The statement by a group of teachers in the University of the South Pacific that teaching is the primary activity of teachers in different departments is true. However, the nature of this activity varies greatly in different departments, and the extent to which teaching is the primary activity may also vary within the same department. For example, in some departments, teaching is the main activity, while in others, it may be supplemented by other activities such as research and service. Therefore, while it is true that teaching is the primary activity of teachers, the extent and nature of this activity may vary depending on the context.
Our paramount teaching and research should be combined does not imply that in individual cases members of the University should not specialize in one of the two activities. We believe, however, that in a University such specialization should never be complete.

If the ideal sketched above is to be realized in New Zealand, it is essential that the research function of the University should be fully recognized. The commonly held view that the University is primarily a teaching institution should be abandoned, and the University should be looked upon as an institution in which the spirit of free inquiry is preserved and cultivated.

There are certain basic requirements which must be fulfilled if the University is to play its proper role as a research institution. These are: (1) the University must be supplied with adequate finance; (2) the academic staff must be large enough to ensure individual members sufficient freedom from teaching to undertake serious research; it must be realized that research often demands continuity of effort, and that it may temporarily absorb the whole energy of the worker; (3) the provision of the necessary space, together with the essential apparatus, and of technical and clerical assistance; (4) the provision of adequate library facilities, and, in particular, of periodical literature, on a greatly increased scale; (5) a break with isolationist tendencies, that is, the recognition of the need for contact with colleagues, within and outside New Zealand, by attendance at conferences, congresses, etc.; by visits to other research centers, and by regular sabbatical leave; (6) the provision of the means of publication of research by the institution of a University Press, or by monographic assistance; and (7) the recognition by controlling bodies that research activity should receive due reward in such matters as status and promotion.

The principles outlined above provide the material framework within which a University devoted equally to teaching and research could grow. Beyond providing this framework, no organisation of research within the University should be attempted. University research should be free, it should be directed merely by the initiative of the individual worker, and by his enthusiasm for his chosen problem.

These are the basic requirements, but they are inadequate in themselves. In addition, the right spirit must be present. What we need is the establishment and encouragement of a research tradition.

It is only in very rare instances that one sees the development of a new centre of research which cannot be traced back to the direct personal influence of a man who was brought up in one of the great schools of research. In a comparatively new country where such research traditions are rare, there is only one way of establishing them: they must be imported. This may be done either by sending promising research workers abroad or by importing research scientists from overseas. An excellent example of the successful importation of a research tradition into New Zealand is the establishment of the Otago School of Geology by Professor W. N. Benson.

It is necessary to realise that as a rule, these methods will be successful only if the essential material conditions for research are already provided, and if the research worker can count on understanding and recognition of his mission. New Zealand has lost many of its most brilliant men because it has failed to provide both the material and spiritual conditions for their work. For example, Rutherford might have returned to New Zealand, instead of going to Montreal in 1898, but he knew very well that there was no hope of continuing and developing his research here. New Zealand has lost opportunities, in recent years, of attracting and keeping established and distinguished workers from Europe, opportunities from which many other countries are at present benefiting greatly. The widespread defeatist view (which at present dominates appointment policy) that New Zealand cannot afford to keep a good man, must be given up.

We hold that New Zealand cannot afford to lose a good man.

In this connection we may quote the following statement by Polanyi: "Modern science is a local tradition and is not easily transmitted from one place to another. Countries such as Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Argentina, Brazil, Egypt, Mexico, have built great modern cities with spacious universities, but they have rarely succeeded in founding important schools of research. The total current scientific production of these countries before the war was still less than the single contributions of either Denmark, Sweden or Holland. Those who have visited the parts of the world where scientific life is just beginning know of the backing up struggle that the lack of scientific tradition imposes on the pioneers . . . However rich the fund of local genius may be, such environment will fail to bring it to fruition . . ."

In order to remedy the situation as it exists in New Zealand, a complete change of attitude is required. It must be recognised that a speculator might achieve much greater education in a research tradition than by spreading his teaching over what is traditionally considered the balanced content of his subject. The view that it is the task of the University is to hand to the students a definite body of examinable knowledge must be discarded.

If this is true, a complete revision of the examination system is required, with the object of giving greater freedom to the special school of the teachers in different centres. Moreover, the role played by examinations in the University is at present greatly overvalued. We believe that the written examinations of the type at present in use are an inefficient and inconclusive test of the attainment of a University education. The educational task of the University must be taken much more seriously than its role in grading students.

The attitude adopted by us may appear to some as a radical one, or even, perhaps, Utopian. Yet what we demand is nothing but the belated recognition of principles laid down by the Reichel-Taylor Report of 1929. From this Report we quote the following statements: (1) "The proper interaction of teaching and research is of the very essence of the higher education."); (2) "The teacher and student in a University should be engaged jointly in a voyage of discovery in search of truth."); and (3), quoted from evidence submitted by H. C. Denham, "A teacher of science who is himself untaught by the research spirit is an incapable of fulfilling the higher ideals of his position."

We believe that the great influx of students now in progress endangers University standards, so that this is an appropriate moment to recall and endorse these findings.

5) ibid. pp. 75-76.

R. E. ALLAN
J. C. ECKLES
H. G. FORBES
J. PARKER
H. N. PARTON
E. R. POPPER

Christchurch,
July 10, 1945.