Derek Bok Sets Up His New Dominoes

By Steven Luxenberg.

HE HARVARD and Radcliffe alumni who flocked back to Harvard this week for reunions and the usual commencement pomp and circumstance hardly recognized the Harvard that awaited them. The Harvard of 1973 is a far cry from the Harvard of 1923 or 1948; it is also a far cry from the Harvard of 1969, the year in which the class of 1973 entered.

In terms of the change in the political atmosphere, it seems longer than just four years. And the change is more than the absence this Spring of a building takeover. All the important administrators of that era have left Harvard for more lucrative and undoubtedly more peaceful jobs, and the Harvard of Nathan Pusey has become the Harvard of Derek Bok.

The distinction is not artificial, nor is it just stylistic. Although most people in the Harvard community readily acknowledge that Bok is a good administrator, while Pusey was more inclined to cling steadfastly to his principles, the difference between the two men does not center around Bok's slickness vs. Pusey's "reasoned conservatism."

Pusey adapted well to the Harvard of the fifties, and he must be given credit (or blame) for Harvard's golden age of expansion. James Byrant Conant set up General Education, but Nathan Pusey implemented it, and brought it to every corner of every geographical nook and cranny in the United States.

But if Pusey was in step with Harvard and social change in the fifties, he fell badly out of line in the late sixties. After the 1969 disorders and the highly-controversial bust at University Hall, Pusey slowly began to lose his grip on Harvard as the University became more and more politicized. Finally, Pusey abdicated all official responsibility; in the Fall of 1969, the Corporation granted Archibald Cox, Williston Professor of Law and fresh from a study of Columbia's 1968 crisis, wide unilateral powers to handle all University disorders. Cox, who would report directly to the Corporation, was to make all the decisions Pusey had to make in those early April hours before the bust.

When Pusey departed to make way for Bok, he left behind a whole crew of administrators who suddenly found themselves unable to toe Bok's line. Bok went right to work on a thorough administrative housecleaning. One Pusey aide after another exited, waving goodbye to Massachusetts Hall, and saying hello to their replacements. Bok's assistants--the so-called "Mass Hall whiz kids"--have acquired a certain reputation during their brief tenure. Steven S. J. Hall, vice president for Administration and a former hotel administrator, has saved the University a great deal of money--Food Services and the University Press--at the expense of making some enemies on the House staffs. (For his work on Food Services and Buildings and Grounds, Hall has been dubbed "Super Janitor" in some circles.)

But one bureaucrat looks like another, and its the men who hold the political pursestrings that receive the most attention. The first year Bok set up his Administration; the second year he began to select his own people to run it. Exit R. Victor Jones, the dean of the GSAS, in September 1972; exit George Bennett...
'33, treasurer, the same month (Bennett remained until a successor was chosen); exit John T. Dunlop, dean of
the Faculty, in January.

Jones's departure was no surprise--the bushy eye-browed dean had no particular desire to continue after his
Spring 1972 running battle with graduate students over financial aid. His replacement, Edward T. Wilcox,
then head of General Education, was named acting director; it is no secret that the popular Wilcox, who
handled the annual graduate student crisis well this year (from an Administration standpoint), may earn the
permanent spot.

Bennett said his decision to leave was based solely on a time commitment problem. The treasurer--who
provided his services to Harvard at the salary of $1 per year--said he just could not manage Harvard's
portfolio and handle his other full-time position as management partner of State Street Management Co. in
Boston.

Although Bennett's reasons may indeed have been that simple, his exit was timely for the Bok
Administration. In the wake of the takeover of Mass Hall--by students who were protesting Harvard's
investment policy--men like Bennett, who believes that activist shareholder resolutions are a waste of time,
just didn't fit into the Bok way of looking at things.

Bennett was a holdover from the Pusey years, and at least partially responsible for the University's negative
attitude toward shareholder resolutions. This attitude was set forth in 1971 by the Pusey-appointed Austin
Committee, and the committee's report outlined a rigid position that led to the takeover of Mass Hall.

The Austin Report may or may not conform to Bok's own beliefs about investment policy, but it clearly did
not jive with Bok's method of handling a political crisis. And the report's chief proponent, Bennett, while a
good financial manager, undoubtedly did not jive either. He voted against nearly all of the resolutions
considered this Spring by Bok's pet committee, the Advisory Committee on Shareholder Responsibilities, a
body formed in the aftermath of Mass Hall to aid the Corporation in deciding how to vote Harvard's proxies.

**BENNETT'S DEPARTURE** was no small change, for it gave Bok free rein in determining the University's
role as an activist stockholder. He selected George Putnam '49, a member of a well-known financial family,
and more receptive to guarding the new image of a financially responsible Harvard. But the most important
change of the year came in January, when the irascible John T. Dunlop left Bok's Harvard (although he
continued to put in long hours on weekends for three months) for Nixon's Washington and the directorship of
the Cost of Living Council.

Dunlop assumed command of the Faculty in January 1971--the same month that Pusey picked the Austin
Committee--as acting dean. Six months later, he dropped the acting from his title, and went on to a fairly tight
reign in what has been termed a transitory stage for the Harvard Faculty. Dunlop bargained with his
colleagues when necessary, joked with them at times, but carefully coaxed them into pursuing his policies in
a unified fashion, a quality missing in the last Pusey years.

During Bok's first year, some spoke of a split between Mass Hall and University Hall, that Bok's Whiz Kids
were trying to take over the academic administrator's jobs as well, but this schism (if any existed at all) was
less real than an expected aspect of transition.

Dunlop's resignation gave Bok the opportunity to name his own dean, an appointment which he took a long
time to make. First, he picked an acting dean, Franklin L. Ford--no newcomer to the post--and a legislative
assistant, Harvey Brooks. Finally, in early May, Bok tapped Henry Rosovsky, Taussig Professor of
Economics, as his new dean.

Bok said when he announced the choice that Rosovsky had been his only candidate, but the lengthy search
raises strong doubts about the credibility of Bok's statement. The five-month "search" undoubtedly means that Bok is still proceeding cautiously, and that if Dunlop was a transition from Pusey to Bok, Rosovsky might ultimately be a transition from a cautious to a more gambling Bok.

Bok's relationship with the Faculty is improving, and the selection of Rosovsky indicates that he does not want to endanger that relationship. Rosovsky is a moderate, well-liked and respected by his colleagues. He does not antagonize the liberals, and he is middle-of-the-road enough for the conservatives.

SO 1972-73 was the year of appointments for Bok. Like his counterpart in Washington, he did some wholesale housecleaning, but for very different reasons. Ironically, Bok almost helped clean up Nixon's House; he was mentioned as a possible Watergate prosecutor. Eventually, the job went to trouble-shooter Cox.

The ties with the Pusey years remain, but they grow weaker and weaker. While Bok stays home to mind the store, Pusey's right arm goes to Washington to make government respectable again. It may be an impossible task at this point. For the moment at least, Bok will stick to his cautious program aimed at making Harvard respectable.