

MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING OF  
THE INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDY

January 16, 1931

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A regular meeting of the Members and Trustees of the Institute for Advanced Study was held at the Uptown Club, 60 East 42nd Street, New York, New York, on Friday, January 16, 1931.

Present: Messrs. Louis Bamberger, Carrel, Flexner, Friedenwald, Hardin, Leidesdorf, Maass, Straus, Weed, Mrs. Fuld, and Miss Sabin.

Absent: Messrs. Aydelotte, Edgar S. Bamberger, Houghton, and Lehman.

On motion, Mr. Louis Bamberger was requested to act as Chairman.

No objections to the minutes of the previous meeting having been made, their reading was dispensed with.

The President announced the appointment of the following committees:

Executive Committee

Mr. Louis Bamberger, Chairman  
Mr. Aydelotte  
Mr. Flexner, ex officio  
Mrs. Fuld, ex officio  
Mr. Hardin  
Mr. Lehman  
Mr. Leidesdorf

Finance Committee

Mr. Hardin, Chairman  
Mr. Edgar S. Bamberger  
Mr. Louis Bamberger, ex officio  
Mrs. Fuld, ex officio  
Mr. Maass

Committee on Nominations

Mr. Edgar S. Bamberger, Chairman  
Mr. Friedenwald  
Miss Sabin

The following statement was read by the Director:

At this first regular meeting of the Trustees of the Institute for Advanced Study, I should like to make a statement of progress and to indicate in general terms the lines to be followed during the next few months. It is considerably less than a year since the idea of establishing the Institute was first considered by Mr. Bamberger and Mrs. Fuld; it is approximately six months since the necessary legal steps were taken; it is three months since the Board of Trustees was organized and officers were chosen. These periods are the merest moments in the history of an institution designed for permanent existence. And yet they have been long enough to evoke from scholars and scientists of high distinction in this country and Europe expressions of enthusiastic welcome and approval and to elicit many inquiries from persons living in all sections of the country as to the program of the Institute and their eligibility as students. Not since the founding of the Johns Hopkins University sixty years ago - so I have been told again and again - has any such opportunity been given to create, unhampered by history or tradition, an institution that, if wisely directed, may lift American culture to a new and higher level.

The history of higher institutions of learning in America is a curious zigzag. The highest points reached today in the leading American universities - the peaks, if I may so call them - are higher than they have ever been; at the same time, the general level is lower than that of the Johns Hopkins in 1876. The one exception to this broad statement is the medical faculty, in which the level has risen steadily during the last forty years and especially during the last twenty years; and medicine is the one faculty which has increasingly concerned itself with scientific productivity.

The medical faculty has not been distracted by lower activities and interests - athletics, extra-curricular nonsense, etc., as have the faculties of arts and science.

We cannot too often remind ourselves of the high and severe purpose for which this Institute was established; and I trust that at least annually and perhaps oftener the Officers and Director of the Institute may be called upon to take stock and to make to the Trustees and the public a critical accounting. The great universities have in recent years slipped partly at least because no such procedure has been followed. Presidential reports are nowadays almost invariably self-congratulatory in character, with the result that trustees and faculties become complacent and well-nigh irreparable damage is done before the facts of the situation are realized. A notable exception to this statement is the long series of reports made by President Eliot to the Harvard Corporation. Mr. Eliot was a constant critic of the University. The steady growth of Harvard from 1869 to 1900, due, of course, to many causes, was first and foremost due to Mr. Eliot's critical sense, his unceasing vigilance and candor, and the ability, which he never lost, to learn from others.

Following as best I can in the footsteps of the greatest of American educational leaders, President Eliot and President Gilman, I propose from time to time to remind myself and you of the fundamental object of this Institute and to ask myself, you, and those who speak with authority in the world of science and scholarship whether we are steering our ship towards the pole star, or whether we are drifting, as others have drifted, out of our proper course.

The Institute for Advanced Study was created by its founders for the sole and single purpose of advancing the boundaries of human knowledge and training at the highest possible level students whose

previous performance gives promise that they may have in them the making of scholars and scientists who in this and other institutions may successfully engage in the unique and highly privileged career of teaching and research. At the moment university authorities complain that too much ability is tempted into other and competing callings. I do not believe that the complaint is correctly stated. If higher institutions of learning had created within themselves conditions really favorable to intellectual activity - tranquillity, independence, freedom from irksome and needless routine - the career of the scholar and the scientist would easily prove the inherent superiority of its attractions. I have myself never met a successful man of affairs, who, looking back on his whole career, would not gladly have exchanged his arduous and anxious life for that of a Rutherford, an Einstein, or, if I may venture to mention one of our small company, a Carrel. These men, in the quiet of their study or their laboratory, make human history, for they dig the channels in which the rest of us work and think. If we can create the conditions essential to their activity, we shall not want for recruits. I look upon this Institute therefore as a glorious adventure which will attract the brave spirits who desire, as in all ages the brave have ever desired, to climb the yet unscaled peaks of the Mt. Everests in the field of intellectual endeavor. The Institute is this and this only: all else in the way of training and education it leaves absolutely and entirely to other agencies. And in so doing it recognizes the fact, already too clearly established by our American experience, that institutions, which aim at many goals, reach none.

During the past three months in continuous and helpful cooperation with Mr. Bamberger and Mrs. Fuld and such Trustees as have been accessible, I have organized and equipped a simple office and have devoted

myself to preliminary studies and conferences. It seemed to me essential that we should profit by experience. I have therefore re-read carefully the reports and addresses of President Eliot and President Gilman and have made such excerpts as bear upon our particular problems; I have submitted a list of questions to a number of persons who have favored me with well-considered and definite replies embodying their judgment and experience; and I have, finally, embarked upon a long series of informal conferences with men of acknowledged standing, seeking to ascertain what they would do, if they were faced with the responsibility I bear and the opportunity I enjoy, and seeking, further, to learn who among the younger men promise most for the future. The situation is a more complex one than at any previous time in the world's history. When, for example, Mr. Gilman organized the Johns Hopkins University, he could appoint a professor of history, a professor of mathematics, a professor of economics, or a professor of physiology. But any one of these subjects and indeed all subjects have so developed that it would require a small faculty to represent any of them adequately in all its aspects. Progress is likely to be made by selecting a crucial or strategic point, and then by procuring a scholar or a scientist who will push his investigations from that point forward. Some subjects are already so well represented in one or another university that we should squander our energy and funds if we attempted merely to duplicate them. We must ascertain the subjects which, though of fundamental importance, are not at present productively cultivated in this country at a high level, and we must undertake to discover the persons who may be relied on to forge ahead; but in order to come to decisions on such points and to make choices of this character one must possess a sound knowledge of the status and outlook of each of the major branches of learning. Towards this end I have been working.

I have as yet no conclusions to report to the Board and no action

to recommend. But I beg you to believe that the cautious and deliberate procedure I am following does not mean that I am inactive or drifting. When I feel reasonably certain in my own mind, I shall ask you to pass judgment. The most serious blunders in higher education have been due to precipitate action or to superficial thinking.

I propose to continue interviews and conferences in this country for at least two months longer. At the end of this period, I desire your authority to go abroad for the same purpose. There are in England and on the Continent persons whose counsel it is important for us to obtain; and institutions, like the Collège de France in Paris, the Royal Institution in London, and the Institutes maintained by the Kaiser Wilhelm Gesellschaft near Berlin, which, despite my previous study of them, I wish once more to examine from the point of view of the Institute for Advanced Study.

In conclusion, may I express once more my thanks to Mr. Bamberger and Mrs. Fuld for their confidence and their friendship? Nothing could be more perfect than the relationship which they have established: their modesty, devotion, patience, and selflessness ought to be known to all the Trustees and to the world at large, as they are already known to me and to those who are fortunate enough to be in frequent contact with them.

On motion, the statement was approved by the Trustees and ordered to be inserted in full in the minutes of the meeting.

The Director reported that, pursuant to the instructions of the Trustees, inquiry had been made of the members as to the hour and day on which they could most conveniently meet. It was unanimously agreed that the annual meeting should be held on the second Monday afternoon in April at one o'clock and that the regular meetings should be held on the second Monday afternoon in January and in October, at one o'clock, and that the By-Laws should be altered accordingly.

On motion, the following resolution was adopted:

RESOLVED, That the Treasurer be authorized to provide the Director with a letter of credit, which will enable him to pursue abroad the conferences which he is now holding in this country with scholars and scientists.

The Director reported that after conference with the President he had communicated with Mr. Welles Bosworth, an American architect and artist now resident in Paris, on the subject of the seal, preparation of which had been authorized at the Organization Meeting held October 10, 1930. Mr. Bosworth had suggested that the seal be so prepared that it could from time to time at long intervals be used as a medal to be presented for work of high distinction in the field of science or scholarship.

On motion, Mr. Bosworth's suggestion was approved, and the following resolution was adopted:

RESOLVED, That an appropriation not to exceed Five hundred Dollars (\$500.00) be made for the purpose of procuring drawings and executing the seal.

In view of the possible absence abroad of the Director at the time of the annual meeting it was suggested that the President should, if necessary, defer the meeting until the Director's return to this country.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned.