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Interview with Professor M. Mulvania Questioned by Dean Hoskins

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University of Tennessee - Knoxville

Dean Hoskins
University of Tennessee - Knoxville

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In Re (Summary Of Testimony Offered By this Member Of
Prof. M. Mulvania (The University of Tennessee Faculty.
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This member of the University Faculty, upon being examined by Dean Hoskins, made the following material statements:

1. He wrote two letters to President Morgan as a result of listening to the dissatisfaction expressed by students and the following named members of the Faculty "Hesler, Schaeffer, Jennison and Jacobson." (p. 1, 2.)
2. He states that President Morgan asked him to get suggestions as to what might help the situation and submit them in writing (p.2).
3. But he admits that President Morgan did not authorize him to make a survey for suggestions and that the newspaper report stating that he was so authorized was incorrect. (p. 2)
4. He emphatically denies having told members of the Faculty that the President had sent him around for suggestions. (p.3).
5. He gave to a newspaper reporter the names of those members of the Faculty with whom he had discussed the so-called "Suggestions." (p.6).
6. He did not give the newspapers the contents of his third letter to the President but did talk about it freely, and later learned that Dr. Schaeffer gave out this information (p.3, 4.)
7. He claims that all that he did was in a "spirit of being helpful not hostile", and that President Morgan accepted his offer to help work out "some definite statement as to where our functions lie", and said "let's do it-- go ahead." (p13).

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INTERVIEW WITH PROFESSOR M. MULVANIA
June 21, 1923.
QUESTIONED BY DEAN HOSKINS.

Q. Professor, I asked you to come to my office for a conference concerning the difficulty that we have had here at the University recently and I would like to ask you a few questions about it. You wrote a letter on May 26th to President Morgan offering some suggestions with regard to the organization of the University?

A. Yes.

Q. Who originated this idea, Professor?

A. There is a letter preceding that. That is the second letter.

Q. Yes, here is one of April 18th?

A. Are you asking me who originated that idea?

Q. Yes?

A. That is my own entirely.

Q. Had you conversed with members of the faculty about it before you wrote the letter of April 18?

A. Yes about that letter. Of course there was general talk but not concerning anything in that letter.

Q. Did anybody suggest to you that you write the letter to the President?

A. No.

Q. Now in this letter you say "In view of the conditions now existing in the University." Will you explain, please, what the conditions were?

A. I had in mind the disturbance among the students, of the issuing of that little sheet and general talk about the University.

Q. Did you know anything about that publication?

A. What do you mean? I saw it and read it, yes.

Q. That was all you knew about it?

A. Yes sir.

Q. In this letter you say that you are convinced that the present display of antagonism is the culmination of a dissatisfaction

which had grown out of a series of misunderstandings.

Q. What convinced you of that?

A. Well, I don't know that I can answer that directly. Just the general impression I got from the talk that was going about. I heard students talking. I listened to students and faculty members.

Q. What faculty members did you hear talking about it?

A. I have heard a good many.

Q. Name some of them.

A. Well Hesler and all of the men at Merrill Hall except Professor Bentley.

Q. Who were the men there?

A. Hesler, Schaeffer, Jennison and Jacobson. I have to say that statement was on conjecture rather than definite information.

Q. After writing that letter of April 18th you had a conference with President Morgan did you not?

A. Yes sir.

Q. What did President Morgan tell you to do at that conference?

A. He first said "What is wanted", and I said I don't know.

As far as I am concerned I don't want anything. My ambition is to be helpful. He said "What is to be done?" I then said "Well I don't know what is to be done." I said there are some suggestions that might be made. and he asked me to get them together and write them to him in a letter- the suggestions as to what might be done to help.

Q. Did he authorize you to make a survey in order to get these suggestions?

A. No.

Q. Then the statement that was made in the newspapers to that effect was not correct?

A. No.

Q. You proceeded on your own initiative then to call upon the various members of the faculty for suggestions?

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A. Yes sir. He told me to write them out- the suggestions- and I explained to him that my suggestions individually might not be worth very much and that as far as the conversation went there and I took it upon myself to go to the various individuals. I think I mentioned the fact that I was doing so when I talked to you. I was doing it openly, going about it without any secrecy whatever- explaining my ambition and explaining exactly what the President had said.

Q. Did you tell any members of the faculty that the President had requested you to get suggestions from them?

A. No. Let me say this before you go on: When I went to the men I ~~and~~ explained to them that the President was in a very favorable mood and said get suggestions and write them to me, but not that he had authorized me to come to them. The President received my first letter very kindly and I understood that he was going about it with the view that it was to be helpful rather than anything else.

Q. After you conferred with the different Professors you then drew up this letter dated May 26th?

A. Yes sir.

Q. No one man subscribed to all of these suggestions?

A. No one subscribed to that, absolutely no man. That is a Heterogenous mass of suggestions picked up here and there.

Q. Did you submit this letter after you had drawn it up to any of the professors that you had conferred with. I mean did you submit this letter as a whole before you sent it to the President?

A. No sir nobody saw that until it was in the President's office.

Q. You did not give a copy of this letter to any member of the faculty?

A. Absolutely not.

Q. How did the Knoxville News get this information?

A. Well the information itself was pretty generally talked. I talked it with every member- the suggestions certain individuals had made-- this and this and this. Where they got the news I absolutely don't know.

After I had written the third letter- when I wrote the third letter- I knew absolutely nothing of where that information came from. Since that ~~time~~ time I have a pretty good idea.

Q. Will you give us that.

A. I will if you say so. Let me tell this part of it. I knew nothing about this material that was in the paper- this came out in the News on Friday evening and in the Journal and Tribune on Saturday morning. On Saturday morning the Journal and Tribune came out with something different. I knew nothing about that until Saturday afternoon at faculty meeting and some of the men said it had gotten into the newspapers. I immediately explained to the President that I did not do anything about putting it in the papers and he asked me to write the third letter. Since the third letter was written the News man came to my office and he said that Dr. Schaeffer had given him the information. I said we haven't anything-- I said we are working for uplift- it is a family affair and I have not a thing for you. He said who did you talk with and I said the faculty. He, of course, wanted to see the letter and I said "We are giving out nothing at all. He went away and later came back and said he got the information from Schaeffer and I said where did it come from in the Journal and Tribune and he said "They copied it from our paper"

Q. But it was not the same thing. Where did that come from?

A. I know nothing about it.

Q. You read the article as given by the news did you?

A. I did on Saturday afternoon after seeing the President.

Q. That tallied pretty well with the letter didn't it?

A. Yes, had very much of the same information but I can easily understand how that could be because I talked with a good many of the men quite freely about it.

Q. You never had given a copy of the letter nor had you shown a copy of it to Dr. Schaeffer before it came to the President?

A. Oh no.

Q. Did you show him a copy after it came from the President?

A. Yes.

Q. Give him a copy of it?

A. No.

Q. Did you show it to any others after you came from the President?

A. Yes I did.

Q. Why did you do that, Professor?

A. Well that is pretty hard to answer. I don't think I had any purpose at all.

Q. How many copies did you make of it?

A. I just had that one and the one I have. I wrote it myself.

Q. Did the News representative who told you that Dr. Schaeffer gave him the contents of this letter tell you that Dr. Schaeffer gave him the names that he published in this paper?

A. No sir, he did not.

Q. From whom did he get those names?

A. I suppose he got them from the catalogue. He had a catalogue-- that is not authentic. He had names I did not see the names.

Q. Let me read them over and you tell me the ones you did not see, please?

A. All right.

Q. Dr. John R. Neal, Dr. L. R. Hesler, Dr. C. H. Gordon, Prof. C. E. Ferris, Dr. C. D. Sherbakoff, Prof. N. E. Fitzgerald, Dr. A. M. Withers, Prof. R. B. Lowry, Miss Josephine Reddish, Dr. Asa A. Schaeffer, Dr. J. C. Hodges, Dr. R. S. Radford, Prof. J. B. Hamilton, Prof. R. C. Matthews, Prof. J. A. Switzer, Dr. David R. Lee, Prof. Charles O. Hill, Dr. S. T. Moreland, Dr. R. S. Ellis, Dr. G. T. Wilhelm, Prof. C. E. Wylie, Prof. O. W. Dynes, Dr. J. H. Robertson, Dr. J. Jennison, Prof. S. H. Essary, Prof. J. A. McClintock?

A. All of them except Professor R. C. Mathews. I talked with the following three persons at the same time: Miss Josephine Reddish, Dr. J. C. Hodges and Professor John B. Hamilton. I talked with Professor Hamilton twice.

Q. Did you talk to S. T. Moreland after the letter had been sent in to the President?

A. Yes.

Q. Is it true that the newspaper reporter came to your office and took up the catalogue and went over the names in the catalogue and checked them off as you listened to them?

A. He was going over and asked me if I talked to this and this and I said yes.

Q. All of them?

A. No, no. There are some men that I talked to that are not there at all.

Q. Do you remember who they were?

A. I know Dougherty was one.

Q. Do you remember any others?

A. I don't believe I do. I went a couple of times to the farm to talk to the men out there. I talked to Peacock and his name is not on this list.

Q. Professor did you attend any meetings that were held to discuss the case of Dr. Sprowls?

A. You mean Dr. Radford and those fellows had over here--
No.

Q. Did you attend any meetings held at Dr. Schaeffer's house?

A. No, I have not been in Dr. Schaeffer's house for two years.

Q. Were you invited by him to attend any of those meetings at his house?

A. I think one.

Q. What did he say was the object of that meeting?

A. I don't know that he told me. I am not quite clear-- he called ~~me~~ me over the phone and did not get me and then talked later.

I am not quite clear what.

Q. What day of the week was that meeting to be held?

A. I could not tell you.

Q. He told you the object of the meeting?

A. I think he told me something.

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Q. Did it have reference to Dr. Sprowls' case?

A. I don't think it did.

Q. Did it have reference to an investigation by the American College Professors Association?

A. Well I don't think he mentioned an investigation. It was connected with that in some sort of way.

Q. Did he say anything to you about the publicity of all of this?

A. Oh yes, he talked about that.

Q. What did he say about it?

A. He talked of the injury that would be done to the University by all of the publicity in connection with student activities and in connection with the dismissal of Sprowls and in connection with evolution and all that kind of thing. We all talked about that. The impression got out because ^{of} Dr. Sprowls dismissal -- because of the teaching of evolution. Of course we all know that was not the cause.

Q. Did Dr. Schaeffer mention to you his giving any information to the News?

A. You mean in regard to this here?

Q. With regard to any of it?

A. No, he went away the day this paper was printed.

Q. Do you know what his address is now?

A. No I don't. He is down at the Terteevis Laboratory-- there is an international laboratory there and he is down there.

Q. Did you ask or advise Dr. Sprowls to have an investigation of his case?

A. No sir, I asked him if he was going to.

Q. What did he say?

A. He said not. That was about the time they had that meeting at Dr. Radford's. They were talking about it then and I asked if he was going to ask for an investigation and he said not.

- Q. Was he at that meeting?
- A. I don't know whether he was there or not.
- Q. You never did urge him or advise him to have an investigation?
- A. No, no. I have had nothing to do with the Sprewls case. All I did is in writing.
- Q. You stated, as I understand it, that all of this was an your own initiative and you were not advised by any member of the faculty?
- A. Yes, of course this was done at the suggestion of the President.
- Q. That paper gave a list of institutions that had, according to the paper, similar organizations to the one suggested here in your outline. Who gave the newspaper that list of institutions?
- A. I don't know. Schaeffer I suppose.
- Q. I did not know if you knew about that?
- A. No, you see there is nothing about that in the letter.
- Q. You have no knowledge of any member of the faculty having aided in the publication or editing of the Truth have you?
- A. No sir.
- Q. You showed the letter to a number of the members of the faculty after it was drawn up. Did they subscribe to it or express their approval of it?
- A. Nobody subscribed to it. I would not subscribe to it and nobody else would subscribe to it. Different individuals made different suggestions.
- Q. From whom did you get the suggestions with regard to the Board of Trustees?
- A. I could not tell you that. I have papers scattered about. When I would go see a man and would get away from him I would jot down what he suggested and write his name on it.
- Q. Have you those papers?
- A. Yes but they are not all there.

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Q. Would you turn those papers in to me?

A. Yes.

Q. With regard to students here. Did the students make these suggestions or the faculty?

A. I did not talk to a student at all?

Q. You did not?

A. No, absolutely not.

Q. You are in hearty sympathy with the organization of the University as it is under the present charter?

A. You have my letter to that effect. In the third letter I stated that I was.

Q. You understand that method of procedure in the employment of professors don't you?

A. I don't think I do. Just within the last year or so I think the President told me they were employed for the year only.

Q. What I mean, Professor, is this: You as Dean of the Premedical School, if anyone should be employed solely within that school, you would be the one to make recommendations for the filling of that particular position. You understood that did you?

A. No, I don't think I did.

Q. It just so happens that that situation does not exist in your department?

A. Yes, for the department itself. The President told me to look out for someone to take a position as instructor last year.

Q. That is what I mean?

A. But I did not know whether that was in practice. I know in that specific case he told me to look out for someone.

Q. The only meeting that you attended, Professor, was the one held by Dr. Badford?

A. I did not go to that.

Q. You did not attend any meetings?

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A. No I attended a meeting of the A. A. U. P. at which it was talked about somewhat but not a private meeting. That was a meeting we had in which Dr. Glocker, ~~President~~ presented the Carnegie pension.

Q. Was any committee appointed at that meeting with reference to an investigation of the Sprowls case?

A. No.

Q. No decision was made at that meeting with reference to the Sprowls case nor with reference to anything else?

A. No.

Q. Did anyone present a letter to you asking for an investigation of the Sprowls case for you to sign?

A. Yes.

Q. Who presented that letter to you?

A. Dr. Ellis.

Q. Did you sign it?

A. No sir.

Q. What reasons did you give him for not signing?

A. I was out of the case entirely. I had nothing to do with the Sprowls case. I have enough to do with the other.

Q. You never have had anything to do with the Sprowls case as I understand?

A. No. Of course I have talked about it as everyone else has.

Q. Was that ^{letter} ~~that~~ that Dr. Ellis handed to you signed by anyone?

A. Yes.

Q. Whose signatures?

A. It had Schaeffer's, Withers' and Ellis'

Q. What were the contents of that letter?

A. I did not read it. He explained to me that it was a letter to the Chairman of the Committee on Academic Freedom of the American

Association of College Professors.

Q. De you know who wrote that letter?

A. I think he told me Schaeffer wrote it.

Q. Was this the only document drawn up with reference to a constitution for the University?

A. As far as I know, yes.

Q. Were any others working on a paper of this kind that you know of?

A. Not that I know of.

Q. Are there any other facts that you know, Professor, that you think we all ought to know, both the administration of the University and the board of trustees if they wanted to know it with regard to this whole thing?

A. No, I don't know anything.

Q. You have told me all you know about it?

A. I don't know that even- whether I have told you all I know or not. I know a lot of things you have not asked for that might or might not.

Q. Name some of them please?

A. That is hard work- that will be an impossible question. I don't know what should be known or anything like that.

Q. The reason why I asked you a question of that kind is because you are an administrative official in the University and we look to the administrative officers to cooperate with the administration of the institution in giving any information that may be known that is of importance to the welfare of the institution.

A. Well if you narrow your question down to a field and throw the whole field open and ask if I know anything the institution ought to know-- If you narrow the thing down to specific things I can tell you that.

Q. Do you know of any groups of individuals who have been working in this matter of the Sprowls case with regard to investi-

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gations or in an antagonistic way?

A. Naturally if any work of that kind were being done it would be done through this organization and Dr. Schaeffer is chairman of the organization and any move that would be made toward getting an investigation would come through that organization.

Q. As I understand it, you refused to sign a letter asking for that investigation as did other Professors?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you remember who made the most of those suggestions to that letter?

A. Well I don't know that I could answer that. I got a list from Dr. Hesler that he said he had just picked up from students here and there- just minor details of what the students were saying.

Q. You have this list?

A. I have some of them. I am not sure. Fitzgerald sent me a written list of suggestions he had. Hesler ~~sent~~ another, and when I got them I wrote his name to them.

Q. I wish you would get these together and let me have them as soon as you can?

A. I don't know who had the greatest number. This is a summary of mine.

Q. And there isn't any one person who subscribed to all of those?

A. No not any one. Some of these suggestions were-- I read over the University of Kentucky-- they have a little Code of By-Laws. I copied several from that. This does not purport to be anybody's material. It is simply a mass of suggestions collected together.

Q. Is it your idea that students should sit in faculty meetings?

A. No.

Q. Not your idea?

A. No.

Q. Whose idea was that?

A. I have no idea. You are asking for information. I should not see any objection to seeing students representative of the school coming in an advisory capacity. That has nothing to do with this.

Q. They are invited in sometimes to administrative council meetings?

A. Yes. I will tell you what I thought of when I first wrote the letter - this original letter - that we might meet and possibly have a committee appointed that would work a year or two years and get some kind of definite statement as to where our functions lie. This is not supposed to be a guide - just what might be thought out and give the committee something. I realized from the very beginning that if the President was not in sympathy with the move it meant nothing and if he was in sympathy with it we should appoint a committee to get ideas. The President took it in that way when I first approached him about it - was very sympathetic and said to let's do it - go ahead. This whole thing was undertaken in the spirit of being helpful not hostile or a desire to injure or tear down or anything of that sort - just to help if the situation is not the best it should be then make it the best you know.

Professor Mulvania went out and was recalled for further questioning by Dean Hoskins as follows:

Q. Professor there is one thing I am not quite satisfied about and that is the statement that you made a while ago that there are several things you know that I did not ask you about. I wish you would make a full statement if you will, please, of all that you know about this difficulty here in the University?

A. I think I have covered that already.

Q. I mean this general fund of information.

A. You ask me what I know that the University authorities ought to know.

Q. About this trouble?

A. You asked about the Sprowls case and I told you.

Q. As to the "Truth" we are concerned with that in this way: What professors aided in the publication of the Truth?

A. I don't know.

Q. Are there any circumstances surrounding the trouble arising from the Sprowls case that you know of and that you think we should know?

A. Well I know that Sprowls has in mind staying here in this city perhaps to make some effort to keep digging up something. He told me that he was making arrangements to stay in the city next year and will not be away.

Q. What is he going to stir up?

A. Well I don't know.

Q. He told you he was going to stir up something.

A. No, he told me he was going to be writing some stuff and intimated that he might be looking for something in his defense.

Q. Is there anything else besides that that you think of?

A. He told me at that time that he had looked up the President's naturalization and there was some question about that.

Q. Is there anything else he told you?

A. He suggested what was suggested by many others to me- that the Board of Trustees is supposed to be made up of four alumni of the University and that is not the case.

Q. Four alumni?

A. Yes.

Q. That is the legal status of the Board?

A. You will remember when Dr. Ayres had it reorganized. It provides for one-third of the members to be alumni.

Q. Is there anything else?

A. No, I don't remember anything else.

Q. Is Dr. Sprowls the only one who has made statements?

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A? Yes. Well, no, with regard to the Board I have heard several.

Q. With regard to anything else concerning changes in the University.

A No. There is always more or less chat.

Q. We are not concerned with ordinary criticisms, Professor, that is what we expect. We think that ordinary constructive criticism is a good thing for the University within the faculty?

A. That is in my third letter to the President.

Q. Have you discussed this with Dr. Schaeffer?

A. What do you mean?

Q. This difficulty?

A. Yes sir. We are right there together and of course naturally enough we have talked it over. I talked it over with all of them down there. He told me that he ~~had~~ came to the President about the Sprowls case immediately when the thing first came up. Being President of the organization, he thought it was his place to introduce it to the President.

Q. What was his general attitude on that?

A. He thought that an investigation should be made. Of course, naturally, you would suppose so after he signed the letter to the Secretary.

Q. Are there any other matters that you think we ought to know?

A. No.

And further saith not.