

## Early History of the Senate(DRAFT)

The beginnings of the University Senate might be traced back to a series of events that began on April 22, 1929. As documented in Robert Alberts' "Pitt: The History of the University of Pittsburgh 1787-1987" pp 144-146, a student initiated effort to speak on behalf of two individuals who had been sentenced to life imprisonment on questionable charges, led to the dismissal of three students. The trustees were involved, as were faculty who signed a petition asking for an explanation. The AAUP sent two professors to investigate the situation. The decision of Chancellor Bowman to expel the students stood through consideration by the Board of Trustees and through court proceedings. The details will be of great interest to some, but related to the University Senate, we can view the incidents as the beginning of a series of events which brought to the attention of the Trustees questions about the balance of power in the University. Other preliminary events occurred in 1932 related to an attempted student protest around a commencement speaker and a subsequent loyalty pledge instituted by the University (op. cit. pp 147-148.)

More directly precipitous related to the Senate would be what the actions related to Dr. Ralph E. Turner. Considered one of the best teachers at Pitt, Turner was an activist and spoke frequently about social activism. As reported by Alberts (op.cit., pp 149), one speech on April 24<sup>th</sup>, 1934 at the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, was viewed by many as an attack on the Mellon family, and led to several complaints by prominent individuals to the Chancellor and members of the Board of Trustees. At this time, all faculty were on one year contracts and Turner's contract for 1933-34 had initially not been renewed related to his political activism. Turner agreed at that time to make no more speeches and his contract was renewed. After the April 24<sup>th</sup> speech, his contract was again renewed on May 9<sup>th</sup>, but then he was informed on June 30<sup>th</sup> that he was to be paid a year in advance but not allowed to teach – in essence he was being dismissed.

The Turner dismissal grew in significance in a number of ways, but related to the story of the Senate, perhaps most important was that the AAUP formed a committee of three professors to investigate. They met, with the cooperation of the Chancellor in Pittsburgh in August and November of 1934. In February of 1935, they finished a 72 page report which was sent to Chancellor Bowman for corrections of fact. Alberts reports (op. cit., page 152) that contrary to custom, Bowman released the draft report, with an unfortunate paragraph that would later be removed, to the press. The offending paragraph was critical of the city and region. The final report modified the offending paragraph and found Bowman had acted in a way that was contrary to academic freedom and tenure. At the annual meeting of the AAUP, Pitt was added to their list of Censured Administrations. This incident also led to investigations by the State House of Representatives which came to mixed conclusions. The AAUP report and the State report did share the conclusion that the one year contracts instituted by Bowman should revert to the tenure rules which had been put in place in 1919.

## Early History of the Senate(DRAFT)

---

From 1935 through 1938, there were additional issues that surrounded the chancellor related to athletics – this being the era of Jock Sutherland. While these incidents surely set the tone for what was to follow, we leave their discussion out as it is well covered by Alberts (op cit. pp 157-168).

On March 20<sup>th</sup>, 1939, Bowman and Rufus Fitzgerald, Provost of the University, met to discuss and upcoming Trustees meeting. (op.cit., 170-171) The Chancellor was prepared to have the administration of the University reviewed, but he was also planning at resigning. One can only imagine the growing pressure that led to this decision. Fitzgerald approached members of the Board who convinced Bowman to attend the meeting. The result of the meeting was the formation of a committee to study the administration of the University and report to the board. The committee met and interviewed numerous members of the community beginning just two days later on March 22<sup>nd</sup> and concluding on May 9<sup>th</sup> with an interview of Provost Fitzgerald. On September 5<sup>th</sup>, George Clapp – a wealthy alumnus, gave Chancellor Bowman a preview of what would be reported to the Trustees in 10 days. On September 15<sup>th</sup>, meeting at the Duquesne Club, the Board was read the 49 page report which while beginning with praise for the chancellor's accomplishments, concluded that changes were needed in the administration of the University. While there were numerous contributing events during the decade, and while there were numerous recommendations moving forward, three reported by Alberts merit our attention here. The recommendations included:

- *the chancellor reorganize the University offices to achieve a better distribution of work and responsibility and promote understanding of school aims among deans and faculty members; . . .*
- *a University council of faculty members be established for the expression of faculty advice on educational policies and procedures;*
- *a code of tenure be drawn up "representative of the principles and practices in force at institutions which have had successful experience with codes of tenure"; (op. cit. pp 175-178)*

Bowman reacted very strongly to the report defending himself. None-the-less, the trustees prevailed and while Bowman stayed Chancellor until 1945, the Board approved the following motion on June 17<sup>th</sup>, 1941:

*BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Trustees approves the recommendations of the Temporary Council, authorized on February 6, 1940, for a University Senate. In this action, however, the Trustees stipulate that the present Committee on Athletic Policy and the present Committee on Student Publications are to continue without change in personnel by the Senate. It is further stipulated that fifty per cent of those eligible to membership in the University Senate shall constitute a quorum. Finally, the recommendations are approved with the understanding that in whole or in part they may be discontinued by the Board of Trustees or by the Executive Committee at any meeting of either body.*

Senate documents, which include the above abstract from the minutes of the Board of Trustees, also include minutes of what appears to be the first meeting the University Senate approved by the board of trustees.

## Early History of the Senate(DRAFT)

---

*Minutes of the first meeting of The Senate of the University of Pittsburgh held in the Office of the Chancellor, 106 Cathedral of Learning, Friday, October 31, 1941*

*The first meeting of the permanent University Senate was held in the office of Chancellor Bowman, October 31, 1941. The meeting was called to order by the Chairman, Mr. Fitzgerald, who appointed Dr. Franklin as temporary secretary.*

*The Chairman explained the agenda of the meeting and called upon the Secretary to read the resolution of the Board of Trustees authorizing the Temporary Council and the review of the work of the Temporary Council from its first meeting in February, 1940 to its last meeting in January 1941.*

*Professor Ayars, Secretary of the Committee to Report a Permanent Council reported on the Constitution of the Permanent Senate which had been adopted by the Temporary Council and sent to the Board of Trustees to become the Constitution of the Permanent Senate. Copies of this Constitution were distributed to the members present. Professor Ayars also read the resolution of the Board of Trustees adopting the Senate at their meeting in June 1941.*