

Remarks addressed by Peter Becker to the Faculty Senate,
March 7, 1990.

The New Testament urges "Let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay." If the Academic Planning Committee's response is a bit of both yea, yea and nay, nay, that probably owes to the need to satisfy more than one master, reflected in the committee's composition. It consists of students, faculty members from the Columbia campus, and representatives from the two- and four-year campuses.

When I appeared before the committee, the representative from a two-year campus immediately corrected my terminology. These are not two-year campuses, he said, but University Campuses, and that means that their function exceeds that of a regular two-year campus, limited to awarding an Associate degree.

Thoroughly chastened, I then heard from a four-year-campus representative, who bristled at the audacity of the Columbia Faculty Welfare Committee to tell the regional campuses that they could not offer graduate degrees. He referred to the plan by the four-year campuses to start M.Ed. programs.

The same intention was also voiced in a letter to the chair of the Academic Planning Committee from the Spartanburg faculty. Inasmuch as fundamental questions are broached here, I think it may be instructive for all faculty members to read Professor Bruce's letter and my response (which I hereby enter into evidence, so to speak). My letter reiterates the main points of the Welfare Committee, and I do not wish to bore you with a repetition. Only the two major conclusions bear repeating, because they are central to the Welfare Committee's views.

1. The university is overextended in its commitments. It cannot adequately acquit itself of its present obligations to faculty, operations, and maintenance.
2. If the financial situation is to improve, it can be done only internally, through a rethinking of priorities and a policy of austerity.

The plans of the various campuses explain the cryptic references to "decentralization of programs" and "aspirations" mentioned by the Planning Committee on the first page of its report.

The Welfare Committee was and is not concerned with what the other campuses wish to do ultimately. It was and is concerned with costs, and how to keep them under control. For example, if

a substantial portion of a program is decentralized but also costs more money, then it should be decentralized only if the expenses of the central unit are correspondingly lowered.

With respect to weighing new or expanding programs only as a matter of dollars and cents, of course that should not be the only criterion. But it is in part because this aspect has been ignored in the past that we now face a fiscal crunch. It is not going to harm this university if it were to apply mostly fiscal considerations until the situation is under control again. We must shed our credit-card mentality. We should not forget that operations, maintenance (as a friend said to me, "maintenance deferred is maintenance denied"), and salaries are very much a matter of dollars and cents.

With respect to the filling of faculty positions, I am not as sanguine about the necessary vigilance as is the Planning Committee. As long as we have a department on the campus (it may be the only one, at least I hope so) in which faculty members teach only one course per semester, I am not convinced that the oversight process is working very well.

Finally, let me dispel a misperception apparently engendered by the Faculty Welfare Committee's report. It is not the senior administration which is solely responsible for expansion. Faculty members, department chairs, and deans are equally responsible, and all of us must exercise restraint.