VC GIVES TENANTS FACTS ON CASH

This is not an easy speech to make, but it is an important one. I hope to say a few words about the problems of tenants who live on University property, and some of the solutions that have been developed to address them.

"I said before and after the beginning of term in talks with the Union that I would be willing to speak in the University on the whole question of rents and accommodation and related issues. I regret the particular circumstance that has brought me to this, but I am willing to speak at a meeting of U.T.S.A. and I am glad that there are so many people here.

"I am going to speak at a meeting of U.T.S.A. for two reasons:"

First of all, because I do believe that the building of accommodation and the provision of amenities on this site has been a cooperative venture between the University and students in a way that has not been possible before, and particularly in recent years.

"And I think that it is not unreasonable for me to talk about any problems of accommodation without being involved in every stage in a way that it is not possible for me to comment about them. The presence of such a large number of people here tonight shows what importance, whatever your views are, you quite rightly attach to this set of issues.

"Secondly, I believe it is of the utmost importance that everybody connected with the University - students, faculty, laymen associated with University matters - should also be aware, with all the relevant facts of the situation, in which we live. We hope that the University operates as far as finances are concerned in rents and other matters. Unless we are clear about these facts, we can indulge in various forms of fantasy, but it will be impossible to resolve the problems which will be a real one.

"Now, on accommodation, this University, over the course of the last fourteen years of its life, has never had an entirely easy history. We have never been given a great deal of public money or private money to put up accommodation here at all. We have recognised increasingly that we do not need a long term accommodation policy, a positive policy, and within limits we have tried to secure this policy through the building of accommodation on the campus where it is simplest through the acquisition of properties in the lowest.

"We have been handicapped in carrying out this policy by difficulties in financing - actually getting hold of any capital at all, by very high rates of interest and by planning controls in relation to the acquisition of properties and the carrying out of the necessary improvements in Brighton or elsewhere. Nonetheless, over the last fourteen years through Community Services and through very close co-operation with the local authority and always with the hope of being able to explore some of the implications of an accommodation policy, we have managed to carry forward to the Department of the Environment, as well as to the Department of Education and Science, the University Grants Committee, some of the special problems that we have in Brighton. That includes shortage of accommodation for both students and staff. Lack of adequate building facilities, difficulty of control systems and so on. We have not been alone in this; no other University has had at the Department of the Environment, the staff who have managed to bring together representatives of the Departments of Education and Science and of the Environment.

"And this does not mean to say that exceptional circumstances, for particular periods, we cannot take a different line, and in 1975-76 and I don't know how many of you realise that we have frozen those campus rents at that particular period of time even though I knew that it would be a great difficulty in relation to the account in the future of the building policy. We did it because there was no increase in the student numbers.

"This certainly placed the accommodation account in a number of difficulties. We also in that year adjusted at the margin costs between the University and tenants that we could. We tried to secure what we thought was the best deal for the students at that particular time.

"And I would just like to say as Vice-Chancellor, I am conscious of the fact that is a difficult problem in a university, to reconcile the different constituent members with each other. Students are one part, faculty are another, the members of councils and committees of universities are another. The Vice-Chancellor does not take unilateral decisions, he does make multilateral bargaining; what he can do, is to put forward a case in a committee which will decide and carry some support.

"It has been my policy as Vice-Chancellor over the last three years, whatever has been the case, to try to do everything that is possible to advance the case for increased student grants, secondly to try and put cases for fair treatment of all, not only for members of staff, people, many of whom are not sympathetic to students, and thirdly to try and secure a change in the staff system of finance which, while it has given as many buildings here, has not given us to the rates that we would really like - and we have run into many problems in relation to accommodation because of the fact that we have been dependent on this extremely expensive system of finance.

"We have put a lot more in 1975/74, but this year there was a national increase in student grants. You may think that this was an unexpected development; and it has certainly been a very welcome one. I don't dispute the figures of the N.I.C.S. about the increase since the grant was issued over the past five years. That increase in student grants was thought, however, at the time, even by the N.I.C.S., to be a better settlement than had been expected likely. It certainly seemed to me to be the best settlement which could have been reached in these times.

"The University and students have been present on these occasions and we have made a strong case and we are possibly about the local issue of accommodation, bearing in mind that there is a general national issue of student accommodation.

"During the last eighteen months we have been facing quite exceptional rises in prices everywhere and at every point of the University's life. Of course, we are not alone in this respect; all institutions face problems of this sort. We have not regarded adequate compensation as a University to deal with them. The increases of this last year have come on top of previous substantial rises in 1974-75.

"We have always been aware when we think about the accommodation account of this increase in the income side of that account comes, first of all from student accommodation and secondly from conferences. We left at that accommodation account; we try in mind the fact that we are against it. We are told by the University Grants Committee that we must balance that account; there is no advantage in creating difficulties for the Vice-Chancellor, in this matter. It is public money and is subject to control by the Committee of Audit and Auditor General, and we are told that we have got to balance the account.

"That settlement, whatever we like it or not, was based upon a situation that it included a rent increase element. I was present when The Secretary of State for Education and Science, described the negotiations that he had had with the Government about the fixing of the grant. He made it very clear that this settlement included a rent element. He expected any future negotiations with students about the levels of grants in the years after this to take account of the base-line negotiations which had taken place during the course of this year, so that there could be a realistic adjustment of costs in relation to charges this year. It had to be treated in some sense as a base-line.

"It would like to have had negotiations - and I mean negotiations and not discussions - in the University through the people who are put out these negotiations last year about the levels of student rents. It seems to me a very good thing to have been made impossible to have adequate negotiations before the beginning of last term. Even before the grant had been announced, there was a students' union mandate which froze all possibility of effective negotiations on the grounds that there really should no increase in rents at all.

"There had been no increase in rents in 1974/75, as I have said, and it was pronounced that this policy should continue, even though the University had been told that it should balance its accommodation account.

"We found ourselves unable to carry out negotiations about what a higher rent would have been. We did, however, set up a project committee which included students, and it had some very valuable meetings in the Summer Term. We tried to fix what was really the economic rent, the rent which it would be necessary to charge in order that the accommodation account should balance. It was very important for us to agree on that figure, the University and students, because any hope that we might have had of any additional funds from the University Grants Committee would have been based upon absolutely realistic and beyond all doubt figures in this particular connection.

(Continued on page 2)
"We fixed the amount of the increase at £11.25 per student, taking into account the then the smallest possible difference - and I hope the President of the Union will say this, Professor Gram. and the President of the University, last year or this year's, or the realism of that particular figure.

"Although it is a realistic figure, it is a very difficult matter to argue and to my mind it would have been a lower figure if there had been a proper process of negotiation taking place last year. At the end of last term, I personally urged the Senate and the Council of the University, through a small project committee, to try and reduce that figure. After a series of meetings, when it stood at £11.25, the figure was reduced from £11.25 to £11.00 per student at £1.25 could be accompanied by a rebate scheme which would make a rent rise of £1.00 paid at the of term.

"Now the rebate, whatever anybody may say in this room, was in no case some kind of political trick. If we are talking about student rights, at the beginning of the term, we are losing a student by the week and at each rent of thousands of pounds each term, and every rent we lose is a loss. If we were paid into the accommodation fund, the future would enable the future pool and the concession they were bitterly adjusted than it is at the present time. It would also enable us to go ahead with a more positive programme for the building of accommodation.

"The answers to these complex questions cannot be worked out on the basis of slogans. Some can only be worked out on the basis of some coping with the facts, with examining them very carefully, and looking at their consequences. If you look at the increase in rents, even at the £1.32 level, the proportion of the average student's grant devoted to rents was lower than it was before the grant increased.

"The average level of student rents in this University will be and is lower, even though they are higher in London or in an expensive area here and we have to put our buildings up at very high costs, it will be our duty to argue that the only reason why the rents are going up to a large extent is the loss finance basis of the borrowing. They would have had to do this this year anyway and the amount that they go up really will still leave campus rents in Sheffield the same as the average of British universities. Moreover, the rate of increase of the rents in the second year is lower than in most other universities, because of the freezing of the rents in 1973/4.

"These are relevant figures because it seemed to me that there was never any element of realism injected into this discussion about the fact that, whatever else one was to say, there would be more to increase in rents. The whole predication of the increase in grants was based on the fact that the grants do come out of public money, I have to admit that a phrase is my own University, but they do, therefore, come out of taxpayers' money. It is not at all a popular cause to argue that when the grants go up, through a process of negotiation by involving the National Union of Students that the grants are frozen there should be an adjustment of rents, given an increase in student grants. Now because of the number of complaints, and because of the problems that arise, we prepared in a fact a good look at this particular position, and to see if it is possible to do something about it, in the meantime I should remind you that it is not just during the course of these last few months that everything has gone up in price, that the balances of the accommodation account now would really require a higher figure than £1.32. We have no intention, I should say, of going forward to try and defend that figure were be, because it is a pointless exercise when one is moving in the way that they are at the present time.

"I would just like to make two substential points before I pass on from this stage of what I have to say. Last year I had a good deal of time as Vice-Chancellor trying to help the University Union in their cost-increase in levy and capital fees. Union capital fees went up from £24 to £50 and £50 £100, it would be three times as much, and the University has been arguing about in relation to any other increases in prices.

"The most unrealistic demand which is being made at the moment is, in our view, the demand for no increase in the University accommodation, the increases in catering prices is supported by the University Community Committee, and there was an attempt to drive up the price of catering at which students were present. It was this sort of debate that kind of that debate of reason. It is in our interests to form that kind of money in, and the interest of students, not because it passes then to Physics 1000 expensive new course in Arts, but because it goes straight into the dean's office in the accommodation, where, in fact, it is used in relation to student accommodation policies.

"If I may I would like to come to two other categories of student very quickly first of all those who have in both as well. I think the University would like to see the great scheme phased out quite quickly, this year, if it can be done. I think that it is possible for the University to try and do something to assist, in this exceptional year, the position of people living in guest house.

"This, however, should be a proper matter for negotiation and not something which we can change by bandying figures around. The Government can make subsidies, but I think there is no way of raising extra money, even in the way that a business could, and I haven't got the resources to surrender, subsidising a policy which is against E.G.C. rules, therefore, what we would have to do, if we help guest house tenants would be to fall on non-E.G.C., non-public funds, funds not supplied directly by the tax payer. That is the problem but I don't think that it is an insurable one and I think that something could be done about it.

"I would like, if I may, in conclusion, Chairman, just to say this, that what I tried to do at the beginning of the term in taking advantage of the offer of the Union, and what I really would very much like to do now, is to be able to work out an accommodation policy, which is a student and not one to the University accommodation policy with a number of points which would be positive points, one of which is to ask and demand that we make some progress. I would like to be able to have some idea, if the Pointers and the University are really genuinely in difficulties, and I think that this has already happened, but I think that we have to deal, if we need, with groups of students who are living in irregular positions or through their choice of our own. I would like to have a really hard look and at the structure of the accommodation account, the realistic systems of costing, and I would like to think that it might be possible to go on in some way that the University can put forward, and perhaps to some people outside the University - but perhaps to some people outside the University - does seem to me to look extraordinarily self- indulging. If the University has to take the kind of case which would prevent for some time the building of any sort of private funds which we need would.

"But that the one sure way of not being able to get such a fund is being for us a fundamental deviation between the student and the student body about the way in which these things have been talked about. We have student participation. Many of you are new to the University; you have not seen it. It can be terribly boring, it can also be very frustrating, but it is also for everybody who is a part of a fact of life in my community. But we have got this system here through Community Service, and I hope we have got it through the Senate of the University; we have got it through the Union, and we will get further and who are well-wishers. We have managed in the long run to maintain the place as a happy University.

"I am appealed to find that, in parallel with this system, there is the view that we should not form Community Service as if that system didn't exist, and the friendliness of the University, which is something I believe only if you are a permanent, and I do, can very easily be lost. You can get away with it, for instance, an un- promised kind which produce the sort of thing that only destroy in our own eyes, but in fact do make us look a mockery to the rest of the world. I think that is inevitable without significance in relation to the obligation.

"I must say as Vice-Chancellor that when I read phrases like 'Massive intimidation being used against students at the beginning of the term.' and so on, if I had been told I was appealed by this language because no massive intimidation was used at the beginning of the term. But we have, and we will go on to try to be sensible and realistic, however, however many other place it difficult to manage to get an answer to these problems which will keep the University in the sort of shape in which we would like to see and which will enable us to get a positive long- term basis, to be able to tackle this problem, and not merely deal with the issues which arise in a particular year, because this is really a long-term problem in Sunet, over the three years that she is here, has got probably some difficulties that other universitv don't have. He has got to contend at present - many students at any rate - in some house which he has not been chosen. He is here on the campus then for another year, I would like everybody, I think to be on the campus for one year so that we could really even out through campus rents and that is a reason why they be found over three years in the town.
At a meeting of Planning Committee held on 31 October 1974, a paper by the Assistant Chairman of Commerce Services was presented for extending and improving the provisions of student accommodation for students who had been told that adequate accommodation would be available.

(iii) Full registration of students on the Senate list

With regard to (i) he explained that, although the Action Group was agreed to on the grounds of its desirability in removing situations of registering students in guest houses, the Committee was not prepared to propose only the easing of existing conditions, which would result in giving rise to a general subsidy— which would result in giving rise to a general subsidy, which would then have to be addressed to the University and the Student Union. He also said that, as there appeared to be agreement on the general line of the Sevenoaks Scheme, with regard to (ii), the result was that the rent increase (from September 1974) would be somewhat limited. The inflationary effects of the rent increase were considered to be less, and the University would be able to achieve the desired effect by addressing the question of the cost of living to the University and the Student Union.

The Vice-Chancellor said that he had been informed that the accommodation in the Student Union, the U.S.T.A., and the Housing Services Schemes was all in the hands of the University, which, like the Planning Committee, the Senate, and the Council, provided for student accommodation.

The House agreed to the proposal for extending and improving the provisions of student accommodation for students, and the President, in the name of the House, thanked the Committee for its report.

The establishment of a special fund, financed from non-university grants, and the setting up of a special committee to devise a financial plan for student accommodation, were also discussed.

The establishment of a system of effective procedures and arrangements for financial planning and for the management of student accommodation, was considered.

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The approval of the proposed plan of student accommodation by King's College, for the academic year 1975-76, was approved by the Senate.

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UNIVERSITY TEACHERS FACE CUT IN LIVING STANDARDS

Inflation and higher taxes lower living standards unless people receive substantial increases in their money incomes. University students have been aware of this for some time, but last year's salary campaign made a mark. University teachers are also being hard hit by inflation. Table 1 shows how university teachers at five places in the salary structure are being affected by inflation and the tax changes in this year's budget. It is assumed that prices will rise by 17 per cent (the actual increase in the retail price index in the year to August 1974) between October 1, 1973, when the old salary scales came into effect and October 1, 1974 when the new salary scales came into effect. It is assumed that the teacher is married and has one child under 11. The figures are taken after income tax, national insurance and the appropriate rates for the two years. Allow for the tax benefits from superannuation and for the threshold payments appropriate for a 17 per cent rate of inflation. They also allow for an annual increase except in the case of professors who normally receive no increases.

With the exception of the lecturer at the bottom of the scale all are worse off. UINLUM, the accommodation account will not balance, earnings are accounted for by the sum payable as included in the scales in the account. All sections of the University should seek opportunities to remove the implications for the University of national policies over which the University had not possibility of direct control.

After discussion a procedural motion that the first motion should not be put was carried. The President of the Union expressed her regret that the Senate Committee had not seen it fit to consider her motion which represented a substantial concession in relation to the Student Union's original position in terms of increases and which departed from the mandate set down by the Senate. In this meeting of the Senate, Senator H. A. C. Brown of the Senate Committee rose to leave but decided that as the Vice-Chancellor explained that the intention of the motion was not to reject the object of the motion but to take a different approach, he voted with the Senate Committee. There was a basis for sensible discussion, and the motion was carried. They proceeded with good will on the best available documentation and in the firm knowledge of the students' position.

The Senate Committee agreed to conclude its discussions at that point and to request the normal decisions but with a generally agreed view that the discussions should continue in the light of the factors mentioned above and of the tenor of the Senate Committee's discussions.

H. J. (Dick) Silverstein died suddenly on the night of Tuesday, 3 November. He had made a member of the University finance staff since 1976, serving for more than 25 years in the Finance Office. Mr Silverstein, 65, is survived by his widow and two sons.

There will be a sale of East African Arts & Crafts in the vestibule of the Federation house at 12 noon to 2.30pm. All profits will go to the Malawi Hospital Appeal Fund to help rehabilitation in Malawi.

This article by Professor Charles Brin, professor of economics at Stirling University, makes it by permission of the editor as we though it would interest members of faculty.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position, October 1973</th>
<th>Lecturer at bottom of scale</th>
<th>Lecturer at mid-scale</th>
<th>Lecturer one point below top of scale</th>
<th>Lecturer one point above top of scale</th>
<th>Professor paid promotional average</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$ change in retail price index</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>-1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$ change in retail price index after tax*</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>-1.1</td>
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Table 2

<table>
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<th>Recession</th>
<th>3.2</th>
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<tr>
<td>Return</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recovery</td>
<td>3.2</td>
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Table 3

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<th>Age</th>
<th>University*</th>
<th>Post University</th>
<th>Salary (L)</th>
<th>Civil Service*</th>
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<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>2,547</td>
<td>3,500 (inner London)**</td>
<td>4,065</td>
<td>5,190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>2,876</td>
<td>4,300 (near London)**</td>
<td>5,300</td>
<td>6,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>3,665</td>
<td>6,000 (near London)**</td>
<td>7,300</td>
<td>8,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* University students are those for October, 1974, and include the 11 threshold payments that will be due if prices are the 37% above October, 1973, but exclude London allowance. It is not clear whether or not the Civil Service figures include London or London allowances.

** The advertisement states "starting salary between £3,300 and £3,950. You need to have at least two years postgraduate experience."