

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN  
SENATE ASSEMBLY

Minutes of Special Assembly Meeting, February 10, 1975

ATTENDANCE Present: Professors Anton, Berki, Brockway, Pooley, Cosand, Crawford, DeKornfeld, Dernberger, Eisley, Evaldson, Flynn, Gikas, Goldman, Harrison, Hoffman, Horsley, Hymans, Ilie, Jameson, Johnson, Kaplan, Kell, Kelsey, Kish, Lands, Larkin, Lehmann, Livermore, Loomis, Lytle, Magrill, Mohler, Nesbitt, Oberman, Millard, Schmickel, Scott, Matejka, Sudarkasa, Terwilliger, Van Der Voo, Vaughn, Weeks, Williams, Leonard, Hoch, Cohen

Absent: Professors Adams, Baublis, Brown, Caldwell, Cartwright, Cassidy, Cornell, Creeth, Danielson, Deskins, Beaver, Floyd, Goodman, Kachaturoff, Lyjak, Murphey, Ostrand, Seligson, Sibley, Springer, Taren, Vander, Wilson

Guests: President Fleming, Vice-President Rhodes, Ms. Aleda Krause, Mr. Alexander Wilkinson

CALL TO ORDER In line with the intention expressed at its special meeting of February 7, 1975, Chairman Cohen called this second special meeting to order at 4:21 p.m., in order that the Assembly might continue to address GEO NEGOTIA- TIONS itself to the cluster of issues involved in the negotiations between the Graduate Employees Organization and the University administration. His proposal that the Assembly again hear first from the respective parties (this time in reverse order) was accepted by the Assembly, whereupon President Fleming was invited to state the administration's position at this point.

Having previously urged intensive negotiations over the preceding weekend, President Fleming was pleased to report that substantial progress had been made in the sessions. It was therefore the administration's hope that the parties would engage continuously in further negotiations in the belief that, with good faith on both sides, agreement could be reached very shortly on the remaining issues. The crucial question at the moment was whether a settlement was possible before the strike deadline that had been set. An interruption of the educational program was not in the best interest of the University's students, and there rested on both parties the obligation to avoid such discontinuity if, as appeared, delay of a day or two could result in an agreement, Mr. Fleming declared. He offered to answer such questions as might be raised, suggesting, however, that it would not serve a useful purpose to go into details of the current negotiations in public at this point. The Assembly was assured, in any case, that the faculty point of view had been represented in the Advisory Committee to the University Negotiating Committee, and that such agreements as were contemplated were deemed feasible.

Invited to speak on behalf of GEO, Mr. Alexander Wilkinson concurred in President Fleming's assessment of the weekend negotiations, which GEO,

too, regarded as productive. Further, the attitude and cooperation of the administration's bargaining team were appreciated. Agreement was approached on some issues, though others remained to be settled. With the results of the recent strike vote to be known that evening, the GEO leadership would proceed in accordance with that outcome. Procedures for implementing a strike, as well as for ending one, were held in readiness, unless a contract were fashioned in the interim. As soon as the latter became available, Mr. Wilkinson assured the Assembly, the strike would be halted as speedily and expeditiously as possible.

The floor having been opened to comments from members of the Assembly, Professor Loomis sought to ascertain whether it was true that one's participation in the vote on whether to strike had cost \$2.00. This, according to Ms. Aleda Krause, was not the case. In order to vote, one needed to be a member in good standing, dues having amounted to \$8.00 in the fall or \$2.00 if one had joined in January. Professor Sudarkasa, on the other hand, was most concerned with whether, given President Fleming's previous remarks, GEO had a mechanism available for postponing the strike for a few days in the event that a vote to strike materialized. Conceivably the evening mass meeting could decide to call off a strike or to postpone it, Ms. Krause felt. For its part, however, the GEO Executive Committee did not intend so to recommend, feeling that after months of bargaining, the extension of its original deadline, and the absence of an actual package or contract at this point, it would not be fair to the membership to recommend further postponement. This being the case, Professor Mohler sought further clarification concerning what could be expected during the strike in terms of the availability of classes for those wishing to attend, the nature of the picketing activities, and the like. To these questions Chairman Cohen invited a response from both parties.

Speaking for the administration, President Fleming remarked on the rather unique situation by which one is confronted. Both parties concede that substantial progress is being made, yet one side will not recommend to its constituency that negotiations continue for the moment without a work stoppage. The administration, he reiterated, was willing to negotiate through the night, feeling a settlement could be achieved. Thus, he was surprised at the reluctance of the GEO officers to recommend postponement of a possible strike for at least 24-48 hours under the circumstances. To a question from the chairman as to how one might respond to Professor Mohler's concerns, Mr. Fleming pointed out that the recent memorandum from Vice-President Rhodes had outlined the situation. The University would remain open, it was assumed that faculty members would continue to meet their classes, and, all in all, it was expected that each of us would be fulfilling the duties for which he or she had contracted with the University.

Responding in turn to Professor Mohler's query, Mr. Wilkinson conceded that strikes are never pleasant, either for those who picket or for those who must choose whether to honor such lines. The GEO had not taken this decision lightly. He assured the members of the Assembly, however, that the strike would be non-violent in character and its picketing activities

orderly. Nor would a strike, if it eventuated, be meant to imply that negotiations had been broken off or that GEO was unwilling to persist in the effort to reach an agreement.

Having heard both rejoinders, Professor Hymans had some misgivings about each. He could not bring himself to feel, as he had heard President Fleming intimate, that a strike at this time would be capricious; after months of negotiation the GEO reaction was at least understandable. On the other hand, he was not prepared to grant the GEO assertion that the current fruitful negotiations had come about only as the result of pressure recently exerted. Be that as it may, Professor Hymans declared, it is the GEO leadership which at this point is in position to make the generous move, taking the statesmanlike step of recommending to its membership that, in view of the progress being made at this time, a delay of the projected strike by 24-48 hours be considered. Apropos of the latter, a visitor, Professor Henry Gershowitz, on recognition by the Chair, and with the approval of the body, inquired concerning the timetable for beginning and ending a strike, should one be called. Were a strike to go into effect, Ms. Krause explained, it would commence at 12:01 a.m. on February 11, 1975. Should a contract subsequently be worked out during that day, for example, a mass meeting would be called for the following evening (February 12), at which time a ratification vote would be recommended. The latter would be carried out on three days following, in this case Thursday, Friday, and Monday (February 13, 14, and 17), and, given ratification of the contract, normal duties would be resumed on Tuesday, February 18, 1975.

The foregoing exchange moved Professor Kaplan to make some remarks growing out of the present circumstance. We need to be most concerned, he argued, not alone with the question of a strike but even more with what we might learn from this experience. There is a history here, he reminded the Assembly. Some four years ago the various issues at stake had led graduate students to propose an organization; the effort gradually foundered. Nonetheless the Assembly at that time expressed its feeling that the faculty should be concerned with the general problems and that, in fact, the committee on the Economic Status of the Faculty should consider such matters as among its responsibilities. Nothing much happened as a result. It behooves the faculty, Professor Kaplan insisted, to show proper concern for problems of the sort that have led to the present situation. Professor Brockway and Berki both saw aspects that merited subsequent consideration, the latter adding that while he had originally felt uncomfortable at the thought of crossing a picket line, his perception of the situation was being altered by virtue of the fact that a strike was still being threatened in the face of the currently fruitful negotiations.

Attempting to capture the mood of the Assembly, Professor Loomis proposed the following motion, which was seconded and passed unanimously:

"It is the sense of the Assembly that the parties be urged to reach a resolution of the issues under negotiation at the earliest possible moment."

By way of attempting to reflect additional concerns of the Assembly with respect to the immediate situation, Professor Hymans offered a motion which was seconded and passed by a vote of 41 to 1, with several members abstaining, to the effect that:

"It is the sense of the Assembly that the leadership of GEO be urged to reconsider its intention of recommending an immediate strike, considering instead a delay of 48 hours, if it is honestly felt that substantial progress toward a settlement is being achieved."

On recognition by Chairman Cohen, Professor Eggertsen expressed the hope that the GEO officers would convey to the evening's mass meeting the sense and spirit of the Assembly discussion. Professor Van der Voo, in turn, sought clarification of the obligations of faculty in the event of a strike, especially with reference to whether they were expected to meet classes other than their own. Speaking to these matters, Vice-President Rhodes remarked on the differing circumstances in various units. In some cases, responsibility for particular courses is vested in graduate students; in most, overall responsibility resides with a faculty member, in which case the decision rests with the latter, in consultation with the chairman. Recognizing the claims on conscience occasioned by the current situation, Mr. Rhodes affirmed that the general policy remains that of carrying on the instructional program. Apropos of such practical details, Professor Brockway offered the further information that in his department Teaching Assistants would not be asked to assume duties other than their own in the event of a work stoppage.

The closing minutes of the meeting were marked by an exchange of views prompted by a concern expressed by Mr. Martin Halpern, a student member of the audience, with respect to the behavior of instructors vis-a-vis students who might choose to honor picket lines. It was evident that procedures smacking of academic reprisal per se found no favor among those expressing themselves on the matter. Nevertheless, it was insisted by some members of the faculty, Professors Edgar Willis and John Allen, that maintenance of a pre-set schedule of assignments or examinations could not reasonably be considered "reprisal."

Feeling it had done what it could under the circumstances, the Assembly adjourned at 5:10 p.m.

Erasmus L. Hoch  
Secretary