

- Alan: James Stacey Coles, the president of Bowdoin College. The subject of tonight's discussion will be, "Should Bowdoin go coed?" Now, here is the program director of WBOR, Jim [De Gallo].
- Jim De Gallo: Evening, and welcome to Forum. I'm Jim De Gallo. And with me as my guest is President James Stacey Coles, president of the college. We are here this evening to discuss should Bowdoin go coeducational. And before going into the discussion, I would like to remind you, the listening audience, that you can participate in this discussion simply by dialing extension 210 and asking your question. Good evening, President Coles.
- President James...: Good evening Jim.
- Jim De Gallo: President Coles, Bowdoin is often called a monastery because supposedly we have a lack of girls and an oversupply of chapel. Now I have heard the argument often stated that men and women are exposed to one another throughout their lives, and often must compete in their occupations and that this should be the basic goal of a college, to prepare its students for their adult life. They should do this by making their college environment like life itself. Now, could you comment on this please?
- President James...: Well, I don't think Bowdoin is a monastery by any means, as I walk about the campus, particularly on a Friday, Saturday or Sunday, it has many appearances which are far from monastic. So I don't think this is the situation. So far as adult life is concerned, most of the life of a businessman or a member of a college faculty is essentially a male world. You can look at the Congress and count the number of women who are in our Congress, count the number of women who are in major executive positions in business. Take the total number of women on college faculties across the land. It's essentially a male world. So if you want to speak about preparation for life and the business world or the professional world in which you live, we have much more of this at Bowdoin than you would in a college which is coeducational.
- Jim De Gallo: Now, President Coles, it's also stated that because of Bowdoin's geographical location, in that there are not many girls school in the area, the situation found at Amherst and other all men schools, that we should go coed. What do you feel about this?
- President James...: Well, are there lots of reasons to go coed. The basic underlying reason that you've just given is just told us to have more dates close at hand, and it's presently the situation. I don't think this is the reason the college should go coed or not. It should go coed to perform some essential function and education. A college doesn't become coed just for the convenience of the students there so far as as dating is concerned.
- Jim De Gallo: Now, going on with this argument of coed, many students on this campus complain of the apathy that is found on the campus. Don't you think that female

stimulation would change this and to go further, that it would so straighten the so-called Bowdoin tattered dress?

President James...: Well, I don't know as I agree with the tattered dress, there was a recent newspaper article, very recent in fact, which says that Bowdoin students dress casually, tattered trousers, elbows out sweaters, dungarees, and sweatshirts are marks of distinction. This is a long way from the campus I see when I walk across it day by day. I would say that comparing Bowdoin students with students on other campuses that they are just about as well dressed as any of them.

So far as dress is concerned, I've talked with the presidents of coed colleges to ask if the men on their campus dress better because it is a coeducational college and they said they didn't see how they could dress any worse. I'm not quite sure that this is true. I haven't noticed, for example, that the Bowdoin students dress any different when there are dates around than they do when there aren't dates around.

Jim De Gallo: I, to go along with your comment, I agree that I don't know if coeducational schools change in their dress because I've been to Brandeis a few times, and I think they're quite well-known for their dress or their lack of it, if you might put that way, but going on further with this newspaper article, the title of it is, "Bowdoin may establish a woman's college." Is this really true?

President James...: Well, this article, which is in a paper today, was based upon a question which I received this morning over the telephone. The education editor for the Gannett Papers telephoned to ask about a report which had come in from Kenyon College, that Kenyon College was forming a coordinate women's college. And I said I didn't know anything about it. And he said, "Well, is there any plan at Bowdoin may do this?" And I said, "There is nothing which is under any discussion now." And he said, "Well, could there be?" And I said [crosstalk] and this is precisely what I said. And this is what he has accurately reported in quotation marks, "If a suitable physical plan became available, that would lend itself to such a change, I'm sure the idea would be seriously considered by the board of trustees." Well, this is a long way from the fact that we may establish a women's college or that we're planning to establish a women's college. Bowdoin may win the Rose Bowl next year, but I doubt very much that we're going to.

Jim De Gallo: If Bowdoin wanted to go coed, do you think we would have the facilities for such a change?

President James...: Well, this is the basic problem or one of the basic problems about Bowdoin becoming coeducational. If you look at it seriously, and we've been looking at it semi-facetiously up to this point, but looking at it seriously, suppose Bowdoin didn't want to become a coeducational institution. I'm not recommending this and I would not recommend it. I don't think there are any of the trustees or the overseers who would give any very serious contemplation to this, because I think that they realize the factors involved, but if we wanted to go coed, a

successful coeducational college has to have roughly a 50:50 ratio of men to women. They will usually attempt to have perhaps 60% men and 40% women. The reason for this is that theoretically the girls are somewhat happier if there are a few more men around than there are girls around. The men don't become over-confident if there are extra girls, as they might, if the extra girls around were falling all over themselves to get dates with the men.

But this is about the ratio you'd have. Now, say a college of 900 men, which is roughly what Bowdoin is, if we were to be coeducational, this means that we would have to have about 1600 or so in the college altogether to make it come out in about the right ratio. In other words, 900 men and 700 women. While a college of 1600 is no longer a small college in the sense that Bowdoin is a small college now, and so you have your choice immediately. Do you want to change the type of college Bowdoin is by roughly doubling its size, which we would have to do to become coeducational. Alternatively you can say, "Well, we don't have to double the size, just cut down on the number of men you want to take in, to take in more women," while the other extreme, of course, would be to keep the size at 900 and say, "Let's cut back the number of men to 500." This will give you room to take in 400 women. And again, you could have a coeducational college.

I doubt very much that our governing boards or our alumni or others, who are interested in the college would contenance cutting back our male enrollment to 500. This has caused very serious difficulties in many ways. Of course this year, we're having perhaps 13 or 1400 applications for admission for men. We'll have 600 perfectly well-qualified applicants at least under this number. And to cut back our admissions to support a college of say, 500 men means cutting it back and admissions back to about, oh, 140 to 150 incoming freshmen, male freshmen, as compared to the 240 that we have now.

This isn't anything which I think that I'm prepared to recommend for Bowdoin college. Now in between you see, you say, "All right, well, let's not double the size. Let's cut back the men somewhat and take in some more women." Well, even cutting back the men a little bit, I don't think would be good. We saw a good many reasons for increasing the number of men in the college from about 775 to 925, which is the increase you're undergoing now. Now, the alumni supported this to the extent of raising \$10 million to make this increase in size possible. The governing board has supportive it wholeheartedly. I doubt very much that we're preparing to cut back on the number of men we have admitted. I doubt very much that we're prepared to say that Bowdoin should be a college of 1600 students instead of 900 students. This would have a very marked change in the character of the institution. So this is a basic and fundamental problem that you have, so far as going coeducational is concerned.

Jim De Gallo:

Now, instead of doubling the size, as you were stating, couldn't you say have 300 girls and 800 men or 900 men, having a school of 1200, which is not a large institution?

President James...: Oh, a ratio of 900 men to 300 girls is that sort of token coeducation, one might say. It certainly is contrary to the best recommendations of people familiar with the equalities of coeducation. This means that you'd have 300 men who could get dates on a given weekend, assuming that every single girl in the college is datable, coed campuses I've been on haven't necessarily proven that out to be the case. Then you have 600 hungry wolves hanging around the doorstep. I don't know if this is an especially healthy situation and, of course, the people who aren't familiar with coeducation don't necessarily recommend this ratio of 900 to 300.

Jim De Gallo: Now, as we've ruled out the Bowdoin going coed itself, as this article has stated as I want to ask you, there's been talk of forming a sister school, in the immediate area of Brunswick, which would supply the feminine companionship to the Bowdoin men. But however, would have academically, very high standards. The facilities could be built, especially for the women. And you could have say 300 women in its own school, and we would not have the same problems as mixing them together in a coed situation. Do you agree with this?

President James...: Well, to me, and I speak personally here, I'm not speaking officially because the governing boards have never even discussed this matter, but to me, this would make a lot more sense, to have a coordinate college for women closely associated with Bowdoin, sharing a good many of its facilities, library, faculty, other facilities. This I think could be done because this would mean that Bowdoin could remain the same size and have the qualities of the small college.

The coordinated women's college can also be a small college and you have the quantities which are associated with that. There can be a sharing of courses, particularly in the upper class courses, which are apt to be less likely populated and where you could take in more students without overcrowding them. This would lend itself to a lot of advantages. This is the sort of thing, you had this at Jackson and Tufts. You have it Radcliffe and Harvard. You have it at Brown and Pembroke, at Barnard and Columbia. You have it out at Hobart and William Smith. These are all examples where this has been done successfully. Kenyon College announced that this considering such a plan. I noticed in the article about it, that the undergraduates at Kenyon are opposed to this. They don't think it's a good idea.

Jim De Gallo: Has it been any reason for that?

President James...: Well, the undergraduates give their reasons for that, just to quote a few of them like John Scofield of Philadelphia says he doesn't like the idea. Tom [Car] of Evanston, Illinois. He doesn't like the idea. Both say they'd prefer dating on weekends and studying hard during the week. They don't want female distractions. Quote, the newspaper. Car said most Kenyon men don't want the obligation of dressing carefully and having study dates. You know, I went to a coed college. I don't know whether you knew this or not. I used to have studied dates, mostly dates and very little study, the way they worked out. Then with

the sister school concept, we could have the 300 women and 800 men without having the problems of a coed combination.

Jim De Gallo: If you had a sister school and you could have a four or five or 600 women and still not change the size of Bowdoin as a college, you wouldn't be limited to having a small number of women. You could have a school of any number of women you wanted to.

President James...: I would think it'd be better to keep it somewhat smaller than the 900 that Bowdoin's going to have on this campus.

Jim De Gallo: Do you think Bowdoin would have the financial resources to establish such a school?

President James...: No, we don't have the financial resources now. We'd have to go out and seek them. This means that you would have to have the opportunity. And this is a matter of finding someone who would be sufficiently interested in good high quality women's education to want to provide a good basic endowment for it.

Jim De Gallo: Knowing the alumni as you do and having contact with them, do you think the alumni would be appreciative of this move and do you think they would back it?

President James...: I think there would be some alumni who would back this type of activity, whether there would be any alumni who had the wherewithal to provide the endowment is another question, but I think there would be alumni. And I think that eventually such a college could be endowed. You'd have the questions [inaudible] such a college, would you do it on the basis of the Claremont colleges in California, where each new college that's associated with the group as a separate board of trustees and separate president, or would do you want to do it keeping it under the control of the single board of trustees or the single president. Perhaps separate deans for the different campuses. These would be questions which would have to be very carefully studied and carefully thought out.

Jim De Gallo: Alan, do we have another question?

Alan: Yes, [inaudible] student has called in and asked of the position of the married student at Bowdoin. The wife of a student has no real social or academic position, as one student referred to it. What is President Cole's view on the situation, there being 25 or 26 married students in campus at the present time?

President James...: Well, I can't really say much about the married student at Bowdoin. Bowdoin has always been very liberal in recognizing that students could be married. For example, until the end of World War Two, where Amherst and Williams would not permit any student who was married to remain in college. A number of these students used to transfer to Bowdoin, and Bowdoin has permitted married students back to the turn of the century. We don't have any special

program for married students. We don't provide married student housing. That the student who is married, we consider that to be his own personal affair. We admit the man to college. We don't admit a married couple to college, and we trust that the married students can provide among themselves some sort of a social life. Marriage for a student is a very important decision to make. And these are decisions which we assume the student is taken very seriously.

He's given it careful consideration that he realizes that while he is in college and studying, that his wife is sitting at home and doesn't have the opportunities that she will have when he's out of college. This is not related to coeducation so far as I can see.

Jim De Gallo: Just answering maybe the person who asked this question, giving him a better answer. Do you think it would be possible in this situation for the married lady to audit courses or get credit, slowly but surely, toward a degree?

President James...: Well, this is of course possible now. We have had married students where the wives have enrolled at Bates College or Westbrook Junior College, been able to take courses and get credit toward their degrees there. And of course, if there were a coordinate women's college in the area and the person were qualified for admission, why, certainly they could be admitted there and pursue their degree there.

Jim De Gallo: Going back to our original topic, should Bowdoin go coed, and the sister school, we discussed that Bowdoin does not have the resources, as such, to establish a separate sisters school. Wouldn't it perhaps be financially within Bowdoin's range if we allow the girls to be coeds on this campus, use our facilities and classrooms and only had dorms that were a distance away?

President James...: Well, this would be quite different and I certainly wouldn't recommend that we go into a new type of educational venture on the shoe string sort of basis.

Jim De Gallo: Now on the sisters school, I've also heard rumors to the effect that the sister school being planned by Bowdoin-

President James...: [No] sister school being planned by Bowdoin, let's have that made emphatic here and now, there's no such thing, regardless of what any newspaper reporter says.

Jim De Gallo: Well, the plans I had heard, I'll rephrase my question. They're not being planned, but do you think Bowdoin would like to make, if it established a sister school, an experimental type of school, in which it would try new things and give Bowdoin the image of being a school that was far forward, say the trimester system, a full honor system, a social honor system? You think this would be workable if we did this to a sister school, and if it worked, apply this to Bowdoin?

President James...: Well, the experimental schools are [been] and particularly the experimental schools for women. There are two of them which are notable examples, which I won't mention by name, but it's awfully hard to have an experimental school, as a successful experimental school, remain experimental because after it's been successful and has established a new pattern, after four years it's no longer experimental, it's in a pattern of its own tradition. And so it no longer is an experiment. I would say that the Bowdoin tradition has been the tradition of a conservative high quality, thoughtful, educational program. And that if we were to establish a women's college at all, why, it would be one which would be established in this tradition.

Jim De Gallo: I'd liked to interrupt this conversation, just a moment to remind the audience you're listening to WBOR, 91.1 mega cycles on your FM dial. The broadcast from Moulton Union, Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine. You're listening now to Forum with President Coles, discussing the subject, should Bowdoin go coeducational?

And if you'd like to take part in this discussion, call extension 210 on the campus phone system. Now, President Coles, as I was discussing our subject at dinner at my fraternity this evening, it was suggested that the college, since we are limited geographically for dates and women, that Bowdoin should established or subsidize a bus route, or establish somehow closer relations with Bates, Colby and Westbrook Junior College to allow dates and a freer exchange of relations between the schools. Do you think this is possible?

President James...: I would think that if this were to be done, this should be done on a basis of student initiative, if there's sufficient desire for it. And perhaps it will be done through the student union committee or in some fashion like that, perhaps from the student council, by having a special board, a board of transportation established with the student council. Oh, this is pretty much an extracurricular activity and I would think it might be best run as an extracurricular activity. Well, the college might assist with bus transportation, it being at the opening or close of [colonies] to run special buses into Boston and New York. And here again, we've talked a lot about this with other colleges, for example, Middlebury College, and they've tried this and it hasn't been very successful. They found out that very few students really want to ride on these buses. And they finally, for the last I knew we'd given it up, but so far as running dating buses to Westbrook or to Colby or Bates, I would think this would be pretty much up to the student initiative and they're doing this if they thought there was sufficient demand for it.

Jim De Gallo: However, don't you think if the college had a regular weekly run, that it would allow it a freer exchange rather than students, since it is expensive to a [charter bus], being able to do it once a month at best?

President James...: Well I would think the students might subscribe to this and perhaps apply to the blanket tax committee for funds to subsidize this, if they think there's sufficient

need for it. I have a hard time justifying going out on an annual alumni fund drive and saying to the alumni, "Bowdoin College needs money. We need it badly. We've got to run buses to Westbrook Junior college for the undergraduate side." I just think this is a little bit outside the range of educational activity, even though I'm sure that some students find it quite educational to be on the Westbrook campus.

Jim De Gallo: Alan, do we have another question?

Alan: One student would like to know has the need for a woman's college [up] ever at any time been established?

President James...: Oh, this is really the key question. And this is getting down to the heart of it. The answer, very frankly, is so far as I know the need for a women's college at Bowdoin has not been proved. There are a lot of expressions of desire for this on the part of some students and on the part of some faculty. Certainly the need for high quality education for women, I think, has been proved again and again. And if this is possible through coordination with a high quality men's college, why this is one way that this can be provided. The need for additional opportunities in education during the next 10 years for the increasing number of people who want to go to college has been proved and there have to be new colleges established. I think this is much better than to have older colleges just become larger or the state universities become larger. This touches a little bit on some of the things we were talking about last week, but so far as a need right here at Bowdoin having been proved, I think the answer to that has to be, no, it has not been.

Jim De Gallo: Alan?

Alan: One student would like to know whether or not Bowdoin is able to encourage relations between Bates and Colby or any other local schools and Bowdoin, insofar as joint dramatic productions, joint lectures, and an intermingling of both faculties.

President James...: [inaudible] I've had a good bit of a inter-relationship with Bates and Colby. The most successful venture of this kind has been with respect to the Colby Bates Bowdoin Educational Telecasting Corporation, which runs WCBB channel 10. There are a lot of problems in connection to this, but we're able to manage this all right. We talked about joint faculty appointments, but there are sufficient differences in the institution that we have never been able to agree on what appointment should be made at what time, at a time when there is a great shortage of good faculty candidates available who offer a man a job jointly between Bates and Colby, for example, and say, "All right, you got a job, you're going to live either in Brunswick or Waterville. Three times a week, you're going to have to drive a roundtrip between these two towns, winter, snow, hail, sleet, boom of night."

This fellow who has a chance for this job with this thrice-weekly commutation, is compared with a job where he can stay on one campus and do all of his work there, is going to be [inaudible] a single campus. So there are a lot of hazards of this, even places like Bryn Mawr, Haverford and Swarthmore, which are campuses within a very short distance of one another, the amount of interchange, this type they have is somewhat limited. It's not as full as one might imagine it to be from the outside.

Jim De Gallo: Alan, do we have another question?

Alan: One student has called in and has mentioned the fact that non-isolated colleges, such as Amherst for one, seemed to have more of an intellectual, tangible intellectual atmosphere. And the student would like to know whether or not the isolation has anything to do with the kind of atmosphere that one sees around campus.

President James...: Well, here again, this has been often put out, I'm not sure about this question that he speaks about isolation. He's not speaking about coeducation or sort of [in] tutors or thing [crosstalk]. In terms of coeducation, if its isolation from coeds he's talking about, I've talked to the president of coeducational colleges and they say they don't think that the coeds really add anything to the intellectual atmosphere at all. And in fact, there are sometimes they say that they think there are signs that this detracts from the intellectual atmosphere of the male student body, because very often the coeds are apt to exceed or excel the males and the males sort of make a pretense of not wanting to become intellectually involved. To get back to the other part of it, which is the question that's stated, what about the isolation at Bowdoin, and here again, we have a during difficult time, but I would say that we have a very active program of lectures. For example, tonight, right at this moment, there are two very excellent lectures taking place.

And I'm surprised that there aren't more students at the lectures rather than listening to what's probably an inconsequential discussion. Professor Margenau is one of the outstanding scientific philosophers in the country, is in the senior center and Professor [Cassera] lecturing on liberal religion is right downstairs in this building. Last night, we had a first rate lecture by one of the experts in space psychology and space sociology, a man who is in great demand in the Boston area as a lecture. He was in the Pickard Theater. And while there was an audience of 200 to hear him, I doubt that there were 30 students there.

So this isolation is an awfully hard thing to measure. And we take a lot of steps to overcome isolation. The students don't show the need to overcome this by going out to hear people like Professor Margenau or Cassera or Dr. Cronkite who was here last evening.

Jim De Gallo: I must admit that the fact that the senior center, with its program, has established a much better relations and has given the facilities for better, more lectures and more intellectual stimulation. Alan, do we have another question?

Alan: Does the President feel that a coed college might help the drinking problem rampant at Bowdoin?

Jim De Gallo: Well, this is another question which is always brought up with respect to coeducations. Number one, I deny that there is a rampant drinking problem at Bowdoin. And I don't know that any student would want to identify himself as claiming they're holding that there is a rampant drinking problem with Bowdoin. Certainly the fraternity presence I've been talking to in the last few weeks wouldn't admit to this. And I don't think I would admit to it either, but number two, is there a difference in drinking on a coed campus and on a campus of a men's college? And here again, I can only go by talking with presidents and deans of coeducational colleges and these colleges, which are similar milieu to Bowdoin say that there really isn't much difference in the drinking habits of undergraduates, the male undergraduates on their campuses, compared with the old men's colleges, which are acquainted. Alan, do we have a final question since our time is just about up?

Alan: Yes. Has Bowdoin college subsidized in the past, or plan to in the future, any joint social activities with other colleges? Just a repetition so that President Coles can hear the question. Has Bowdoin college subsidized in the past, or plan to in the future, any joint social activities with other girls schools?

President James...: No, the college has not done that except as through the student organizations, such as the glee club, things of that musical organizations. Some fraternities, of course, has subsidized this by having buses to Wheaton, or from Wheaton, or to or from other campuses. We have no plans to subsidize this type of activity. Again, our money is devoted for educational purposes. And I think that this would be strictly extracurricular social purpose, somewhat remote from the primary goals of the college.

Jim De Gallo: As I see our time is just up. I'd like to thank you, President Coles for being our guests this evening on Forum. I'd like to remind our audience to tune in next week when we'll have more lively discussion here on Forum. I'd like to make one program note, that in light of WBORs special programming, tune in tomorrow night at 8:30, when we will hear favorite songs of The Stowaways. And now here is Alan Pollack.