

An Evaluation of UNL Residence Halls

The fire of student protest has been rekindled. Last weekend, organized groups of students placed signs throughout dormitories and manned protest booths to tell parents that the present visitation policy is unfair.

The dormitories long have been a center of discontent, and with the summer defeat by the regents of proposals to allow increased visitation and alcohol in the dormitories, student leaders are being forced to take action.

This edition of EXTRA concerns the plight of the dormitories and reports on evaluations of the residence halls completed at the beginning of the school year by a sub-committee of the ASUN Environment Task Force.

By Rebecca Ross

The UNI Housing Office prefers to call them residence halls. Students who live in or have lived in dormitories would rather call them storage areas for student bodies.

The Housing Office lists its objectives for residence halls as providing students with opportunities for learning experiences and self development.

But last year, a sub-committee of the

ASUN environmental task force took a long hard look at dormitories and found that the university isn't meeting its objectives for residence halls.

In its report, "An Evaluation of UNL Residence Halls", the committee found that many students each year are moving out of dormitories and many more, would like to move out.

Why are students dissatisfied with dormitory life?

To answer this question, the committee surveyed Harper-Schramm-Smith dormitory residents and interviewed 32 persons who had moved out of dormitories. The committee found that at the end of the 1972-73 school year, the dormitories were 86 per cent occupied and 40 per cent of the 153 students surveyed said they would rather not be living in a dormitory.

The committee also set up an observation schedule of the three dorms to determine how they were being used. The committee members spent time in the main floor lounges, the snack bar, cafeteria and game room.

The group also made field trips to Benedictine College in Atchinson, Kan., the University of Kansas and Kansas State University, to make comparisons between UNL's dormitory system and those of other colleges.

After conducting their research, the committee concluded that most UNL students are unhappy with dormitory life because of violations of personal rights.

"Current student dissatisfaction with dormitories exists," the report says, "because their personal rights have been largely ignored and openly vetoed on occasion by administrators."

The report uses findings from the Committee on the Student in Higher Education which found that "students are thrown into huge building complexes, where their own rooms are rather small and barracks-like and inhabited by several other people. Often the expression of

personality through furniture or decorations is severely restricted."

How can a University, the report asks, justify denying rights and privileges to a legal adult who lives in a dormitory while recognizing the same rights and privileges of a legal adult who lives off campus?

Is a dormitory, the report asks, merely a "facility grudgingly provided by the state to accomodate its students?"

The committee said the UNL dormitories are especially confining because they all have the same policies, rules and programs.

"If one ostensible purpose of the dorm," it says, "is to allow people to live near and be exposed to many different sorts of people and their ideas, opinions, and life styles, it is not being met to its greatest potential."

The committee proposes that the university set up dormitories with different features, such as coed dormitories, ones with 24-hour visitation or dormitories with fixed rules. The student could then choose which type of living arrangement suited his personality.

**Photos by
Rich Steinmetz**

One of the basic problems with dormitories, the committee found, is the physical layout.

"The floor lounges are almost all equipped with televisions," the report said, "which have pre-empted the development of different types of interpersonal activities there."

Students are not always free to bring guests to their rooms, where they feel the most comfortable, the report stated.

The Housing Office includes the need for privacy in its basic objectives. But the committee found that this privacy should include not only privacy inside the room,

