

Regents: A silent majority of six?



Greenberg

Elliott

Herman

Raun

Schwartzkopf

Adkins

Look Ma! No Regents!

Board to be abolished?

By GARY SEACREST

Nebraskan Staff Writer

The Board of Regents abolished?

It could happen if Nebraska voters approve a constitutional proposal this November to establish a single Nebraska board of higher education.

If that proposition is approved, the new "super board" would be responsible for all higher education in Nebraska, including technical schools, and would replace the University Board of Regents.

The constitutional proposal for the creation of the "super board" is the brainchild of state Sen. Richard Marvel of Hastings and was passed by the 1969 Legislature.

Regardless of the fate of the constitutional proposal, Nebraska voters in 1970 will be electing four Regents, including candidates from two new Board of Regents districts. The 1969 Legislature implemented a constitutional amendment approved by voters in 1968 expanding the size of the Board of Regents from six to eight members and establishing districts of approximately equal population size.

Last December state Sen. Terry Carpenter proposed that an NU student Regent could be elected from the newly created Eighth District in Douglas County. However, no student has as yet filed for the Board.

Two Regents will be bidding for

re-election in 1970. Dr. B. N. Greenberg of York will be seeking his fourth term as Regent from the Fourth District. Richard Adkins, a banker in Osmond, will be trying to win a third term as Regent from the Third District in northeast Nebraska.

Challenging Greenberg in the Fourth District is 51-year-old Philip C. Anderson of Crete. Anderson is the author of a public spending limitation plan in the 1960's and an unsuccessful candidate for lieutenant governor in 1966.

In filing for the Regent's seat, Anderson declared, "As a businessman, I can see a need for business-oriented direction of this very large public investment, with emphasis on quality of the services which the people are buying with their tax dollars."

Three candidates have filed for the Eighth Regent District, which includes part of Omaha. The three are Ross C. Horning Jr., a Creighton University professor; Gene P. Spence, an attorney and insurance executive; and James H. Moyhan, an attorney and son of state Sen. Harold Moyhan.

Dr. Robert Koefoot has filed as a Regent candidate for the newly created District Six position. Koefoot, a Grand Island physician, tried unsuccessfully for the Regent position now held by Robert Raun.

The Regents—by act of God

by BILL SMITHERMAN

Outstate Nebraskans who saw their local ministers pack up for the long trip to Lincoln in the spring of 1869 must have thought they were on their way to an important religious meeting.

In fact, the ministers were traveling to serve on the first Board of Regents of the University of Nebraska.

When the Board held its first meeting June 3, 1869 four clergymen were present as Board members. Other members ranged from a railroad land agent to a state politician. In its first appointments the Board chose ministers for Chancellor and Secretary of the Board.

Albert Watkins, writing in the Semi-centennial Anniversary Book of the University of Nebraska, speculates that Governor David Butler appointed so many clergy to the Board to gain support from the church in "the doubtful experiment upon which the state whose people were chiefly experienced in a sense of poverty were entering."

This church orientation gave education at the University a decidedly religious cast. Daily chapel was required for all students and those attending the school had to be off the streets by 9 p.m.

This trend led to bitter controversy in later years. The problem was not resolved until a Chancellor had been fired after several years of political battles.

But controversy did not have to wait for a religious issue to boil. Only a year after its completion the foundation of University Hall (the University's first structure) was found to be badly built. There were charges of corruption that ended the political hopes of the Governor and most of the Regents.

A new state constitution adopted in 1875 decreased the number of Regents from 12 to 6. Members were elected at large and none but Republicans served on the board from 1875 until 1891.

Many Regent elections in the 1870's and 1880's were centered around religious questions.

The election of 1879 was particularly bitter as religiously "liberal" and "orthodox" candidates squared off.



Edmund Fairfield

Orthodox visitors to University chapel services criticized student conduct while Omaha newspapers denounced the Chancellor for letting students "run wild."

Religious controversy had begun to boil in the mid-70's when four young professors began asking loudly for greater student freedom, fewer restraints on a professor's personal conduct and turning the aim of education away from religion.

Chancellor Edmund B. Fairfield and many older faculty members opposed this trend, but they were unable to stop it. So they alienated both liberal and orthodox factions in the state.

The controversy became more intense and Fairfield was asked to resign in 1882. The Regents indicated they hoped to hire a Chancellor who could reconcile the factions and end the dispute.

They made the wrong choice.

In his four years as Chancellor Irving J. Mannatt kept the University on course of moderate educational reform. He also managed to alienate almost every faction in the University, according to Robert N. Manley in Centennial History of the University of Nebraska.

Although he was acknowledged as an effective administrator Mannatt had a personality that grated nearly everyone he worked with.

After a Regents hearing in 1888 Mannatt was asked to resign. He refused and was fired by the Board.

In 1920 the state constitution was amended to provide for election of Regents from six separate districts.

Closed meetings are in the open

by JAN PARKS

Nebraskan Staff Writer

Closed meetings of the Board of Regents is no secret, contend a number of University students, State Sen. Terry Carpenter and some state journalists.

"It's obvious to people who attend Regents meetings that the real decisions are made behind closed doors," ASUN senator Steve Tiwald said.

"Public meetings are only a facade. A means that Regents use to keep within the law and to fulfill their obligations to the press," he commented.

Tiwald noted that press releases of Board action are available and in correct form immediately after the board publically votes.

The University is a state-owned public corporation, he said. "Actual board decisions should be made in the public eye."

Senator Carpenter told University Young Republicans in a December meeting that a student Regent would end the "board's secrecy which was characterized by the selection of the new chancellor.

"Then you'll know what's going on in the University," Carpenter continued. "Then you can be heard whether they want you to be heard or not."

The Lincoln Journal in a December editorial criticized the Regents "for the manner in which NU business is largely discussed and settled upon in secrecy and then ratified publicly."

The Journal in a subsequent editorial said the "closed door performance" of the board "deprives the public from knowledge of the background of policy decision, the arguments for and against it, the alternatives and all considerations in decision-making."

Most Regents, however, deny that decision-making occurs outside of public meetings.

Regent Jack Elliott: "All official business . . . in public meetings."

Regent President, Ben Greenberg: "All official action . . . in public meetings. It is not taken in closed meetings."

Regent Richard Adkins: "By law, Regents serve public notice of meetings . . . meetings have always been public."

Regent Robert Raun: "No closed meetings as such. Private discussions are often useful and necessary for the Board, just as they are to any similar group."

Regent Edward Schwartzkopf, however, acknowledged that

"discussion of personnel is the main reason for closed meetings." He said the "secrecy in the selection of Varner was necessary."

Schwartzkopf also noted that Regents "often discuss business at lunch and dinner meetings, however, all official business is taken at public meetings."

Many students have speculated that "everything is decided before they get to the Regents meetings," Student senate president Bill Chaloupka said.

Although Chaloupka has attended "only three or four Regents meetings" he said he thought it odd that the Regents "nearly always vote unanimously."

"The Regents evidently like to present an image of unanimity to give the public the impression of the trustworthiness and strength of University leadership," he said.

Bert Evans, assistant professor of agricultural economics, agreed that public unanimity was a Board objective.

"But to look at the secrecy of Regents meetings is to look at only half the problem," he said. One should also examine the "overwhelming desire in the hierarchy of the administration to suppress the airing of differences in public," Evans said.

"Above all, the administration likes to maintain an academic pose of 'all is well,' he said.

A graduate assistant who helped present the graduate student dormitory visitation proposal to the Regents in October 1968, Nancy Ryan said, "I definitely felt the decision about visitation had been made prior to our presentation. Their minds were closed to everything we brought up."

"The Regents were cooperative about listening to what we had to say," Miss Ryan recalled. "One day they listened to us for 45 minutes."

Miss Ryan said that the visitation proponents "never did get a satisfactory answer as to why they said no."

"After the Regents' refusal to accept visitation they patted us on the back, told us how mature we were, and said sorry about that," she commented.

Ellie Shore, a visitation spokesman said, "I don't know for sure if the Board does meet secretly. Since they only see each other once a month, I could see why they would want to talk for a little while in private before their public meetings—for all we know, they could just be discussing the wives and kids."