

APRIL 1982

DR JOHN POLYA 1946 - 1979

b. Hungary. Educated Switzerland.
Scholarship at Imperial College London.
Arrived Australia just before outbreak of World War II.
An enemy alien, after Hungary entered war.

100 Naturalised. Worked for Defence Research Laboratories. Got job in Tasmanian University "after a bit of unpleasantness" owing to "political problems" - i.e. other candidates who were favourites of various powerful people.
Another fight then broke out - Harold Solomon, member of Council, "most important function to protect Council against staff". Exchange of comments in paper - Solomon attacking Polya, also Hans Buchdahl, for not having fought for Australia in W.W.II.
Polya was Hobart correspondent for Focus (Melb.)

165 "Plenty of fights, plenty of fights".
185 Fight with "the great Professor Pitman".
205 "By and large the professors [1947] were not worth a cracker". Pitman excepted.
Professor Macaulay the first was also a distinguished academic. But others were got on the cheap.

235 Beginnings of Chemistry Dept. [an idiosyncratic account]. The brothers Macleod - one appointed, the other came! Early appointments - low or no academic qualifications.

285 Students complaining to Council about no lectures. Professor Kurth.

365 Sir John Morris "we always fought ... his family called me a murderer ... but I always respected and admired him". He was a Renaissance man, very learned, elegance of behaviour ... a very good king ... Whitlam was of this kind - natural leaders - they can't stand other people who won't let them lead.
He started a policy of importing new people, young people, with higher degrees.
Problem of young ill-paid people and older less qualified people.

430 A version of the economic difficulties facing Sir John Morris.
445 An account of Professor Hytten's history.

DR JOHN POLYA (contd.)

475 A scandal connected with the Hobart bridge. Hytten a Commissioner.
 495 Undesirability of a full-time V-C.
 510 Morris Miller - "a dear man and a great man ... "a scholar and a gentleman".
 550 "Sir John [Morris] mucked up the matriculation and pasted over the censure in the Minute Book" - an altercation / Sir John and the professors.

End side 1

Sir John Morris and university appointments.
 " " " W.E.A. (Adult Ed.)
 " " " appointment of S.S. Orr
 020 Assessment of Orr - "terrible faults and great virtues as well".
 Orr's thesis.
 Previous history of stirring staff at St. Andrew's (Scotland). Orr described himself as an Idealist.
 055 The two best candidates put themselves down as Logical Positivists.
 065 Enquiry by Council member at a party about Logical Positivism - is it good or bad?
 Orr was the sort of person who could not leave well alone.
 100 Orr wrote "a magnificent article" for The Mercury and "you can't do this sort of thing in Tasmania".
 110 Cosgrove and the gangsters in his government - would fit beautifully into some of Boccaccio's Tales - he was a cardottieri
 125 The Royal Commission.
 Reg Wright "took our case first, then took the Council's". "Here it was perfectly normal".
 Result "on the whole a big smack for Council - unfortunately none of them to be sacked".
 Many people destroyed.
 170 During the R.C. and a couple of months afterwards some of the University's money was spent hiring private detectives tagging us - George Wilson, MacRae, Orr, himself.

DR JOHN POLYA (contd.)

Damage to his car.

Log dropped from roof by friend of Cosgrove.

Nearly run off road.

Explosives thrown at door.

Report sent to Deputy Police Commissioner - who died almost immediately.

R.C. archbishop holds report given him by Polya about these incidents.

210 There were also 2 political murders at the time. Details.

235 Question in Matric Chemistry paper set by Polya indicative of his defiant [and amusing] attitude to the Establishment.

Curious anecdote involving Polya and the V-C (Hytten). "The story of how I was not sacked".

P. brought out a report for his colleagues comparing members of staff - those on Council side, neutral, and those against, with accounts of what happened to them in terms of promotion. [P. still has copies - has agreed to put in Archives].

Article in Journal of Science.

The effect on the Chemistry Dept of Polya's unpopularity with the Establishment.

Smashing of his equipment, destruction of his books in 1964. Other victims.

re Gordon Newstead - "Gordon, give them my head". So he did. And got his Chair.

"The famous case of Mick Townsley" and the Chair of Political Science. The Chancellor wanted to give him the History Chair. He couldn't; and the Pol. Sci. Chair was set up in ten minutes!

Tasmania not worse than other places, merely smaller.

** A manifesto.

"Science was my third choice". 1) poet 2) classicist.

"I owe much more to my reliable enemies than to some of my untrustworthy friends".