

Paper takes IU to task over dancing during war

It must have been what we call in the trade "a slow news day," when the Columbus *Republican* took Indiana University to task. And on the front page, too.

Apparently the controversy began when someone at the *Republican* saw an advertisement on the first page of the Charles-town (Ind.) *Citizen Record*. That ad said, "Mrs. Agnes Snider and Miss May Annis, dancing instructors in Indiana University, will give lessons on modern ballroom dancing, one-step, fox trot, waltz, waltz canter, tango and 'walking the dog.'"

It must have been the latter dance style that set them off at the *Republican*. Some writer rose up in righteous indignation and let IU have it in newspaper type.

The *Republican's* first salvo was, "This is the first time we ever knew that Indiana University employed dancing instructors. The general public is familiar with the fact that Indiana University has gymnasiums for both men and women and that drills are taught there for physical development."

Having launched into the subject, the



Looking back

By Rose McIlveen

writer thought he ought to put a mild disclaimer into the article. "This paper rather hesitates to believe that the state school pays out the good money of the taxpayers for dancing instructors alone. Surely these women have some other employment at the university, aside from teaching dancing."

The Columbus *Republican's* objection to dancing instructors was that it was wartime, and such instruction was entirely frivolous. Commented the newspaper, "It is our humble opinion that a man or woman who attends Indiana University and graduates there, will have had just as good an education and will be fully equipped to start the battle of life without knowing how to 'walk the dog' as those who do."

The name of that particular dance was too much for the *Republican*, but lest some

of the readers think their newspaper had gone too far, the writer explained. "This is no protest against dancing. It has its place, and this paper cannot see any harm in it, unless it is overdone. But this is war time. It is a time when the heads of the state and nation have been begging and pleading with the people to abstain from frivolous things and to lend their energies to the great work that must be done."

Thus the Columbus newspaper staff made themselves appear to be a bunch of old fogies. Having gone that far, it was a predictable progression toward some half-hearted humor.

"Certainly this is not time to 'walk the dog.' If these women (the so-called dance instructors) are going to remain at Indiana University and if it is true that they are dancing instructors there, it would be far wiser they could think up some new dances by the time the fall term opens."

The writers suggested some new ones: "Washing the Dish," "Hoeing the Spud," "Darning the Sock," and "Sewing the But-

ton." "Rocking the Baby," "Feeding the Chickn," (feathered variety exclusively) "Milking the Cow," "Currying the Horse," "Shearing the Sheep," "Slopping the Pig" or "something else that tends to be domestic and useful."

The *Republican* might as well have save the ink and newsprint. The Bloomington *Evening World* of Aug. 8, 1917, explained.

Actually, the two young women were never on the payroll of IU. They did help one of the Bloomington organizations "in giving a children's festival one night, and they had charge of a dance that was given as a part of that entertainment. For their services that evening the girls were paid a certain percentage of the receipts, which amounted to only a few dollars."

So the university hadn't hired any dance instructors, after all. The two women may have been disingenous in claiming that they were on the IU teaching staff.

They could be now. IU offers modern dance, tap dancing, jazz dance and aerobic dancing, war or no war.

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