IN PRAISE OF A
"NEW DEPARTURE"

The well-oiled argument of the old versus the new Honours School syllabus really needs recourse to an even older geographical controversy— that of what our role as geographers should be in the real world context. If the latter problem can be solved successfully, then the denouement of the former should follow, simply and logically.

In the official Oxford University Prospectus, 1973-74, two main objectives of the School's syllabus were thus stated:

- to provide the student with a balance of training in general and regional geography,
- and to give him(her) some knowledge of the variety of the world by offering a wide range of options in special subjects.

In both aims the emphasis was certainly laid upon geography per se rather than upon any applications which our discipline might have to real world situations. Special testimony to this is afforded by the ludicrous over-emphasis of 'regional geography' whereby an undergraduate's Final becomes largely a fact-counting examination. (See for instance Peter Ambrose's learned arguments which systematically dismember the corpse of regional geography.)

In striking contrast the new emphasis on planning and environmental management in geography seems at last to have built a bridge between our island discipline and the real world which has always surrounded it, and yet from which we have always managed to stay remote. With their training in their training, geographers can now channel their creative capacities towards moulding the future development of the real world, instead of either commenting on what should be done in a detached and non-empirical way, or simply 'projecting' what the future holds (usually disastrously).

So is our "new departure" can add the vital new dimension to our study whereby, through strategy formulation and implementation, we can define our own optimal projections and then realise them (at least in part), especially as we now possess a whole range of new innovative techniques. Without goals there is no progression, the "new departure" has given us our goals, or at least the ability and motivation to form them.

But the end of an era of "splendid isolation" does herald certain new responsibilities not least of which are the new techniques which we must master. Especially those which have direct reference to our "new departure"— namely, Systems Theory, Linear Programming, Game Theory, and Cybernetics.

In his treatise on applied geography, the great Sir Dudley Stamp (as long ago as 1960) wrote:

If the past fifty years have been spent in developing geographical methods of survey and analysis, surely the time has come to apply these methods towards the understanding and interpretation of some of the features of the world today.

Further, the time has surely come when those same methods of survey and analysis can be used in helping towards the solution of some of the great world problems— the increasing pressure of population on space, the development of under-developed areas, or the attempt to improve living conditions in terms of town and country planning.

In an increasingly socialist world (where the emphasis is moving towards planning from the controlled government levels, and away from the so-called "free enterprise" market force determinant), the reality of Stamp's assertion can only become increasingly manifest. Though there are several exceptions to the general spread of Socialism (will a future Conservative Government exhume Selsson Man? Where will the CIA strike next?) the implications of this trend cannot and must not be ignored, even by the most shortsighted.

Continued on page two...

Inside: page two - Dorset field trip; page three - Editorial and 'shorts'; page four - "What was once prized...?"; page five and six - psychogeographic quiz.
It is hoped that within the limiting constraints of the space available here, some sort of skeletal case has been made for the new Honours School syllabus. It is certainly far easier to split out the pill of progress than to chew over its various possibilities, and ultimately swallow it. Like Ted Hughes's Hawk, governing bodies do have a tendency to "want to keep things like this", rather than continually seek an optimal course of study for their students. And though the Hawk has been successfully stirred at Mansfield Road, this is certainly no reason for adopting a stance of self-congratulatory limbo. In addition, the "new departure" must not be seen in absolute terms, for it simply opens up a wealth of fresh new-departure possibilities for course development, in which Oxford can be a pioneer, instead of waiting for developments elsewhere, and the rudimentary ten-year lag-time before they are implemented here. One instance of this might be a new "psychological Geography" option for Moderations and Schools, which would provide a far sounder base of factual knowledge for the behavioural geographer. Moreover, a compulsory Moderations paper of "Economic Geography" would serve a similar function, in addition to complementing the new emphasis on planning in the Honours School Syllabus.

Richard House.

WEYMOUTH 1975 - some interesting discoveries - not all of them geographic.

A party of thirty-odd (30 odd?) all led by ASG, MD, uh, with frequent but sometimes coherent interruptions from DS and sonorous blessings from CS, left Oxford on Saturday 15th of March and later that afternoon descended on the Netherton Hotel in the style of the mudflats we were to see later in the week. We were duly allotted our sleeping quarters (it was certainly a question of fractions) and then proceeded to take over the Plaza Torró steak bar as our HQ.

For those concerned with facts, figures, graphs, analyses etc. there is a volume undergoing production, but here is a brief resume of what really happened. Sunday morning was spent in the salt marshes at Poole Harbour - but the real highlight was the north versus south "football" match. Almost immediately it degenerated into a primitive call of nature rampage; the whereabouts of the ball seemed unimportant as bodies heaved together in sweaty confusion, delicate young 'ladies' revealed their true passions - the men took up the challenge - who saved geographers aren't red-blooded?

At Charmouth on Monday, the "hertford mob" showed true grit - they bulldozed a path down to the sea through almost impenetrable gorse and bramble, and then bulldozed a seperate path to the top of the cliff - all for no apparent reason.

Early in the week, Trevor Hart and Co. had set a new angling record with a depth of 7.5m, and on Thursday, the well-drilled and determined duo of House and Pichon were out to better this. At 6.30am they hit flint - tension mounted - House was doubtful, Pichon still hopeful. They persisted, they had to retire - beaten men.

Thursday night was party night. In the suitably anonymous atmosphere of Flat 7A, geographers danced thigh to thigh, hip to hip, cheek to cheek, (they'd obviously read 'Locational Analysis in Human Geography'). ASG was seen jiving (pictures are available) Dale was spotted looking sober. There were other surprises too of an even more astounding nature... the editors regret that through necessity, this account of the Weymouth field trip has had to be censored in parts in order to avoid unsavoury and personal references....

Friday was a restful day - water samples were taken from the Fleet. At was rather different in the evening - beer sampling was very evident (it became random sampling as the evening wore on) and it had its effect on the skittles match. ASG launched himself into the game with great energy and downed pints with equal enthusiasm - the effect on his bowling was shattering - though no casualties were recorded. Elimination matches left Kat as women's champ., Adam as men's champ, and the West country as overall winners. Prizes for style and finesse must go to the London and south-east team brilliantly captained by Nick, Mary and Nina performing a duet on the piano completed the rollicking scene.

Anon.

SCHOOL OF GEOGRAPHY 1980

Scuffles broke out yesterday between contending factions of undergraduates in the SAG and Bulldogs had to be called in to break up the fighting. Observers note that there has been trouble brewing ever since the SAG had been "democratised" six months ago. One remarked that now everyone - graduates, undergraduates and staff - was enfranchised in the professorial elections, the way was open for populists to stir up the mass of voters. Undergraduates had been excited by speeches given by the two main candidates, Drs Rabbil and Bowdie - and the divided allegiances had caused "some acrimony". Rumour has it, however, that interest in this contest will pall rapidly if Barnaby Venon, a research student, declares his surprise candidature. He is noted for his strong feelings on the selection procedure and other matters. There is little doubt that if he stands, he will win: "It's just a question of organising the rank and file". Another reason for his certain chance of success is the proving groundswell of support for his approach to the subject. Mutatis mutandis!
The aim of these few sheets is to stimulate more interest in the S.O.G both in Geography itself and in the activities of the Herbertson Society. To some people it is a matter of some astonishment that the Department has never had its own regular magazine or newsletter. Only two years ago, a well produced magazine of some length was published twice in one term. Unfortunately, this publication - Discoveries in Geography - ceased after that. The benefit of this newsletter being sponsored by the Herbertson Society is that it has more chance of maintaining continuity. Providing there are people sufficiently interested to write articles and providing that there are a couple of people prepared to tackle the work of production, there is no reason why the HERBERTSON NEWSLETTER should not prevail.

NEWS AND HERO ROBERT O. K.

Not many would claim nowadays that regions really exist in any strict sense, but some still hold as did E. W. Gilbert, that regional geography is the very pith and core of our subject. This is an anathema to many who recall being taught Geography in a series of boring case studies progressing from climate and relief to population and resources. This is not an experience of regional geography, it is a failed regionalization where facts have been confused in a way that makes complex inter-relations look like simple cause and effect.

Look instead to the good regional geographies - North America, Latin America, or South America (where the art synthesis has been skillfully worked). One of the reasons regional studies are becoming less common is that to prepare a good synthesis of all the important geographic factors acting in an area is very difficult. Moreover, the craving for order which is stirred up by a glimpse at the natural sciences initiates a quite frantic refusal in some to acknowledge that areas differ, that regions though they may share some general characteristics with another place are essentially unique. Those who would lead us astray with stochastic models, grey boxes, and systematic analyses should not forget that these methods should complement the main aim and not replace it. Geography is after all about places.

PROGRESS AND CO-OPERATION

No doubt everyone will have noticed that most of the articles kept on the book-list of the S.O.G library is now on the open shelves. This makes access to reading list and other previously reserved books much easier and saves the librarians a lot of work.

This move is a direct result of a discussion on the Library, held at a Staff Student Committee Meeting last term. After talking with Miss Gilcr (acting on behalf of Miss Buxton), it was suggested that the book-list could be dispensed with.

One of the problems associated with the greater ease of access to popular books is that of security. Spot-checks are now being made in the library but it is to be hoped that members of the S.O.G will not abuse the system by making illegal removal of books.

HERBO IN DEBT?

Baron's Leinon, HERO president estimates that by third week this term the Herbertson Society will run out of hard cash. This situation, he says, is by no means unusual.

Each guest speaker costs on average £2 to bring from Oxford, feed and accommodate for one evening. No gross extravagances have indulged. It is this simple regular expense which has eaten away the Herbo's small funds, plus an extraordinary grant from the University Clubs Committee of £20, and left the Society in this embarrassing position. To avoid the total demise of this unique Oxford society it is customary for one of the senior members to make the Herbo a loan. The Oxford R.C.S. has already given the Herbo a chance, but although this gesture is appreciated it can only go a small way to solving the problem.

It seems inevitable that membership fees must rise, but other money raising schemes are being considered. Any suggestions along these lines would be welcomed by Phil Edison (St Johns)
What was once prized is afterwards held cheap... nothing else emerges....

Lucrative, 'De rerum natura'.

Following the well-chosen changes in the degree syllabus, it is perhaps especially disappointing that the spirit of our founder seems to remain, by and large, so remote. The works of Sir Halford Mackinder gather dust on the shelves, the photograph on the landing continues to be unnoticed by the majority and his lectures packed and followed by eyepatch are forgotten. In the continuing methodological confusion, the legacy at Oxford from this brilliant mind, which is now afforded only lip service, might yield a philosophy to smite the tendency to meddle pretentiously with material considered to be loosely 'geographical' whatever its systematic context.

While the systematic topics pursue higher standards of scholarship, trying to maintain geographical approach, the core of the subject, having left the shelter of the capes and bays, unprotected by technical language, flourishes in a sea of self-deceit. Geography suffers as badly from fashions as history: whatever the tools available, man is ultimately the measure of all things; we must not ignore our finest man.

Mackinder took his themes from a wide range, especially from the physical environment, at present reasserting itself in terms of retribution against the moral and political creed of anti-determinism; his insight, ability to predict (in defiance of Hartshorne), and compelling clarity make 'Britain and the British Seas' (1902) of far greater value than idle historical curiosity. His geology was not content to borrow from other disciplines (far easier in his day), even in regional works: consider the loose and superficial phrases all too common today in this part of the subject so demanding of true scholarship. 'Britanny's unity owes more to history than to Geography' is a clear circular argument which we ought to be able to avoid if subjective writing on the region is now deemed boring old-fashioned and above all contemptibly simple. Mackinder prefaces one of his chapters with a quotation from Michelet: 'In the beginning History is all Geography', a sentiment echoed by G.M. Trevelyan: 'History is governed by Geography. An ability to argue more truly, to symphonically weave thoughts into funda mental ideas (and thus write penetrating regional dissertations of value, stimulating to candidates and examiners) might instil greater enthusiasm in the undergraduate than a cramping of undigested trivial, such a conceptual framework might prevent 'vaguely geographical work' being 'made ad hoc vehicle for such things as... regional planning'. So wrote Hagget (1957), who, incidentally, remarked recently that contrary to popular opinion, he craved for students who knew some good integrated regional geography, we might then with all the valuable recent research being done, better defend our subject, potentially occupying a fascinating and crucial position, and render our discussions with others of more weight. Fundamental Geography is as difficult a subject as any; competence may require a lifetime of study, but it would be richly rewarded.

Paul Coones.

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RECOMMENDED READING

For an interesting account of the relationship of deteriorating climate to marginal agriculture, see M.A. Parry in the IGS no 64 March 1975.

Anyone just returned from the Isle of Arran might be interested in A.M.D. Gemmel's paper 'The deplacation of Arran' IGS (1973) 59, pp. 39-39 and the fascinatingly bitchy criticism and defence of the article in the IGS March '75. In this, J.M. Gray accuses Gemmel of perpetrating a 'chain of errors' and mentions his 'inadequate data' and his 'ecritical accept.nce'. The IGS allowed Gemmel to reply and he very nimbly succeeds in discrediting Gray. Who said the academic life was easy?

Politics and Chile. The Bank of London and South America Review (March 1975) contains an assessment of the situation in Chile by Dr Harold-Blakemore of University College London. 'The World Today' (April 1975) carries a rather contrary view of the same situation. One may rightly wonder if they are talking about the same place when Blakemore says (p133):

That feeling of relief (of the Chileans) is still the Government's chief asset...

and it can count on the people's response to firm but fair government in the national interest.

while Strafford, in 'The World Today', claims (p159):

There is no doubt that the military government has lost much of its public support that it had when it came in. But it has developed a siege mentality, and tends to regard criticism as politically inspired.

Finally, no II in the SSG research paper series should fascinate many social geographers. R.L. Woods builds a model of the changing spatial distributions of coloured immigrants in Birmingham using the Monte Carlo method. Heavy going for the uninitiated, this paper is daringly predictive in a complicated situation.
WHAT SORT OF GEOGRAPHER ARE YOU? THE THIS QUIZ WILL FIND OUT!

Many hours of painstaking psychological research have produced these three multiple choice questions which in themselves are sufficient to sum up the psyche of every spatial differentiator in the School of Geography.

To discover what sort of geographer you really are pick anyone of the seven answers to each question. When you have chosen all three (and you must be completely honest with yourself) add up your score from the key at the bottom. Then turn to the Psychogeographic Guide and learn your true self.

Begin here:

1/ Why did you choose Oxford Geography for a degree course?
   a/ You didn't. They threw you out of the PPE course.
   b/ You feel the academic value of spatial differentiation is crucially important.
   c/ You always wanted to row in the Blue Boat.
   d/ You were rejected by Bristol.
   e/ You were rejected by Slough Polytechnic.
   f/ Your father wants you to go into town and country planning.
   g/ You're very fond of intelligent women/men.

2/ Which is your favourite lecturer?
   a/ Mrs Haired.
   b/ Mrs Baird.
   c/ What lecturer?
   d/ Dr Scargill.
   e/ Marj.
   f/ A.S.G. (Cantab)
   g/ Prof. Gottmann.

3/ Which of these changes would you like to see instituted in our department at Mansfield Road?
   a/ The introduction of a Geography course.
   b/ Topless waitresses.
   c/ No change. The present system is perfect.
   d/ A vote of thanks to all the staff for their splendid work.
   e/ Abolition of the Herbo Newsletter.
   f/ Abolition of the Herbo.
   g/ Combat against the present loss of momentum in the OSU campaign by genuine and informal mass participation.

Now turn to the Psychogeographic Guide, over the page, and remember the Truth is not always pleasant!

A NEW START FOR SPANISH GEOGRAPHY.

Students from the faculty of History and Geography in Barcelona have written to Oxford asking how they should go about tackling a modern Geography course.

Anyone interested in helping formulate a reply to them should see the President of the Herbo, Barnaby Lenon (Kable).

OVERHEARD (in a discussion of the pros and cons of the tripos system)
"It gives you a chance to get rid of students in their second year."

THANKS

The editors would like to thank all those who have contributed to the Herbo Newsletter and all those who have passed on suggestions and good wishes. It is hoped that parts of this first issue are provocative enough to evoke a response and any offers of articles, letters, or help in any form for the next issue this term would be gratefully received by Martin Harrison and Tim Charlesworth.
SCORE 0-100 Your secret ambition is to be a research student working closely with the Professor on a thesis more earth-shattering than the DAVIESION cycle of erosion. You look for appreciation and praise from the staff of the S.O.G. and always wonder why your friends sit at the back of the lecture theatre when you sit at the front, don't worry, it's not B.O. just remember the maxim about the gnomes ambition 'people who crawl never crawl far'.

SCORE 101-900 Ah -- at last -- a true geographer. Weaned on Haggett and chorley you have a deep understanding of the earth and its intricacies. Your inability to name any of the lecturers stems more from scholarly absent-mindedness rather than indicating the number of lectures you attend. You are the sort of geographer Oxford needs, that stupid grin on your face hides a flexible and perceptive mind - you're an embryonic marchlander, so don't believe everything the advertisements tell you - speak up - be confident. Write an article for the Herbo newsletter.

SCORE 901-3000 Geography has awakened you to the love of the outdoors - the fresh, bracing, and uninhibited life. Your passionate nature has been stirred, your earthy emotions aroused -- you crave for ice-wedges, vast after polygonal formations, long to sink your fingers into sensual mudflows. Don't hold back -- crevasses are waiting to be plumbed -- tors embraced -- slaty cleavages revealed. Remember you're still in the youthful stage with a long way to go before you reach your base-level.

SCORE 3001-11,000 Your desire to be one of the crowd and your obvious thirst for mass-participation reveals a deep-seated insecurity, an inability to maintain personal relationships on anything but a superficial level, and the burning need for a vehicle to express your views. Your almost total dependence on your fellow-men is of the worst parasitic type. Symbiosis can be a beautiful thing but in your case it's one-sided. You're a nasty, greasy, money-grabbing, long-haired, layabout. Just because Slough Poly rejected you, you think you're made, and now you lounge around in your Oxford study sipping sherry -- you socialist you.

SCORE II,001 and over "The need for geographers to be numerate as well as literate is no new development." S. Gregory.

YOUR HERBERTSON SOCIETY

This term's Herbertson Society programme has begun with John Hart's annual tribute to ROCKS AND RELIEF IN THE OXFORD REGION which no doubt all Mod's candidates thoroughly appreciated.

Four more highly stimulating and erudite lectures take place this term:

On Monday May 5 at 5 o'clock Dr J.P. Cole, well-known author of books on the U.S.A. and World Affairs, is coming from the University of Nottingham to lecture on THE COMPUTER IN GEOGRAPHY. We hope you will make an effort to come; a knowledge of computers is becoming basic to anyone with an interest in understanding present trends in the subject. Moreover you may want to use one to handle that mass of information accumulated for dissertation or research. The only really 'innovative' topic of the term, this lecture will definitely be worth coming to.

The remaining lectures are attractive subjects by popular authors. On Tuesday, May the sixth, at 2.30 pm Peter Toynbe (Newby's friend) is talking on PERCEPTION AND THE DECISION-TAKING PROCESS about which, he has recently written a book. On Wednesday, May the 14th, at 5.00 pm we are honoured with the presence of Professor B.W. Hodder, academic, author and explorer, coming to talk about MARKET AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE LESS DEVELOPED COUNTRIES, a topic on which Prof. Hodder can justifiably be called a world expert. Finally, on Wednesday of fourth week, Prof. J. A. Patmore, Herbertson prize winner in 1952, is visiting us to tell us of recent trends in his subject - RECREATION AND THE GREGG PARK.

These lectures will all be memorable and we hope that you will come along to support your society. And remember - the long and hazardous road to a first must begin at a Herbertson lecture.

The Herbertson Committee.

The Herbo Newsletter, issue I, May 1st 1975, Mansfield Rd., Oxford...