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Report of a discussion between Skancke and the Deans of Faculty.

On Friday September 25, 1943 all the Deans were summoned to a meeting with Minister Skancke. Besides the Deans and Skancke there were present Hoel the Rector and undersecretary Pedersen from the Church and Education Department. The meeting lasted from 12.02 to 2.05 p.m.

Skancke began by emphasizing the disadvantages attaching to the fact that the reception of students in the faculties which have a numerical limit (numerous clausus) is only done on the basis of their place in the matriculation exam (artiumskarakter). He maintained that these disadvantages had a specially unfortunate effect in existing conditions. He quoted the letter of June 12 1925 from the medical faculty to the University authorities, a letter which he considered confirmatory of his own opinion.

Monrad-Krohn observed that no doubt the medical faculty had on that occasion stressed the disadvantages attached to the place in the matriculation exam as a basis for reception, but all the same the conclusion of the faculty was that it accepted the system in spite of its deficiencies.

Skancke. But anyhow the defects of this system have been pointed out by the University, The rule now introduced has the object of curing these defects so far as is at present possible. What is required is to get in now those who have qualifications for study, "the most talented students". Many considerations here suggest building on something else besides the place in matriculation. One is that school education is at present bad - not least because of the congestion of schools. Another is regard for the interests of outside students (privatister). A third consideration is locality, i.e. division of the students according to districts of the country. Students from the northern districts have difficult conditions for study. Added to these is the need to train people for the civil service. The University must take charge of this service, and the state had a claim to get able people. As things are at present, it seems to be usual for educated people to sabotage state posts, "whatever the reason may be". Skancke had considered the idea of making the students sign an undertaking to apply for state positions at the end of their studies, but he had abandoned it.

He stressed that there was no aim of a political nature in the new rule. He himself considered that in the long run a bad service was done to the party by forcing upon the University members of Nasjonal Samling. He was definitely against anyone gaining admission to the University simply through becoming a member of the Party. "The Rector will confirm that that is my attitude". He had had a hard job to get the organisations of the party to understand this point of view. He had had a lot of trouble with it. The considerations which were to weigh in the reception, beyond the place in matriculation, would therefore apply equally to a member of the NS and a non-member, "but there will be an idea of taking into consideration whether a man who is a member of the movement has been impeded in his work". In the letter from the faculties to the Department it is said that "the University must have security in regard to regulations on the same lines as previously." This means that merely the place in matriculation is to be taken into account. But then there will be nothing left for the faculty to control. On the whole, the Department "cannot agree to this". It is for the Department to draw up the regulation. The old regulation is repealed. The new regulation will be applied to the reception of students who are to

commence their studies from January 1944. So the only question is as to the attitude of the University teachers when the education of these students is to begin. "How then am I to interpret the final passage?" I have taken it as a threat to strike. I will first ask the Deans of the three faculties which have limited entry. This applies first of all to the medical students. So I will first address the question to you, Professor Menrad-Krohn.

Menrad-Krohn wished first to speak of the general observations used by the Minister in his opening, and would begin by expressing his pleasure that political considerations were ruled out. But he could not conceal that he too had felt great bitterness at the fact that the regulation was issued without the University having been given the opportunity of expressing itself. There was hardly another university in the civilised world to which this would have been done. Besides, it was accompanied by a letter which must be regarded as a challenge. There is no one in the University who is unwilling to accept the written statements of the head of the Department and the Rector, but this has not been supplied in a regular form. These gentlemen can disappear, they may get the proverbial roof-tile on their heads (a reference to Ibsen's Doll's House - translator) or they may be replaced by others. "There are perhaps persons who will make efforts to get into the places of these gentlemen." So we have no guarantee. He had no authority to speak on behalf of the University. But this was the way in which he would interpret the letter and the reaction of the University. It was also necessary to remember the interferences which had taken place earlier; he referred to the 10 medical students who were advanced to the head of the waiting list.

Skrancke. "That was in the past. That was an unfortunate episode. It was just a thing like that which the new regulation was to cure. "Security for the future" is a thing which we can consider later on. The question now is admissions this year. "This year I and Hoel are here", and I must know what is meant by the concluding passage in the letter. I will have an answer, yes or no, to this question. "Before I can go any farther", I must know whether this is intended to lead to strike. The Deans themselves have signed it, and they must be able to answer to the fact that they individually are concerned.

Menrad-Krohn. In a discussion like this one must be allowed an opportunity of making general observations. You said that no one applied for state appointments. If the state carries on a health service under expert control and with adequate conditions of work, I had no doubt that the state would find all its posts filled. We must not judge the conditions on the basis of the present period of crisis.

Skrancke. The University completely ignores the fact that we have a period of crisis now. In normal times the new regulations would have been laid before the University. But if I had now laid the new regulation before the faculties "I should only have got a blank rejection". I cannot be content with general observations, but must have a clear and definite answer. Is this regulation to be considered unacceptable? Is the idea that I am to abandon hope of services of the university teachers if the new regulation remains in force? Does it mean resignation?

Menrad-Krohn. That depends on what the Department is going to do. The regulation is unacceptable. But if it is amended, and the written assurances of the Rector and the Minister are worked into it, then and not till then shall I be able to make up my mind as to what I will do.

Skaneke. Conscience is always being put in the foreground. Each individual Dean must be able to answer as to whether he is willing to continue. It is of decisive importance for the University, and it is of great importance to each individual. "Before anything done about it", I wish to be informed whether conscience prompts you to resign your offices. (To Monrad-Krohn)-What will you do?

Monrad-Krohn. May I ask what is meant by the hint as to the importance of the matter to every individual?

Skaneke. The legal provisions which we have will be used to their full extent, but then the matter will have got into other hands.

Monrad-Krohn. My answer will entirely depend on how the declarations (of the Minister and the Rector) are worked into the regulation. If they are worked into an amended regulation in a satisfactory manner, and the University can work undisturbed, I think that both I and the majority will continue our work.

Skaneke. Who is going to disturb you? These new students? Anyhow I shall not disturb you.

Monrad-Krohn. I wish to say nothing as to that, until I see how it is worked in.

Skaneke. I wish to hear the attitude adopted by the individuals present.

Monrad-Krohn. Why have we been summoned as Deans?

Skaneke. You are acting here solely as a Professor. What will be the attitude of Professor Monrad-Krohn?

Monrad-Krohn. I can say no more. Only after the regulation is amended and the declarations of the Minister and the Rector incorporated, can I adopt an attitude as to what I will do.

Skaneke. Such an evasive answer will be regarded as a threat to strike. Such an attitude will have consequences for the University and the students, and for you yourselves, gentlemen. You know the new law. What will be your attitude, Professor Solberg?

Solberg. I cannot accept the regulation in its present form. It is obscurely drafted and contains everything and nothing. But if the interpretation of the Minister and the Rector are incorporated in the regulation, then I am sure we can reach a satisfactory result. I have expressed the same view to the Rector. I can therefore see no reason why I need resign my office.

Skaneke. What will be your attitude, Professor Ivar Krohn?

Krohn. I assume that we shall have an amended regulation with among other things the declaration of the Minister and the Rector incorporated, and then there is surely no question of a strike. No one in our faculty has said a word about striking.

Skaneke. I repeat that an evasive answer will be regarded as a strike. What will be your attitude, Professor Magnus Olsen?

Magnus Olsen. The question of strike or no strike must not be discussed now. The concluding passage in the latter from the faculties must be read in its context. The question of yes or no will not arise until - (is interrupted).

Magnus Olsen. The word "procedure" does not merely mean the place in matriculation. The whole final sentence must be seen in its context, the last section must not be severed from the first. In the first section is stressed the necessity for security.

Skancke. So then you are going for a strike. What is Professor Mowinckel's attitude?

Mowinckel. I have regarded the final passage as expressing a simple truism. It is a statement of the obvious fact that it may be assumed that the Department has no interest in compelling a man to remain in his office if he gets into practical and conscientious conflict with it. Here in Norway it has always been not merely a right but also a duty for an official who is no longer in agreement with his official duty to apply for discharge. It has for example always been regarded as wrong conduct here in Norway for a clergyman to stick to his position when he has reached disagreement with the doctrines of his church, either on grounds of faith or morals.

Monrad-Krohn. The word "strike" has not been used by us here. I must protest against an answer being put into our mouths which I have not given. The word "strike" has been introduced by the Minister, not by us. None of us have threatened to strike, and we will not be manoeuvred into a strike situation at which we have not aimed. But today we have been exposed to threats.

Skancke. I call this a strike. It will be regarded as a strike by "the others" (? the Germans?).

Monrad-Krohn. An authentic interpretation of the contents of the letter ought to be given by the committee which drafted it. I can only interpret it according to my personal understanding of it at the time I voted for it.

Skancke. I need not use the word "strike". I can use the word "sabotage". What is your attitude, Professor Frisch?

Frisch. First, with regard to "strike" or "sabotage". Those who at the moment have the power in their hands can of course interpret these expressions entirely as they please and act accordingly. They are in a position to treat those present as they like. We must take the consequences of it, and answer in accordance with our consciences. We have been summoned to this meeting in our capacity as deans, but we are now faced with a demand to answer what we mean to do as individuals. It is rather a curious method of procedure, but all the same I will answer for myself. The important side of the case to me is not the detailed provisions of the regulation. I can quite imagine the possibility of a regulation prescribing that weight should be attached to other things besides a certain number of marks in matriculation. But I attach importance to the point that all such considerations must be expressed in the rule, and in such a way that personal caprice is as far as possible eliminated. The selection must be made as far as possible according to fixed rules. I think there are great possibilities of adapting an elastic formula which has regard in all cases to all the points which have arisen in this discussion. We must not shrink from making the regulation rather comprehensive. There are such great advantages in eliminating subjective caprice so far as possible, and we must use all our efforts to achieve this. I should hold this view regardless of who is to undertake the selection. Even if they gave us Rector Seip back, I would protest against his

an analogy from the economic sphere. In industrial life, I am willing to approve regulating provisions, but I consider it important that that these should as far as possible be preparations of the construction of the machinery, not surveillance of the engineer. So an alteration in the rules for admission (of students) can well be imagined, a fixed number of marks in matriculation is therefore not a question of conscience to me - and presumably not to my colleagues. But the whole of this case must be looked at in the light of the way it has been conducted. We have seen how the Department has attempted to introduce political considerations, and we see today how the Deans are exposed to cross-examination in which it is attempted to impute to us intentions which we have not got. This is a method of procedure which is not that of a civilised legal community. All this makes me see that the University as a scientific institution is in danger. And so the case becomes a question of conscience. What was the foundation of my life's work is taken away, and thus I cannot avoid drawing the conclusion, regardless of what results this may have for me personally.

Skanke emphasized the difficulties of laying down all the considerations which should be taken, in the form of a regulation.

Frisch. My experience from work on similar questions in the sphere of statistics is that one can often get much further than at first sight seems possible.

Mowinckel. It appears from the letter of the faculties and from this discussion that we have no objection in principle to the drafting of a new regulation on admissions, and for my part I see no objection to taking into consideration also such matters as outside students. But the assumption must be that these things can be incorporated in the rule itself, so that chance and subjective choice are as far as possible eliminated. It must be possible to find a formula safeguarding the different considerations mentioned by Frisch (At this point, says the report, a lengthy and to some extent discursive debate took place between the Deans on one side and Minister Skanke on the other).

Skanke maintained, inter alia, that "the University now intends to indulge in politics just like the Church, which has never done anything else. Even the Pope has begun now"; and further that "you want to drive me into a corner". If the students, who are accepted and are to begin e.g. in the chemical laboratories in January 1944 do not get any teachers because these resign, and if we get another man he will perhaps be stopped, then this is a strike. It is for the Department to decide the role. Why do you come and demand "security" from the Department?

Frisch. Because we have experience of encroachment.

Skanke. What (encroachment)?

Frisch. The conflict with the medical faculty.

Skanke. If you want security, I must also have security on my side too. I must know if I can count on the University teachers in January. The Department has decided that the new regulation is to be put in force now. That is a fact which must be reckoned with. (in reply to a question, Skanke however declared that it was his wish that work at the University should go on peacefully and smoothly).

Monrad-Krohn. We have found it difficult to appreciate that, during this discussion.

Skanke. I will wash my hands of all responsibility for "what will happen" if the University is upset. "When you leave this conference, you will have the full responsibility".

Frisch. It is impossible for us to have this responsibility when each of us has merely been confronted with a personal question. We have no authority to bind the University.

Skencke. I have knowledge that there are forces within the four walls of the University who are working for a development which will lead to the closing of the University.

Several Deans. We know nothing about that.

Skencke. The Germans wish to have these forces stopped, and they will be stopped. The Reichskommissar considers a matter of this kind within his province. If anyone is trying to drag out the affair, counting on the Germans being out of the country in six months time, that also is a matter in which the Germans will be interested, and which they will get stopped. For that matter, I cannot understand why you should have any objection to the new regulation, if you think the war will be over in half a year. "Then no doubt everything will be changed again".

Frisch. But the question of principle?

Skencke. I have been blamed for postponing admission from autumn 1943 to January 1944: I have been able to give a technical reason for this, but I cannot now come and say that there is to be a further postponement. That would be thought queer. So the new regulation must be applied to the admission of those students who are to begin their studies in January 1944. "A demand for this has been presented".

Ivar Krohn. It may well happen that the German authorities agree that the regulation shall first be applied in the autumn of 1944. How will that affect the case?

Skencke did not answer.

Solberg. Who is it who has presented this demand? The occupying power?

Skencke. No, it has (hesitation) been put forward from government quarters.

Ivar Krohn stated that in his faculty the written declarations by the Minister and the Rector had been understood to mean that the new regulation would first be applied to those students who sought admission in 1944. Several of the other Deans confirmed that they had understood it in the same way. Skencke protested against this interpretation.

Louise Krohn. Also, apart from the Rector's supplementary statement, the following observations can be made: An admission rule which assumes the sending in of applications in July and is not passed to the University till August or September cannot of course come into force till the next July.

Ivar Krohn with the support of several of the other Deans stressed the same point.

Louise Krohn. The students who (in accordance with the University's advertisement and before the transmission of the (new) regulation) had applied on the basis of the old conditions for admission, have in all decency a claim to be accepted in accordance with these (old conditions).

Skencke. Yes, that is what they think.

have reason to believe that from a certain quarter activities are being carried on which may lead in this direction, viz: by that member of the medical faculty who belongs to your party. The speaker wished to recall what happened last year, when the person in question went to Minister Skanke with a wholly misleading account of what had occurred at a meeting of the faculty. And after what happened at the last faculty meeting this year, Monrad-Krohn thought it possible that the same element in the medical faculty had tried to stir up German authorities against the University by a misleading report to similar effect. The activities of this member are on the whole the greatest obstacle to peaceful conditions of work in the medical faculty and in relation to the authorities.

Skanke fully realized this. There was on this point "no difference of opinion" with regard to the person in question, and Skanke himself was not liable to be influenced in this way. He would strike down such elements, whether within or outside of the party.

Monrad-Krohn. But this person can create difficulties elsewhere. It would be an advantage if this member could be excused from attendance at meetings of the faculty.

Skanke. I have nothing against such an arrangement, but that must be for the University itself to settle. I have difficulties enough here in any case.

When Skanke had several times indicated that the interview was at an end and it looked as if the discussion had reached an impasse, Under-Secretary Pedersen produced an "intermediate proposal", since he "thought there was no special opposition to the technical point of view." The proposal was that the Deans of the three faculties together with Hoel (the Rector) should produce a draft of an amended regulation where notice was taken of the views which had appeared, inter alia in such a way that the above-discussed written declarations by the Rector and Skanke should be incorporated in the rule, and so that the regulation could be used in the admission of those students who were to begin their studies in January 1944.

Hoel agreed to this proposal.

Skanke accepted the proposal. Mentioned that an attempt should be made as far as possible to fix rules for weighing the different considerations besides the places in matriculation. "We must see how far we can get by this road".

Monrad-Krohn maintained that the students who had sought admission this autumn had done so on the assumption that the old regulation applied.

Hoel replied that there was no obstacle to accepting 54 in accordance with the old regulation, i.e. examination place, but that it might be possible to accept a further number in accordance with the provisions of the new rule. So far as could be understood there was nothing to hinder the contingent acceptance of a few more than the 54 who were fixed.

Skanke had no observations to make on this, and asked Monrad-Krohn if a few more could be admitted in addition to the 54.

Monrad-Krohn persisted on this that an addition to the 54 would increase the waiting lists.

Frisch. Such a formulation of the rule can well be imagined as would be acceptable.

Monrad-Krohn. It is probable that such a formula can be found, if there is good will on the part of the Department.

Skanke. But if we try to find such a solution and it fails, and we arrive at the beginning of term in January, then it will be a catastrophe.

Frische. Yes, then it will be a catastrophe.

Solberg. The provision that there shall be no political consideration must be incorporated in the rule.

Skanske. Nasjonal Sealing must not be mentioned there.

Frisch. Of course, the name Nasjonal Sealing must not be there, but it must be expressly laid down that political considerations are not to apply. So the word "politics" or "political" must not (sic) appear.

Skanske would prefer that this did not appear either.

Monrad-Krohn. The wording of the regulation may be postponed for later discussion.

Hoel, urged that an alteration of the rules was greatly needed. He had himself been a "privatist" and a teacher for 10 years in two-year schools (gymnasier) in Oslo, so he had a plentiful experience of how much worse pupils from such schools were situated than those who could afford to go through the three year course. His experiences under this head had been confirmed by going through the year's applications to the Pharmaceutical Institute. "Privatists" are now practically excluded from becoming doctors, dentists and pharmacists, and this must surely be described as a great injustice.

Further, regard to locality must be paid in the selection of students. As things are at present, large parts of the country are not represented in the selection of students. Of the 40 on the waiting list of the Pharmaceutical Institute, 14 are from country schools, 13 from Oslo and Akers, and 13 from other towns. The three most northerly counties are only represented by one man.

The result was that it was agreed, on Rector Hoel's proposal, to request the three faculties with limited admission (numerus clausus), the Medical, Mathematical-Natural Science, and the Dental, to appoint representatives (besides the respective Deans) to discuss with Hoel the drafting of amended rules for admission. It was mentioned that it ought however to be stressed that the Deans thought it would probably be difficult to be ready in so short a time.

Oslo, September 25, 1943.

(Signed by the six Deans and the Rector Hoel).