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Memorandum for Chancellor Williams on ODK-Mortar Board Forums for 1953-54

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January 26, 1954

Memorandum for Chancellor Williams on ODK-Mortar Board Forums for 1953-54.

The Forum Committee for this year has been composed of four faculty members (three from Liberal Arts and one from the School of Law) and eight students (five from School of Law).

Its procedure began last spring when the committee agreed to approach some fifty prominent Americans as possible forum leaders. Every single one had the unanimous approval of the committee members who agreed that there should be a well-rounded program, with many points of view, presented to the student body and faculty.

The following make an almost-complete list of people who were approached by members of the committee: Inez Robb, James Reston, Sir Archibald Gordon, Harry Ashmore, Elmer Davis, Fred Sullens, Thomas Finletter, Harry Truman, Claude Bowers, Averill Harriman, Paul Hoffman, Omar Bradley, Robert Taft, Walter Reuther, Paul Douglas, Howard K. Smith, Dean Acheson, Learned Hand, General Van Fleet, Senator Vandenburg, Col. McCormack, Senator McCarthy, Senator Fulbright, Senator Kennedy, Pearl Mesta, Alistair Cooke, Jacob Potofsky, former Secretary Lovett, Senator Russell, Adlai Stevenson, and Mrs. Hobby.

As might well be expected, most of the people the committee approached could not come, for one reason or another.

Various members of the committee tried in every way possible to get an outstanding Republican leader to come to the campus for a forum. George Klepper in particular, through his father who is an outstanding Republican in West Tennessee, worked on this. Up till now we have had no luck but we may get the type person we want before the school year is out.

In view of the prominence of the Tennessee Valley Authority question, the committee had tried to arrange a debate between persons holding different views. As a part of this potential program, the committee approached J. Hamilton Moses (as it had for several previous years) to see if he would come to the campus. Others approached on this problem have been Governor Clement and Senator Gore.

In view of the every increasing importance of industrial labor relations in the state of Mississippi, there has been an effort in recent years to present to the student body speakers who are informed on both sides of this question. Last spring the committee decided to try to get Jacob Potofsky to come to the campus and he agreed to come this year. The only date that he could be with us, however, is on February 1, during registration, so he will not address a regular forum. He will talk to the Men's Faculty Club and to some twenty-five students on the afternoon of February 1st. These students are advanced in almost every case, students who are taking courses in labor history and labor law.

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The enclosed sheet will give anyone an idea as to what the committee has tried to do and is trying to do in these forums. Fred Sullens thought enough of this information to print it verbatim as an editorial in the Jackson Daily News in November, 1953.

It should be emphasized that there never has been a forum conducted by ODK in which there has not been a lively debate. Students have proven time and again that they are able to take care of themselves and the more extreme a speaker has been the more opposition has come from the audience. This audience is not a captive one. No student is ever made to go to a forum though the caliber of speakers has been so high that the average attendance this year has been approximately six hundred.

The speakers who have appeared on these forums this year are: Inez Robb, Eddy Gilmore, Hanson Baldwin, Claude Bowers, and Alfred Robens, former British cabinet member. Mr. Potofsky was to have appeared on a forum in the spring but he will not do so, as explained above. Mr. Farmer, the chairman of the National Labor Relations Board, is expected to be a forum speaker in the spring. Among others the committee hopes to bring are 1) a highly placed Republican in the present administration, 2) Senator Kennedy from Massachusetts, 3) two people to debate the TVA issue, and 4) a panel of perhaps four informed people to discuss the segregation-school issue in Mississippi.

Over the years, the forum committee has brought to the campus a bona fide labor leader about once every two years. The last labor leader brought here was Clinton S. Golden, brought in December, 1952; Mr. Golden at the present time is a member of the faculty of the Graduate School of Business of Harvard University.

This memorandum is not in the order you requested but it should give some idea as to how the forum committee proceeds. The only purpose of the forums in the fourteen years of their existence has been to stimulate interest among students and faculty in problems confronting the State, the Nation, and the World. The committee has done its level best, with its meager resources and the reluctance of many individuals (particularly business men) to come to the campus, to present a balanced program. Members of the committee feel strongly that they have worked hard and that they have done an excellent job in stimulating intellectual activity at the University of Mississippi. Their assumption all along has been, of course, that students and faculty are adults who are capable of thinking and of making up their own minds.

Sincerely,

James W. Silver
faculty adviser to the committee