

May 15, 1998
5:30 pm Gold Room
Catt Committee Meeting Minutes

In attendance:

Blue Maas
Judd Penny
Jose Amaya
Elisa Strachan
Virginia Allen
Mary Quinnell
Lynn Wellnitz
Pat Hulsey
Dan Pasker
Jan Beran
Linda Cottingham
Anthony Bateza

Absent:

Matt Ostanik
Alicia Kaiser
Pam Thomas

Public Attendees:

David Clatterbuck
Jason Rivera
Milton McGriff
Simon Huss
Allan Nosworthy,

I. Dan called the meeting to order and distributed Agenda.

II. Officer's Reports

Dan explained that Matt was absent. Also that the ISU Library's Special Collections Department has agreed to put the Committee's documentation in their department for public review but that they are only open during regular business hours. Dan stated that he and Matt are trying to make arrangements to have the materials put on reserve at the Library's Reserve Department because of greater accessibility to the public.

III. Sub-committee Reports

Naming Process Sub-committee had not yet met. Will have a report at the next meeting, Friday June 12, 5:30 p.m.

IV. Special Orders

A. Submission of Position Papers on Catt's "Objections to the Federal Amendment." Papers distributed by Lynn Wellnitz and Virginia Allen. Jane Cox gave verbal presentation with promise to distribute a written version via e-mail to the committee.

B. Claims/Statements on Chapter VI

1. Lynn Wellnitz: Discussed Suzanne's Lebsock's essay as a helpful framework because Lebsock identifies suffragist rhetoric which pandered to white supremacist ideology. There is no disavowal of white supremacy in "Objections." The way in which Catt used the term "white supremacy" in her arguments made white supremacy sound like a good thing. As a package, "Objections" argued for the Federal Amendment by assuring southern racists that white supremacy would continue and in fact would be strengthened by woman suffrage.

2. Virginia Allen: Discusses handout entitled "Equivocation inside and ad hoc structure." Some phrases sound natural; some don't. As an example, put the thing you find most reprehensible into the phrase "Female suffrage will guarantee _white supremacy_ if it should ever be in danger." An example is "This amendment will guarantee the _free practice of prostitution_ if it should ever be in danger."

3. Jane Cox: "Objections" was a response to Tucker's published assertions against woman suffrage. While reading historical documents, Jane has found lots of really racist things. Suffragists responded in varying ways, from not at all, moderate approaches, and overt racism. Catt's rhetoric was phrased in a way that her audience would understand. According to Catt, fear of female supremacy was the main fear. As an example of Catt's arguing that it would be humiliating for southern women to appeal to black voters to elevate them to their own political position, Jane Cox used the example of the humiliation some faculty might have appealing to a bad department chair.

Jane also told how Catt believed in educated voters vs. illiterate voters, regardless of race. She was an advocate of education. Catt saw lots of corruption at the polls, people buying and selling votes, and that affected her vision of an educated electorate.

Lynn questioned whether fear of female supremacy was indeed the main

fear addressed in Chapter 6. Catt's address of female supremacy was just an aside whereas white supremacy was given its own section and much more coverage.

Regarding the phrasing about Catt's identifying two choices of the south enfranchising its women (1, by federal amendment or 2, by humiliating its women by having them appeal to voting blacks at the state level), Jane argued that one of the choices was made to sound offensive so that the other choice would clearly be identified as preferable.

For example, on a hot summer day a mother would tell her child "you can either wear a short sleeved shirt (federal amendment) or you can wear a long-sleeved short with buttons (state's rights)" with the inference that the latter choice would be very uncomfortable.

Virginia responded that you can give two choices that EXCLUDE the _really_ offensive one.

Such as:

Wearing a shirt on a hot summer day = enfranchising women.

Long-sleeved shirt with buttons (states' rights); light T-shirt (federal amendment). This way of laying out the choices presupposes that

the kid WILL wear a shirt, as Catt presupposes that women WILL be enfranchised eventually.

4. Jose Amaya: Questions to whom Catt was referring when she referred to white women. Notes that Catt referred to "negro women" when talking about Black women. Jane Cox contributed that Catt was talking about black women when she used the term "negro women" but all women when she used the term "women" by itself. Also, Jane asserted that Catt was referring to all women in her argument about southern women being put in the humiliating position of appealing to voting black men. Even though Catt talked about southern women of a certain class, Jane pointed out that Mary Church Terrell was a black woman from an elite family. Lynn questioned how many black women would have been in that class. Jane acknowledged not that many. Jose also talked about the construction of race in "Objections." Did Catt internalize white male culture? Finds argument problematic because it has innate form of cultural racism.

5. Judd Penny: What Catt said is unclear. Motion to draft arguments that have been asserted tonight into a written format. Seconded. Lynn volunteered to draft arguments for review and revisions.

6. Elisa Strachan: Discussed the confusion over the issue of states rights vs. federal amendment in "Objections."

7. Blue Maas: Felt that Catt was not respecting the word, human, in her writings/speeches. Catt's perception that was reflected in writings/speeches may be that of perceiving others as beast - like instead of human and, therefore, unworthy of certain things -- such as the Vote -- may have been subtle, since that sentiment even in times past could not have been politically correct -- but, nonetheless, may have 'been there' in her and others' work anyhow.

Lynn Wellnitz: On discussion about "arguments" formulated for the "Objections" reading, stated she felt that Jane's argument was (1) because Catt was responding to a racist argument, her text in "Objections" needs to be considered in that context and (2) there were lots of racist people in Catt's era, many more racist than Catt; therefore the text in "Objections" needs to be considered in that context. Interpreted Jane's comments to infer that there is some sort of spectrum of racism and Catt was not as racist as other people.

Linda Cottingham: Wants to know if the committee is going to look at everything Beardshear and other men who have ISU buildings named after them to determine whether they were racist. Wants to know why Catt is being held to a different standard. Thinks the Committee needs to focus on this issue and look at the things the other people said.

Anthony Bateza: Explained issues of exclusion that took place during the naming process of Catt Hall and why the Catt Hall controversy is a complicated topic.

Jose Amaya: Suggested we need to determine whether or not the civil rights of persons, citizens of the state of Iowa, people in our community, were violated during the naming process. This is an important issue. If we find that the rights of persons were violated, then questioned whether or not the committee could proceed with a recommendation for Catt's name to be removed from the building.

Elisa Strachan: Explained the Committee's mission statement and guidelines, specifically stating that we are charged with only looking at issues relevant to Catt Hall and not other buildings on campus.

Lynn Wellnitz: One difference is that we are looking at the issues surrounding the Catt Hall controversy. Also, another difference is that Catt Hall was named during a time of professed commitments to diversity and in the name of "equality" and not during a time when nonmajority persons didn't even have a voice on this campus.

Judd Penny: Discussion about time limit on meetings; it's getting late. Group agreed on 1-1/2 hours for future meetings.

Discussion about naming process and questions that need to be answered:

Judd Penny discussed finding out how much money Catt's family donated. Perhaps Tim Lane will volunteer this information since ISU may not release specific donor information. Jane Cox stated they are not a wealthy family by any means but they may have donated a little bit of money.

Lynn Wellnitz commented that over a year ago she had a conversation with a fund raiser who worked with the fund raising for Catt Hall. The person told Lynn that no money was raised in Catt's name and that Catt's name was not used as a fundraising tactic.

Jane Cox told the committee about a meeting that was called to specifically address the issues raised about Carrie Chapman Catt after the naming dedication. The meeting included former dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Elizabeth Hoffman; former director of the women's center Celia Naylor-Ojurongbe; Mary Ann Tetreault; Muhammed Abdullah, and Jane Cox. Jane said that no one had any comments about Catt at that meeting. Jane was asked whether she felt the staff in attendance at that meeting would have felt comfortable expressing their concerns and Jane said she didn't know why they wouldn't. In fact, the people at that meeting moved the chairs so that they could sit closer together. Lynn asked whether any primary documentation was presented for discussion or review at that meeting, and Jane said there was no documentation. Lynn noted that freedom of speech is a gray area according to Carla Espinoza as recorded in the P&S council meeting minutes. Elisa asked if there was any purpose for the meeting other than discussion, such as taking a course of action regarding the controversy. Jane said she didn't recall there being any other purpose other than discussion.

Blue Maas: Talked about her study of Gandhi and said she didn't feel he would have done what Catt did.

Jane Cox: Asked Blue if she knew how old Gandhi was when he became a pacifist.

Blue Maas: I think in his thirties.

Jane Cox: I think it was a little later than that. Questioned whether Gandhi violated the rights of his wife when he took a vow of celibacy.

Virginia Allen: Said she felt the point was that people don't need to look as far as Gandhi to find examples of people who didn't trod on the oppressed in their quest for civil rights.

Judd Penny: Suggestion that we impose a time restriction in an effort to move meetings along.

Lynn Wellnitz: Seconded. How about two minutes.

Judd Penny: No objections - two minutes agreed upon.

Virginia Allen: Wants to make sure we get a couple of minutes of discussion in about the fall forums so that we can begin planning [this didn't happen].

C. Claims/Statements on other readings of Literature Packet #1: Not done at this meeting because time was allotted and used for analysis and discussion Catt's "Objections," Chapter 6 of Woman Suffrage by Federal Constitutional Amendment.

D. Scheduling of Future Meetings. Friday, June 12, 5:30 p.m. Memorial Union - room to be announced.

V. Unfinished Business

VI. New Business: Lynn announced that she would distribute a copy of information from Thomas Hill that explains the documentation and information that President Jischke relied upon in making his decision that the naming process of Catt Hall would not be reopened. Copies will be put in the next packets for those who were not at this meeting.

VII. Announcements/Questions/Comments

Milton McGriff:

1. According to an ISU professor who attended a recent meeting between The September 29th Movement and President Jischke, Milton Glick (when interim president of ISU), would not allow Old Botany Hall to be named Catt Hall because of what he knew about her. Jane questioned whether Milton could talk about these issues, and Milton clarified that the confidentiality agreement from the meeting with President Jischke and The September 29th Movement only applied to speaking with reporters and Milton was speaking to us as a committee. Also, Milton clarified that there were no reporters or media in the room.

2. Noted that the movement's sources have said, of the \$5.1 M to renovate Old Botany, only about \$300K was in Catt's name. Another \$300-350K was generic Foundation money, the rest from the state.
3. Informed the Committee of the clause requiring secrecy in guidelines for Building and Streets Committee.
4. Asked Jane Cox to clarify her comments from a radio debate in which she suggested that Catt did not author "Objections...", Chapter 6 of Woman Suffrage by Federal Constitutional Amendment. Jane couldn't remember whether her radio debate statement about authorship was regarding the book or specifically Chapter 6, stating that Catt edited the book, Woman Suffrage by Federal Constitutional Amendment. Lynn offered that she has recently listened to a tape of that radio debate and that Jane clearly implied that Catt did not author Chapter 6, and was confused about this later when she found that Catt was identified as the author of Chapter 6 in the book's table of contents and identified as the author of a suffrage pamphlet with the same text of Chapter 6. Jane said that it was her understanding that Catt authored Chapter 6 but did "lift" some of the material from "Objections" from the "Woman's Journal."
5. Asked that the committee not lose sight of why and how controversy arose, i.e., that The September 29th Movement and President Jischke locked horns over issues because we suggested renaming because the process was flawed and exclusionary. Suggested that both President Jischke and The September 29th Movement make presentations to the committee giving our respective positions. Milton also asked whether Catt would have submitted "Objections to the Federal Amendment," to the Crisis (the official publication of the NAACP) as an argument for passing the amendment and said, "I don't think so."

Allan Nosworthy:

1. Gave a brief history of the origin of The September 29th Movement. Stated that Meron's help ceased after the pressure got too hot and heavy and that's when she turned to someone else (Allan Nosworthy) for assistance.
2. Most black people kept their mouths shut about Catt Hall because they didn't want to loose their jobs, which is what would have happened if they spoke up.
3. The question of this committee's authority came into question but

,was never answered during the meeting. Allan pointed out that this committee has no authority of any kind and certainly cannot pose anything binding to ISU administration. If there is to be any changes in that status, it is up to the committee to change it.

4. Pointed out the validity of questioning the litigation arising from the Catt Hall issue. Suggested that litigation may very well arise out of the Catt Hall controversy.