

The Hollomon Committees

Carefully organized “creative tension” hopefully will produce grist for the master plan

In October, coinciding with the inauguration of Dr. J. Herbert Hollomon as the eighth president of the University of Oklahoma, a report which will guide the institution in the future will be made public. All those immortal phrases which publicity men of motion picture promotion departments summon from their bullpen of bromides to herald a new film could, with only minor revisions, be used to announce the “master plan,” as it has come to be known: *Months in the making, a cast of hundreds, the most long-awaited plan of the decade, the plan they said couldn't be made. Or even: Bold! Daring! Recommended for mature audiences only.*

When Hollomon moved into his temporary offices on the first floor of Buchanan Hall (Liberal Arts Building) last September to begin his one-year term as president-designate, he knew he wanted long-range planning at the top of his list of priorities. What he wasn't sure of was the best way to go about the formulation of a plan. By mid-autumn he had decided. In a report to the Board of Regents in November, he outlined his “plan for a plan.” Committees would be established to study every conceivable aspect of the University, from operation of its physical plant to its doctoral programs. The committees would submit reports and recommendations which would be used to build a long-range program. “Our aim is to develop a plan,” said Hollomon, “that will define the goals and purposes of the University during the next ten to twenty years.” The plan would be both broad and detailed, providing not only a general philosophy but also a precise schematic approach. It would deal with fundamental questions and specific methods of answering them. “The study,” said Hollomon, “will be concerned with those basic yet very difficult questions: Where should we be going? What should we be doing? Whom should we be serving? How can we serve them best?”

The Hollomon committees would be composed of what an undergraduate might call a “mixed bag” of participants. Its members would represent the five constituencies which are part of or are affected by the University: the students, the faculty, the administration and staff from within the University; and alumni and other citizens from the larger community. Thus, some interesting combinations would be found on the committees. A typical one includes a freshman from Shawnee, a bank president from Oklahoma City, a housewife from Tulsa, an attorney from Washington, D.C., a member of the State House of Representatives, a vice president of an oil equipment firm from south central Oklahoma, a college dean, a senior in pre-law, a professor of history, an editor-publisher of a metropolitan daily newspaper, among others. Since these are the people whom the University serves, Hollomon decided, it should be they, as representatives of their constituencies, who express the mission and identity of the University. It should be they who shape the University to fill the needs of the future.

Hollomon has consistently stated that he has no intention of dictating to the committees his notions of what should be found. “I have no preconceived ideas of what recommendations should come from the committees' study,” he has said. “I expect a series of recommendations of which some will be accepted, some rejected, and some modified.” And later, during the course of the committee studies: “I have heard the rumors that this study is just so much window dressing, that I have already decided what should be done at the University. These rumors are false. I asked for this study because I believe that the people affected by the programs and policies of the University should participate in the development of these programs and policies. I intend to be guided by their recommendations.”

Gordon Christenson, who was chief

assistant to Hollomon when he was undersecretary of commerce in Washington and who accompanied him to Norman, is, next to the president-designate, the person closest to the master plan. It has been Christenson who has been largely responsible for devising the machinery which will produce the raw material for the plan, and it will be Christenson who will direct its writing. He believes that the formulation of the plan is a unique experiment in the annals of higher education. Says Christenson: “The plan is based on three value judgments or assumptions. First is that there has been no involved planning by those inside and outside the University and that if the University is to be connected with the society of which it forms a part, then those leaders in the larger society must help state the mission and function of the institution. One of the problems at Berkeley has been an alienation between the faculty and the larger community which led to a serious political crisis. The faculty members feel uninvolved in the society, even feel that the society is persecuting them. The students feel, likewise, that there is no involvement with the faculty and although the students wish to become involved in the larger community, there is no connecting mechanism. We have found this on a number of other campuses also. The faculty members are so concerned with the quality of their work, their reputation in competition with their peers, and their disciplines that very little time is permitted them to become involved with the broader questions of society. In order for the University to take on this function, we must not think just in terms of more money to permit the faculty to do better work, but really what the fundamental purpose is behind the university and what role it should perform in society.

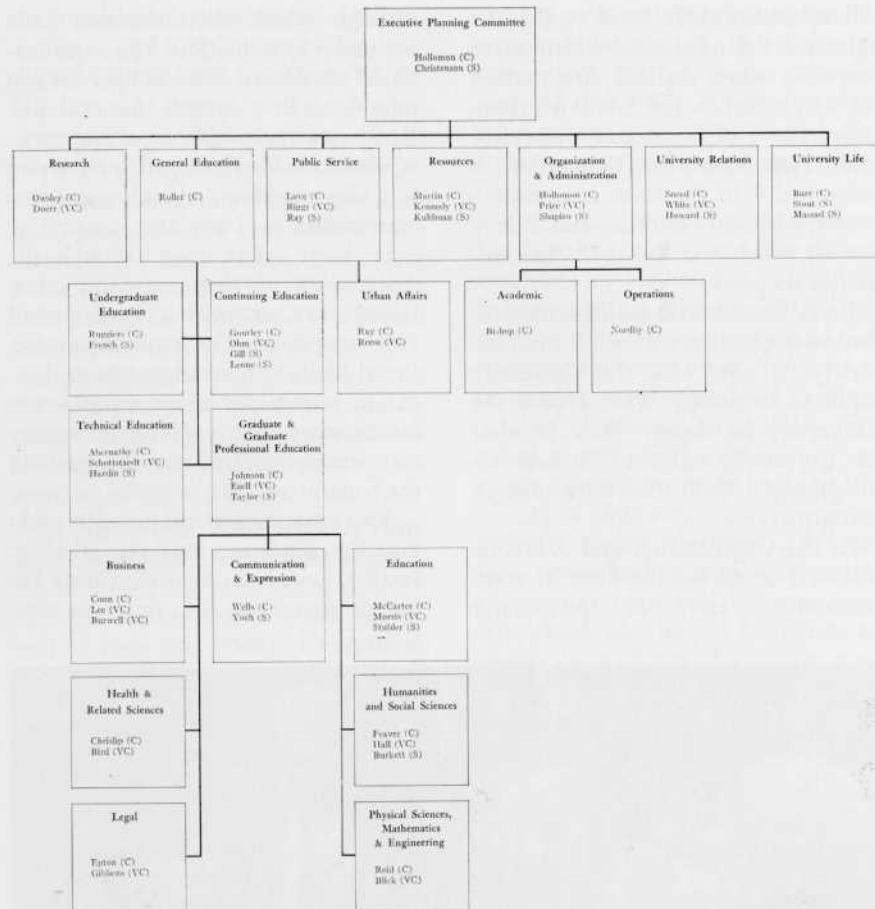
“The second assumption is that it would be unfair for persons to review their own disciplines. The organization of the study is along the lines of purpose and function, not by dis-

cipline or existing structure. We must open each discipline to a fresh view, and for that reason we decided that no single administrator should be responsible for or participate in the examination of his own area of responsibility.

"The third assumption has to do with the management of such a large number of persons and panels. Because of the size, we wanted to create a structure which, in and of itself, would generate enough tension to make certain that the issues would emerge. We have more than twenty main committees composed of many subcommittees, each studying a certain part of the University's functions. Each committee looks at the entire University through its own perspective—it may be from the vantage point of law or medicine or public service or business or research. It is our view that when you look at the priorities and needs which any one of these areas has, then you will inevitably come into conflict at some point or another with what someone else wishes to do. We wanted a structure which would produce such conflicts. We think they are desirable and necessary if issues are to arise which can be hammered out and resolved. The issues must come from the planning process for their solution and resolution to have meaning. We call this organized chaos 'creative tension.'"

Weeks were spent in assembling the names of persons who would be asked to serve on the committees. Chairmen were appointed and asked to organize the work of their committees before the first meeting in January of the Executive Planning Committee. With Hollomon as chairman and Christenson as executive secretary, the Executive Planning Committee would coordinate the studies of the various committees to make sure there were enough blurred boundaries to produce the desired "creative tension" which would in turn produce material for the blueprint that would direct the University in the seventies.

In the organization of the committees, the function has been separated from the means to accomplish the function—substance has been separated from procedure. On the left side of the chart (see above) are the three traditional functions of a university: Research, General Edu-



In the organization of the Hollomon committees, function has been separated from procedure. On the left side of the organizational chart are the three traditional functions of a university—Research, General Education, and Public Service. At the right are the means by which these purposes, when defined, are carried out—Organization and Administration, University Relations, and University Life. The Resources Committee is concerned with the three resources—people, physical facilities, and money—with which the University accomplishes its goals. Two committees which were established in mid-course, the Ethics and the Architectural committees, are not shown. Committee officers are named below:

The chairmen (C), vice chairmen (VC), and executive secretaries (S) of the Hollomon committees are: *Executive Planning Committee*: President-Designate J. Herbert Hollomon and Dr. Gordon A. Christenson, assistant to the president-designate and associate professor of law. *Research & Creative Activities*: W. D. Owsley, senior vice president, Halliburton Co., Duncan, and Arthur H. Doerr, professor of geography. *General Education*: Duane H. D. Roller, McCasland Professor of History of Science. *Public Service*: F. C. Love, president, Kerr-McGee Corp., Oklahoma City; Dr. Carl D. Riggs, vice president of graduate studies and dean of the Graduate College; Joe C. Ray, assistant director, Research Institute. *Resources*: William F. Martin, senior vice president, Phillips Petroleum Co., Bartlesville; Verne Kennedy Jr., vice president for operations; J. H. Kuhlman Jr., assistant director, OU Foundation. *University Organization & Administration*: Hollomon; Dr. William C. Price, dean of admissions and registrar; Dr. Robert A. Shapiro, director, School of Industrial Engineering, assistant to the president-designate. *University Relations*: Dr. Earl Sneed, executive vice president, Liberty National Bank & Trust Co., Oklahoma City; Dr. Thurman White, vice president for University projects, dean of the College of Continuing Education, dean of the Extension Division; James K. Howard, assistant to the president-designate. *University Life*: David A. Burr, vice president for the University community; Paul D. Massad, director, high school relations; Jack H. Stout, assistant dean of men. *Undergraduate Education*: Dr. Paul G. Ruggiers, and Dr. David P. French, both professors of English. *Continuing Education*: J. Leland Gourley, chairman of the board, State Capitol Bank, Oklahoma City; Dr. Robert E. Ohm, dean of the College of Education; Mrs. R. B. Gill, assistant director of public information, OCCE; Dr. Joe A. Leone, administrative coordinator, school and community services, OCCE. *Technical Education*: Jack H. Abernathy, president, Big Chief Drilling Co., Oklahoma City; Dr. William Schottstaedt, chairman, department of preventive medicine & public health medicine; Neal Hardin, Oklahoma Regional Medical Program, Oklahoma City. *Graduate & Professional Education*: Dr. Mark Johnson, physician, Oklahoma City; Dr. John S. Ezell, David Ross Boyd Professor of History, dean of the College of Arts & Sciences; Dr. Kenneth L. Taylor, assistant professor of the history of science. *Business*: Jack T. Conn, chairman of the board, Fidelity National Bank & Trust Co., Oklahoma City; Dr. James R. Burwell, associate professor of physics, assistant dean, College of Arts & Sciences; Robert E. Lee, chairman of the board, Lee Way Motor Freight, Inc., Oklahoma City. *Communications & Expression*: Dr. Richard Wells, associate professor of political science, assistant dean, College of Arts & Sciences; Dr. James J. Yoch Jr., assistant professor of English. *Education*: Dr. Pete Kyle McCarter, vice president; Dr. J. R. Morris, dean of University College; Elizabeth Stubler, assistant director, office of public information. *Humanities & Social Sciences*: Dr. J. Clayton Feaver, David Ross Boyd Professor of Philosophy, Kingfisher College Professor of Religion and Ethics; Dr. Rufus G. Hall Jr., professor of political science; Dr. Jess E. Burkett, assistant dean, College of Continuing Education. *Health Related Sciences*: H. Dean Chrislip, manager of crude oil marketing, Kerr-McGee Corp., Oklahoma City; Dr. Robert M. Bird, professor of medicine and physiology, associate dean, planning and development; *Legal*: Hicks Epton, attorney, Wewoka, and Daniel G. Gibbens, associate professor of law. *Physical Sciences, Mathematics & Engineering*: Dr. William T. Reid, Phillips Professor of Mathematics, and Dr. Edward F. Blick, associate professor of mechanical engineering and assistant dean, Graduate College. *Urban Affairs*: Ray and Dr. Jim Reese, David Ross Boyd Professor of Economics. *Academic (Organization & Administration)*: Dr. L. Doyle Bishop, professor of management. *Operations*: Dr. Gene M. Nordby, dean of the College of Engineering.

cation, and Public Service. On the right are the means by which these purposes, when defined, are carried out: Organization and Administration, University Relations, and University Life. The Resources Committee is concerned with the three resources—people, physical facilities, and money—with which the university accomplishes its goals.

Each committee is asking some fundamental questions: Is what the University is doing what the University ought to be doing? What *should* the University be doing? How is what the University wants to do best accomplished? Will this work today? tomorrow?

In the Organization and Administration Committee the lines of communication and the procedures

through which decisions are made are under examination. The organizational machinery shouldn't permit and tolerate such a system, for example, that has forty people reporting to an academic dean or thirty-five reporting to a vice president. Already some recommendations from this committee have been acted upon through the designation of three new organizational areas, each with a vice president (*see page two*). The explicit jurisdictional limits and arrangement of delegation which can allow a ponderous bureaucracy that is a large university to operate smoothly are the goals of the committee.

Two separate areas of decision-making, the academic and the administrative, have been separated from the parent committee into separate com-

mittees. They are the Academic and the Operations committees. The former is examining the process by which academic policies are decided—curricula, tenure, selection of standards, and faculty academic standards. Its members will be interested in how the structure of the faculty is governed and governs itself.

The Operations Committee is looking at all non-academic functions on campus, from the book store to food service. Last fall the Governor's Management Survey Committee recommended that all auxiliary enterprises on the campus be self-sustaining so that the academic area of the University didn't indirectly subsidize operational activities. Says Christenson, "If our principal purpose is academic excellence and public service, then let's make sure the tail doesn't wag the dog."

Another function of a university is relating its policies, purposes, and missions to the larger community. To understand how this should be done and to recommend desirable actions is the assignment of the University Relations Committee. This committee will recommend what the University should do to communicate effectively within the larger society, and internally. It will be asking about how to relate to alumni, parents, business, government, the media. It will be seeking ways that the University can translate its purpose and can improve the information feedback from these various publics, information that is necessary to the decision-making machinery.

The University Life Committee is concerned with enriching and governing the community which comprises the University itself. The University has grown with leaps and bounds. It has buildings, food services, transportation problems, security problems, maintenance problems. It has thousands of students. The committee's task is to define what kind of a place the University community ought to be. Its jurisdiction covers such subjects as recreation, special events such as visiting speakers and entertainment, organizations from honorary clubs to fraternities and sororities, student government, and the character of the University outside the classroom. Its eight subcommittees are Housing, Medical School, Student Facilities, Student Activities, Commu-



A student member listens and Prof. David French puffs placidly on his pipe as Prof. Paul David makes a point during a Saturday session of the Undergraduate Education Committee.

nity Relationships, Religious Life, Government, and Athletics, Intramurals and Recreation.

General Education has been separated into four other areas—Undergraduate Education, Continuing Education, Technical Education, and Graduate and Graduate Professional Education. The Undergraduate Education Committee has been asked to consider the following questions: What is the function of undergraduate education? What does it provide the student and what should it provide the student? How do you make the undergraduate experience relevant? The recommendations of this committee will probably be among the most interesting and imaginative.

The Continuing Education Committee is concerned with adult education and the continuing relationship of the University with its alumni.

The University's role in technical education is being considered by the Technical Education Committee.

The Graduate and Graduate Professional Education Committee has been divided into disciplines with each of the committees examining the quality and future direction of its particular field of study.

"The Executive Planning Committee," says Christenson, "was the last to be formed. We didn't just sit down and draw up the Executive Planning Committee and start allocating duties. The first thing we did was to compile the names of people who could take the fresh look we wanted. In order for them to do this we had to fashion an arbitrary but reasonable way for them to look. The result was the organizational structure. Once we had decided on the seven general areas, we decided that their seven chairmen would form a major coordinating body. But we didn't want just a closed structure because it could turn into a political process in which the chairmen would be making arrangements with each other before issues could get to their committees. We chose to open and enlarge the committee. The chairmen of the four committees under the General Education Committee were included, and we appointed sixteen members-at-large. Three ex-officio members were added also—the Governor, the Speaker of the State House of Representatives, and the President Pro-Tem of the State Senate. We have a number of

distinguished citizens and faculty members and four students. The committee includes the presidents of the OU Board of Regents and the Alumni Association and the chairman of the State Board of Higher Education."

At last count more than five hundred persons were members of the committees, and scores more had been interviewed. "In effect," says one committee member, "Hollomon has created a new minority group—those people who aren't involved with the University of Oklahoma master plan." From the perspective of the OU campus, this statement may not seem so exaggerated.

In mid-March, the Executive Planning Committee held an interim meeting to review the work being done by each committee and to check the direction each was taking. In addition, the possibility of the creation of new committees was examined, which eventually led to establishing the Ethics Committee, the Architecture Committee, and the Urban Affairs Committee.

Committees were asked to submit final reports by the end of May. During the summer, the reports will be studied, compiled, and forged into the master plan, which will be published in time for the Hollomon inauguration.

"One clearly deep and essential question is being asked," Hollomon has said in discussing the work of the committees. "Is the University only sort of a supermarket? Is it a place where students come and select a series of courses that, put together, become an education? Or is it living in more of a connected process? Is there a variety, a plan of academics and activities that become an integrated whole?"

Speculation about the committee findings and the final plan is prevalent on the campus. There are elements of anticipation and foreboding in the guessing games that are taking place about the favorite topic. Rumors are commonplace. One is that human sacrifices will be offered at the inauguration. Careful investigation has yet to confirm this.

"Universities in general are slow to change, to adapt to any situation. This is true of administration, of faculty, and of student institutions," says Hollomon.

Change, however, is inevitable. The recommendations of the Hollomon committees will, in some instances, lead the University in new directions. Some procedures will be junked. New structures and new emphases will appear.

The time for such a reassessment has been opportune, and the thought and industry applied to the task have been impressive. The committees have been meeting since January, and their findings represent many hours of interviewing, discussion, and reading.

The Hollomon committees were asked to provide the grist for a long-range plan which would lead the University of Oklahoma along the proper paths of higher education. This they have done. In less than four months, the master plan will be announced. And those who helped formulate the plan—the students, the faculty members, the alumni, the "civilians"—are hopeful that a couple of other Hollywood clichés can be applied to the final product: *Acclaimed by the critics, applauded by thousands.* ●



Gordon Christenson (left), above with Dr. Hollomon, is the plan's executive secretary.