

# Tax dispute over IU first surfaced in '23

In the winter of 1923 among the stories that rated front-page display in Bloomington newspapers was the controversy over levying property taxes on Indiana University fraternity and sorority houses.

An earlier bill in the Indiana General Assembly had granted tax-free status to the groups in the days when IU was not providing much, if any, housing. According to an article in the Bloomington Daily

## Looking Back

By Rose H. McIlveen

Telephone of Jan. 26, 1923, the rationale for the favored status was that it was "a help to education."

The newspaper article reported that State Representative F. W. G. Johnson (of Monroe County) had introduced a bill that would cancel out the tax-free status. Said the Telephone, "but the word from Indianapolis is that the measure would have hard sledding as the fraternities have many friends in the legislature."

**ENLISTING THE ASSISTANCE** of Monroe County Auditor Horace Blakely, Rep. Johnson announced that taxation for fraternity and sorority — estimated at worth \$300,000 to \$400,000 — would bring the county some \$20,000. In comparison with other taxable entities in the community, the auditor revealed that the Monon (railroad) paid the highest, \$66,000, and Showers factory second highest at \$30,000.

To reinforce his argument that the taxation was popular among his constituents, Rep. Johnson claimed on Feb. 2 that "95 percent of the farmers are in favor of the bill." A few days earlier, Auditor Blakely had said that the tax would encourage the building of rooming houses.

**REP. ALBERT B. CLAPP** of Clark County, a Beta Theta Pi, introduced a bill of his own which provided for, of all things, the moving of Indiana University to Indianapolis and combining it with Butler College. Commented Clapp, a Hanover College alumnus, "Monroe County is showing undue hostility to the Greek letter fraternity."

The Telephone joyfully re-printed a sarcastic (Back page, col. 7, this sec.)