Two opposing viewpoints on the removal of restrictive clauses from the charters of fraternities featured in the proceedings of the banquet Dr. Carl E. Woodward, President of the University of Rhode Island, presented the opinion that the removal of the clauses was a beneficial and constructive process rather than by administrative ruling. Dean Wilson, Professor of Government at Amherst College reported on the experiences of Amherst after legislating the clauses out of existence. Dr. Woodward made his position clear when he said, “I believe it should be clear at the beginning of his talk that not only the legal power to approve or disapprove restrictions but the moral obligation to follow the regulations through prescribed channels to have the regulations changed.”

In April, 1946, the Board of Trustees voted that “each chapter of a fraternity shall formally advise the Board of Trustees that there is no restriction by reason of race, color, creed, or creed affecting the selection of members.” This was to be done by October, 1948. The deadline was twice extended until February, 1951, when they drew the final line and said that beyond this no more.

Dean Wilson emphasized that these “radical and distasteful trustees” who dared to erase the words of national fraternities must be considered not merely as Alfred E. Stearns, former head man of Andover, . . . Lewis Douglas, former ambassador to Great Britain, and Harold Shone, former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. These were the radicals . . . who didn’t believe in free government and democracy, who forced this on the students.

Dean Wilson spoke of what has happened since the trustees’ edict. These fraternities have had their charters revoked by the national organization. All became local fraternities. One other did not meet the requirements and was disbanded. This year, the fraternities at Amherst pledged every freshman of 364 entering. The fraternities were attached this year by the Lord Jeff Club (the non-fraternity living group on campus) and as a result the Lord Jeff Club did not have a single pledge. According to Dean Wilson, “When Amherst fraternities have more senior government, more responsibility than ever before, and I think they’re stronger in terms of our local scene than they’ve ever been before . . . What everyone said couldn’t happen, in my opinion, has happened.”

The President, Dr. Eliot, devoted the next portion of his speech to the discussion of nationalization centering about the word discrimination. He differentiated between the discrimination which “can be an evil thing—unjust, unfair, un-American, un-Christian” and the discrimination which “can also be a good thing—constructive, productive, and thoroughly in line with the democratic way of life, the American dream, and the Christian hope. It all depends,” he said, “Upon the kind of discrimination you are talking about, or rather it all depends upon the criteria you use.”

“Three criteria can be rational, national, and religious; and the result will be discrimination that is useful and constructive. Or they may be irrational, national, and religious; and the result will be discrimination that is among the ugliest things in the modern world—ugly and cruel and frightening. Especially in a democracy, constructive discrimination can be one of the most important tools to achieve competence, balance, and the sort of diversity that produces a creative unity in the long run.” Dr. Eliot suggested that one of the best ways of keeping the quality of democracy is by practicing the “right kind of discrimination.”

Dean Wilson urged the delegates “that what we have come together to attempt is not to organize a crusade, nor to mobilize in defense of a cause, but to try to shed light upon a complicated and baffling set of problems about which . . . good men do not agree.” He said he felt that the success of the conference depended on maintaining “a problem-solving attitude.”

Dr. Eliot closed the evening by saying: “If our democratic institutions are to be preserved, our young people will need to learn how to work out their convictions in social and political problems. Let us not deny undergraduate fraternity members the educational experience ‘working out their own problems on a drastically revised basis’ and as a result the Lord Jeff Club has a single pledge.”

In conclusion, Dr. Eliot observed that “the spirit and character of the methods we propose to use” is no longer a question. It is desirable that the university and the college should have the right to name their own institutions. If the college had only 34 members, he pointed out that “the college could no longer be an institution of free government.”

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