

# 'Dean' of Unions Praises SU

(What we consider the best words written about our Student Union are offered here for the Oregon students.)

They are excerpts from a speech given by Porter Butts Friday night at a dedication dinner for approximately 100 out-of-town guests.

Butts is the director of the Memorial Union at the University of Wisconsin, and can probably be called the "dean of America's union directors." As you can tell from his speech, he was consulted before Oregon's building was planned.

Since the Wisconsin union opened in 1928, it has grown under the hand of Porter Butts, who was graduated from the U. of W. three years before, in 1925. He was editor of the Wisconsin Cardinal in 1924.)

I did not have the privilege of knowing the men whose name and leadership this building honors and remembers.

But I do know something of the spirit which animated those who have planned the building and brought it into being. It is of them and their work that I would like to speak for a moment.

The Union is a pioneer in a very special and important way.

## Two Hundred in U. S.

There are perhaps two hundred unions in this country. They have existed in the British Isles for almost a century and a half. They are to be found in Canada, South Africa, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Australia and New Zealand, and even in Melaya.

But this is the first time that anyone really undertook, in a careful and comprehensive way, to find out what a union should be before building it.

I remember that Prof. Will Norris and Abbott Lawrence, the architect, in 1944 spent the better part of six months traveling across the country from one university to another, examining their social centers, watching them in operation, conferring with anyone who knew anything about unions. This had never been done on such a scale and with such care and intelligent understanding before.

## Poor Result Possible

But it could all still have come to a poor result if the findings had been squeezed into the pre-cast mold of a traditional campus style of architecture.

It is to the credit of Oregon and of the planners of the Erb Union that social and educational goals and the convenience and comfort of the users were allowed freely to determine the form of the structure. The rooms are where they ought to be and of the kind they ought to be. No part of the design, inside or out, exists without a purpose.

And as a result you have the first genuinely contemporary union—contemporary in the sense that there was thoughtful determination first of what the function of the building was to be, and contemporary in terms of a design which most simply, economically, and appropriately serves the uses which have been foreseen.

## Influences Others

It is quite a notable achievement, when one considers how much life of students and the desires of the college elsewhere have been constricted and frustrated by symmetrical renaissance wings and replicas of colonial interiors. Already this building, widely pictured and publicized as it has been, has had quite an influence on what others are doing. I could name a half dozen unions in the planning stage or

about to open which even look like Oregon's.

There is another element in the planning of a building of this kind which is hidden from view but without which the building doesn't happen. One who hasn't lived through it can scarcely know the disappointments, the minor and major crises, the fantastic multitude of questions to get answered, drawings to check, orders to write, arrangements for staff and equipment to be made, and people to keep happy that start when you find you haven't the money to build the building you hoped for and only on a night like this, at least in part.

I am one who somehow managed to live through it twice at Wisconsin, and so as a member of that harassed but fortunate fraternity of union directors I want to salute your Dick Williams, who has the missionary zeal and disregard for sleep that a union director has to have to survive, and to tell him that he has successfully come through his hazing period and is initiated into the brotherhood, as of tonight.

He, with many of you as associates, faced the problem of not enough money to carry through the first vision of the Union, but with the resourceful help of the architects and many of you, nevertheless achieved a building that will do what it ought most to do.

## Why is SU Here

What is this building supposed to do? What is any union for?

When our President Gleen Frank spoke at the dedication of our building 22 years ago, he said: "The Union gives us the living room that will convert the university from a house of learning into a home of learning."

Almost every university that has one recognizes, in these days when size and impersonality come easily, and witheringly, that the Union does make the large university a more human place.

Oregon's Union also will be living room, a hearthstone, and I think you can confidently expect that with such a living room you can restore the personal relationship among students, and between students and faculty, that once graced and unified the smaller campus community.

But a union is not built only to gain a comfortable living room or to make the undergraduate years pleasurable and picturesque. It engages the attention of the college administration also because it is a necessary educational complement of the classroom and laboratory. A student cannot be educated in an academic vacuum; he must develop as a person as well as an intellect.

Stephen Leacock, grand old man of McGill University, some years ago put it this way:

## Real Things is Life

"The real thing for the student," he said, "is the life and environment that surround him. All that he really learns, in a sense, he learns by the active operation of his own intellect and not as the passive recipient of lectures. And for this active operation what he needs most is the continued and intimate contact with his fellows.

"Students must live together and eat together, talk and smoke together. Experience shows that that is how their minds really grow . . . If a student is to get from his college what it should give him, a life in common with other students is his absolute right."

President Conant, I'm sure, meant the same thing when he addressed his first freshman class at Harvard, saying: "More souls are saved

around the dinner table than through courses."

And both echoed the theme of our President Van Hise when, in his inaugural address in 1904, he urged a union of Wisconsin:

"When a student goes out into the world," he said, "there is no other part of his education which is of such fundamental importance as capacity to deal with—to get along with—other men. Nothing that the professor or laboratory can do for a student can take the place of daily close companionship with hundreds of his fellows. If Wisconsin is to do for the sons of the state what Oxford and Cambridge are doing for the sons of England, not only in producing scholars but in making men, it must have a union.

## Oregon Has Opportunity

Oregon, too, now has a new opportunity to engage further in the essential enterprise of making men as well as producing scholars.

I think you will find that provisions for personal and social needs will heavily populate the Union. The presence and the message of the arts will add grace and purpose to social activity.

## Exposed to Activities

Coming to the Union for one activity, students will be exposed to, and perhaps inspired by, another activity. They will find in the concerts, the art exhibitions, the books, and the discussion groups at the Union a chance to do something, for a change, about the cultural interests the University so painstakingly sets out to develop in the classroom.

How pointless it seems sometimes to arouse in the classroom a student's interest in the arts and then, on the same campus, to provide no means for applying that interest.

Here in the Union will be joined the learnings of the classroom, the practice of the arts, and daily social life in an art of living, one and indivisible.

There is one thing more:

The Union is priceless too for shaping community solidarity and the individual student's sense of social responsibility—a natural laboratory where all who will may have a part in the direction of community enterprise, the kind of social and service institution where it can immediately be apparent that the ideals of democracy are practiced and that they work.

The Union as much as any college institution, has a part in the present education job of surpassing necessity—the job of enlisting in every student possible in a personal concern for the general welfare.

Increasingly the center line objective of the Union is this one of training students for leadership in a democracy by providing the maximum means and tools for practicing leadership of their common life together on the campus. If as we all argue, students are to be the future leaders of a democracy, somewhere they must have the chance to practice it.

## A Community Center

On the campus there is no better place than in the Union, the community center—the campus counterpart of the civil, political, and social life of the thousands of communities into which students will move after graduation.

A few days before I came here I was called on by a faculty member from the East, who had been visiting a professor on our campus for the summer and was about to leave.

He said: "We don't have a Union; I've been watching what happens at yours; I've been here almost every day. It's an amazing

place. The food is good and inexpensive. The employees are cordial and go out of their way to help us. There's a place to leave your things. You can use the phone without hunting for a nickel.

"There's an air of informality and cheer about the place. Everybody seems happy. We've watched negro and white students, Chinese and Canadians, sitting on the terrace laughing and talking together as though it were the most natural thing in the world.

"There are paintings to see, music to listen to, good books to read. The movies are excellent. And that workshop—I framed a picture there the other day and I just wish I had had more time to putter around. We've taken in all the lectures and concerts. We sat on the floor and sang with students at almost every Sunday evening sing. And the other night we stopped to watch the square dancing and were invited in on that.

## Feeling of Belonging

"We feel as if we belonged. In fact, the union has made this the best summer we've had. It's really all very wonderful. We've said to ourselves many times, this is the way things ought to be."

I suddenly saw that what he was saying embraced in a simple and very special way, all of what a union is for—all of what I have been trying to say tonight. "This is the way things ought to be."

We spend so much of our time and our substance—almost all of it, it seems sometimes—arranging for the necessities that let us exist, repairing the damage of past wars and worrying about the next one, being annoyed with our neighbors or our political leadership, quarreling on the economic front as to

## U of O Students Show Interest In Civil Rights

Student interest in the proposed civil rights ordinance in Portland, Oregon, has been demonstrated during the past week by endorsements and suggestions by campus organizations and individuals.

Earlier this year the Portland city council presented a plan designed to bring that city in harmony with other metropolitan areas in this country which have already passed civil rights ordinances. A petition has forced this issue to be put before the voters on November 7.

If the voters approve this proposal, it will be unlawful for any place which holds itself open to the public at large to refuse service to any person because of his race, religion or color. Similar laws have for some time been in operation in Seattle, Tacoma, San Francisco and Los Angeles, as well as other large cities throughout the country.

Several groups contacted in a partial campus survey gave their enthusiastic support to this ordinance. Approval was officially voiced by Newman Club, Plymouth House, Wesley Foundation, and Westminster House. Unofficial endorsements were voiced by members of other organizations.

Some interest in establishing a permanent program for the development and furtherment of civil rights on the campus and in Eugene was also expressed by these groups.

who shall get what, stalemating each other, struggling to hold things together, just keeping even with where we are—what somebody picturesquely has called just keeping the plumbing of life in order—always having to postpone to another time, for one pressing reason or another, the things that make life really worth living.

And then one day there suddenly bursts on the scene a new institution like this one—where people can come together to enjoy each other; where people treat each other considerately; where there are a multitude of services and conveniences which make the day go easier; where the prices for doing things and for dining will probably be cheaper than anywhere else, except at another union; where one can follow the urge to make things and learn the lasting satisfaction of personal creation; where it is in order, and natural and pleasurable, to stop and to see good paintings, listen to a concert, read a book, and hear or talk about ideas; where having fun and making friends comes easily; where old feelings about race and religion dissolve on an outing or around a game table or in a committee that does things together; where students can meet readily in groups to shape a course of action; where social mindedness becomes a habit and people work together for the common welfare as a matter of course; where students by the thousands can engage in what Prime Minister Nehru calls the most important thing in the world—to get to know and to understand other people.

I think in a very short time you will be able to say, because you have the union, this is what we've been working and waiting for all the time, this is the way things ought to be—here and everywhere.

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**MAYFLOWER**  
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"Peggy"  
"The Desert Hawk"

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**LANE** Dial  
4-0431  
November 6  
"Key to the City"  
"Please Believe Me"

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**MC KENZIE** Dial  
SPRINGFIELD 7-2201  
November 6  
"Rocky Mountain"  
"Stagefright"

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**VARSITY** Dial  
SPRINGFIELD 7-3403  
November 6  
"Framed"  
"Parole"

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**CASCADE**  
Drive In Theatre  
November 6  
"Three Came Home"  
"The Walking Hills"