



COOPER UNION HISTORY PROJECT

Memorandum regarding the Cooper Institute 1854

by Barry Drogin, EE '83

Abstract

A transcription of an 1854 memorandum written five years before the Charter and the opening of the Cooper Institute. Given handwriting issues, it may have been given to Abram Hewitt rather than written by him. One working theory is that it was written by Horace Mann, who had lived in Massachusetts (although he did not attend or teach at Harvard) and left to become the first president of Antioch in Ohio in 1853. Antioch was supported by Unitarians, and Mann asked Peter Cooper to be a trustee; instead, Cooper loaned money to the college.

1. Every institution ought to have an expansive character. Knowledge, New-York, everything expands, and this institution ought, if possible, to be so organized that it may gradually expand as to the number for which it provides, and the branches it teaches.

Why not adopt a principle which prevails in Harvard College, where ~~persons~~ students receive support on promise of paying back one half whenever they may be able to do so. ~~The~~ The money is always returned some time or other. Now why would it not do to take the promise of each beneficiary of the Cooper Institute that when able he will pay the institution say \$50 or \$100? It would be done with pride; it would gradually increase the revenue, and it would serve still more to attach the alumni to the institution. It might be settled that the return-money should go toward certain purposes.

2. There ought to be a library, with a permanent fund for increase, connected with the C.I. [Cooper Institute]

3. The appointment of teachers or professors ought not to be done by the full board, but by a Committee of Appointments of 3, elected at stated intervals, and not for the occasion.

It is now acknowledged by all the best authorities in the different civilized countries that appointments of professors ought not to be made by large bodies, but by a few who feel the whole weight of the responsibility, and who are elected when no appointment is depending.

The whole Board may have the right of confirming the election by the Committee.

4. The chief teachers ought to form The Faculty, with a presiding officer to direct the academical duties etc. The president of The Faculty ought to be a member of the Board of directors, ex officio.

Ought the whole faculty to be so?

Or ought the faculty to elect 1 or 2 from among themselves to be members of the board for a specified time?

5. Is the C.I. to be divided into 2 parts, the school ~~and~~, where branches are taught in the day, to regular scholars, and the college or Prelection¹ (or whatever name be given) consisting of instruction to older persons in the evening or at periods when persons in practical employment can attend? A catalogue of lectures etc., consisting of semi-annual courses, is to be published every half-year.

6. There out to be prizes:

1. for the scholars of the school and the Prelection¹
2. ~~for~~ general ones

They ought to consist in choice books, instruments, support to travel (on certain conditions), etc., but not in mere money (?)

7. The recipients of the higher prizes ought to engage themselves to send a copy of whatever they may publish, or a description of whatever they may invent or discover, during the whole course of their lives, to the C.I.

8. The President of the Faculty, with a higher salary, is the officer through whom the Board of Directors acts on the professors etc. He is the executive officer for the whole teaching department of the institution.

9. The Faculty ~~settle~~ direct the punitory ~~department~~ part, or under the supervision of the Board. The Faculty determine on punishments, expulsions etc.

10. The greatest possible care is to be taken to appoint ~~the~~ proper persons as professors. This once done great confidence is to be shown to each in his own department

11. In addition to the regular teaching there shall be:

1. Lectures from time to time by the first men in the country or from abroad
2. Permission to be given to persons who desire it and who, in the opinion of the Board are not only competent but whose lectures would bestow a real benefit upon the institution. These lectures, though delivered in the C.I., to be paid for by the audience

12. The Westpoint principle to be adopted - only those who really profit by the institution, to go on

13. The Blackboard largely to be used in all branches.

14. Model boarding houses in connection with the C.I. (?)

15. French and German, it would seem ought to be taught. English, German and French are now almost as necessary, and in some respects even more so, than Latin was, as the common medium in the middle ages - I mean² for purposes of general culture and not as a part of erudition

16. There ought to [be] a provision in the organic law of the institution, to make organic changes, when times, circumstances etc. have changed. Such changes ought to be possible with great difficulty only, yet they ought to be possible. Without it institutions are apt to wither.

¹"Prelection" means a public lecture or reading, especially delivered at a college or university.

²"I mean" indicates that this is written by a single person.

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