

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
SENATE ASSEMBLY

Minutes of Assembly Meeting, January 20, 1975

ATTENDANCE

Present: Professors Adams, Anton, Brockway, Pooley, Brown, Caldwell, Millard, Cassidy, Cornell, Cosand, Crawford, Danielson, Dernberger, Deskins, Eisley, Evaldson, Beaver, Gikas, Goldman, Goodman, Harrison, Hoffman, Horsley, Hymans, Ilie, Jameson, Johnson, Kachaturoff, Kaplan, Kell, Kelsey, Kish, Lyjak, Lands, Larkin, Lehmann, Livermore, Loomis, Lytle, Mohler, Nesbitt, Ostrand, Rowe, Scott, Springer, Sudarkasa, Taren, Terwilliger, Vander, Van Der Voo, Vaughn, Weeks, Williams, Leonard, Hoch, Hildebrandt, Cohen

Absent: Professors Baublis, Berki, Bishop, Creeth, DeKornfeld, Floyd, Flynn, Magrill, Murphey, Oberman, Schmickel, Seligson, Sibley, Matejka, Wilson

Guests: Professors Bruce Bowen, Catherine Kelleher and Bennett Cohen

CALL TO
ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Cohen at 3:22 p.m.

APPROVAL
OF MINUTES

The minutes of the Assembly meeting of December 16, 1974 were approved.

ANNOUNCE-
MENTS

Among announcements made by Chairman Cohen were the following:

a) In accordance with the action taken by the Assembly, representation to the Advisory Committee to the Negotiating Team of CCFA/UAW has been effected, Professors Thomas DeKornfeld, Joseph P. Price, and Ms. Rose-Grace Faucher having agreed to serve.

b) The report of the Commission to Study Student Governance, to be discussed at the present meeting, is to be before the Regents again at their February meeting.

c) By way of sensitizing relevant groups and persons to the matter, the Academic Affairs Committee has been discussing with Vice-President Rhodes and his associates the impact of possible work actions growing out of the GEO negotiations.

d) The Budget Priorities Committee continues to involve itself in the current hearings concerned with making fair decisions in the budget-cutting process. Its chairman, Professor Shapiro, and one of the executive officers may be invited to report to the Assembly at its February meeting concerning the review process and its results.

REPORT OF THE
COMMISSION TO
STUDY STUDENT
GOVERNANCE

In introducing the report of the Commission to Study Student Governance, Chairman Cohen indicated that he was relinquishing the chair during this segment of the meeting, since he wished to be free to participate in the discussion. Vice-Chairman Loomis, who would ordinarily have assumed the chair, had a similar desire. Hence, Professor Goodman, past-chairman of

SACUA, was asked and agreed to serve as chairman for this portion of the Assembly meeting.

As background information for the ensuing discussion, Professor Goodman reminded the members of the Assembly that while the report under consideration, which had issued from the Office of Vice-President for Student Services, was not addressed directly to the Assembly, it was nevertheless perfectly in order for its members to comment thereon. He noted, too, that members of the Commission had been invited to be present, should they also wish to speak to matters raised.

Having sought and received recognition from the chair, Professor Brockway proceeded to make a statement in the matter on behalf of his department. Pointing out that there had been no broad spectrum of faculty represented on the Commission, only two schools and three departments having been included, he proceeded to enumerate several basic misgivings concerning the report, to wit: (a) it is inappropriate that student members of departmental committees to review graduate students should participate in the review of fellow-students; (b) it seems even more inconceivable that students should participate in decisions concerning the hiring, promotion, and termination of faculty, when such decisions require a level of experience students have not acquired; (c) in an organization as complex as a university, embracing as it does many types of communities, it simply is not a fact that all of its citizens have all the rights and privileges. Expanding on these sentiments, Professor Brockway remarked upon the different levels and degrees of information, background, experience, and responsibility characterizing various members of the total University community, noting in passing that students pay to be here while the faculty is paid to be here, contributing, as it does, knowledge and experience different from those of others.

Asking to be recognized, Professor Cohen affirmed the sentiments of Professor Brockway, while indicating that he wished to offer a formal resolution for the Assembly's consideration. In so doing, he stressed that the resolution was his, lest it be assumed that it had the endorsement of SACUA, which had actually not heard the proposal previously. Thereupon he proceeded to read the text of the resolution (a copy of which is attached to the present minutes) and, upon its seconding by Professor Lehmann, copies were distributed to the members of the Assembly.

Having allowed sufficient time for its perusal, Chairman Goodman recognized Professor Cohen, who desired to expatiate upon the intent and spirit of his resolution. It is simply not true, Professor Cohen declared, that all members of the University community have equal rights. The University is a complex of communities, each having distinct concerns, and while each member of a particular community of equals has the same rights, this principle does not apply to the University as a totality. If one speaks, for example, of responsibility and authority, it is a fact that students and faculty have different qualifications, roles, and duties; to assume that both parties have the same right of franchise is foolish. With regard to the matter of competence, Professor Cohen added, the members of the faculty are appointed on the basis of extensive training and experience; such competence is not simply acquired--and here he hoped his remarks would not be seen as patronizing--by virtue of studenthood. Thus he had based his resolution on the dual issues of responsibility and competence.

Proceeding toward fuller discussion, Professor Kaplan expressed his concern over the fact that, while the Commission had been charged with the study of student governance, it seemed to have taken on University governance as well. If so, the enlarged scope did not disturb Professor Lands, who saw good reason to have students join faculty in various areas of decision-making, the problem lying rather in determining what those areas ought properly to be. Indeed, he suggested, faculty governance has floundered somewhat, and appropriate involvement of students might not be amiss. He hoped therefore that the Assembly would speak not only to perceived deficiencies in the report but to its good points as well. The discussion, he suggested, might most profitably focus on delineating those areas in which student participation is appropriate, thus avoiding undesirable polarization. After all, he observed, no one seems disturbed over how Ann Arbor handles its franchise when only property owners vote on millage proposals while all vote on bonding issues.

Be that as it may, Professor Weeks contended, University governance and city governance are not necessarily comparable. On the other hand, he did not feel altogether comfortable with the Cohen resolution either, having witnessed University situations in which students had played a large and helpful role. The resolution, as phrased, represented an over-reaction, he felt, hoping that moderation could be achieved.

Similar sentiments were voiced by Professor Anton, who expressed agreement with certain aspects of the resolution under discussion (and its second paragraph in particular) yet, unlike Professor Kaplan, felt it salutary for students to show active interest in what goes on at the departmental level. Nor did his own experience of seeing students serve on departmental committees bear out some of the implications of Professor Brockway's earlier remarks. Thus, while he favored certain aspects of the Cohen resolution and disagreed with various recommendations of the report under discussion, Professor Anton hoped the Assembly would not try to resolve all of the issues on principle but rather work toward outlining areas in which student involvement would be appropriate and, indeed, helpful.

In the interest of providing additional background, Chairman Goodman invited members of the Commission to speak at this point, if they wished to place the matter in a fuller context. Professor Bruce Bowen welcomed the opportunity. The Commission, he pointed out, had been created by the Regents because of a crisis of leadership in student government. With as few as 4% of students participating in some elections, it was clear that the issues had not been engaging student interest, a fact confirmed by the results of a subsequent survey indicating that students had a much more active interest in academic matters than had been supposed. Apparently rejecting the carnival atmosphere of some aspects of student government, they were concerned with matters affecting their academic lives, including, for example, such issues at the school and departmental level as curriculum, requirements, and the like. The question for the Commission, then, was how such interest was best represented via appropriate student involvement. The intent, Professor Bowen emphasized, was not to have students have an equal voice in University governance, nor certainly to turn University governance over to the students, but rather to give them an increased voice.

Perhaps, he admitted, some recommendations had not received the most felicitous phrasing, for it was obvious now that the use of such focal words as "all" in some instances were ill-chosen. What had been intended, rather, was to have students become appropriately involved in basic issues at the University.

Professor Brockway found these remarks informative, for they helped dispel in some measure what he regarded as the somewhat monolithic cast of the report. He wished to make it clear that his remarks had not been meant to suggest opposition to student input, for he recognized that there are degrees of participation. He did, however, object to the single-minded character of the report. Professor Kelleher, a second member of the Commission, provided further assurance that the hope was that student participation would become more organic in character, the specifics of such participation still being left to departments. This, Professor Brockway added, he wished the report had made clear.

A variety of sentiments emerged during the next phase of discussion, some favoring the resolution on the floor, others expressing reservations about parts or all of it, still others suggesting alternative steps for the Assembly's consideration. Professor Taren, for example, saw the cart as being before the horse; the writers of the report seemed to be talking of the goal of student participation before the students had put their own house in order. Professor Johnson, on the other hand, saw an element of overkill in the resolution. In his experience student participation had worked well; one might therefore continue to encourage such participation while leaving the various campus units to work out its details. Though feeling the Commission had exceeded its charge somewhat, Professor Lytle likewise expressed satisfaction with the results of student participation in the affairs of his college. Partly because he shared these convictions, but also because he viewed the report's recommendations as essentially enabling propositions, Professor Hymans found it difficult to become exercised about the matter under discussion. To him, too, the resolution conveyed the flavor of overkill. On the other hand, a colleague, Professor Dernberger, reminded Professor Hymans that while student participation in the affairs of their department had made a contribution, it had also carried its share of crises. Further, he stressed, it should be remembered that the department's policy had carefully specified the details of such participation; the present report did not.

The resolution had its unqualified supporters as well. Professor Lehmann discounted the concept of overkill; to him its tone represented a desire to have dissatisfaction with the report as written be brought as forcefully as possible to the attention of the Regents. This same note of dissatisfaction was expressed by Professors Larkin and Cosand who, while not opposed to the appropriate participation of students, saw a clear need to have the language of the report carefully reconsidered before, as Professor Larkin put it, one proceeded to fiddle with the regental Bylaws capriciously. For that matter, Professor Eisley commented, there is nothing in the present Bylaws to prohibit the degree of involvement which schools and colleges are currently allowing students; what is objectionable in the present report he added, is the issuance of mandates to the governing faculty. Similar sentiments were voiced by Professor Scott.

What, then, ought to be the next steps? This question concerned Professor Loomis, who stressed the importance of having the Regents appropriately apprised of the position of the Assembly when next they consider the report at their February meeting. It was in this spirit that Professor Sudarkasa offered a practical suggestion. Troubled by the prospect of rushing to a vote, she suggested that the Assembly consider instead the appointment of an ad hoc committee to study the issues in the interim in light of the Cohen resolution and report back to the Assembly at its next meeting (which would precede the meeting of the Regents). To what end, Professor Springer asked, seeing the whole discussion as an idle exercise, for in his experience the views of the Assembly tended to be ignored anyway. Not so, declared Susan Andrews, a student member of the SGC; Student Government Council would listen, she guaranteed. Similarly, student Robert Stevens reminded the Assembly that the Regents did not intend to act until they had a representative sample of opinion from the Assembly, schools and colleges, departments, and SGC. If the Assembly were to interpret the report too narrowly, student participation would prove a lost cause, he feared; construing the recommendations more broadly, on the other hand, would still allow schools, colleges, and departments the discretion they sought.

In an effort to resolve the situation, Professor Lands proposed an amendment to the resolution, namely insertion of the "... strong desire to reword the following" in place of "... firm rejection of" in the first sentence of the third paragraph. Following some clarification of the intent of the amendment, Professor Nesbitt moved that the entire matter, including the amendment, be tabled, a motion that was defeated by a vote of 27 to 23. Subsequently the amendment itself was defeated, thus leaving the original resolution before the Assembly.

Having again been recognized by Chairman Goodman, Professor Cohen proceeded to argue for the adoption of his resolution, the foregoing discussion having taken place. His defense was threefold:)a) the language of the report and its recommendations is unclear, inconsistent, and interpretable in a host of ways; (b) past experience with student participation has been favorable in some ways, unfavorable in others; (c) the overriding consideration remains the principle that governance of schools, colleges, and departments is the prime responsibility of the governing faculty. Departments are moving in the direction recommended by the report, Professor Kaplan observed, but they are doing so voluntarily; there is no need to legislate such action. Though Professor Sudarkasa still favored appointment of an ad hoc committee, Chairman Goodman pointed out that such a step could still be taken later, and responded to the call for the question. Thereupon the Cohen resolution was adopted by a vote of 36 to 14.

Having been sympathetic to the intent of the resolution, Professor Hymans pointed out that he had nevertheless voted against it; lest its adoption be regarded as opposition to the participation of students in the governance of schools and colleges. Hence, he offered a motion, which was seconded, to the effect that, in its adoption of the foregoing resolution:

The Assembly wishes not to be perceived as opposed to the participation of students in school and departmental governance, but is concerned rather with the lack of clarity in the report's distinction between what is mandated and what is permissible; hence, the Assembly remains ready to review a report that is clear on these matters.

Opposition to the motion was expressed by Professor Cohen, who argued that it was hastily worded, that the main concern of the Assembly was not with the clarity of the report but with its implications, and that to adopt the motion at this point could cause the Assembly to be seen as having behaved inconsistently. Subsequently Professor Hymans' motion was defeated.

Discussion ended with remarks by Professors Livermore and Taren concerning the communication of the Assembly's action to the Regents and Professor Cohen's assurance that in so doing he would be scrupulously careful to convey the sense and spirit of the Assembly's discussion and action.

PROPOSED
SENATE
MEMBERSHIP
FOR PRIMARY
RESEARCHERS

In view of the time consumed by the preceding discussion, Professor Scott offered a motion, which was seconded, proposing postponement to the next Assembly meeting of action on a change in the Senate Rules granting Senate membership to primary researchers. The motion to postpone was passed unanimously.

NOMINATIONS
AND APPOINT-
MENTS

The Assembly approved unanimously the appointment of Professor William Uttal, nominated by SACUA to serve a three-year term on the Research Policies Committee, replacing Professor Loe.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:20 p.m.

Erasmus L. Hoch
Secretary

Attachment