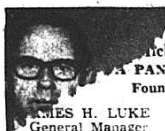


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JAMES H. LUKE
General Manager

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KENNETH S. LOWE
Editor

Stacking The Deck

The future of the Women's Job Corps Center on the Northern Michigan University campus has been a matter of conjecture ever since the NMU Faculty Senate voted last year in favor of eliminating the Job Corps program here or removing it from the NMU campus. The NMU Student Government Association subsequently voted for retention of the Job Corps.

Now, the Human Relations Committee, composed of faculty members and students, has undertaken a referendum on the question of retention of the Job Corps. The committee prepared a secret ballot which was mailed to 334 persons who held academic rank at the university as of last Nov. 15. Recipients of the ballot were asked to cast their vote and return the ballot by campus mail the following day, Feb. 25.

The ballot provided spaces for one of three choices by each elector. The faculty member could cast a vote (1) in favor of retaining the Job Corps on the campus, (2) in opposition to its retention or (3) indicating he had no opinion either way.

Results of the election as announced yesterday indicated that 109 voted in favor of retaining the program, 83 in opposition and 17 indicating no opinion. That is a total of 209 ballots. This means that ballots were not received from fully 130 faculty members — or more than one-third of the total faculty.

Although it seems strange that approximately 35 per cent of the faculty would neglect to cast ballots on an issue as vital to the university as the Job Corps, this is not what disturbs us about the voting.

Rather, the aspect of the voting that we find almost shocking is the manner in which the ballots were presented to the voters. Printed at the top of each ballot was a memorandum, which read, in part, "We, the members of the Human Relations Committee, are sponsoring a referendum on retention of Job Corps on the campus of Northern Michigan University. This is being done in the belief that the total faculty should have an opportunity to express itself on this critical issue. We are enclosing a fact sheet which was presented to the Student Senate by Dr. Bert Jones of the Job Corps. We believe that this is a comprehensive document which can help to dispel the many rumors that exist concerning Job Corps."

The "fact sheet" consists of two and a half pages (single spaced) of material relating to the Job Corps at NMU, nearly all of it explaining the program in a favorable light. Half of the "fact sheet" is devoted to a section headed "Misleading Statements Frequently Heard About Job Corps." This consists of seven purported accusations against the Job Corps at NMU, each followed by a reply defending the Job Corps.

This newspaper has supported the concept of a Job Corps Center here ever since its inception three years ago. This support has been based in part on the conviction that assistance by society to its deprived members is only fair.

That is more than can be said for the referendum conducted by the Human Rights Committee, which is anything but fair. By enclosing copies of the "fact sheet" with each ballot, the committee was so obviously trying to rig the outcome of the balloting that the operation can hardly be considered a referendum at all. The committee mailed ballots with built-in bias instead of trying to conduct a fair and meaningful sampling of faculty opinion. The attitude of the committee seems to be that the end justifies the means.

The entire referendum should be scuttled and its results completely discounted.