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BOOK REVIEWS

POWER AND CONFLICT IN THE UNIVERSITY

J. VICTOR BALDRIDGE

Wiley, New York, 1971, \$8.35.

REBELLION IN THE UNIVERSITY

SEYMOUR MARTIN LIPSET

Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1972. £2.75.

IN the wake of the world-wide student dissent of the late 1960s, a veritable flood of books, articles and commentaries have been published. These two books represent divergent views of the causes of conflict in the university.

Baldrige argues that the bureaucratic (formal organisation) and collegial (community of scholars) models for understanding decision-making in the modern university are inadequate. He proposes a third the "political model". In the political university, conflict is viewed as normal, the social structure is fractured by subcultures and divergent interest groups and the view of decision-making is one of negotiation, bargaining and political influence groups. According to Baldrige interest groups—external as well as internal—bring pressure on the decision-makers whose policies are formed as a result of conflict, negotiation and compromise. Having outlined his theoretical model of university governance, Baldrige uses a case study of New York University to illustrate his claims.

Another sociologist, Seymour Lipset differs markedly from Baldrige's interpretation of university decision-making. His basic premise is that "the primary function of the university is scholarship, not politics or therapy" (p. 235). He argues that the often used demand for "relevance" is a political, not a scholarly demand. He quotes Chomsky who states that the university "is highly decentralised and rather loose in its structure of decision-making and administration, hence fairly responsive to the wishes of its members". Chomsky suggests that much about the university which radical students dislike "results not from trustee (i.e. Senate) control, not from defense contracts, not from administrative decisions, but from the relatively free choices of faculty and students" (pp 214-215).

Whatever one's personal views of the causes of conflict in the universities around the world during the 1960s both these books make many interesting points. The changing staff responsibilities

in the balance between teaching and research, the growing numbers of students who are removed from the job market for as long as a third or even half of their lifetime, and the influence of social issues such as the Vietnam War on the university campus are just three of the many factors which are discussed as contributing to student dissent in the university.

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A STRATEGY FOR EDUCATION

HERMAN T. EPSTEIN

Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1970. \$6.50.

IN 1967 Dr. Herman T. Epstein of Brandeis University used an unusual strategy in a course he offered to a group of twenty-five mostly first-year non-science students of mixed ability, all taking a general biology course. The method he used in the course may be described as follows. Initially the students are presented with a research paper, with no prior preparation or explanation. They are requested to read the paper, to attempt to understand what the scientist who wrote the paper had thought and done, and to ask the instructor at the next class meeting about terms and procedures not understood. The class meetings are in the form of discussions. Students ask the instructor questions of fact and method, and the instructor encourages other students to answer and to inquire into the thought processes of the author of the research paper. After one or two periods of preparatory study and discussion of a paper, most students have grasped its fundamentals although naturally not its full details or implications. They are then presented with another research paper, which concerns research logically consequent to the work done in the previous paper. This procedure of reading and discussing research papers is continued for about fifteen sessions, with six to ten papers being covered.

When using this method, the coherent set of research papers must be in an area in which the instructor has had research experience. The instructor can then explain with confidence many of the fine points that often trouble students but which by necessity are slurred over in conventional presentations. Also, the instructor necessarily is vitally interested in the subject, and preparation time is negligible.

In the few years that followed the initial course, this method was extensively tested in biology at Brandeis by Epstein and many others, and used at other universities and in subjects such as philosophy and economics. It has also been used for students majoring in the subject of the course, for adult education, and for teaching in institutions where research is not stressed. *A Strategy for Education* is Epstein's attempt to convey his understanding of

the method he pioneered, "so that those who try the method elsewhere can know what is really involved".

Quite interesting are four features found essential to the success of the method: the class must be composed mainly of students just entering the university; the focus must be on the actual work done by the researchers, not on the informational content of their work; the class must be conducted almost entirely through student questioning; and there must be no pressure exerted on the students to work or even to participate. Epstein also discusses detailed tactics for instructors. When the method has been properly used, its success has been phenomenal. About 80-90% of the students become vitally interested in understanding the papers, and incidentally learn thoroughly a large amount of factual material in pursuance of this aim. Conventional teaching is stood on its head. Instead of first learning "facts" so that later principles may be understood as correlating them, the activities of scientists are the main object of understanding; the student's desire to understand these activities motivates the learning of the necessary background facts and organising principles in a highly efficient manner. This observation has been found to hold even when a student is uninterested in the particular subject matter of the papers. (The reviewer can vouch for many of the statements made in the book, as a result of a highly successful course in physics which he ran in 1973.)

Dr. Epstein is not hesitant in drawing general conclusions about education based on his experiences. As he notes, "There are far-reaching implications of the demonstrated ability of first-year non-science students to study published research materials." For anyone sincerely interested in education, as distinguished from teaching, training, or "schooling", reading *A Strategy for Education* is an exciting and stimulating experience.

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