

Co-ed Co-ops Face Trials Past, Present with Optimism

by Rodney Morrison
Emerald Feature Writer

Has prosperity, Portland State and a new approach to financing education killed cooperative living for women students on the University of Oregon campus?

That's a question that a group of student leaders heading three living organizations have been asking themselves this past year. The three women's coops, University, Rebec and Highland houses, started out the school year with several vacancies for the first time in eight years, according to Charlotte Parr, former coop member and treasurer for Co-ed Housing, Inc. during the past 11 years.

The cooperative living movement, with students doing their own housework to cut living expenses, was born as a result of the depression of the 1930's.

Inspired by the success of the men's coop, which had just begun on campus, and by a visit to the student coops which had been organized on the University of Washington campus for several years, a handful of determined girls set out to found cooperative living on the University campus during the winter term of 1936.

Rent First House

Aided by Miss Janet Smith, University employment secretary, the girls rented an old house on University St. in the block now occu-

pled by the Erb Memorial Union. Administration members scoffed at the idea and a member of the University Housing committee refused to be connected with an idea that was bound to be a failure. But the girls, encouraged by Miss Smith, remained undaunted.

Sans cook, furniture, furnace and funds, the charter members of University House set up house-keeping that spring. Taking the problems of running a house and cooking their own meals in their stride, the charter members still had time to win the tennis singles' championship, make a higher GPA than any house on the campus and turn out a couple of Phi Beta Kappas.

The idea caught on and the next year, in 1937, the coop movement extended to Hilyard House. The coops have since grown to include Rebec and Highland, with Hilyard closing its doors immediately after the war. The three houses incorporated as Co-ed Housing, Inc. in 1942 and have been governed through a council composed of the house officers from each member house, a buyer and a treasurer.

Face Same Problems

Hundreds of girls who have gone through the University as coop members since 1936 have faced the problems of their charter members—keeping house, a majority of house membership work-

ing full or part time and never knowing where the next term's tuition would be found. Coops have not only provided low cost room and board for these girls attending college on a limited budget, but they also have provided organized house living for girls who might otherwise have gone through college working in someone's home for their board and room or living alone in an isolated rented room.

But today coops are facing financial difficulties from three sources. The recent decision to allow Portland State to be maintained as a four year, degree-granting institution, has cut deep inroads into one of the most profitable sources of membership—the Portland school area. Girls can save more financially living at home and commuting to Portland State than they could in a coop at Oregon.

Many co-eds entering college in these prosperous post-war years demand better living conditions than the coops can offer. Girls are not willing to make the compromise that must be made to hold room and board to the low rate of \$45 per month. College, money and work has a different interpretation to this generation than it did to those girls who founded the coops back in 1936.

New Trend Hurts

A trend for girls to drop out of school for a year to work, rather than push through all four years on a shoestring as coop girls have traditionally done, also is evident, according to Mrs. Golda P. Wickham, director of women's affairs.

But the University coops, facing these problems, are not willing to let one lean year defeat their purpose, especially when coupled with the overall enrollment drop at the University this fall.

The three houses have tightened their financial control by reorganizing the old Co-ed Council into a board of trustees, with committees on finance, building and maintenance, food and supply, and promotion directly responsible to the student members of the board and to the faculty and alum members of an advisory board.

Alums and actives are working to maintain a growing building fund to eventually replace the three old houses now occupied by the girls. Rebec House is owned by Co-ed Housing, Inc., and University and Highland are rented from the University. The girls also are shifting emphasis of coop values from low cost board and room to the full program of social events and college life now offered the coop girl.

"If we can make the high school students see they can get a better education and receive more of the benefits of college life through living together, we've got the problem licked," Carole Wood, board president, says optimistically.

USA Tried AGS Plan

(Continued from page two)

general election ballot after the 200 signatures necessary for an initiative measure were obtained. Both UIS and AGS supported the open primary plan in their 1953 platforms.

First recent suggestion of an all-campus primary came in 1952 when Virginia Wright submitted a United Students Association plan to the senate. Her proposal provided for a nominating convention for presidential candidates, with an open primary to be used to fill other offices.

Senate Was Critical

The senate, according to Emerald reports, was particularly critical of the presidential section of the proposal. Dave Rodway, then senior class president, said that the convention would only help one kind of minority representation, while causing another kind.

The USA proposal for an open primary was designated to create more interest in student government, Miss Wright said. Bill Frye, then a senator-at-large, replied that there was more interest under the existing plan and that interest must come from within the party itself.

Miss Wright then cited the direct primary as a means of giving individual students a direct voice in the makeup of the party slate. Her proposal was tabled. The proposal was finally sent to committee, and no action was taken by the senate.

USA continued its support of the primary and held a primary of its own on campus. AGS followed the lead and held a primary in the houses for the presidential nomination. "More democracy" was stated by party leaders as their reason for adopting the primary system.

Dignan Disagreed

Bill Carey, then ASUO president, told the Emerald that "with the primary in both parties, we don't need the ASUO primary." His successor, Pat Dignan, disagreed, and called the AGS primary a "big step" in the right direction. He advocated a primary where every candidate would be selected by popular vote.

Dignan was chairman of the senate primary proposal investigating committee. Collin, Lally, Helen Packson and Frye were also members of the committee which reported that "It is desirable to have an open primary."

In their report, the committee recommended that screening of candidates be handled by the political parties, that the polling booths be located on campus and that the ASUO should finance the primary.

USA, predecessor of UIS, held a nominating convention in 1951. A candidate for office under USA reported that the results of the convention were not worth the trouble.

Reasons Listed

He listed as reasons the difficulty in managing the convention and the difficulty in keeping out non-party members. Only those with party membership cards were entitled to sit on the floor and vote, but enforcement was lax, he said.

Only 275 students attended the convention which lasted an hour and 45 minutes. Held at McArthur court, all students were welcome to attend the meeting. Non-party members were to sit in the balcony.

All members of the party were entitled to one vote. Nominations, in addition to the slate screened by the party, were made from the floor, with 10 seconds required to each nomination.

Voting in AGS in 1951 was by direct house votes. Each house was entitled to one vote for each office, with a majority of the votes needed for election. A screening committee approved the candidates.

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CAMPUS BRIEFS

Deadline for items for this column is at 4 p.m. the day prior to publication.

• There will be an initiation service and business meeting of Pi Lambda Theta, women's education honorary, this Sunday, beginning at 4 p.m. in alumni hall. All members are urged to attend by Acting President Mitzi Asai.

• Helen Rehkoph, from the Friendly house in Portland, will speak at the Newman club meeting at 7 p.m. Sunday on "Appreciation of Catholic Action to Racial Prejudice." The meeting will be held at Sacred Heart hospital, according to Pete Zinsle, president.

• Canterbury Club will not meet Sunday because of the Northwest Province Canterbury conference at Pullman, Wn.

• "Les Miserables" will be the feature presentation of the Student Union movie committee Sunday. The film, starring Charles Laughton and Frederic March, will be shown at 2:30 and 5 p.m. Admission is 30 cents, according to Barbara Wilcox, movie committee chairman.

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