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EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY - UNIVERSITY OF NEW ZEALAND

Dissolution of University of New Zealand

We have come now to the beginning of the end — the years immediately preceding 1961 when the curtain was finally rung down on the University of New Zealand. The constituent colleges, under their respective amendment Acts, had each become — what Otago had always been—a university: the change was of name and of titles only. Each university had control over its own funds, in terms negotiated by the University Grants Committee, and over its own academic work, subject only to approval by a Curriculum Committee of Senate of regulations governing courses and degree structure. The Grants Committee was negotiating with the Government not only for block grants to meet recurring annual needs (totalling, £2,576,703 for 1960 and rising to £4,119,469 in 1964) but for grants to cover minor capital items as required. Also in consultation with the constituent institutions it had worked out and won Government approval in principle for a building programme involving an expenditure of over £10,000,000 over the next 10 years to meet progressively the rising tide of student numbers. (In 1960 the number was 14,570, internal.) The Committee already had seen the completion of many buildings, with many more under way, at some stage, at every centre. It had secured an increase in the research grant to £40,000; and it had formulated, and urged on the Government, an improved salary scale calculated to be competitive with that of universities in Australia, where considerable increases had been given in recent years.

Under these improved conditions which gave the universities the substance of autonomy, what was the basic reason for the dissolution of the University of New Zealand? The fatal blow was struck by the Parry Committee (1959): but what conditions led to the appointment of such a committee? It is true that a desire for complete independence was latent in the constituent colleges over many years, bursting into fitful flame from time to time, quenched neither by the cold water of the Reichel-Tate Commission nor by the wet blanket of the executive of the Association of the Commonwealth Universities. Those who cherished it seized the opportunity offered by a Committee on the Universities in 1959 to fan the sparks into flame, but were not themselves responsible for promoting the committee. Two factors, one almost fortuitous, were more directly responsible: first, a Labour Government, returning to power in 1957, had in its election campaign promised that the whole field of education would be examined by an expert committee; and those concerned with the universities, fearful lest university education be brought under a general survey, urged that a special committee of overseas university men should be given the university assignment. The second factor was the demand on the Government for increased expenditure on the university, and in particular for the greatly increased salary scale mentioned above — a demand urged by Grants Committee, Councils, and Teachers' Association at a time when Government was faced by difficult internal conditions imposed by an adverse balance of trade. The Labour Government, never unfriendly to education, but in principle against wide salary margins and foreseeing consequential demands from the higher ranks of the Public Service, wanted expert and authoritative backing for the steps it would have to take. Thus it appointed the Parry Committee.

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Next Part: [The Parry Report](#)

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