

The University of Chicago

Office of the Vice-President and Business Manager

ROOM 1838, 230 S. CLARK ST.  
TELEPHONE DEARBORN 9312

November Twenty Five  
1 9 2 4

*Dr. J. Y. Aitchison*  
*I have not had time*  
*to review. However, you*  
*can get my point*  
*from this draft.*  
*WV*

*Cooperated with*  
*Dr. J. Y. Aitchison*  
*Civic Committee*

*441*

Dr. J. Y. Aitchison  
The University of Chicago

Dear Dr. Aitchison:

Here is a matter upon which I should like your advice. I know it deals with things in which the University could be very helpful to this community. The question is whether it is a service which comes within the special matters which concern the University now in identifying itself with this community; and also ~~whether~~ it is concerned with the general question of service which the University ought to seek to render, or ~~whether~~ it has special capacity to do so.

I personally have been called upon for the last number of years to represent this office in a number of civic and commercial organizations. These organizations such as for example, the Association of Commerce, the Buildings Owners and Managers Association, the Union League Club, the City Club and various State Bodies to which I have been appointed, take up matters of a fundamental character, such as the question of taxation reform, both in matters of constitutional and legislative authorization and in administrative procedure.

Time and again the committee or conference will arrive at a definite conclusion as to what the problem involved is and as to the general plan by which relief is to be accomplished. Time and again the matter rests in that position mainly for two reasons: first, the individual members of the committee or conference, with the demands of their daily work are unable to devote their attention to the detailed study and preparation of the plan for relief; second, the members of the committee or conference will not have in themselves, or in their connections, access to expert information and advice. A third reason that frequently crops out is the lack of funds to retain the special intelligence necessary to prepare a detailed plan.

To make the issue specific, I have just left a conference of the Committee on Revenue and Legislation of the Association of Commerce at which a number of leading business and professional men were present, which resulted in appointment of a sub-committee composed of Mr. Judson Stone, the Manager of the McCormick estates, Mr. Willis Baird, a prominent real estate man whom you doubtless know, myself and one or two others whose names were to be added. This Committee probably will have access to the expert staffs of the Bureau of Public Efficiency, the Civic Federation and the Committee of One Hundred.



These staffs, however, as good as they are and assuming we can get all that they are able to give us, will undoubtedly need to be supplemented, if the job is well done, by other expert service.

Now if in such a situation, the members of our Department of Political Science who know about state revenue matters, and there are several men in our faculty who are quite competent in this field, could be related to the work of this Committee and similar Committees wherein these faculty men have special knowledge and competency, it would be a distinct contribution, which the business men and others directly associated with the work would recognize, it would tend to establish far better than pamphlets do the principle of the community of interests between the University and the City whose name it bears.

These questions upon which help is needed for their solution, are questions of fundamental civic concern and the help which the University faculties would be asked to give would be on questions of fact and of principle and would not involve taking sides upon controversial issues.

The question of the compensation to the individual rendering such service might be involved; however, in the particular question that I have used above as an illustration, I believe that Mr. Viner or Mr. White or others on the faculty would be competent within a very short time to make a substantial and important report to the Committee referred to.

As a part of this report, the Committee wishes to have a statement of the case prepared, setting forth the recent history of the taxation question in this State; the methods which have been advanced for correction; the apparent reasons for failure and the arguments for and against the present recommendation.

It may be that this kind of service is precisely what the Local Community Research Committee is organized for, provided the financial participation, which I understand the Committee makes a condition, is met. ~~However the matter be, other cause having one or two demonstrations made of the capacity of the local research Committee to participate in service of this character as a sample demonstration of capacity and time, be prepared to meet opportunities for other service upon a partial cost to provided basis.~~

From the faculty standpoint, I think it would be helpful in relating these members of the faculties to leading citizens and organizations and to live questions of fundamental character in this community. Perhaps some appropriation as of a research foundation character, would need to be made, if it were available, to take care of the time and materials involved. The method of making such a service available would of course have to be studied and put upon a definite, practical basis.

These staffs, however, as good as they are and assuming we can get all that they are able to give us, will undoubtedly need to be supplemented, in the job as well done, by other expert services.

Now if in such a situation, the members of our Department of Political Science who know about state revenues matters, and there are several men in our faculty who are quite conversant in this field, could be relied to do the work of this kind and similar committees wherein these faculty men have special knowledge and competency, it would be a distinct contribution, which the trustees and others directly associated with the work would recognize, it would tend to establish far better than pamphlets do the principle of the necessity of inter-ests between the University and the City whose name it bears.

These questions upon which help is needed for their solution, are questions of fundamental civic concern and the help which the University faculties would be asked to give would be on questions of fact and of principle and would not involve taking sides upon controversial issues.

The question of the compensation to the individual rendering such service might be involved; however, in the present question that I have used above as an illustration, I believe that Mr. White or others on the faculty would be competent within a very short time to make a substantial and important report to the Committee referred to.

As a part of this report, the Committee wishes to have a statement of the case prepared, setting forth the recent history of the taxation question in this State; the methods which have been advanced for correction; the apparent reasons for failure and the arguments for and against the present recommendations.

It may be that this kind of service is precisely what the local community research committee is organized for. I provided the financial particulars which I understand the committee has a right to see. I am sure the committee will be able to do the work of this kind and similar committees which are organized in various parts of the State for the purpose of providing a service of this kind to the community. I am sure that the committee will be able to do the work of this kind and similar committees which are organized in various parts of the State for the purpose of providing a service of this kind to the community.

From this faculty standpoint, I think it would be helpful in relating these matters of the faculty to leading citizens and organizations and to give questions of fundamental character in this community. Perhaps the organization as of a research committee character, would need to be made, if it were possible, to take care of the time and materials involved. The method of making such a service available would of course have to be studied and put upon a definite, practical basis.

My conclusion, however, is that if such a basis can be secured, I know there will come up again and again as there is now available at this time a splendid opportunity for the University to serve the community and the State in which it exists and to its credit, and I believe to its ultimate profit.

Aside from the general question therefore, I should like your advice as to how the particular need in connection with the proposal for a study and report in connection with many civic advances in Chicago and in the State can be met by some of our faculty men, wise in this field. The precise thing desired is as follows:

(a) A phrasing of a constitutional amendment of the revenue article in order to make taxes more equitable and its collection more efficient.

(b) A statement of the taxation <sup>question</sup> sketch and its history leading up to the argument which suggests the statement in (a) above as the appropriate plan.

If through the agency or help of the University faculties, either or both of these requirements would be met, I am sure it would be one of the large things to attract attention to the University as a servant of this community, and of a servant worthy of its hire. There has been much material in the last ten years on the subject and the two requirements are in themselves not difficult or burdensome as to time to men who are familiar with the material, as Viner and some of the others no doubt are, who will have the co-operation and advice of the men in the various organizations referred to.

If, then, through you, the general and the special question could be considered with the President and with the members of the local community research committee, and an indication given of what help can be given by the University and upon what terms, we would be obliged.

Yours very truly,

GOF:JW

*G.O.F.*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
George O. Fairweather

My conclusion, however, is that if such a book can be secured, I know I will come up again and again as there is not available to this time a sufficient opportunity for the University to serve the community and the state in which it exists and to its credit, and I believe to its credit.

Aside from the general question mentioned above, I would like your advice as to how the particular need in connection with the proposal for a study and report in connection with many civic activities in Chicago and in the State can be met by some of our faculty members, also in this line. The precise thing desired is as follows:

(a) A study of a representative sample of the revenue receipts in order to make better use of the collection more efficient.

(b) A statement of the taxation laws and the history leading up to the argument which suggests the amendment in (a) above as the appropriate plan.

If through the agency or help of the University faculty, either or both of these requirements would be met, I am sure it would be one of the fairest things to request attention to the University as a service of this community, and of a service worthy of its hire. There has been much material in the last few years on the subject and the two requirements are in themselves not difficult or burdensome as to time to men who are familiar with the material, as Viner and some of the others so fondly are who will have the co-operation and advice of the men in the various organizations referred to.

If, then, through you, the general and the special question could be considered with the President and with the members of the local community research committee, and an indication given of what help can be given by the University and upon what terms, as stated above, I would be glad to accept the same.

Yours very truly,

W. L. Y. Johnson

W. L. Y. Johnson