

Union director asks \$1.50 student fee increase

The director of the Nebraska Union said Monday he intends to ask for a \$1.50 per-student increase in student fees per semester to meet expected rising costs in the Union's budget.

Al Bennett said products, services provided by the Union and labor are expected to increase 10 to 20 per cent in the next fiscal year. While inflation is driving prices up, he said, income from student fees, which is about one-third of the Union budget, remains relatively constant.

He said the request "does not make me happy," but "we see no way to meet these costs without passing them on to the student." Other alternatives would be to close down some Union services or reduce the time the Union is open, he said.

\$1 for operations

Of the \$1.50 increase, he said, \$1 would go for operating the Union and 50 cents for Union programming.

Student fees account for \$334,000 of the total \$1.15 million Union funds. Union food service provides \$600,000; the games department and sales at

the two main desks net \$180,000; and Gateway Bank and Union Barber Shop rents total \$17,500.

Bennett said the Union will be able to stay within its present budget if students continue to use the Union and if nothing "economically unforeseen" happens.

Despite overall budget strains, the Union food service has "kept its head above water," he said. Prices are up 12 to 18 per cent from last year and fewer customers buy food, he said, but sales are about five per cent ahead of last year's.

Harvest Room used more

Bennett cited the increased use of the Harvest Room as the main reason for improved sales. Students are now spending their money to get a more complete meal, he said, and they are not buying "casual items," such as cakes and pies.

"The Harvest Room in the past was used by faculty and administration people, but now its customers are 65 per cent students," he said.

Bennett said Union officials could lease a section of the first floor to private businesses to provide

funds.

The Union's older southern section, erected in 1938, needs to be renovated, he said. It needs remodeling for "cosmetic reasons," and to renovate plumbing and wiring, he said.

Opinion needed

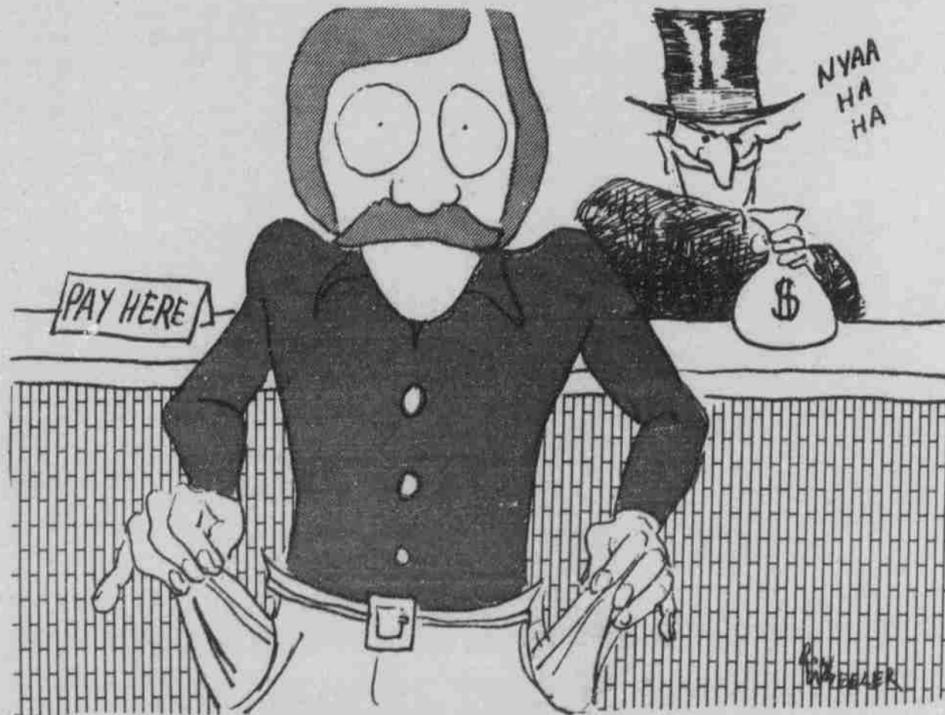
Before a proposal on leasing or renovation is presented to the University administration, the opinion of the University community is needed, Bennett said.

"We have to know if existing spaces are being used efficiently and what effect a remodeling proposal will have on parking, library and bookstore space," he said.

Bennett said he hoped the new Union Board, appointed Sunday, will survey the community's opinion. He said the board will advise him in any decisions.

"The collective opinion of these people (the UNL community) is what counts," he said.

Renovation of the south section would take about three years. Bennett said he did not think any construction would start this year.



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