

The Evergreen State College

May 26, 1969

DEAR TRUSTEES:

What follows is more the kind of thing for concerned conversation over a glass of Olympia; but since I don't get to see you that often, it's better done in writing than not at all.

I've been brooding over Governor Evans' letter to Al Saunders. Evergreen will probably go farther in his direction than perhaps even he has in mind. What concerns me is that he should put his executive power behind such a specific request to the trustees, a request that suggests that he may not understand the role of trustees in the larger context.

My position with regard to a student on the board was expressed in a letter to the Legislature, which I enclose. I've had no reason to change my mind, except to add an admission: Perhaps the principal drawback with boards has been that administration has had its policies reviewed to the exclusion of faculty-students' policies. Let's hope we can stand the strain of doing otherwise at Evergreen.

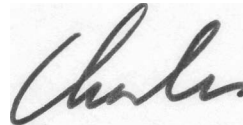
Strong, representative input to a strong representative board is what public higher education needs, and not a weakening of the board by turning it into an operating council, which is what would happen if local students and faculty were added. Citizens will not trust local operating councils as boards of review. Then, the next step: "Let's do away with these self-serving boards and have one central board."

State universities must be more than service stations for whims of central bureaucracy. They must be answerable, of course, to the state and to the public (through its Board of Trustees) but they must not be errand boys for bureaucrats or politicians. It's enough that a man like Governor Evans, whom everyone respects, should say that students should have a greater voice (or appropriate voice or whatever the adjective) and allow his appointed trustees to see that it's done according to their wisdom and their faculty's wisdom, not his. If governors can't refrain from telling trustees how to do things, if the state can't have the courage and wisdom to maintain universities which are responsible yet independent and critical, then the outlook for a free American society is in deep trouble.

These remarks aren't for circulation and publication--only for conversation. I may be too sensitive, but I see Evergreen, in its situation in the State of Washington, as one of the prime hopes in a very dismal looking prospect. This action of the Governor hasn't made the prospect any cheerier.

Here are some excerpts from recent readings that I thought you might find interesting. The pieces are numbered in rough order of worth. In (1) Hutchins' comments include many points which Evergreen's ideals seem to bear directly upon, and (2) Barr's comments in "A Center Symposium" contain a lot of practical wisdom about community relations that I hope to build into our way of life. Numbers (3) and (4) I don't include for any intrinsic worth, but only because they're tangential to the kind of thing I've been brooding about lately. Number (3)--I don't know who Kathy Mulherin is, whether her economic arguments are accurate; I include her piece only for its expression on the issue of state control and political meddling. Number (4) is the kind of thing you can only brood about: The lack of common language and value systems between large groups of people, specifically between a large part of the younger generation and our generation, as well as between sides of deepening societal cleavages. A combination of this with the political tinkering with education alluded to in (3) makes me glad that only rarely I can afford the luxury of brooding.

Just some thoughts over an imaginary glass of Oly.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Charles", written in a cursive, flowing style.

Charles J. McCann
President

CJM:rmb

Enclosures

chem

February 19, 1969

The Honorable Marjorie Lynch
Washington State Representative
House of Representatives
Legislative Building

Lynch:

Thank you very much for your invitation to attend the public hearing on Senate Bill 232 and Senate Bill 378, which I'm sorry I cannot attend. I hope that you won't mind my expressing personal views by letter; personal since I do not yet represent a full-fledged college community nor do I represent the views of our Board of Trustees who have not, as a board, expressed themselves on the matter. I write, then, only as a long-time student of academic governance who has participated as faculty member) chairman, dean, and who now faces the prospect of influencing the development of a new academic community.

The American system of layover-seeing boards has generally worked well. Exceptions reflect poor appointments by the Governor or, in the case of private colleges (and a situation far more difficult to correct) the failure of the board to police its own quality. Generally speaking, colleges and universities with the strongest faculties and the ablest administrations have existed contemporaneously with a board composed of very able, experienced people who have a strong view of the public interest, combined with a view of how all the complex relationships, almost organic in nature, of higher education affect that public interest.

The manner of operations of such boards has traditionally been strictly as overseer, and not involved in actual operation, particularly in faculty and student matters. The writings on higher education abound in expressions of this, perhaps a most typical one being from the AAUP statement on government of colleges and universities (AAUP Bulletin, December, 1966, page 377): "Since the membership of the board may embrace both individual and collective competence of recognized weight, its advice or help may be sought through established channels by other components of the academic community. The governing board of an institution of higher education, while maintaining the general overview, entrusts the conduct of administration to the administrative officers, the president and the deans, and the conduct of teaching and research to the faculty. The board should undertake appropriate self-limitation."

Membership on the board representing interest groups within the institution would be inimical in two respects to the manner which has proven best up until now: (1) Such membership would tend to confuse the board of trustees' role as overseer with a role as operating council for the institution. Trustees functioning in the latter way would invite public response in deleterious ways. (2) To the extent that representatives from faculty or students are elected, it destroys that single great control over quality inherent in gubernatorial appointments.

I wish to emphasize that my position does not exclude a likely intent of the bills: it is certainly desirable for part of the membership of boards of trustees to be composed of young people and also of people who happen to be faculty members. It is certainly within the power of the Governor to appoint such people to boards of trustees. One that the young people would be of demonstrated ability, and that the faculty members would not be from that same place--better yet, not from a sister state institution. Boards need informed objectivity more than axes to grind.

I should one of our goals for The Evergreen State College is to establish an internal governing council representing all members of the college community.

Sincerely,

Charles J. McCann
President

CJM:crs

•

C
O
P
Y