us to live differently for quite different and still unstated reasons. This tactic has been successful in getting rigid environmental laws passed, and has succeeded in stalling many measures for getting more energy. But, as the congressional vote on the Alaska pipeline showed, environmentalists cannot get us to change our life-styles without really convincing us that the changes are desirable or necessary. Unless this happens, we'll stick with Nixon.

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The University Department

I am sure that most department chair(wo)men were not indifferent as they read "Departments and disciplines: Stasis and change" (30 Nov. 1973, p. 895) by Robert Straus. He presents a dilemma in that any field of knowledge judged to be of value to society and of interest to scholars and students requires both resources (personnel, equipment, space, and money) proportional to its importance and an organized system of authority and responsibility (a department) to assure that these resources are applied efficiently. The dilemma stems from the fact that no sooner have such resources been allocated than obsolescence sets in because both the goals and the means by which they should be reached have changed. The French have expressed this in their ancient proverb, *Il faut chercher pour trouver, mais pas pour trouver ce qu'on cherche* (One must seek to find, but not to find that for which one seeks).

Nevertheless, I don't perceive the situation to be as serious as Straus suggests. Every department chairman should heed Sir Eric Ashby's advice (*1*) that academic administration is a *necessary evil*, but with the emphasis upon the qualifier. As our new medical school at the University of California, San Diego, has moved through its adolescence, I have been delighted by the emergence of an explicit committee structure—"Ad Hocracies" in the sense of Toffler and Braunwald (*2*)—as a means, not only of curtailing the power of departments, but also of dealing with "academic future shock."

These committees control important interdisciplinary courses, research, and service functions. Most have a half-life of only 2 to 3 years, although I am sure that some will evolve into groups (perhaps institutes) as large and conservative as any department. They also can serve effectively as buffers to protect the more abstract functions of the university from intense social concerns (as, for example, the Jet Propulsion Laboratory at the California Institute of Technology and the Applied Physics Laboratory at Johns Hopkins University).

The best way to handle most dilemmas is to learn to live with them, and I offer the following advice for those who may wish to add it to their "academic jungle survival kit."

1) Large and multifaceted departments are much more adaptable than small ones, as it is easier both to prune them and to graft on to them. The best way to Balkanize (or Middle-Easternize) a university is to create a series of small departments, each of which may serve as little more than a primping platform for some academic prima donna.

2) Periodic (every 5 to 7 years) institutional (and, perhaps, public) review of both departments and their leadership is essential as insurance against senescence.

Finally, I believe Straus exaggerates the impact of society at large on the university. Society has both the right and the responsibility to help define both the long-range goals and the more immediate objectives of its universities. However, it should resist the temptation to "legislate" new departments into existence or to delete old ones. Universities have every right to continue to resist this kind of irresponsible tampering.

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Straus describes university departments as political units and suggests change. Why not accept the reality of this situation and profit from it?

When Woodrow Wilson was asked where he had learned politics, he replied that the campus had been his best school. The situation is no different today. The art and science of politics is displayed at all colleges and universities; the tragedy is that students are barred from observing that display and learning from it.

In Wilson's time, the amount of politics at the elementary and high-school level was minimal. Teachers were kept busy in the classroom and had little time to seek power individually or collectively. The institutions were operated on a lord-and-master basis, with almost total authority in the hands of the superintendent or the principal. Currently, teachers are banding together, and dictatorship of the chief administrator is becoming a rarity.

Who teaches and what is taught at the elementary and high-school level is hardly ever controlled by the teachers. Final authority rests with the elected boards of education, who, in practically all cases, relinquish their authority to the hired chief executive officer. Teacher committees operate in the realms of curriculum and personnel, but, alas, the maneuvers and discussions are not for students.

At most colleges and universities, the faculty selects personnel and determines curriculum, but the process of selection and decision—as political as any in a state legislature—is closed to students. Even a cursory view of methods would be illuminating to the neophyte, as well as instructive to the parents who pay the bills.

The young man or woman who has gone through the obstacle course of acquiring a Ph.D. applies to the head of a department for a position. A pleasant conversation ensues, while the department chairman fingers the references, college transcripts, and notations of other members of the department. The latter may be called in for more questioning of the aspiring professor. If a candidate is adroit in one-to-one or one-to-several situations, he may get the job, even though he is a stumblebum before a class or really hates teaching.

Departments seek to fill their rosters with Ph.D.'s from prestigious institutions who have research programs or scholarly publications under way. These become minor considerations when the candidate is warmly recommended by a friend of the department head. The form of patronage is thus similar to that in local, state, and federal governments.

Once employed, the college teacher has no real supervisor. Given the task

of imparting information, inspiring, guiding, and tutoring, he need not do any of these. He is supposed to serve students, but anyone who has been to college classrooms knows that the service can be minimal. Not a single person from the department or administration comes to visit any teacher. The only indication of the quality of his work can be found in offhand remarks by students. Political officeholders also continue in their employment without much discipline. Only a change in administration affects them.

If a student protests any aspect of faculty service and decides to go through channels, he generally wastes his time; stone walls are met almost everywhere. The department chairman protects his charges unless adverse criticism is plentiful and the chairman feels the heat; the dean supports the chairman, and the president supports the dean. Faculty and administration have learned to form a united front through the incessant practice of politics.

College faculty at almost every school are forever concerned with reducing what they call their "load." The word is well chosen, but the term simply means the number of hours per week of classroom instruction. Administrators, too, seek reduced working hours and strive for long vacations, short days, and many assistants. Political action is used by both groups to attain their end. Faculty load reduction is awarded to the politically powerful—the researchers and writers. Those who are voted the best teachers by students or peers are awarded a plaque or a few dollars.

As in all legislative bodies, faculty committees are subject to pressures, and each of their deliberations is a result of compromise. Such important affairs as votes of confidence for administrators and revision of the curriculum are decided politically. An energetic faculty member can collect all others with real or imagined grievances and form a formidable group to oppose an administrator. The latter, on the other hand, must not only choose the proper time for his assessment by the faculty, but also must pay his respects to the political powers among the teachers. The curriculum is molded in a similar way, rather than in response to the needs of students. In some schools, a gentleman's agreement exists whereby departments approve each other's offerings wtihout question. In any event, departmental sovereignty is always very strong.

The establishment of the curriculum is a simple and political process. Whatever its origin—student, faculty member, or department chairman—a course is described in vague terms to a curriculum committee where hardly anyone, except the sponsor, is interested. The entire faculty then votes its approval. Occasionally a question or two may be asked by the faculty troublemakers, but little attention is paid to the boat rockers unless morale is low.

Faculty members who needle and prod are not the ones who are catapulted into administration posts. When newspapers announce that Professor X is appointed president of Y college, it is almost certain that Professor X has shown great political skill in faculty committees. Either he works out compromises between the opposing positions exceptionally well or he has acquired a coterie of supporters by virtue of his personal magnetism. He does not have to show any characteristic of a university president to be chosen; all he must do is show his acumen in academic politics. It is a realm replete with railroading, logrolling, pork-barreling, and sandbagging.

Political science and sociology departments have veritably neglected the study of academic maneuverings for individual and departmental power. More important, students have been barred from observing the process or participating in it. Academic politics could serve as a laboratory for developing future Woodrow Wilsons. Why not offer the course for credit?

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I deeply appreciate the many letters that I have received personally in response to my article. Most of these included extensive ideas or were accompanied by published materials that have substantially amplified my own perceptions.

The letter from Stokes provides an encouraging report of his own experiences, but I must take exception to his last paragraph simply because the alleged exaggerations to which he refers imply a position that I don't recognize in my own writing.

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