

COMMENTARY

Senior lecturers in Natural Sciences underperforming

I SEEM again to have aroused the ire of the UWI bureaucracy in some public comments made recently in relation to the general question of tertiary education. So upset was the bureaucracy that the principal felt it necessary to dismiss my comment as unfortunate, going on to make defamatory statements about my manner of communication and my "failures". What exactly caused the response?

The extract now below is from a study entitled "Toward consensus in the development of the Faculty of Natural Science" which I conducted prior to my departure on early retirement from UWI, and which was widely circulated within the University.

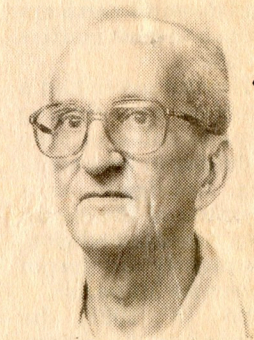
Under the section dealing with research was

read publicly:

"A cursory scan of the INDEX over the past few years indicates that we have a serious under-performance problem amongst the senior academic staff of the Faculty needing urgent attention. In categories of Senior Lecturer upward there no less than five of 16 senior staff who have not attracted a single citation in the past five-year period!"

What precisely is unfortunate about the statement? The truth of the statement? Is a fact unfortunate? Nowhere did I say that all the staff were underperforming.

The simple fact is about a third of the senior staff have not warranted a citation in the Science Citation Index, a journal which monitors over 4500 scientific jour-



By DR JULIAN S KENNY

nals, suggest under performance.

Anyone at the level publishing original science could reasonably expect his or work to be cited by others working in the same general area.

The same study noted the heavy citations of Professors Chan and Farrell, as well as Drs Narinesingh and Angadi, as well as the books by Kalicharan and Crichlow

'We have a serious underperformance problem amongst the senior academic staff of the Faculty needing urgent attention. In categories of Senior Lecturer upward there no less than five of 16 senior staff who have not attracted a single citation in the past five-year period!'

published by international publishing houses of Cambridge and Patience Hall.

It is in my view the crudest form of defamation making reference to vague "failures". During my tenure I ran a flawless examination programme, always carried the heaviest teaching load and supervised postgraduate research in Zoology.

When I, representing about two percent of the manpower of the Faculty, discontinued contact with UWI, I had successfully supervised 37 percent of the doctorates and 25 percent of the M Phils awarded in Natural Sciences and only lost three higher degree candidates. I had also supervised higher degrees at two British Universities and the University of

Miami. I had also published books, chapters, monographs, journal and other papers.

Far more important than my personal "failures" is the monumental failure to be found on page 101 of the UWI Strategic Plan 1997-2002 which reads.

"Furthermore, efforts will be made to raise the throughput rate ie to reduce the number of years a student takes to graduate from the 3.7 years to 4.4 years for a three year degree programmes and 5.7 years to 6.2 years for a four year degree programme."

The carelessness in the writing is not the issue. The monumental failure is that after 50 years of "world class" management, the average duration of a three-year degree is 4.4 years and a

four year degree 6.2.

The UWI frequently and publicly anoints itself with the "world class" category. In THE real world of quality universities, however, top institutions do not need to tell us of their quality, it simply shows.

Your readers may be as entertained as I was by the fact that while I was being defamed by one branch of the bureaucracy, another branch was inviting me as a "distinguished alumnus" to present a paper at their anniversary celebration conference at St Augustine next August.

For this single honour I was also asked to make a modest subscription of US\$300, not my national currency, toward the conference. Actually, I do not hold any UWI degrees.