

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

SENATE ASSEMBLY

Minutes of Assembly Meeting, June 16, 1975

ATTENDANCE

Present: Professors Adams, Bishop, Bornstein, Pooley, Brown, Cornell, Corpron, Cosand, DeKornfeld, Gikas, Gray, Hildebrandt, Lechlitner, Jones, Kachaturoff, Kell, Kish, G., Kish, L., Lands, Lehmann, Morton, Lindberg, Livermore, Lytle, Magrill, Millard, Nesbitt, Seger, Springer, Stross, Terwilliger, Weeks, Hoch, Johnson

Absent: Professors Baublis, Berki, Child, Christensen, Cohen, B., Cohen, C., Crawford, Dernberger, Deskins, Eisley, Flynn, Goldman, Guinn, Harris, Hoffman, Ilie, Kaplan, Kelsey, Kessler, Leary, Lucchesi, Mullen, Murphey, Proctor, Schmickel, Aupperle, Seligson, Sherman, Meiland, Matejka, Taren, Van der Voo, Votaw, West, Williams, Wilson

Guests: Vice-President Johnson, Ms. Kathleen Kolar, Mr. Robert Stephens

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Johnson at 3:23 p.m.

APPROVAL OF
MINUTES

The minutes of the Assembly meeting of May 19, 1975 were approved.

ANNOUNCE-
MENTS

Chairman Johnson called attention to two reports--that of the Committee on Environmental Resources, Planning and Design and that of the Committee to Review the Graduate School--copies of which are to be sent to the members of the Assembly for their perusal and subsequent discussion at a meeting in the fall, by which time SACUA itself will have considered both reports in consultation with Vice-President Rhodes and Dean Sussman.

COMMISSION TO
STUDY STUDENT
GOVERNANCE

Having expressed its reservations with respect to the report of the Commission to Study Student Governance at its meeting of January 20, 1975, the Assembly was pleased to have Vice-President Johnson available for discussion of a supplement to the report, which had presumably taken the Assembly's sentiments into account. In his introduction Chairman Johnson expressed appreciation for this additional opportunity to exchange points of view.

The Commission had, indeed, tried to be responsive to the reactions of the Assembly, Vice-President Johnson declared. Its supplement sought to clarify those aspects of the original report that seemed to have been ambiguous while also modifying some sections as well. In particular, the supplementary report tried to make it clear that the Commission had in no way intended to have the Regents order student participation. Rather, adoption of the report was seen as encouraging such participation. With these words of reassurance, the Vice-President invited reactions, adding that Commission members Kathleen Kolar and Robert Stephens were also present and available for comment.

Following some background remarks by Professors Weeks, Lehmann, and Pooley, Vice-President Johnson reiterated that it had not been the Commission's intent to mandate changes, a fact he hoped was now reflected

in the more felicitous wording of some passages (for example, the use of "may" in place of "shall"). Granting that the supplementary report represented a substantial improvement, Professor Pooley was troubled nonetheless by such remaining recommendations as that for a student representative on the Board of Regents, when, as he pointed out, there was no comparable suggestion for a faculty, staff, or administration representative on the Board. The Commission had not intended to slight the latter parties, Vice-President Johnson countered, but the report dealt, after all, with students. Hence the recommendations in their present form. Actually, the particular recommendation to which Professor Pooley had referred apparently did not unduly disturb Professor Weeks, who felt one might argue for a student on the Board of Regents as representing the people of Michigan, that is, the consumer public. In actual fact, however, Professor Pooley contended, the Regents themselves already represent the public. Be that as it may, Vice-President Johnson observed, though the report was basically student-oriented, it did in any case point to the need for student-faculty collaboration in the implementation of its recommendations.

For his part, Professor Lands urged some other cautions with reference to the four-step regental action proposed on pages 8-9 of the supplementary report. He could understand the desire to have the Regents endorse the philosophy of the report and even the creation of a task force to facilitate implementation. He found it more difficult, however, to accept the professed urgency in the matter of Bylaw revision and doubted the wisdom of embarking on a hasty rephrasing of provisions of central importance to the faculty. As a case in point, he cited Bylaw 6.04, which, since it deals with departmental affairs, is especially critical. The fact that substantial opposition from the Assembly had already been encountered on such sensitive points as the "shall/may" distinction should give the Commission pause in proceeding with premature rewording of critical sections of the Bylaws.

Members of the Commission, however, had other perspectives. Whenever one is concerned with change, as here, Vice-President Johnson felt, Bylaws inevitably enter. For that matter, Mr. Stephens explained, even the suggested changes in the Bylaws were merely offered as samples of revisions that would need to be considered. On this point, however, Professor Lands had reservations. If the Commission was simply floating trial balloons, it would have been better to have been more candid about it, he declared. But neither Mr. Stephens nor Ms. Kolar saw it this way. The Commission, after all, had responsibility for urging the ideal; it was for others to decide how much of the overall proposal they would accept. To have come to grips with all of the practical details would have been to get bogged down in endless detail.

The suggestion by Professor Bornstein that such critical phrases as "where appropriate" deserved a gloss, led Professor Springer to remark that in his opinion the supplementary report amounted primarily to a change in wording here and there by way of softening its impact but did not handle the Assembly's earlier objection to a report that had been intended to deal with student governance but wound up dealing with University governance. He rued the fact that Professor Cohen whose

resolution the Assembly had adopted at the time, was not present to reiterate the tenor of the objections. No matter, contended Professor Weeks. The spirit of the Cohen resolution had not died, he assured the Assembly, but at this point one could hardly object to the innocuous character of the present report, with its bland phrases, such as "where appropriate." Nor would a nonvoting student member of the Board of Regents ". . . change fundamentally the mode of governance", something the resolution had been concerned about. As Chairman Johnson reminded those present, the Assembly had at first objected to a report dealing with University governance as compared with student governance, but, as discussion proceeded, the principal objection had been to what seemed the mandatory nature of the recommendations. The supplementary report suggested that the Commission had been responsive to the Assembly's reaction.

While Professor Cosand suggested some further emendation of the recommendations (for example, expanding the phrase "where appropriate" to read "where appropriate and acceptable to the department"), Professor Lands remained unconvinced that the supplementary report in general had met the concerns expressed in the Cohen resolution. The latter had tended to misinterpret the intent of the Commission, Vice-President Johnson insisted. One needs therefore to distinguish all the more carefully between words and intent, Professor Lands suggested. Professor Hildebrandt likewise questioned whether the supplementary report had served its purpose, for, while its language had been improved in some respects, its recommendations remained essentially unchanged, he observed.

In responding, Vice-President Johnson emphasized that what was fundamentally at issue was students' desire to be heard. If, for example, a student representative on the Board of Regents were to come into being, the fact of being without vote would be of small moment. What mattered would be the opportunity to express a point of view. Again, whether that view would prevail was of less consequence than the fact that such representation would at least carry with it the possibility of influencing decisions. In short, what students desire most is the chance to be heard at the level where decisions are made.

Granting this point, Professors Gikas and Jones wondered about how strongly students were motivated in this respect, for, in general, it seemed difficult to induce them to participate actively where such opportunities were available, as witness the redundancy in the names of students who are visible. Professor Jones cautioned therefore against saving the bathwater of student government while throwing away the baby of University governance, as he put it. He recommended in this connection that the proposed revision of Bylaw 5.01(3) leave decisions concerning student representation solely in the hands of the governing faculty.

A series of comments followed with respect to revisions proposed by the Commission in the case of other sections of the Bylaws, Professor Bornstein, for example, making a number of suggestions for softening

the language in Section 7.05, while Professor Cosand indicated a passage in Section 5.06 that could be misread. In addition, Professor Kell called attention to a series of seeming inconsistencies among various sections of the document. All comments were duly noted by Vice-President Johnson.

In the course of such discussion, Mr. Stephen voiced some apprehension about the tenor of the faculty's concern. At the earlier meeting of the Assembly he had concluded that the objections raised were to the form and tone of the document. Now he was beginning to feel that perhaps the faculty was questioning the advisability of student participation per se. Not at all, Chairman Johnson insisted. The Cohen resolution had, in fact, made it very clear that such participation, where appropriate, was favored; objection was essentially to the mandatory character of the report.

Indeed, as Professor Lytle pointed out, student representation was not a novel affair; it has existed in his unit for the past ten years. Similar sentiments were voiced by Professor Kish, who, while not regarding student participation as an inalienable right, nevertheless viewed student input as a useful resource. In the last analysis, concluded Professor Weeks, the report as it now stood was essentially advisory, hence hardly constituted a hazard of any sort. He wondered therefore about next steps.

As Chairman Johnson understood it, Vice-President Johnson would continue discussion with the Commission, relaying to its members the substance and tone of the Assembly's reactions and suggestions. Were further modifications in the report to be made, arrangements could be made for their discussion with the Assembly, if the Commission wished. Vice-President Johnson, for his part, expressed appreciation for the feedback received from this representative faculty group, assuring the Assembly that its comments would be brought to the attention of the Commission.

ELECTION OF
COMMITTEE RE-
PLACEMENTS

In preparation for the election in connection with Assembly committees, SACUA had nominated candidates for the respective vacancies. The Assembly was reminded that nominations could also be made from the floor. None, however, were proposed, whereupon, after a motion by Professor Lehmann which was seconded and approved, the Assembly accepted the nominations as presented by SACUA (and shown in the Appendix to these minutes).

ADJOURNMENT

There being no old or new business, Chairman Johnson reminded the Assembly that there would be no regularly scheduled meetings during July and August and extended the best wishes of SACUA for an enjoyable summer.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:36 p.m.

Erasmus L. Hoch
Secretary