

An E.A. Professor Proves His Worth

In the belief that a few prickings of the conscience may never come too late to save the soul even of an administrator, the Journal, in righteous pursuit of its mission, is convinced that in presenting the following moral tale it is doing the right thing. Written as it is from the perspective of one who already dwells "Down-under" (although like others in that part of the world he is apt to assume that he really lives "Up-above"), the tale may be felt to carry all the more moral force.

It seems that a very noted professor in educational administration passed away recently and reached the pearly gates. At this point Gabriel arrived and showed him into a waiting room. "I'm afraid you have to take a small test of your achievements before final admission," said Gabriel. "But I don't expect it will be any trouble. However, I strongly advise you to tell the truth. He," and at this Gabriel indicated the room above them, "He doesn't really appreciate anything else." "Of course, of course," replied the academic in a confident way, because he knew he had been a very hard-working scholar with many outstanding contributions to his credit. At this, Gabriel ushered the professor into the test room.

This was a square room with a small desk for the candidate and a rostrum for Gabriel, who had to pose the questions. On the side wall was a large automatic screen. "You need 100 points for entry," said Gabriel. "Press the button on the desk when you are ready to answer. Your score will be automatically recorded. Now check the reply system by pressing the button." The process had upset the professor a little because he realized it was not a situation in which he had full control, but when he pressed the button, the number 90 flashed on the screen. "That's your starting score," said Gabriel. At this point the professor felt very much better, only 10 points needed to pass. It is hardly a test at all, he

reflected.

Gabriel opened a file and started the questions. "What do you think has been your greatest accomplishment?" he said. "Writing and having published seven books which presented my theories and research. A couple of these were in association with other academics in educational administration, but even there, credit for originality of the work was given to me." The professor glanced at the screen, but the number did not change.

"Tell me more about that. What precisely did you achieve through this writing?" Gabriel continued. "It explained a particular theory of organization which should lead to more effective use of resources in the last analysis. The work was well received, and at least three of my books have been used as texts in administration courses in many universities and colleges." The professor again glanced at the screen, but nothing changed. "That must have used up a lot of paper," said Gabriel. "Well... I... I never really looked at it that way before... I suppose you're right." At this a buzzer sounded and the score changed to 80.

"What else do you feel you have accomplished?" said Gabriel. "I have written thirty-seven articles and many of these have been published in the most prestigious journals." The academic again glanced, with expectation at the screen, but again nothing changed. "What was in the articles? How did they help people in the world?" "The main theme was really an elaboration of theoretical aspects of the administrator as leader in the complex educational organization. Many of my colleagues said they were very useful. Indeed I think I can claim an international reputation in the field."

"Did you ever comment favourably on your colleagues' work?" "Yes, for quite a group I gave credit where it was due, and when I was on the editorial board of a couple of journals I recommended publication of their work." "Did this group constitute a sort of club?" "I... well..." The professor glanced at the ceiling with a slightly worried expression. "I suppose you could look at it that way." At this the harsh buzzer again sounded and the score changed to 70.

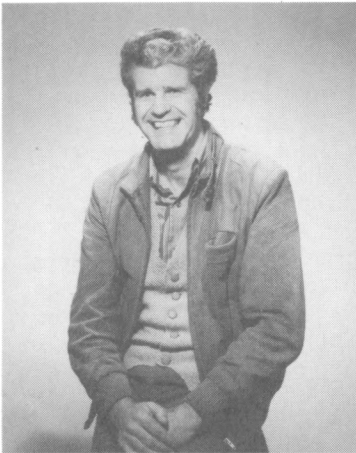
"Well, what else?" said Gabriel. "As I say I was involved in editing several journals. Also, I was a consultant to several committees in universities and to authorities in education. I was key speaker at at least nine conferences and attended many others to introduce other key speakers." At this Gabriel interrupted while the professor glanced nervously at the screen. "This must have brought you quite a lot in fees and expenses, not to mention status," said Gabriel. The academic glanced at the ceiling. "That's true... that's true," he confessed in some confusion. "Could you please tell me what all that travelling and spending actually accomplished?"

A short silence ensued. As it tended to develop into a long silence, the buzzer started to beep repeatedly and the score changed 10 points at a time, from 70 to 0.

When the academic found himself outside the pearly gates

of the beautiful kingdom, he happened to see an old friend, Bill, a former school principal, arriving. Bill immediately sensed that his friend had been rejected, but he encouraged the professor to give a full account of the test procedure. The professor was quite happy to do this after he had recovered from his surprise at the arrival of Bill, because he had not even realised that Bill was even a little sick.

Bill listened to the account with great care, even though he was quite distressed at the professor's rejection. He thought about his work; about the schools he had administered and what he had done there as an administrator for so many years. He reflected on the type of questions he might have to face. In the end he said, "I don't know that I will bother with that test. It is a long way down and it's getting late. Perhaps we'd better start now." Of course, you have to understand that Bill was not really a typical school principal.



David Allan was born in Scotland and has studied in Canada, but writes, "I live and work in Australia and have developed a fundamental attachment to this timeless land. One aspect... is a love of the magnificent native plants; an aim in work and life is thus to consider the relationship of the Eucalypt to the management of human affairs..." He is Lecturer in Management and Organization at the Phillip Institute of Technology in Coburg, Victoria.