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Record of Deans' Meeting

University of Tennessee - Knoxville

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Deans met in the office of Dean Hoskins on June 29th at 10:15 A.M. The following Deans were present: Porter, McDermott, Willson, Ferris and Hoskins. This meeting was called for the purpose of considering recommendations concerning the retention of certain members of the University faculty. Two previous meetings of these Deans had been held within the two weeks preceding. After careful deliberation it was unanimously decided that the following members of the Faculty be not recommended for reappointment:

Doctor A.A. Schaeffer, Professor Zoology
Doctor R.S. Ellis, Professor of Psychology and Philosophy
Doctor R.S. Radford, Professor of Latin and Roman Archaeology
Professor Maurice Mulvania, Dean of the Premedical Course and Associate Professor of Bacteriology.

From time to time changes are made in the University faculty. These changes are made on the recommendation, first of the Head of the Department, to the Dean of the College concerned, the Dean of the College transmits this recommendation to the Dean of the University, and if these three agree the Dean of the University transmits the recommendation to the President. It became necessary about April 1st for the Head of the Department of Education and the Dean of the University to notify Dr. Jesse William Sprowls, Professor of Secondary Education, that he would not be recommended for reappointment for the reason that Dr. Sprowls was not adapted to the field work of his department and had failed to get satisfactory results in that work. After two and one-half years of trial it was clearly demonstrated that Dr. Sprowls was not the man for the position. Hence the recommendation that he be not reappointed.

Following this announcement to Dr. Sprowls, the University began to be disturbed by the activities of certain members of the faculty in opposition to the Sprowls case. This disturbance grew and became more disquieting as time advanced. Some of the students became inflamed and an anonymous paper entitled "The Truth" was issued. Some of the Professors actively engaged in agitation and urged an investigation by the Association of American University Professors by writing to the Committee on Academic Freedom and Tenure. The disturbance was augmented by violent attacks made against the administration of the University through the columns of a local newspaper. This general disturbance continued until it became necessary for the Administration to enter into an investigation. This investigation, begun about the middle of June, was conducted by Dean Hoskins in the presence of Dean Porter and the questions and answers were taken in shorthand. The evidence was presented to the Deans and after thorough and careful consideration of the typewritten evidence and of evidence given by other professors besides the ones involved it was
Dr. Jesse William Sprowls was employed by the University of Tennessee as Professor of Secondary Education about the close of the first term of the session 1920-21. A very important part of the duties of this position is the field work including the visiting of schools in the State. The Professor of Secondary Education should through visitation and inspection strengthen the relationship between the University and the schools of the State, especially the high schools. He should assist in promoting the efficiency and standards of the public high schools since this is of such vital importance to the entire system of elementary schools. By a demonstration extending through two and one-half years Dr. Sprowls proved conclusively that he was not adapted to this work.

He presented no feasible plans for the promotion of Secondary Education, nor did he report the results of his visits by giving estimates of the schools visited. His haphazard methods brought no specific information suitable for intelligent planning and promotion on the part of the University. He made no constructive suggestions for the strengthening of the relations between the University and the public secondary and elementary schools. His failure, therefore, to meet the requirements of this position imposed upon the Head of the Department of Education, Dr. Thackston, the duty of recommending a change.

Dr. Thackston informed the Dean of the University of the situation. After careful consideration it was decided that Dr. Sprowls should be called to the Dean's Office and notified by Dr. Thackston that he would not be recommended for reappointment because he was not adapted to the field work and had failed in getting satisfactory results as hereinbefore explained.

This notification was given to Dr. Sprowls on or about April 1st. He left the Dean's Office and immediately began an agitation of protest, questioned the authority of the administration to notify him that a change would be recommended, sought legal advice and assistance and gave the impression that he had been dismissed from the faculty in violation of Academic freedom. He did not confine his agitation to the faculty, but he extended it to students and to the public.