

Some suggested referenda. *Suits for Tots Initiative.* A clothing drive shall be organized wherein students who bought bunches of suits in preparation for futures in investment banking could donate said suits to children five years of age and under, because the economy will probably have recovered by the time said children graduate college. *UC Rides 2.0.* A match program shall be organized wherein any student desiring to have a conjugal encounter in Widener before graduation would be paired with a willing student of similar attractiveness with whom they could do said deed. *Ab Board Reform.* Precisely three copies of 8 Minute Abs shall be made available in every dining hall, for obvious community benefits. *Faustus (Faust + Us).* A whole bunch of pairs of tickets to baseball games and drive-in movies shall be kept in Massachusetts Hall so that every student desiring to hang out with President Faust on a one-on-one, jeans-and-tees sort of basis may do so. Includes compromise provision that President Faust does not have to play more than thirty minutes of Halo 3 if she is not winning by the second round. *We'll Take the Thousand Words.* Officers of the Harvard University Police Department shall be dispatched to block the delivery of all copies of *The Harvard Crimson* containing **awf** any editorial cartoons. ■

the arbitrary SWAPPER ♪

will this week swap *A hardbound copy of The Manual of the Porcellian Club* for *Twenty million U.S. dollars*
TO MAKE THIS SWAP, OR TO PROPOSE YOUR OWN, SWAPPER@THEEXILE.MATINIC.US

THE EXILE

VOLUME 2 — ISSUE I THEEXILE.MATINIC.US 15 OCTOBER 2008

ONE STUDENT ONE VOTE

WE ARE GUILTY OF PROMOTING many ideas which are about a century out of fashion. Utopianism is one of them. We suffer dutifully under its antiquarian yoke. We have assumed this burden partly as a consequence of youth but mostly due to an inconvenient inability to ignore the difference between the way things are and the way they ought to be. Someday we may very well outgrow the notion that societies can possibly live together in happiness and equality. Someday we may reassess our faith that mankind, if not perfectible, is at least perfecting. Someday. Until then, what better place for utopian experiments than Harvard College? Our community here is prebuilt on socialist principles. The House system, the police department, and the dining halls are all socialized systems.

Yet our governing system remains rigidly antidemocratic. The concept of the Undergraduate Council—that is to say, a concept of pre-professional politicians who tend to student representation by proxy—is difficult to reconcile with the principle that every Harvard student is expected to be a good citizen and a mature adult. Why designate representative duties to a governing class? Worse, the UC itself is a near-powerless organ, a recommendation service whereby students may politely offer their suggestions to upper management but hold no authority to ensure that those suggestions are taken seriously.

This is not to say that the people sitting on the UC aren't genuinely dedicated to the concerns of the studentry. We are, in fact, lucky to live under a particularly enlightened UC leadership, and the work that individual members do every day in University Hall and the various other administrative grottoes of the College is heroic, though often unnoticed. We are fortunate to have the best of all possible UCs. Even considering this, however, it's apparent that the UC doesn't work very well. To this end, Harvard has done the one thing that it knows how to do very well: it has convened an investigative committee.

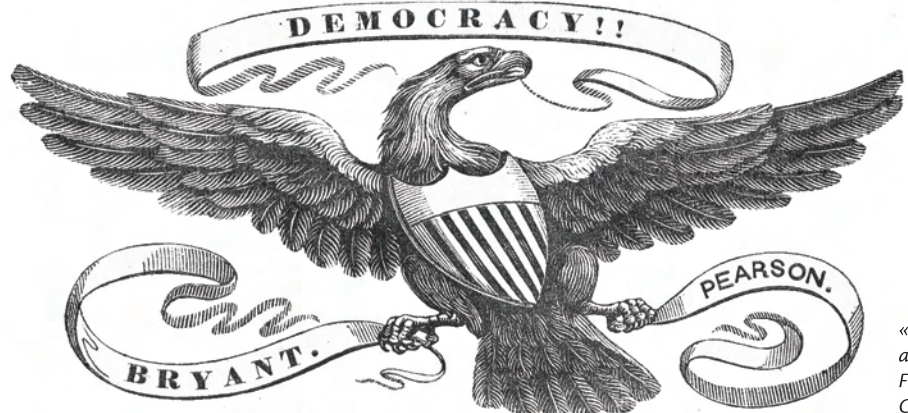
As usual, that's not going to cut it. Five years and three thousand meetings later, with perhaps a detour down Task Force Lane, we might at best hope for a new name for the council. But if student government is ever going to do anything worth the title 'government,' it is going to need teeth.

Enter direct democracy. The academy considers this an ugly idea in the realm of national politics, as it conjures the terrifying spectre of West Virginians deciding fiscal policy, and there is nothing that scares the Economics Department more than the idea of West Virginians deciding fiscal policy. The college administration appears to consider it an equally unattractive option, as the Admissions Office's heady claims of "best and brightest" don't seem to have very much in common with University Hall's fatherly solicitude for its helpless little lambs.

But we live in an age where technology has made it easier than ever for individuals to engage in the political life of their community. So why not expand the Undergraduate Council from a membership of thirty-five to a membership of 6,500? In other words, why not give every student direct legislative control over the UC's decisions? And, while doing so, why not formally invest it with power since it will now be an unquestionable voice for student opinion?

Student apathy is the obvious rub. Why put decisions in the hands of an unwilling undergraduate populace? Why uproot a functioning representative democracy for a series of referenda that might never engage more than ten percent of students at once? Because there is hardly a shocking lack of opinion on this campus. If the system becomes truly responsive to students, we have no reason to believe that students will fail to respond to it. And even if stagnation is all that results from a new collective responsibility for making our opinions known, let it at least be a stagnation of our own making.

There is already an existing schematic fairly close to this one that we could look to for inspiration. It is called the town meeting, and it has been functioning perfectly well in hundreds of New England towns—many of them with populations greater than 6,500—since the seventeenth century. It too began its life as a utopian scheme, a plan which broke sharply with the aristocratic sentiments of Europe. In these towns, every resident is a member of the legislative branch. In many cases, the majority of these people have never attended college. Yet it works well. Certainly if the citizens of tiny hamlets in northern Maine can properly govern themselves, the undergraduates of Harvard might do the same. ■



« Democratic ticket broadside for John Y. Bryant and P. M. Pearson, Washington D.C., 3 June 1853. From the Library of Congress Printed Ephemera Collection.

Greatest hits of the Minutes of the 26th Undergraduate Council. Mike Ragalie: "Why didn't we give money to Respectably French?" Sean Robinson: "They asked for funding for [...] a British military uniform. I asked them why they didn't go to HRTV. They said that HRTV was flimsy." Jay Anderson, two poems about the UC-Crimson Beirut tournament: "The Lost Crusaders: On Friday young Jay and old Joshy did show / That Beirut balls they knew how to throw / Their work was not done / As they should have won / But at least they beat Christian Flow." Mike Ragalie: "There is a square cakapan which was included so that people can make brownies." Daniel Kroop: "I think this is to include 'masculine' men to make it clear, for example, that rape is not a masculine thing." Sean Robinson feels lost and requests a map, but in vain. If Macmillan were to vote his heart, he would vote "Yes, a thousand times" on every grants pack. However, he abstains as a matter of principle. Joyce Zhang: "Which student group is 'christ@hcs.harvard.edu' (as listed in the grants pack)?" ■

«ONCE UPON A TIME IN A CASTLE made out of envelopes and used piñatas there was a prince named Allen and his robot dog Dogbot. Occasionally, Dogbot would fall over in the middle of running when his batteries would suddenly die. ‘Darn these batteries to hell!’ Prince Allen would cry. He would carefully pick up Dogbot and carry it up to the wizard’s private laboratory on the seventh floor of the castle.

“Did the batteries die *again*?!” the wizard would say, looking over his spectacles.

“Yeah, they suck, man—I love playing with Dogbot so much. I want him to always be on, but these batteries last such a short time. Please help me.

“The wizard ran his fingers through his long beard and sat and thought. ‘There may be a way,’ he said slowly, ‘Only it could be extremely dangerous and may cost you your life.’

“Allen’s eyes grew wide. ‘Dude, I like Dogbot a lot but I’m not gonna risk my damn life for him. Geez—it’s a toy, what the hell?’

“The wizard looked shocked. The most incredible thing was that he actually invented the AA battery and the plastic salad fork tosser thingy. Incredible.

“This has been my speech for the 1999 Inventors of America Reunion Tour. Are there any questions?”

“What ever happened to Prince Allen?”

“Well, that’s a funny story and a good question actually. In 1964, archeologists actually recovered Prince Allen’s bones. He died still a Prince

due to the fact that the King was immortal and never left the throne. While examining the bones, researchers discovered that his rib cage

was twice the normal size of people of his time. They actually determined that this was due to his having a huge heart. Apparently, his love

for Dogbot made his life so wonderful that his heart grew and grew until eventually it killed him, oddly enough. Next question please.”

“Are the batteries we use today still made the same way that the wizard invented?”

“No. Next question please.”

“I was wondering; you mention that Prince Allen died a Prince and something about his father the King being a manhole. What did you mean?”

“Ha ha, no: I said ‘immortal.’ He never died—‘manhole’—boy, that was funny. I know I shouldn’t laugh, the acoustics in this submarine are so poor, next question.” Reprinted from *ephemeral scrolling text, The Siff & Olly Show, Season 2 Episode 14.* ■



« Earl Schuler, Cleveland Division of Health, 13 March 1941. From the Library of Congress Works Project Administration Poster Collection.

Voting schematic for a direct democratic form of undergraduate government

STUDENTRY

Consists of all undergraduates currently registered and in good standing. Each vote is considered to hold equal currency. All students guaranteed anonymity in electronic voting.

LEGISLATION

Legislation may be submitted by any student for ‘certification’ to the Select Board. A vote of three Select Board members forwards the legislation to a vote, or, if three Select Board members fail to certify the legislation, a joint motion of five House Committees may certify it. Legislation is presented electronically at a biweekly vote accompanied by a brief statement in favor and against the legislation prepared by the Select Board. A simple majority ratifies a bill, except in constitutionally dictated situations where a supermajority may be needed.

SELECT BOARD

Five members, one per House ‘neighborhood’ (Dudley included with the Quad) and one freshman elected by popular vote at the beginning of term. The Select Board is charged with setting legislative agendas, educating the studentry on the merits of proposals, and promoting successful legislation to the administration. The chairmanship of the Select Board is rotated between the four upperclass members through a quarterly division of the academic year.

BURSARY COMMISSION

Nine members, interviewed and chosen by the Select Board to administer the disbursement of grant money. Functions clerically, not governmentally.

STUDENT-FACULTY COMMITTEES

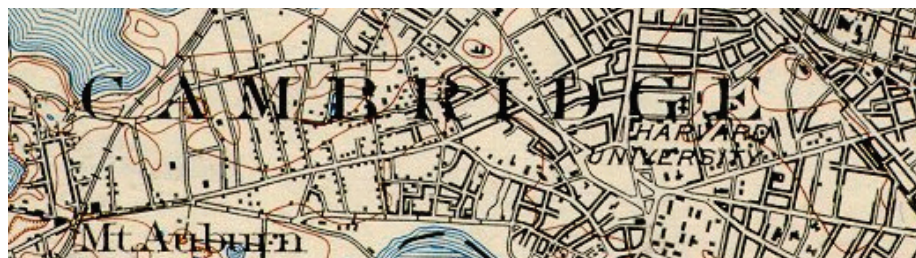
Elected directly by studentry. Select Board may ‘endorse’ a candidate; the endorsement will appear on the ballot.

HOUSE COMMITTEES

Voting rules standardized and elections administered centrally.

HARVARD ADMINISTRATION

Constitutional structure determines specific powers over which student legislation has sovereignty. Dean of the College, Dean of FAS, and President of the University given unconditional veto power. Items not specifically enumerated in constitutional structure as areas of student sovereignty will be submitted as formal agenda items to the Secretary of the Faculty of Arts & Sciences. Students on Student-Faculty Committees given ‘proxy’ voting power; they may call an item to legislation, and the way the studentry votes will be submitted as a single vote in the Committee.



Here in THE EXILE’s editorial caverns, we welcome your letters, complaints, stray paragraphs, dormant poems, accidental photographs, napkin drawings, sentences consisting only of adverbs, tales better left untold, mockeries & paeans. SUBMISSIONS@THEEXILE.MATINIC.US