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Constitution of the University of London.¹

THE Royal Commission on University Education in London—the “Haldane Commission”—was appointed in 1909 and its final report was issued in 1913. In August 1913 a Departmental Committee was appointed to report as to the steps by which effect should be given to the scheme of the report of the Royal Commission, but that Committee abandoned its labours soon after the outbreak of War.

The Departmental Committee, which reported last month, was set up in October 1924 with Lord Ernle as chairman. In February 1925, however, Mr. Hilton Young was appointed chairman on Lord Ernle's retiring for reasons of health. The terms of reference to the Committee were :

“To consider the Final Report of the Royal Commission on University Education dated 27th March 1913, and, having regard to present circumstances and after consultation with the persons and bodies concerned, to indicate what are the principal changes now most needed in the existing constitution of the University of London and on what basis a Statutory Commission should be set up to frame new Statutes for the University.”

In the introductory section of the report the Committee expresses high appreciation of the analysis and of the ideals presented by the Haldane Commission, but says :

“A careful examination of the Haldane Report and the knowledge which we have acquired of the progress and development of the University, particularly since the war, have led us to the conclusion that it would be impracticable to attempt to give effect to some of the major recommendations of the Commissioners. There are other recommendations which require modification to meet altered circumstances, and there are others, again, which the University has substantially adopted. . . . We conceive our terms of reference as conferring on us the duty of devising an immediately practicable scheme for the better government, organisation and development of the University to which effect may be given by way of a Statutory Commission, and we are convinced that with the lapse of time and material change of circumstances some of the main recommendations of the Haldane Report have lost their force, and that the ground for attempting to impose such an entirely new constitution on the University as the Report proposed no longer exists. A practicable scheme of reform and reorganisation must, in our opinion, be evolutionary rather than revolutionary and build as far as possible on existing foundations. Certain characteristics peculiar to the University of London have become firmly established, the University has developed greatly during the past twenty-five years, even though hampered by serious constitutional defects. For the removal of those defects we are obliged to recommend some fundamental changes.”

¹ Board of Education : Report of the Departmental Committee on the University of London. Pp. 76. (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1926.) 1s. 3d. net.

Approaching the problem in the spirit indicated by these passages from the report, the Committee has found it possible to present, in a relatively short report, its own reasoned views and recommendations, together with a discussion of the main points on which divergent views were submitted to it in oral or written evidence. The Committee confined its attention to broad constitutional issues; thus the question of where and how the central offices of the University should be housed—rather a prominent question at present—did not call for consideration by it.

The subject of the external side was considered early, and after discussion and inquiry of the value of the examinations for external students, the conclusion was reached that, "in the view of the whole Committee these examinations have in the past served, and will in future serve, a useful purpose." It is gratifying to learn that on the evidence before it the Committee noted with satisfaction the steady growth of understanding, interaction, and good feeling between the internal and external sides of the University.

Another section of the problem before the Committee—the question of incorporation—appeared, when examined closely, to present no serious difficulty. There are two, and only two, "Colleges incorporated in the University"—University College and King's College. The Haldane Commissioners were of opinion that incorporation should be extended. The Departmental Committee, with the history of thirteen more years on the table, does not recommend the incorporation of other colleges; at the same time it does "not urge the disincorporation of University and King's Colleges." The view is that colleges should "have liberty in agreement with the University to achieve either disincorporation or incorporation."

The pregnant chapters in the Report are those headed, respectively, "The University and its Colleges," "Finance," "The Government of the University," and "The Schools of the University." In these the Committee discusses the facts and considerations which have determined its recommendations as to certain changes in the constitution of the University. These chapters give an attractive, clear, terse and pointed account of the present position and of the advantages which the changes recommended are designed to secure. That account should be read as a whole, for the proposed constitution must be fully envisaged before its effectiveness can be estimated, and the objection or difficulty which may seem to affect it at one point may, in practice, be ruled out at another.

In due course the general scheme recommended as for the guidance of a Statutory Commission will no doubt be subject to criticism and suggestion. Indeed, on a point of primary importance—the only matter of

divergence within the Committee—one member of the Committee has presented a 'minority report,' and on that point readers of the main report have in its text the grounds upon which all the other members of the Committee based their recommendations.

The recommendations of the Committee are summarised under twelve heads: (1) The Council, (2) The Senate, (3) Standing Committees of the Senate, (4) The Academic Council, (5) The Council for External Students, (6) The Collegiate Council, (7) The University Extension and Tutorial Classes Board, (8) The Matriculation and Schools Examinations Board, (9) Faculties and Boards of Faculties, (10) Schools of the University, (11) Examinations, (12) The Principal.

Of these, No. 6 would give effect to the view that the "Institutional Element of the University is sufficiently important and distinct to justify not only representation on the Senate, but also the creation of a special standing committee of the Senate." This committee, designated "The Collegiate Council," would consist of the Vice-Chancellor, the Principal, the seven members of the Senate appointed by seven named institutions, the two members appointed by the Medical Schools, with possible additional members added by the Senate as representatives of institutions or groups of institutions, the Principal of the University to be chairman of the Collegiate Council.

Recommendation No. 12 includes that the Principal "shall have unrestricted rights of attendance and speech at all meetings of the Council [of the University], the Senate and the standing committees of the Senate, and it shall be his duty to assist them with his advice. He shall be Chairman of the Collegiate Council but he shall not be a member of the governing body of any School of the University."

It is not to be anticipated that these proposals will elicit any serious questioning, but the position, powers, and constitution of "The Council of the University," summarised in Recommendation No. 1, and the matters of policy and of administration which are set out in the Report as in relation to that recommendation, are sure to be subjected to searching examination. Recommendation No. 1 is therefore quoted here in full:

"There shall be a Council of the University consisting of:—The Chancellor, the Vice-Chancellor, the Chairman of Convocation, Six members appointed from their own number by the Senate, Four members appointed by the Crown, Two members appointed by the London County Council, One member co-opted at the discretion of the remainder of the Council.

"The Council shall control the finance of the University, and in particular it shall have final authority in the allocation of university funds, but in dealing with financial matters directly affecting educational policy it shall give the Senate a full opportunity of reporting.

"The Council shall have power to negotiate with, and receive money from, grant-giving bodies on behalf of the University as a whole and of any of the Schools of the University including the Incorporated Colleges.

"The Council shall appoint a Chairman from its own number."

With this should be read from Recommendation 2 : "The Senate" :—

"The Senate shall elect the Vice-Chancellor. . . .

"The Senate, subject to the financial decisions of the Council, shall control the educational work of the University, but it shall have power to delegate the performance of such duties as it thinks fit to its standing committees and other bodies."

In his minority report, Mr. Lees-Smith presents objections to the constitutional position of the Council as recommended by the Committee, and he recommends "that the representative Senate should be supreme in finance as in other fields, but should have a statutory 'Finance Council,' with the same membership as that proposed in the Report for the supreme University Council."

The recommendations which the Committee makes as to the constitution commend themselves at sight on the ground—a ground, however, to which the Committee does not refer—that the proposed allocation of functions follows in the main the lines that have proved satisfactory in all the newer universities of England and in all those of Scotland. The Report itself presents discussion, explanation, and argument which leave little strength in the objections that witnesses put to the ideas which the Committee had formulated as the inquiry proceeded.

It must be recognised that any argument from the success of corresponding schemes in other British universities does not really carry far ; for in size and in complexity the University of London is *sui generis*. As to *size* : from the latest statistics published by the University Grants Committee it appears that, excluding Oxford and Cambridge from the totals, the London institutions comprised in the University of London had of full-time students 8955, while all other university institutions in England had 11,672. Of part-time students London had 7442 ; other institutions in England 3322. Again, the recurrent grants made by the University Grants Committee were : to London institutions, 376,270*l.* ; to others in England, 386,800*l.* As to *complexity*, the Report of the Committee says :

"There are now 38 Schools of the University ranging from large colleges with several hundreds of internal students to small institutions with few or no internal students and including on the one hand colleges providing undergraduate instruction in nearly all the staple subjects of a normal undergraduate curriculum, and on the other institutions, or departments of

institutions devoted entirely to postgraduate study or research in a limited range of subjects."

The recommendations of the Committee mean that the whole amount of the grants made by the University Grants Committee and by the London County Council in respect of constituent institutions of the University would be passed in block to the council of the reconstituted University for distribution as the council might decide. Thus in this important matter the proposed University Council would bear a responsibility with which that now resting on the council of any provincial university in England is as little comparable in scale as it is in complexity. It is to be noted, however, that as the Committee has pointed out, at several stages, not only before the determination of this block grant but also during its currency, the Council of the University would be in effective communication with the University Grants Committee, and further, that in "dealing with financial matters affecting educational policy the Council shall give the Senate a full opportunity of reporting." It might well be also that the smooth starting of the proposed new constitution would be effectively aided in practice by the observations with which the University Grants Committee announced its grant to the Council of the University.

The Committee appears to have tackled successfully the problem of presenting, in outline, a reasoned scheme for such amendment of the constitution of this great University as would provide machinery for its government and administration, sufficiently well-knit to avoid waste of effort, and sufficiently flexible to adapt itself to work in the varied fields in which the University operates.

There are, however, some considerations which, if not faced before effect comes to be given to the recommendations as a whole, may prove detrimental to the scheme. These turn on the fact, which is fully recognised by the Committee, that "the University on its teaching side is organised mainly on a collegiate basis." It is in this collegiate basis of its parts that the University of London differs essentially from the newer universities of England. The resources of its schools are in varying degree in the form of buildings, endowments, and fees and other income liable to fluctuation. A large part of the fluctuating income comes from the grants, national and local, which in the case of London the Committee recommends should be paid in block to the University for allocation to its colleges and other schools.

Now, some of these institutions perform valuable functions which are not regarded as university work ; many of them have received, both for their university work and for their other activities, valuable annual support and liberal endowments from donors more

appreciative of specialised work than of the far-flung usefulness of the University. Not a little of this support has been given for work that is definitely university work but in particular institutions. Considerations turning on such facts as these are bound to give rise to ideas, and indeed fears, that would retard the development of the institution which the Committee desires to promote.

Relatively well-endowed or well-supported schools of the University may fear that the payment of grants in block for allocation within the University may in practice to some extent discount the benefits of their separate resources. Prospective benefactors may find in it reason to hesitate to be generous to a particular institution or in respect of particular aims which they desire to forward.

With the University in the hands of a well-constituted Council and Senate, such fears or hesitation should not materialise; but now is the time to prevent harm from their emergence. The Committee has aimed at an evolutionary rather than a revolutionary scheme of reform and reorganisation. Well-judged application of public support has been the dominant element in the environment of the several institutions of the University, and there should be no apparent risk of serious change or unsettlement in this influence. Some reassurance on this matter appears to be desirable, and it would be well that national and local grants continued to be at least earmarked in the initial stages of the proposed changes. Even now the list of recurrent grants made by the University Grants Committee shows that, in the case of provincial university centres, separate grants are made to six colleges—five in England and one in Scotland—each presumably doing good university work for its region although not incorporated in the university.

Italian Alchemical Manuscripts.

Sulle fonti storiche della chimica e dell'alchimia in Italia. Per Dott. Giovanni Carbonelli. Tratte dallo spoglio dei manoscritti delle biblioteche con speciale riguardo ai codici 74 di Pavia e 1166 Laurenziano. Pp. xix + 218. (Roma: Istituto Nazionale Medico Farmacologico, 1925.) 300 lire.

THE great libraries of Italy form one of the happiest hunting-grounds for the seeker after ancient alchemical manuscripts. Dr. Ernst Darmstaedter's exciting discovery last year of a Latin version of Geber's "Book of Mercy," up to that time known only in its Arabic dress, is almost certainly merely a foretaste of what is to come. In the practically unbroken tradition of culture in Italy, extending over a couple of millennia, the accumulation of precious documents has found a

peculiarly favourable atmosphere, and the International Committee which is now conducting a census of alchemical manuscripts in Europe will doubtless unearth its greatest treasures in the land of Dante—who consigned all alchemists to a special corner of the Inferno.

The part played by Italy in the scientific renaissance of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and in the transmission of knowledge has scarcely received the recognition which is its due. In South Italy and in Sicily, under the Norman sovereigns, the translation of scientific works and the dissemination of learning went on apace; in Sicily, for example, the "Almagest" appears to have been translated for the first time into Latin from the original Greek, in 1160 or thereabout, while on the practical side it has been suggested with every probability of truth that the discovery of alcohol was made in South Italy in the tenth century. Although conditions in the northern portions of the country were not so favourable, the commercial relations between Venice and Pisa and various regions of the East led to the establishment of Italian colonies in Constantinople, and in this and other ways a transmission of knowledge and a steady intercommunication between scholars was rendered possible. Among the translators of the north of Italy may be mentioned Burgundio of Pisa, who translated ten books of Galen, and Pascalis Romanus, who, says Prof. C. H. Haskins, can be "almost certainly identified with the translator from the Greek, in 1169, of the curious book known as the Kiranides."

There is, therefore, every reason for great expectations from the Italian manuscripts, and particularly so when we recollect that Italy is also the home of painting. The Muslim dislike of representations of anything endowed with life reacted upon the illustration of books, with the result that very few figures of any sort are found in Arabic alchemical manuscripts; while in most of Europe the alchemists do not shine conspicuously as artists. Such delightful drawings as those which are found in a British Museum manuscript of the "Ordinall of Alkimy," by the Bristol alchemist Thomas Norton, are noteworthy as much for their rarity as their beauty, while in the printed books the figures of apparatus do not often reach the level of those in the 1545 Geber.

With our appetites thus whetted we may turn to Dr. Carbonelli's sumptuous volume and sample his fare. Our first impression is one of complete satisfaction, for it is produced by the sight of his numerous and very attractive illustrations. The coloured frontispiece is a reproduction of Giovanni Brueghel's picture entitled "Elemento del Fuoco," which was probably painted in 1608 for the Cardinal Federico Borromeo,