

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING  
OF THE  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
May 17, 1962

Present: Dr. Smith, Chairman, Messrs. Huff, Merriman, Stevens, Vanderploeg; President Hannah, Treasurer May and Secretary Breslin

Absent: Mr. Harlan; Dr. Bartlett

The meeting was called to order after dinner in the Red Cedar Room at Kellogg Center.

The President presented a review of the situation that has arisen as a result of an invitation extended by the Young Socialist Club (a student organization) to Robert G. Thompson, a notorious Communist, to speak at an open meeting in the Student Union Building on the evening of Wednesday, May 23, 1962.

After considerable discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Merriman, seconded by Dr. Smith, and it was voted to instruct the President to deny the use of facilities owned by or controlled by Michigan State University for this purpose. The Board restates its view as contained in its policy statement of December 1960 for guidance of University administrators and officials:

Students need to be taught and to learn about communism, but they should get their facts from faculty members who are competent in the field and who respect the obligation to tell the full truth. The University never has and never will knowingly invite Communist to preach his treason on our campus for we see no point in providing a platform for an exponent of communism who is not bound by any obligation to tell the truth.

Young Socialist Club denied use of University facilities to have Communist Robert G. Thompson speak on campus

The vote was four to one, Mr. Stevens asking to be recorded as voting "no". Subsequently the President contacted Mr. Harlan in Portland, Oregon, by telephone, and he indicated that had he been in attendance he would have voted "yes".

The complete policy statement as developed in December 1960 is as follows:

To be true to itself, a university must encourage rigorous examination of all points of view on matters of proper educational concern, regardless of their popularity or unpopularity. The tenets of academic freedom require that these points of view be advanced only from a posture of professional competence, complete candor, and absence of concealed bias.

A university is obligated to defend academic freedom. It is obligated equally to insure that advantage is not taken of that freedom for purposes of propaganda.

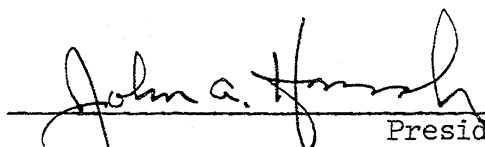
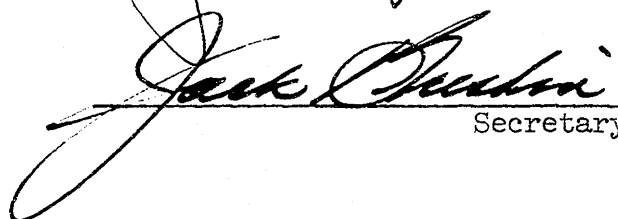
These obligations of a university are shared by its faculty, trustees, administrators, students, alumni, and the general public. All are responsible for safeguarding academic freedom against both those who would curtail it, and those who would abuse it as a license to mislead and confuse the unwary.

This responsibility extends to those invited to visit the campus. A prospective speaker should not be disqualified solely by reason of his political adherence. Neither should he be allowed to use his rights in his field of professional specialization to advance his personal political views.

This philosophy has special validity in the case of communism, which is not a political party in the sense we know of political parties but which is recognized as an international political conspiracy aiming at world domination through the subversion and overthrow by violence of existing governments, especially our own. Students need to be taught and to learn about communism; but they should get their facts from faculty members who are competent in the field, and who respect the obligation to tell the full truth. The university never has and never will knowingly invite a communist to preach his treason on our campus, for we see no point in providing a platform for an exponent of communism who is not bound by any obligation to tell the truth.

Under the law, final authority to decide who may use the University's facilities rests with the members of the Board of Trustees as the continuing custodians of the University's welfare and prestige; but faculty members, administrators, and students are equally responsible for the defense of the University's best interests.

Adjourned.

  
President  
  
Secretary