In consideration of my desire to be of assistance to future historians of Roosevelt University, I, Hermann Bowersox, hereby authorize and approve that the interview with me recorded on December 4, 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 so grant permission to the users of the Archives for the publication of this interview or portions thereof.

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Mr. Perlman: You have been with this institution from the beginning and were one of the founders and have been in position to observe it over the years in a number of capacities, including that of faculty trustees.

Mr. Bowersox: Only in recent years.

DHP: Yes. As a member and chairman of the Senate, and, as I guess I may have indicated to you, or maybe when Rolf announced this grant that I received, my interest is in studying the faculty participation on the Board of Trustees. How it evolved, what consequences it has had, what role the faculty have played and, in general, how the experience has matched up with the expectations. And I am curious to know whether initially my question is, what your thoughts are about why Roosevelt University came to adopt the policy of faculty representation on its governing board. That was quite radical at the time.

HB: Well, I don't know. I was not a part of that decision in any very important way. I did not help devise the Constitution. Henry Johnson and Wayne Leys were the chief people who, in 1945, wrote the Constitution. I suppose that faculty members were put upon the Board of Trustees because this was to be an institution in which the faculty had
some administrative power. Now it's commonly thought that the Board of Trustees, in some sense, “run” the institution. If the faculty is to have more power to run the institution, then they should be represented on the Board of Trustees. I assume, perhaps ignorantly, that that was the theory.

DHP: Do you think that there was a feeling at the time that the faculty would play a certain role?

HB: If there was any definition of the role, I was not aware of it. I doubt that the faculty role was ever defined. Perhaps the sentiment was “More power to the faculty or even all power to the faculty.” But the faculty role in administration was not, I think, clearly defined.

DHP: Well, that's interesting: “all power to the faculty.” Mr. Sparling has said that his initial proposal was to provide 51% of the representation on the Board from the faculty, and he suggests that it was the faculty that reduced this representation to 25%.

HB: That may well be true. As I said, I was only an instructor at that time, not a member of the committee that drew up the constitution, and I was not privy to those discussions. Henry Johnson would be a better person to consult in that matter than I, for he not merely helped to draw up our Constitution, but was also one of the earlier representatives on the Board of Trustees.
DHP: Do you have any feelings, or was it discussed among the faculty at the time as to what this was going to achieve?

HB: If so, I was not a part of those discussions and I do not know what was said.

DHP: So what you're saying is, at least as far as you were concerned, the participation of the faculty on the Board was sufficiently removed from the ordinary discussions among the faculty that it didn't involve you.

HB: I think so. Despite the fact that discussion at Roosevelt University is in some ways different from that of other institutions, there has been, at least in my experience, relatively little discussion as to how the University should be run. At least as far as I had heard it at faculty luncheons, there hasn't been too much discussion about that matter, or if there was, I haven't been a part of it. I recall that, in the early years of Roosevelt University, George Watson, then Professor of Political Science, was busy politicking, that is, seeking to get certain people elected or appointed to this position or another. I remember once telling George that all that had been produced by this politicking was a certain amount of animosity among the faculty and nothing else. He replied that it had assured us of the freedoms which we enjoy today. I said that we didn't have to fight to assure those freedoms, since they were written into the Constitution, and that the politicking was merely a power struggle
among various elements in the faculty. I took rather a cynical view of
the sort of maneuvering that went on among the faculty. The faculty
did have rather extraordinary powers by comparison with the powers
the faculties have at other institutions. Nevertheless, these powers
did not prevent a great deal of politicking which George defended on the
ground that this assured freedom, and I said it merely assured that
certain people rose to positions of power.

DHP: There was politicking as to who would get what kind of position
and appointment?

HB: Oh, let us say, election to this body or that body.

DHP: Was the position of faculty representation on the Board of Trustees
considered to be of such importance that it came in for this kind of
politicking?

HB: It may have, though I have no evidence. I could well imagine it
would have.

DHP: Do you think there was more politicking earlier than there is now
in the University?

HB: I have that feeling, though I can't demonstrate the truth of that
assertion.

DHP: Do you have a theory as to why this might be, if this is the case?
HB: Oh, I don't know. Maybe people got tired and discovered it wasn't
worth it.
DHP: Or maybe positions were thought to hold greater importance at an earlier date?

HB: That, I think, may be the second reason, for I once asked Alan Street, now retired, who was a member of the Board of Trustees, what he thought was the function of faculty members on the Board of Trustees. He felt they held a rather limited and a rather special position, though he didn’t, as I recall, define that special position.

DHP: I'm interested in your conversation with Alan Street about the role of the faculty trustee and what it could accomplish.

HB: I think his impression that it couldn’t accomplish very much. I must say that’s exactly my impression. I do not think that the faculty plays a very important role in the Board of Trustees and I don’t think it can.

HB: I think the Board of Trustees has rather limited function. It, of course, has certain legal duties which it performs. It also represents the institution to the community. It, therefore, I think, should be a prestigious organization. It, likewise, raises funds, and that, I think, is its chief function. The only people who can raise funds are rich people. The “fat cats” talk to “fat cats.” They do not talk to college professors; of course, they may talk to them, but such talk does not
raise money. If it is the primary business of the Board of Trustees to raise money, and I think it is, then I think the Board of Trustees should consist of those people who have the kind of contacts that, bring in money. Few, if any professors, have such contacts. If, the Board of Trustees were actually to participate in the running of the institution, that is to say, take over the functions of the President, the Deans, the Department Chairmen and, to a certain extent, the faculty themselves, I think the result would be absolute disaster. If there is a president who commands the respect of the Board of Trustees and is not too actively opposed by the faculty, then the Board of Trustees will take the President’s word for things, and I think it has to do that. As soon as the Board of Trustees loses confidence in the President, that is to say, feels that the President does not have the support of the majority of his faculty, then all is chaos. I think then the President has to go. Short of that, the Board of Trustees should listen to the President.

DHP: Rather than to individual faculty?

HB: I feel, as a matter of fact that when certain faculty members oppose a proposal that has general faculty approval and that, finally reaches the Board of Trustees for approval, it is futile and unwise to continue one’s opposition if the President supports it, for there is no time in the Board of Trustees for discussions of this sort. The Board of Trustees, at its
bi-monthly meetings meets merely, as it were, to give legal approval to things which, in effect, have already been done or are about to be done. There is not time for discussion. And I don't think the Board of Trustees can operate in any other way. The work of running the institution is necessarily done by, let us say, certain top administrators (who, of course, must be responsive to faculty opinion); and, within the Board of Trustees, the essential work of the Board of Trustees is done by the Executive Committee on which the faculty has at present one vote, a sufficient number. In effect, the real work, I think, goes on in the Executive Committee and in the recommendations of the President. I think the Board of Trustees can do nothing but accept. So then, what remains as the function of the faculty members? It seems to me they have very little function on the Board of Trustees, except, possibly, to give the trustees some sort of sense of contact with the University as a whole. That's what I meant when I said in the Senate that I thought our function was ceremonious. This statement was attacked by Mr. Weisskopf and Mr. Johnson. But I take that seriously. I think ceremony has a certain place. It is our business to be agreeable to the trustees and to somehow make them feel, although it's only a feeling and not a fact, that they are in touch with the realities of the institution. Now there is one exception to this. When there was a split in the Board of Trustees
as there was during Mr. Sparling's regime on the Auditorium Theatre, its restoration, then it seems to me, the matter might have been swayed, one way or another, by faculty members. They might have commanded enough votes to have swayed the decision. But short of a split in the Board of Trustees where votes are needed to support the President, I don't know what else the faculty could do. May I say I think that the Board has made a couple of fairly serious mistakes, and the presence of faculty members on the Board has not saved them from those mistakes. The first and most obvious mistake was the selection of Mr. Pitchell, which was quickly recognized as a mistake. So far as I know, no faculty member opposed the selection of Mr. Pitchell. A second matter, of which I am less certain about, but I have some strong feelings about, was the erection of the Crown Center. It seems to me that very valuable land has been used to give a residence to no more than 400 students who ought to be housed somewhere out of the Loop. Land is so precious that it ought not to be used as housing. Well, I do not know how that came into existence, but I know of no faculty members who opposed it. So the faculty members on a board of trustees do not prevent its making errors; so what good are they? And they don't raise money; they can't raise money, except in rare instances, and they certainly won't raise as much money as people like our Chairman, Mr. Mesirow, and other people of that sort who have the right sort of social and business contacts with money.
DHP: You mentioned the Auditorium issue as one where you think the faculty did, or might have, influenced the vote.

HB: Might have; I don’t know.

DHP: Can you think of any other instances where the faculty members of the Board of Trustees influenced the outcome of a decision?

HB: I don’t know that they did there. All I can recall is that Mr. Runo, who represented a certain faction of the faculty, frequently cast a negative vote in Board meetings, and I thought it was a sheer waste of time for him to do so. It merely wasted our time. It accomplished nothing.

DHP: In other words, you attached no importance to the fact that he had a vehicle in which to do this?

HB: No. He didn’t represent the majority of the faculty, either. This is going to put me on the spot because, if the Senate passes the recommendation to create a College of Education, which I seriously oppose, then how am I going to vote on the Board of Trustees? I’m not going to vote for it. I may cast a negative vote, but I shall make no fight to kill it, because once it receives the approval of the Deans and the Senate, it’s too late to change the decision.

DHP: It’s my understanding of this issue, and you were here at the time, that this came up once before, but was in fact stopped just at that point.

HB: I was told it was not. I was told that Frances Horwich was given a clean bill to go ahead and establish a College of Education, if she could
raise the money. The story, as I heard it, was that she was unable to raise the money and, therefore, there was no College of Education. There are some sub-committees of the Board of Trustees which are supposed to be concerned with planning. It seems to me that such committees cannot, in any real sense, plan for the University. Even the Planning Committee is, I think, an extremely ineffective institution. It hasn’t done very much for the University. But, however ineffective the Planning Committee of the University has been, this corresponding committee of the Board of Trustees is certain to be less effective. It was created a long time ago but never met. Last year it met on rare occasions--two or three times. It doesn’t meet often enough to do anything, and so no problems were presented to it. It was asked, "What do you think about this?" "What do you think about that?" But no concrete problems were presented to that committee upon which they could reach a decision. And, indeed, I suppose the shouldn’t be presented with any concrete problems, because they aren't close enough to the workings of this University to arrive at any sensible judgments. So I keep wondering exactly what that committee is supposed to do. And incidentally, I think some of the committee members do too, if I can gauge their temper. Nevertheless, the committee meetings are fairly enjoyable. DHP: It’s kind of enjoyable, but you don’t feel that it’s really productive.
HB: The last time, for example, was spent, properly, introducing Mr. Olscamp and examining some of his ideas. But in no sense did it plan for the University, nor could it, because planning for the University is a continuous and tedious task. Board members cannot be engaged in continuous and tedious work except fund raising. They have to leave the running of the institution to the administration. It requires knowledge, it requires day-to-day work, decisions on thousands of points to which the Board of Trustees are not close enough. What I would like from the Board of Trustees, what we had under Spencer which has been discontinued under the present Chairman, are informal meetings where various issues were discussed but nothing decided. I don't know whether they accomplished anything, but they provided a sense of contact between the faculty members of the Board and the public members of the Board. There was an airing of opinion on various matters, and in this way, the faculty member could speak up and communicate his ideas to the Board and give the Board some sort of sense of what at least some faculty opinion is. Of course, the faculty often disagree among themselves. I remember Dick Hooker and I, on one occasion, disagreed very sharply about something, but at least the Board members got the idea that at least on one issue the faculty did not agree. I think those informal Board meetings have more value, than the meetings of the Planning Committee of the Board, for the sub-committee cannot in any
serious way plan for the University, whereas the entire Board can, through informal discussions, because it is acquainted with general problems and faculty sentiments about those problems.

DHP: You have expressed a fairly clear idea as to the function, or lack thereof of the faculty trustee, and I'm curious to know whether or not you think this is commonly or generally accepted on the part of the other faculty trustees or the other members of the Board?

HB: Well, Mr. Johnson and Mr. Weisskopf have asserted in public, and also in private, how sharply they disagree with me. So you'd better talk to them as to how and why they disagree with me. I speak only for myself.

DHP: That raises another thought. You say you speak only for yourself. At Board meetings, do the faculty trustees at Board meetings speak only for themselves or do they intend, in some way, to reflect what they understand is the general feeling among the faculty?

HB: Well, what they do and what they should do are two different things. This depends upon your concept of "representation." There are some faculty members who feel that they ought to represent the faculty, that is to say, they should get the consensus of the faculty and report that. My feeling is that board members should represent their own opinions. This is a delicate political question and if I had an opinion which was contrary to that of the faculty, I would make that known, but I would certainly express my own opinion. In short, I think that anybody elected to an office like
this should not merely be kind of a voice for the silent majority, but he ought express his best ideas on the subject, and if the silent majority doesn't like it, they don't elect him again. I think he ought always to express his own views. Many of the faculty disagree with me on this, but my view is that the faculty tries to elect the most intelligent, the best-informed people to these jobs. Then they should always take their own best judgments. Perhaps they've given more attention and study to a particular problem than the faculty has, and therefore they may not necessarily represent popular opinion and if their views run contrary often enough to popular opinion, then they fail at re-election. So a representative is not merely a mouthpiece for the majority; he represents his own best ideas. If he is aware that he is in conflict with those who support him, I think he ought to make that known, but still he states his own ideas.

DHP: You've indicated that the most intelligent and best people are elected, at least theoretically. How extensively do you think that the Senate considers the qualifications of its nominees?

HB: I can't answer that question. They have elected, I think, some very good people to the Board, and I think they've elected some very bad people. On the whole, I think elections to the Board have been fairly representative of a wide range of opinions, attitudes and abilities.

DHP: Do you think that the Senate, as a whole, has a consensus to what it is looking for in the election of a faculty trustee?
HB: I have no way of answering that question. I don't really know. I've never discussed it. I know why I vote for people for this, and why I don't vote for some.

DHP: What do you look for?

HB: I look for intelligence, judgment, and character. Some people I would not vote for because I regard them as hysterical or erratic, sometimes downright stupid, prejudiced, narrow. In other words, I mistrust them. I suppose it comes down to a matter of judgment and character, judgment above all.

DHP: The Senate, of course, elects the faculty representatives on the Board and provides on its agenda an opportunity for the faculty trustees to report.

HB: And there's nothing to say. For example, at the October meeting I made no report because all I could say was that we listened to the President's Report, which the Senate had heard a few days previously. And we listened to the report of the treasurer, which report I am not qualified to repeat, and we had some formal business which was, in a sense, of no concern of the Senate. There is really virtually nothing to report. The reason is that the Board meetings are formalities which ratify decisions and actions which often have already been approved elsewhere. They are, in a sense, a legalization of actions which have, in effect, almost already taken place. The Executive Committee recommends this, this is the money that's come in, we have done this, or we think this ought to be done, the President asks for it, the Treasurer, the Controller asks for it. We have no reason to
oppose it. You see, I have not been on the Board when there's been any serious controversy. In a controversial situation, I don't know. Then the faculty might be more important. But I have no experience there, so I can't speak. Board meetings are frankly a bore, except for the kind of pre-dinner or during-dinner conversation. And I suppose the public board members accept a position like this because they have a sense of responsibility: they are men of power, intelligence and money and they feel an obligation to do something for higher education, and I applaud them for their efforts.

DHP: We were talking about the election of the faculty trustees by the Senate and the reporting to the Senate. Two questions come to my mind in regard to that. One is, the report of the faculty trustees to the Senate is listed as a separate agenda item, and very often things enter into the routine of University business because at one time there was some sort of special crisis of some kind that made it very important to the Senate that there be a report from its faculty trustees. Was that the case with the report of the faculty trustees?

Mr. Bowersox: I don't recall the history.
DHP: Do you recall whether or not there has ever been an instance where the Faculty Senate has instructed or suggested to its representatives that it vote in one or another way, or take one or another position on an item of business?

HB: I can recall no such instances.

DHP: So, once they're elected, they're on their own and they operate in a Board meeting as they understand it?

HB: Some senators, whose views of the functional relation of the Senate to its constituency are different than mine, may seek out expressions of opinion. I think Richard Hooker was such a person who felt that he was a representative in the sense that he was the mouthpiece for the opinion of those who voted for him, or at least of the majority opinion in the Senate. And it may be that certain senators do that. But if there was going to be a divided vote on a matter in the Board of Trustees, I wouldn't have to seek out the opinion of the Senate because I would already know it, or could easily find out how the Senate had voted on the matter by consulting the Minutes. I would know from the Senate what its sentiment was, because most of the controversial matters that have come to the Board have already come to the Senate. So I don’t think it’s necessary to make any special investigation.

DHP: In your recollection, have there been any instances where the faculty trustees would caucus together as to how they would stand on a particular issue?
HB: If so, it's never come to my attention. I won't say it's never happened, but I have no experience of that. Again it seems to me the most likely time that it may have happened was during the controversies Mr. Sparling had with the Board which was, you know, accompanied by Board resignations and so on. It seems to me that you ought to interview the faculty members of the Board who were faculty members at that time. That was the time when such a thing might have gone on. But, if so, I was not privy to it.

DHP: Do you think that the faculty members on the Board of Trustees have, in any way, at any time, influenced either the outcome of an important Board decision or, in any way, the direction the University has taken?

HB: I would not know what it is. I couldn't say. I have no evidence they have ever done it.