

*Concluding Unscientific Postscript (about the Senate)*  
*- with apologies to Soren Kierkegaard -*

Tom Shipka  
May 3, 2006

Since the Senate has a full agenda today, I have chosen to divert some of my remarks in my final meeting as Senate chair to a postscript which I ask that Professor Hogue, our Senate secretary, incorporate into the minutes of the May 3, 2006, meeting.

My relationship to the Senate dates back to my arrival on campus in fall 1969. At that time the Senate, recently established, had a peculiar composition and role. Half the members were *ex officio* administrators, the President of the university was chair, and the Senate initiated recommendations through a Faculty Affairs Committee on salaries, fringe benefits, and other terms and conditions of employment. In my first year of employment I was a candidate for faculty senator and won election. It was fascinating to me to watch and hear certain senators give impassioned pleas to restrain faculty compensation. I did not know then and I do not know now whether this was done out of sincere worries about rising student fees or simply to mollify President Pugsley.

In any case, when the bulk of the faculty decided in 1972 that salaries were low, teaching load was high, and job security was shaky, we unionized. I had the privilege to play a major role in that movement from the very start through 1986 when I left the faculty bargaining unit to become a department chair. As president and chief negotiator of the faculty union during the negotiation of our first contract, one of my objectives was to restructure the Senate and to make it compatible with collective bargaining.

Accordingly, Article XIX of the first labor agreement provided:

**The University agrees to recommend to the Constitution and By-Laws  
Committee changes in the Faculty Constitution and By-Laws which include:**

- a) An elected presiding officer in the Senate;**
- b) Increase in ratio of faculty to administration in the composition of the Senate;**
- c) Redefining the charge to the Faculty Affairs Committee so that its function will not conflict with the bargaining process;**
- d) Substantial revision of the A-B-C Committee concept. (1973-1975 Agreement, p. 25)**

Elizabeth Sterenberg, secretary of the faculty negotiating team, and a member of the Political Science Department, had the responsibility to draft this language for our team and, once the contract was signed by President Pugsley and myself, another team member, Steve Hanzely of Physics and Astronomy, was appointed to chair an ad hoc committee to implement the changes specified.

From that time through the rest of my career as a campus labor leader, I chose not to participate in the Senate. My decision was based on my view during that time that the Senate, as the primary campus deliberative body on curriculum, academic programs, and academic policies, should operate independently of the faculty union. The Senate and the union had different roles and it would be inappropriate, I thought, for union leaders to be active in the Senate.

When I left the bargaining unit to become a chair in 1986, I reentered the Senate and have been active in it in most years ever since. As I look back at my more recent Senate involvement, two things stand out. As a senator with strong views about the

components of our general education requirements, I was vocal on many occasions when we undertook a makeover of gened. You can blame the critical thinking intensive component on me, for instance. But I did serve a useful purpose now and then. If you browse through the minutes of the meetings in the late 90s when we debated the new general education program, sometimes interminably, I chimed in at virtually every meeting several times with “I move the previous question” to bring debate to a close. Almost always the motion – non-debatable – got the required two-thirds vote. It occurs to me that “He moved the previous question” would be a suitable inscription on my grave marker except that my will provides for cremation.

Since Jim Morrison stepped down as Senate chair, I have had the privilege to chair the Senate. As chair I claim only one important accomplishment. I found a way to get quorums. For a long time the Senate could not conduct business at many scheduled meetings for lack of a quorum. This was especially true after hard copy reminders of meetings gave way to electronic reminders. Some senators chose not to attend because they simply forgot about a meeting; others, I suspect, did not want to attend what was routinely a very long meeting during the era of recasting general education. My cure was simple – resume the sending of hard copy reminders and keep meetings as short as possible. This worked.

So when the history of the YSU Academic Senate is written, if ever, I hope that the author says three things about me – Shipka is one of the architects of the Senate in its current form, he found a way to get the long-winded to sit down and shut up, at least temporarily, and he got people to show up.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve with you and for you in the Senate.