

Book Reviews

Report on Some Problems of Personnel in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. A Special Committee Appointed by the President of Harvard University. Harvard University Press, 1939. 165p. \$1.50.

THE DISMISSAL from Harvard, in the spring of 1937, of Messrs. Walsh and Sweezy, two popular economics instructors, set off the train of events which resulted in the report under review. These terminations of appointment prompted 131 of the younger Harvard faculty to address a memorandum of misgiving to nine professors who in turn recommended to President Conant that the university's action be investigated by a faculty committee and that, further, a report on the larger questions relating to the advancement of younger men on the faculty be considered. The present item is a report on the second of the two objectives.

The problem underlying the situation investigated is a dilemma confronting every private institution of higher education and, in some degree, most publicly supported institutions. One horn is the static or declining income from investments; the other, increasing enrolment. The first horn calls for a reduction of expenditures; the second, for an increase in teaching personnel. One way to reduce expenditures is to replace professorial vacancies with instructors. Thus, money for the good job, the secure job, filters down to the level of unattractive jobs with no security at all. It is easy to see how such circumstances produce, presently, the need for an investigation like this. It is also apparent that there can be no satisfactory solution in the idiom of

the past when an expanding university economy could make room in the upper brackets for promising young men. The solution proposed is nothing more than a rapid and enforced turnover in the lower ranks of the faculty. This solution recognizes the accidental practice prevalent at many universities of casual, hand-to-mouth re-employment from year to year of lower rank teachers, resulting eventually in the acknowledgment by the university of "a moral obligation to retain for life the man whom they have never at any point explicitly and affirmatively chosen for permanent rank. The time for the crucial decision has been postponed until it is no longer a free decision, the teacher having acquired a cumulative expectation, and the university a cumulative commitment."

The report divides itself into four major parts: rank, tenure, and salary; criteria of selection; administration and procedure; extramural relations. The discussion and conclusions are, since this is a report of a faculty committee of Harvard University, stated in local terms. It is possible, however, to glean certain general truths applicable to any institution.

The discussion of tenure is one of the portions of general interest and utility. The value of tenure is essentially the value of security. Security confers freedom of thought on the teacher and the research worker, and insures safety for men whose public statements from the lecture platform or in print make them peculiarly open to attacks by outside groups. Security makes attractive a career whose low income prevents the storing up of reserves against old age and accident, substituting the guarantee of modest

but continuous income. Finally, security "enables a scholar . . . to devote himself single-mindedly to the advancement of knowledge unharassed by one of the major anxieties of life."

Library workers may well ponder this analysis of the value of tenure in connection with their own jobs. While the librarian apparently does not need the safeguard of tenure for freedom of thought, since his activities occur within the framework of institutional policy, it should be observed that, as he assumes broader interests and responsibilities of professional and community nature, he moves increasingly into the area of conflict with outside groups. The problem of censorship in libraries is an instance of such an area of conflict. If the library profession draws to itself people of broad interests and personal capacity, it must in time face this problem of conflict which has always confronted the scholar. As for attractiveness of job and security to work wholeheartedly at the job, the librarian is in a situation no different from that of the scholar.

Throughout, often by implication, the report recognizes the positive need for administration as an activity necessary in large and complex operations. "Regrettable as it may be to those who prefer the traditional spirit of informality. . . . In a complex situation, informality gives rise to misunderstanding, conflict, irresponsibility, and inefficiency."

The report is an admirable case study of faculty organization, its problems, and certain solutions therefor. The course of scholarly advancement is formally simple, going as it does from the undergraduate by degrees to the top professor. This formal simplicity, however, is attended by many real complications produced by en-

rolments, the tradition of tenure, academic freedom, the difficulty of defining and applying criteria for advancement, and the problem of securing adequate self administration by men whose primary concern and thought lies along wholly different lines.—*Donald Coney, University of Texas, Austin.*

Administrative Ability; Its Discovery and Development. Walter Van Dyke Bingham. Society for Personnel Administration, P.O. Box 266, Washington, 1939. 17p. \$.25. (Pamphlet No. 1)

IN THE equipment of university librarians emphasis has so often, even very recently, been placed on academic education, on the scholarly mind, that there seems to be some danger of forgetting, as is sometimes done in reference to other university administrative positions, that administrative ability is something else again and must be sought out, cultivated, and used in certain places where it is perhaps entitled to be considered before scholarship, at least productive scholarship. It is to be expected that university librarians, who generally stress the administrative character of their work, might have contributed some ideas, some practice in their organizations for the development of this particular ability, but such are not readily found and therefore we are constrained to read general treatises and study how they may be applied to our particular organizations. Colonel Bingham's little pamphlet is so vigorous, so specific, so pertinent even to libraries that I have already quoted from it rather extensively in my recent paper on "The Training of University Librarians."¹ I

¹ *College and Research Libraries* 1:22-29, Dec. 1939.