

According To Abbot Jude

Board Of Trustees May Be Revised

The present structure of the Belmont Abbey College Board of Trustees is under serious consideration for revision by the Chapter of the Abbey. The Chapter is made up of all the finally professed monks.

The proposed revision would convert the present monastic Board of Trustees into one in which responsibility is shared with lay persons.

The Board is now composed of seven members, all of whom are from the monastery. Three are elected annually and three are appointed yearly by the Abbot. All are subject to re-election or re-appointment. The Abbot is the Chairman of the Board, ex-officio.

The other six members of the Board of Trustees presently include Fathers Peter Stragand, John Oetgen, Jerome Dollard, Kieran Neilson, James Solari, and Raphael Bridge.

In the last few years, the Board of Trustees has begun to function in a more democratic manner. Since all the members reside in the same building, meetings can be called at regular intervals or on almost a moment's notice. Any proposal can be approved by a simple majority.

A most important recent decision of the Board of Trustees was the approval of an administrative proposal to make the College co-educational.

However, the issue of visitation has brought about hesitation and apprehension.

The Board of Trustees also serves as the Seniors of the monastery. In this capacity, its members must approve all spending over a fixed amount. They also act as consultants and advisors to the Abbot.

These seven monks are the Board of Directors for the Southern Benedictine Society and the Board of Directors for the Virginia Benedictine Society, which determines the administrative policy for Richmond's Benedictine High School; a majority are also teachers and administrators at Belmont Abbey College.

These seven men who compose the Board of Trustees are members of the policy-making body whose decisions are executed through the President of Belmont Abbey College, Rev. John P. Bradley. Since some of the members are also educators and administrators, they are in the dual and possibly conflicting roles of being simultaneously "the boss" and "the bossed." Generally college boards of trustees play what is termed a "disinterested" role in arriving at decisions.

At most colleges the Board of Trustees is directly responsible for producing approximately half the money obtained in a fund raising drive. However, at Belmont Abbey College the members of the monastic board have taken a vow of poverty; thus the outside monetary support which most private colleges receive from their boards of trustees is non-existent.

In the present system, a complete membership turnover is possible every year. This can be detrimental to any long-term programs the Board initiates. One objective of any Board of Trustees is the maintenance of continuity in structure and policy.

Lay persons on the Board would become avenues which would make the local community aware of the monastic way of life and the function it serves at Belmont Abbey College.

Abbot Jude states, "We would select people of capacity, leadership, talent, and the knowledge of business operations who would incorporate their invaluable knowledge to help the well-being of the College. These people of wisdom and accomplishment in all facets of life will join with the monks in promoting the betterment of the College."

"Understandably, the present Board of Trustees lacks the background in business. However, they do possess a humanistic and religious concern which would be complemented if businessmen, educators, alumni and professionals were added to the Board of Trustees."

"It is naive to believe the monks can make all correct decisions on finance, business, and public relations."

"I am thoroughly convinced we need the change, but it is not a simple question. There are differing views which the monks must address and reconcile," said Abbot Jude.

"All change which is allowed to happen in an evolutionary way is the best type of change. People are permitted to live with it a while and get accustomed to it. Radical change is difficult to accept

because of a natural human reaction against great change."

Approximately eight years ago, in January, 1968, the monastic Board began looking toward lay participation on the Board of Trustees. Much time has elapsed since this idea of transition first appeared; thus, there is not a whole lot more to be known. "We have done enough looking," according to the Abbot; "the problem is deciding what we want to do and how to make the change come about."

"At the present, there is question about the best way to make the transition. There is a big difference between the theoretical need and the practical implementation," stated Belmont Abbey's fifth Abbot.

"There are mixed feelings in the monastic community. Some have serious, well-founded reservations."

"They tend to look at St. Leo's Abbey in Florida. There, the monks literally gave the college away to a Lay Board of Trustees. They transferred legal ownership of the properties and buildings. Animosity between the college and monastery grew to the extent that only three or four priests presently teach at the college. Perhaps, the monks of St. Leo's Abbey had lost their appreciation of the college long before they installed the new Board of Trustees which finally relieved them of all their responsibility to the college."

"At St. Procopius in Lyle, Illinois, a more sensible change was made; yet, there are certain reservations regarding the wisdom of that change."

"Although the change is not perfectly accepted by everyone, in balance with the risks, I feel it is well worth trying," concluded the Abbot.

Since discussion of the transition began so long ago, it now should be easier to achieve, although the exact procedure is still not clear in Abbot Jude's mind.

The present proposal visualizes a lay board as a body consisting of approximately seventeen members. The Abbot would be a member ex-officio; however, he wouldn't necessarily be the Chairman of the Board, since the chairman would be elected by the board members. Four or five Benedictines would be included on the board.

Several questions remain in the proposal. First, how would the new members of the Board be chosen? Would the Board or the monastery elect them? If the Board elected the members, would they be subject to approval by the monastery?

Would the monastery submit to having the Board elect the clerical representatives, or would they want to elect their own representatives?

An ideal if, of course, that the Board be self-perpetuating. But will the monastery relinquish some of the controls it has had over the college for a hundred years?

Also, who would legally own the buildings and properties -- the college or the Southern Benedictine Society?

Not only how will the Board be instituted, but when, is another fact that drifts into one's mind.

According to Abbot Jude, "My best hopes would be to clear the way in the next couple of months to allow full discussion and, hopefully, decision on this important matter. Given approval, we might then have the new Board in the fall of 1976."

Although the long-range effect of this transition will be tremendous, since the lines of responsibility in the College would be more clearly drawn, the short-range effects can be foreseen more clearly. Immediate effects of a new board of Trustees would include the lifting of the "veil of mystery" which has separated Belmont Abbey from its local community, a more successful Fund Drive, an improved psychological awareness both within the Belmont Abbey Community and on the part of others in the area, and perhaps even the disappearance of hesitation and apprehension about the issue of visitation.

Even though these immediate effects can be numbered, concern for the future improvements of this school is vital.

In Abbot Jude's words, "The importance of this concern is that interest in what is going to happen in the future is very important. It is very important for us to look to the future for those who will come after us, just as those who came before were looking out for us."



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B.A.E.T. What is it?

B.A.E.T. What is it? These initials stand for the newest organization on Abbey campus, the Belmont Abbey Emergency Team, conceived to fill the emergency and everyday medical needs of the campus when the nurse isn't on duty.

You may ask why an "emergency team" is needed on a campus of only 800 students. In the past, it was noticed that someone was needed on campus with first aid training for when the nurse was off-duty. Therefore, the resident assistants were instructed in standard multi-media first aid, an eight hour course. To some students though, a better trained individual seemed to be needed. For that reason, the Belmont Abbey Emergency Team was formed. Each Belmont Abbey Team member has 61 hours of emergency first aid training, which includes advanced first aid.

The area of coverage for the emergency team is the buildings and campus of Belmont Abbey. In the future the emergency team will offer its services at all intramural functions and any special events happening on the college campus. Any club or organization on Abbey campus which is having a special event has but to ask for help. Of course, all this is in addition to providing services for the dormitories at night.

The present members of the team are Tim Lawson, 301-C R.A.; Bob Breiner, 302-B R.A.; and Fred Moench, 301-D R.A. All members are qualified in emergency first-aid with emergency room experience.