Willard, A. C.

January 16, 1939

President A. C. Willard
355 Administration Building

Dear Mr. President,-

I had hoped that I might be able to discuss certain matters with you before the Christmas vacation but your rush of business prevented an opportunity and I am taking the liberty of writing to you in regard to them. I hope you will not feel that I am presuming too much if I make certain rather frank comments.

Two questions have come up recently which have a bearing on the matter. The first was the proposed change in the method of handling discipline. The second was the proposal of the Student Senate, that a central authoritative body be established to have authority over the Student Senate and the Student Affairs Committee. These two items, while seemingly widely separated, may have a much closer relationship than they appear to have at first glance.

The student body is sensitive, if not always with sufficient wisdom or understanding to any changes in the attitude of the University and its administrative policies. The faculty is also sensitive, and misunderstands just as easily. The University Community, particularly the townspeople are interested, usually opinionated, and too often completely misinformed. Prior to 1930 and 1931 when the Committee of Nine completed its reports and the Senate of the University revised the Statutes, the University had the reputation of being a thoroughly paternalistic institution. Its reputation as a paternalistic institution gave two reactions to the public, one of praise from those who were in agreement, and one of thorough condemnation from those who believed in a more liberal attitude, or so-called more liberal attitude. Consequently when the work of the Committee of Nine was completed, the central authority which had been vested in the Council of Administration was no more, and the University was left with a completely decentralized organization, with college autonomy for individual colleges and schools, and with most of the work which had been

centralized previously, scattered over the campus in various committees, sub-committees, and offices. The result was a rather complete liberalization in contrast to the strong paternalism of a few years before.

It seems to me that at the present time there is a rather general swing toward a return to middle ground, away from the extreme liberalism of the past few years, possibly toward a more paternalistic attitude, although most people seem to feel that they do not want to go as far as the situation of ten years ago. I suspect that in saying this a good many are under the same misunderstanding which existed in 1931 and in the years prior to the changes. The dissatisfaction of the methods which have been tried in the handling discipline point to the need for a change. The fact that the Student Senate has asked for a "super-committee" to be over the Senate and Student Affairs Committee seems to indicate a willingness on the part of the students to have an administrative prop of some kind. The dissatisfaction which one hears constantly among students over inconsistencies in regulations between colleges is not good public relations material. The irritation which is expressed by faculty people over the amount of time they must give to committee work seems to express dissatisfaction.

Far more serious, I believe has been the fact that under our present set-up, we have seen a rather complete breakdown of student respect for university regulation and some phases of administration. Our disciplinary situation has not been healthy, for the Dean of Men has been drawn into the disciplinary work, contrary to present Statutes, the faculty men who have had to shoulder the disciplinary work have not been satisfied with it, and the student body has generally assumed that a carefully told lie will get most situations worked out without further trouble. Students making requests from the Student Affairs Committee, have not had much respect for the decisions of the committee, and are constantly looking for reversals of decisions. There is a rather general tendency among students who have been told "no" by one administrative officer to attempt to find another administrative officer who will say "yes", or a faculty man who will champion the cause of the student, when presented to him by the student with certain added decorations. Undoubtedly our Student Affairs Committee, of which I am a member has not aided this whole situation by granting the Student Senate equal powers

with the result that the Student Senate is beginning to assume that it has a definite right to take a position in every phase of University work and administration. Desirable from the standpoint of interest no doubt, but impossible in the matter of actual administration.

I am not familiar with your own interest in the old Council of Administration. President Chase once told me that it was the most completely autocratic administrative authority with which he had ever been associated or with which he had been acquainted. I think it can be said in praise of the Council, that it was made up of the real administrative authorities of the University, that it met regularly, at an appointed time, and if its decisions were not always popular, they were usually accepted, and seldom questioned by the students, even if criticised by the faculty.

If there was one single error in the makeup of the Council of Administration, it was the fact that the Dean of Men was Secretary of the Council of Administration, and Chairman of the Committee on Discipline. The Dean of Men was accordingly given credit for much authority which he did not actually have. He could have served as Dean of Men and Chairman of Discipline, without the criticism which came from students and faculty, if he had not been Secretary of the Council as well. The public never was able to discriminate between the functions of the Dean of Men in this tri-capacity, and gave the Dean of Men credit for all of the actions regardless of capacity.

The old Committee on Student Organizations and Activities which was the predecessor of the present Committee on Student Affairs was confronted with a peculiar dilemma when it was set up by the Senate in 1931 and 1932. It was given no specific duties and was expected to begin functioning. As a result, the Committee on Student Affairs began its duties, not knowing just what was expected of it. It was forced through sheer necessity of getting work done, to assume all of the authority of the old Committee on Student Organizations and Activities, plus some of the functions of the Council of Administration, a far more authoritative body. In addition, it was forced to take over some of the former duties of the Deans of Men and Women, now "advisory officers". As a result, the Committee devoted at the outset, and has since, most of its time to the consideration of minor details of mechanics rather than to the determination of broad policies and the delegation of the work under these

policies to administrative officers who could carry on the work under these policies. Without any attempt to depreciate the sincere efforts of the members of the committee, it has had to spend far too much time in the education of the new members of the committee appointed to it by the Committee on Committees, usually faculty members whose administrative experience has been meager and inadequate. Much of the work has been purely administrative, and out of the line of the faculty members who make up the committee. Yet the members have managed to keep the ball in motion, and through hard work have maintained a semblance of respectability in the administration of student affairs.

The distressing problems of the Committee on Student Affairs raises some question as to the effectiveness of the Committee's Method of Administration as compared with the old centralized Administration under the Council of Administration. It seems to me doubtful if any industrial organization of the scope of the University could expect to function efficiently under a committee method such as we utilize at the present time. We have the never dying conflict between the faculty who feel that they should administer all policies, and the administrative officers who are forced with the necessity of getting work done without the red tape, and inadequate knowledge of administrative problems which the faculty element introduces.

With the problem of administration as it is, it is no wonder that we have an unhealthy student body situation. Discipline among the students is a matter of no great concern. The recent question of authority for the Independent Weekly in competition with the Daily Illini is a good illustration, with the Independent being published, under circumstances which if exposed would bring genuine embarrassment to the administration of the University. Interfraternity-non-fraternity relations are at a point at the present time which is the unhealthiest it has been in years, and which is on the verge of breaking out into open conflict. There can be little doubt that student opinion was responsible for the defeat of the "building authority" bill in the last legislature, and the real truth about this student participation in policy had a background of outside influence and selfish interests. Unless something is done soon to bolster their interest in and their support for it, our new student union stands a chance of boycott and opposition which may harm it seriously, and the difficulty will come from the students and faculty who do not understand just what is being attempted.

inclusion of student opinion in most matters is desirable, yet from the standpoint of effectiveness, our experience since 1931 has certainly pointed to a failure in the system.

The talk of new dormitories for men, of a new union building, and the actual greater integration of functions, has brought us new problems of administration which did not exist, even in 1931 when we made our great changes, and I fear that unless some changes are made, that we will be in much more serious troubles in 1939 and 1940 than we are now.

I can see no method of accomplishing much unless we made a radical change in our whole method of handling certain matters which are related to students. I say radical, because I believe that it will require Senate and Board action to accomplish the changes which seem to me almost essential in order for us to have an efficient administration of our student affairs.

We have given to the students through our Committee on Student Affairs a voice in administration which is strong and which can seriously impair efficient administration. This cannot be withdrawn at will and will take a sweeping change to accomplish what is needed. We have deceived the students and the faculty too, into a false feeling of participation in administration, which in theory is admirable, but in actual practice, failing to give us an efficient administration. I feel that our most likely possibility is the formation of a Division of Student Welfare, under strong centralized administration is the most hopeful plan which we can look to, to improve the situation.

I am aware that this has been recommended to you in various forms on numerous occasions. I believe that it could be accomplished without a great cost from the budgetary standpoint; the real battle would be to secure the approval of the Senate. I would like your permission to submit to you my ideas on this question, particularly from a functional and budgetary standpoint, if you feel that there is any merit in this discussion and the problems it raises.

Sincerely,

FHT-Y