Walkout Disrupts Senate Quorum; Broyles’ Impeachment Threatened

Members Boycott Senate Discussion Involving Petition

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First the bumbleplums picketed the Senate meeting. Then the Senate bumbled itself into a sudden and frustrating defeat as one of its members stalked out and destroyed the fragile quorum.

During the course of its remarkable meeting, the Senate also heard a motion to impeach SA President Bill Broyles for the ditto machine fiasco, and dispelled queries from the Houston Post that the student government had been overturned.

The meeting ended and remaining Senators formed a committee of the whole during consideration of the controversy concerning the math department and certain charges leveled against it.

Limiting Debate

The quorum was destroyed when SA Treasurer Ken Burgess rose and announced “I wish to call to the Senate’s attention that I am leaving and that destroys your quorum.” Burgess’ action followed a Senate vote which defeated a motion to limit debate on the math question only to members of the Senate.

The quorum question had been raised by Senator Ray Needham shortly before Burgess’ action. Needham had requested a roll call to determine whether a quorum was present, and refused to respond to the roll when his name was called, thereby not permitting his presence to be recorded or counted.

The Senate had maintained its quorum at that time.

The rump Senate resolved into a committee of the whole in order to hear from the half-dozen interested students who had come to the meeting in order to speak to the Senate about the math situation. The committee recommended to the Senate that SCTR be allowed to handle the matter as it sees fit.

Origin of Controversy

The math controversy began last week when the Senate endorsed the spirit of a petition bearing 125 signatures. The petition cited eight charges against the “present teaching of mathematics at Rice” and requested that Dean McEnany and the University “review” the charges.

Broyles opened the discussion by reading to the Senate a series of correspondence which had taken place between Charles Lanford and Dr. M. L. Curtis, Chairman of the Math Department.

Senate Letter

Broyles read to the Senate a letter he wished to send to Dr. Curtis clarifying the Senate’s position on the matter. Broyles stated that “In endorsing the ‘spirit’ of the petition, the Senate was endorsing none of the specific points; neither was it appointing Charles Lanford as
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(Continued from Page 1) its emissary to deal with the Math Department.” The letter expressed “confidence” in the Math Department’s re-evaluations of its operation, but added “we cannot ignore the concern of the 125 signers of the petition, nor can we ignore our own concern.” The letter proposed a discussion between math faculty and a student committee.

Several math students were present who wished to communicate to the Senate their feelings about the petition.

Quorum Call

Ray Needham moved that debate be limited to Senate members only; Ralph Parks seconded. A motion to call the question failed; at this point Needham attempted to destroy the quorum by his tactic of failing to answer the roll call.

When the Senate subsequently defeated the motion to limit debate, Burgess walked out.

In referring the matter to SCEP, the committee of the whole expressed concern that SCEP not be involved with the petition and related actions which would impair SCEP’s effectiveness.

Ditto Affair

The motion to impeach Broyles was made during the course of Ken Burgess’ financial report. Broyles was requested to explain to the Senate the scandal that had arisen in connection with its ditto machine.

Broyles explained that the machine had been returned to the SA office, the $20 check had been returned to Jones, and that the SA had given Jones an additional $20 for damages. Jones has been given a ditto machine, by the Placement Office.

Melodrama

“I talked with several members of the court,” he explained, “and it became apparent that sympathies lay in the traditional melodramatic pattern.”

Ray Needham expressed shock that the SA officers could “so severely transcend the powers constitutionally given. Only by inquiry from the floor was the Senate to discover by the merest chance what was going on.”

He deplored the actions of the executive committee in spending Senate money without Senate authorization, and added that this action constituted grounds for impeachment. “And further, I so move,” he said.

Where’s the Chair?

Broyles gave the chair to Ralph Parks. Burgess explained that Jones had been given the $20 with the written stipulation that the expenditure must secure Senate approval. Needham offered to withdraw his motion if the chair would apologize.

Broyles interjected that, on the contrary, he thought Parks was doing a fine job as chair and there was no reason for him to apologize. Needham offered to withdraw the motion if the ex-chair would apologize. Broyles admitted negligence in not bringing the matter to Senate attention earlier.

“You’re not on your knees, Bill,” said Needham. “In the spirit of world brotherhood,” however, he withdrew the motion. The Senate approved by a vote of 8 to 3 the $20 expenditure to Jones.