

The events of the last few days and the situation as it is at present seem to us to indicate that the specific issues involved here (such as University members' conduct, demonstrations and militant political activity, the concept of discipline, and the principle of freedom of speech), profoundly important though they may be, are but expressions of a failure within the community more general and fundamental.

We are distressed and amazed at the rapidity with which communications have broken down, and extremely concerned about the evident lack of sympathy on the part of many staff and students with the Vice-Chancellor's recent decision or with the manner in which it was reached.

What is apparent is that as a result of collapses of communication on a variety of levels and of a lack of sense of common purpose there is a definite possibility that the University community will destroy itself.

A new university starts just as a set of buildings, an assortment of people and an educational programme and principles. It has no traditions and conventions for interpreting these principles in action. This is precisely why dialogue and discussion are as a general principle peculiarly essential to a new university. But for Essex, dialogue has a still greater importance.

For many of us, the principle of an integrated, democratic community of responsible adults was fundamental to the proposals in the Reith Lectures, and consequently to the public reputation of the University of Essex. We recognise that this ideal is not easy to maintain, let alone to construct from nothing. For this double reason in this immediate situation we feel it essential that barriers to communication must be broken down, dialogue must take place - if the University is to survive.

Everybody is concerned about the fate of the University; we must give ourselves the chance to develop - indeed initiate - that sense of corporate purpose which has hitherto been so conspicuously lacking.

We propose therefore that there be a moratorium on the University for a period of two days, beginning on Tuesday morning (May 14th). These should be devoted to generating dialogue, in a variety of forms, in which all members of the University participate.

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