## ROOSEVELT UNIVERSITY

## Interview Release Form

In consideration of my desire to be of assistance to future historians of Roosevelt University, I, Philip Mullenbach, hereby authorize and approve that the interview with me recorded on December 2, 1970 by Daniel Perlman be included in the Roosevelt University Archives and be made available, by the Roosevelt University Librarian, to users of the Archives. I hereby also grant permission to the users of the Archives for the publication of this interview or portions thereof, as revised.

10-9-71 (Date)

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## Mr. Philip Mullenbach Interview December 2, 1970

Mr. Perlman: I'm concerned with whether or not you have any thoughts about why Roosevelt College (at that time) adopted the policy of faculty representation [on its governing board] and what it was anticipated at that time that this policy would achieve.

Mr. Mullenbach: My memory of what the reasons for faculty representation on the Board go back to is what Jim Sparling told me when I came onto the Board. He felt that this was a unique measure, if you wish, of democratic organization of the Board.

DHP: When you first came on the Board, he actually talked with you about this?

PM: Well, let me say that my first discussion with Jim was about the problem that had existed in the YMCA and that out of this stemmed, I gather, his judgment that we needed to have strong representation of the faculty on the Board. Now I can't say that the two issues are in any way directly related to each other. All I can say is that in the first discussion that we had his primary interest was in the battle that he had been through at the YMCA [College] and part of this discussion was this decision to maintain a widely representative board of which he was very proud. I'm not sure what it was that the policy was designed

to do, specifically. My own feeling is that it has been more, shall I say, an image than a strong operating influence on the Board. In other words, it was something that was raised up early in the days of the Board and has been continued (in my judgment) with practically no variation that I have seen. That is, as an institutional device it was started, and has not been modified in any way that I know of. This tells me something about it. It's very surprising that it would not have had some kind of modulation over a period of twenty-five years. I just can't conceive of such a radical thing happening without some change. This tells me that actually in our circumstance it was not a radical step but sort of in keeping with the institution. Therefore, I'd say that on this score, when I came onto the Board I had a feeling that this was going to be a more important influence than it apparently had in the day-to-day or meetingto-meeting activities of the Board. In other words, my own expectations after having come onto the Board were not realized, in the sense that I had thought that we would be hearing more what might be called, a "faculty point of view," if you wish, on the Board. In this sense, I think that the institutional device of faculty representation, has been less than I expected. However, I would have to qualify that by thinking of one individual on the board, and that was Runo, who (in my judgment of course) expressed fully

what you might think of as a minority point of view on the part of the faculty. I think that this was an important thing to have expressed, Whether I agreed with him or not is immaterial, at least he expressed it. Another factor on expectations that occurs to me is this, it had never been clear to me whether or not the faculty member was a delegate or a representative. The distinction I think is fairly important. It's not hard to get. Was the individual sent there as a delegate of the faculty or was he there as an individual representing the faculty with a greater degree of discretion, if you wish, than he would have had if he were just a delegate. That's never been clear to me, really, what the faculty member is doing on the board. A further point is that I've never been sure, in day-to-day activities with the faculty members who were on the board, the extent to which they could express themselves freely to me, independent of the meetings, that is, outside the meetings. A sort of a strange reticence on-their part as to how much they were prepared to tell you or say to you about what was happening in the University. Now I'm thinking particularly of the time when we had not the Auditorium conflict; this was

before my time; there were residual aspects of it and that's all I know about that--but, rather, during the interval when Jim Sparling was neither in nor out, you remember. This was the point in which things

were very sensitive in the relationship between the faculty and Sparling and the Board. It was a triangular relationship that really, I think, could be said to be difficult from the standpoint of Jim because he had taken the step to move out, and yet he did not in fact move out. He was still there.

DHP: What role did the faculty trustees play in this?

PM: I don't know. I think that the word that I got when they were being quite frank about it was--look, we need new leadership; we can't go on the basis of what we've had for 15 or 20 years (whatever it was before he fully stepped aside). So that was sort of an ambiguous relationship. Another thing that has failed, in a sense, to jell properly is the attitude of the incumbent president toward the faculty members. There is a dichotomy here, you see, that one has to recognize. It could exist. One is that the faculty members are the president's men, see, that they are all on his side, no criticism, everything is fine. There's the other side in which the president is almost in the situation of saying: "Darn it, these men from the faculty on the Board are really going to cause me problems. This is democracy but it's gone a little too far." Which would be healthy, you see.

That hasn't really been clarified. I think, in effect,
that the presidents, and I'm thinking now of Jim and Pitchell and
Rolf, were a little uneasy about faculty representation on the Board, that

something would break loose somewhere or that there would be information that was fed to the Board members which was unfortunate from the stand-point of the president. This is rather crucial. You can't put your finger on it easily, but I assess that it has been there in the case of every president that I have known--the three that we have had.

DHP: How do you think it actually worked out, in fact, in terms of where the faculty trustees lined up? Did they line up with the president, against the president, or along neither of those lines?

PM: Well, it's varied from time to time, I don't think that there's any real pattern. Except recently, of course, it's perfectly clear that the faculty has been with the president. They have not been difficult. They haven't been a thorn in his side. Going back to Pitchell, it is perfectly obvious that the faculty were difficult. Now, some were not. Some people, who in a sense were close enough to the president, to Mr. Pitchell, were not difficult. But in the main, I would say, that the faculty, I think, was looked at by Pitchell as being difficult. And I think the surrounding circumstances were good enough to demonstrate that that probably was so. Under Sparling in the years in which I saw him, which were at the end of his administration, it's perfectly clear that the faculty, that I saw, and maybe it's difficult for me to distinguish between Board members and other faculty members, but I think my memory would say that they were difficult too, in terms of the president attempting to perform his function

without too much interference from the faculty. But having said all this, I think that I come off with a judgment that its probably well to have the faculty members there because they represent a kind of good communication between the Board and the body of the faculty other than through the president and the administrative lines. Obviously, the Pitchell case was the most serious because here it was very difficult to distinguish between "the revolt," I'll call it, that occurred among the deans and Pitchell, from the faculty members who were on the Board. Looking back at it historically they become indistinguishable in my memory. And this is fairly important, not only from the standpoint of the president, but also from the standpoint of the chairman of the board. [Some material off the record.]

DHP: I was just asking whether in the situation that led to Mr. Pitchell's resignation the faculty trustees on the Board played a role that influenced the outcome of that situation?

PM: Yes, it probably influenced it, but not greatly, because the real decisions were made in a different forum, so to speak, that is among the chairman, the deans, the president and a handful of Board members.

DHP: So that by the time the situation got to the Board itself you think the real decisions had already been made?

PM: Yes, yes.

DHP: Do you think this can be generalized? Do you think this is true of most major decisions in, the University, that they are made away from the Board and then brought to the Board for ratification?

PM: Yes. I don't think there's any doubt about that. Through the years what you've seen happening is that the basic decisions have to be made within a smaller forum, either among the deans, the Administrative Council or the Executive Committee of the Board, or at the committee levels of the Board, but seldom at the Board itself. And we had a major example of that, incidentally, today, Dan, when the Business and Finance Committee, in a sense, reported that they were going to increase greatly the cost of insurance, you That decision was taken at the Finance Committee or the Business Finance Committee level. and then, in a sense, [was] approved by the Executive Committee, but the Board as a body never really addressed itself to the question as to whether or not this institution should have a ten-fold increase in its insurance costs because of the attitudes of the insurance companies. That's a very good example. And to carry this through, I had my notes made up so that if this thing came to a debate in the Board I would be prepared to present, if you wish, a minority view; even though in the Executive Committee I went along with the group just in order to support it; but in the Business and Finance Committee I voted against it. Ok, I don't know whether that's an apt example or not, but you asked whether or not the decisions were made elsewhere. And I think they are.

DHP: I wonder if that relates in any way, in your judgment, to the fact that there are faculty members on the Board. In other words, do you think that this tendency that you've noted, to make crucial decisions in other bodies,

is related in some way to the fact that there are faculty members on the Board?

PM: No, I don't I think this would be the same way whether there were faculty members on the Board or not. It may be that with having faculty members on the Board in particular instances it may have contributed to a resolution of a problem outside the Board. For example, I know that at the time the faculty members were on the Board in the Sparling period, they often talked with me individually and off the Board about the problems that confronted the University: whether I asked for it or not, in some cases. Oftener it was the case of my asking what was going on, but some times it was volunteered. So in this sense, yes, these things do lead up to a decision, even though the decision is not made in the Board itself.

DHP: Let me ask you a more general question about how the faculty trustees have actually functioned. What role have: they played in the ordinary times of the University? What do they do in the more quiet times?

PM: Well, in the more pacific times of the University they have been singularly silent, and almost going to the point where I wondered whether the faculty members were simply there to listen or whether they were there to contribute something. I have a sense that in the pacific times they are there to listen, and, so to speak, to report "home" on what's going on. I also have a sense that they are there silently supporting the president and the administration.

DHP: This gets back to what we were discussing before as to whether they were supporters of the administration or, in a sense, antagonists. And you say in quiet times they support the administration in a kind of tacit way?

PM: Right. I think only during periods of tension and crisis is their role then of substantial importance, that is, it's visible, or at least the other Board members hear about it and know what their views are. And of course this is a personality matter. There are very few men who are like Rune: very explicit in his criticisms, vocal and so on. There may be others like him, but I don't recall any. Most of them have been quiet, judicious, mild-mannered people:

DHP: Well, what kinds of things have they done in periods of crisis that have been different from what has happened ordinarily?

PM: Well, I think I'd be repeating what I said earlier with Runo as a prime example, he was highly critical of what was happening in a variety of areas. For example, he felt that the presidential selection committee, of which I was a member, was dragging its feet and, therefore, he felt that he had to be explicit about this and was. So as a faculty member of the Board, he was in a position to exert, shall I say, unusual influence or extraordinary influence on the deliberations of the presidential selection committee. And, you are probably aware of certain memos that he shot through to me, maybe you aren't. But he nevertheless did, and did this in his role as a faculty member of the Board of Trustees. If he had not been a faculty member, [of the Board], I

don't know whether he would have done this or not, but it gave him a degree of freedom that he would not otherwise have had. Now in the upshot of it, was this good or bad for the University? I suspect it was good that the faculty had direct access to the selection committee and could express its views.

DHP: Do you think that the faculty trustees have influenced the kinds of things that have been discussed by the Board, or the way they have been discussed, or the outcome of Board decisions?

PM: As I indicated earlier, yes, but only slightly. I would say that a strong answer would be very little influence on the board. While they are there they have not been a strong influence. They have been more, in the point of view of the president, an irritant or a silent group. From the standpoint of the chairman of the Board, probably indeterminate; sometimes an irritant, but usually a silent group.

DHP: Would you like to make some comments about your feeling of over all evaluation of the practice of faculty trusteeship as it's existed at Roosevelt? PM: I haven't thought enough about that, Dan, really. The institutional device, in my judgment, has been, in recent years, so innocuous that I haven't really thought about it. Unfortunately, it appears to me that the faculty members might just as well not be members of the Board. I don't see what their contribution has, been during the last, say, two years. Just no evidence that I can see that they've contributed visibly to the kinds of things that the Board or the sub-groups of the Board have been involved in. I suppose one way, just thinking very quickly about this, would be to get

them into the activities of the committees of the Board where they logically have something to offer, to pitch in and help.

In this way the Board of Trustees could then have a better view of what the faculty members can do, of what it is they have to offer.

The faculty could be used as an interesting device for maintaining the initiative of outside Board members who have plenty of other things to keep them from taking the initiative.

DHP: From your judgment of the faculty representative that sit on the Board,

do you think that adequate consideration has been given by the University

Senate to the election of faculty representatives?

PM: I haven't any idea how they are selected. If I understand your question, no, I don't know how they go about it. I don't even know with what instructions they come to the Board: back to this question of whether they're representatives or whether they're delegates, what degree of freedom they have in acting as individuals for their group as against simply acting as a delegate. Clearly, to function properly it would be better for them to act as a representative than as a delegate. Maybe they don't recognize this distinction and maybe there's some other distinction that I'm missing. Maybe you can say. What is it that they come with from the Senate? Is there anything that you know of as an instruction? DHP: It's very seldom discussed in the Senate in these times. I think in the beginning of the University there was considerable discussion in the Senate as to the role the faculty trustee should play; and I think that they act very largely on their own interpretation of what their role is. I recall no incidents of the faculty trustees ever having been instructed by the Senate to vote on any issue in any particular way.

Let me ask you a final question, and that is: if you were going to start the University now, if you were going to found the University from the beginning, would you include this pattern of governance?

PM: Let me step back on this to say that faculty representation on the Board is simply one evidence of the diversity of representation on the Board generally. It's not the only evidence of it. You have diversity by having representatives of organized labor on the Board. You have a strong proportion, or a large proportion of the members being women. You have minority groups, black members of the Board of Trustees, in a substantial number. All of these things are representative of the diversity of representation on the Board. It's one of the strengths and one of the things that I think clearly makes the Board of Roosevelt unique compared with any other. So that I don't look at the faculty representation as being unusual under these circumstances. It's just part of the pattern of diversity and manner of operating in the Roosevelt University setting. As a diversion, I'd say the one challenge that hasn't been met yet is student representation on the Board at Roosevelt University, which we haven't tangled with really, although I imagine there's been some talk about it. So I would say "sure," if I were to found Roosevelt over again, yes, I would say I would move toward the same kind of diversity, and probably it would be my own disposition to have students represented on it as well as faculty, women, organized labor and business and so on because the fact is that most boards become extremely pro forma. Seldom do they have an opportunity, really, to engage in a real issue. As we indicated earlier, most of these hard decisions are made elsewhere and then are brought up to the Board in a pre-digested and masticated form. And this is part of the administrative process. You can't have 35 people making these decisions, like the kind we have been talking about, as a body. I think one further change in diversity that I would make, and that is that, generalizing beyond the faculty representations, that I would have professors from other faculties, from other institutions, represented at Roosevelt. I think it would be great to have Phil Hauser, for example, on the Board of Roosevelt University. It might represent a conflict of interest to somebody, but I don't think so.

DHP: Would you do this in lieu of, or in preference to, representation from your own faculty, or in addition to?

PM: No, in addition to. I wouldn't say that they would give up the position, that is the faculty should give up a position on the Board just to let somebody else in. No, I think it would be on top of, simply to get a breadth of view. I think it was significant that Phil Hauser at the Academic Objectives and Long Range Planning Committee meeting had a contribution to make on his observations and questions about the Black Studies Program, how it fitted in, or how it didn't fit in, what other institutions were doing. This is all to the good. This is what we need some expertise of that kind on the Board. Well, my main concern about the Board is that they become too narrow: too many businessmen, too many people with what I consider rather narrow views of the responsibility of the University.