

Article on Ritchie and Associates for Library Bulletin
Ted Byrne, Union Coordinator, AUCE Local One

I attended the Aug. 22, 1985, meeting at which Doug McInnes addressed the library staff on the issue of Ritchie and Associates. I would like to make several observations on Mr. McInnes' presentation.

First of all, I would like to congratulate him for his decision to hold such a meeting. This is the first time, to my knowledge, that an administrator has called a meeting of all staff to discuss the purpose and procedures of the Ritchie and Associates' review. This is a step in the right direction, and it is unfortunate that the University has not taken such an open and public approach to this issue in general. Part of the reason for the high level of tension and apprehension on the part of the staff is the apparent secrecy that surrounds this project.

This tension was very evident at the meeting, but I believe it was somewhat muted by the sympathy that the staff feel toward Mr. McInnes and the difficult position this efficiency study has put him in. It was obvious from some of his remarks that the Library administration had vigorously resisted the arrival of Ritchie and Associates. His position seemed to be that the decision to hire Ritchie and Associates cannot be reversed, and therefore we had better try to make the best of it.

Mr. McInnes assured us that the Library has a firm agreement with the University administration regarding the degree of control that Library management will have over the process, and that hopefully some of the problems that have occurred elsewhere can be avoided. He also assured us that the entire review would be carried out with a high degree of constant and open consultation with staff. It is to be hoped that these ambitions can be realized.

Mr. McInnes stressed three points when explaining the need for this review: improved management methods, improved efficiency, and the need for a 'campus-wide management control system' to determine real staffing needs.

He said that the preliminary study in LPC showed that the Centre's 'informal' approach to supervision permitted a considerable amount of time to be lost. If this 'informal' approach exists, and is not a misperception on the part of Ritchie and Associates — and if such an informal approach is in fact detrimental to the operation of the Centre, we don't understand why Library management itself could not identify and correct the problem. In other words, what is the problem with the University's own management, and why are they not using their own resources? One of the solutions to the problem of management methods which will be introduced by Ritchie and Associates will be training sessions ('communication meetings') for supervisors and managers. Supervisors will be trained in 'basic management concepts': setting objectives, planning, implementing plans, control and follow-up ('positive control'). We

have seen many of the documents from these 'communication meetings', and we feel that their approach is very basic, and in no way an advance on the kind of training already provided by the Library to its supervisors. The main result of increasing the control that supervisors exercise over staff — if they are successful in imposing it — will probably be a worsening of staff relations.

As for improved efficiency, Mr. McInnes said that there has been no criticism of the Library's current operations. So the real question, for Ritchie and Associates, is whether or not the same level of services can be maintained with less staff. From what we have seen so far, this is not accomplished by radical changes to methods of operation, but rather by a simple calculation of the amount of work and the time required to accomplish it. Ritchie and Associates have no expertise in the area of Library systems, and so the question that was asked at the meeting regarding maintenance of quality is a very crucial one. Ritchie and Associates' calculations in the Purchasing Dept. indicated that a sizeable reduction in staff was possible. The calculations themselves were severely criticized by both management and staff in that department. We have no indication at this time as to what percentage of 'savings' were predicted by the preliminary study in LPC. In Purchasing the final recommendation came very close to the preliminary projection. The important question there is whether or not these 'savings' can be effected without a reduction in the quality of service.

Finally, there is the question of an ongoing 'management control system'. Mr. McInnes stated that it is impossible for the University to continue making arbitrary percentage cuts as a response to the crisis situation imposed annually by government cuts to the University's budget. So far, the University has managed, with some difficulty, to meet these reductions. Given the severity of the reductions over the past several years, it is unbelievable to us that the Provincial Government intends to continue cutting away at the post-secondary education system. However, we were told that this is to be expected, and that we must be prepared. In order to be prepared, we need a campus-wide management control system that will allow the administration to determine 'real staffing needs', so that such cuts in future can be made rationally, and with the least damage to the University. So this review is being presented as a kind of contingency plan to allow the University to face further cuts, if such cuts are forthcoming. Our question is: given the attitude of the Provincial Government toward higher education, is it not more likely that the results of the Ritchie and Associates' review will be used to determine future cuts to the University's budget?

One last point. Do we really deserve this kind of treatment? One result of this review has already been a serious decline in morale, and increased anxiety for both staff and management. Our bargaining unit has not seen a wage increase for over two years, and many of us are struggling to get along on what we earn. The University refuses to pay already agreed to incremental increases, and yet has spent to date several times that amount on this review. The work-force has already been considerably reduced as a result of hiring freezes and attrition, and many of us are working in areas that are short staffed. Could the University have not found a way of dealing with their problem internally using their own abundant resources?

~~Nellie~~

~~He Wilson~~

Regina?

~~Stinson~~

~~Wesley~~

~~Ann H~~

~~He W~~

~~Stinson~~

~~Mark~~

~~Shila Porter~~

Regina

lady in grey at the back

2 lady at the side

~~Stinson~~

Karen Shaw

Melovan

~~Pos~~

Andrea - Lea

guy in green

grey & red lady