

Bloomers rule creates IU uproar

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dropped.

But the *World* suspected that some of the coeds were not exactly thrilled with the dean's Victorian paternalism. Continued the newspaper, "... an interview by the writer with a number of coeds proves that the rule is unpopular for a number of reasons."

The objections were very basic. Explained the *World*, the most popular argument against the decree seemed to be that when women enter a University they are old enough, or should be to take care of themselves and know what kind of clothes to wear. Another argument was, it has been tried several times, but has failed."

In the 1928 IU yearbook, the

Arbutus, there is a kind of job description for the assistant dean of women — one that gave her a great deal of power over the coeds. Wrote the woman who worked with Wells, "As assistant dean of women, I take care of personnel cards for each girl. At graduation, these cards show what the girl has stood for on the campus ... This information is valuable to the dean of women while the girls remain in college, and is of great assistance to her in recommending them to positions after graduation."

In doing research about the flap over the bloomer decree, the *World* reporter had found some interesting information on the subject. "A statement recently issued by an English physician, well versed in his profession, points out that scantily dressed women are healthier than those who wear too many

clothes, which shatters any talk of warmer dress for the coeds."

Obviously, the IU dean did not subscribe to English medical journals, and would have retorted that the contradictory opinion was probably written by a male doctor, anyway. Wells may have had a kind heart, but her *Arbutus* photograph conveys no mercy and no flexibility.

That she and her Victorian outlook were fighting a losing battle, is reflected in Thomas Clark's book *Indiana University: Midwest Pioneer*. "The deans of men and women could cry out in anguish at the lowering of moral standards, but the open car, the rumble seat and the speakeasy, and then the return of the open liquor bar and free sale of alcohol widened the breach."

It is likely that bloomers were the least of the dean's worries.