

PROFESSOR A. OLIVER - ENGINEERING 1947

Arrived 1947.

Brief account of earlier history.

Prof. McKay left 1913? Engineering major in B.Sc.

Prof. Burn appointed 1919. Built up Engineering School over the years.

2. Came with intention of getting master's degree. Then intended to go "back to the bush" but Burn said "No don't do that, I'm going to retire in a few years and I'd like you to get the job".

Some personal ill-feeling about the two professors of Engineering - towards Newstead and Oliver.

"Took Chair in 1956 and got into a bit of a panic about how a small school could compete with bigger ones ... Burn had been doing it successfully for 30 years. I went round industry asking what they wanted - then went round again asking WHO ARE YOU GOING TO PROMOTE - and got quite different answers. PEOPLE WHO CAN FORMULATE PROBLEMS - this is what industry wants. Instituted procedures where students worked in pairs on the machines themselves - building up what he calls an ENGINEERING ATTITUDE. More time in laboratory and design work than most universities, fewer lectures. "A real world situation". Details. Building responsibility among the students. Students call each other "MR" for same reason.

Experiments are designed to demonstrate a situation. Details of design of experiments; with some rough data, redundant data, etc, etc "you've got to make some sort of effort to adjust the data" - As in "real world".

Diplomates and graduates. Very much more descriptive stuff for Diplomates.

230 Staff. "Always been short" - difficulties with breadth of ^{Coverage} ~~courage~~.

But with this "engineering attitudes" aim it doesn't matter so much what you teach as how you teach it.

More difficulty with post-graduates because of staff shortage.

265 1964 was peak year for Asian students. Then Soekarno refused to let any more Indonesian students come. About half of 75 intake were Asians in 1964.

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Engineers in very short supply throughout the world at present.

" of Tasmanians" in Hook of Holland. Jobs in Tasmania fairly short at present.

335 Industry has not tried to influence the shape of the course.

"Our best people" in jobs are the ones who can work out a lot quickly -not necessarily stacked with information.

11 on staff at present: including a Jew, a Greek, a Chilean, a Dutchman ...

1950s Oliver had 28 contact hours; now down to 12 and "I hardly know what to do in my spare time".

Only one member of staff without higher degree.

420 How hard to get what you have wanted for this Faculty?"

"We've never been held up ... with this "engineering attitude" philosophy is cheap commercial stuff or stuff we've built ourselves - e.g. 5 wind-tunnels, 4 of them we've built ourselves.

Has not felt the need to get involved in univ. politics in order to achieve things. Became Chairman of Professorial Board only 3 years when he had enough time from teaching duties.

Was "annoyed" by university politics earlier on "when I allowed those things to annoy me" - but not much disturbed by Royal Commission and Orr case; though he knew a lot about Orr that never came out in the papers. "There was a pre-hearing of the case". Knew Ted Tanner very well. (Details). "I introduced Ted to Sidney Orr ... he designed Sid's house ... he was doing a degree ... Sid told him he wouldn't pass Philosophy unless he painted his house". There was a lot of that sort of feeling about Orr." "I saw Orr physically strike his lecturer

500 MILANOV because of not teaching Philosophy I the way he wanted it." Milanov's evidence in court; Not anti-Orr.

530 Oliver a member of the Staff Association executive at the time. Orr "intellectually scurrilous". "Had turned Suzanne Kemp against her father".

550 The black ban on the University was "not justice".

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Baker (Chancellor) told Oliver that Orr came into the Council room, threw his resignation on the table, had his lawyer with him, who said "of course it can't stop there". How else could you handle this except to say "instantaneous dismissal and no resignation". The University had to react hard.

Orr was such a con-man; he would have dreamed up support whatever ..."

575 The T.C.A.E. mid 1970s affair did not affect him at all. What about Surveying? When the TCAE set it up it was "a political dodge to get more money to tech. colleges". O. was in favour of this.

"TCAE tried to compete with us". Lower quality intake than us".

There had been a view 30 years earlier that Diplomates were more immediately useful than university graduates. Anecdote about a new Tas. graduate at Hamersley (very gratifying). 6 months after graduation running the whole of the locomotives at Hamersley.

655 Other areas of excellence in the University: geology, radio astronomy, botany, agricultural science - some world-renowned staff in these areas.

Peter Doe and Bob Menary on heat mass transfer in biological material (???) (also hop business) Details.

685 Solving problems in timber panelling for Forestry. "We get a lot of enquiries from industry".

The implications of this kind of work - e.g. in this case, taking "young trees" and making beautiful wood panelling from them.

Answer: The Forestry Dept. are professionals ... "I'm a professional and I trust professionals".

"This is a good university. Advantages in smallness. "Cross-work" such as Doe and Menary are doing.

060 Biographical details. Born on farm at McLaren Vale, S.A. Graduated Adelaide 1942. Full-time B.E. and 40-hour week. Early responsibility - 500 men at age 22.

No regrets about moving into academic area. Always enjoyed teaching. "No regrets except the money - money always a bit light on in a university".

THE END