

Bank in Union may be a bargain for students

About two weeks ago, this page carried a protest by Randy Beam against the introduction of money changers into the temple. To be more precise, the opening of a branch office of a bank in a corner of the Nebraska Union. To quote him, "The benefit to the bank would be the big bucks it would make using leased space in a building built with student dollars. Its location would put other Lincoln banks at a gross disadvantage; its utilities would be provided free by the University."

He tossed in words like "usurping space", "rationalization" "save the Union's financial skin" and even "commercial, profit making business" (horror!) At the risk of not getting this past the copy desk, I've got to say I think he got a little excited.

Mary Cannon Cannon Law

A lot of people hope the bank is only the beginning of a whole new kind of service in the Union. There is a lot of wasted space in the building, which could be put to better use with a little work, so it isn't a question of squeezing out existing activities. Already the Union has a bookstore, a barber shop, food service and a ticket office—all motivated by profit.

When Beam says that business ventures are contrary to the philosophy of the Union, he's just plain wrong. You could eliminate all the profit from the Union, but you'd have to turn the whole organization inside out, and you would be throwing the baby out with the bath water.

Union leaders feel that there are many areas where students would be well served by renting retail space to businesses, and plans are getting

underway to do just that. The Oklahoma State University Union has a whole mall of little shops, including things like a florist shop and a good bakery. The idea works quite well there. Why not here?

The reason the question comes up now is that every so often, it is necessary for the Union to remodel itself. Everything gets updated, and there is an opportunity to correct all the mistakes that were made last time around. For instance, when the main lounge was designed, no one predicted that it would turn into a zoo every day at noon.

The Crib needs help, too. Not only is the orange plastic décor out of date, but the cost of operating the place could be reduced through better design. The Harvest Room and the Colonial rooms are both getting looked at. And why not put Student Activities, the Union offices, student organizational offices, the Program Council, and ASUN all together in the south side of the second floor? They could combine functions, save money and free their present offices to become meeting rooms. It's a game called musical rooms, and the prize could be a Union that is easier to live with.

This is the context of the Bank-in-the-Union idea. If it works, there could be other things—maybe a drinking establishment (regents permitting), or a florist shop, or fast food, or pizza, or whatever you want, since the building needs remodeling anyway. Who said the Union had to be nothing but a big barn?

Yes, the thing could get out of hand. Already there is talk of a big parking building near the Union with the first floor full of shops, an idea which I think belongs in the circular file. Enough is enough.

But give the Union Board credit. As student, its members have no other motive than the interests of students in the Union. Besides, if the Union by

some mischance makes money, they just have to figure out some way to spend it again, which gets embarrassing. On the other hand, if the Board can find someone, such as a bank, which can provide services we need, free some money for more exciting programs and pay rent, too, how could you object?

A carefully written lease agreement, for a short term, would assure that student interests were protected. If the bank believes there is an untapped wealth of rich students eager to open accounts, that's their problem, not ours! Rather than getting ripped off, I think students are getting a bargain.



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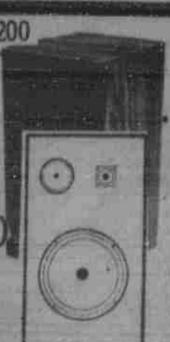
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