The university investigation

Perhaps the most unusual investigation in the history of American education which was begun by the state senate March 30 at the request of the board of regents ended April 9 with a report by the committee to the senate exonerating certain officers of the university of charges of irregularity.

Alva McDonald, formerly United States marshal, conducted an investigation at the university for a period of six weeks, taking statements from university employees and discharged employees. He presented each of the persons queried with an authorization from Governor Murray, stating that he was acting on behalf of the governor. Towards the close of March, and after the investigation had been in progress for six weeks, it was announced in Oklahoma City that Mr. McDonald was making the investigation.

Trunk wires of the United Press and the Associated Press carried March 26 the following prepared statement made by Governor Murray relative to the investigation Mr. McDonald had made (the United Press report is the one reproduced here):

My instruction to him was to go to the university and ascertain whether there was bootlegging of liquor, whether there was any immorality going on the campus and whether there was expenditure of money that was in violation of the law. In short, to investigate crime.

I selected McDonald because he has been United States marshal and in politics, had no democratic bias and who understands how to detect criminals from years of experience; and he got a plenty.

We found that the Oklahoma City orchestra had bought instruments that were never used at the university out of the state funds. In fact, I have a letter signed by Dean Holmberg that would convince any persons of the misuse of these funds.

I have facts of one member of the faculty who traveled in various states, Ohio, Indiana, Louisiana, Illinois, and Kansas and padded the expense account, even on simple things as railroad fares.

In one instance, where there was not a possibility of eating more than one meal, there was charged up $7.50 for food. This party knows that we know and offered McDonald to return the money, even to resign.

Many thousands of dollars has been stolen by these methods and the truth is clear and convincing.

In addition, flagrant cases of immorality exist. Certainly, I would not be doing my duty, to parents of this state, who send sons and daughters to that institution, some of whom make the complaint, did I not order an investigation to protect them, as well as to protect the expenditures of the funds of the state and I shall do this notwithstanding the honor and slander of certain newspapers who have hounded me all my public career.

Mr. Murray explained that he had hoped to keep the investigation private and take whatever action was necessary through the board of regents, by presenting to the board such evidence of alleged irregularities that the former marshal had secured. He stated further that he was not aiming the investigation at President Bizzell. "I have the highest regard for President Bizzell," Mr. Murray told the United Press. "My opinion of him is better now than when this investigation started six weeks ago. He is in no way involved in any of the wrongful conditions we found to exist."

The United Press stated: "Immorality at the university is limited and not widespread, the governor said. Both school teachers and students are involved, Murray said, but he declined to go into detail."

The story was carried on every trunk wire in the United States, and "immorality" appeared in most of the headlines, whether in St. Louis, Chicago or New York.

Person Woodall, '27 law, county attorney of Cleveland county, in which the university is located, wrote the governor a letter, asking to prosecute any charges of irregularity. His letter follows:

I noticed through the press that you have evidence in your possession that has been obtained by operates working under your direction, of violations of the criminal laws of this state, said violations purported to have been committed in Cleveland county by employes of the University of Oklahoma.

As county attorney of Cleveland I want to take this occasion to offer my office and services in the prosecution of these violations if there be any. It is my desire and hope that you will give me this information in order that I might proceed against these violators.

The governor, however, requested the board of regents to make an investigation of the evidence Mr. McDonald had found.

The board met March 27 in Oklahoma City and asked that the legislature make the investigation, since it was without funds to do so. The resolution of the regents in full text follows:

Whereas, much publicity has been given to alleged immorality and alleged misuse of state funds at the university;

Whereas, the authority of the board of regents to make an investigation is very limited;

Whereas, the board of regents has no funds with which to make an investigation;

Now, therefore, be it resolved: First, that we hereby request the legislature of the state of Oklahoma to make a complete and thorough investigation of all such charges and rumors, or any other matter pertaining to the state university that the legislature may see fit to investigate; and that this investigation be made before the adjournment of the present legislature so that these charges, or the facts relating thereto, may be definitely determined.

Second, that the president of the board of regents be authorized and directed to present a copy of this resolution to the presiding officer of each house of the legislature, and to the governor of the state of Oklahoma.

On March 28, in pursuance to the request of the regents, Lieutenant Governor Burns, so authorized by the state senate, appointed the following committee to investigate in full all of the charges, to subpoena witnesses and to make a report: W. G. "Bill" Stigler, president pro tempore of the senate, chairman, Hardin Ballard, Charles Memminger, Mack O. Williams, W. C. Fisher, T. T. Blakely and W. J. O'Brien. Mr. Stigler was unable to serve on the committee because of illness and Senator Cecil R. Chamberlain was named chairman in his stead.

On March 30, the senators began their inquiry in Oklahoma City, conducting the second hearing at Norman on March 31, the inquiry lasting until 3 o'clock in the morning. Five administrative officers were named in the report of Mr. McDonald: Walter W. Kraft, superintendent of utilities; Miss Edna McDaniel, dean of women; James R. Craven, landscape gardener; Fredrik Holmberg, dean of the college of fine arts; Emil R. Kraeitli, ex-'18, secretary of the university; and W. K. Newton, associate professor of accounting.

Mr. Kraft was alleged to have diverted certain materials belonging to the state for use in the building of his home. Miss McDaniel was alleged to have "padded" her expense accounts and to have absented herself from the university unduly.

Mr. Craven was accused of taking certain shrubs and trees from the university to his home. Dean Holmberg was charged with irregularity in the purchase of music for the university by the Oklahoma City symphony orchestra, which Mr. Holmberg directs, and in sending private telegrams at university expense, and with unduly absenting himself from the university. Mr. Kraeitli was alleged to have solicited insurance for a brother-in-law. Mr. Newton was charged with acting as auditor for various cities while an employee of the university.

Mr. Murray sent the senate committee a letter as it began its investigation requesting that the immorality charge be not investigated. The senate committee decided to investigate the charge but to do so privately. It concerned a faculty member whose name was not revealed; and no substance was attached to the charge, the matter finally being left in the hands of the president of the university.

Many witnesses were called by the committee in the eight day investigation. Mr. McDonald, the first witness called, stated that he had not been sent to Norman by the governor to investigate immorality. He had found accusations of immorality in the university into alleged "padding" of expense accounts and other administrative alleged irregularities one case of alleged immorality, he told the committee.

Mr. McDonald was represented in the long-drawn out hearings by Ben Williams of Norman. Miss McDaniel, Mr. Kraft
Dean Holmberg and Mr Craven were represented by J. B. Dudley of Oklahoma City and by John Luttrel of Norman.

On April 9, the senate committee reported that the charges against the six officers were without foundation and commented that the senate committee praised the administration of the university and recommended that internal government of the school be left to the board of regents and the president of the university.

The committee’s report in full text follows:

We, your special committee of the senate on investigation of affairs at the state university, beg leave to report that the committee has concluded the investigation, and desires to submit herewith our findings, conclusion, and recommendations. A complete record of the testimony taken in said investigation is hereto attached, made a part hereof, and filed with the secretary of the senate for the permanent records and files of the state of Oklahoma, one to the president of the university and one to the board of regents of the University of Oklahoma at Norman.

Likewise true copies of such record, together with this report, are being transmitted and delivered, one to the honorable governor of the state of Oklahoma, the thirty-eighth regent of the University of Oklahoma, and one to the board of regents of the University of Oklahoma for the permanent record and files of such officials.

We make this recommendation for the reason that insofar as this investigation is concerned any findings made by the committee are not based on evidence proffered or admitted by the defendants or on any considerations of any sort except such as came before the committee from persons who have personal knowledge of the matter in question.

Second: The report of McDonald directed certain accusations against Walter W. Kraft, who is the superintendent of utilities of the university and in such capacity is in charge of and in the supervision of the physical equipment at the university with certain supervisory powers in the construction of university buildings. The charges brought against Kraft were that in the construction of certain building material and equipment belonging to the university, and purchased by the state, and used in the same in the construction of a house of his own, which he built in Norman in 1926-27, and a garage apartment built by him in 1929, and that he had used some university labor in such construction.

A complete investigation was made of this phase and the committee finds that all the building material purchased and used by Kraft has been purchased from independent contractors engaged in the construction of various university buildings, and that he has paid such contractors for all of the material used by him and only such labor as was bought and used by agreement of Kraft with such contractors. None of this material belonged to the university and we cannot find where any university laborers who were receiving state pay were used by Kraft.

Such laborers as were used by him, and who may have been connected with the university, were paid during their university employment and they were paid independently for their work by Kraft. Kraft produced all of the evidence concerning the labor used and the services performed, and the committee deemed the same insufficient to form a definite, certain and conclusive finding in this matter. Therefore, insofar as the misuse of any university funds or the appropriation of any university material or property for his own use or benefit, we desire to absolve Kraft from all such charges.

On two occasions Kraft received something like $750 for acting in an advisory capacity for outside construction projects. One was on the student union building at Norman and the other for the city of Norman in some engineering work being done by that city. While the committee does not believe that any contract was made with the university should offer his services generally to the public for hire in private enterprise, yet since these two projects were more or less of a civic nature, and the services of Kraft were sought and rendered by him largely in such spirit, we find nothing irregular in his action in these particulars.

We, therefore, concluded this phase of the investigation with the recommendation that the same be referred to the president of the university for their investigation and action, and your committee now so recommends.

We make this recommendation for the reason that the charges brought before the committee by McDonald were not in any way connected with the official and activities of Kraft or any other defendants of the committee. The testimony which was brought before the committee by McDonald was received. The testimony which was brought before the committee by McDonald was then and without making record of the testimony then and there received.

Third: The report of McDonald called attention to the matter of some university employees working under him. Mr Craven operates a private nursery just outside of Norman at his home, which is conducted largely by his wife and hired employees paid by Craven.

There was a great deal of testimony to the effect that Craven had taken quite a few trees and some shrubbery from the university grounds, be-
longing to the university, and planted the same at his own home and other yards and homes of Norman and Oklahoma City, and collected money for his own use and benefit. On several occasions Craven took trees belonging to the university to his own place, and there was testimony to the effect that on some of these occasions he used university laborers on university time.

While the committee is of the opinion that no official connected with the university should at any time or in any way take any property of the university, or any property belonging to the university, or any character of university laborers, who are paid by the state for the service of the university, and who are under instruction from the state board of agriculture to the effect that any outworn, obsolete, or discarded property belonging to the university, and each and every expense made by any person or persons acting for the university in that it places at its disposal music purchased by the Oklahoma City symphony orchestra. It did not reveal that he had used any university time for this purpose, and it is to have the witnesses reveal the contents of their statements to McDonald. If the committee does not have before it, the use of the university time for this purpose is in line with the university functions and duties, in a similar manner as if he were working with the other schools of the state, which practice we have herein before condemned. The remuneration received by Holmberg in this capacity would not normally be in excess of the practice of the Oklahoma City organization and the university organization. We feel that this activity on behalf of Holmberg is in line with his university functions and duties, in a similar manner as if he were working with the other schools of the state, which practice we have herein before condemned. The remuneration received by Holmberg in this capacity would not normally be in excess of the practice of the Oklahoma City organization and the university organization.

Fifth: Mention was made in the report of E. R. Kraettli, secretary of the president of the university, and a careful check of this matter was made by A. D. Kemp, assistant treasurer and auditor of the university. A careful check of the various expenses incurred by Holmberg is in line with the university functions and duties for the convenience of the telephone and for the end of each month. It was observed that the work done by Holmberg is in line with his university functions and duties, in a similar manner as if he were working with the other schools of the state, which practice we have herein before condemned. The remuneration received by Holmberg in this capacity would not normally be in excess of the practice of the Oklahoma City organization and the university organization.

Sixth: The last official covered by the report of McDonald is Fredrik Holmberg, who is dean of the college of fine arts. The testimony revealed that Holmberg is a director of the Oklahoma City symphony orchestra of Oklahoma City, composed of various musicians in and around Oklahoma City, including some of the faculty members of the university college of fine arts and some of the students of the college of fine arts. The university symphony orchestra acquires the music through purchase by state funds for the purpose of playing it for public entertainment. Likewise, the Oklahoma City symphony orchestra purchases music out of its own private funds. A practice has grown up between the two organizations whereby music purchased by one in order that the other may have it, and for the convenience of the telephone and for the end of each month. It was observed that the work done by Holmberg is in line with his university functions and duties, in a similar manner as if he were working with the other schools of the state, which practice we have herein before condemned. The remuneration received by Holmberg in this capacity would not normally be in excess of the practice of the Oklahoma City organization and the university organization.

Lastly: At various stages in the investigation, inferences were drawn and statements made that some of the witnesses connected with the university, or to have the witnesses reveal the contents of their statements to McDonald in an attempt to force a change in their testimony, or to have the witnesses reveal the contents of the statements to McDonald. Some of the witnesses did testify that Kraft and Craven had used abusive terms concerning the testimony or their statements, and had threatened (Turn to Page 304 Please)
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to discharge them on a basis of such statement. Some of these instances revealed that the witnesses, testifying to such threats, had been dis- contented for sometime, while others apparently had been in accord with no such dis- content or prejudice. Kraft and Craven testified that they had talked with a number of persons whom they understood had given statements and had tendered to explain the nature and contents of such statements and had admonished them to tell the facts about the various matters. They denied, however, that they had threatened to discharge any of such persons or had used any form of abuse or coercion in an attempt to affect a change in their testimony. In one particular instance a witness made a statement to Mr. McDonald to the effect that he had done certain work for Kraft on state's time. Thereafter Kraft produced and exhibited to him the check with which he had paid the witness for the work and the witness recalled that Kraft had paid him out of his private funds for this employment and that his former statement was incorrect in that regard. In another instance a witness recalled that Kraft had paid him on the record. All of these things considered in the light of the entire testimony, the committee is un- able to state that any attempt of force or coercion was made by any of the parties concerned in the investigation on any of the witnesses. It is pos- sible that any conversation had with any such witness would be material with a view of as- certaining the contents of such statements made to McDonald by them might be considered by such witnesses as an unwarranted attempt to have them reveal the testimony which they expected to give, while at the same time the sole purpose of such questioning by such officials might have been with an honest intention to ascertain what the witnesses actually knew.

We do find that a number of the witnesses must be taken from the facts set forth in the record. All parties concerned in this investigation, in- cluding Mr. McDonald, were represented at all times by able counsel, and it is the desire of the committee that such counsel be thanked by this committee for the aid and assistance given in this investigation and the fair manner in which they conducted their part of the same. On a basis of statements which Mr. McDonald received, we cannot say that his report and conclusions, or the conclusion of any other persons from a reading thereof were without foundation. As Mr. McDonald has stated repeatedly his investigation was not ended when this investigation by the senate committee began, and, coincided with his investigation, a satisfactory conclusion is possible that he would have reached the same conclusion which was reached by the committee and con- cluded that all the testimony and evidence brought before the committee.

We desire to state that Dr. W. B. Bizzell, the president of the University of Oklahoma, has shown a complete willingness to cooperate in this investigation and it has been his purpose to arrive at the true facts covering all phases of the same. He has been present at all the sessions of the committee and has advised and counseled with the committee and the individual members thereof. We desire to thank the president of the university for his co-operation with the com- mittee.

Conclusion: As a brief summary of the record consisting of 1,508 pages of testimony and exhibits, your committee finds that the charge of flagrant cases of immorality and the misuse of thousands of dollars of state funds is not substantiated in fact.

We further find that the administration of affairs at the university is in the hands of officials who are competent and who are sincerely and honestly devoted to the true purpose of higher education. We, therefore, recommend that the supervision and guidance of the university affairs be left to the board of regents and president of the university, free from interference. Without further findings and conclusions, your committee recommends that the report submitted herewith be adopted by the senate and the com- mittee discharged.

National Geologists' President

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States." His doctor's thesis on Studies in Minor Folds was published as a book by the University of Chicago Press in 1920. Collaborating with C. A. Merritt he wrote a bulletin for the Oklahoma geological survey on Physical Characteristics of the Arbuckle Limestone. His bulletin on The Simpson Group of the Arbuckle and Wichita Mountains of Oklahoma was pub- lished last year by the American Asso- ciation of Petroleum Geologists. Several of his papers were published by the Illi- nois Academy of Science and the Ok- lahoma academy.

The Oklahoma geological survey will soon publish his bulletin, The Simpson Group of the Arbuckle and Wichita Mountains, upon which C. A. Cooper and Rex McGehee are working with him. The new map will be included in the bulletin.

And so Doctor Decke works on. Hard work is his motto. He will always smile and patiently help students who come to him for assistance. Students love him. They are quick to return his courtesy. They willingly exert extra effort to do well in his classes. Most of Doctor Decker's time and energy are spent for students—but there's always time for the flowers. They keep him young.

Alumnus Leaders

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Lucia Loomis Ferguson is the sec- ond of the group born in the Indian Territory, Choctaw nation, at old Boggy Depot. Little can be said of opportunities in that section for a white child of that period, except that there were few distractions, no recreations—but a whole world of time to think and read.

This is what Mrs. Ferguson did—be- came an inverterate reader, which habit has grown stronger, if anything. She took her high school work in a convent in Texas; then she majored in music at Hardin College, Missouri, and received her degree in music from the University of Oklahoma in 1908.

If work can be made better by love, then the work of Frances Smith Catron, '26 arts-sc., has been refined many de- grees by her love for music, and therein lies the secret of her success. This year marks the silver anniversary of her com- ing to Ponca City to become director of music in the city schools.

Mrs. Catron is nationally known in mu- sical circles, being president of the South- western supervisors conference, and a member of the board of national federation of music clubs.

She is solicitous for the advancement of her pupils and the expansion of music into every grade paid for until her death. She went to her work in music to Oklaho- mans, not only in its vocational aspects, but for its culture and as a means of ex- pression and achievement. Mrs. Catron was one of the organizers of the state federated music clubs, and later became president of the organization when choral music was made the goal for every high school in Oklahoma.

Largely through her influence, contests in group singing have been made a part of the annual interscholastic meets.

Born in Linneus, Missouri, Mrs. Catron received her early education in the public schools there. Later, she was graduated from Central college, Lexington, Mo., in piano, voice and dramatic art. She has also studied in New York, Chicago, and the University of California. In 1926 she took a bachelor's degree from the University of Oklahoma.

Mrs. Catron has been influential in de- veloping the music department of the Ponca City schools into one of the best small systems in the United States, hav- ing ten assistants in the department, with Mrs. Catron as director.

Students from the school have taken part on outstanding musical programs, state and national.

So much for work she has already done. As for work now in progress, her every- day program would tax the endurance of half a dozen women—until her friends ask "How do you accomplish so much?"

Possessed of a happy philosophy of life, she rejoices in her work and secures her greatest relaxation through it. She has traveled and studied extensively. In the summer of 1929, she represented the United States at the first Anglo-American conference of music supervisors held in Lausanne, Switzerland.

Mrs. Catron has one son who also at- tended the university. Her husband died a number of years ago.

The promotion of music in the public schools of the state has brought apprecia- tions from hosts of music lovers to Mrs. Catron.

Through work, worlds of it, each of these women has contributed her part