

Union management comes under student fire

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garage eventually will be built.

"It keeps coming up year after year," Petersen said. "It's just going to be a matter of time."

Simonson said he became concerned about union expansions three years ago when he served on the student senate, the Associated Students of the University of Nebraska (ASUN). Petersen said she has been working with Simonson about two months.

Both said they want a line-by-line audit of union operations and financing.

"We are told by the administration that the union incurs substantial dollar losses every year. On that basis they push for one of two things—either more lease rental space, which would generate revenue, or an increase in student fees or a combination of both.

"What we've been contending is that it is not wise to go ahead with either of those two things until you can accurately assess the financial position of the union," Simonson said.

Cannot Understand Why Union Operates at Loss

Simonson said he cannot understand why the union is operating at a loss since the union receives state funds for grounds maintenance, utilities and custodial personnel, rent for space leased by private business such as Gateway Bank and student fee funds.

Bennett in a June 5 interview said the loss in the 1976-77 fiscal year resulted from the opening of the Nebraska East Union, inflation and other unforeseen factors. The 1977-78 fiscal year is also expected to show a loss, Bennett said.

Years in which the union has lost money were years in which the union calculated depreciation into the books, he said.

Simonson said a depreciation allowance is not a justifiable calculation. The

rate at which the union depreciates equipment is unnecessarily large, he said.

In addition to generating revenue, Bennett said expanding lease space will help the union become less reliant on student fees. He said student fees are the greatest single source of income for the unions but that there is a continuing push for a slow down of student fee increases.

Bennett said unless fees are increased at the rate of inflation the union will have to reduce services paid by fees (lounges, student organization offices, meeting rooms, study spaces and television viewing areas) or find replacement funds.

Student Fees Said to Increase with Expansion

Petersen and Simonson said, however, that the garage expansion would increase student fees. Because another bond would be purchased, student fees would be increased to cover the larger debt.

Because the student population at the university is expected to drop from 22,000 to about 18,000 within the next 10 to 15 years, that larger bonded indebtedness would have to be spread out over fewer students, Simonson said.

"Fewer students will be paying off a larger debt," Simonson said.

Petersen and Simonson added that leasing space to private businesses is an undesirable alternative because space given to business is space taken from students.

Students Say Union Will Become Shopping Center

"The union director wants that building to in effect become a shopping center such that it would be made financially viable, in his opinion. In the process he is defeating the purpose of the union toward that it would no longer be communally acceptable.

"That should in concept be a student building—a living room, so to speak, for the student," Simonson said.

Petersen said the projects do not comply with the publication of policies for the Nebraska Unions which states that space leased to private enterprise should benefit the majority of the community.

"How can you say that a plant shop and a travel agency (suggested in \$120,000 renovation proposal) are day to day needs of the student, especially when those needs can be fulfilled a block or so away from campus," she said.

Bennett said he has proposed that a survey be conducted to determine what is communally acceptable. The survey should be conducted by an outside firm and be financed from \$30,000 approved by the Regents two years ago for long range planning and survey activity.

Vance Colling, chairman of the Union Board facilities committee said his committee is setting up another committee independent of Union staff and board and under the vice chancellor for student affairs to conduct the survey.

A private firm, College Union Evaluations Services, has been contacted about providing technical know-how and analysis, he said.

Simonson Not Allowed on Committee

Simonson said when he asked to be on the committee which will determine the survey format his request was denied.

Because "a survey can be constructed to get any results you want," Simonson said the committee "will be sitting in judgment of themselves, independent of the college community."

Bennett said charges that his proposals are not made with the best interests of the students in mind are wrong.

He said his proposals are made with two objectives in mind—client satisfac-

tion and economic benefit. The two are weighed against the other and "sometimes both are served equally."

But the students' economic situations are not considered fully, according to Petersen and Simonson. They said it is unfair that students will pay for renovations and the garage but will not be able to afford to benefit from the changes.

"The only thing the students can do for free in the union is watch TV," Petersen said, and added that is in danger because one proposal calls for the television area to be changed to lease space.

Parking Cost Called Expensive

"It seems unlikely that a majority of the students would be able to take advantage of this parking facility. It would be too expensive for them to park. It's for attracting downtown customers," according to Simonson.

Bennett said the stalls would be metered, probably at 25-35 cents an hour for the first hour and 25 cents an hour after that, with a \$1 maximum.

Bennett said the garage and businesses would attract off-campus students, faculty and staff to spend money on campus that they would normally spend elsewhere.

He said critics should consider that the money spent by customers would be returned to the union in rent and then returned to the students by reducing student fee requirements and financing campus programs.

"The campus community would have say about how those dollars are returned," Bennett said.

He said he believes most students could afford the parking garage since he sees students attending three and four dollar movies after eating six dollar meals and wearing \$25 jeans.

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