

Group Effort

Think Session

Last weekend's brief ASUO student leadership retreat at Kitson Springs proved one thing that most of us—even student leaders—need to remember occasionally: activity hounds though they may be labeled, student leaders can sit down and talk intelligently about purpose and direction. This may be something of a surprise to many who feel that the only concern of this peculiar group—"pseudo-students"—say some—is the immediate worry about this weekend's dance committee's promotion co-chairmen.

True, there were difficulties in the presentation of the conference on such short notice and not all the administrative details worked out perfectly. But the important thing is that Oregon's student leaders were able to divorce themselves from the daily grind and look to the direction.

We're not sure that the group, in its "buzz sessions," found the direction that Oregon student government and activity are headed. This is too much to expect, especially from an evening's discussion when few, if any, of the participants came prepared.

But the success of the conference in spite of this is a tribute to those student leaders who participated, sharing real ideas rather than petition suggestions. It is also a sign that this type of sitting down and thinking over is needed more often in student government and activities. It is unfortunate that we have to travel fifty miles to stop and think.

Part of the Process

There will be no Religious Emphasis Week at the University of Washington this year. Such a week, declares John J. O'Connell, the state's Attorney General, violates the state constitution. And one of O'Connell's campus supporters claims that "every state, except Vermont, has constitutional prohibitions against the expenditure of funds for sectarian purposes."

That may be true. We note that the Oregon Constitution says, "No money shall be drawn from the treasury for the benefit of any religious or theological institution, nor shall any money be appropriated for the payment of any religious services in either house of the legislative assembly."

If this is the part of our constitution that brother O'Connell was referring to, it certainly would not apply to our own Religious Evaluation Week. No state funds are used to finance the week, and the University itself is not concerned with its sponsorship.

Perhaps a different situation existed at the University of Washington. Or, the attorney general is simply taking issue with the basic of a state institution having anything at all to do with religion.

If Washington's problem is the former, it should be simple for the Religious Council of the university to place their Religious Emphasis Week on an independent footing

and remove it from state jurisdiction. If the latter, it will just have to be chalked up as another step down the road to an academic status quo that began with Washington's refusal to hear a speech by J. Robert Oppenheimer, a "controversial" figure.

At Washington, apparently, anything that smacks of "unAmericanism" or which might be considered technically illegal, is automatically unsuited for contact with university students.

That, we're sure, is where somebody is missing the whole point of education entirely. Now Oppenheimer's speech (heard and enjoyed at the University of Oregon) had not the slightest tinge of "red" in it; and a Religious Emphasis (or Evaluation) week is not an attempt to change somebody's church-going activities.

But even if the worst were true about both, there would still be no grounds for keeping them from the students. The educational process involves more than a forced-feeding of pre-digested ideas. At its best, it should offer a variety of theories on every facet of life, with the student allowed to make up his own mind on their relative merits.

RE Week at Oregon gives us just that chance—to look over ideologies that we may never have heard of before and to draw our own conclusions. It is as much a part of our education as lectures and tests—and perhaps more.

Milk, Anyone?

Activities at the University, moving in their tradition-directed ways, have included something for just about everyone—from political science graduates to lipstick-wielding freshman women. Sandwich series, browsing room lectures, assemblies and rallies have offered variety—truly the spice of collegiate life.

A favorite son among such impregnable institutions has been the eternal coffee hour, or half-hour, as the case and the speaker may be. This smacks strongly of discrimination to the minority (we admit it) preferring something other than coffee.

It may shatter some well-worn illusions about journalists stirring cold coffee with a considerably-chewed copy pencil, but there are some of us here who just plain don't like coffee—be it drip, percolator or of the Student Union variety (fresh ground yesterday).

We could conceivably go on and on about the evils of conformity, the perils of sleepless nights on cold sleeping porches and the psychological horrors of having nothing to hold in the hand. But that would be digressing.

Suffice it to say that there is room for still another facet of the campus to be represented, despite our feelings on the scope and octopus-like spread of activities. We appeal to the army of committee workers to design something for the tea, milk or even postum drinkers. Anyone for a coffee dry zone?

Footnotes

And now we learn, thanks to a timely lecture illustration, that the influence of the Forest on the Russian peasant was quite strong, making him one of the most skillful evaders in Europe when called to military service. Not that this is new. It just explains what we'd always thought; the reason the present-day Russians are so evasive is that they've been in the woods so long.

Attention 1825 Harris: Headline in Sunday Oregonian declares "Village Communism, Chiefs' Rule Seen Perils to 20th Century Fiji."



William Cook

Conformity, Indifference Rewarded by Our Society

Modern society rewards conformity and pays a premium to indifference. Non-participation in public affairs, or campus activities, is made easy for "the average man." These points were made in a speech by E. S. Wengert, head of the political science department, at the ASUO leadership conference at Kitson Springs Friday night.

Wengert said that people have had most of their decisions made for them, that they no longer have to think for themselves in many instances. Participation outside their own very limited and specialized spheres is not even considered by many people, Wengert said.

Not the least important reason for this feeling, Wengert said, is the danger that one might "get stuck" with a job such as a committee chairman. But it's not the most important reason.

Wengert related these facts of modern society to what he said was the "most important characteristic" of our society—specialization. The emphasis placed on specialization can be seen in many students who study for the occupation they have chosen and ignore everything else.

Public apathy is the result of this specialization, Wengert said, for as people become more specialized, they tend to confuse their specialized view of things with the general view. He said the specialized society is, when carried to its logical extreme, on the verge of disintegration.

Wengert explained that our society fosters the formation of political pressure groups which represent a particular specialized view of things. He said participation in a pressure group is satisfying to its members, since they have a feeling they are supporting something important—a feeling often lacking in modern society.

Wenger is not the first to explain modern American society in these terms. David Riesman in the "Lonely Crowd" talked of "other-directed" people who

take their guidance from their group associations. Commencement speakers across the nation last year almost unanimously exhorted graduating college students to reject the trends to conformity and express their individuality.

Such a state of affairs, said Wengert, leaves little room or desire for "moral indignation."

We are all products of such a society and are becoming more and more affected by its manifestations. Perhaps this all helps to throw some light on the Milquetoast character and general purposelessness of University student government and extra-curricular activities.

How many of us are genuinely interested in serving the general and particular welfare of the University and its students? Interested, that is, to the point of attempting to remedy faults and injustices about us. I venture to say not many. That's a job for the "other fellow" who is "interested" in such things.

How many of us have been approached by someone in the living organization who asked us—or told us—to participate in some extra-curricular activities? Their reasons probably ran something like this. "You've got to help the house...you can make Kwama or Skull and Dagger...the house needs someone in honoraries...you can become well known on campus..."

And so some students—the small minority—by coercion or by their own volition get involved in the frenzied whirl of extra-curricular activities. Are they attempting to serve the University and its students—the real purpose of such activities? In some cases, of course.

But to most students involved, activities have become ends in themselves. The service that activities are supposed to render has become a by-product if it appears at all. Activity hounds seem to feel that as long as they are busily doing something, they are doing something of value.

Another interesting phenomenon has appeared in activities. Those involved—once they have started in activities through the magical and complicated pe-

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