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Collective Bargaining on Campus

Elections for the selection of a bargaining representative have occurred on a number of campuses, and about 10 percent of faculty members, nationally, now seem to be represented by a bargaining group. Additional elections are certain to be held in the near future. Many of these elections are likely to be contested closely, if three concluded recently are reliable indicators: the University of Rhode Island (293 faculty members voted for the American Association of University Professors to represent them; 289 voted against a representative); Fordham University (no representative, 236; AAUP, 222); and Manhattan College (no representative, 130; AAUP, 121).

It is difficult to anticipate the impact of collective bargaining on a university campus. Clearer definitions of procedures are likely to emerge with our growing experience during the next few years, but evaluation of the long-term effect is much less clear. Certainly the industrial union, which has been so markedly successful in bettering the conditions of its members, does not constitute a useful model. Reduced to simplest terms, management and labor, in the industrial model, negotiate for a favorable share of the profits in their joint production, as well as for an equitable grievance procedure. But it is not clear on a university campus what is "profit" and how it is to be shared. In fact, it is not even clear what the academic analogs to "management" and "labor" would be. For example, in campus contracts negotiated so far, department chairmen are sometimes categorized as management, sometimes as labor.

In a state university the question becomes even more clouded. Does the bargaining team for the faculty negotiate with the university administration, with the state board of higher education, with the state comptroller, with the state legislature, or with all of them?

If an industrial model is not appropriate, the model of the public employees' union is only slightly more so. Of course the lack of a clear preexisting pattern that could be emulated does not mean that there is no place for collective bargaining on the campus. It does imply that a different scenario must be envisaged and a new role must be created for the collective bargaining team that is to represent the faculty.

Should negotiations be limited to salaries and fringe benefits which usually seem to be the first goals of collective bargaining on campus? Salaries and benefits infringe upon questions of tenure, promotion, reappointment, teaching loads, class schedules, parking, and a host of other issues. If these matters are to be subject to negotiation, in whole or in part, what then will be the role of traditional faculty governance? Are the current responsibilities of the department personnel committees, college promotions and appointment committees, and university senates to be shared with, or relinquished to, the faculty bargaining agent?

To put the question differently, will we replace the traditional collegial decision-making on campus, flawed though it is, with a series of negotiations between adversary groups? Or will campuses develop two parallel and competing systems of governance, and, if so, how are powers and responsibilities to be distributed between them?

The legitimate faculty grievances that arise on campuses from time to time must be adjudicated, and few people would suggest that our present machinery for resolving such grievances has been perfected. The more inclusive, and more important, question we must debate is whether we will make our universities better institutions of higher education by bringing onto our campuses from the larger community the machinery of collective bargaining, with all of its accouterments. Will we be exploiting conflicts to increase divisiveness on campus, or will we be negotiating cooperatively to improve the academic community? Bluntly put, on balance, will collective bargaining on campus be constructive and creative or destructive and demoralizing?—ARNOLD B. GROBMAN, *Office of the Dean, Rutgers College, New Brunswick, New Jersey 08903*