

Copy for Dean Turner

Urbana, Illinois
August 15, 1934

President A. C. Willard
355 West Administration Building

Dear President Willard:

On June 22, 1934, Acting President Daniels appointed the undersigned "to serve as a small committee to consider the rooming house problem and suggest remedies." The committee has given considerable thought to the matter, has secured the opinions of others familiar with conditions about the Campus and submits the following report.

We call attention to the many and varied ramifications into which a study of the rooming house situation leads. There is not just one evil to be considered but several of them varying from students living in unsanitary, unsafe houses to the collection of room rents from irresponsible persons. We have attempted to simplify the problem by breaking it down into its component parts and concentrating our attention and recommendations on the quartering of unorganized students in the so-called "rooming houses" about the Campus that are operated by private and corporate parties purely for monetary profit. We have made no suggestions applicable to Illini and College Hall, Newman Hall, the Y.W.C.A., McKinley Hall, the Granada, and the like, and, of course, nothing is said concerning fraternities and sororities and our own Residence Halls. All these have their influence on the general problem, and in these days of oversupply of rooming space, the effects of their practices loom large in the practices of the "rooming house" group. However, each of these has its own peculiar characteristics that make formal relationships with the University special to particular cases or groups. Likewise, we have not included the strictly private residence in our consideration where keeping a roomer or two is purely incidental to the general family use.

We call attention briefly to the University's relationships with the student housing agencies during the past ten years. It exercised quite complete and, apparently, duly authorized supervision, through the Deans of Men and Women, over the social, moral, and physical life of the students living in organized houses, prior to 1930-31. Since 1930-31 only the Dean of Women has exercised any semblance of supervision, deriving her authority, presumedly, from the provision in the Regulations Applying to Undergraduate Students, Section 19, Page 8, of the September 1933 issue, entitled SPECIAL REGULATIONS - LIVING QUARTERS OF STUDENTS. Incidentally this section applied only to students renting apartments in the original Regulations and did not have any general significance. Prior to 1930-31 the Deans of Men and Women caused all "rooming houses" to be inspected as to sanitary conditions. The Dean of Women still functions in this respect in that she maintains in her office an "approved" list of seventy-two houses, which means that she has ascertained by inspection or by report of the landladies that certain standards have been met in these houses. Also, the Dean of Men acted in his official capacity to enforce an "approved" contract between students and rooming house keepers, to which contract the University thereby became a sort of third party on the side of either of the other two, but against the offender in case of a complaint or breach of the contract. This relationship has not existed for three or more years.

The University appears to exercise other mandates, such as the enforcement of the "ten o'clock in-the-room-hour" for women, the prohibition against lodging both sexes in the same house, calling hours for men, et cetera. However, the Dean of Women maintains whatever supervision exists in these matters with respect to the rooming houses for women, including the sororities, Residence, and other Halls, by acting as an adviser to Woman's League which promulgates

rules of conduct for women and then reports infractions of a serious character to the Dean of Women for adjustment.

We point out further that since 1930 the University has been basing its relationships with students, to a greater extent than ever before, on the philosophy of "individual responsibility and self development." Rules and regulations have been relaxed in every direction and, in the case of men students, abolished almost altogether. Self-government has been encouraged. The functioning of the Woman's League, already referred to, is a good example of this philosophy in operation. The powers of the Deans of Men and Women have been made advisory only. This philosophy must be kept in mind in developing any program of rooming house cooperation or supervision, in order for the University to develop a program of action consonant with its published avowals of policy.

We now draw attention to some of the immediate and practical aspects of the rooming house situation as they affect the point of view of the keepers thereof:

(1) The decline in enrollment in the University has created an over-supply of living quarters for students. This has developed a keenly competitive condition among all rooming agencies about the Campus. The efforts of the sororities and fraternities to keep their houses filled throughout the year contribute to the instability in the "rooming houses." The strenuous efforts of Newman and other large Halls add to this instability. Even the University itself appears to the "rooming house" landlady to be contributing to the acuteness of this phase of the problem through the operation of the Residence Halls for women.

Under these conditions, prices of rooms have fallen in all directions. Undercutting the other fellow's price in the open and through

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secret understandings is not uncommon. Instability, that is, the between-semester and in-semester moving about of the students, is one result. This is often accompanied by non-payment of rents that are owed. From the standpoint of the rooming house keepers, no other phase of the problem is so harassing and acute. They would like the University's cooperation to the extent of enforcing payment of room rents and continuance of at least one semester's residence in a house, by means of the exercise of University discipline, the withholding of University credit, or by other means at its disposal, such as the maintenance of a Students Credit Bureau, placing in the hands of the Deans of Men or Women, or some other constituted authority, the power to "crack" down on offenders.

Some of our colleagues in the University have urged the sanctioning of such procedures. The action of the Board of Regents of the University of Michigan in authorizing the withholding of academic credit as an extreme means of enforcing performance has been cited. We note, however, that this action is in the nature of an experiment and may be withdrawn at any moment. Our Committee on Discipline ruled, rightly, we believe, that University discipline should not be used in the manner suggested. Your present committee does not believe the University should enter into any official arrangement whereby it would undertake to enforce the payment of rents and other debts incurred by its students. Instead, we suggest a plan of procedure below which is consonant with the philosophy of individual responsibility and which, we think, will gradually raise the standard of living conditions all around.

(2) Another prominent element seriously affecting the rooming house keepers is that of lowered net incomes, first, because of fewer students to be housed; second, because of the lower incomes of the students themselves; and, third, because of the comparatively high revenues which the owners of

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houses must have to secure their investments. It must be kept in mind that the owner is not the keeper in a great many instances. The consequence is that large houses are falling into the hands of Loan Associations which must operate them in a less personal way under the supervision of a hired caretaker. Some fraternity houses have fallen into this status. Repairs and improvements are being neglected. Students seek out the undesirable and cheaper places. Many students club together and provide their own meals and upkeep services.

The remedy suggested by some is that the University keep an Approved List of rooming houses to which would be admitted only those meeting the University's specifications, or standards, as determined by an official inspection once or twice a year. Students could be warned thereby of the undesirable conditions of houses not on the approved list.

In the opinion of your committee, this is not the time to put any such plan into effect. It can lead only to irritation and resentment on the part of a goodly number of people because it is well-nigh impossible to raise the physical condition of properties at the present time. The approach to the solution of the problem should be gradual and based on a long time plan of education and effective means of rectification. We are not unmindful, however, of the many undesirable living conditions about the Campus, but these are now in demand at a lowered price by poor and needy students, and, therefore, must be dealt with mainly by educating the students to desire better housing.

Until the University can furnish men students with socially, physically, and morally desirable living quarters in publicly owned dormitories at a low cost, it appears futile to expect decided general improvement in the living conditions of large rooming houses, under economic conditions now prevailing. If all freshmen not residents of the Twin Cities and not commuters, unless otherwise permitted by the University, were required to live in University

owned dormitories, from which they could go in their sophomore year into fraternities and sororities, and into other living quarters about the Campus, the tone of the entire situation would be raised immensely and better local housing would be provided.

(3) The rooming house keeper has many functions to perform outside of maintaining a physically fit place to study and sleep. No amount of inspection of a house for sanitary and other physical characteristics will guarantee that proper study hours are maintained or that good moral conditions prevail. As has been pointed out, the University has given up "rule and regulation" supervision of the student's life beyond his organized social and extra-curricular activities. The landlady may, however, even in these days, expect, and, in truth, receives cooperation from the University in preserving a wholesome community life in her household, both through the offices of the Deans of Men and Women and through the influence of college administrators with their students. The students, in turn, may expect such cooperation on their side. The rooming house situation cannot be said to be in a chaotic condition in spite of many manifest evils now confronting it.

(4) Finally, we call attention to the fact that rooming house conditions reached such an acute stage of unsatisfactoriness from the keepers' point of view that a sort of protective association was formed two years ago to combat the manifest evils of the situation. This Association accomplished little more than the adoption of a set of REGULATIONS FOR MEN'S ROOMING HOUSES, a copy of which is attached. These are simply rules of conduct for the student, and to some extent for the head of the house as well. In Rule 8 the University is brought into the picture through its Committee on Student Affairs.

The Association has discussed collection of rents, price fixing, price undercutting, and other phases of the problem, in other words, Codes of Fair Practice. The cooperation of the University in this latter respect has

been sought on the basis of acting as a compliance officer.

We point out that much good can be accomplished from concerted action of this kind, and from the University's cooperation with the group. On the other hand, such an Association can become a strong force against the policies of the University, as was the case at Michigan when appropriations for dormitories were being sought from the legislature.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Anything the University may do in the way of cooperating with rooming house keepers in promoting better living conditions must be based on the principle of interest in the physical, intellectual, and moral development of its students. It cannot invade the legal rights of student and keeper to make whatever contractual arrangements may seem desirable between themselves. It must accomplish its purpose to improve the living conditions of students about the Campus by means that will secure local public approval and support. Among the things it can do in this direction are:

1. Cooperate with the Administrative Departments of the Twin Cities in all phases of health protection and promotion. Such cooperation would include surveys of sanitary, safety, and general health conditions. It would utilize the facilities of the University Health Service, and, when necessary, the services of experts in sanitation and construction on the regular staffs in engineering and architecture, and possibly the services of the Director of the Physical Plant.

2. Promulgate standards of acceptable study room furnishings, proper temperature and illumination conditions, and effective means of combating the spread of vermin and contagious diseases. These activities would enlist the services and advice of persons in the University who could be of real constructive assistance in such a program. The single item of lighting the study

table is of tremendous importance in this connection.

3. Promulgate standards of conduct that should prevail in any house where students are congregated. This would employ the experience and service of those in the University most competent to advise about such matters. The Deans of Men and Women would be called upon in this connection. Others interested in student conduct and development would contribute their counsel.

4. Lastly, the University could cooperate in the development of a "Code of Practice" that would come to have the effect and influence of a University sanction through long usage and readjustments as necessity required. This last would require the services of a small committee working over a considerable period of time in developing a workable set of rules.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that a small standing committee be appointed by the President to develop a long-time plan of student housing which the University could adopt and put into effect gradually, through the committee's supervision, but which would coordinate the efforts of several agencies of the University now in existence and proposed, to the end that spasmodic attempts to do something by this and that person may not place the University in the light of having no policy at all.

This committee should be responsible only to the President, and its plans and proposals should be approved by him, and, in some cases, by the Board of Trustees, before becoming effective. It should have the authority to secure the advice and cooperation of other units of the University in developing its program of action. It should, with the approval of the President, be able to delegate details of administration to regular University officers in effecting its purposes. It would receive and pass upon suggestions of all interested persons. It would not operate in conflict with the Senate Committee

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on Student Affairs. On the contrary, it might be of help to that Committee in some of its problems. Its operation would keep the focal point of criticism and complaint away from the Offices of the Deans of Men and Women and thus prevent these officers from being embarrassed with regulative duties in connection with their position of advisers to students. A wise continuing policy could be developed under which desirable changes could be effected and harmonious relationships established with rooming house keepers.

Respectfully submitted,

Chairman

REGULATIONS FOR MEN'S ROOMING HOUSES*

1. Unless otherwise provided, the lady of the house shall be the responsible director and shall be known as the "head of the house." She is expected to supervise the house properly; to maintain a comfortable temperature and cleanliness of rooms and bath; to provide clean linen; to exercise due care in admitting strangers; and otherwise look after the general well-being of the occupants of her house.
2. Absolutely no intoxicating liquor or gambling will be tolerated in or about the house.
3. Quiet hours will be maintained after 8:00 p.m. every night except Friday and Saturday nights, when such quiet hours may be set at the discretion of the head of the house in response to the request or appeal of individual occupants in the house. During quiet hours there shall be no loud talking, singing, or whistling in rooms or halls and no use of musical instruments, radios, or phonographs in a manner that will cause disturbance to other occupants of the house. It is expected that this rule will be enforced against non-student occupants, including the family and other tenants of the head of the house.
4. No excessive disorder, such as wrestling, active scuffling, etc., will be permitted in rooms or halls at any time.
5. Cigars, cigarette stubs, matches, ashes, etc., must be properly cared for by the occupant when receptacles and depositories are provided by the head of the house for such intended purpose.
6. Care should be exercised to turn off light, gas, and water when not in use in exchange for the willingness of the head of the house to provide ample quantities of such material, immediate replacement of burned out light bulbs, constant good repair of plumbing, etc. The student tenant will pay extra for the use of electrical appliances and radios.
7. The student occupant shall not lodge a guest in his room at any time without the knowledge and consent of the head of the house.
8. A student shall be held liable for any damage done to his room or its furnishings, other than that due to ordinary wear and tear. In assuming this liability the student may exercise his choice of satisfactorily repairing the damaged article or making a suitable replacement of the article with a substitute of as nearly the same quality and specifications as possible. Demands for cash settlement may be protested to the Senate Committee on Student Affairs if they seem excessive.
9. It shall be the duty of the head of the house to have a definite understanding with her tenants in regard to protection from theft and placing of locks to be provided or used.

* NOTE: These regulations were adopted by the Association of Rooming House Keepers in 1932-33. They have not been given official University sanction, and have not been printed for general distribution. Some changes in wording appear desirable before the University's official approval is given to the Regulations.