

In the first half of 1968, students created political turmoil—and in some instances ousted governments—in France, Turkey, South Korea, and several other places. Student unions were banned in Pakistan at that time. Some of us could see that as soon as the students returned to the campuses in September, they would launch an agitation for the restoration of their unions. And, this is precisely what they did.

Their movement started at the Punjab University in Lahore, spread to campuses across the country, and then merged with a larger revolt against Ayub Khan's rule. Students, along with peasants and workers, became the object of the late Mr Bhutto's solicitude and strategy. It should be emphasized, once again, that these developments surfaced before, not after, the Act of 1974.

In the proposed scheme of things a body of 15 to 20 members will replace the existing senate in the universities and act as a board of governors. These members will, presumably, be appointed by the chancellor (usually the provincial governor), who will most likely act on the advice of the education secretary. The names of those to be appointed will be picked from a list submitted by a nominating committee. It is not clear where this committee will originate. The new senate or board will have no elected members.

A syndicate, the university's executive organ, will consist of numerous ex-officio members (vice-chancellor, registrar, treasurer, controller of examinations, deans of faculties, a few principals of affiliated colleges). It will also include three professors, but we don't know who will appoint them. Once again, no elected members here.

An academic council will settle pedagogic issues, presumably such as departments and programmes of study, degree requirements, syllabuses, nature and standards of examinations, undertaking and guidance of student research, and operations of the departmental boards of studies. It will include, in addition to those who serve ex officio, five professors, two college principals, and five representatives of teaching departments and institutes in the university. None of these

only a slight one. A place devoted to the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge, functioning without administrators, can be imagined, but a university without professors is entirely inconceivable. The proposition that persons without whose presence an institution cannot even be conceived are not, by a right inherent in the centrality of their function to the institution's mission, entitled to a say in its governance, and to participation in the maintenance of its good order, would appear to be preposterous. Why then do apparently sensible men want to extinguish this right? They will protest that they do want the faculty's wisdom and professional expertise to bear on the conduct of the university's affairs. But they want its administrative bodies and officers to identify where in faculty ranks the right kind of wisdom resides. They fear that if this task is left to the professors themselves by allowing them to elect their representatives they will both do it up by permitting extraneous political forces to influence their choices.

It seems that the new university ordinance says nothing about student unions. The sceptics—including the former vice-chancellor referred to earlier—would revive them if they were to be elected indirectly by departmental associations, and not by the entire body of students.

Why the aversion to the flow into campuses of political formations and opinions at work in larger society? It is feared that links with these forces will detract faculty and students from their appointed missions. The business of teachers, it is said, is to teach, and that of students is to learn. Politics is none of their business.

On the face of it, the argument sounds reasonable. Further reflection may, however, cause doubts. The business of physicians is to heal the sick, that of electricians to instal and repair electrical cables and appliances, and that of mechanics to make and fiddle with machines. But we have not heard it posited for more than a hundred years that working people are not entitled to have their respective professional or craft unions.

In democratic societies all citizens have

become a political actor.

The apprehension that an elected body entitled to speak for professors on professional issues or their right to elect a few representatives to the university's statutory bodies (senate, syndicate, academic council) will politicize them, open them to political machinations and mischief from outside, and thus impair the quality of their teaching and research is entirely without basis. If some professors do actually interact with colleagues and students in a manner unbecoming their station, that is because they have been touched by the moral decay prevalent in larger society. It has nothing to do with their right to elect officers in their professional organizations and representatives on their university's governing and regulatory bodies.

The bias against elections on campuses is merely a spillover from the bias against democratic politics common among administrators. The culture of democracy brings forth individuals who, instead of simply obeying orders, will ask questions, propose different ways of achieving professed goals, suggest new goals, and make a variety of demands. All of this makes life uncomfortable for rulers and their agents. It requires more work, patience, perseverance, and respect for the dissident on the part of administrators. It also calls for the painful exercise of innovative thinking, which, those steeped in the bureaucratic mode dread more than anything else.

Yet, they must overcome this dread, and come to terms with the requirements of our democratic age, which cannot be wished, or even legislated, away. Administering a university is admittedly a difficult job, harder than running most other organizations, for it houses men of learning who, standing on their own ground and in the context of their institution's mission, are-intellectually—the average administrator's superiors.

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