It seems paradoxical that academic tenure should come under official scrutiny at a time when the risks in making tenured appointments are, in certain important respects, less than they have been for many years. It cannot seriously be denied that during the post-war boom period of tertiary education which peaked in the 60’s, tenured appointments were given to not a few people who, in the present climate, would not be considered serious candidates for tuition. Because of the rapid rate of expansion and high level of funding at that time, this did not create an obvious immediate problem; if an appointment proved to be a mistake, it was comparatively easy to cover the situation by making a further appointment and “finding something” for the original appointee to do. This is not so cynical as it sounds: in a situation where demand exceeded supply there was really no other practicable approach to take. Today competition for even the most minor post is so high that only extreme misfortune or gross negligence could lead to the appointment of a person who is not competent to fulfil his or her duties satisfactorily.

Unfortunately the same change in general climate has also, quite naturally, led to a need for much greater flexibility in the appointment of limited funds and it is this fact, rather than concern about the quality of people “appointed for life”, which has caused the question of tenure to become a political issue.

It should be noted, however, that although academic tenure has long been largely, even if sometimes grudgingly, taken for granted by public authorities and the community at large, it has been the subject of debate within the universities for several decades. Those who are devoted to the subject of debate within the universities for several decades. Those who are devoted to the teaching and development of a discipline within the broader framework of educational programs are extremely sensitive to the interdependence of their own aims and efforts and the general health of the institutions within which they work. They could not but see, sometimes with sad examples before them, that the protection afforded by tenure had its costs as well as its values to their institutions and to tertiary education as a whole. It is far to say that over the years there has been constant soul-searching over the issue and balanced, objective weighing of the cases for and against tenured appointments as standard university policy.

This very fact creates initial problems in preparing a submission on the question for a committee of inquiry. Firstly we cannot, in honesty, adopt the simplistic “hands off” attitude which has come to be expected in industrial negotiations but must argue that, notwithstanding the “costs” of tenure, the “cost” of a total or very substantial abandonment of it could be considerably higher. Secondly it is hard to avoid feeling that the cases both for and against tenured appointments in universities have been so thoroughly argued for so long that they must be well known to anybody who has given the question deep consideration and there is little new that can be said. There is no doubt that the debate has always been dominated by two sets of spectres: on the one hand, the vision of appoyant me; ...
A2. The security provided by tenure is an equitable compensation for the comparative paucity of material rewards. However, only those who can make full and free use of the freedom it affords will be in a position to turn it to advantage. Tenure is an instrument of freedom, not an instrument of influence and the freedom of the individual is a freedom that can never be considered to be absolute. It is a freedom that can only be exercised by those who are not bound by the restrictions of a system of education that is designed to maintain the status quo. Tenure is a right, not a privilege, and its purpose is to enable the individual to express himself freely and without restraint in his work.

B6. Some people may rely on security of tenure to enable them to concentrate on their work and attention upon the task at hand. They may be uninterested in the field of research which appeal to them, irrespective of the value of their work, to other people, and neglect what they consider mundane duties.

B7. Institutional flexibility is reduced by tenure; once a programme is established it cannot readily be discontinued. Whilst this is at worst wasteful during a period of expansion, it creates severe frustrations during a period of non-expansion and can lead to a crisis situation in a period of contraction.

B8. Promising young scholars are lost to academia because the positions they would be competent to take are filled, inadequately, by people who may have considerably less potential.

B9. Tenure promotes complacency and has no attraction for the ambitious, self-confident and genuinely first-rate people who are prepared to stand on their own record and compete openly for preference. Such people may tend to move on into more competitive fields outside of universities, and undermine the quality of work and the kinds of rewards, that will be evolved. It is only in the most glaring cases of inadequacy that it is ever refused on the expiry of the term of a parliament from three to four years on average, that universities are not tenured, and society whether they are tenured or not. While this is certainly not to say, when we consider the role and function of a university, that the universities are left with time-serving or second-rate people. The ideal temperament for a university academic is not necessarily the same as that for an oil company executive.

It leads directly to points A3 and A4 — and the courage to look B 3 and 4. It is widely accepted that where a degree of unworldliness is no disadvantage and may indeed be an asset, it is both reasonable and wise to shield people from irrelevant worldly considerations — such as the possibility of being fired — in order that they can get on with the jobs they are paid for. It is interesting that the people of New South Wales recently voted overwhelmingly to extend the tenure of university staff members for the specific purpose of retaining the best staff.

C1. Points A1 and A2 can fairly clearly be matched, in some respects, to the corresponding B arguments. Taken conjointly, they raise the question: what kinds of people, what personality and motivation patterns, do we really want in universities? Here it can certainly be argued that there are no grounds for assuming a correlation between the patient and rigorous devotion to scholarly enquiry, or to the nurturing of knowledge and insight in students, and the self-confident determination to achieve eminence and secure the maximum reward for effort and ability. Indeed it might be observed that some of the finest university work has been done by self-effacing people who have neither the inclination nor the ability to survive in a cut-and-thrust competitive society and that those who have this inclination be found within the walls of society whether they are tenured or not. If we grant, as surely we must, that an academic career attracts less people who have the popular image of an academic career attracts less and, it is widely acceptable that the most valuable research or experimental work, and undermine the quality of work and the kinds of rewards, that will be evolved. It is only in the most glaring cases of inadequacy that it is ever refused on the expiry of the term of a parliament from three to four years on average, that universities are not tenured, and society whether they are tenured or not. While this is certainly not to say, when we consider the role and function of a university, that the universities are left with time-serving or second-rate people. The ideal temperament for a university academic is not necessarily the same as that for an oil company executive.

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C2. It is also worth mentioning that the tenure of university staff members for the specific purpose of retaining the best staff.

C3. In the event of a conflict of obligations to authority and to the demands of their disciplines, it is vital for the good health of universities and the objectivity of scholarship that academics give priority to the latter.

In opposition to the practice of tenured appointments the following, prima-facie equally forceful, effect, it is vital for the good health of universities and the objectivity of scholarship that academics give priority to the latter.

C4. A1. When normal care is taken, bad errors can be made in the selection of appointees: universities should not be 'stuck with their mistakes' for ever.

C5. A2. A brief probationary period does not overcome this problem. Inadequacies can show up after the expiry of that period and, in any case, where tenure is the norm, it is only in the most glaring cases of inadequacy that it is ever refused on the expiry of the probationary period.

C6. B1. When normal care is taken, bad errors can be made in the selection of appointees: universities should not be 'stuck with their mistakes' for ever.

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C8. B3. People who have been extremely valuable can, for a wide range of reasons, deteriorate to the point where they are of little value — or even are positive liabilities — long before they reach retirement age.

C9. B4. The presence of such people in the university community may have a demoralising effect on their colleagues and undermine effort and enthusiasm.

C10. B5. Well-planned and necessary reforms and redirections to meet changing circumstances can be inhibited or even stifled by passive resistance or even downright rejection by people who cannot or will not be replaced or disciplined.

C11. B6. Some people may rely on security of tenure to enable them to concentrate on their work and attention upon the task at hand. They may be uninterested in the field of research which appeal to them, irrespective of the value of their work, to other people, and neglect what they consider mundane duties.

C12. B7. Institutional flexibility is reduced by tenure; once a programme is established it cannot readily be discontinued. Whilst this is at worst wasteful during a period of expansion, it creates severe frustrations during a period of non-expansion and can lead to a crisis situation in a period of contraction.

C13. B8. Promising young scholars are lost to academia because the positions they would be competent to take are filled, inadequately, by people who may have considerably less potential.

C14. B9. Tenure promotes complacency and has no attraction for the ambitious, self-confident and genuinely first-rate people who are prepared to stand on their own record and compete openly for preference. Such people may tend to move on into more competitive fields outside of universities, and undermine the quality of work and the kinds of rewards, that will be evolved. It is only in the most glaring cases of inadequacy that it is ever refused on the expiry of the term of a parliament from three to four years on average, that universities are not tenured, and society whether they are tenured or not. While this is certainly not to say, when we consider the role and function of a university, that the universities are left with time-serving or second-rate people. The ideal temperament for a university academic is not necessarily the same as that for an oil company executive.

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academic self-esteem, indeed self-respect, is heavily dependent upon working performance. The deliberate loser tends to be viewed with contempt by both the public and his colleagues. Universities are very civilized places, but he is the man they would least wish to be like. The attitude to the immediate colleagues is, therefore, very different. It is formally one of sympathetic understanding, coupled with a subconscious desire to ensure that the less able are always second with what is economically feasible.

2. It would, however, be utterly unrealistic to assume that, particularly in the present economic climate, people outside of universities are going to attach the same value to the maintenance of tenured appointments as do those within the universities—or to pretend that policies on tenure should not be reviewed and could not be modified to the advantage both of the institutions and of the community. The second approach, therefore, is to hammer out, in the light of all the evidence, what that is the basic minimum of tenure needed for universities to maintain effective and efficient operations. In approaching this task it is important to distinguish quite clearly between the level of degree of tenure on the one hand and the extent or proportion of tenured appointments on the other. Although the two are certainly inter-related, the first is concerned principally with what is educationally desirable and the second for what is economically feasible. It seems appropriate, therefore, to consider them in that order.

3. If it could well be felt that tenure has, in the past, been too all-embracing, that it amounted virtually to an unattainable right, and be paid for holding, a greater degree of flexibility would have been possible if the incumbent did not behave utterly and overtly outrageously. It should be possible either to give a somewhat broader definition of misconduct or to include stipulations about the amount and nature of work to be undertaken in a way that would impose rather more contractual obligation on the tenured incumbent. It could be equally reasonable for the contract to provide that a level of competence be maintained and to provide some guidelines for determining this. Tenure could be subject to periodic review and be open to the university to consider it. It must be understood that renewal would be automatic unless there were breaches of contract by the incumbent and that the universities would be entitled to act as an employer. It may also be desirable to establish an independent appeals tribunal to guarantee that misconduct is treated in a fair and impartial way, and which would never invoked to cover independence of thought or the expounding of unpopular views.

4. There are, however, other modifications possible that are independent of tenure. For example, tenure from receiving additional payments for extra work performed for the university and a specific exception would probably need to be made of the receipt of royalties from publications. But it could well be argued that those academics who put a high value on their right to maintain private consultancy practices or

5. The current discussions of employment, the universities would no longer attract those people who have most to offer higher education and the expansion of knowledge.

6. There are, of course, risks of another kind in the acceptance of these risks. Whilst allowing that great good may come from a more responsible attitude, it is possible to ensure that the vast majority of people appointed to university staffs have been largely second with what is economically feasible.

7. It would be well to remember that those academics who put a high value on their right to maintain private consultancy practices or...
involve themselves in commercial enterprises should be prepared to forego tenure.

These are some ways in which the conditions of

The quantity question is obviously difficult to answer; the factors which make a university an important place are not objective and independent character of the

There has been much talk lately of earlier retirement

It is in considering how many and which staff members, other than heads of departments, should be tenured if they so elect, that both factors, the free functioning of the university and fair treatment of individuals, are most obviously relevant. On the first count tenure is most vital for those individuals whose very strength is the cause of their vulnerability, the people who have, and know themselves to have, considerable contributions to make in introducing innovative methods or challenging entrenched viewpoints. It is the constant review, necessitated by conflicts of ideas within departments, which above all gives the university its special character.

Plainly, somebody moving from private practice, commercial employment or public service to a university administrative post would probably have a family dependent upon him, is taking quite a drastic step in his private life; it is certainly not an easy one to reverse should it become unreasonable to him, or if he should have, as soon as possible, the security of tenure of his post. The situation of young people in their twenties and early thirties is quite different: they are still, to a great extent, sorting out their own futures and should be better able to cope with the situations if their employment were terminated for any reason.
Tenure relates to the length of time assuredness of employment is given to an individual within an enterprise unit. It may convey highly specific commitment, or merely strong intent, perhaps backed by provision that the employing unit itself is not assured of continuity with adequate funding beyond the date implied or stated, that in itself creates doubts as to the nature of the labour employment relationship.

In a sense every employee enjoys tenure, differences across individuals relate to the length of binding commitment, or at least to the likely expectation of tenure. Tenure is one element entering into job choice in the eyes of a would-be employee, and one element entering into the content of a job package offered by a would-be employer. Each party considers it a desirable attribute at least to some degree, otherwise we would find the average periods of tenure extremely short, rather than in practice quite, or very long. For workers, within limits, longer tenure may be worth seeking at the expense of higher pay, for firms the offer of longer tenure imposes higher fixed of labour costs for which they will tend to seek offset by offering lower payment for services rendered per sub-unit of time.

In a freely competitive market would-be workers of given skill would spread themselves across employment opportunities until there is seen to be no advantage from rearrangement, and reassignment of skills. That is to say there is no move by any individual that can be made which gives longer tenure without say an offer of that degree of reduc­tion in pay, which is considered a balanced offset. Of course not all workers operate in such a competitive situation in the short-run, but it is entirely reasonable to assume that in the longer run they do and hence glaring gaps in the total emoluments from employment packages will be eliminated save where there is strong control on entry (and hence queueing costs must be accounted for).

This enables us to make two points. Firstly, tenure is a sought after element of a pay package, of some degree: its length relates not only to the skill on offer but also to the viability of an enterprise unit to offer such a duration of employment — that is the second point. Clearly a Federal Government organisation with the fiat of the state is in a stronger position to create a problem, the higher the rank involved, the greater the problem.

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