

From: Burrell, Gibson (Prof.)

Sent: 17 March 2021

To: Vice Chancellor, University of Leicester; Dean, School of Business; Head of College of Social Science, Arts and Humanities

Subject: Futures in the University of Leicester

Dear Vice Chancellor,

Last week I received a letter from Henrietta O'Connor regarding my future in the University of Leicester. My name was misspelt – yet one of many indications of the abysmal lack of care exhibited by senior managers throughout this process, who have had no human respect in their dealings with peoples' lives and livelihoods. It concludes "Professor Burrell's research is primarily in CMS and PE and is not in areas aligned with School strategic priorities". In the first individual consultation I chose not to defend my work over a 47 year career to someone (the Acting Dean) who showed no knowledge nor interest in my research nor any inclination to learn something of it in the meeting. What he did show was a great deal of discomfort, being forced to make academic judgments in areas of which he had no knowledge. Clearly, he was the monkey not the organ grinder, pressurised into demeaning and excruciating embarrassment by the need to reduce University expenditure by July 31<sup>st</sup> and the dawning of a new but terrifying financial year. However, here I refute the lies and spurious categories which have been levelled against my work. I am an Organisation Theorist and internationally known as this, and have been from well before 'critical management studies' was ever thought of, and I continue to be widely respected and known for my contribution to Organization Theory across the world.

The Dean of the School of Business expresses his wish for staff to become more 'mainstream'. It is difficult to imagine someone being more 'mainstream' than me. I have had a long commitment to the School and the University of Leicester starting in 2002 as Head of School and in unbroken form thereafter. When I was HOS, our NSS scores across Business and Management centres in all the UK were 1<sup>st</sup> 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>. These are results of which only to dream today. I understand how to run a School which the current incumbent Lilliputians do not. The Wikipedia page against my name in September 2018 says "According to the Carter/Mueller index, Burrell ranks as the best Dean in the UK over the last two decades". In the June 2007 issue of *Long Range Planning*, a piece by Don Antunes and Howard Thomas entitled 'The Competitive (Dis)Advantages of European Business Schools' (pp 382-404), made positive reference to Leicester three times. The authors opined (pp 397-8) that "An example of an innovatory learning style is Professor Gibson Burrell's attempt to develop a 'critical' management school at the University of Leicester in the UK and encourage the development of innovation and creativity through dialogue, criticism and integrative learning". Try finding a positive reference to Leicester anywhere in the world at this moment in time - because dialogue and criticism are being stifled and it offers a management style that one can *only* critique as dire and incompetent!

From October 2014 to December 2016 I held a Leverhulme Emeritus Fellowship, the funds for which were located in the University of Leicester, despite my other professorial position in Manchester Business School. The tenure of this Fellowship is not recorded in the documentation with which I was provided as part of the case against me. In 2016 I published

a book with my then departmental colleague, Professor Martin Parker, entitled *For Robert Cooper: Collected Work* Routledge, New York. The work of collecting material behind this book was funded by a grant from within Leicester's College of Social Sciences. This fact of College support is missed out from the outright condemnation which the edited book receives in the documentation. The case seeks to find the devil's work everywhere and like that of most witch-hunters, it but glances anywhere and finds it.

Overall, my devilish work is so mainstream that it has achieved over 27,000 citations, of which 2808 were recorded in the last calendar year, which is an average 54 citations per week. This does not demonstrate a slowing down of academic influence and is one which is somewhat uncommon. I was one of the first members of Leicester staff to be elected to the Academy of Social Sciences in 2005. I was a Founding Editor of the journal *Organization*, developed by the publisher Sage, whose lawyers will be interested to know that publishing in it is now deemed to be an issue for redundancy within the University of Leicester. Today I am a section editor for the *Journal of Business Ethics* which is a top 50 journal so far as the *Financial Times* is concerned. I was awarded a prestigious biennial prize at the 74<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the American Academy of Management, Philadelphia, USA in August 2014. Candace Jones (October 11<sup>th</sup> 2014) of the Organization and Management Theory Division of the Academy of Management – and not the CMS division - for I am an Organization Theorist first and foremost – said:

'Our 2014 Joanne Martin Trailblazer award went to Gibson Burrell and Gareth Morgan for their collective and individual work on organization theory, paradigms, images, power and space with books such as *Sociological Paradigms and Organizational Analysis* and *Images of the Organization* as well as numerous thought provoking and stimulating articles—all of which has forged new paths for, sparked animated dialog about and shaped our thinking on organization theory'.

The 'mainstream' is what people like me thought about yesterday - but in a different way and a bit earlier than most Deans. It's obviously all too frightening for the anti-intellectuals that are running the School and the College today. My recent CV was available to the Dean and Deputy Dean of the School of Business but they chose in their 'method' of data collection to ignore it, as it does not fit their purposes. Or they never read it, for genuine scholarship is not really their thing.

I am truly sorry that the University of Leicester has come to this; where even mediocrity is a dream to aspire to, where lies and half truths masquerade as knowledge, where academics seek to frighten other academics about what they research and how they can research it, where the closing of ears is the chosen way by senior managers to solve problems, where being critical of management is not acceptable. I wish the Institution well, since I was both an undergraduate and postgraduate in Leicester and have worked hard on its behalf, but on this evidence, it is in line to be the first British University to fail in centuries. And that will be your legacy.

Professor Gibson Burrell