LE JEU EST FINI; LA GUERRE COMMENCE
(or
Playin' by the Rules Ain't
Hardly No Fun Anymore)

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Prologue

The candor and caution of Professor Pryluck's essay on "Playing by the Rules" are remarkable, and his conclusion is worthy of respect:

> I guess the whole point of my presentation is that we have to learn to live by the traditional rules. As well as I understand them, the rules are that quality counts and professional activity should be relevant to one's academic assignment.

Yet, in this year of our Lord 1978, is the conclusion worthy of approbation? Professor Pryluck hesitates, sensing perhaps that wider discussion might render it suspect:

> There is more to the story than this. What I have been describing is what I understand to be the dynamics of a system that has been operating in good faith and mutual respect. But it must be recognized that any question that touches on the relationship between departments and deans also touches on questions of university governance.

How restrictive is Professor Pryluck's premise of "good faith and mutual respect"? Extraordinarily so, I think. I shall, therefore, begin where Professor Pryluck ends, for I am convinced that forces are at work within higher education rendering "good faith and mutual respect" atypical. We can no longer play by the rules of the game, for the game has ended. War has begun (open war in some places, attrition in others), a total war that will change the face of higher education beyond recognition.

Let me put the argument in perspective.

Perspective

Our century has witnessed a double revolution in the structure and management of American industry.

The first step occurred when Henry Ford solved, once and for all time, the strategic problem of mass production. By introducing the assembly line, Ford eliminated the need for skilled workers. Thereafter the problem of how to replicate items in quantity at

lowest cost was tactically solvable, for the means of channeling the efforts of disposable, replaceable workers had been found.

The second step occurred when Alfred P. Sloan (of General Motors) wedded Ford's disposable work force with the disposable product, thereby solving, once and for all time, the strategic problem of mass marketing. Thereafter products were designed not only to meet present demand, but to obsolesce, creating future demand for their replacement. Sustained product excellence could not sustain demand; hence adequacy of performance in the short-run, coupled with low-cost replacement in the long-run, became the goal of product design.

The ideas of Ford and Sloan reshaped the morphology of the industrial world. Whereas industry had once sought whatever profit was compatible with maximum excellence of product, it now sought whatever performance was compatible with maximum profit. The old game, and its rules, disappeared. By means of disposable products, created by disposable means of production, America learned to sustain the highest average level of mass consumption in the world.

Thesis

Given perspective, the premise of my argument is simply put:

> We are witnessing the industrialization of higher education.

The industrial model of management, and managerial success, is settling irretrievably upon the academic world, warping its financial policies, its administrative institutions, its sociology, and its raison d'être. The rules of collegial decision making, acknowledging the permanent value of students, faculty, and liberal knowledge, no longer reflect the forces at work. For our universities are increasingly operating as institutions by which to reap maximum profits from providing disposable students with disposable knowledge imparted by disposable faculty.

Evidence (general)

I need not wax statistical before this audience in support of the thesis: the evidence is abundant and recognized. Let two examples suffice as reminders:

Some of us, for a while yet, may elect to play by the rules of the game in splendid pockets of isolation, hoping that this, too, will pass. But it won't. The game is over for

many and will soon be over for all. Only the war will go on for those with eyes to see, ears to hear, common sense and courage.

1. We no longer live in a society dominated by a military-industrial complex, but rather by a military-educational-industrial complex. The flow of administrative personnel between government, industry, and the academic world is accelerating, for the techniques of management are no longer unique to each, but common to all. Higher education has become part of the controlling establishment, not (as many predicted) because our grants and military contracts drew us in, but simply because higher education has become by design big business!

Whatever else it may be, the academic world is a conduit for big money. Boston University is not atypical: with an operating budget exceeding $150,000,000, it has managed within the past 6-7 years to put nearly $50,000,000 into capital reserves (an awesome 'profit margin' for a 'non-profit' institution in a supposedly beleaguered economy).

2. Collegiality has disappeared, or is under attack, in every university with which I am familiar:

[a] Departmental chairs are being replaced in many schools by program directors – administrators appointed with neither faculty ties nor consent. Others, although retaining their titles, are finding their traditional responsibilities usurped by deans or other administrators (budget preparation and approval, for example, or hiring and promotion of faculty, structuring of departmental courses and teaching schedules, etc.).

[b] No longer are deans appointed routinely from the ranks of faculty and chairs of departments, much less with their consent. Often they are appointed from without the academic world, having neither academic experience nor credentials (particularly in the professional schools, including schools of communication).

[c] Presidents, and other senior supervisors of academic programs, and not infrequently appointed with neither academic experience nor credentials, and without the consent of deans, chairman, or faculty. Often their predominant personal and public interests are political, and

> they openly flaunt the university as a means of entrance or exit from political life.

Evidence (particular)

The truth of the premise is manifest most clearly, however, in the emerging practice of university administrators with respect to the promotion and tenure of faculty members.

Once upon a time, rumour has it, universities "played by the rules" (Professor Pryluck's phrase). The game was simple; the rules were sanctioned by consent and precedent in accordance with the 1940 Statement of the American Association of University Professors. In summary,

> Faculty members were appointed for a probationary period, during which time their performance and promise could be ascertained.
>
> At the end of the probationary period, they were evaluated by his peers and supervisors on the merit of their performance and promise.
>
> If their level of achievement was high, they were rewarded by promotion and appointment to a tenured position among the permanent faculty.

Thereafter,

> Their rank and salary were periodically reviewed, and increased in step with their achievement and reputation.
>
> Their service was periodically interrupted by sabbaticals, or leaves or absence, permitting them to keep abreast of his subject. And
>
> They enjoyed a stable association with his school and the surrounding community.

Recently, however, the game has been publicly cancelled at many universities, and privately cancelled at others. Schools of the wealth and prestige of Yale and Harvard have announced, or have announced that they are thinking of announcing, moratoria on tenure.

But what remains of the game if tenure – permanent appointment – is eliminated? Nothing! For there remains

No probationary assignment;
No evaluation on merit;
No reward for excellence of achievement;
No potential for increases in rank and salary.
No expectation of renewal through sabbaticals or leaves of absence; and
No possibility of a stable association with either school or community.

If the game no longer exists, then satisfying its rules is counterproductive. If evaluation has no purpose, then establishing standards of evaluation is otiose.

Rationale

Is there a rationale behind the gameless university, the unevaluated faculty member and the moratoria on tenure? Yes, and we underestimate its power at our peril, for on the industrial model it is not only eminently reasonable, but compelling.

The new university wishes to graduate students with marketable skills – students having sufficient short-term, surface knowledge to gain entrance upon graduation into the work force. The university can have no other goal, for the *students* demand it. (Given the transience of marketable knowledge, most students consider meditative (liberal) learning a cost-ineffective luxury; hence the demand for 'professional' rather than 'humanistic' programs, the proliferation of 'applied' Ph.D. programs, and the elevation of these programs by the university as models of educational viability.)

What sort of faculty member can best service disposable students seeking disposable skills? On the industrial model, faculty members who possesses an accurate, contemporary, surface knowledge of their discipline (the kind of knowledge ready-at-hand upon graduation from Graduate School, maintainable for six or seven years through inertia and then lost through erosion); and who are imbued with a contagious, optimistic enthusiasm for their subject, undimmed by the rough edges of teaching and experience (the kind of blind enthusiasm taken from Graduate School that lasts maximally 6-7 years thereafter).

Also, for maximum cost-effectiveness and institutional stability, faculty members should be politically quiescent and subservient to administrative policies and procedures, and willing to work overlong hours teaching unpopular and overpopulated courses for minimal financial and academic rewards.

Consider, then, university Presidents of industrial bent reviewing young, talented faculty members up for tenure. Ought they to take the time and effort to evaluate carefully the performance and promise of the faculty members, and, if positive, award them tenured, permanent employment for the next thirty to thirty-five years? Or ought they rather to deny them tenure (for whatever reason), replacing them with younger people recently disgorged from Graduate School with the intention of repeating the procedure every six or seven years thereafter?

On the industrial model, the optimum choice is unequivocal: by hiring a new person every 6-7 years, rather than tenuring a single individual for 30-35 years, the president of a university assures excellent though transient instruction with minimum political interference at 1/2 to 2/3 the cost. (If willing to fill the post with part-time help, the savings are even greater.)

To administrators harried by rising costs and declining resources, the argument is irresistible. Small wonder that the forces of which I speak are focusing the efforts of our largest and wealthiest universities, and that the competition of the new management techniques and methods of cost-accounting is forcing many smaller colleges to the brink of merger or bankruptcy. Even in those universities where goodwill and collegiality remain, notice is being taken of the models operative elsewhere. Once the model is noted, the pressure to conform is extraordinary.

Not only is the rationale powerful, but, if the administrators have an instinct for the methods of Madison Avenue and a sense of the ironies of academic history and procedure, it becomes elegant as well. For they can assert publicly that they support

(a) humanistic education and the liberal arts (knowing full well that student pressure and effective cost-accounting will keep the professional schools in the forefront),

(b) academic excellence (knowing full well that students have no standard of ready comparison, and that other universities are marketing skills as average as his own) and

(c) academic freedom (knowing full well that untenured faculty members cannot afford to exercise it),

while the same time – and with unprecedented irony – publicly opposing

(d) the tenure system as cruel and inhumane to young faculty members (knowing full well that the tenured faculty and the AAUP will then rise to its

> defense, insuring its continuance, thus providing him with the most efficient tool ever devised by the academic mind to enable an administrator to clean house of unwanted faculty members every 6-7 years).

The tenure system, thus, lies at the heart of the industrial realignment of higher education, and if we are to understand the strength of the rationale, we must distinguish between the value of tenure itself, and the value of the tenure *system*.

> Although tenure is valuable to the faculty member who is given it (and perhaps to the society that sanctions the giving), the tenure *system* is invaluable to administrators of common sense and industrial leanings.

Without collegiality, the tenure system is an administrative bludgeon – and collegiality does not exist in the industrial model.

Consequences

What effect, then, is the industrialization of higher education having upon untenured faculty members? Like the tools and dies of a manufacturing plant, faculty members are finding themselves programmed to obsolescence – trained and maintained to be disposable. The result is an ever-broadening pool of untenured teachers, constantly circulating through our universities, unable to keep abreast of their disciplines through sabbaticals or leaves of absence, underpaid for the work that they do and the years they have done it, unstable with roots neither in the school nor in the surrounding community, and embittered, as younger faculty with the temporary brilliance of Graduate School are hired to replace them at lesser salaries than they and their families can afford.

The result?

Bitterness alienation, pessimism, and misanthropy.

Modes of Redress

What can we do, as faculty members within the gameless university, to respond to the unconscionable assault on the professional and personal integrity of so many of our younger untenured colleagues?

We must be careful, I think, to measure our tools to the task, avoiding general solutions, for what may be a minimally adequate response at Boston University might well be a mauling overreaction in a university administered by humane and well-intentioned academics. I know, however, of only three open avenues of response.

1. We can seek mutual agreement with administrations on procedures of binding arbitration to settle grievances on promotion and tenure evaluation. (For example, a three-person committee could be empowered to adjudicate a grievance, one member to be selected by the faculty person aggrieved, the other by the administration, and the third by the first two members, with the decision binding on all parties.) It is unlikely, of course, that such arrangements will be welcomed by administrators, except when faced with a worse alternative such as 3 below

(2) We can seek elimination of the tenure track, hoping to substitute long-term, renewable, non-tenured contracts instead. Again, administrators are unlikely to agree unless faced with the threat of 3 below.

(3) We can seek collective redress as bargaining agents under the various labor relations acts of the Federal and State governments.

All modes of redress are dependent upon the threat – implicit or explicit – of collective faculty action, for without it administrators in the industrial model have no incentive to temper their advantage.

Although, therefore, unionization is a complex and contentious issue, its attraction is understandable and undeniable. Recent surveys indicate that nearly 3/4 of the faculty members in our colleges and universities favor collective bargaining, and many major universities and university systems now operate under negotiated contracts (the Universities of Massachusetts, and Temple University, to name two). Many states permit faculty members at state universities to bargain collectively, and 15 others have legislation pending to the same purpose.

Of particular interest is Boston University which recently became the first major private school to be compelled by order of a Circuit Court to bargain with its faculty.

Three weeks ago the National Labor Relations Board initiated proceedings against Boston University, claiming for the first time that a faculty member within a major private university had been denied his rights under the National Labor Relations Act when denied tenure. (The administrative law judge hearing the case has ordered the University to relinquish all tenure dossiers and records acquired in recent years,

including all internal or external confidential evaluations. If sustained, the order will set a precedent that may shatter the 'confidentiality' of the tenure review process at universities throughout the country.)

Surprisingly, however, the legitimacy of collective bargaining by faculty members is not yet assured, for broad legal issues await adjudication by the Supreme Court. I commend two cases to your attention:

> The Circuit Court of the District of Columbia has ruled (in the case of Boston University) that department chairmen are insufficiently supervisory to be considered managers under the National Labor Relations Act, and hence are members of the bargaining unit.
>
> Yet the 2nd Circuit Court in New York ruled, two weeks ago (in the case of Yeshiva University), that since faculty members contribute to the formulation of administrative policies and procedures within the University, all faculty members are managers, and hence no faculty member has rights under the National Labor Relations Act![1]

To many of us, unenamoured of unionization, the advent of faculty collective bargaining signals the end of much that we have cherished in the academy, namely (in Professor Pryluck's phrase) "good faith and mutual respect". Yet it is undeniable, I think, that the alternatives are fast disappearing. Perhaps administrators of humane genius will appear, capable of saving the university as we have known it. If so, they will deserve our respect and support. But I wouldn't hold my breath awaiting their appearance.

Summary & Conclusion

What has been the genius of American civilization since World War I? I venture to answer in one word: marketing. We are engineers and technologists, yes; but above all else we are marketeers!

We have solved, largely, the problem of servicing and sustaining the highest average standard of consumption in the world. How? By creating disposable products through disposable means of production.

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[1] The thought of Justice Rehnquist bringing his intellect to bear on this issue is sobering.

By extension, we are about to solve the problem of servicing and sustaining the highest average standard of educational consumption in the world as well. How? By packaging disposable knowledge for disposable students through a disposable means of production – our untenured faculty.

As a teacher and sometime administrator, I approach the probable future of the academic world with deep and abiding anger. I should like to have spoken hopefully today. I should like to have said, in good conscience, that the problems we face are collegially solvable, and that the issues constraining us in the evaluation of faculty members for promotion and tenure are amenable to discussion among men and women of goodwill. Unfortunately, I cannot speak thusly, for I do not believe it. The issues constraining us are large, and the forces of goodwill seem no match for the institutionalization of greed.

Some of us, for a while yet, may elect to play by the rules of the game in splendid pockets of isolation, hoping that this, too, will pass. But it won't. The game is over for many and will soon be over for all. Only the war will go on – for those with eyes to see, ears to hear, common sense and courage.

Yet if bulwarks are not erected against the impending industrialization of our universities, I fear that we shall witness another dark age in education, similar to yet subtler than that of the McCarthy era. Those who resist will not be permitted to teach; and those who do not resist will be unable to teach freely and well, for they will have lost the personal integrity and courage upon which good teaching depends. Blacklists will again circulate through the backrooms of administrative power, while on the surface sycophancy will reign.