INTERVIEW WITH PROFESSOR RUSSELL MURPHY
FOR THE WESLEYAN RETIRED FACULTY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
Heather Zavod
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HEATHER ZAVOD: It is October 4, 2017, and I am in the Public Affairs Center with Professor Russell Murphy, who retired from the Government Department in 2011. Professor Murphy, please tell me about your background and how you became interested in Government studies.

RUSSELL MURPHY: I began as a full-time member of the Faculty back in 1966. The year prior to that I had a part-time visiting Faculty position in the Government Department. My background is a bit unconventional for a place like Wesleyan. I was raised in an Irish Catholic background in Boston and still identify strongly with that heritage—albeit my grandfather, great-grandfather (Civil War), great-great-grandfather and great-great-great-grandfather, (Revolutionary War) were all Yankees and Protestants. I went to parochial schools, graduated from Boston College High School, and entered directly into Catholic seminary. I was in the seminary for six years, four of them in Brighton, Mass., at St. John’s Seminary. After the four years the Archdiocese of Boston sent me to study in Rome, at the North American College and at the Gregorian University, the latter run by the Jesuits. All the classes were in Latin, as were the examinations, including oral exams. I’m one of the few members of this Faculty, I venture, who has ever taken a Hebrew test in Latin [laughing]. I couldn’t speak a word of Hebrew now and I am very limited in my Latin these days. I left Rome, having decided, after a lengthy self-examination, the priesthood was not for me. I returned to the States in 1957, and was fortunate enough to be admitted to Boston College and to be awarded a draft deferment. I received an MA from Boston College in 1958. More importantly, it is where I met my wife, Sheila Ann.

When my deferment expired, I enlisted in the Navy and was admitted to the Naval Officer Candidate School in Newport, Rhode Island. I was commissioned in the fall of 1958 and assigned to the U.S. Naval Security Group at Pearl Harbor. I reported for duty there in January 1959. At the time, Hawaii was still a Territory; it had not as yet been admitted as the 50th State.
Sheila and I were engaged that summer. She had flown to Hawaii following the end of the school year. She had received an MA from Boston College (Her Thesis: *Self-Reliant Women in Pre-Shakespearian Drama* was some decades ahead of the curve) and had been teaching English in Hudson, Mass. Her mother had been hesitant about her leaving, but approved conditionally—the conditions being that she have a summer job and a regular job the next fall. “Self-reliant,” she ventured cross-country and across the Pacific. She worked that summer at a Girl Scout camp deep in an inaccessible part of mountains in the center of the island (Oahu). That fall she taught at Sacred Heart Academy on Oahu in the shadow of Diamond Head. We were married that November at the Submarine Base chapel at Pearl Harbor.

Living in Hawaii was idyllic but not sustainable, and while a Navy career was conceivable, it was problematic, since it would have meant substituting one hierarchical organization for another. And though we had both done quite well in college, we were not entirely confident whether our academic credentials (and especially mine) would carry much weight with graduate schools or whether our meager resources, which were virtually nil, would allow us to do so. These resources were spread even thinner with the arrival of our oldest child, Russell Jr., and the pending arrival of our daughter, Siobhan Marie. But we decided to cast the lot, applied to various graduate schools and, *mirabile dictu*, I was admitted to a number of them including Yale. Yale was attractive to us. Sheila had graduated from Albertus Magnus, a Dominican College located in New Haven just up the hill from Yale. Besides, Yale was ranked first among political science graduate programs and was then at the forefront of the behavioral revolution, stressing as it did the ways in which sociology, psychology, economics and quantitative methods contributed to the understanding of political life. Yale was a happy choice, additionally, in that I found a helpful mentor, Herbert Kaufman, who in addition to stimulating my interest in the administrative state and in state and local government, helped steer me to a paid internship with what was then a fledgling experimental program being funded by the Ford Foundation. The program was to be run by a new private non-profit, Community Progress Inc., which later became the prototype for the Johnson Administration’s War on Poverty (*Economic Opportunity Act of 1964*, and the subject of my first book). This same mentor, Herb K., was subsequently instrumental in my appointment as Director of the Yale Political Science Research Library. This position had previously been held by Fred Greenstein, who had moved on to Wesleyan. As director, I came into contact with Clem Vose, then Chair of the Government Department at Wesleyan, who asked me to run a session for his class on the wonders of the then newfangled IBM card sorter. And,
finally, and through this same mentor, I was able to enroll in a two-person (Yale) graduate seminar at Wesleyan with Nelson Polsby. Fred, Clem and Nelson share the blame for my being in Middletown.

HZ: Do you have a specialty or sub-specialty?

RM: My specialty is state and local government. I’ve published three books, two of which received awards for scholarship, and numerous articles and essays on various aspects of these sub-national governments, which, by the way, are fairly unique given the (albeit declining) political autonomy they have. At Wesleyan I taught the Introductory American Government course, which focused on: (a) the abiding ambiguities of democracy, (b) the enduring ambivalence among the nation’s elites about the wisdom and the practicality of popular rule, and (c) the “elites’” continuing efforts to distance policy-making from politics and elections. These same themes ran through the courses I taught on state and local government: in particular Un-heavenly Cities and Urban Politics, as well as The Administrative State, the latter of which, while focused on the national government, contained a goodly amount about the rise of professionalism, and non-partisanship and bureaucracy at the state and local level. I also have a longstanding interest in public law—my Master’s thesis at Boston College back in 1958 was on The Deportation Policies of the Warren Court, policies that dealt principally with federal efforts to combat organized crime. The syllabus in each of the courses I taught was heavily laden with federal and, in some instances, State cases on topics such as school equalization, access to public welfare, voting rights, zoning and public housing.

HZ: Have you been involved in governance in the local Middletown community?

RM: Jack Paton [John “Jack” W. Paton founded Wesleyan's public relations department, served as university editor, and was very active in local and state politics.] asked me to run for the Board of Education. I said no, but I did serve on a task force to reorganize the staffing of the Board of Education’s central office. I was also Chair of the Middletown Legal Assistance Committee (as I believe it was called back then). At the State level I was on a Connecticut State Legislative Committee Task Force charged with making recommendations regarding the nominating process.

HZ: How about your family? Do you have children?
RM: Sheila and I have been married for some fifty-seven years, come this (2017) November 21 and have been blessed with four children. Our eldest son is an econometrician at Liberty Mutual; our daughter, Siobhan Marie, is a Senior Vice President and Chief of Staff at the Educational Development Center (Boston); Brian is a Senior Vice President at Fidelity; and our youngest, Stephen, is Vice President for Finance and Chief Financial Officer at Yale University. Sheila and I have 10 grandchildren, two of whom are pre-deceased: Cianan (11 mos.) and Cecilia (14 mos.), both of whom died of a genetic disease—Spinal Muscular Atrophy (Type I) which none of us (including numerous medical personnel at Boston’s Children’s Hospital) had ever heard of. This has since changed, in part due to Brian and Silva’s efforts to mobilize and educate people about the disease, and along with raising awareness, raising funds (over $1.0 million so far) for research. The effort, happily, is bearing results. The FDA recently approved Biogen’s Spinraza, the first-ever therapy for SMA.

HZ: Back to the Government Department. Could you explain what the four different branches of the government department are?

RM: The major is divided into four general areas: American Government and Politics, Comparative Government and Politics, International Relations, and Political Theory. These divisions are quite common in undergraduate programs across the country. To major in Government a student needs to concentrate in one of these areas; students are strongly encouraged to takes courses across the remaining three concentrations. We also encourage students to take courses across the curriculum, and especially in cognate disciplines such as Economics and Psychology and History. Government is a popular major, with a large number of majors and large enrollments. There have been times, however, when the Department has been hard-pressed to meet student demands, as well as times when it was unable to offer an adequate range of courses. For many years, to cite one example, the Department was unable to offer courses on the U.S. Presidency and the U.S. Congress, both of which are standard offerings in undergraduate curriculum, because the Administration declined to authorize Faculty positions in these areas despite our repeated requests they do so.

Broadly stated, the range of courses and the subject matter have remained pretty stable over the years. In recent years, however, there has been a growing stress on methodology—on quantitative methods and statistical analysis for example. Although there are many people whose research is highly quantitative, there has always been a kind of mild division among Department Faculty as to whether
we ought to require the students to have a quantitative background. As far as I know there is still no such requirement— but there are a number of courses that encourage students to do so. Personally I think this is an encouraging development—the discipline and skills students will acquire by confronting and mastering these skills will serve them well down the line.

For the record: We are a Government Department, the significance of which is that unlike most Departments across the country, we did not change the name to Political Science. Only a few others declined to do so; Harvard was one, Bowdoin College another.

HZ: Are there prerequisites for this?

RM: I haven’t looked closely at recent Course Books or at syllabi so I don’t know whether (or which) individual courses might require students to have some background in quantitative methods. As I indicated above, I know some that encourage students to do so, but beyond this I’m not sure.

HZ: Have you noticed a trend over the years of one of these four?

RM: International relations has become increasingly popular. The American field has long attracted large numbers of students, and continues to hold its own. I would say those two have been probably the most popular.

HZ: Do students have to acquire a language if they’re majoring in international relations?

RM: Not to my knowledge. There is a language requirement for Wesleyan’s International Relations Certificate but none for the Department major or for entry into individual courses. While the IR Certificate originated with the Department it is separate from and not administered by the Department. Since then, the number of Certificates has proliferated—the list is posted on the Wesleyan website, along with what each requires. Nor is there, as there once was, any campus-wide language requirement. Mandatory language courses were discontinued around the time I came to Wesleyan—no causal connection I hope. The initiative, as I recall, came from the language Departments themselves, doubtless with encouragement from student reformers. One justification for the “reform” was that Faculty did not want to be burdened teaching languages to those who didn’t want to learn. Presumably, and somewhat ironically, many students (but not all) who profess to be
intensely interested in other cultures are interested in all aspects of that culture except, I guess, that culture’s language. Whatever the case, I guess there has been a long-term decline (here and elsewhere) in enrollments, especially in “traditional” languages, e.g., French, German, Russian, Latin, and Classical Greek.

HZ: In that they can’t hire people, that really hurts their staffing.

RM: Yes, or so I understand. There is talk that Wesleyan will discontinue Latin and that other classical and modern languages are endangered. I assume student interest in Italian and Spanish remains relatively high, along with study abroad programs in countries where those languages are spoken. And I understand there is growing, or at least steady interest in the principal Asian languages, especially Korean which, rumor has it, recently received substantial funds from an outside benefactor.

HZ: Do you think the Language Departments are interested in revisiting their decision?

RM: To reinstate the language requirement? No, not that I know of. Nor have I been privy to whatever discussions (formal or informal) Faculty in these areas have had among themselves and about what, if anything, might be done.

HZ: Where does a decision like that go? Does it have to be made through the EPC?

RM: Initially it would need to be discussed with the Division I Dean (of Humanities), and then with the Vice President for Academic Affairs, and then with the Educational Policy Committee, and finally presented to the Faculty Meeting for a vote.

HZ: It would seem that it reflects on so many other departments.

RM: Yes, though probably not as much today as in times past and probably more so in some Departments or academic areas than in others. It might be interesting to survey various academic Departments (in the sciences as well as in the social sciences and in literature), ask how much they depend on foreign language sources in their research, and what foreign languages they would encourage their students (undergraduates as well as graduate) to master.

HZ: Why do you think there is less interest in History?
RM: I don’t know. Apparently there has been a decline in the number of History majors and in course enrollments. My impression is the decline has been variable, especially when one looks across individual courses. There are some courses that seem regularly to attract sizeable (respectable) numbers of students; there are others that do not, many of which seem to an outsider as somewhat specialized, perhaps too much so for an undergraduate.

HZ: Is that because the students don’t come in with enough of a basic background in history?

RM: That may be a factor. I would think/hope, however, that students without a basic background in history would wish to take advantage of the chance to fill in the blanks, as it were. And my sense is many do in the “few” courses that provide a broad historical perspective. It may be there are not enough of these.

HZ: If you take a high school history course perhaps it piques your interest in history.

RM: Most of the high school courses I hear about through my children and now through my grandchildren. They are heavily tilted toward Civics and politically trendy topics. Such courses seem to pique student interest in in current events and “doing” politics, but not in history, at least not in the kind of history courses with which I am most familiar.

HZ: In Government and Economics you had said that students who come in are geared for professional school afterwards.

RM: That remains my impression, albeit my information may be outdated. From what I know, students are still career-oriented and understandably so. And most are interested in pursuing careers in the law or in public service. Law school, I suspect, is probably still the single largest post-graduate destination for majors, though, but again this is only a guess. A fair number probably also head off to schools of Public Affairs—the Kennedy School, the Woodrow Wilson School, Maxwell and the LBJ School of Public Affairs. Some few will even try their luck at the polls, but if the past is any guide, their numbers will be few indeed.

HZ: Which Presidents have you been closest to?
RM: I have served under six Presidents (Vic Butterfield, Ted Etherington, Colin Campbell, Bill Chace, Doug Bennet and Michael Roth, and under three Acting Presidents (Bob Rosenbaum, Bill Barber and Joanne Creighton). Of the Presidents, I was closest to Colin Campbell and Doug Bennet; of the Acting Presidents, I was closest to Bill Barber. Both Colin and Doug commissioned me to prepare lengthy reports on Faculty Governance, which I did, and which included numerous recommended reforms that have since been adopted by the Faculty and or the Academic Council. More recently, I completed a third report on governance, this one commissioned by Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost, Professor Joyce Jacobsen. Among other things I was also Chair of the Faculty during the Chace Administration. I served on the Presidential Search Committee that recommended Doug Bennet be named President—and drafted and presented to the Trustees the Committee recommendation. During the Bennet Administration I was twice Chair of the Review and Appeals Board. I have also served on a number of different occasions on the Faculty Committee on Rights and Responsibilities and as Chair of the Department.

HZ: What is your sense of what the current President’s agenda is and which of the Presidents have been more scholarly during your tenure?

RM: The last question first, and then the first question later on. Presidents Butterfield, Chace and Roth each had extensive academic backgrounds and all had active scholarly careers both before and during their Presidencies. President Bennet had a PhD in Russian History from Harvard, and headed the Roosevelt Center in Washington, D.C. He spent much of his career, however, in public service. This includes his term as the head of National Public Radio. Both President Etherington and President Campbell had backgrounds in the private sector—Etherington, for example, as the Head of the American Stock Exchange, and Campbell as its Legal Counsel.

HZ: Does President Roth think of himself as a scholar?

RM: Yes. Very much so, or at least that is what I surmise from the Wesleyan website and from other sources. Of course I have been retired for much of his time as President and I had little personal contact with him as a member of the Faculty. I was Department Chair his first few years as President. As Department Chair I suspect I didn’t endear myself to him. For one thing, I objected to a course on American values proposed by, and to be funded by, an alumnus. The course would have been
designed to counter the “liberal tilt” in the Wesleyan curriculum and would be subject to the donor’s approval in ways I considered unacceptable. The Administration apparently objected to my objections, and since I had also objected to a similar proposal (from a different source) some years earlier, I guess I ended up on that infamous list, stored in the Secret Archives, never to be heard from again. For another, I had presided over a Department that had made a recommendation in a personnel case that I imagine caused the President some painful moments.

HZ: How does President Roth see the University?

RM: I don’t know a great deal about his agenda or about his perspectives on Wesleyan University, or University or on universities generally. He has publicly stated (or reportedly so) that he is not fond of academic disciplines and professions, or of Academic Departments, which are built around them. His hesitations in this regard seem to be reflected in his support for, and the expansion of, the number of interdisciplinary “Colleges” and clusters built around such topical issues such as the environment, gender or, public life. Whether these Colleges are any more interdisciplinary than the discipline-based Departments is an open question. For one thing, my impression is that the courses in the Government Department are far more interdisciplinary than the President realizes. But that is a moot point. Besides, the suspicion of academic disciplines is of longstanding at Wesleyan—and I suspect at other small colleges as well. By way of hypothesis, the main reason for this is that disciplinary Departments insist they be judged by outsiders—by members of the profession using the profession’s standards, while Administrators would like the unfettered freedom to judge Faculty themselves. I also have a sense that he leans strongly toward the “engaged University,” which places a great deal of emphasis on political action. This includes granting academic course credits for such activity.

HZ: Can you speak about the Xerox money? Did that affect your department?

RM: I’m not sure, but I suspect one specific outcome was that it allowed the Department to expand (in terms of Faculty). Second, and this is a wee bit more complicated, I think the expansion of Faculty in Government and elsewhere was associated with a greater stress on professionalization of the Faculty. I’m not sure on this point, but my sense is there was a quantum shift in the character of the Faculty that coincided with (and was facilitated by) the University’s improved financial situation. Obviously someone had to have been here, on the Faculty and already committed to such a change. I have some sense of who that was, but again I am not really sure I’m even in the ballpark. And I am
not all that sure about what kinds of grand trade-offs were made among the Faculty of North Campus, the Faculty of the Central Campus, the Faculty of the South Campus, and the Faculty of points all around.

HZ: How did that change the character of the University?

RM: My sense (based on listening to tales of yesteryear) is that ante-Xerox Wesleyan was a top-notch small undergraduate residential college, with a Faculty devoted to both teaching and scholarship. I don’t think that has changed, except that there is now more of the same. Ante-Xerox, Wesleyan’s financial resources were constrained. Post-Xerox it was able to expand the size of the Faculty, and recruit these Faculty from top-notch graduate programs, offering them competitive salaries, benefits, and research support, including a generous sabbatical program.

HZ: Speaking of the character of the University, what role do you think coeducation has played?

RM: For the better. I know there were hesitations at the time, even among student leaders. But I am sure those leaders have forgotten all that. If not, my hunch is they will be chided by their daughters, who are now alumnae. Second: While the decision to go coed was a positive, not so the decision to double the size of the undergraduate student body. As I understand it, when Amherst and Williams went coed, they reduced by one-half (+/-) the male student body. Wesleyan did not. Subsequent increases in this already expanded base have substantially weakened the small-college atmosphere at Wesleyan and have increased the stress not only on the physical plant but as well on Faculty resources. It also weakened the sense of loyalty later on toward what was once truly a small college.

HZ: How about the quality of the students during the 45 years you’ve been here? Would you comment on that?

RM: I don’t think it’s changed all that much. Over the years I have taught and advised a great many very smart students who worked hard and got the most out of what we have to offer, which is quite a bit. I have also had some few (smart students) who did not work hard and some (fewer still) who would probably have been better off elsewhere.

HZ: Is there a difference in their critical thinking skills?
RM: Although the quality of the students remains quite high, sometimes their critical skills are not quite as well honed as they were in times past. This is especially noticeable of students in introductory courses who seem less able to read critically, and seem to struggle to write complete sentences, let alone thoughtful papers.

HZ: Could we speak a bit about grants for foundation funding coming to your department?

RM: There is no funding.

HZ: Who is supposed to get the grants? Is the Faculty member supposed to connect with someone?

RM: Let me differentiate. First. Individual Faculty can apply to outside sources, public and private, for research support. There are numerous such sources, some quite familiar, such as the National Science Foundation or the Ford Foundation, others more specialized and less visible. Second. When I say there is no funding for the Department, I make reference to the Department collectively. The Department has no endowment or access to outside funds to support their ongoing work other than a small budget that is provided every University Department, Program, College or what have you. Third. I do not know what the University policy is regarding contacts between individual Departments and possible outside donors. Rumor has it that some Departments have done so, whether or not with the Administration’s permission and blessing, I do not know. As far as I can tell there is no published policy on these matters, or at least none I have been able to locate. Fourth. With the one or two exceptions noted below, during my years at Wesleyan the Government Department never had an exploratory conversation (collectively) with the University’s Development Office about the Department’s needs and never was asked about possible outside funding.

The one or two exceptions I have in mind date from the 1970s when Colin Campbell was President. Colin was on the Board of the Culpeper Foundation and asked me if the Department wished to apply for a visiting Faculty fellowship. We did so, successfully, and had the benefit of three Culpepper Fellows over the life of the grant, which I believe was for three years. The second exception was the Luce Professorship. This too originated with Colin, and the then Vice President of Community Relations Bob Kirkpatrick. As I understand it, Wesleyan had applied earlier, but without success, but had been invited to apply again. We were offered the chance to do so. We accepted the offer, did so and again we were successful.
These two exceptions differ from the incidents noted earlier, occasions when outside donors offered the Department funds conditional on the Department adding courses to its curriculum that were specified by the donor and subject to the donor’s review.

HZ: What about the Meigs Fund?

RM: The Meigs Fund is a History Department Fund managed, I take it, by the Department’s Full Professors. I’m not sure when the Fund was established. I think I first heard about it when I came to Wesleyan back in the 1960s. It is not widely publicized, and not listed in any published University source. As I understand it, money from the Fund (or endowment) was originally intended to support leaves of absence for senior Faculty in the History Department who were working on their second book in American History. This support would cover salary and all fringe benefits. I believe eligibility has since been broadened to include virtually all members of the History Department. Leaves funded under the Meigs are in addition to one’s regular sabbatical funded by the University. As I noted earlier, the Meigs is not widely publicized and I don’t know exactly how many similar Department Funds or Endowments there are around campus. The only other I have heard of is the McMahon Fund in Romance Languages, named after Joe McMahon, a long-term member of that Department and former Dean of Students at Wesleyan. Joe, I am told, provided for this Fund in his will. There is no such Fund in the Government Department—though I once spoke to someone—I don’t remember to whom—suggesting the University might capitalize on some of its distinguished Faculty alumni, most especially E.E. Schattschneider. Nothing came of the suggestion—and I suspect opportunity to do so has passed, as have most of his former students. I also suggested, and again to whom I do not know, that there might well be Department-centered newsletters that went out regularly to former Department majors. Nothing ever came of this either.

HZ: Is it Institutional Advancement that is supposed to do that?

RM: I would think so, or at least they might provide some guidance and assistance. More generally it might be fruitful if there were periodic meetings between Departments and the staff in Development, mutual learning opportunities, as it were. Such meetings might be extended to include other Administrative offices, not the least of them Admissions. With few exceptions, Academic Departments are excluded from the admissions process.
HZ: In the old days would you have felt comfortable knocking on the President’s door to ask?

RM: Yes, and I did so. But times are now quite different.

HZ: Is that because the alumni are a very different group of alumni?

RM: That’s probably a large part of it, since I presume Presidents today have a larger, even if equally vocal, set of alumni. If so, that goes back to the earlier point, namely the perhaps unanticipated consequence of expanding the size of the student body—and the size of Faculty, the staff and the physical plant. Increased size has also made it more difficult to broaden interactions between Faculty and students. Not long after we came, for example, Delta Tau Delta, the fraternity, created a Faculty Fellow program. As part of the program Sheila and I would be invited to dinner at the Fraternity once a week. The students also created a Faculty Fellow Room/Library at the fraternity and asked Fellows to drop-in periodically—to be available to fraternity members who might want to chat. Perhaps this might be tried again, though it would be more difficult to do so today, given the increased size of the institution and shifting student interests. Besides, the President has abolished fraternities and so there may no longer be any venue for such a program.

HZ: It’s helpful to have Faculty interact with students like this.

RM: I’ve always liked the Yale Colleges and the Harvard Houses with the Master living there. We tried something like that here many years ago—East and West Colleges. Each College was headed by a Faculty member, who may also have resided in the College, though I am not sure of the last point.

HZ: How has the Wasch Center for Retired Faculty figured in this?

RM: They have expanded the Center’s reach by creating an Emeritus College. Retired Faculty were asked if they would be interested in offering tutorials to students; about six or seven of us agreed. I indicated I would and provided a list of topics. There were few takers but then again the initiative was quite new.

HZ: Would these be senior level students? Would tutorials mean an organized course and would you be paid for it?
RM: I believe the tutorials would be limited to seniors, but I’m not sure. And like other tutorials, my guess is the assignments would be tailored to the individual student and the topic. I listed as a general topic, the fate of the Johnson Administration’s Great Society initiatives: the Voting Rights Act, for example, the Economic Opportunity Act, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The courses/tutorials require Departmental approval, which the Government Department has done for my tutorial(s).

HZ: You’ve written some reports on Faculty governance. I know that most recently you gave one to Joyce Jacobsen.

RM: Actually, I submitted it to her a year ago in October [2016]. The Vice President e-mailed me the other day to inform me that she is planning to distribute the Report to the “Faculty leadership”. The date was left unspecified. The complete Report (roughly 135 pages in length) is being circulated, except for an Addendum, which addresses issues solely under the Vice President’s jurisdiction.

HZ: How do you define Faculty leadership?

RM: I have only a vague idea. Presidents and Vice Presidents have used this phrase over the years, without always specifying whom they had in mind. In this case I suspect the VP may have made reference to Faculty who are on the Executive Committee of the Faculty. This is a committee I proposed in an earlier Report on governance. That Committee has since been much expanded. It now includes, among others, the Chair of the Faculty Meeting, the Chair of the Educational Policy Committee, the Vice Chair of the Advisory Committee, and the Chair of the Review and Appeals Board (RAB). The most recent Report calls for some major changes in the composition of the Committee—for example, the removal of the Vice Chair of Advisory and the Chair of the Review and Appeals Board, as well as the Chair of the Faculty Committee on Rights and Responsibilities. Each of these Committees deals with sensitive Faculty personnel matters and because they do they should be distanced from the kinds of “political” issues with which the Executive Committee sometimes deals.

HZ: We spoke about the EPC. I think you said it should have its own staff and it should be hard-nosed about what’s happening in the courses.
RM: First: One of the changes that occurred as result of the last Faculty Governance Report was the creation of the office of the Academic Secretary within the Office of Academic Affairs. Actually, what had been proposed was something more akin to the U.N. Secretariat. I had discussed this at some length with the President (Doug Bennet) who in his position as the Assistant Secretary of State for International Organizations was quite familiar with the workings of an office akin to what I was proposing. Unfortunately, the proposal was opposed by the then newly appointed Vice President for Academic Affairs. And the Office of the Academic Secretary was created instead.

There are several aspects of the proposed Academic Secretariat that help account for the eventual outcome. For one thing, the proposed Secretariat would have been appointed by the President and would have reported directly to him or her—and hence would have been independent of the Vice President for Academic Affairs. The Office would also have its own staff, and it would be responsible for staffing various Faculty and Academic Council Committees, most notably the Educational Policy Committee, the Committee on Faculty Rights and Responsibilities, and the Advisory Committee. It would also be responsible for collating and disseminating the rules and procedures related to Faculty governance, including those of individual committees. None of this has come to pass. Instead, the Administration created the Office of the Academic Secretary, someone who is appointed by the Vice President for Academic Affairs, and Provost, and is responsible directly to her or him.

Second: In my judgment, the Educational Policy Committee is the premiere Faculty Committee at Wesleyan. Some might challenge this and claim the Advisory Committee deserves that distinction, except that the Advisory is not a Faculty Committee, but one created and chosen by the Academic Council. Others may point to the Faculty Committee on Rights and Responsibilities and that too is a critically important Committee within the narrow purview of its Charter. The EPC on the other hand has wide-ranging jurisdiction and as its name suggests, deals with issues at the very core of the University.

Yet the committee’s resources, broadly defined, are not fully adequate to its responsibilities. This is not meant as a criticism but rather as the basis for urging the Committee be given the resources needed to facilitate its work. One of these would be the kind of staff support envisioned in the proposed Academic Secretariat; another would be restoring course relief for all Faculty on the Committee, and not just the Chair. Yet another would be modifying the membership on the
Committee. Currently the Committee includes a number of students as voting members. Consideration might be given to giving student members a voice, but not a vote.

More adequate resources would allow the Committee to regain control over issues I understand it has delegated to others. These include, for example, the approval of new courses and new course credits. These decisions apparently have been delegated to the Office of Academic Affairs. I’m not sure what role the Committee now plays in this process, but it would be worth considering a process whereby those proposing new courses be asked to discuss their proposals with the Committee, something which might also apply to changes in the major or other aspects of the Department or Program’s curriculum. This would also, hopefully, make for more informed discussions about the University’s curriculum in Faculty Meetings.

HZ: So, is the Advisory Committee the one that rules on tenure and the EPC the one that rules on courses?

RM: Yes, and I would recommend the EPC also be active in the admissions process. We used to have a Committee on admissions, or at least there was some “supervision” or relationship between the EPC and the Office of Admission. But no longer, I take it, except perhaps for select Departments and Programs on campus, but not the Faculty qua Faculty. To my knowledge there is no regular contact with Departments and Programs. I’ve been told that other Colleges, or at least some of them, require every Admissions Department to visit every academic program on campus to learn about what they are doing. We don’t do that, except perhaps quite selectively.

On a related but different topic: Once upon a time, in the olden days, we had a Faculty Student Affairs Committee. The Committee was responsible, as I recall, for working with the Dean of Students in conducting academic (and non-academic) reviews. As I recall, Faculty complained vociferously—this, despite the fact Wesleyan was, back then, a small residential college where the Faculty (collectively) were expected to have some voice in the undergraduate lifestyle. But the concept of in loco parentis was fading quickly, even more quickly, I guess, than interest in studying Latin. And so the Committee was abolished.
HZ: If there is a complaint, is the first step mediation through the Faculty Committee on Rights and Responsibilities? Do the Presidents go to these meetings—the EPC, the Advisory Committee or the Faculty Committee on Rights and Responsibilities?

RM: First. Mediation is at the discretion of the FCRR. The mediator must be acceptable to both parties. If the mediation is unsuccessful, the Vice President for Academic Affairs is informed. The Vice President must then make a determination as to whether the alleged offense, if proven true, constitutes a dismissible offense. In making this determination the Vice President must consult with a committee of three senior Faculty. Their advice is not binding on the Vice President.

Second. To my knowledge no President has ever attended an FCRR meeting in which a case was being heard. I’m not sure he or she would be allowed to do so under the Faculty By-Laws, or the Rules of the Committee.

Third. The Vice President has attended Meetings of the EPC but I don’t think any President has done so, at least not on a regular basis.

Fourth. Until quite recently, Presidents regularly attended meetings of the Advisory Committee. In my judgment, these meetings are the President’s single best source of information on the quality of the Faculty. This includes information not only on the quality of the individual candidates, but as well the quality of the Department—how well it prepares and presents its case and deals with questions. And it includes the Advisory Committee, not only in the questions it asks, but in its own in camera conversation and deliberations following the Department’s presentation. In more recent times, I am told, the President has not attended the Committee’s meetings. It may be this is on the advice of legal counsel, but I really don’t know.

HZ: What is the stated purpose of the advisory committee? Is it only tenure?

RM: No. Its portfolio is much broader. It extends to most Faculty personnel issues (FCRR excepted), and includes Faculty appointments, reappointments, and renewals, and promotions (to full professor or, on occasion, term associates). It also has served in times past, as a Presidential sounding-board—where the President would seek the Committee’s counsel on issues confronting the University. I take
it this is no longer the case. Anyone interested in the tenure process might take a look at the public
documents in the lawsuit Daley v. Wesleyan University. I was Department Chair at the time and spent
about five days on the witness stand being cross examined by the Plaintiff’s attorney. This case
stretched out for roughly ten years during the 1990s, and included a jury trial in Superior Court,
followed by appeals before the Connecticut Appellate Court and the Connecticut Supreme Court. The
University (and the Department) prevailed in the jury trial as well as before the Appellate and
Supreme Courts. The case established a critically important precedent regarding the University’s right
to judge the quality of its own Faculty and did so while validating the University’s policies and
procedures, as well as the way the Government Department had applied these in practice.

HZ: Do you need a slot in order to have a full professorship?

RM: Ordinarily no, though there are exceptions. Ordinarily Faculty are hired under a four-year
contract. The contract is renewable (in one’s third year) for an additional four years. Contractually,
the University must decide in the seventh year whether to grant tenure. Promotion to full can occur at
any time after that, depending on the individual’s record of scholarship, teaching and colleagueship.
To my knowledge there is no “Professor-cap”. On the other hand, if a Department wishes to hire a
full Professor from the outside (or a tenured associate for that matter) I assume a “slot” would have to
be approved by the Administration.

HZ: Is that the way it’s always been?

RM: It has always been that way on paper, yes.

HZ: I see you were in the College of Quantitative Studies and that doesn’t exist any longer. Could
you comment?

RM: The College of Quantitative Studies was created back in the early- to mid-1960s, around the
time I accepted a job at Wesleyan. It was also around the time the two earliest Colleges were
established, namely the College of Letters and the College of Social Studies. The three Colleges, I
was told, shared at least one characteristic—namely, to provide some students with a means of
avoiding the University’s course distribution requirements. I don’t know for sure whether or not that
was a factor but I do know that like the COL and the CSS, the CQS was committed to inter-
disciplinarity—in the case of the CQS to the application of social science methods to public policy issues associated with technology and science. There were three of us, all junior Faculty, who were assigned to the College—one from Economics, one from Psychology and one from Government. For whatever reasons, the College faltered and the three junior Faculty members approached its founder and suggested it be discontinued. He listened, and graciously agreed. I taught part time in the College and full time in the Department.

HZ: Have people thought about a graduate program in the Government Department? You said something about Fred Greenstein wanting one.

RM: Yes, Fred once urged we create a Center in Washington which would be staffed on a rotating basis by Department Faculty and would offer an MA in Government. Others were hesitant, among other reasons out of concern about the risks and costs involved in graduate students and whether their quality would be on a par with that of our undergraduates.

On a related matter—The Department participated for many years in the Washington Semester Program for undergraduates, which I supervised. And Clem Vose conducted annual visits to Washington for undergraduates in his courses, scheduling small group visits with Washington notables—Supreme Court Justices, Attorneys General and leading Capitol Hill lobbyists and lawyers—but, again, that was back when the University was quite small. For several years I also supervised Wesleyan’s participation in the Legislative Internship program at the Connecticut State Legislature.

HZ: Would this Center also have been for undergraduates?

RM: No. It would have been for graduate students.

HZ: Can we speak about the physical facilities in the Government Department?

RM: The Department is currently housed in the John E. Andrus Public Affairs Center. The Department shares the building with three other Departments—Economics, History and Sociology, and with the College of Social Studies. The building has numerous classrooms and Faculty and Department offices. It is one of the most heavily used buildings on campus, not only during the
regular academic year, but year-round, during intersession and summers as well as during the regular academic year. It is also an older building, which, to put it mildly, is a high-maintenance facility—requiring constant repairs and fixing, and considerable Scotch tape. Word is that the building is on the list of sites to be renovated in the near future.

HZ: I know you spoke about the lack of collegiality in the physical building. Do you have any sense of how that’s going to be changed?

RM: Two broad points. First, there is still a great deal of collegiality among the Faculty in the different PAC Departments. The original layout of the office spaces in the PAC was designed to encourage this. At least this is what I was told when I came here—that E. E Schattschneider, who was instrumental in designing the original floor plan, insisted that Department Faculty offices not be segregated by Department, but rather be scattered throughout the building so that there would be an intermingling of Faculty from different Departments. That is the way the PAC is still organized, with the exception of the College of Social Studies, which has its own space on the fourth floor, and whose students have their own Lounge and their own Library. Originally, by the way, the top two floors of the building were student dormitories, and remained so well into the “modern era.” Schattschneider, by the way, was a Professor of Government and founded the Department back in the 1930s.

Second, my impression is the level of collegiality has declined in recent years. Fewer Faculty, it seems, are here on a regular basis—they seem to come in, teach their classes, hold office hours and then leave. With the Internet I suppose it is much easier these days to work at home.

HZ: Is it possible that the Departments would be separated?

RM: I think I know the campus pretty well, but I can’t figure where they’re going to get the classroom space and space for Faculty and Departments. Besides, I think separating History from Government from Economics from Sociology, from the CSS will weaken whatever remaining ties there are among the Departments. This includes—and this is extremely important—the ties among the Administrative staff of each Department.

HZ: How about the increase in the amount of adjunct professors who are not here all the time?
RM: It is not just the Adjuncts and Visiting Faculty who are not here all the time—it is the Faculty generally. Second, there needs to be a close and critical look at the trends in “Faculty” positions. These seem to have proliferated in recent years. My most recent Report on Faculty Governance urges the Vice President and the regular Faculty to examine this trend/and consider whether it reflects a radical policy shift (albeit unstated) in the kind of University Wesleyan wishes to be.

HZ: How do you differentiate between the two?

RM: Part of the problem is there are more than just two—there are tenured and tenure track Faculty, there are adjunct Faculty, and there is an array of other “Faculty”—for example, “professors of the practice,” University Professors, and a host of others. University policies (and procedures) regarding tenured, tenure track and Adjunct Faculty are spelled out in considerable detail in the documents printed in the Faculty Handbook, as well as in Department (and, where appropriate, College and Program) manuals. There are no published University policies and procedures governing the appointment or retention of other “Faculty,” or at least none I am aware of.

HZ: I understand there was one round table in the faculty dining room in Downey House to which you had to be invited.

RM: I’m not sure an invitation was necessary but perhaps it was. Whatever the case, there is no Faculty Club, and really no Faculty space. Nominally I take it there is a Faculty dining room in the Usdan Center. But I am told it is frequently crowded with students, and quite noisy besides. I have the impression the Faculty has given up on trying to “create,” or at least “protect” its own space. A sign of the times, I guess.

HZ: I am grateful for all the time you have spent with me. It has been very interesting, and I thank you very much.

END