

Your Faculty Trade Union Chief does *not* tell you the truth!

To the Israeli universities faculty members

From Yaacov Bergman

December 10, 2003

Dear faculty members:

Faculty trade union chief wrote to you:

The government decided that faculty members will no longer be involved in any administrative role in the universities and will not have any influence on any decisions, including strictly academic ones. Instead non-academic people from the 'public' sector (without any required background) will be in charge of all decisions concerning the operation of the universities. Such restrictions do not exist in any respectable research university in the Western world.

This is *not true*, of course. The Israeli Weizmann Institute *is* a "respectable research university in the Western world," yet it is governed by a public Board of Trustees with only symbolic Weizmann faculty participation. That Board nominates a strictly hierarchical administration which handles all affairs of the Institute. The Weizmann has neither a senate nor a senate-elected-rector. The deans and department heads are nominated by Weizmann's president, who consults with the faculty, but need not secure their formal approval.

Has Weizmann's governance structure, which has been in place since its foundation over half a century ago, destroyed the Weizmann institute as a research university, as faculty trade union chief would have you believe? Of course not! On the contrary,

the Weizmann is by far the best research organization in Israel *because* of its unique governance structure, which allows its administration to hold its faculty accountable for the resources they use in their research. This, in turn, upholds Weizmann's high scientific standards for the benefit of its faculty and the Israeli public.

On the comparison between the Weizmann Institute and the other Israeli universities, you are invited to the presentation that I made last week at the Hebrew University Senate meeting. You can find that presentation at http://pluto.mscc.huji.ac.il/~msyberg/Higher_Education/Senate_Meeting.pdf

In fact, the best research universities of the world operate similar to the Weizmann with very little participation in their administration by their respective faculties. A good example is the University of California, and an excellent source on how it is administrated is Martin Trow, Graduate School of Public Policy, University of California, Berkeley, "Governance in the University of California: the transformation of politics into administration," *Higher Education Policy*, 1998, 11, 201–215. Excerpts are quoted below.

It should be emphasized: That the public benefits from true accountability of the faculty is obvious. Equally obvious should be the fact that the excellent researchers also benefit from authoritative university administrations, who can hold faculty accountable, and who can reallocate resources accordingly. This is clearly demonstrated in the following recommendation by the 1999 Eisen-Melchers Committee that was commissioned by the Israel Academy of Sciences to review the state of research in immunology:

If, say, one-third of the suboptimally performing investigators were no longer supported, a considerable amount of resources would be freed up to increase support for others.

It should be realized. This is *not* a struggle between the government and the universities. It *is* a struggle between the excellent faculty minority in the Israeli universities backed by the government, on the one hand, and the mediocre majority backed by the faculty trade union, on the other hand.

In the context of a general message from the Israeli faculty trade union chief, it is instructive to quote the following passage from Trow 1998:

Like other leading American research universities, the University of California does not have an academic trade union. That is to say, the academics do not bargain collectively with any authorities about pay, working conditions, fringe benefits, or anything else. Thus, there is no organization at the heart of the university whose interest it is to cultivate and organize discontent, and to find allies for its positions in the larger political parties of the society.

The Israeli government, representing the Israeli public, who has begun demanding accountability from its education providers including *its* universities, would readily embrace Weizmann's governance as a model for the rest of the Israeli research universities. In fact, the government is ready to accept a model that is even less strict in its exclusion of the faculty from the administration than that of the Weizmann Institute. On the other hand, the Israeli government rejects — like many of its counterparts around the Western world have rejected, including Japan's government this last summer — the current incompetent, defunct governance model, which has allowed the faculty of the Israeli universities, except the Weizmann Institute, evade true accountability to the Israeli public. The aim of the recent government decision is to establish authority at the universities and then demand accountability from them which shall result in upholding of high academic standards, as those university reforms have accomplished in all other advanced countries of the world.

— *Yaacov Bergman*

To the Hebrew University community: You are urged to read my reply to Deputy MALA"G Chair Yechezkel Taler's comment in Haaretz on my article, "The Head is Sick Too," in that newspaper. My reply is entitled "חופש אקדמי; אמיתי מול מזויף", and you can find it at

http://pluto.mscc.huji.ac.il/~msyberg/Higher_Education/Academic_Freedom_Taler.pdf

The following are excerpts from: Martin Trow, Governance in the University of California: the transformation of politics into administration, *Higher Education Policy*, 1998, 11, 201–215.

UC is not a democracy

One way of reducing the play of politics within the University is not to have many occasions for voting; and there are very few occasions for voting in the University's governance structure. [] Starting with the Regents, 18 out of the total of 25 are appointed directly by the governor then in office [Incidentally, Israeli raised, Mr. Haim Saban, was appointed a UC Regent two years ago, -YB], when a place is vacant, and those are the regents who actually do the business of the Board; there are seven ex officio members, four of whom are elected state officers who with some exceptions rarely attend meetings of the Board [the Hebrew University Constitution stipulates a reasonable representation to the Israeli government on its Board of Governors, but the Israeli government is not interested in that representation, and there is none, -YB]; two are elected by the UC Alumni Association for one year terms. The seventh ex officio member is the President of the University. The appointed members of the Board of Regents serve for twelve years, ensuring that they will serve beyond the term of the governor who appointed them. []

The Board of Regents appoints the president of the University, with the advice of the Academic Senate; the Board also appoints all chancellors on the advice of the president and a Senate committee. Chancellors appoint all the senior academic

and non-academic administrators: they appoint the provosts and deans, and the latter appoint department chairmen, though usually on the advice and with the participation of the department in question, and sometimes of a committee of academics from other departments. Of course, a good deal of consultation goes on in connection with these appointments, but basically academic administrators are appointed by their superior officers, and can be and indeed occasionally are dismissed by their senior officers. [] Incidentally, all these officers except for department chairmen serve without limit of term, another aspect of their office which strengthens their hands.

The academic Senate and the academic community

If we are to find democracy anywhere in the University, it should be in the Academic Senate. But here too we see an aversion for democratic political processes in favor of appointive procedures and consensual decision-making. [] In UC the Academic Senate consists of the whole body of academic personnel, from the newest assistant professor to and including Emeriti professors. All have an equal standing in the Senate, all have all its rights and privileges. [] Roughly, and very briefly, Senate bodies have primary responsibility for the academic programs on the several campuses, for the appointment and promotion of academic staff, and more ambiguously, for the criteria for the admissions of students.