

## 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Social Sciences: a lecturer reminiscing

I arrived in Southampton in 1969 as a lecturer and retired in 2010 spending the interim in the Economics corner of the Faculty.<sup>1</sup> My recollections from that corner may have a more general interest.

### What ‘we’ were like

I was a typical entrant of the period. I came to a permanent position with only a Master’s degree—a PhD was an ornament in the 70s becoming a de facto requirement in the 80s.<sup>2</sup> The 50 year old professors had been in the War and some of the 30 year olds had worked in industry but I never worked outside education.<sup>3</sup> The entrants of today have had not ‘proper’ jobs either but they are massively better prepared than I was. To me they seem distinguished, ‘professorial’ even but already middle aged. My first colleagues were another Brit, a Jamaican and an Indian and we lived

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<sup>1</sup> “Corner” is deliberately vague for, while I sat, departments formed and dissolved around me. I joined a Department of Economic & Social Statistics but at the end of my first year it was taken over by the Department of Econometrics to form a Department of Econometrics & Social Statistics. In 1975 a separate Department of Social Statistics was floated off and the econometricians went into the Department of Economics. Economics was already big having absorbed Commerce & Accounting in 1969. In 1978 C&A separated to become Accounting & Management Sciences and later left Social Sciences to become a School of Management.

<sup>2</sup> The taught Master’s was itself new. I had one in Econometrics from the LSE but the degree did not exist in Raymond O’Brien’s time—he graduated from the LSE in 1963. The only PhD was Ivor Pearce who had one from his time as a lecturer at Nottingham. In the mid 70s Profs Messers Fisher and Kalton would assemble their publications into PhD ‘theses’ to make them employable in North America.

<sup>3</sup> Profs Rowan and Pearce had been in the army. Chris Hawkins had worked for Unilever, David Heathfield had been an engineer and Mick Common a merchant seaman.

in the after-glow of Empire.<sup>4</sup> European Economics was beyond the Pale but later the representative economics colleague would be a Greek or an Italian, often now with a European rather than an Anglo education.<sup>5</sup> The undergraduates have always been predominately homes—in the early days the overseas were from Cyprus or Hong Kong, today they are from China.

I was appointed a lecturer but the job spec. (had there been such a thing) was different then. Publishing research was an option, not the essence of the job. The most ‘research active’ (another anachronism) of my early colleagues was John Wise. John lived and talked economics but his research was only ever ‘published’ on colleagues’ blackboards to be wiped away when the space was needed. I spent the first half of my career learning things and the second half doing research—unthinkable today.

### **What the ‘place’ was like**

The Faculty of Social Sciences I joined was small. In 1968 90 students graduated but the Faculty was growing and in 1964 it had graduated 45. If it had maintained this rate of growth, then it would be graduating nearly 10,000 each year. For those 90 third years in 1968 there were about 60 academics!

The small lecturing staff and the high staff-student ratios made the experience of being a lecturer different from what it later became. I *knew* people outside the group with whom I taught. I knew that Gordon Trasler, the professor of Psychology, drove an E-Type Jag. Now I cannot put a *decade* on the date when Psychology left the Faculty. At a staff-student meeting I heard the Sociology prof, John Smith, defend himself against a radical student—I was with Titmuss at the LSE. After the

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<sup>4</sup> Flavia Savigear (Jolliffe) was the Brit, Roy Chang the Jamaican and V. C. Chidambaram (call me “Chid”) the Indian.

<sup>5</sup> This afternoon’s speaker, Carmine Ornaghi, is an Italian with a Spanish graduate education.

period of student unrest students were given a voice in the university and junior staff had more say too. That did not last and one colleague took early retirement because the university was becoming too managerial.<sup>6</sup> That was 20 years ago and 10 years before a new VC introduced the term “line manager.”

Relations between academics and students were different too. In the early 70s we met our first year tutees once a week. Thirty years later I was telling colleagues that a PhD student would be lucky to get so much quality time. When anonymity of exam scripts was introduced one lecturer said it was pointless because he would recognise his students’ handwriting.<sup>7</sup> But the moment had passed: already there were too many students and too little written work for this identification strategy to work. The Exams Office used to phone tutors to tell them of absences and at least one tutor went and got a tutee out of bed.<sup>8</sup> Social relations were different too. For years I fretted about how to entertain my tutees—some lecturers had parties, one, took them to dinner.<sup>9</sup> I was too shy and too mean to do either but eventually the weight of numbers made the question irrelevant.

I should mention secretaries—as they were called then—or support staff as they are called now. In the beginning they typed and typed and typed! No academic could use a typewriter and formal documents began with a hand-written draft and went through repeated typed drafts—exam papers with mathematical expressions were a nightmare. In the late 80s PCs got academics typing and secretaries remodelled themselves as administrators and as the human face to the studentry—they were the “good cops” and we, the academics, the “bad.” Since then there have been repeated re-

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<sup>6</sup> David Heathfield.

<sup>7</sup> Raymond O’Brien.

<sup>8</sup> Raymond again.

<sup>9</sup> Maurice Townsend dined his tutees but I don’t think more than three ever turned up. Paul Geroski, Saul Estrin and Trevor Breusch threw parties and once I invited *my* tutees to one of *their* parties.

structurings. The organisational changes of my early days did not affect what I was doing or destroy my human capital. The secretaries have not been so lucky.

Large forces were responsible for the changes I have described. *Understanding them* would need a degree in Social Science.

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