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MORE DISCIPLINE

The news that a number of students are to be brought before the Discipline Committee charged with offences in connection with the invasions of the University offices in third Term has caused a good deal of surprise and comment. SOUND asked the Vice-Chancellor whether he thought the decision was wise at this late stage in the year. Dr. Matheson replied as follows:

"It is, of course, for the Discipline Committee to decide whether these charges are proved and, if so, what punishment, if any, should be imposed. I shall not be a member of that Committee.

"The decision was a difficult one and I am conscious of strong argument on both sides; I am quite sure that it would not have been *right* simply to drop the matter. It is a pity that so much time has gone by since the incidents took place but this was inevitable as it did not seem fair to make accusations of misconduct against students during the examinations and so to add to their worries.

"The main argument for taking no action seems to be that it is tactically unwise, and that to prefer charges is to present student radicals with a ready-made 'cause' round which to build next year's protests. This point of view is perhaps re-inforced by the end-of-term pre-Christmas euphoria which suggest that bygones should now be acknowledged to be bygones. Let us make a clean start next year, goes this train of thought, with a new Discipline Statute and perhaps other arrangements which, it may be hoped, will aid student-staff dialogue and understanding.

"I must confess that this thought appealed to me very much at first, especially as I was utterly tired of the emotion and hysteria of last term and wanted to forget it and get on with some more creative work during the vacation.

"However, I reflected that it could as strongly be contended that even the argument of tactics could be turned round. After all, the students knew perfectly well what they were doing when they sat-in; they had been warned that disciplinary action could follow and they took the risk. To drop the matter at this stage might be taken as a tacit admission that the University authorities lacked the resolution to resist a determined assault and almost as an invitation to have another go next year.

"The tactical arguments, based on expediency, seem thus to cancel out. But the moral argument that students must somehow be brought to a realisation that it is wrong to press their contentions to the point of violence must surely prevail. Unless the whole University comes to agree that there are limits beyond which protest must not go then we shall certainly have to live indefinitely in a state of conflict; while it is possible to adjust to almost anything, given the fortunate resilience of the human spirit, most of us prefer our University to be a place of scholarship, not a laboratory for experiments in revolutionary politics.

"The argument about fairness can also be stated in various ways. It could be argued that it is less than fair that these cases should have been deferred until now, but it has already been explained how this came about. On the other hand, some former students are already under injunction not to enter the University Offices; why should the others who came in with them be ignored?

"It has also been argued that these others are easily-led people who were misled by the hard core and/or that they were only following the dictates of conscience.

"But *my* conscience tells me that it is not right that those who work in the Offices, and upon whom we rely for the effective running of the University's administrative machine, should be subjected to the sort of things they had to put up with last term. It is idle to argue that the invaders remained in the foyer area only and kept out of individual offices. In the first place it is not true, at least on the second occasion; and it is surely naive, or tendentious, to argue that work need not have been interrupted.

"For me to have taken no action would have been tantamount to my deciding on a wholesale acquittal. And this I was not ready to do."

CONSTITUTION OF COUNCIL

The Professorial Board has endorsed the report of the Committee on the Constitution of Council, which had been adopted by Council at an earlier meeting. A summary of the report appeared in SOUND No. 7.

NEW APPOINTMENTS

Dr. D. B. Heron, Sub-Dean of the Faculty of Arts, has been appointed Deputy Academic Registrar.

Keith Bennetts, formerly a senior journalist with a number of publications in the Herald group, has been appointed Information Officer.

Ian Anderson, former Education Writer with the Sun, has become Assistant Information Officer.