

# The Danish University between the Millstones

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THE relationship between state and university in Denmark has always been symbiotic. At times it has been peaceful, at times conflict-ridden. Sometimes the state interfered in the daily life of the university; sometimes the university directly and through the academic professions permeated the entire fabric of society. In a long-range perspective this symbiotic relationship looks unstable and ever-changing.

Neither has the internal structure of university government been stable. At times professional administrators and the rector were powerful figures; at other times the professors or collegiate boards of professors held the strings of power. In a long-range perspective the only enduring characteristic of university government has been the dominant position of the professors in the hierarchical network of the university organisation.

In the centuries which have passed since—with permission from the Pope—the Danish king, Christian I founded a university in Copenhagen in 1479, many configurations of internal and external relationships have been in existence, and many changes have occurred; but even in a very long perspective no transformation can compete with the one which has occurred during the last decade. Some say this transformation has awakened the universities from their magic sleep. Others stress the destructive aspects of the transformation. But no one will contest the fact that the transformation has not only changed fundamentally the daily life of the institutions of higher learning, but has also had the effect of shifting the balance between the university and the Danish state.

The Danish parliament, the Folketing, has played a significant part in bringing about this transformation. It was the Folketing which in 1970 passed the first university act, and it was in the Folketing, before, as well as after 1970, that the changes in the university system were registered. The Folketing responded to and processed a variety of demands.

The Danish university system has experienced deep crises during the last decade. The crisis at the outset had the characteristics of an "input-overload". It was instigated by the sharp increase in the number of students enrolled. Through the semi-automatic budgetary mechanisms, by means of which the government provided increased support in terms of money and manpower, the disequilibrating trend was fought, but not overcome. Derived frustrations and aggressions ignited events, which in Denmark had not only the character of a revolt of students, but also of a revolt of the younger generation of university teachers.

The Danish government dealt with the events of the crisis in turn and in a piecemeal fashion. The critical changes were considered by the politicians only when they were already irrevocable. The authorities, and in particular the Folketing, tried to cope with the ever-changing situation without a sufficiently rational analysis of the problems and the possible solutions, and consequently the overriding political goal of depoliticising the university issue was not reached. The important and lasting effect of this sequence of events has been an incremental and unintended redefinition of both the concept of the university and of university autonomy. These phenomena are not unique; they may be encountered to some extent in many Western countries. In one respect, however, the Danish situation is unique.

The unfolding of the university conflict in Denmark began in a situation, in which university matters were considered outside the realm of parliament. As the crisis deepened, the Folketing came to feel a need to take action, but it turned out that this action coincided in time with a dramatic transformation of the Folketing itself. The university legislation was passed in 1970 by a parliament, which contained five parties, of which four because of their long electoral and parliamentary history have been dubbed the "old parties". The implementation of the University Act, as well as the evaluation of its impact since 1973, has taken place in a parliament which consists of 10 parties, of which several have never regarded themselves as being responsible for the way in which the parliament dealt with the university issue before 1973. In this new political climate the university issue has, from a question which preoccupied Danish politicians not at all, gradually turned into one of the "hottest" and most controversial problems on the agenda of the Folketing. As the issue is also considered to be a serious problem by many voters, who tend to perceive it as a symptom of a general malaise in Danish politics, it has without doubt a potential for being further exploited by parties and politicians in an unstable political situation.

### *The Antecedent State of the System*

Although the Danish university system went through many changes between the fifteenth and the twentieth centuries, nevertheless the principal components of the system were relatively stable for long periods. The curricular structure through which the universities have primarily provided professional training for higher positions in the public sector, crystallised in the last decades of the eighteenth century<sup>1</sup>; the internal organisation of the university, and its legal relationship with the government, stabilised during the nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Thomsen, Ole B., *Embedsstudiernes Universitet* (Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1975), vols. I and II.

<sup>2</sup> A short description of the history of the government of the University of Copenhagen can be found in *Betænkning afgivet af Universitetskommissionen af 1935*, appendix 2 (Copenhagen: Statens Trykningskontor, 1936).

The central figure in university life was the individual professor. As in most other European universities, the professorial chair was endowed with the powers to control the development of "its" branch of learning. In many sectors of the university the professor became a "manager", who delegated the various duties and tasks of the chair to younger staff, but who, nevertheless, held the reins by his total control of recruitment and careers. The subordinate—and the professor usually had not more than one or a few—was aptly titled, in Danish, *amanuensis*. In most cases the relationship between professor and *amanuensis* was a benevolent one, analogous to the relationship between a master artisan and his journeyman; in the small and stable university, which existed until the 1950s, the *amanuensis* as an apprentice also stood a fairly good chance of succeeding the chair in due course. In such a relationship personal and professional conflicts might occur, but they were unlikely to come into the open. The outcome of such conflicts as did occur was easily predictable.

Succession to chairs was considered of the greatest importance, and every precaution was taken to safeguard promotions. Formally the professor was appointed by the King. In reality he was chosen by his older colleagues, acting as an *ad hoc* committee of appointment. In many branches of learning the holders of chairs in the three Scandinavian countries constituted the group which controlled academic careers. Thus, very often the committee had at least one member who was not Danish and sometimes a majority of members were recruited from other Nordic countries. Consensus on scientific principles made this procedure natural and beneficial in an academic community as small and "inbred" as the Danish.

The professors jointly ruled the daily business of the university as members of the *Fakultet* (faculty board). A sub-committee of professors were elected or *ex officio* members of the supreme governing body, the *Konsistorium*, which acted as a check on as well as an advisory body to the rector of the university.

Because of historical circumstances, many of which date back to the early days of the institution, the organisational structures and procedures of the University of Copenhagen were highly complex, mostly because a distinction was traditionally made between the academic and the economic aspects of government and control. The newer University of Aarhus, although founded as late as 1928, soon developed a similar, highly elaborate governmental structure.<sup>3</sup>

These organisational patterns did not differ much from the prevailing

<sup>3</sup> For the best description of the governmental structures before 1970, see Universitetsadministrationsudvalget af 1962, *Betænkning II om Den højere undervisnings og forsknings administrative organisation*, *Betænkning* nr. 475 (Copenhagen: Statens Trykningskontor, 1968), esp. pp. 12, 27. See also Sverdrup-Jensen, Sten, "Styringsproblematikken på Københavns Universitet", *Økonomi og Politik*, XLVII, 3 (1973), pp. 343 ff. For an analysis of recruitment patterns and organisation at the University of Aarhus, see Eliassen, Kjell A. and Kristensen, Ole P., "Det akademiske Marked", *ibid.*, LI, 1 (1977), pp. 76-101.

continental European pattern of university government. As long as the university staff mostly consisted of professors, and as long as political and professional consensus prevailed, they provided an adequate, if not efficient, framework for the use of academic authority. Anyway, in a stable organisation which changed very little and gradually, the important locus of power was situated in the individual chair.

The most interesting feature of the traditional university system was its links with the Danish government. Since the Reformation in 1536 the University of Copenhagen had been a state university. The newer University of Aarhus was founded as a private institution, but because of the fact that it was totally dependent upon the government for financial support, it became in reality as much a public institution as its older counterpart. The third university, in Odense, founded in 1966 by an act of parliament, was a state university from the very first day.

These state universities did, however, differ from most other public institutions in a way which was to become of critical significance for their fate in the 1960s: they were outside the legislative domain, and thus only in an indirect way controlled by the Folketing.

To understand this peculiar characteristic one has to go back to the point when modern democratic institutions were introduced in Denmark. When in 1848 the absolutist rule was replaced by a representative system of government, the transfer of legislative power from King to parliament was not made complete and universal. A few domains were left within the executive realm, the most important among these being the regulation of higher education. Although daily administration had of course been delegated to higher civil servants, it was the King who for centuries had issued the statutes and by-laws which regulated the affairs of the University of Copenhagen. From 1848 onwards, the Minister of Education took over this legal power.<sup>4</sup>

Although an indirect parliamentary control was created in 1901 with the introduction of the principle of cabinet responsibility, the relationship between government and university was thus arranged in a way which impeded the Folketing's supervision of higher education. Consequently the Folketing almost never debated the problems of the universities, and thus its members did not become familiar with these problems. It was only when the expansion of the universities in the 1950s and 1960s called for large public investment, that the legislators began to discuss the adequacy and reasonableness of this constitutional arrangement.<sup>5</sup> In 1959, a leading Danish expert on constitutional law raised the question and proposed that the Folketing should take over full control of this last domain of executive

<sup>4</sup> This constitutional issue is discussed at length in Ross, Alf, *Statsretlige Studier* (Copenhagen: Nyt Nordisk Forlag, 1959), pp. 104 ff, 199–204. See also Ross, Alf, *Dansk Statsforfatningsret* (Copenhagen: Nyt Nordisk Forlag, 1966, 2nd ed.), vol. II, pp. 506–509.

<sup>5</sup> A debate, which touched upon the principal problem, took place in the Folketing in 1958: see *Folketingstidende*, Forhandling, 1958–59, cols. 1016–62.

power by means of a comprehensive codification of the rules of all higher education.<sup>6</sup> This step was taken 11 years later.

The relationship between the universities and the Ministry of Education was, however, not one of subordination, as was the case with most other public institutions. This was partly because of the unqualified adherence of traditional concepts of academic freedom and the autonomy of the university, but also probably had to do with the fact that, during the 1950s and the 1960s, the Ministry of Education was in need of an organisational reform to make it capable of coping with the various tasks which were being forced upon it. There was a growing feeling among civil servants and administrative experts that the institutions of higher learning traditionally had too sheltered a relationship with the Ministry of Education, and that reforms were needed.<sup>7</sup>

The most important feature of this relationship was the relatively autonomous position granted to the university with regard to research, curricular regulations, and internal allocation of resources. With regard to research, its initiation, execution, and evaluation were exclusively controlled by the academic community; a governmental science policy did not exist, nor had a network of research councils and other co-ordinating institutions yet been established. The professorial chair was in almost exclusive command of the development of research. Second, curricular requirements, although issued by the Ministry of Education, were in fact developed by the university itself, often in consultation with the academic profession. The curricular structure was fairly stable, and changes mainly gradual. Third, the university was in total command of its internal distribution of resources. Although the Ministry of Education possessed the legal power to control the purse, it did not use this power in an active way. It was to a very high degree the university itself which established the goals as well as the quantitative and qualitative standards, and thus also determined the level and distribution of expenditures. Allocation primarily was done at the level of the *Fakultet*.<sup>8</sup>

This position was described in summary fashion in 1968 by the then permanent secretary of the Ministry of Finance, who in a discussion of the limited possibilities of controlling public finances in Denmark said:

The real control of the public expenditures in many cases is left with other authorities [than the financial ones], even if these authorities are not allowed to spend more money than was allocated during the budget term. The main example in this respect is the influence of professors over the educational and

<sup>6</sup> Ross, A., *op. cit.*, 1959, pp. 703–704.

<sup>7</sup> See *Administrationsudvalget af 1960, 1, Betænkning, Betænkning nr. 301* (Copenhagen: Statens Trykningskontor, 1962), esp. p. 31.

<sup>8</sup> A description of the budgeting relationships can be found in the Danish contribution to the OECD and CERI's Studies in Institutional Management in Higher Education, *Planlægning, budgettering og organisation* (Copenhagen: Statens Trykningskontor, 1971). An acid critique has been given by Dich, Jørgen S., *Den herskende klasse* (Copenhagen: Borgen, 1973), see esp. pp. 102 ff.

research expenditures of the institutions of higher learning. The professors decide what kind of curricular requirements should be in force, and consequently how long students will have to stay in order to graduate. From these decisions are derived demands for a particular capacity as well as future growth rates for the expenditures in these sectors...<sup>9</sup>

The powerful position of the professor, the autonomous position of the university in relation to the state authorities, and the slow and gradual change in internal structure and external relations were the major characteristics of the university system of the early 1960s. With a slight exaggeration it may be said that the only factor, which was not directly or indirectly controlled by the university, was the size of the student body. It was exactly this factor which went out of control during the 1960s.

### *The Pressures on the University System*

During the 1960s the Danish universities like universities all over Europe experienced a period of growing tension as a result of uncontrolled and rapid growth. The two universities, in Copenhagen and Aarhus, received an ever-growing number of students. The older of the two, the University of Copenhagen, started its growth from the level of approximately 5,000 students in the late 1950s. Ten years later it had passed 20,000 students, and nothing could stop the avalanche. The smaller university in Jutland had increased its student body slowly since its foundation in 1929. Its relative growth was even more dramatic: from less than 2,000 students it increased its enrolment to 10,000 at the end of the 1960s.

The development in Denmark apparently is in accordance with a typical European, and worldwide, pattern. But it appeared to be overwhelming because it happened in a small country with a long history of slow growth in all spheres of society; a country in which stability and gradual adjustment had become a way of life and an ideal: "a quiet country, where hardly anyone raises his voice and the rhetoric of revolution finds few admirers."<sup>10</sup>

When the profound changes in the universities came into public view, the experience frightened many Danes and made others happy, because it was discovered that the transformation of the university system had a qualitative as well as a quantitative aspect. Academic education in Denmark was an education for an elite. The universities mostly recruited the sons of upper and middle class parents. Only a small percentage of any age-cohort ever enrolled, and instruction was very much directed to the needs of the state. This tendency practically disappeared during the 1960s. Equality became an educational ideal, which did not have many opponents, even if many of its proponents were lukewarm in their attitude.

During the 1960s the goals of university education gradually changed.

<sup>9</sup> Schmidt, Erik Ib, *Offentlig Administration og Planlægning* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1968), p. 44.

<sup>10</sup> Dahl, Robert A., *After the Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), p. 4.

Higher education was increasingly perceived as a right for every gifted adolescent, rather than as a means of obtaining access to the social elite. Thus the status of higher education, of the university, and the university teachers changed, and the "social distance" from other educational institutions diminished.

These and many other profound changes took place in little more than a decade. They were only perceived in the early 1970s, and opinions—positive as well as negative—are still crystallising in Danish society. But the many traumatic discoveries, which go with these qualitative changes, have undoubtedly become magnified by the fact that the changes took place in a small country with a highly visible and traditionally esteemed university system.

The increase in the number of students enrolled in Danish universities during the 1960s was partly a result of governmental policy, and partly a result of developments which were outside the educational policies of the Danish state.

Denmark experienced an unprecedentedly high rate of economic growth in the late 1950s and the following decade. Education was during this period seen as a worthwhile investment which Danish society could well afford, as could the individual citizens. The increased level of welfare and affluence produced waves of educational demand by the accidental fact that relatively large numbers of the post-war generation entered the educational system during this period. More children entered secondary school than ever before. During the 1960s the number of adolescents graduating from the *gymnasium* tripled. A larger proportion of each cohort of graduates was enrolled at the universities. Where in many of the institutions of education, such as teachers' training colleges, technical colleges, the schools of engineering, pharmacy, and the schools of dentistry, a *numerus clausus* was applied, admission to the university traditionally was free of any entrance requirements for graduates from secondary school. The influx of students probably was magnified by the structural limitations of the educational system.

This development was deliberately supported by the government. In the late 1960s steps were taken to open admissions even further by giving admission to the university to graduates from other types of schools. Thus a higher preparatory examination was introduced, with the partial purpose of preparing adolescents and adults from socially and culturally disadvantaged milieux for higher education. The universities themselves applied increasingly liberal rules for admission in marginal cases.

Probably most important, however, was the existence of a scheme of financial support (*Ungdommens Uddannelsesfond*), which was introduced in the 1950s, and which was expanded greatly during the following decade. The purpose of this programme was to support students throughout the educational system, but with special emphasis on students at the higher

levels. Only students from relatively well-to-do family backgrounds were ineligible for support.

The increase in the number of students was a catalyst for derived and related growth in the university system. During the period of expansion the universities incessantly asked for new teaching positions, and they succeeded in getting an increase, which was, if not proportional to, then at least approximate to the enrolment of new students. However, as long as the numbers of new students were growing, and the numbers of graduates were still fairly low, it was difficult to catch up with the development. In this state of growing pressure upon the teachers, the full professors were content to have an increase in the number of younger staff-members, and the full-time staff was eager to be relieved by means of an increased use of part-time teaching assistants. Thus the pressure spread through the entire university system and beyond as the demand for qualified personnel far exceeded the supply.

The government tried to channel the avalanche of students. As it was not politically feasible to introduce a *numerus clausus*, the state instead tried to control the avalanche by creating new universities. One of the "hot" political issues of the 1960s consisted in the debates and decisions about the geographical location of these new institutions. As the University of Copenhagen was affected much more than Aarhus University, there was a lot of common sense behind the demand for a new university in the vicinity of the heavily populated metropolitan area. On the other hand, strong local interests pressed for the building of universities in the peripheral parts of Denmark. Many plans were discussed, many promises were made in the Folketing and many reversals occurred. The net result was the founding of three new universities, in Odense in 1966, Roskilde in 1972, and Aalborg in 1974 (Table I).

TABLE I

*Rates of Growth of the University System, 1955-70*

1955 = 1.0

Matriculation certificates	3.1
Students enrolled at the universities	5.5
New enrolments per year	5.3
Academic degrees awarded	3.1
Doctorates awarded	1.2
Full professors	1.9
Full-time teachers	3.4
Total number of teachers (full-time and part-time)	6.8

SOURCE: *Statistisk Årbog*, 1955 onwards.



It is difficult to estimate the impact of these developments on the quantity and quality of the research in the universities. This is the topic of much controversy in the Danish system today, but as there is no reliable information, the truth is anyone's guess.

It can be argued that what made the expansion of the university a political problem which started to concern persons inside and outside the university, was not the fact of growth, but the fact that this growth was beyond control of society. Furthermore it was a very uneven growth, which in a few years eroded the subtle equilibrium of the traditional, small university (Table II).

TABLE II  
*Critical Ratios in the University System*

	Percentage	
	1955	1970
Secondary school graduates as percentage of all adolescents (15-19 years)	1.1	2.9
New enrolments at universities as percentage of secondary school graduates	38.6	66.8
Academic degrees awarded as percentage of new enrolments	47.1	27.0
Doctorates awarded as percentage of academic degrees awarded	6.0	2.4
Full professors as percentage of all full-time teachers	30.0	17.0
Full professors as percentage of all students enrolled	3.0	1.1
All full-time teachers as percentage of all students enrolled	10.1	6.2
Public expenditures on universities as percentage of the budget of the Ministry of Education	5.3	9.0
Public expenditures on universities as percentage of total budget of the Danish state	0.6	1.4

SOURCE: *Statistisk Årbog*, 1955 onwards.

The year 1955 was probably representative of the stable Danish universities of the post-war period. The rates of growth differed widely across the sectors of the university. In this state of the system only a tiny fraction of the individual age-cohort was eligible for enrolment at the universities, and only a minority of the eligible began university training. Approximately half of the students finished their studies. The traditional hierarchy at the universities consisted of the full professors, who were assisted by a relatively small subordinate staff. Even if the professor was a greatly respected and somewhat distant person, seen from the perspective of the student, the teacher-student ratio was not so high as to preclude personal contacts among various groups.

The situation in 1970 was fundamentally different. The public expenditures used for university purposes had grown in importance, within the budget of the Ministry of Education as well as within the state budget. The still relatively small number of junior teachers, most of them very young, had emerged. But even with this influx of intermediate staff, the teacher-student ratio had deteriorated. The existing figures do not allow us to estimate whether the relative output of graduates had diminished, but they demonstrate convincingly that the university had changed its position *vis-à-vis* the eligible cohorts.

### *Unsuccessful Attempts to Cope with Disequilibrium*

In the sequence of events which in 1968 led to the student revolt and to the introduction in 1970 of a bill in the Folketing on the management of the universities, the deliberations in a governmental committee on university administration—Universitetsadministrationsudvalget of 1962—played a significant part. Most of the discussions about the future of the universities took place in and around this committee. The committee proposed a number of organisational innovations which established a framework for planning for the universities in the late 1960s and the 1970s. But, above all this, the committee acted as an arena for the emerging political conflicts in the universities, and as the catalyst for coalitions, which were to become decisive after the events of spring 1968.

The first step towards the long-term change in the balance between the university and the state was taken when the Minister of Education established the committee in 1962. Its two reports are important landmarks in the emergence of one of the most controversial political issues at present in Denmark, primarily because they did not produce practicable solutions.<sup>11</sup> A desire to make fundamental changes in the organisation of the universities and in the relationship between the state and the institutions of higher learning did not play any role at the time of the creation of this committee. It was created almost accidentally, as an offshoot of the work of another governmental committee.

In 1960, the Prime Minister had established a committee—Administrationsudvalget of 1960—the purpose of which was to provide principles for the future organisation of the central civil service. In 1962 this committee put forward a plan for the reorganisation of the Ministry of Education; no concrete proposals with regard to the relationship between universities and ministry were included, but the committee proposed the establishment of a new committee—Universitetsadministrationsudvalget of

<sup>11</sup> *Betænkning I om den højere undervisnings og forsknings administrative organisation*, Betænkning nr. 365 (Copenhagen: Statens Trykningskontor, 1964); *Betænkning II om den højere undervisnings og forsknings administrative organisation*, Betænkning nr. 475 (Copenhagen: Statens Trykningskontor, 1968). Hereafter these are referred to as *Betænkning I* and *Betænkning II*.

1962—which should be charged with a “study of the amount of administrative work done at the institutions of higher learning, and the question concerning the future distribution of tasks between the ministry and the institutions”.<sup>12</sup>

In accordance with the prevailing administrative doctrine at that time, much stress was laid on the need to decentralise the administration so that more tasks were moved away from the ministry and handed over to a strengthened and better co-ordinated set of inter-university bureaucracies. The committee, which was staffed with high civil servants and the rectors of the institutions of higher learning, was entrusted with a task which was intended to be mainly technical. It had, of course, a considerable political potential.

In 1964 it submitted its first report. *Betænkning I om den højere undervisnings og forskningens administrative organisation*. This report stressed the traditional autonomy of the universities and put forward several proposals, the purpose of which were to adjust administrative structures and procedures to “those demands, which the development in all educational sectors have created”.<sup>13</sup> The decentralisation of the administrative functions which had hitherto been handled in the ministry was to be aided by a strengthening of the administrative capacity of the universities. No intention was indicated of changing the governmental structure of the university; the creation of an intermediate agency between the universities and the ministry like the university chancellor in Sweden was explicitly warned against as a potential threat to university autonomy.

This first attempt to introduce changes in the situation of the universities did not change the control of the universities over their own affairs. It rather constituted an attempt to increase the administrative capacities of the relatively autonomous sector of higher education.

The committee introduced several new institutions, which, even if they were not to be charged with other than co-ordinative powers, nevertheless contained the potentiality for changing the relationship between the universities and their environment. It advocated a permanent co-ordinative committee of the rectors of the universities and a set of co-ordinative committees for the various branches of learning. A consultative committee for planning of the future development of the institutions of higher learning was created as was a new committee for research. All these committees were to have only consultative and co-ordinating power, but their creation and the representation of interests which were embodied in them, opened new possibilities of political discussion and contention.

While these proposals were acted on—some with enthusiasm, others with hesitation and delay—the committee proceeded with its task. On several

<sup>12</sup> *Administrationsudvalget af 1960, I, Betænkning, Betænkning nr. 301* (Copenhagen: Statens Trykningskontor, 1962), p. 31.

<sup>13</sup> *Betænkning I*, p. 43.

occasions it was enlarged, as it approached the more controversial problems of the organisation of the universities. A student representative was appointed in 1964, and in 1965 a representative of the professional organisations, acting on behalf of the non-professorial teachers, was appointed. At the same time the concern of the committee changed from technical feasibility to political feasibility. The committee became an arena for encounters between the various categories of university teachers and students, and its deliberations, which became widely known, provided matter for the internal debate in the universities.

The committee published its final report, *Betænkning II om den højere undervisnings forskningens administrative organisation*, in early 1968, a short time before the upheaval in the spring of that year. The report was rendered obsolete by subsequent events. It has, however, a certain interest, because it laid open the cleavages and conflicts which had appeared in the 1960s among the various categories of university teachers. It provides a description of the situation immediately before the turmoil started.

The pressure on the universities and their administration had increased considerably since 1964. It was still considered appropriate at that time to recommend strengthening of the administrative resources of the universities in order to make it possible for them to practise their traditional self-government efficiently. Decentralisation and co-ordination through mutual consultation between the universities were still the guiding principles.

The relationship between the various categories of university teachers had, however, turned into a serious and important problem, which had to be "solved" one way or the other by the committee, even if such a task was beyond its original terms of reference. By 1968 the ratio of full professors to other teachers had changed drastically, and everyone had become aware of the exponential growth in this disparity. The institutions of higher learning, which traditionally had been able to recruit some of the best minds in Danish society, could in this situation rapidly lose their competitive advantage, simply for the reason that they were not able to provide career opportunities for the recruits. At the same time the younger staff, who had been recruited during the 1960s, found it increasingly difficult to work in a system in which a single individual—the professor—possessed the ultimate power to decide on every professional matter, large or small, and where the many tedious administrative tasks of rapidly growing institutions were delegated to teachers who sometimes felt intellectually superior to the professor. Against the background of the gloomy prospects of the late 1960s, many younger staff-members foresaw a promotionless future. Their response was to demand the right to participate in the exercise of authority without as yet fundamentally contesting the superior position of the professors.

These demands were raised in moderate terms but with increasing force as the committee continued its work, and the majority of the committee

apparently decided to take a firm stand on the issue. The core of the committee, consisting of the original members, stated the position of the majority in no uncertain terms:

At the present moment it is only full professors and their peers who at most institutions are members of the collegiate bodies. The committee is of the opinion that the professors ought also in the future to possess the ultimate responsibility for the development of their field of knowledge with regard to teaching as well as research activities. The committee does, however, find that the experience and inspiration, which is present among the other categories of qualified teachers, ought to be involved in the process of making decisions. It is furthermore of importance to stimulate the interest for and understanding of the general problems of the institution among these teachers.<sup>14</sup>

The implication of the principle of the benevolent and controlled co-optation, which was embodied in these phrases, called for the construction of a new hierarchy of ranks in the university structure. The committee proposed that in the future the recruits to academic posts should have open to them a career which would lead from the position of assistant professor on limited tenure (*amanuensis*) to the position as lecturer (*lektor*), on permanent appointment. Promotion to a higher level of associate professorship (*docent*, *afdelingsleder*, *afdelingsprofessor*) was to depend upon special, rather strict procedures and should furthermore be dependent on the existence of vacancies. The substance of the position of the full professor was not to undergo any change, according to the proposal. A crucial feature of this plan, in which a new rank of associate professor was introduced between the ranks of lecturer and professor, was that the ratio of professors to other teachers would remain as it was. The creation of a new rank in the hierarchy would make it possible to start a gradual and controlled co-optation of the associate professors into the exercise of authority, without undermining the traditional status of the professor.

This detailed plan, one which would have preserved a clearly hierarchical structure had it been realised, was attacked by a heterogenous minority in the committee. First, the representative of the younger staff criticised the arithmetic of the plan and proposed a ratio of professors to other teachers in which the proportion of full professors would be raised to 40–50 per cent. of all positions. This representative furthermore proposed that all teachers should have an equal voice in elections.

This new "principle of integration" as it was called, was supported by the rector of the University of Copenhagen, Mogens Fog, who on this vital point dissociated himself from his colleagues. A third party to the coalition was the student representative, who demanded equal suffrage for all members of the academic staff, as well as eligibility of all teachers to all administrative posts from the chairmanship of the institute to rectorship of the university.<sup>15</sup> It was the attitude of the majority which precipitated the

<sup>14</sup> *Betænkning II*, p. 33.

<sup>15</sup> See *Betænkning II*, p. 67–73, for the most important minority opinions.

formation of this three-cornered coalition of students, younger teachers, and the rector of the University of Copenhagen—who also represented the position of a number of his colleagues. This coalition became a crucial factor in developments after 1968.

The committee also dealt with the problem of student representation in the various governing bodies of the university. The demand for such representation was not insistent at the time, and the reason for the inclusion of a student in the committee as early as 1964 seems primarily to have been a wish to further the flow of information. The committee noted that students in many places had been given an informal right of consultation about curricular matters, and it emphasised the value of such consultative participation. The committee also stressed, however, that participation should be restricted to certain fields and that the “principal right and duty” of participation should not necessarily be practised in a uniform way, but might differ from university to university with regard to form and content.<sup>16</sup>

These proposals were endorsed unanimously by the committee. A few months before the student revolt, this issue was not controversial in Denmark. The student representative in his minority report did not discuss the possibility of an increase in student participation, nor did other dissenters in the committee.

The historical significance of this committee is not to be found in its organisational innovations, nor in the originality and depth of its deliberations. Its significance lies in its contribution to the conflict between the professors and the other teachers. The conflict would have arisen, even if this committee had not existed. Nevertheless, the deliberations within the committee, its public statements and its surreptitious “leaks”, did help to make the universities into a political issue. The most important feature of the attempted reorganisation of the 1960s is the fact that it was an affair of the universities and the Ministry of Education. Parliament was not at all involved in the matter. The university had not yet become a political issue. Politicians only reacted when the problems of the university were taken out into the streets in the spring of 1968.

### *The Years of Agitation*

Shortly after the Ministry of Education had submitted the report of the Universitetsadministrationsudvalget of 1962 to the universities and had requested that they begin a revision of their statutes along the lines of the recommendation, the international student agitation spread to Denmark.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> *Betænkning II*, pp. 34, 55–56.

<sup>17</sup> For a short description, see Blegvad, Mogens and Jeppesen, Steen Leth, “Danish Universities in Transition”, in Seabury, Paul (ed.), *Universities in the Western World* (N.Y.: The Free Press, 1975), pp. 184–185. A more complete description is contained in *Beretning vedrørende den af Undervisningsministeriet overfor amanuensis, cand. jur.*

It started in late March 1968 at the department of psychology in Copenhagen. The numbers of students in this department had grown greatly during the 1960s, and the conditions of study probably had deteriorated more than in other university departments. In a few days a series of meetings, "sit-ins", and demonstrations had mobilised large groups of students inside as well as outside the department. The leaders of the student organisations lost control of the movement, actions arose from motions proposed at mass meetings.<sup>18</sup> The agitation was a quiet one with no bloodshed, only minor confrontations with the police, and few attempts to occupy university buildings or embarrass teachers. It was decidedly an affair of the television, radio and press,<sup>19</sup> and many of the skirmishes were fought out in the Copenhagen newspapers.

The Danish student agitation was not a political uprising against government, constitutional principles, the United States, or capitalism. In its first and crucial phases it primarily aimed at the creation of a new kind of university government.<sup>20</sup> Early in the history of the movement, the radicals attacked what they called "positivist tendencies". Under the slogan, "Research for the People—not for Profits", they opened a broader attack; nevertheless, a general critique of the structure of Danish society along Marxist lines only became a feature of the movement well into the 1970s.

From the negative "Down with the Rule of Professors", the psychology students went on to "Influence—NOW", and at the end of the first week of meetings the "principle of parity" had been discovered. The students demanded the creation of study boards—*studienævn*—composed of equal numbers of students and teachers, irrespective of rank, and they demanded that the legal control of the professors over curricular matters should be transferred to these boards.<sup>21</sup> This demand, which absorbed—and thus diminished the importance of—the demand for integration, which had been raised earlier by the university teachers of a lower rank, soon became the main article of the student platform. It provided a substantial basis for the cooperation of students and junior teachers, for it was strong and simple enough to appeal to radicals as well as to all those who believed that a

*Erik Høgh beordrede disciplinærundersøgelse—afgivet af landsdommer Fritz Møller* (Copenhagen: Statens Trykningskontor, 1973). Important documents relating to the events of spring 1968 are published in Hansen, Bente and Jacobsen, H. H. (eds.), *Studereroprøret* (Copenhagen: Gjøellerup, 1968).

<sup>18</sup> In Aarhus the chairman of the student organisation explicitly warned against "actions, strikes, and obstruction" in early April in the newsletter of the students of the University: *AT*, 6 (April 1968). Outside Copenhagen the new radical movement only gained momentum much later in 1968 and in 1969.

<sup>19</sup> The events of March at the University of Copenhagen thus were ignited by a column in the Copenhagen daily, *Information*, 20 March, 1968, which asked "Are Danish students too apathetic to revolt against the system?". This newspaper continued to play an agitational role during the following period.

<sup>20</sup> The "apolitical" character of the movement was acknowledged by several of the founders, see, e.g., the statement of Carl Weltzer in *VS-bulletin* (September 1968).

<sup>21</sup> A vivid chronicle of the meeting, in which the principle of parity was formulated as a basis for action, can be found in *AT*, 6 (April 1968).

confrontation between equals necessarily culminates in compromise. The students' demand for openness and publicity in the hitherto confidential deliberations also appealed to many junior teachers.

While the government held back and studiously tried to avoid commitments,<sup>22</sup> the political lead was taken by the rector of the University of Copenhagen, Mogens Fog.<sup>23</sup> He had, partly as a result of his dissenting attitude in the Universitetsadministrationsudvalget, a large following among the younger staff. By means of a shrewd tactic of partly scolding, partly conciliating public oratory at mass meetings, he quickly won the devotion and respect of many students. He played a crucial historical role when he mediated between the students and the professors of psychology in a way which gave the students what they wanted, namely a board of studies based on the principle of parity. He also promised to begin negotiations for a general reform on the lines laid down during the conflict in the department of psychology.

Not least as a result of the effort of Mogens Fog, a series of new principles and institutions were accepted by the university authorities during the spring of 1968. A system of dual authority was created; much of the power of the professors was transferred to the new boards of studies in which parity of representation prevailed; meetings in the various committees, especially the study boards, became public—and often crowded and noisy—gatherings. During this tumultuous period many professors continued to fight for their privileges, even when the battle was over. Others tried to strike a balance, and quite a few joined the cause of the students wholeheartedly or prudently. Many of the junior teachers probably had second thoughts as they discovered that their initiative had been lost to the radical students. Attempts to mediate between unyielding professors and aggressive students were ineffectual; the failure accentuated the polarisation, which forced every university teacher to choose sides in the conflict.

At all the institutions of higher education, local negotiations were carried out in the course of the following year. The results differed widely. In some cases the new arrangements clashed with the statutes which were still in force. This was true especially of the statutes, worked out at the University of Copenhagen, which departed from traditional patterns of university management.<sup>24</sup>

The Ministry of Education deliberately refrained from an active role

<sup>22</sup> See parliamentary question to the Minister of Education in April 1968, *Folketingstidende* 1967–78. *Forhandlinger*, col. 2107.

<sup>23</sup> The rector of the University of Copenhagen, Mogens Fog, was a neurologist who had a political past as a former leading communist, as a leader in the resistance movement, and as a former minister in the Liberation Cabinet, 1945. His views on university problems in 1968 were published in Fog, Mogens, *Universitetsproblemer—nu og i morgen* (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1968).

<sup>24</sup> A short description of the very complex historical development can be found in *Folketingstidende*, 1969–70 *Tillæg A*, cols. 2095 ff.



during this period. It only tried to make sure that certain minimal concessions were made by the university authorities to the demands of students and of junior teachers. It did move the organisational process further along the way by issuing a series of "experimental" statutes for higher educational institutions. At the same time, the cabinet decided to put forward a bill in the Folketing during the session of 1969–70. It was therefore only after the institutions of higher learning themselves had reached a more or less agreed settlement that the legislators were called upon to decide. Their task was necessarily mainly one of codifying and making the new arrangements uniform. Almost by necessity they would tend to define their role as giving approval to decisions already made.

### *The Years of Codification*

In January 1970, the Minister of Education put forward in parliament a bill on university government. It embodied those principles which had been agreed upon during the deliberations between students and university authorities at the University of Copenhagen, the university which had gone furthest to satisfy the demands of the students.

The tripartite government,<sup>25</sup> which put forward the bill, stressed that its purpose was to lay down certain principles of university government. The two most important principles were the following: First, that the membership *ex officio* of the full professors in the faculty councils and other governing bodies should cease; the professors and other full-time teachers should be equal in voting power and in their eligibility to serve on academic governing bodies. Second, that the students should be guaranteed a shared influence and responsibility for their own education by the establishment of boards of studies composed equally of teachers and students, and by giving the right to control one third of the seats in the other governing bodies such as the senate (*Konsistorium*), faculty boards, and the boards of the institutes.<sup>26</sup>

The bill, which laid out the structure of the university government in great detail and which set forth particularly elaborate rules for the election of members of the various councils and boards, met with some resistance in parliament.<sup>27</sup> However, sponsored by a moderate government, which included the conservative elements in the Folketing, it was not criticised as going too far in the direction of giving new groups the right of participation. The criticism of the bill originated among the parties of the opposition, and so it continued throughout the debate. In the final division on the Folketing, the bill was supported only by the three governmental parties,

<sup>25</sup> This majority cabinet, which was formed in 1968, was composed of the Radical Liberals, the Liberals, and the Conservatives.

<sup>26</sup> The bill, with a detailed commentary, is in *Folketingstidende 1969–70, Tillæg A*, cols. 2081–2112.

<sup>27</sup> *Folketingstidende 1969–70, Forhandlinger*, cols. 2591–2597; 3291–3327; 6325–6368; 6662–6663.

the Liberals, the Conservatives, and the Radical Liberals. In the final vote, the three opposition parties either voted against the proposal, or abstained. The opposition parties did not consider the bill satisfactory in its application of the principles of representation and distribution of powers. The spokesman of the largest opposition party, the Social Democrats, compared the situation at the universities to that which Danish society had experienced, when the absolutist monarchy gave way to a limited participatory system in 1830. The Social Democrats desired an ideal university constitution based upon the principle of "one man—one vote", but as they admitted that this was not politically feasible, they supported the demand of the Danish Students Federation (Danske Studerendes Fællesrad) for parity in every governing body. Since this and other amendments were not accepted by the government, the Social Democrats (Socialdemokratiet) and the Left Socialists (Venstresocialisterne), a small left-wing party, voted against the bill. The third party of the left, the People's Socialists (Socialistisk Folkeparti) was prepared to proceed directly to what was termed "real and true democratisation", i.e. the "one man—one vote" system, which at that time was being discussed in the Finnish parliament.

Parliament had never before dealt with university problems in detail, and most of the legislators were unfamiliar with the highly complex problems of university government. Uncertainty seemed combined with relief that the university authorities had themselves provided parts of the organisational framework during the confrontations of 1968 and 1969. In many ways the enactment of the bill confirmed the right of participation, which had been conceded to the students and the junior staff in the earlier negotiations. Parliament tended to treat the entire issue as one of the democratisation of a large public institution. No attempts were made to analyse and discuss the probable consequences for teaching and research in the Danish universities. The principal disagreement in the debate was over the rate of further extensions of the right to participate in the government of the university. The conservatives and liberals in parliament hesitated, while the socialists and radicals pressed for further alterations, but everyone agreed that all categories of teachers and the students were entitled to have a voice. Apart from this issue, only the principles of student organisation and election procedures were debated at length.<sup>28</sup>

The Management of the Universities Act (*Lov om universiteternes styrelse*) created a new pattern of university government.<sup>29</sup> It was not an unambiguous pattern. The division of power between the boards of faculties

<sup>28</sup> According to the initial proposal, the representatives of the students were to be elected by the students' organisations. This principle of indirect election was abandoned during the legislative process, as was an attempt by the Minister of Education to control the students' organisations by means of the requirement that the statutes of these organisations had to be approved by the Minister. These two issues were debated with much more eagerness than the other more fundamental principles.

<sup>29</sup> The full text of the 1970 Universities Act with a commentary is contained in Hansen, Knud Espen, *Universiteternes styrelseslov* (Copenhagen: Gad, 1971).

and institutes on one hand, and the boards of studies on the other, was only vaguely indicated. The Act was soon interpreted in very different ways. In some sectors of the universities, business went on almost as usual, while in other sectors the rules were interpreted as meaning that boards of the studies were the chief authorities. Both students and teachers were discontented.

The Universities Act contained no rules concerning the duties of the individual teachers, the hierarchy of ranks, and the careers which could be made in this hierarchy. The Universitetsadministrationsudvalget had treated these issues. Nonetheless, although problems concerning the functions of academic positions were not given much attention during the turbulent years, they were not forgotten. A committee of representatives of ministries, universities, and professional and student organisations (Stillingsstrukturudvalget af 1969) was requested to propose a description of the functions of the various categories of teachers. The work of this committee came down to a series of negotiations among universities and with the professional unions. The negotiations between the ministries and the professional unions were continued after the committee had published its report in 1970,<sup>30</sup> and in 1972 a government circular which dealt with the matter in detail was issued.<sup>31</sup>

The new rules combined elements of the existing structure with some new organisational arrangements. Their purpose was to simplify a hierarchical structure, which had grown beyond control during the expansionist years of the 1960s. A hierarchy in three tiers was introduced. The prospective university teacher would in the future begin his career as an *adjunkt*.<sup>32</sup> After four years on a probationary appointment, he might be promoted to a position on permanent tenure as *lektor* on the basis of his scholarly and pedagogical achievements. Promotion to the third rank of *professor* was, as hitherto, dependent on available vacancies and collegiate evaluation. It was stressed that no change in the criteria of appointment was intended.

The functions of each of the three categories of teachers were elaborated in the circular. They differed with respect to the training thought appropriate, the difficulty of educational tasks each category performed, the amount of evaluation contained in the tasks and their conduct of research. It was, however, explicitly and somewhat contradictorily stated that in principle all teachers, irrespective of rank, should be able to perform all types of task, as decided by the institution's authorities, in accordance with existing rules of university government.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>30</sup> *Betænkning om stillingsstrukturen ved Universiteterne og de højere læreanstalter* (Copenhagen: Statens Trykningskontor, 1970).

<sup>31</sup> *Cirkulæreskrivelse af 31. maj 1972*, printed in *Ministerialtidende*, 1972, pp. 285-290.

<sup>32</sup> The new Danish structure has some resemblance with the American. The American equivalent is the assistant professor on limited tenure.

<sup>33</sup> In extension of this declaration the circular also decided in principle the proportions of working time to be spent on teaching, research, and administration (45, 45 and 10 per cent.). This principle of allocation was to be valid for the larger group of academic

With these rules, the working conditions of the individual teacher were adjusted to the new principles of government. Although a considerable amount of leeway was left for the individual and the governing bodies at the lower levels, the new rules, nevertheless, formalised relationships, which had in practice hitherto been left to the discretion of the professors or had been grounded in tradition. More important, the right to determine these working conditions was no longer left solely to the university authorities, but was made part of the general system of contractual negotiations. The balance of power between the state and the then rather strong unions of the academic professions would in the future determine the rights and duties of the individual university teacher among those questions which could be negotiated, for example, in the planning of the state budget. This prospect, however, was not prominent in the early 1970s when the academic unions were at the peak of their bargaining powers.

### *The Revision of 1973*

The Universities Act was intended to be revised during the parliamentary session of 1972–73. The revision was based upon the experiences reported by the universities and the other affected organisations to the Ministry of Education. It had turned out that the university act of 1970 had many ambiguities which not only created confusion at the universities and an administrative burden on the ministry, but had also been used by the various groups in the universities in very different ways. The revision was therefore mainly technical, but it had certain political overtones. By 1973 the new arrangements had been in operation for several years. Many difficulties and outright acts of obstruction had delayed the application of the various provisions of the Universities Act,<sup>34</sup> but compared to the period before 1970 these years had been relatively calm. There were only a few instances of open and serious conflict. The most prominent was a conflict which had started in 1969 at the Institute of Sociology in Copenhagen. A complaint by students against a group of teachers grew in a short time into a deep cleavage in the Institute, intervention by the police, the judiciary, and the Ombudsman. The case was discussed in the Folketing on several occasions, and it probably played an important role in forming the opinion of the legislators, who did not heed the old proverb that it is too late to lock the stable door after the horse has been stolen.<sup>35</sup>

Apart from the clarification of those articles which dealt with the distribution of powers among the various governing bodies, the Minister of Education proposed a new clause which authorised him to establish provisional rules for bodies which did not function in accordance with the rules laid down in the Universities Act. This clause, which was a response to the

employees, not for the individual teacher. It was later revised as part of a budget-cutting compromise and for the time being it is 50, 40 and 10 per cent.

<sup>34</sup> See further Blegvad, M. and Jeppesen, S. L., *op. cit.*, pp. 188–189.

<sup>35</sup> A detailed analysis of this incident is contained in *Beretning vedrørende . . .*

conflict in the Institute of Sociology, somewhat restricted the powers of the minister, since it made ministerial action dependent upon recommendation by the university senate.

The new law, the Management of Institutions of Higher Education Act (*Lov om Styrelse af højere uddannelsesinstitutioner*)<sup>36</sup> was to apply to all institutions of higher education in Denmark, and not only the universities; it contained two important new features, which were products of the close cooperation of the Minister of Education and the parliamentary committee on education. It did not change the position of the egalitarian boards of studies, but it created a new body, the central board of studies (*centralstudienævn*) with far-reaching if vaguely defined powers to co-ordinate, control, and even annul decisions of the ordinary boards of studies. The central board of studies was to exercise its powers within the readings of the faculty, or "principal field" (*hovedområde*) as the new terminology had it; it too was composed according to the principle of parity.

The second important amendment consisted of the extension of the rights of participation to the technical and administrative employees. The entire technical staff was to be represented in the senate, the faculty boards, and the boards of the institutes. In order to include this category without fundamentally altering the balance between teachers and students or the size of the boards, the distribution of seats among the groups was changed from a 2:1 ratio to a 2:1:1 ratio. Students as well as teachers had to accept this restriction in order to create room for the representatives of the technical and administrative staff.

The revision of 1973 was supported by all the parties in parliament, ranging from the Conservatives to the Socialist People's Party.<sup>37</sup> Only two members abstained in the final division. It was implied that with the latest amendments a more permanent solution had been obtained. In the legal commentary, which was issued by the Ministry of Education, it was said proudly—with relief, but definitely without foresight—that:

The act thus puts a temporary end to more than 10 years of discussion about the management of the institutions of higher education. Temporary, because no set of rules is final. An end, because, it is to be expected that the broadly based agreement in the Folketing will have such a consequence that it will be quite a long time before the question is raised again, partly also because the Act does not contain a clause concerning revision.<sup>38</sup>

### *The Basic Principles of the Universities Act: Formalities and Realities*

The law on the management of the institutions of higher education—I shall continue to refer to it as the Universities Act, even though this is not

<sup>36</sup> The full text with a detailed commentary has been published in *Uddannelse*, no. 7a-73 (Copenhagen: Undervisningsministeriet, 1973). The Danish title is *Lov om Styrelse af højere uddannelsesinstitutioner*. See also this issue of *Minerva*, Reports and Documents, pp. 377-386.

<sup>37</sup> *Folketingstidende 1972-73, Forhandlinger*, col. 4022 ff, 7002 ff and 7230.

<sup>38</sup> *Uddannelse*, no. 7a-73, p. 7.

quite precise—is a comprehensive document, which lays down the principles and rules according to which academic institutions are to govern themselves. Although the Act contains many detailed regulations, it still has the character of a framework, which has to be supplemented by statutes and standard rules of procedure. These subsidiary rules are adopted by each institution, according to its special situation and its view of its own needs, but they must be approved by the Minister of Education.

The Act is rather complicated. The organisational maze which it has created does not lend itself to description in the same terms as can be used in the case of other public or private organisations. It is impossible to describe either the organisational system of the university, or the relationship between university and government, as hierarchical in the usual sense. This unique legal pattern was produced by means of compromise made in many places and at various times. Neither in 1970 nor in 1973 did the Danish parliament discuss and agree on a formal set of principles and it never discussed the possible goals, means, and consequences of future courses of action.

Duality is the basic organisational feature of the Danish university system. While the traditional university structure was characterised by the concentration of all powers in the hierarchy of senate, faculty board, and professorial chairs, the new structure splits the powers and the responsibilities in two sectors, namely the educational sector, and the managerial and research sector. Inside each sector there is no hierarchical structure of governing bodies in a strict sense. In some instances the Act prescribes such a hierarchical relationship, in other cases the power of, for example, the boards of studies and central board of studies are exclusive and final; in a third category the relationship is probably best described as one of overlapping or shared powers. Neither is it possible to state that the two sectors have mutually exclusive powers. Even though the revision of 1973 created a more distinct division of powers, the senate and other related boards are still entrusted with important roles in the exercise of educational authority. Furthermore the rectors have been given a rather important, albeit ambiguous and not very well-defined position; they are entrusted with certain powers of control *vis-à-vis* the collegiate bodies, although they are elected and in some cases re-elected by these same bodies.

This duality was not the outcome of rational deliberations. It arose during the years of the student agitation. The establishment of separate boards of studies was a response to the students' demand for participation and also a line of defence for the traditional faculty board of the professors. The principle of duality has never been discussed; indeed discussion seems to have been deliberately avoided.

Apart from the complexity of this organisational structure, which makes it a heaven for bureaucrats, its main feature is the absence of mutually exclusive powers in the various bodies. In the official legal commentary

further clarification of the statutes and other secondary regulations is foreseen; but, as the commentary adds, "even if these rules are made very clear, the system will not be able to function, if a certain measure of flexibility and goodwill is not present".<sup>89</sup>

A second basic principle is "integration of the teaching staff". According to this principle, all teachers and other scientific personnel are given equal rights to participate in the governing bodies of the institution. A few minor legal restrictions exist, the most important being that the rectors and the pro-rectors must be full professors or lecturers. This principle is no longer disputed, although the conflict between the various categories of teachers before 1970 was about exactly this principle; a small number of professors still are holding to the opinion of the majority of the Universitetsadministrationsudvalg. Today many full professors do not participate at all in university government. Of five rectors serving at present in Denmark only two are full professors. Most of the deans, *i.e.* chairmen of the faculty boards, are elected from among the lecturers.

Even if this principle is generally accepted today, its realisation in the daily life of the university is not without problems. As the equality of participation in the government of the university was not followed by an equality of the professional tasks within the academic world, nor by an equality of external status, it is no secret that elements of the traditional ruling structure still exist to some extent. But now they survive in a more subtle and informal way which allows for cooperation and formation of new types of coalitions within the teaching staff. The application of the "principle of integration" in the Danish universities was a hard blow to many professors who had served before 1970, and the wounds inflicted at that time are still not entirely healed. To some the reform did, however, mean relief, not defeat.

The third basic principle is that of "participation". Every person who holds an appointed position at the university, irrespective of status and function, and every student, irrespective of his standing in the university and his performance as a student, is entitled to participate in elections both as voter and as candidate for representatives of his own "estate".

This principle, which became a reality in 1973, was from the very beginning of the political controversy the central issue of university reform. Yet, in official documents, including the records of the Folketing, there is no serious attempt to discuss the rationale of the principle and its varying applications in the dual structure. "Parity" was a war cry of the students after 1968, but it was never considered a final goal for the student movement. There was never any discussion of why the university should be considered a multitude of corporate interests, any more than there was a serious discussion of why it should be considered a multitude of equal individuals. Only a few of the professors who were appointed before 1968

<sup>89</sup> *Uddannelse*, no. 7a-73, p. 13.

have raised these fundamental problems, but little attention has been given to their lonely voices.<sup>40</sup>

The decision about the composition of senate, and faculty boards, the application of the principle in the form of the ratio 2:1, and later 2:1:1, was no more than a pragmatic political compromise. In 1973 both students and teachers acquiesced in the entry of the technical assistants onto the boards, but the concession was probably based more on tactical and pragmatic considerations than on principles of justice or equality.

A fourth principle, which was introduced in 1970 and affirmed in 1973, was that of publicity. The business of the university had been conducted before 1970 in meetings which were not open to the public; students, technical assistants and lower-ranking teachers were excluded. The only exception was the requirement that the written evaluations of applicants for full professorships should be published. The publicity of university deliberations was a major objective of the students after 1968, as it was for many younger teachers. During the turbulent years 1968 and 1970 this demand was complied with at many institutions. It was therefore a foregone conclusion for the law-makers that "the meetings shall be public unless, on account of the nature of the matter or the circumstances as such, it is considered necessary or desirable that discussions take place in camera."<sup>41</sup> But since no rules were laid down in the Universities Act to define infringements, the principle of publicity has in some places been interpreted as meaning that anyone who wishes to speak, be it an elected member or not, is free to do so.

One of the effects of the Universities Act has been an excessive use of time for all participants in the governing bodies. A large number of boards and committees with a large number of members meet frequently and often for long periods. This fact is uncontested. The meetings of the boards of studies are especially time-consuming, even though there are signs that a certain equilibrium is approached as the work becomes routine.<sup>42</sup>

The excessive use of time in the boards of studies can be traced back to the principle of parity. The fundamental idea, which was laid down in the Act of 1970, called for an equal division of seats. This principle was never considered by parliament as more than an expedient way to reconcile opposing interests. The arguments in its favour were derived from the belief that teachers and students are two internally homogeneous groups with sometimes converging, sometimes conflicting interests. Conflicts between these two groups were to be resolved by intensive discussion and compromise.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>40</sup> For a critical discussion of the principle, see Ross, Alf, *Demokrati, Magt og Ret* (Copenhagen: Lindhardt og Ringhof), pp. 39-58.

<sup>41</sup> *Universities Act*, para. 24.

<sup>42</sup> This problem is analysed in Pedersen, Mogens N. and Rasmussen, Poul, "Tidsforbruget ved studienævnssarbejde", *Økonomi og Politik*, XLIX, 3 (1975), pp. 219-229.

<sup>43</sup> Goldschmidt, E., *Student Participation in the CCC Member Countries in 1973*



It soon turned out that the realities of the Danish universities did not correspond to this ideal. In some places, primarily in the sciences, conflicts were not so common, and the teachers and students have both in general felt satisfied. In some places, however, a sharp polarisation has occurred, which has led to deterioration in standards of teaching, stalemates and delaying action. On some matters, where delays could not be suffered, in particular in connection with the appointment of part-time teachers, the Ministry of Education responded to widespread dissatisfaction by promulgating detailed and precise rules. These rules, amongst other things, prohibited the appointment of students to positions as teaching assistants and thus put an end to the practice which had grown up in many of the appointing boards of studies.<sup>44</sup>

A rather common pattern of the resolution of conflict, at least in the humanities and the social sciences, has been when one or both of the two groups have split up. In most boards of studies the students have tended to vote and act as a block; if only one teacher joined this block, the students would be in the majority. At some institutions, such as Roskilde University Centre, this asymmetrical pattern became predominant. Voting in blocks is not usual in the central boards of studies. Most winning coalitions consist of a large group of students voting in unison with a smaller or larger fraction of teachers.<sup>45</sup>

Some observers tend to see the new system as approaching a democratic ideal. For many, peaceful co-existence and collaboration, based upon a broad consensus, is seen as the primary goal, and they think it is being approached by the new system of university government. Others tend to take gloomier views, stressing the persistence of conflict and the deterioration of scholarly standards. There is evidence that conflict, indicated by the occurrence of formal divisions, is a much more frequent phenomenon in the humanities—and in the social sciences—than in the more exact sciences (Table III), and that the business of the senate is relatively politicised.

The same tendencies are visible in the composition of the winning coalitions in these divisions. None of the three main groups in the governing bodies can command a minimal majority. If the groups were internally cohesive, either the students or the technical assistants would have to support the teachers in order to produce a decision. Such a cohesive pattern, however, seldom occurs. In the senate of Odense University it never once occurred during the two years, and in the faculty boards the frequency of

(Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 1975), p. 8, reflects this outlook. The author is a high-ranking civil servant in the Danish Ministry of Education.

<sup>44</sup> See *Bekendtgørelse af 14. maj 1975 om ansættelse af deltidsbeskæftigede undervisningsassistenter og hjælpelærere ved de højere uddannelsesinstitutioner*, in *Lovtidende*, 1975, pp. 583–585.

<sup>45</sup> Rasmussen, Poul, *En undersøgelse af samarbejdet i konsistorium, fakultetsråd og centralstudienævn ved Odense Universitet efter styrelseslovens gennemførelse i 1970*, unpublished thesis (Odense University, 1976).

TABLE III  
*Decisions by Formal Divisions,  
 Odense University, 1973-75*

Body	Period	Decision with division, percentage	Number of decisions
Senate	September 1973 – November 1975	17	412
Faculty Board, Humanities	—	20	529
Faculty Board, Sciences	—	8	498
Faculty Board, Medicine	April 1974 – November 1975	5	286
Central Board of Studies, Humanities	May 1974 – November 1975	14	236
Central Board of Studies, Sciences	December 1974 – November 1975	3	142
Central Board of Studies, Medicine	April 1974 – November 1975	1	201

SOURCE: Calculated from data in Rasmussen, Poul, *En undersøgelse af samarbejdet i konsistorium, fakultetsråd og centralstudienoevn ved Odense Universitet efter styrelseslovens gennemførelse i 1970*, unpublished thesis (Odense University, 1976).

such block voting was less than 10 per cent.<sup>46</sup> Thus in most divisions at least one of the three groups splintered to some degree, and often all of them did so at the same time (Table IV).

Many of the technical assistants, who serve on governing bodies of the university, do not regard themselves as responsible for voting as members of a homogeneous group.<sup>47</sup> Cleavages exist between full professors and the lower-ranking staff, between full-time and part-time teachers, and, of course, between representatives of the various professions and disciplines. To some extent the students divide according to field of specialisation, and to a minor extent also according to a vague kind of party affiliation, with a small group of "moderate students" acting in some universities as an opposition to the official—i.e. radical—student position (Table IV).

<sup>46</sup> Rasmussen, P., *op. cit.*

<sup>47</sup> See Arnoldus, Marly and Klöcker-Larsen, Liza, *TAP-undersøgelsen. Undersøgelse af medarbejderrepræsentationen i kollegiale organer ved højere uddannelsesinstitutioner, Delrapport 1976* (Copenhagen: Institut for Organisation og Arbejdssociologi, 1976) mimeographed.

TABLE IV

*The Composition of Winning Coalitions in Governing Bodies:  
Odense University, September 1973 – November 1975*

Coalition with participation of:	Senate	Faculty Board, Humanities	Faculty Board, Sciences	Faculty Board, Medicine <sup>a</sup>
Teachers only	5%	17%	7%	0%
Teachers and Students	19%	34%	24%	0%
Teachers and Technical Assistants	18%	7%	5%	15%
Teachers, Students, and Technical Assistants	58%	42%	63%	85%
All (N=divisions)	100% (67)	100% (83)	99% (41)	100% (13)

<sup>a</sup> The Faculty of Medicine was only established in April 1974.

SOURCE: Calculated from data in Rasmussen, P., *op. cit.*

### *The Confrontation at Roskilde*

While the Universities Act of 1973 was being carried out at the universities, dramatic events were taking place in Danish society.

The Danish party system had been very stable ever since its main features were established in the first quarter of the twentieth century.<sup>48</sup> The four "old" parties had always controlled between 80 per cent. and 90 per cent. of the votes and the parliamentary seats. Minor parties beyond the periphery of these main collaborating and competing parties were only able to acquire a marginal influence on governmental coalitions and their policies. In the election of December 1973 this equilibrium was fundamentally changed.<sup>49</sup> All the five parties in parliament were outrightly rejected by the voters. In the election, which was preceded by a short and acrimonious campaign and which brought out 89 per cent. of the voters, the incumbent parties lost from 21 to 45 per cent. of their voters. The new Progressive Party (Fremskridtpartiet), which had been founded the previous year by the charismatic lawyer, Mogens Glistrup, won the electoral contest with 16 per cent. of the votes, which in the fragmented party system was enough to raise the new party into the position of the second largest in the Folketing.

<sup>48</sup> Damgaard, Erik, "Stability and Change in the Danish Party System over Half a Century", *Scandinavian Political Studies*, IX (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1974), pp. 103-125.

<sup>49</sup> Borre, Ole, "Denmark's Protest Election of December 1973", *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 9/1974, (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1974), pp. 197-204.

Besides the Progressive Party four minor parties also gained representation; the total number of parties represented thus increased from five to ten.

The majority which had carried through the revision of the Universities Act in 1973 no longer existed. At least three of the new parties—the Progressive Party was the most outspoken—had campaigned on the university issue as part of a general anti-Marxist programme. As soon as parliament met in session, a barrage of parliamentary questions and other public statements signalled that the compromise of 1973 might be short-lived.

The main target of the attacks was the Roskilde University Centre (RUC). This new “experimental” institution became a political symbol of great importance early in its life, and especially so just before and after the 1973 election. From the specific criticism, which was directed against the Roskilde University Centre, grew a more general discontent with the university legislation itself. By many outside observers Roskilde University Centre was considered a frightening example of what might happen at other universities.

Roskilde University Centre was a product of the rapid expansion of the entire university system. Its primary *raison d'être* was to relieve the pressure on the overcrowded University of Copenhagen. In the legislation, which laid the legal foundation for Roskilde University Centre, it was said that “a university centre will be created near Roskilde as soon as possible”.<sup>50</sup> No one in the Folketing discussed seriously the possible meanings of the term “university centre”, nor was there a discussion on any occasion of the organisational and educational principles of the centre. It was generally understood that Roskilde University Centre was not to become just another university, but that it should experiment with new principles and ideas with the purpose of finding ways to increase academic mobility and educational flexibility.

The organisational pattern of Roskilde University Centre was worked out by a committee in which the student organisations played a very active role. Many of the first group of teachers helped to shape the new university, and other scholars, who felt uneasy in the traditional university structure, were attracted to Roskilde University Centre in the initial phase. So were many of the radical students.

An undergraduate programme was created for each of the three fields, the sciences, the humanities, and the social sciences.<sup>51</sup> Each of these programmes was intended to become an introduction to later, more specialised short courses and to longer, academic courses of studies. These basic

<sup>50</sup> *Lov om Københavns Universitets placering og universitetscentre*, in *Løytidende* 1970, p. 678. For a good analysis of the early history of Roskilde University Centre, see Bendix, Per, “Et ansvar søges”, *Weekendavisen*, 8 March, 1974.

<sup>51</sup> A description of the Roskilde University Centre's ideas can be found, e.g., in Beyer, Karin, et al., *Roskilde Universitets Center 1972-73; en rapport om arbejdet* (Roskilde: RUC Boghandel og Forlag, 1974).

programmes emphasised interdisciplinary, project-orientated studies to a high degree, and only a few disciplinary courses were to be provided. As a corollary, cooperation in groups was encouraged, and the buildings were constructed so as to facilitate "collective projects" and "group-work".<sup>52</sup> Third, studies were to be conducted in "houses". Each "house" comprised between 70 and 80 students and to each "house" a number of teachers, from a variety of disciplines, were assigned, not permanently, but for the lifetime of a student cohort.

In a short time Roskilde University Centre became a phenomenon of Danish politics. The media of mass communications devoted much attention to it; before long, it became part of the standing business of parliament. The Conservatives began a campaign against Roskilde University Centre, and after 1973 the Progressive Party and most of the other conservative parties frequently asked for intervention against the university centre; in the later phases of the conflict, they demanded its immediate closure. The prevailing mood in the electorate was similar. Roskilde University Centre rapidly became a controversial issue in public debate. In the spring of 1973 a poll indicated that only 4 per cent. of the voters approved unconditionally of the Roskilde University Centre; 45 per cent. were in favour of increased control and 30 per cent. agreed with the position of the Progressive Party that Roskilde University Centre should be closed.<sup>53</sup> The fact that only one fifth of the respondents had no determined stand on the issue demonstrated that university problems were no longer an esoteric matter, but an issue with great political potential.

The Social Democratic minority government, which was formed after the election of 1975, felt compelled to intervene directly, as public criticism grew dramatically in the spring of 1975. Several steps were taken by the minister in order to calm the Folketing majority and to change the direction of Roskilde University Centre. Committees were formed, mainly of teachers who were not at Roskilde, to prepare new programmes of studies with an increased emphasis on disciplinary courses, and to formulate a new evaluative procedure which would enable Roskilde to meet the same professional standards as the other universities.

On the basis of the deliberations of these committees, in the late summer of 1975, the Minister of Education issued new decrees for Roskilde University Centre to be effective immediately.<sup>54</sup> The action of the Ministry of Education was not in the spirit of the Universities Act; it was interpreted in many places as an attempt to avoid an outright closing down of the new centre.

The Roskilde University Centre, especially its central boards of studies,

<sup>52</sup> The architectonic ideas are presented in Wivel, Peter, *Fremtidens Universitet* (Copenhagen: Spectrum, 1971), pp. 95 ff.

<sup>53</sup> *Morgenavisen Jyllands-Posten*, 17 March, 1975

<sup>54</sup> *Undervisningsministeriets bekendtgørelse nr. 514 af 24. september 1975 om Basisuddannelser på Roskilde Universitetscenter*, *Lovtidende* 1975, pp. 1432-1444.

were not able to meet the requirements of the ministerial decree, whether for lack of time or sheer lack of enthusiasm. New demands for intervention were then raised in parliament, and this time the Minister of Education became the target of criticism. She was attacked for not having been rigorous enough, and it was hinted by several politicians, that she was lukewarm because of her sympathy with the basic philosophy of the experiment.<sup>55</sup>

The Progressive Party demanded immediate closure, and the Conservatives asked for a gradual transfer of the Roskilde University Centre's facilities to the University of Copenhagen. As a clear majority in the Folketing this time was inclined to take a strong line, the Minister had to formulate a new policy. The Minister proposed a bill, in which she asked for permission to suspend the university legislation with regard to Roskilde University Centre and to invoke her administrative powers to carry out the reorganisation. This permission was granted just before Christmas 1975 by a large parliamentary majority. Only the parties at the extremes voted against the bill or abstained.<sup>56</sup>

Under the provisions of this act, which was a sort of "emergency powers" act, the Minister of Education abolished the central boards of studies. She also gave the representatives of the teachers a double vote in all collegiate bodies. Most important, however, was the appointment of three "external rectors", with virtually unlimited powers. These persons, one for each of the three main sectors of the university, formed a governing body, through which virtually all the academic business had to be conducted over a three-year period, until the revision of the act could take place. The minister, in a short note to the parliamentary committee on education, said: The external *rektorat* is the highest authority at the centre. It is entitled to make any decision within the law concerning the centre. To the extent that the *rektorat* finds it necessary, it may undo any decision made by the collegiate bodies. . . .<sup>57</sup>

Again, the issue of the Roskilde University Centre calmed down for a while. The *rektorat* used its powers, and students and teachers in Roskilde apparently acquiesced. In April 1976, however, a new storm blew up, which led to an open confrontation between not only the students and the state, but between large parts of the Danish university population and the state authorities. The conflict was ignited when several hundred students at Roskilde University Centre refused to register for examinations under the new provisions. The *rektorat*, after dramatic negotiations and with the support of the Minister, decided to expel the students. At the same time, students at a large number of educational institutions were being mobilised

<sup>55</sup> See the Minister's widely publicised statement entitled "Before the Last Crossroad", *Berlingske Tidende*, 29 July, 1975.

<sup>56</sup> The text of the *Lov om Roskilde Universitetscenter* is in *Lovtidende* 1975, p. 1795.

<sup>57</sup> *Betænkning over forslag til Lov om Roskilde Universitetscenter*, Folketingstidende, 1975-76, Tillæg, Fortryk.

against what they thought of as an attack on their fundamental interests. There was an almost universal boycott of classes all over Denmark. After negotiations, a compromise was reached, which the students, the *rektorat* and the minister described as satisfying.<sup>58</sup>

In a very tense atmosphere the situation was debated in the Folketing on the request of the Conservatives and the Liberals.<sup>59</sup> The debate, which was accompanied by large demonstrations in the streets of Copenhagen and elsewhere in the country, was quickly turned into a confrontation between the coalitions of the polarised party system. The conservative parties asked for measures which were equivalent to a closing down of the experimental university centre. The spokesman of the Christian People's Party aptly summarised a prevailing attitude in the five conservative and moderate parties, when he said that:

Roskilde University Centre is maybe only a small institution in number of students and in space. But what Roskilde University Centre stands for has developed into a threat against the functioning of a democratic society, and into a threat against the freedom to pursue academic studies. Consequently Roskilde University Centre is not a minor question for our society. . .<sup>60</sup>

The other five parties reacted with varying degrees of indignation and sympathy for Roskilde University Centre. The Social Democratic Party supported the actions of its Minister of Education, including the retraction of the expulsion of the students. The other socialistic parties criticised the conduct of the Minister and stressed the uniqueness and indispensability of Roskilde University Centre in the Danish educational system.

The outcome of the debate was uncertain, so closely matched were the two coalitions, until a conservative member of parliament, who had left his old party a few weeks before, put forward a resolution which saved Roskilde University Centre. The resolution was passed by 79 votes against 77.<sup>61</sup> The relationship between Roskilde University Centre and the state was not stabilised in this narrow victory. The decision created an unstable, temporary stalemate.

During the next year, the issue was publicly discussed from time to time and was followed closely by the parliamentary committee on education. Exactly a year later, in May 1977, the Folketing again devoted much time to debates and parliamentary questions concerning the Roskilde University Centre,<sup>62</sup> with the same proposals brought forward and the same arguments being used. No resolutions were passed but there was growing impatience with the developments taking place at the universities.

The background of the new conflict was a decision taken by the rectors

<sup>58</sup> One of the rectors withdrew after the subsequent debate in the Folketing, see, e.g., *Information*, 6 May, 1976, and *Weekendavisen*, 7 May, 1976.

<sup>59</sup> *Folketingstidende 1975-76*, Forhandling, cols. 9239-9334.

<sup>60</sup> *Folketingstidende 1975-76*, Forhandling, col. 9290.

<sup>61</sup> The main point in the resolution was that it imposed on the Minister of Education the duty of bringing Roskilde University Centre back to its original experimental idea; see *Folketingstidende 1975-76*, Forhandling, col. 9308, for the full text.

<sup>62</sup> *Folketingstidende 1976-77*, Forhandling, Fortryk.

of the Roskilde University Centre in November 1976, when the external *rektorat* recommended, and the Minister approved, that admission of students to the social sciences be postponed until 1978 in order to gain time to carry through measures of reorganisation. This far-reaching decision, which at the university was interpreted by students and by many teachers as a first step towards liquidation of the entire social science programme, was debated throughout the winter. Strikes among the teachers were reported and it was evident that a new conflict was building up rapidly. The conflict burst into the open in mid-April, when students took over parts of the administration buildings and at the same time called upon students all over Denmark to support their cause.

At an early stage a compromise was worked out between the Roskilde University Centre authorities and the Ministry to allow for the admission of students in February 1978, *i.e.* in the middle of the university year. This compromise, however, was opposed by students and by the social science teachers at the university.

While negotiations continued, the first parliamentary questions were raised and the students mobilised as in 1976, but this time on a much larger scale. "Spontaneous" demonstrations and boycotts of classes all over Denmark were soon followed by occupation of institutions and in some instances also "sit-ins" in administration buildings. In only one instance—at Odense University—was a "sit-in" broken up by the university authorities, supported by police. At the Universities of Copenhagen, Arhus and Aalborg, abnormal working conditions prevailed for almost a month, while teachers were barred from classes and from their offices.

It is not known whether the student leaders had a long-term goal beyond re-opening of the social sciences department. Probably their actions were intended primarily to put pressure on the governing Social Democratic Party, which was confronted with a difficult decision in the Folketing. There the moderate parties were pressing hard for strong measures against the Roskilde University Centre, and the students' agitation might therefore have coerced the cabinet into either negotiations—as had happened a year earlier—or "disclosure" of the Social Democratic Party as a "puppet of capitalism".

Whatever the strategy was, it did not work well. The students' demands did not succeed to the same extent as in 1976. Many of the demonstrations and occupations failed, and it was clear that an open disagreement had occurred among radical students for the first time since 1968. With dwindling support for continued action among students, with growing hostility in the population at large against them, and with much more serious questions on the political agenda,<sup>63</sup> it was evident that the climate and the political balance had shifted between 1976 and 1977.

<sup>63</sup> In the spring of 1977 a serious labour conflict was paralysing Danish newspapers, and during the same period the economic crisis was deepening.



The Minister of Education apparently decided the situation was less critical. She tried to avoid decisions being made by the Folketing. Referring to the traditional autonomy of Danish universities, she called upon the institutions of higher education to regain control over their own business without interference by the government and parliament. Using similar arguments, she tried to keep the opposition parties to the right from accentuating their demands for action. In the middle of May 1977, when on the initiative of the Conservative Party the issue of the occupation of the

TABLE V

*Parliamentary Questions relating to the University and its Problems:  
Distribution according to Topic, 1955-75*

Topic	Year			
	1955-60	1960-65	1965-70	1970-75
Admission to universities	1	2	8	4
Public support of students (stipends, housing, etc.)	—	8	6	9
Allocation of resources to universities, planning, construction, etc.	1	6	8	8
University legislation, elections, general problems of government and organisation	—	—	3	12
Teaching, curriculum contents, examinations, etc.	—	1	1	—
Concrete cases of intra-university conflicts:				
a. Sociology, Copenhagen	—	—	3	7
b. Roskilde University Centre	—	—	—	14
c. Other cases	—	—	—	2
Employment of graduates and related problems with regard to graduates	—	—	1	1
Other matters, including research and appointment of personnel	—	—	1	14
Total number of university ques- tions	2	17	31	71
Total number of parliamentary questions	348	744	1,295	2,008

SOURCE: *Folketingsdbogen 1955-56-1974-75*, supplemented by *Folketingsstidende* for the same period.

university was debated in the Folketing, she had beforehand negotiated a proposal for a resolution. This resolution, which was carried by a majority, asked the government to take adequate steps in order to restore normal working conditions at the universities.<sup>64</sup> The same day the student leaders had called off the remaining boycotts and the other actions, and soon the institutions were back to normal. The confrontation was over, the issue of the Roskilde University Centre remained unresolved, but the student movement appeared to have suffered its first defeat since 1968.<sup>65</sup>

### *Towards a Major Revision of the Universities Act*

In the course of these experiences, the universities have become increasingly aware of the problems following from their dual role as autonomous centres of higher learning, and subordinate institutions in a governmental network. At the same time, the Folketing has become increasingly aware of the complexity and the political potential of this new legislative issue. This growing interest of the Folketing is demonstrated in a telling way by the increase in, and the changing distributions of, parliamentary questions put to the Minister of Education (Table V).

In a parliament in which members displayed a markedly increasing inclination to raise questions, the number of questions dealing with university problems tended to increase even more dramatically. At the same time, the topics of the questions changed from problems related to the admissions to and costs of the universities to questions of governmental relations with the universities, and questions pertaining to university government.

This increasing interest in the problems of the universities is paralleled by an impressive growth in the regulatory activities of the Ministry of Education (Table VI). When the power to amend and revise curricular regulations was transferred from the professors to the new boards of studies in the years after 1968, it resulted in an avalanche of proposals which required governmental action. Gradually the Ministry of Education also took a more active role, and this change contributed to growth, as did the acknowledged need to clarify and specify the rules laid down in the Universities Act itself.<sup>66</sup>

The emergence of the Progressive Party in the Folketing in 1973 caused a change in the balance of politics in Denmark. The seemingly stable and strong position of the new party gradually forced the other parties, and especially the four "old" parties, to revise their initially indulgent attitude towards the new tendencies in university government.

<sup>64</sup> *Folketingstidende* 1976-77, Forhandlinger, Fortryk.

<sup>65</sup> The situation was analysed by several newspapers; see in particular *Jyllandsposten*, 15 May, 1977 for a well-documented commentary.

<sup>66</sup> A brief discussion of this development can be found in Blegvad, M. and Jeppesen, S. L., *op. cit.*, pp. 190 ff.

TABLE VI

*Number of Governmental Regulations promulgated in the Danish Lovtidende relating to the University and its Problems, 1955-75*

Topic	Year			
	1955-60	1960-65	1965-70	1970-75
Regulations concerning particular academic studies: teaching, curriculum contents, examinations, etc.	35	24	51	68
University legislation, elections, general problems of university government and organisation	1	5	3	32
Other matters	10	10	16	10
Total number of university regulations	46	37	70	110
Total number of regulations relating to the institutions of higher education	114	121	198	294

SOURCE: *Lovtidende*, 1955-75.

The aggressive behaviour of the party consequently became an important catalyst. A Danish political scientist recently characterised the party as the most influential factor in modern Danish politics, not because of the bills it passes—for it has not yet succeeded in a single instance—but because of the simple fact that its very existence has changed the policies of the other parties.<sup>67</sup> In the case of Roskilde University Centre, as in the case of other parliamentary debates on university problems, the Progressive Party forced the older moderate parties to take initiatives, which in the final analysis constituted reversals of the policies which were carried out or advocated by these parties a few years earlier. The Social Democratic minority government came under the same spell, only with a slight delay. How this mechanism has worked is made clear by the pressures for a revision of the Universities Act of 1973.

In connection with the debate about Roskilde University Centre, a strong demand built up in the Folketing for a revision of the Act. This demand emanated from some of the new parties, at first the Centre Democrats, which early in the life of the party made the reform of the universities a central issue on its platform. Not much later the Progressive Party opened an attack on the Act. In the session of 1974-75 the Liberals and the Conservatives, who had taken part in the compromise of 1973,

<sup>67</sup> Meyer, Poul, in *Morgenavisen Jyllands-Posten*, 1 February, 1976.

gave up their position, and a resolution was proposed by these two parties in cooperation with the Centre Democrats and the Christian Peoples Party. The proposal explicitly referred to the experiences with Roskilde University Centre and other institutions, as evidence that "amendments to the Act ought to be made".<sup>68</sup> The proposed solution consisted of strengthening the powers of the faculty boards and abolishing the central boards of studies. This proposal did not reach a final reading before the end of the session, nor did a bill proposed by the Progressive Party,<sup>69</sup> but the Social Democratic Minister declared her willingness to discuss the matter in committee. It was made clear by its sponsors that the proposal would reappear in the autumn of 1975, and so it did. In order to outflank the opposition parties, the Minister put forward her own bill of amendment in early November 1975,<sup>70</sup> and a few weeks later the Progressive Party tabled a revised version of its bill.<sup>71</sup>

With three different proposals in front of them, the cabinet and the Folketing were forced to undertake the revision, which no one had had the imagination to predict in 1973. The Minister of Education was put in a difficult position because her own Social Democratic Party was split on the issue, with one wing supporting the proposal of the government and another wing preferring a postponement of decision. The parliamentary committee, in which these proposals were discussed in the final days of the session, concluded that it was impossible to strike a compromise.<sup>72</sup> It is easy to see why. The initiators of the various bills had touched upon different basic principles in the legislation and accordingly had advocated widely differing "solutions" with such a vigour that it was difficult to withdraw from the initial political positions.

While the proposal of the four moderate parties tried to break down the principle of duality without tampering with the other basic principles, the governmental bill attempted another approach. The Minister proposed to double the weight of the teachers in the two types of boards of study. She was attempting to change the ratio of teachers to students in most educational matters from 1:1 to 2:1.

The bill of the Progressive Party was the most radical solution in form as well as in substance. Its purpose was stated in no unclear terms:

The Progressive Party is fully convinced that the Act... is the object of absolute distrust in the Danish population.

The Progressive Party proposes this bill again in a revised version with the one and only purpose during a short span of time to reestablish the confidence of the population that the billions of Crowns, which are allocated annually for higher education and research at the institutions, are used in a way which is appropriate for Danish society. . .

<sup>68</sup> See *Folketingstidende 1974-75, Tillæg A*, col. 3865 ff, for this proposal.

<sup>69</sup> *Folketingstidende 1974-75, Tillæg A*, col. 3959 ff.

<sup>70</sup> *Folketingstidende 1975-76, Tillæg A*, Fortryk.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> *Folketingstidende 1975-76, Forhandlinger*, cols. 10796-10993 (second reading).

... With this proposal the Progressive Party goes to the root of the evil, and settles the touchy problem of the outdated self-willedness of the institutions of higher education. The party wants to maintain that our universities and other institutions of higher learning are the property of the Danish society and not autonomous enclaves . . .<sup>73</sup>

This is the stand of the new party on university matters. The principal component of the bill consists of a thoroughgoing attempt to remove powers from the university and transfer them to the Minister of Education in consultation with parliament. The bill also proposes to abolish *de facto* the participation of students and technical and administrative staff and to abolish the dual structure of authority. This proposal was so drastic in its approach to the task of revision that it was hardly possible as a basis for a compromise. Yet it was an effective form of pressure on the other parties.

Before parliament adjourned, it passed a minor revision of the Universities Act.<sup>74</sup> The main features of this revision were, first that the Minister of Education was given the legal power to establish and to shut down university institutes after consultation with the senate of the university. (This new rule was established in order to make it easier to carry through a future reorganisation of the entire sector of higher education which has been under consideration in the Ministry of Education since 1975.) Secondly, the rights of minority groups, especially in the student body, were enlarged by means of an electoral reform.

A majority in the parliamentary committee, consisting of five parties—but excluding the parties on the extremes of Danish politics—further recommended the creation of a small committee of rectors with the explicit purpose of working out a proposal for a new act, which could eventually pass the Folketing in the spring of 1977. Thus the legislature for an intermediate period of half a year gave the leadership of the universities an opportunity to influence the fate of the Universities Act. The discretionary powers of the rectors were limited; certain goals, such as the strengthening of academics in the exercise of authority in the university, were mentioned explicitly in the mandate given to the rectors.<sup>75</sup>

Early in 1977 this committee finished its work.<sup>76</sup> Its proposal, which was not unanimous and which was in three forms, was an attempt to change the balance of power in the university without altering the basic principle of joint participation. It was intended to increase efficiency and expert knowledge by transferring powers to smaller executive committees and to the chairmen at various levels, from the chairmen of departments to the rector of the university. The proposal also interfered with the principle of dual authority by removing the central boards of studies and transferring their

<sup>73</sup> *Folketingstidende 1975-76. Tillæg A, Fortryk.*

<sup>74</sup> See *Lovtidende 1976*, pp. 842-843, for the text of the act.

<sup>75</sup> *Folketingstidende 1975-76. Tillæg A, Fortryk.*

<sup>76</sup> *Betænkning fra udvalget vedrørende revision af loven om styrelse af højere uddannelsesinstitutioner, Betænkning nr. 778 (Copenhagen: Statens Trykningskontor, 1977).*

powers to the faculty boards. Full professors and lecturers were to have greater influence by slightly increasing their proportion of positions in the various governing bodies, and by giving them explicit responsibility for the conduct of teaching and research.

This proposal did not reduce but called for an increase in the number of governing bodies. The initiators did, however, have a strong case for claiming that the total amount of time to be spent in committee would be reduced.<sup>77</sup> University government would be much closer to the typical European pattern, but would still provide the "broadest democratic" governing structure, to use the words of one of the members of the committee.<sup>78</sup>

The proposal was ill-fated. It was rejected by the university authorities. The trades unions, as well as the professional unions, students' organisations

TABLE VII

*Structures of Coalitions with Regard to Amendments of the Universities Act Before and After the Folketing Election of 1977*

	Number of seats 1976	Number of seats 1977
<i>Ardent supporters of amendments:</i>		
Progressive Party	24	26
Centre Democrats	4	11
Conservatives	10	15
Christian People's Party	9	6
Liberals	42	22
	89	80
<i>Hesitant supporters of amendments:</i>		
Radical Liberals	13	6
Social Democrats	54	66
(Justice Party)	—	6
	67	78
<i>Opponents of amendments:</i>		
Socialist People's Party	10	8
Communists	7	7
Left Socialists	4	5
	21	20
<i>Others: Representatives of Greenland and Faroe Islands</i>	2	1
Total number of seats in Folketing	179	179

NOTE: Numbers inside frame identify the parties and coalitions which supported the appointment of the committee of revision in 1976, and the proposal of the committee in 1977.

<sup>77</sup> *Betænkning* nr. 788, pp. 16-18.

<sup>78</sup> Lange, Morten, "Styrelseslovens nødvendige revision", *Politiken*, 8 February, 1977

and other organisations representing the various "estates", warned against the proposal. Much more important was the fact that a parliamentary election in February 1977 altered the party system in a way which was unfavourable to this and probably to any other reform (Table VII).

The election changed the balance of the various groups of parties. Parties in favour of far-reaching action lost strength and were now farther from commanding a majority. But with regard to the fate of the proposal itself, a more important feature of the structure of the coalition was the strengthening of the governing Social Democrats and the defeat of the Radical Liberals, both of which had only reluctantly considered a revision of the Universities Act. Apparently many Radical Liberals interpreted their electoral defeat as a warning against a continuation of close cooperation with Conservatives and Liberals. Turning to the left, as they had often done before, one of the first steps taken by the new radical leadership was to agree with the Minister of Education to postpone a revision of the Universities Act. In early March, the Minister announced that she had decided not to introduce the bill, which she declared too complicated. She also referred to the weakening of the position of the technical assistance personnel, which would result if the proposal were carried out.<sup>79</sup>

The proposal was dead. When the remaining supporters of the revision in the spring of 1977 introduced a bill based on the proposal, they only obtained the support of the Progressive Party, which however, had put forward its own bill, the "limited aim of which was to weed some of the worst thistles".<sup>80</sup> Given the patterns of coalition in the Folketing since the election of February 1977, it is difficult to imagine that a major revision of the Universities Act will be undertaken.

### *Conclusions*

The issue of the universities was new to the legislators when they were forced to deal with it in the late 1960s. They were unfamiliar with the problems of the university and information was lacking. This is still the case to a large extent. The creation of a standing parliamentary committee for education in 1966 provided a forum for continued discussion and in periods with weak minority governments and cooperative ministers of education, this committee has had great influence.<sup>81</sup> Public debates on university problems show, however, that the Ministry of Education has the advantage with regard to information about the daily business of the universities, especially in situations of crisis.

Lack of technological and analytical knowledge is an important obstacle. The introduction of university legislation in Denmark was neither preceded

<sup>79</sup> *Information*, 16 March, 1977.

<sup>80</sup> *Folketingsstidende 1976-77. Tillæg A*, Fortryk.

<sup>81</sup> For a good description, see Larsen, Dan, *et al.*, *Folketingets Udvalg 1975* (Århus: Danmarks Journalisthøjskole, 1977), esp. pp. 137-149.

nor accompanied by efforts to analyse the possible impact of the Universities Act on research, teaching, and other vital processes of the university. As a result, the public debate still lacks depth and perspective and neither before nor after major decisions have the legislators discussed fully the possible effects on their reforms. The Ministry of Education's one attempt to evaluate the educational effects of its policies—an evaluation project on the Roskilde University Centre—was a total failure, not only because of developments at Roskilde University Centre, but also because the design of the project violated most of the canons of sound evaluation.<sup>82</sup> The Ministry, however, was not afraid of passing opinions on its own policies. When in 1973 the Council of Europe through a subcommittee, the Council of Cultural Cooperation, conducted a study of student participation by sending out questionnaires to various governments in Europe, the Ministry replied:

Student participation has mostly had a positive effect upon decisions concerning educational matters. New curricula and teaching methods of examination have been launched. Student participation in planning and budgeting has also had a positive effect, as the student representatives have shown normally a more critical and open-minded attitude towards established rights and priorities than was expressed in the decision-making bodies before students became members. Student participation as a whole has been a challenge to the representatives of the teachers, as the students generally devote a great deal of their time to the work in the governing bodies and are therefore normally very well prepared for the sessions.<sup>83</sup>

Whether it was right or wrong in 1973, this official evaluation by civil servants, who drafted and carried out the university legislation, was certainly not based in a study of the facts.

Second, the formulation of goals was always vague. The university was defined as another large place of work in need of reform, and as an institution the primary purpose of which was to provide education to a large number of young persons. It was furthermore defined as an institution which was identical in structure to society at large, and which should therefore follow the same course of democratisation and politicisation as Danish society had traversed since the early 1800s.

Third, participation in decision-making fluctuated during the entire sequence of events before and during as well as after the enactment of the first Universities Act. There were changes in the preparatory processes, in the party system, and in the persons in leading roles. The entire process was therefore highly irrational in the theoretical sense.<sup>84</sup> The legislative process did not conform with the model of the rational making of decisions because

<sup>82</sup> For a catalogue of pitfalls in connection with evaluation studies, see, e.g., Weiss, Carol H., *Evaluation Research* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: 1972).

<sup>83</sup> Goldschmidt, E., *op. cit.*, p. 11.

<sup>84</sup> See, e.g., Simon, Herbert A., *Administrative Behavior* (New York: Macmillan, 1957); or the critical summary in Dror, Yehezkel, *Public Policy-Making Reexamined* (New York: Intertext, 1968), chap. 12.



of problematic and ill-defined goals, unclear technology, and "fluid participation".<sup>85</sup>

An important aspect of the relationship of university and state during the last 15 to 20 years is that university legislation primarily regulated the processes of internal government of the universities; only in indirect ways did it change the other relationships which link the university and the state. Meanwhile, governmental agencies encroached on the autonomous position of the university in other ways. For the first time, Danish civil servants and politicians tried to apply planning methods to economic policy and higher education as part of the public sector became an object of planning. Higher education has been among the areas of policy which demanded most resources since the beginning of the 1960s, and no comprehensive plan would be complete without dealing with this sector.

Thus policy with respect to the universities became integrated into general economic policy.<sup>86</sup> Many agencies and ministries were involved; permanent planning divisions were established in the Ministry of Education. These consultative and co-ordinating agencies were formed into a network, into which professional unions and other interested organisations were drawn. As a consequence changes in the universities came to an increasing extent to be regarded as a means of achieving wider social changes. From the beginnings of the 1960s, governmental policy favoured large investments in higher education, because it was believed both that such investments produced long-term economic benefits, and that the widening of opportunities for higher education was an effective means of reducing social inequality. Later, and especially in the 1970s, these objectives became secondary to new goals and higher education was increasingly evaluated in terms of the reduction of costs and of increased efficiency.<sup>87</sup>

These changing policies formed the basis for administrative decisions made by the Ministry of Education and its affiliated planning agencies, with regard to the construction and planning of new universities, the links between university education and other types of higher education, and experiments with new programmes of study. From the beginning of the 1970s, the Folketing through its standing committee on education became increasingly involved. The Minister of Education used the committee as a sounding board, and under the terms of minority government she has had major initiatives endorsed in the committee.

Gradually, the traditional autonomy of the universities has been under-

<sup>85</sup> March, James G. and Olsen, Johan P., *Ambiguity and Choice in Organizations* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1976), esp. chaps. 1-5, provides an alternative model, which fits this case much better.

<sup>86</sup> The major documents are *Perspektivplanlægning 1970-85* (Copenhagen: Statens Trykningskontor, 1971); *Perspektivplan-redegørelse 1972-87* (Copenhagen: Statens Trykningskontor, 1973); and the specific plan for higher education, *Helhedsplanlægning af de videregående uddannelser 1974-87* (Copenhagen: Statens Trykningskontor, 1974).

<sup>87</sup> For analysis from a Marxist point of view of these changes in government philosophy, see Mathiesen, Anders, *Uddannelse og Produktion* (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1976); and Sørensen, John Houman, *Statsteori og det danske uddannelsessystem* (Aalborg: AUC, 1975).

mined. An important step was taken in 1976 when the Folketing passed a bill which authorised the Minister to introduce a *numerus clausus*.<sup>88</sup> In 1975 the Minister was further authorised to carry out a regional redistribution of resources, to prepare a reorganisation of the traditional programmes of study to make these shorter, more efficient, and more appropriate to the requirements of the private as well as the public sector. A central computerised registration of students and their progress was planned, as was a new system of budgeting. These innovations would make it possible to allocate resources in a more flexible way. The goal—not always explicitly stated—of these and other initiatives was to further centralised control over the universities and other institutions of higher education.<sup>89</sup>

Such administrative measures are as important as the Universities Act itself. Teaching and research are inevitably influenced by interventions, both actual and announced. Many students and teachers see these plans as a real threat to academic freedom and to the traditional autonomy of the university. Some see them as constituting an act of revenge for the turmoil of the 1970s, or as just another expression of crisis in Danish society. Others consider these plans to be an understandable response to the “feedback” which politicians and civil servants have received from the transformed university system.

Recent developments in Denmark raise the question about the extent to which the encirclement of the university and its loss of autonomy is a result of the political demands which were aroused by the introduction of “participatory democracy”. We do not know whether these developments can ever be undone. If they cannot be undone, it is possible that they will change the universities out of all recognition.

<sup>88</sup> *Lov om adgangregulering ved videregående uddannelser*, *Lovtidende* 1976. A brief outline of the plans which were developed by the Ministry can be found in *Uddannelse* 6-76 (Copenhagen: Undervisningsministeriet, 1976), pp. 332-342.

<sup>89</sup> The full text of this authorisation by the parliamentary committee on education can be found in *Weekendavisen*, 26 September, 1975.