

BUSINESS SCHOOL GRAFFITI

a decennial transcript by
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For TK; BT; PGF; SD; BW; DOD; RBY; DJA with real affection and thanks to them all; SK who unknowingly encouraged me to write it at all; and Avril who typed it for me.

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BY WAY OF EXPLANATION

I was fortunate to join the University Business School movement in Britain at its inception. Because I was thereafter promoted rather rapidly to a position of academic responsibility and some political influence within two of the major Schools, I have been privileged to play an exciting role over the past decade both in developing their organisation structures, and in laying the foundations of marketing studies as a university discipline in Britain. I wanted to talk about it to others and to learn what they thought on a somewhat more structured base than an after-dinner senior common room chat, but without attempting anything so pompous or premature as a complete history or memoirs. Accordingly, after long discussions with colleagues, most of whom are far from blameless for the ideas expressed here, I resolved to do it this way!

Business School Graffiti, as its name I trust implies, is a set of highly personal, whimsical opinions and reflections on what we have done so far. I have named no names but spared no blushes. I have pulled few if any punches and those with whom I have often debated can clearly perceive themselves and their ideas in what I say. Surely the dramatis personae are far less important than what we have argued about, what we saw as the problems, what we implemented as solutions. Not a single word has been written out of malice either aforethought or as an afterthought. Any views I disagree with here I have either already or would willingly tomorrow state my disagreement to the parties so challenged; nonetheless I both deserve and expect to pick up flak for many of the opinions advanced. I have been forewarned by colleagues that a book such as this is a hazardous enterprise.

I hope the book will be useful and interesting to my fellow academic colleagues in the Business Schools, where it may here and there crystallise this or that fleeting thought or provoke heated denunciation I also hope it will prove a valid communication of the issues concerned to our many friends and supporters in industry and the professions. If it provides any ammunition to our critics a plague on them.

The opportunity to write this book was afforded to me by the University of Tulsa, Oklahoma, albeit unwittingly. Sensing that I needed a respite from the British fray after ten years, they honoured me with an invitation to spend the Spring semester of 1976 as Visiting Distinguished Professor of Marketing in (heir Business School. I thank them all for their kindnesses.

LORD FRANKS AND ALL THAT

It is just a decade since Business Schools proper arrived on the higher education scene in the European Economic Community which, of course, now includes Britain. Whilst the precipitating event which gave Britain these institutions is normally identified as the Franks! Report, it came as the culmination of prolonged discussions between businessmen and government, The Federation of British Industries and the National Economic Development Office (NEDO) had both produced recommendations for major new initiatives.

Lord Franks sat taking evidence for some two months in an office at the British Institute of Management. I am not too certain what hours he kept but he received evidence from over a hundred organisations' and individuals and produced his Report. Report is perhaps too grand a word for it. It was a longish memo the gist of which was that in addition to everything already afoot in British Universities, Colleges of Advanced Technology (CATs) and Technical Colleges, two centres of excellence should be created de nouveau. Significantly, he recommended that they should be at the Universities of London and Manchester. I have always termed these the Franks' twins and shall use that expression throughout.

The locational recommendations were significant because they treated with diffidence verging on contempt the very considerable activities already in hand at the CATs, which were to become Universities in their own right following the Robbins Report. Most particularly, at Manchester, the very substantial efforts at the Institute of Science and Technology (UMIST) were to be bypassed in favour of a totally new school. Today we therefore have the paradox of the University of Manchester with two Business Schools - with the UMIST activity probably outstripping the Franks' animal in a host of ways.

Some may jibe at my use of the phrase 'diffidence verging on contempt' earlier: I do not. Excellence must be seen; willing it to exist by pumping in financial resources and wholesale poaching of staffs from well established institutions was unlikely to succeed on a grand scale - any more than new towns could be created overnight at Basildon or Bracknell.

The Oxbridge mentality which seemed to guide the policy enunciated by Franks was that the rest of higher educational efforts for management to date could be ignored and a green field site policy pursued. Two graduate schools of the Harvard type, opined NEDO, should be established, since good management was the key to economic growth and, if we had them, growth would follow. Of course, it has not as yet!

Not only were the CATs treated with unnecessary contempt; the Technical College sector was ignored too. The British Institute of Management (BIM) together with the

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Department of Education and Science had just launched its new Diploma in Management Studies (DMS) in selected Technical Colleges to replace the old BIM Diploma dating back to the late 1940s. That was when the former Institute of Industrial Administration had sacrificed its 'higher goals' for that greater good.

The new DMS had many endearing characteristics about it; it certainly provided a basis for development to good MBA work in due course at many of the colleges which offered it. Some of the CATs also initially ran DMS programmes before they were chartered as universities and began to prepare candidates for their own academic awards and distinctions.

Lord Franks was not asked to do the detailed sums on his twin schools Lord Normanbrook did them, Funds were raised, and matched by government, through a massive appeal by the Foundation for Management Education. Simultaneously, the newly fledged Universities of Technology (the old CATs) began pumping substantial amounts of University Grants Committee (UGC) funds into their management departments. This was perhaps most clearly perceivable at Aston, Strathclyde and Bradford but Salford and Brunel also developed their own special forms of activity, as did Heriot Watt University in Edinburgh.

The traditional universities paid little attention to the whole affair. Oxford and Cambridge spurned what initiatives came forward; Nottingham, Durham, Birmingham and Edinburgh gave scant succour to what they already had afoot. Only Warwick and Lancaster amongst the new universities created their own Business Schools but both did it in a highly traditional fashion, based on several departments and with all the problems which that creates for concerted action.

The Collages offering the DMS were under the control of Local Education Authorities (LEAs). They were, and still are, the providers of by far and away the most substantial number of trained and educated management manpower on all sectors of the higher education scene. Their investment in management training was in no way held back - indeed it grew more rapidly than at the UGC sponsored area in the Universities or at the Franks' twins.

Paradoxically, this is what Lord Franks had envisaged would happen, or rather I should say had *hoped*? The two new schools made little difference to what was already going on and have affected it very little. Rather than acting as beacons of excellence for all of us beyond the pale they have become just two more schools

Was the Franks' Report, therefore, a good thing? In its favour, its ambitious plans to spend some £10 millions on the two new schools, matched by government funds as well, spurred other universities and the CATs onwards as well as the LEAs. It brought enormous publicity for the idea of graduate level contributions from the university world to business management It led to the establishment of two additional good business schools in Britain.

But all the promises and all the hopes were bound to be disappointed. The very excitement of the first half of the decade, the rush to attend courses at Business Schools which was given a massive fillip by the 1964 Industrial Training Act, all meant that

what we could deliver in practical terms was hopelessly oversold. I believe most fervently that the money could have been more wisely if less dramatically spent elsewhere. The obvious candidates for development as major resource centres in management education were UMIST, Aston University, Strathclyde, Cranfield and Bradford. Sagacity of a sort did prevail in the second round of fund raising by industry at the end of the sixties. The Franks' twins did *not* get all the funds raised, even though the Council of Industry for Management Education working with the BIM and FME initially proposed that they should.

By the end of the sixties those who had been scorned in the mid-sixties had demonstrated how wrong that earlier decision had been. They demanded and, with the support of the contributing industrialists, got a modest share of the funds raised.

By the end of the decade, the Franks' twins were the losers; they had failed to meet the hopelessly ambitious targets set for them. The rest of us who had perforce to try a bit harder got more credit for our unexpected performance. The Council of Industry for Management Education was reduced to a bag of gold with little effective influence, either with the twins or with those it had scorned. The BIM and the Confederation of British Industries (CBI) were hopelessly adrift from the whole exercise, without a paddle. The universities, in the exercise of autonomous development as the finest surviving examples of medieval life, had performed in an exemplary fashion. As all exercise in influencing the drift of educational events it is as yet too soon to judge how well industry had spent its funds.

Graffito 2

SLOUGH AND PADDINGTON

Working with ICI in Slough was a fascinating change both from the Royal Air Force and political economy at Reading University. After an elaborate house party selection procedure for arts graduates at Millbank, I had been offered to Paints Division to do either systems analysis or marketing research. Somehow (I do not know how) I chose the latter. I joined the Commercial Research Department, as it was called, along with two others, one from the house party selection route and the other a lady chemist. She was automatically paid twenty per cent less than us for precisely the same work, which puzzled me. Actually her work was often better than ours.

The house party atmosphere had been fun compared with the other job hunting exercises I had been involved in. I had been to Peterborough to see AFI make washing machines and to the NCR, both without success. British Railways had offered me a job however. But ICI's Millbank exercise was quite different. I really was 'interviewed' and we had to make speeches and so forth. I was acutely aware, as I listened to what

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the others had to say, what a swanky lot arts graduates could be. One chap was just back from Katmandu where he had met the King and Queen of Nepal. He was doing a series for Anglia tv on his exploits. Another chap had danced with Princess Margaret in Northern Ireland at some Army 'do' the previous month. All I'd done to match was a study trip to Luxembourg, Brussels and Strasbourg as a Sherborn Scholar to study EEC institutions at work. At the time I was in fact working as a Pig Industry Development Authority Scholar at Exeter University in Newton Abbot on changes in livestock markets in the South West since 1934!

One of the most enduring lessons I brought away from the ICI procedures was a respect for an organisation which took its selection seriously. I've attempted to remember that myself and to let interviewees see clearly that I do.

I think it was about this time I resolved to adopt an interesting hobby to talk about at interviews. It was so boring to talk continually of rugby or athletics. I adopted African poetry - something which had started to fascinate me at Reading where my Hall Warden had kept open-house to African leaders like Joshua Nkomo and Garfield Todd in the final days of the Central African Federation. The way people tackle hobbies and talk about them is often most revealing. Years later I was to read African poetry for nearly an hour to an exclusive Bradford dining club.

Working in the Commercial Research Department did not begin at a desk. It began on the shop floor. We spent three months learning how to make paint, and working on night shifts, in order to see 'how the other half live'. I must confess I was and still am the other half in terms of family and background. Some of my real needs concerning the half I knew little about were met when the Chairman's daughter on vacation from St. Andrew's University popped in for the duration to help do some research. She explained that "Daddy uses a dishwasher to wash up after cocktail parties". I was intrigued. I'd never seen a dishwasher.

Eventually, we got to our desks and began the research work. My immediate reaction was that it all seemed very technique oriented. I was never quite clear what problems the information was intended to illumine or even solve. To the annoyance of some of my friends in the market research world I have doggedly stuck to this point of view, and said so frequently in public.

We studied paint a lot, and wallpaper. We even did investigations into garden fertilisers and zip fastener colour ranges.

We did interview surveys and product tests, and I helped extensively in the setting up of an audit of sales in the retail trade. But I was obviously not a researcher per se. I wanted to see information collected as a basis for decision making.

I changed my job, paradoxically to do yet more research as such. This time I worked at Gloucester Place, London. My London rail terminus was Paddington. The product range covered extended now to bread, car tyres, electronic organs, salad dressings and floor coverings, and the fascination of retailing for me grew.

A further move took me to Baker Street, one street further east, and into the advertising agency world. This time, although the range of products considered changed

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again to beer, biscuits, air travel, oxygen, and bath oils, the job was different. Most memorably, I recall using a chapter from Drucker's *Managing for Results* to develop a product/marketing strategy for Huntley and Palmer; and I thoroughly enjoyed evaluating the retail strategy of Watney Mann's Westminster Wine outlets at a time when wine drinking was just starting to accelerate in Britain. Most excitingly perhaps I had a second opportunity to work out a constructive approach to pricing research. This time it was the keg beer market which was at that time past its zenith; previously it had been in paint. I employed the Gabor/Granger buy-response approach, deemed by many to be somewhat academic but in my view one of the most significant price-information inputs a manager can ask for in marketing. Its appeal was the basis which it provided for action as well as its fascinating output.

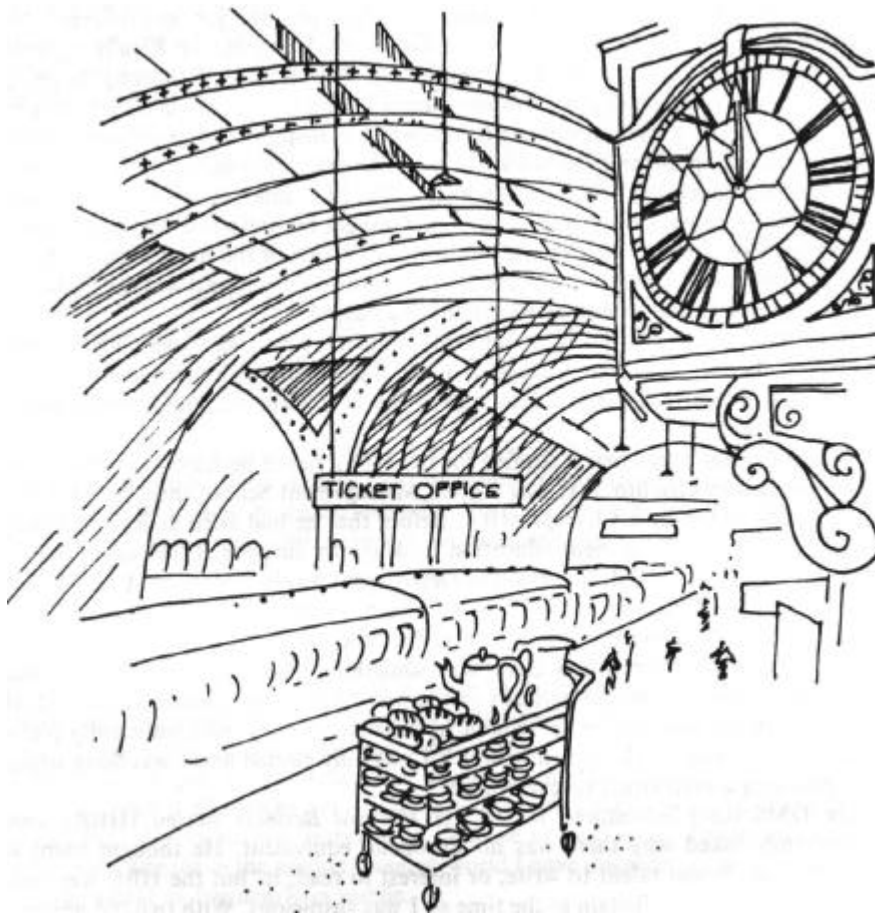
In parallel with my initial excursions into industry, I had been spending two nights a week at Slough Technical College and one night a fortnight on the Board of the Slough Co-operative Society I also started my first academic management journal. *Scientific Business*.

Slough College was where I studied for my DMS, hence perhaps my views thereon as expounded in Graffito I. It was a good Management School then, and the DMS was masterminded by a Chicago MBA. Before that he had been at Ruskin College. His approach to management education took me by surprise. I had never heard of case studies but I soon did. The Head of Department was one of the leading experts on business games in Britain at the time, so I learnt what they were too. I passed the course but was criticised for my literary style: "too flowery", they said.

The Slough Co-operative Society was something else. For my DMS project I surveyed retailing catchment patterns on the new LCC housing estate at Britwell, and went in with the local co-op to 're-launch' their store. They were sufficiently pleased to ask me to stand for the Board to which I was duly elected and I was flung straight into planning a high street redevelopment!

My DMS tutor introduced me to the *Harvard Business Review* (HBR), and I immediately asked why there was no European equivalent. He thought there was probably insufficient talent to write, or interest to read, it. But the HBR was selling nearly 2,000 copies in Britain at the time so I was suspicious. With two old university colleagues, an old school pal and my section head at ICI, I persuaded a Reading printer I had known since student magazine days to fund one for us. We launched *Scientific Business* from Slough Technical College at the same time as Blackwell launched their *Journal of Management Studies* from an editorial desk at Balliol. We've always been different - we are now called *Management Decision* - but we have consistently outsold them for over 12 years.

My penchant for writing was not limited to editorials in my own journal, however, Pergamon were interested in my thoughts on *Marketing Through Research*, on a managerial use of information, and published my first book for me. Pergamon's zest for overseas distribution ensured that it appeared in French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese and Japanese.



As I took stock from the advertising agency's fourth floor window overlooking Kellogg House, but a stone's throw from the finest Frankfurter lecsos and musaka I have ever eaten, it seemed as though I ought to head towards a progressive marketing company for my next job. Two things held me back. The first was Slough, a town full of pathos then if not so now. I liked living there and I enjoyed my involvement with the Co-op.

Less significantly, Paddington station had become an important part of my life. It was here that I first learnt the true importance of logistics which was later greatly to influence my academic life, Paddington station was the only place in London where I could buy *original* Banbury cakes. Each night for years as I returned home to Slough

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I ate one with a cup of superbly brewed tea, except when my logistician was out-of-stock His service level by 17:50 hours each weekday evening was, I computed at the time, about 98 per cent. I still often make a detour when in London to get an original Banbury cake, and now I work and live much nearer to Banbury, I sometimes take a trip there to buy some. They are sold in the Travellers' Fare establishment at Banbury Station.

Yorkshire Boom Town

I was not to find employment with a progressive marketing company, but I did land on my feet in perhaps the fastest growing service industry of the mid-sixties. *Scientific Business* had attracted the attention of a rising star in the Business School firmament, who had a fascination for historical characters in management thought. He began to edit a series of articles for the journal, which were later to appear as a Penguin reader in English and Japanese entitled *Management Thinkers*. To discuss matters generally we lunched at Flanagan's on Baker Street. He didn't tell me then that he was allergic to fish; it was years before I found out. But he did ask if I knew anyone who might like to go into marketing teaching. I said I would like to think about it myself.

Eight weeks later I took a BKS flight from Heathrow to Yeadon airport where the Standard 8 and peaked cap of my academic mentor caught my imagination at once. But it was the driving goggles that convinced me to take a fifteen per cent salary cut and go to Bradford, pronounced *braat-fud* by the natives. The goggles won against the Slough Co-op and Paddington station's Banbury cakes.

Slough to Heathrow was a clear run for me along the A4 Bath Road. As I pulled out in my Hillman Imp at Colnbrook to overtake one of the ubiquitous gravel lorries which ply that road, my windscreen was smashed by a fragment. I drove blind to finish overtaking and continued in the March cold to my plane. I recounted my distressing experience to my chauffeur in his Standard 8 en route from Yeadon to Emm Lane. Without any hint that he would do so, he acquired and presented me with 'the goggles' before I left for London that same afternoon. I still have those goggles in the boot of my somewhat more extravagant car today and I have used them twice since. Such kindness characterised virtually all my dealings with the boss during the seven exhilarating years which I was to spend at the university's Management Centre.

I took the job at Bradford, goggles apart, because teaching in a CAT *cum* university seemed the ideal place to practise as I felt inclined. Decision-related research, and the education of others to look at information in that way, and at techniques, seemed to

