

# *IU student protest, 1896-style*

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Round two of the controversy took place on the 14th when the truant students received letters from faculty committee composed of William Lowe Bryan (later IU president), Horace A. Hoffman and Robert Aley. The message was loud and clear: Please explain your absence from class in writing and deliver same to the registrar's office by the 17th.

**THE STUDENTS** chose to interpret their letters as "valentines" and posted some 50 of them in the window of Axtell's store. The protests then resurfaced in a body in the Opera House. The tone of the meeting was respectful of the faculty, but adamant refusal in regard to the mandatory explanation.

The *Student* editorial position was "amnesty"

for all but students who had coerced others to take a holiday on the 12th. To defuse the protest, the faculty posted notices at strategic locations on campus. That message was simple: No threat of punishment was implied by the letter of the 14th, but the students were required to reply or face the consequence of being dealt with separately. All but 30 students capitulated, and they (the holdouts) held a meeting in Mitchell Hall — a session which deteriorated into a shouting match.

Meanwhile, President Swain summoned the student Advisory Board — the forerunner of the IU Student Association — to tell them that unless their fledgling student government could get a handle on the protest, it (the Advisory Board) could die in infancy.

**WAILED** A *Student* editorial writer in the March 3 issue, the whole incident was a "strange spectacle." According to Clark, the wind-down of the vacation protest of 1896 was "a Shakespearean farce of much ado about nothing."

A postscript to the confrontation was an erroneous Associated Press article which stated that the freshmen kidnapped the sophomores and took them out to rural Monroe County and tied them to trees. The resulting fight was supposed to have ended with a fractured skull and several badly beaten students. Unfortunately, the reporter was inaccurate in regard to the geographical location, at least. The incident took place at the University of Illinois, not IU.