

The Faculty Bulletin

A Bulletin of Information for Students and Officers of the College of the City of New York

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Report of the Administrative Committee

On February 19, 1936, The Board of Higher Education received the "Final Report of the Special Committee of the Associate Alumni of the City College" and also received the Report of the Minority of the Alumni Committee. These reports were referred to the Board's Administrative Committee for City College, for investigation and for report to the Board.

The Report of the Majority of the Alumni Committee had been adopted by the Associate Alumni at a meeting held on January 27, 1936, by a vote of 519 to 217.

Beginning on February 28, 1936, and until the latter part of May, the Administrative Committee held twenty-one sessions on this subject-matter. It sat twice a week and sometimes more frequently. The sessions averaged about four hours each,—a total of over eighty-four hours. All members of the Board were invited to sit with the Committee and some did so. A stenographic record was taken and has been made available to the Board.

Fourteen of these sessions were attended by the members of the Alumni Committee; and that Committee detailed the evidence gathered by it both before and after its Report and also submitted voluminous papers, memoranda, and subcommittee reports and recommendations which have been mimeographed and made available to the Board. In addition, the Alumni Committee was present at the four sessions of the Administrative Committee during which President Robinson was questioned, and it participated in the questioning.

The Administrative Committee also heard in executive session the five Deans, the Director of the Evening Session, certain members of the Faculty and a representative of the Instructional Staff Association. The members of the Faculty were selected in the manner suggested by the Majority of the Alumni Committee in order to secure a diversity of opinion and viewpoint.

The Administrative Committee also received and took note of various communications from various groups and associations at the College; took note of the expressions of various student groups which have been conveyed to the Board or carried in college or metropolitan publications during the last few years; received various statements

signed by various members of the Faculty; received memoranda from members of the Minority of the Alumni Committee; and received a communication from over one hundred Alumni occupying distinguished positions in the community, who record their feeling favorable to President Robinson. Moreover, many members of this Committee have had close familiarity with the affairs of the College for many years; and as to many of the incidents referred to in the Alumni Committee's Report, the Board itself has heretofore conducted extended and independent investigations and has reached findings and conclusions already embodied in its minutes.

With reference to the College itself, the Alumni Committee's report states that the City "has every reason to take just pride in" the College; and that (p. 92):

"The City College of the City of New York is fundamentally sound as an institution of higher education; it is possessed of an exceptionally fine Faculty; its students are able, industrious and devote adequate attention to the task of preparing themselves for useful places in industry or in the professions."

The Alumni Committee's Report commends "the high standards of the College as an institution of higher learning", and commends "the Administration and the Faculty" for "working with considerable success" toward curricula "so planned and so conducted as to give to each student an opportunity to make the best educational progress of which he is capable" to the end that "he will be a happy and a worthy citizen" (p. 93).

With the foregoing findings this Administrative Committee heartily agrees.

With reference to President Robinson, the Alumni Committee's Report states (among other things):

"3. Under President Robinson the College has grown as never before in its history. Much of this growth is the direct result of his energy and recognition of the community's educational needs. He deserves praise for maintaining the highest teaching standards in the face of overcrowding and other physical difficulties, and for successfully maintaining the traditions of the College in keeping itself free from political influence in filling positions on the Faculty."

"22. The President has earnestly endeavored to solve the vexing problem of promotions, selection of department heads and adjustment of the salary difficulties of the institution. Such dissatisfaction as exists is for the most part confined to members of the staff who do not seem to appreciate the difficulties in the way of the President in bringing about a prompt solution of these problems."

"23. In recommending to the Board of Higher Education scholars to fill vacant and newly established chairs, the President has displayed a praiseworthy desire to maintain the high academic standards of the College. His recommendations have uniformly been adopted by the Board."

"24. The members of the Faculty and teaching staff who are in hearty sympathy with the President are in the minority. A considerable number of the Faculty and teaching staff have not that cordial and deep respect for him which is essential to full cooperation, and the existence and preservation of a proper Faculty morale."

"25. Any college administration which fails to establish a high morale in the faculty and student body is not fulfilling its essential functions."

"26. The President lacks the human qualities necessary to achieve the widespread confidence of his faculty and his student body and to provide genuinely inspired, resourceful and socially imaginative leadership."

The Alumni Committee's Report contains no specific recommendation that the President of the College should be removed, and presents no formal charges. Under the head of "Recommendations" that Report says (p. 98):

"1. The committee refers to its findings numbered 25 and 26 above and recommends appropriate action in connection therewith."

The Report of the Minority of the Alumni Committee rejects the Majority's foregoing findings numbered 24, 25 and 26 (as well as certain others) and the Majority's foregoing Recommendation numbered 1. In their stead the Minority make certain findings of which the following is typical:

"1. The college is established to train useful citizens. It is educating for democracy not only as a method of government

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EDITORIAL BOARD

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COMMITTEE REPORT

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but as a form of society. Toward this ideal of educational achievement we find the President and the Faculty to be working with recognized success."

The investigation which this Administrative Committee has conducted has led it to review the past and present administration of the College and to consider means for its progressive development. The observations and conclusions of this Administrative Committee are as follows:

I.

The Alumni Committee's Report states (p. 94):

"The Board of Higher Education, the majority of the Faculty and the President still adhere to the now antiquated theory that they stand *in loco parentis* to the student."

To this alleged attitude the Alumni Committee's Report attributes the enactment and enforcement of "rules to govern extra-mural activities" and agitation "by vociferous minorities" "against benevolent but unwelcome supervision".

On the other hand, the Alumni Committee's Report also states (p. 97):

"The College is established to train useful citizens. It is educating for democracy not only as a method of government but as a form of society."

We feel that in order to guard and further the essential ends stated in this last quotation, there is essential need for reasonable and constructive supervision over extra-curricular activities; that rules in fulfillment of these ends are an inevitable corollary; and that good discipline is as essential a part of education as it is of character and of democratic society.

We do feel, however, that the system of rules which has been created by the Board and by the Faculty under the authority of the Board has become in process of time too lengthy and too cumbersome, and that it requires simplification. We further feel that

in the ensuing review of these rules now to be undertaken by this Committee, there should be consultation with representatives of the Faculty, the Instructional Staff and the student body in order that the sanction behind the rules shall be broadly based. This review will also aim at an organization of student activities in such a manner as to assure a thoroughly representative and democratic system, and as to assure that, as stated in the Alumni Committee's Report (p. 95): "the rights of minorities should be respected".

This Committee, therefore, recommends to the Board that the Board authorize it to create a subcommittee of this Administrative Committee to confer with the Dean of Men, the President and accredited representatives of the teaching and student body with a view to revision of the present system of rules governing the whole matter of extra-curricular activities and student relationships.

In this connection we quote with approval the following statement to us by Professor John R. Turner, Dean of Men:

"I favor the policy of enlarging the opportunities of student initiative and self-control, of giving them more and more responsibility and power as time passes."

The creation last year by The Board of Higher Education of the office of Dean of Men, effective as of last September, has been a successful innovation; and the administration of that office by Dean Turner has been constructive in promoting better understanding and cooperation as between the student groups and the Faculty. In an institution of this size it is impractical and unwise for the President to be burdened with, or to attempt to undertake, any immediate supervision of extra-curricular activities or of mere matters of discipline; and a Faculty Committee cannot act in those spheres with the directness, effectiveness and success attainable by a single official giving his entire time to the subject and handling it in a liberal and sympathetic spirit but without compromise of the ideals and goals of college. We believe and recommend that whatever function the President should have in matters of discipline should be exclusively appellate with a right of review by The Board of Higher Education.

It is the fact, therefore, that The Board of Higher Education anticipated by over six months the recommendation of the Alumni Committee's Report (p. 98) that an office of the character of a Dean of Men should be created; and we regard as constructive and worthy of careful consideration the recommendations made in that Report as to the relations which the Dean of Men should bear to the Faculty as a whole.

In connection with the matter of rules and with specific reference to the existing rule at City College requiring student associations and clubs to be chartered, this Committee is of the opinion that that particular rule should

be replaced by one which allows to the students freedom in the formation and conduct of such organizations, subject to the broad principles of propriety, good manners, good morals and loyalty to the College, State and Nation.

II.

This Committee joins with the Alumni Committee in recognizing as fundamental the right of the student to expression of opinion on any subject in a peaceful gathering and in an orderly and honorable manner; and the right of the Faculty to discipline all under-graduate offenders against the peace of the College, including specifically any who interrupt the regular college exercises or commit acts of disorder or of physical violence or attempt to deprive other students of their free rights as such.

This Committee has no hesitancy in finding that there has been and is at the City College a freedom of expression on the part of students and student organizations which is scarcely exceeded (if exceeded at all) in any institution of higher learning. Under-graduate publications have been and are wholly free from censorship of any character, and have at times carried that liberty to such a degree of license that we believe the following finding of the Alumni Committee's Report to be justified (p. 97):

"Student journalism has at times sunk to a low level. It should take pains to be accurate in reporting facts; judicious in printing unverified charges and sportsman-like in publishing fair corrections and retractions when mistakes are pointed out."

III.

This Administrative Committee is also convinced that there should be further action by the Board as to matters affecting the teaching body at City College below Faculty rank.

The great and rapid growth of the College has outrun the action of the Board in making revision in dealing with such problems as tenure and the right of advancement. At the time when the Board of Higher Education was organized in 1929, it found that there was considerable diversity as between the two separate institutions of higher learning under its jurisdiction in the matter of salaries and of rules as to advancement and position. The Board took successive steps to secure a larger measure of uniformity but the process was slow and prompt solutions were difficult. One of these difficulties centered in the requirement adopted by the former Board of Trustees of City College that as a general principle advancement to an instructorship should be conditional on the possession of a Ph.D. degree. There was provision for exception to this general rule; but the College authorities and many members of the old and new Board were of the opinion that the general rule was sound and should be preserved in general cases.

Subsequently, the President in 1934 recommended to the Board and the Board adopted a new by-law whereby advancement to an instructorship could be immediate without prior possession of a Ph.D. degree, but that there should be no increment beyond the third year thereafter unless a Ph.D. degree were obtained in the meanwhile. In the following year, and with a view to further relaxing the strictness of the rule and to perfecting uniformity, the three College Presidents recommended and the Board adopted a by-law extending this period from three to five years.

IV.

As to tenure, again there were the fundamental problems of uniformity among the three Colleges and of diversity of viewpoint as between the members of the Board.

For several years the President of City College has been urging that the Board establish tenure by by-law; and in 1935 the three College Presidents joined in submitting to the Board a by-law establishing tenure and making detailed provisions therefor. In 1935 the Legislature adopted the so-called Tenure Law for institutions of higher learning under the control of the Board; but the constitutionality of that law has been gravely questioned and is now before the courts for consideration. Finally, in May 1936, the Board appointed a special committee, composed of representatives of its three Administrative Committees, to consider the whole matter of tenure and to make recommendations looking to the establishment of a system of tenure uniform, so far as possible, in its application to the three Colleges. Previously in the same month this Administrative Committee adopted and published the following declaration of policy:

"RESOLVED, That it is the sense of this Committee that it is wise and proper policy to continue in their positions tutors classed as probationary or temporary who have served more than three years unless there exist strong, compelling reasons, based on teacher-qualifications, for their separation from the service; and this Committee suggest to the proper faculty authorities that they make their recommendations in accordance with the spirit of this resolution."

Other matters affecting the instructional staff and groups connected with the administration of the curriculum have arisen and are now before this Committee and the Board for consideration. Some of these matters have been referred to a subcommittee for study and report. We point out that in an institution of higher learning so vast as is the combination of these three Colleges, the Board and its committees cannot at all times make immediate determination of the multitude of questions constantly arising; and that frequently problems can be solved only by the test of time and in the light of accumulated experience.

V.

In the matter of appointments, promotions and increments, this Committee believes that some substantial changes should be made.

Under the present rules, recommendations on these subjects may be made by the head of a department acting alone and subject only to the recommendation of the President and the action of the Board. In point of practice, many, if not all, heads of departments actually do consult the senior professors on these subjects before formulating recommendations; but it seems to us wise to provide, by fixed rule, for the system prevailing in some comparable institutions, to wit: that the initial recommendations should be made by committees of departments (composed of the senior professors) with the approval of the dean of the school concerned. This would provide a broad and assured base for the ensuing recommendation and would obviate suspicion of partiality or personal bias.

VI.

We recognize that there has been unrest and dissatisfaction on the part of some members of the teaching and the student bodies in the City College.

To this unrest, particularly on the part of students, the vast growth of the institution, the congestion, the lack of an adequate campus and many physical disadvantages have contributed. This unrest also is the response of students to the political and economic tension of the day and to the uncertainties with which their futures are subjected by the universal depression and the seeming lack of opportunity for adequate use of the knowledge and training acquired at the College. We agree that the response of the students to these disturbed conditions of the world requires, in an institution such as the College of the City of New York, enlightened, resourceful and inspiring leadership and a full perception and sympathetic understanding of the general causes of such discontent.

But this requirement rests not only on the President but also on the Faculty and the Board; and we are of the opinion that the administration of the College can supply those very qualities. Indeed, it is obvious that a College in which concededly the City may "take just pride", the Faculty is "exceptionally fine", the teaching standards are "the highest", and the Administration and the Faculty are working "with considerable success" toward the "ideal" of "curricula so planned and so conducted as to give each student an opportunity to make the best educational progress of which he is capable", has had effective and progressive administrative and educational leadership.

No doubt the College authorities have originally proceeded too much along lines inherited from earlier days of the College

and have expressed this inheritance in by-laws and regulations which were likewise traditional. In the light of the present time and present experience, it is quite possible that there might have been earlier recognition of the fact that a different method of coping with present day conditions is advisable. That recognition is being and will be progressively extended.

Dissatisfaction with the rules, regulations and by-laws has been dramatized by groups of students, and has been sedulously fostered by an insistent and continuous propaganda against the President; and there is substantial evidence that radical organizations have attempted to encourage and accentuate this propaganda and to disseminate misrepresentation. The President has at times expressed resentment against these attacks in language not always well-advised, and has at times resorted to authority in instances where conciliation and tactful approach might have been preferable.

Many of the so-called incidents might have been avoided if the duties of the President had been delegated, as now, to a Dean of Men, leaving to the President only those functions which properly and necessarily constitute the duties of the President of an institution of the size of The City College.

We believe furthermore that the President has also been blamed unjustly for conditions created by the attitude of certain department heads whose views are not characterized by present day liberality in the matter of student relationships, but whose services to the college otherwise leave little to be desired. Moreover, it has been the duty of the President to carry out the rules and policies laid down by the Board itself, and to observe the instructions of the city government as to the budget.

In this connection note should be taken of the following statements in the Alumni Committee's Report:

1. "The President has asked the Government Department to look into the question of the freedom of the student press and has opened a free forum for all students, with the right of free speech and permission to invite outside speakers." (p. 68.)
2. "Following the recommendation of the Faculty, the President has appointed a student guidance committee to work with the Personnel Bureau, Medical Department and Placement Bureau." (p. 68.)
3. "The President deserves praise for aiding students with funds which, although derived from college publication activities, are legally payable to him personally." (p. 56.)
4. "The (Alumni) Committee is aware of the unreasonableness of many of the demands made by leaders of the radical

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groups for privileges which could not be granted without ignoring college rules and the denial of which did not in the slightest interfere with the free expression of opinion; of the wilful misrepresentation to which the Administration has too often been subjected in the student press and in handbills; and of the regrettable circumstance that some student leaders have broken their pledges and conducted themselves in a manner which it would be euphemistic to describe as ungentlemanly." (p. 62.)

5. "Full credit is given for his (the President's) valuable contributions in improving curricula, for his drawing up the by-laws of the American Association of University Professors on academic freedom and for his activity in the Association of Urban Universities." (p. 58.)

VII.

The Alumni Committee's Report states that the Military Science Department (commonly known as the R.O.T.C.) is the cause of much protest from certain groups of students at the College; but the report does not recommend the abolition of that Department. On the contrary, it states (p. 51):

"The military courses in C.C.N.Y., originally compulsory, are now purely elective. Moreover, privileges have been abolished that those who took them once enjoyed. Despite the fact that the uniformed and non-uniformed students now stand on exactly the same basis (except possibly for some slight social advantages that may accrue to student officers) the Committee is bound to take cognizance of the fact that some 1,000 have elected to take military courses. The desires of these students should no more be ignored than those of the anti-militarists."

A canvass of the members of the Alumni Committee who were present at one of our Administrative Committee's hearings, revealed a majority against the present abolition of the R.O.T.C.

The R.O.T.C. course was established at the request of and in cooperation with the United States Government. The students who have elected that course have conducted themselves in an orderly and unprovocative manner. The Board of Higher Education has repeatedly considered the policy of the retention of this course as an elective and has repeatedly affirmed its retention, irrespective of any views of the President on the subject.

VIII.

As to the relations of the President to the Faculty, it is the unanimous understanding of all members of the Faculty appearing be-

fore this Committee that he has not undertaken to interfere with the judgment and independence of the heads of the departments or with their recommendations as to retention and non-retention or as to promotions and increments.

In this connection note is made of the following statement on page 54 of the Alumni Committee's Report:

"The heads of departments, at this first meeting, clearly revealed that the President has ever been ready with suggestions that are helpful and to co-operate in any program that is submitted to him. No one complained of any improper interference by the President in the conduct of a department or in the matter of dictating appointments to the various departments. All recommendations for appointment to the staff that come to the President are transmitted 'without prejudice' to the appropriate department. Consequently, the President states:

'... in the majority of cases the departments recommended people whom I have never seen or heard of or from whom I have not received any application'."

The evidence is clear that a large majority of the Faculty heartily supports the President in his educational policies and his administration of the College.

There is no evidence that the President has undertaken to restrict that academic freedom which is the rightful possession of the Faculty as a body and of its members as educators.

Undoubtedly, by reason of his ability and versatility and also in pursuance of a tradition inherited from the days when City College was a small institution, the President has undertaken to do too many things and has, therefore, subjected himself to collisions which the personal handling of too large a number of matters, more or less minor, inevitably entails.

To quote again from the Alumni Committee's Report (p. 54):

"In reviewing the statements of the heads of departments, the Committee is impressed with the evidence of the President's deep concern with the growth of the college, the planning and equipment of new buildings, the improvement of equipment in the various departments. His grasp of detail is astonishing. Apparently, nothing escapes his personal attention—from the size of a girder in a proposed building, or the design of a table in the drawing department, to the content of a new lecture course in physics. The Committee is aware of his versatility, his alertness to improve the college plant and expand the size and influence of the college."

Such versatility and attention to detail, while in general of great value to the College, may at times be at the expense of a

wise delegation of powers to others and give the impression of a lack of sympathetic forbearance with other persons not as completely informed or as quick of insight.

CONCLUSION.

There has been agitation at the College and in a portion of the public press asking for the removal of the President. We have not found justification for such action, assuming that it were legally possible.

Nor do we find grounds for requesting his resignation as has also been suggested in some quarters.

It is undoubtedly true that there are a considerable number of students, alumni and members of the teaching staff with whom Dr. Robinson is unpopular. Assuming some personal and temperamental contribution on his part to this unpopularity, nevertheless, when that is viewed with just allowance for the manner in which it has been artificially magnified and propagandized; when it is weighed in the balance with his actual and numerous accomplishments for the great good of the College; and when it is considered with the changes that have already been made and which will continue to be put in force speedily if the recommendations of this report are adopted, there is ample reason for confidence that the City can continue to take just pride in the College, and that any legitimate ground for unrest, criticism or dissatisfaction will not occur.

In order to accomplish the constructive purposes intended by these recommendations, and in order to keep this Committee and Board in constant touch with the problems from time to time arising at the College, and in order to bring about a closer contact between the Board and this Committee on the one hand and the students, Faculty and Administration on the other, there should be appointed a small subcommittee of this Committee with authority granted by the Board to guide and to collaborate in such wise as to insure the smooth working of the proposed changes, and to conduct such investigations as may be necessary, and to recommend the adoption of such new measures as may be found advisable,—this subcommittee to function for the ensuing year and to report with frequency.

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