

REDBRICK

Birmingham University

TUESDAY, OCT. 29th, 1968

FREE

EMERGENCY EDITION

GENERAL MEETING TODAY

EXECUTIVE

SEEKS CONFIDENCE VOTE

CRISIS

by
RAY PHILLIPS

MANY students will probably be wondering, why, after several months of constructive negotiation with the University, the Executive should suddenly find themselves in a crisis of confidence. Even to the very end of the last official meeting of the "Student Role" working party in September, the Executive found that virtually all the students' demands had been met. So why the present crisis?

The answer is almost painfully obvious. The September meeting of Sir Robert Aitken's last. Since that time Sir Robert has moved on and Dr. Hunter has, after an inadequate period of initiation, assumed the Vice-Chancellorship.

Moreover, he is unable to settle down because of two very important reasons. Sir Robert left the "Student Role" negotiations just at the time when there was likely to be a conflict of opinion between the Guild and the "University"—namely, over the question of representation on the University Council. Secondly, Dr. Hunter has inherited a structure which, evidently, can only be sustained by Sir Robert himself. His departure, therefore, has robbed the system of its previous stability and the present Vice-Chancellor is struggling to find a foothold. But why should the Executive be caught in a crisis of confidence?

The activities of the Ad Hoc Committee on University Reform has inadvertently placed the Guild Executive in this equivocal position.

Despite the attempts of the Guild Executive to dissuade members from crossing to the Senate Chamber last Wednesday, many still feel that the Executive is and has been fully committed to the views of the Ad Hoc group. The presence of members of the Executive at the sit-in is regarded as further confirmation. However, we still regard ourselves as the representatives of the Guild and our attendance at the sit-in, and support for the meeting with the Vice-Chancellor last Friday, was to safeguard the interests of the Guild as a whole. It is to enable you to express your views that the General Meeting has been called.

But, perhaps a more significant motive for calling this meeting is to combat certain assertions made by the "University." We, the Executive, are not representatives of any one minority group. We want to give a clear indication to the University Council meeting tomorrow, that the GUILD is united in its support for us when we ask for a careful examination of the University structure.

We are not shaking our fists. We are not holding the present University system against Dr. Hunter. We must proceed in an atmosphere of confidence and NOT FEAR. An "academic community" cannot be based on the dictatorship of the student.

Don't miss the opportunity of listening and speaking at the General Meeting! You have just as much right to speak as the next man. Whatever happens, we, the Guild, must continue as the University must continue—together.



Photo: Pete Brown

Charles Wright and Tony Page, prominent members of the Ad Hoc Group at Wednesday's sit-in.

THE MOTION

THE MEETING WILL CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING
AMENDED MOTION:

That this General Meeting

(1) IS DISGUSTED at the way in which University Senate received the Guild's representatives at its meeting on Wednesday, 23rd October.

(2) URGES the Executive to withdraw "Student Role" if

(a) University Council fails to reach a decision on Wednesday, 30th October

OR

(b) all members of the Working Party are not invited to participate in the discussions of its recommendations at the same meeting of the University Council.

(3) IS DISTRESSED at the intended absence of Pro-Chancellor from the University Council meeting on Wednesday, 30th October at a time when it was agreed to terminate the discussions on "Student Role."

(4) DEMANDS that a University Commission be set up to examine the present University structure. This Commission will include representatives from the following:—

(a) University Council

(b) University Senate

(c) Non-professorial Staff

(d) Guild of Undergraduates, who shall comprise 50% of the Commission

The Commission shall operate in the following manner:—

(a) all meetings of the Commission shall be open

(b) the Commission shall have power to take evidence from all parties concerned

(c) the Vice-Chancellor and the President of the Guild shall be co-chairmen

(d) priority will be given to the consideration of the immediate opening of all University Committees

(5) HAS CONFIDENCE in the Executive to implement the above proposals.

At today's general meeting the Guild Executive will seek the support of the members of the Guild for its policy on the 'Student Role' report. The report, which should come up before the University Council tomorrow for a final decision, seeks representation on Senate and Council committees as a prelude to fuller participation by students in the running of the University.

The meeting today, at 1.15 in Deb. Hall, was precipitated by the Vice-Chancellor, who implied in conversation with Ray Phillips that he and the Executive were in the hands of the militant Ad Hoc Group for University Reform and did not represent the general student opinion. Ray Phillips has in fact completely dissociated himself and Executive from this group, and it is to prove that the student body as a whole is behind him that this meeting has been called.

As the University Council meets tomorrow it is important to show the authorities that the Guild wants "Student Role" to be passed; the Vice-Chancellor has implied that if the Guild does not show its support, the "Student Role" may not be passed. A further grievance has been created by the Pro-Chancellor, Sir George Farmer, who intends to be in Belgium tomorrow and has asked that no final decision be made, despite the fact that the report was to have been completed this week, and the date had been fixed long in advance.

The motion also expresses disgust at the way in which Ray Phillips and other representatives of the Guild were treated at last Wednesday's Senate meeting, when they were only allowed

by PETE ULLATHORNE

to make a statement and were not permitted to participate in the discussion of the issues. Indeed, Charles Critcher attempted to make a statement, but was totally ignored by the chairman.

The fourth part of the motion formulates a completely new demand. It asks for a joint commission to be set up to inquire into University government and to recommend reforms in its structure. This is possibly the most far-reaching part of the motion, as it looks beyond the "Student Role" to a greater form of participation by junior staff and students.

The decision to hold a meeting came at 11.30 on Thursday night after many hours of discussion in the three emergency sessions of Executive. The Press and members of the Ad Hoc Group, which includes staff and students such as Charles Wright, Pete Gowan, Judy McKnight and Tony Page were summoned to Exec. Lounge and waited for the news to be announced. Contradictory rumours circulated all that evening and were only settled when "Redbrick" and G.T.V. reporters were summoned to the President's office and told of the motion.

On Friday, the Vice-Chancellor, Dr. Hunter, was shown the motion. Subsequently he issued a statement to the press to the effect that student representatives would be allowed to make a statement to Council but could not take part in the discussions. Also on Friday the Warden of the Guild, Mr. J. E. Payne, issued a statement in which he commended the proposal for a joint commission, but condemned the "threat contained in the paragraph saying the "Student Role" will be withdrawn if Council fails to make a final decision on Wednesday." He disagreed with the use of the word disgusted, for he claimed that "courtesy and goodwill prevail at all times in dealings with the University."

Today's General Meeting is being held in the Debating Hall and the Council Chamber, with sound and possibly television links between them. In the hope of getting as many people along as possible to make the decision more democratic and representative, there has been an unprecedented amount of publicity and activity: faculty and department meetings were held yesterday lunch-time, and hall meetings yesterday evening, each addressed by a member of Exec. It is hoped to have well over 1,000 people attend the meeting and vote.

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Why this is so important

THERE are two issues raised in today's motion, the most important of which is the Student Role. This document is the beginning of a process by which students can come to help control the way in which they are educated and in which they live, and play a full part in taking decisions upon which they will have to act. It sets out the representation needed on Senate and Council committees to begin to evolve a more liberal and modern structure for University management.

It is, after all, about time the University stopped treating us like children; it's time they realised that we too have views on the "education" we are receiving and on the way in which our lives are run in Halls of Residence and in the University as a whole. Only when our views are adequately represented at Senate, Council and on their committees can we feel that we are really part of an academic community. Only when we participate in the decision-making can we have any control over our own lives.

This is what the Student Role aims at—but it is only a beginning, and even at that it is a compromise. It asks for the minimum possible and without this no real progress can ever be made. It is not to the taste of the militants who demand much more far-reaching reforms, but it is in accordance with the views of the vast majority of members of the Guild. It remains a compromise upon which it would be intolerable and impossible for us to compromise any further.

However, the Vice-Chancellor, having been here four weeks has taken it into his head that Ray Phillips represents only a tiny minority of militant students rather than the whole Guild. It is this impression that we must dispel totally and utterly this afternoon. As we know, Ray Phillips is the elected representative of the Guild, and he and other members of the Executive (Chris Tyrrell, Nelson Bathurst and Sue Jackson) received over 2,400 votes in the Presidential election which shows how ridiculous the accusation is.

It is true, of course, that some students would prefer a more militant and aggressive policy towards the University. To some the reforms are so fundamental and so urgent that direct action may be necessary to achieve them. The majority of the Guild, however, reject this in favour of the policy of negotiation to which the Guild is firmly committed. If you want to change this you are welcome, but do it democratically by voting at the general meeting. If you don't want this changed come to the meeting and make certain that the militants don't cash in on your absence.

This is probably the most crucial meeting in the Guild's recent history, and will be the most important vote we will have to take for many years. For on that vote depends not only the whole question of student participation, but the future of the Guild's credibility in negotiations with the University. If this meeting does not give a vast vote of approval for the Executive the University will justifiably be able to claim that they do not represent the students and will have an excuse for doing absolutely nothing for which they are asked. This meeting must be quorate, and well over that, if it is to have any effect. Only a massive vote can prove to Dr. Hunter that we are serious about participation and will not be fobbed off with fatuous excuses.

This emergency edition—there will be a normal edition tomorrow with a full account of the meeting—was produced for Birmingham University Guild of Undergraduates by Pete Ullathorne.

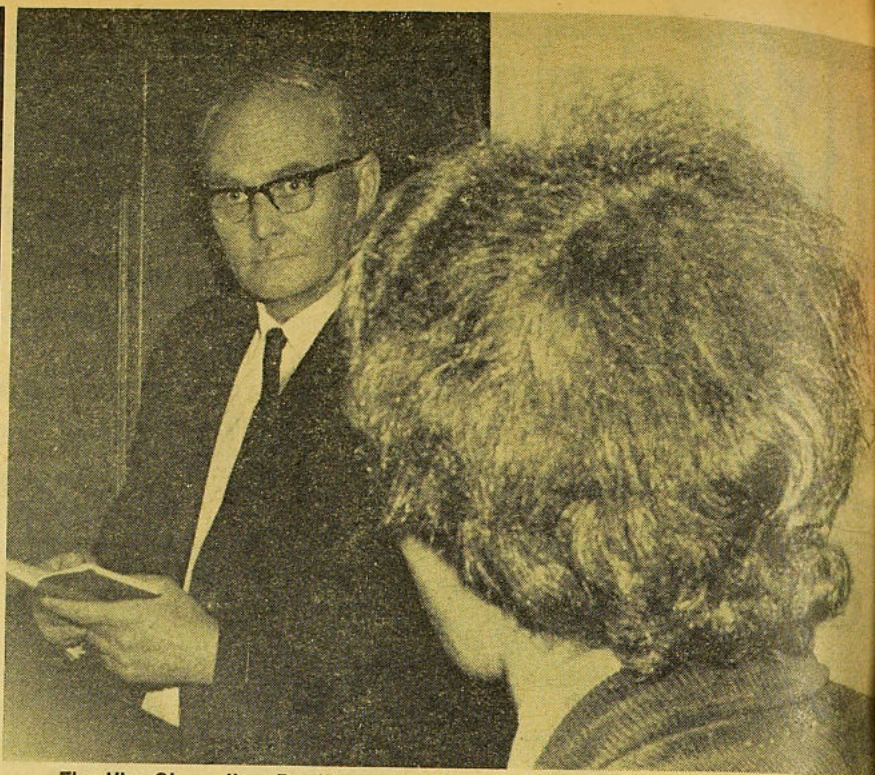
AD HOC WHO?

THE Ad Hoc Group for University Reform consists of staff and students of varied political opinions who want to see a more democratic university structure, with junior staff and students playing a part in running the academic community of which they are all part. It includes Socialists like Pete Gowan and Charles Wright, Radical Student Alliance members like Paul Hardman, and Conservatives like Tony Page.

They set up the committee to act as a ginger-group within the Guild,

and to get positive action on securing student representation and participation in decision-making bodies of the University. Starting with the issue of student control of the Refectory, they have widened the horizons of discussion to include nearly all aspects of University government. But it seems that they have now put the Guild Executive in a bad light from the University's point of view, and consequently the Executive have to prove to the Vice-Chancellor that students really do want the "Student Role" implemented.

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The Vice-Chancellor, Dr. Hunter, confronted at the Sit-In last Wednesday.

Photo: Pete Brown

CONFRONTATION

BY PETE ULLATHORNE & PAUL SOMMERS

WHAT IS STUDENT ROLE?

OVER one hundred students confronted the Vice-Chancellor last Wednesday following a sit-in outside the Senate Chamber while Senate was in session. Staff and students wanting to be allowed into the meeting which was discussing waiving fees for Czech students, came up against locked doors and University Police; notes addressed to the University Secretary and the Registrar were pushed through the door as the group sat down in the corridor outside discussing the issues of democracy, participation and secrecy in University government.

The sit-in was preceded by a meeting in the refectory which, after one speech on the subject of the university's handling of the Czech student problem, began to range widely over the main issues of difference with the university system. Charles Wright, one of the leaders of the Ad Hoc Committee for University Reform, objected to the way in which student leaders were treated by university authorities, and cited the treatment he received from Senate when he was Guild President.

The Vice-Chancellor for four weeks but had already made several attempts at improving communications.

A general discussion followed which underlined the breakdown in communications between administration and students. The questions of the locked doors and the treatment of the Guild Executive at the Senate meeting were again raised without satisfactory answers being given. Students expressed scepticism at the remarks of the staff, and the V.C. seemed mystified by the dissatisfaction shown by his audience. Charles Wright, in a speech that was bitter in tone and was loudly applauded by the students present, drew upon his frustrating experiences as Guild President to prove that good inten-

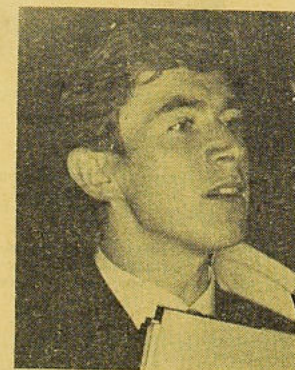
Locked doors

When Ray Phillips and other Executive members left to attend Senate, a hundred people got up and followed them to the Senate Chamber. Although Phillips and Executive were allowed in, the others were confronted by security police and locked doors.

However, after Phillips walked out of Senate in disgust he addressed the meeting on why he had left the chamber. They all then filed downstairs and sat outside the Vice-Chancellor's office, while Ray Phillips spoke to him inside. Eventually the Vice-Chancellor came out and spoke to the crowd; he asked who the staff and students present purported to represent, and the unanimous reply was "Ourselves." In turn the V.C. was accused of maintaining excessive secrecy in University administration. Voices became raised in the ensuing argument, as grievances were shouted at the V.C. The confrontation ended when Dr. Hunter agreed to attend a meeting in the Union on Friday bringing Senate Executive with him.

Face to face

Staff and students packed the Council Chamber for the meeting, which began with an address by the V.C., who asserted that he had intended to meet the students in the near future and that the sit-in had only served to advance the date. He repeated the offer for three of the student representatives on the "Student Role" working party to attend tomorrow's Council meeting (but not to participate in the discussion) and stressed that he had only been



Ray Phillips

tions on the part of the Vice-Chancellor did not mean that any progress would be made. He emphasised that it was not communication that was the issue, but specific grievances and anomalies such as Staff House, the Refectory and the Disciplinary Committee.

When the V.C. left at six o'clock, there remained a sense of frustration and division between the administration and the students. After the departure, however, some hundred and fifty staff and students remained behind, and with the help of Richard Hoggart the discussion proved far more productive in ideas than the preceding sixty minutes.

THE "Student Role" report, which is now reaching the climax of its negotiation, was compiled by a commission under the chairmanship of Tony Klug, President 1966-67. It sets out in detail the minimum amount of representation necessary for beginning student participation and democratising the University. The timetable of its progress is traced by these extracts from the minutes of Guild Council:

October 25th, 1966: Guild Council appointed an ad hoc committee to investigate and report on the situation with regard to representation on University committees.

May 9th, 1967: First draft report submitted to Guild Council, with request for suggestions.

May 16th, 1967: Appeal for suggestions.

June 13th, 1967: Decision to defer final report until the beginning of 1967-68 session.

December 5th, 1967: Final report, entitled "Student Role", presented to Guild Council and approved for onward transmission to the University authorities subject to the revision of the Halls of Residence section.

January 23rd, 1968: Halls of Residence section approved for inclusion in final report.

February 6th, 1968: Reported that copies of the report had been sent to Vice-Chancellor and that the initial reaction had been favourable.

February 20th, 1968: Reported that 700 copies of the report had been sent to the Registrar for distribution to the various committees of the Senate, etc.

March 19th, 1968: Reported that the President and Guild Secretary were to attend the Senate meeting on March 20th, 1968, for the discussion on "The Student Role".

May 7th, 1968: Reported that the document had been considered by the Senate quite favourably and that the next step was the University Council.

June 18th, 1968: Reported that "round table" discussion would take place between Guild representatives and members of the University Council on June 24th, 1968.

July 2nd, 1968: Reported that discussions with the University Council were proceeding favourably. University Council offered a further meeting in July, 1968, but Guild representatives could not attend and the next meeting took place on Monday, September 16th, 1968.

A further meeting of the working party took place yesterday.