

THE INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDY

MINUTES

Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees

January 20, 1973

Board Room, Institute for Advanced Study,
Princeton, New Jersey

Present

Mmes. Gray and Whitehead; Messrs. Dilworth, Forrestal, Houghton, Linder, Petersen, Solow, and Straus; Mr. Hochschild; Dr. Kaysen; Mr. Morgan.

Absent

Messrs. Hansmann, Roth, Segal, Simon, Taplin, and Watson.

Presiding Officer

The Chairman, Mr. Linder, opened the meeting at 10:45 a.m. He said that the meeting had been called, at the request of the Director, to consider the nomination of Dr. Robert Bellah to a professorship at the Institute in the Program in Social Sciences.

Waivers of Notice

The Secretary reported that waivers of notice, required under the By-Laws, had been received from all members of the Board.

Discussion of the
Appointment of
Robert Bellah

Prior to the meeting, the Director had sent the following documents to each member of the Board:

1. VITA - Robert N. Bellah
2. Bibliography - Robert N. Bellah
3. The Work of Robert N. Bellah - Clifford Geertz.
4. Minutes of the Meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Nomination of Robert N. Bellah.
5. Letter from Professor Cavell (Member of Ad Hoc Committee).
6. Letter from Professor Kitigawa (Member of Ad Hoc Committee).
7. Letter from Professor Merton (Member of Ad Hoc Committee).
8. Letter from Professor Reischauer (Member of Ad Hoc Committee).
9. Letter from Professor Shils (Member of Ad Hoc Committee).

10. Letter from Professor John W. Hall, Yale University.
11. Remarks on the Nomination of Robert Bellah - Morton White.
- 11a. Attachment - Letter from Professor Morgan to Professor White.
- 11b. Attachment - Letter from Professor Bailyn to Professor White.
- 11c. Attachment - Letter from Professor Homans to Professor White.
- 11d. Attachment - Letter from Professor Diamond to Professor White.
12. Draft Minutes of Faculty Meeting, January 15, 1973.
- 12a. Attachment - Director's Letter of Transmittal.
- 12b. Attachment - Letter from Professor Gilbert to the Director.
- 12c. Attachment - Letter from Professor Dyson to the Director.
- 12d. Attachment - Vote Sheet.
- 12e. Attachment - Letter from Professor Davis to Professor Montgomery.
- 12f. Attachment - Letter from Professor Dore to Professor Montgomery.

The following additional documents were distributed to the members present before the meeting was called to order.

13. MEMORANDUM - from the Director to Members of the Faculty January 19, 1973.
14. ON THE MATTER OF ROBERT BELLAH'S NOMINATION - Clifford Geertz - January 18, 1973.
15. REVISED MINUTES of the Faculty Meeting, January 15, 1973.
16. A REPLY TO THE DIRECTOR AND PROFESSOR GEERTZ - Morton White - January 19, 1973.
17. LETTER from the Faculty of Natural Sciences to Mr. Linder.

Copies of all of the documents listed above are attached to these Minutes.

The Chairman opened the matter of the appointment of Dr. Bellah by describing the procedure that would be followed during the meeting. After a preliminary discussion by members of the Board, five members of the Faculty -- Professors Borel, Cherniss, Selberg, Setton, and White -- would appear before the Board to present the views of those members of the Faculty who are opposed to the nomination. The Board would then reconvene in executive session to consider its decision.

The Chairman then called on each member of the Board present for an expression of his views. On two points the Board was unanimous: (1) that the issue should be settled at this meeting; and (2) that, based on the evidence contained in the documents which they had received, the Director should be supported in his nomination of Dr. Bellah.

Mr. Petersen raised the question as to whether Dr. Bellah's usefulness would be destroyed by the bitterness of the opposition to his appointment. The Director replied in great detail, describing first the interaction of the several faculties. Mathematics is a world to itself; there is some interaction with the social scientists by the physics faculty and a good deal by the historians. A year from now there may be one or two more faculty members that are hostile to the whole enterprise in social science than there have been in the past, but most will consider this an honest intellectual controversy. The Director said that both he and Professor Geertz had talked with Dr. Bellah at length and had warned him that his appointment was opposed by more than half of the Faculty; and they had separately urged him to let no consideration of personal loyalty interfere within any decision he might wish to make regarding the withdrawal of his candidacy. After due deliberation, Dr. Bellah has decided not to withdraw.

Mrs. Gray said that she hoped that later discussion would touch on a number of subjects: (1) that this was a reasonable appointment; (2) that there was full knowledge of all of the material by members of the Board, (3) that the procedures followed had been correct; and (4) the general question of the role of faculty autonomy in this kind of institution.

The Chairman closed this phase of the discussion with a brief exposition of his own views, relating particularly to the three affirmative letters of the Ad Hoc committee, and to the history of the planning and funding of the Program in Social Sciences.

Remarks of
Professor Borel

(From the Secretary's notes. Professor Borel spoke extemporaneously, and had no transcript of his remarks).

Professor Borel said that he would like to speak first regarding the meaning of this action. It is not so that the members of the faculty who are opposing the Bellah appointment are against the development of the Program in Social Sciences at the Institute. The nomination of Dr. Luce was never brought to the full faculty, and Dr. Miller's appointment was opposed because that part of the Program in Social Sciences had not yet been funded. Professor Geertz was voted in enthusiastically as a first-rate social scientist and a first-rate mind.

The question is how does Dr. Bellah compare with Professor Geertz? Those faculty members sitting with the Ad Hoc Committee had a negative view of this question and of the question "Is this man first rate?" Other members of the faculty will speak to the question of how we arrived at this conclusion.

Professor Borel then referred to the document entitled "Responsibility of the Faculty in the Governance of the Institute". The Director's action in forwarding the nomination does not violate the letter of this agreement, but it does violate the spirit in which it was written.

It would be very unfortunate if the Board were to override the faculty on an academic matter. The faculty has great experience in matters like this even in disciplines other than their own. In his memory there has been no case where there has been such serious study by people outside the discipline of the candidate.

Remarks of
Professor White

(From the Secretary's notes. Professor White spoke extemporaneously and had no transcript of his remarks. He suggested, however, that his specific objections to the Bellah appointment are included in his two memoranda, both of which are attached to these minutes).

Professor White said that he was a very junior member of the faculty, but that his letter of appointment made it clear that one of his duties was to pass on invitations to members of the permanent faculty. As one of the representatives of the School of Historical Studies sitting with the Ad Hoc Committee, he felt it his special responsibility to read everything that Bellah had written. He worked very hard at this task.

His main concern at the meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee was to state his reservations as frankly as possible. By and large he felt that the argumentation of the experts was defective even though their subsequent letters were in support of the appointment.

He felt that the tone of the exchanges on this matter was unfortunate. He must nevertheless conclude that Bellah was not of Institute caliber. (Professor White then spoke very specifically to points included in the minutes of the Ad Hoc Committee, and from other scholars in the field. All of these points are covered in whole or in part by his two memoranda).

Remarks of
Professor Selberg

(From the Secretary's notes. Professor Selberg spoke extemporaneously and had no transcript of his remarks).

Professor Selberg said that he had not taken an active part in the early stages of the Bellah nomination, except that he had participated in the selection of the Ad Hoc Committee. He approached the nomination with no prejudice. He was, therefore, surprised, on reading Bellah's work, that it did not appear to be the product of a first-rate mind, that there was less substance than he would have expected. He reached the conclusion that this was not a very good appointment and he planned to abstain.

Then he found that the matter was not being put forth in a straightforward manner, but followed a strange procedure. He, therefore, voted "no".

What we now face is a situation where the Director has decided to proceed against the majority opinion of the faculty.

He (Selberg) had been at the Institute for over twenty years. During that time there had been a considerable amount of controversy. He had personally tried very hard to get some constitutional rules. He has very strong feelings about procedures as they bear upon the problem of academic freedom, and he feels strongly that the faculty should make these decisions.

European universities had very strong traditions on these matters; he came from an academic family and was very familiar with these traditions. His home University of Oslo, which had a record in mathematics equal to any university in the world, always made appointments only with the approval of the Faculty. The only exception was the period of the second World War. When the Nazis occupied Norway, they had appointed a collaborator as Rector of the University. He made appointments without the consent of the Faculty. The men who accepted these appointments were never viewed as colleagues and were ostracized by the majority of the Faculty.

The Institute is different from U. S. universities. It is unlikely that he would have left Oslo for an appointment to any other place in the United States. He came as the choice of the faculty, and he has always considered a professorship a deep trust. To be a professor at the Institute is not an easy job.

In closing, he took exception to thoughts expressed in Professor Dyson's letter. He said that the nomination of George Placzek was opposed by von Neumann. He had opposed the nomination of Jule Charney not because of his qualifications, but because of the fact that he was a meteorologist and that there was no meteorology at Princeton University. On the other hand, he had supported the nomination of Bengt Stromgren because, although astrophysics was a new field for the Institute, there was a very strong group doing astrophysics at the University.

Remarks of
Professor Setton

(From the Secretary's notes. Professor Setton spoke extemporaneously and had no transcript of his remarks).

Professor Setton spoke very briefly. He said that he had studied the documents submitted by Professor Geertz and by Professor White, and that he shared the view that Bellah was not of Institute standards. In matters of this kind, he believed strongly in specialization of function, and he felt that the Board had no competence to decide matters of academic appointments. They were competent to deal with matters of finance, buildings, and similar administrative matters, but appointments should be left to the Faculty. He believed further that it was improper for the Director to bring this nomination to the Board or for the Board to overrule the majority of the faculty.

Remarks of
Professor Cherniss

(From the Secretary's notes. Professor Cherniss spoke extemporaneously and had no transcript of his remarks).

Professor Cherniss said that he was now perhaps the senior member of the active faculty in age and second only to Professor Thompson in years of service. He came to the Institute at the invitation of the faculty, through the Director, and at that time his work was judged by many non-specialists on the faculty.

His letter of appointment stated that one of his primary duties was to pass on invitations to the Institute for temporary members and for permanent faculty.

Over the years he had engaged in many debates over the qualifications of candidates; at no time had his motives or those of his colleagues been impugned.

In the case of Dr. Bellah, there had been no disposition on his part to prejudge the appointment. He had simply read the books and he was "amazed and shocked". They contained failures of logic and a weird sort of pretense. He could only conclude that the author was a second-rate scholar. (There is nothing in Bellah's writings so esoteric that anyone here could not read them).

The faculty of the Institute has included some great scholars in the past, and he is aware of no nominations to the Board of Trustees of this caliber. The Institute for Advanced Study stands as something special in American education; if, in the past, there have been appointments that did not meet these rigorous standards, this must be corrected. The explanation of his vote on the Bellah appointment stems directly from his understanding of the duties of the faculty as described in his own letter of appointment.

Another grave issue has arisen: If in the face of a substantial majority of the faculty opposing a nomination, this nomination is nevertheless forwarded to the Board and approved by the Board," I shall feel that I should no longer waste my time in sitting in judgment on future appointments".

Recess

(At this point the Board recessed for luncheon. There was a continuation of the discussion of the appointment at table, on which the Secretary has no notes).

Resolution

There followed further discussion of the action under consideration and also the method of transmittal of the Board's decision to the faculty. At the conclusion of this discussion, Mr. Forrestal presented the following resolution:

"Resolved that the recommendation of the Director for the appointment of Robert Bellah be and is hereby approved and, because of the serious issues which have been raised and which the Board has considered in taking this action, the basis for the decision of the Board will be set forth in an appropriate communication to the Faculty of the Institute from the Chairman".

The resolution was passed unanimously. The Chairman reported that he and the Director had been in touch with Messrs. Roth, Segal, and Simon, and that they were in substantial agreement with the action of the Board.

Director's Report: Other Possible Faculty Actions

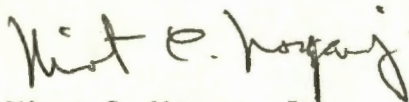
The Director reported that there was one possible appointment in Historical Studies in the offing -- Professor Bernard Lewis. He is a man in his mid-fifties. There is some division of opinion in the History faculty arising from the possibility that bringing him would preclude another appointment in Modern History. Professor Gilliam felt that the three new members of the faculty should be asked to express an opinion. The Director was engaged in an attempt to raise some money (\$500,000) to cover his salary during the period of his possible incumbency.

This is the only faculty action that is imminent. There will undoubtedly at some time be a nomination in Mathematics to replace Professor Atiyah.

Adjournment

There being no further business before the Board the meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Minot C. Morgan, Jr.", written in a cursive style.

Minot C. Morgan, Jr.
Secretary