

'Immoral influences' at universities made the news in 1911

"Mr. (C.N.) Walter asserted that young men have learned many bad habits, such as drinking, smoking and card-playing while attending the state's institutions, and he blamed the faculty for not enforcing a more strict moral code." *Bloomington Telephone*, Oct. 14, 1911.

When the Indiana Association of Weeklies met for its annual meeting in Indianapolis, C.N. Walter, editor of the *Rossville Journal* had, as the saying goes, a bee in his bonnet. In fact, the man told his fellow weekly newspaper editors that he had actual proof of moral laxity among the faculty and students of the state-supported universities in Indiana.

Furthermore, Walter convinced his colleagues that they should pass a resolution calling for an investigation of the schools. It read, in part, "In view of the murmuring of the people of the state of Indiana, complaining that the morals of the Indiana State Normal at Terre Haute,



Looking back

By Rose McIlveen

Indiana University at Bloomington and Purdue University at Lafayette, are lax, we feel that if these charges are true the faculties of these institutions should use more effort to safeguard the boys and girls of our state who are sent to these schools against immoral influences . . .

"We feel that the state aid now furnished them should be withheld, and we urge our members over the state to investigate the conditions of these institutions, and if they find them as charged to make the matter public . . ."

It should be pointed out that Walter did not accuse the "boys and

girls" at the schools of immorality, but rather the atmosphere in which they studied. IU's president, William Lowe Bryan, a very moral man himself, did not take kindly to the allegations about his university.

The town of Bloomington was not insulated from vice, and some of its citizens were known to indulge themselves in whatever was available. Some of the faculty, who had been recruited to serve on disciplinary committees and sit in judgment upon students who got in trouble, must have been somewhat puzzled about Walter's resolution.

There had been some cases of student misconduct with touches of humor. For example, there was the student who had been in a drinking establishment downtown, where he met a young woman who took him back to her boarding house to see what she called "some interesting dancing." The student was so entranced with that experience that he took some friends back to the

boarding house the next night.

When word leaked to the university authorities, all of the students were summoned before the faculty for some attitude adjustment. All appeared except the original student, who suddenly had some urgent business to conduct in Gosport.

Remembering all of the efforts of the university in the past to be a parent away from home to the students, Bryan sat down and took his pen in hand to write a reply. It was printed in the Oct. 14 *Telephone*. He began by noting that about 15 years earlier he had asked the state secretary of the Young Men's Christian Association to have a look at the moral conditions at all of the colleges of Indiana.

The report of the investigation was not to be for publication, but to "aid the association in its work."

Although the details were considered confidential, Bryan related

that in general the state secretary found, "what every man of sense could foresee, that whenever there are a hundred or so young men, a few of them give way to the graver forms of immorality and some to other forms less grave."

Added Bryan, "He found, however, that the great majority of the boys in all our Indiana colleges and universities are clean fellows. He found that many faculty men in all the institutions devote themselves unceasingly to the moral betterment of the students, and that many students cooperate to the same end."

Bryan challenged the YMCA or any other "competent" body to do another investigation and concluded, "What I care for is that moral conditions here and everywhere shall be as good as possible, and I shall not quarrel with any man, friendly or unfriendly, who will help toward that end."