

SOCIAL CONCERNS COMMITTEE

1:30-3PM

626 Campus Club

Thursday, May 13, 1999

In these minutes:

FCC Statements on Basketball Allegations and Animal Rights, Ad Hoc Committee to Investigate Sweatshop Labor, Renter's Rights Workshop

MINUTES

Present: Robin Brown, Chair; Lori Clark, Catherine Forseide-Hussain, Jean Niemiec, Amelious Whyte, George French, Thomas Haakenson, Wesley Matson, Mike Davey

Regrets: Julie Sweitzer, Margaret Kuchenreuther, Theodore Lewis, Sheila Warness, Amy Mertl

Absent: Friedrich Srienc, Joel Nelson, Sabeen Altaf, Nicholas Dehnert, Jenny Nate, Jennifer Watts

These minutes reflect discussion and debate at a meeting of a committee of the University of Minnesota Senate or Twin Cities Campus Assembly; none of the comments, conclusions, or actions reported in these minutes represent the views of, nor are they binding on, the Senate or Assembly, the Administration, or the Board of Regents.

The Social Concerns Committee met at 1:30PM on Thursday, May 13, 1999 in 626 Campus Club in Coffman Memorial Union on the East Bank. The minutes from the meeting held on Thursday, April 8, 1999 were approved as written.

Statements on Laboratory Vandalism and Basketball Allegations.

Professor Robin Brown, Chair, reported that he wrote to Professor Sara Evans, Chair of the Faculty Consultative Committee (FCC), asking if the University faculty have taken a public stand on the animal rights and basketball allegation issues. Professor Evans responded that the Faculty Senate recently issued a statement on each titled, "Statement on Laboratory Vandalism," and "Statement on the Basketball Allegations."

One committee member expressed concern about a phrase in the statement on laboratory vandalism that reads, "they reflect an anti-intellectualism and irrationality that is frightening." He is concerned that the phrase makes it appear that there is no rationality to the issue of animal rights altogether. Professor Brown agreed to send a follow-up memo to Professor Evans indicating that the FCC may have missed a chance to make clear that the University has rigorous and principled protocols for animal welfare in academic research.

Ad Hoc Committee on Sweatshop Labor.

Professor Brown informed committee members that President Yudof and Mark Rotenberg, General Counsel, have constituted an ad hoc committee to investigate and take a position on the issue of sweatshop labor in response to the FLA's Code of Conduct discussed at last month's meeting of the Social Concerns Committee. Professor Brown reported that he has been appointed as Chair of this committee and that its members are still in the process of being appointed. Professor Brown noted that options for consideration of the committee are: 1) write a code for the University of Minnesota; 2) sign on with the national code of the FLA; and 3) take no action. He will keep the Social Concerns Committee informed of its progress.

Before the new ad hoc committee is assembled, however, Professor Brown asked for further input from committee members on how they feel the University should respond to the issue of sweatshop labor. Committee members made the following suggestions:

- It is important to endorse any statement, even if it is not 100% effective, so that the University is in a position that it can publicize its concern with this issue; on the other hand, endorsing no statement whatsoever could be harmful.
- The Social Concerns Committee would like to go on record that it recognizes the complexity of this issue.
- Preference should always be given to supplies in the United States.
- Professor Brown and Professor George French will contact the manager of the Crookston University Bookstore to ask how her policy of ordering only apparel made in the U.S. transpired.

Renter's Rights Workshop.

Mike Davey, committee member, reported on a workshop on renter's rights that will take place from 1-4PM on Tuesday, May 18th in 320 Coffman Memorial Union on the East Bank Campus. The workshop is presented by the Minnesota Tenants Network, MPIRG, the University Student Legal Service, and the MSA to create a forum that allows students to share their personal experiences and knowledge with others, to educate students about their rights as tenants and increase awareness about the housing crisis, to challenge the U of M and the city of Minneapolis to respond to the housing needs of all students, and to offer students ways to get involved to insure more housing choices for everyone. It was recommended that Mr. Davey contact Sue Polarski who has a web-site that lists off-campus housing options; it was also suggested that he try to get the workshop listed on the University Events Calendar.

Miscellaneous.

It was reported that WCCO ran a story alleging that student athletes at the University of Minnesota received preferential treatment at Boynton Health Service. This statement, however, is untrue. Although a reporter called the Director of Boynton and apologized, the error was not corrected leaving an incorrect perception of how the University handles exceptional categories of students.

The meeting adjourned at 2:30PM.