

Student vote a factor in 1907

Many proponents and opponents of "the student vote" in local elections frequently speak in terms of it being a relatively recent development. Actually, that is only partially true.

SEVENTY-TWO YEARS AGO in their enthusiasm to keep Bloomington "dry, the temperance faction recruited "dry" students to vote in a referendum. A General Assembly bill, which gave local option in the issue, also provided for periodic referenda to give citizens an opportunity to express their wishes in the matter.

Bloomington had gone legally dry in 1907, but in the four-year span that followed, when there were no licensed saloons, alcoholic beverages were still being consumed anyway. The issue had been thoroughly discussed in two local newspapers - the *Telephone* which took the temperance position, and the weekly *Star*, whose editor argued that speakeasies (called blind tigers) were proliferating and that the city and county were losing the revenue that would have been received from the licensing of saloons.

WHEN IT OCCURRED to the temperance faction that student votes could help their cause

Looking Back

By Rose H. McIlveen

on election day, a systematic canvass was conducted to find the dry ones. Apparently the efforts were not very discreet, since the *Star's* post-election article contained a statement, "The 'wet' students offered to organize and vote to offset the dry student vote, but the wet committee of the city declined to be a party to such a move, as the student vote would be illegal, as well as morally wrong."

To accomodate the dry students willing to vote, the temperance committee had set up a station on the west lawn of the courthouse, where Bloomington city precinct No. 1 was located. There dry students were sworn in for voting, but close on the heels of the dry student

affadavit procedure were wets with counter affidavits, which in effect gave some 28 students an opportunity to study the county's legal system at close range - namely at the jail.

THE DRAMA OF SWEARING IN and challenge took place after lunch, since most of the students who had been prevailed upon to vote had morning classes. The *Telephone* reported on May 31 that, "W.A. Bressenden and John Engle were at that precinct poll for the 'wets' and challenges were made to every student that applied. A large crowd gathered and watched the students vote and then march down to the jail where each gave bond for \$50." (It must have been crowded at the jail, since also present were attorneys John O'Donnell and J.E. Henley, two ministers and IU Professor Rolla Ramsey.)

The latter three persons signed the bonds for the students who had been arrested. It is unlikely that any of them saw the inside of cells in the jail.

WITH OR WITHOUT the student vote, when the polls had closed on that election day in 1911, (Page 2, col. 1; this sec.)