

# 'U' Urban Affairs Center Looks Anxiously Ahead

By IRV LETOFSKY  
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In the wake of a tidal wave of terrifying adjectives, the University of Minnesota regents last week approved the establishment of a far-sighted Center for Urban and Regional Affairs.

The regents heard Minneapolis Mayor Arthur Naftalin, a guest expert, refer to the need for attention on urban problems as "total and pervasive."

Regent Otto Silha said that in 5 or 10 years, the federal government will be giving "as much attention on urban affairs as the national defense."

REGENT Dan Gainey put in, "We've been meeting a jet age problem with almost horse and buggy knowledge." Regent Robert Hess added the summary statement: "It's got to be done and we're the only ones who can do it."

With that, the regents voted without dissent to give the university administration the authority to set up the center, which has been under quiet and careful study for about two years.

It might prove to be one of the most important social, economic and political steps in recent university history.

THE CENTER'S mission in "urban and regional affairs" covers a wide range of evils. One outstate regent asked how the spheres of influence would be divided and University President O. Meredith Wilson returned, "There's no way to separate them. The process of urbanization is the process of draining the rural areas."

Wilson added that Owatonna, St. Cloud and Mankato have problems in relating to their counties.

"Excuse me, but what about Rochester?" wondered Dr. Charles W. Mayo, chairman of the regents, who is from Rochester and laughed at his own joke.

Even as "urban and regional affairs" covers rural affairs, too, it reaches into most of the academic disciplines to which the university is devoted.

A GOOD example is Naftalin's description of a recent conference on urban affairs that he attended in Washington, D.C. The meetings covered everything from beautifying the American landscape to race relations.

Another good hint is a proposal in the report of the center's study committee, headed by Warren Cheston, a professor of physics. In the university's devotion to solutions, the report said, it should set up master's degree programs in the School of Architecture and the Social Science Division of the College of Liberal Arts, two usually diverse disciplines.

Just how the center will be set up, who will run it and

how, has not been determined, although its vague outlines were suggested to the regents at their meeting Friday.

Naftalin, a crusader in metropolitan and regional concepts, offered some dos and don'ts:

BECAUSE the problem is so broad and complex, the center should be flexible and openminded in its approach until "focus" can be made, he said. It should first have an instructional program "because we are desperately short of people, not only in planning but in the whole sweep of administrative and technological personnel."

It should have a "rich program of research" and a clearing-house function, Naftalin said.

He said he could give a good example of the need for the foregoing: He referred to the "dope scare" in Minneapolis high schools about two years ago. He said he found 28 agencies, seven or eight of them at the university, that were essential in solving the problem.

HE WAS impressed with the complications of how and where to rally community resources.

Naftalin said financing for the center is available from foundations and the federal government, but "it can be terribly frustrating." He said the university should begin with its own resources and dedication.

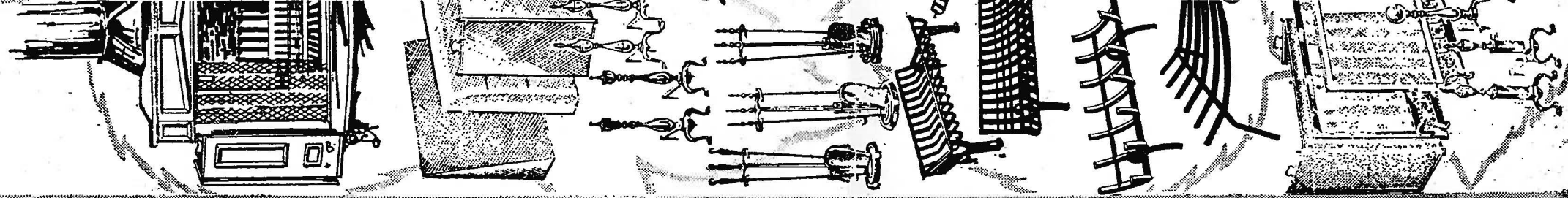
Another important note: The center should be the direct responsibility of the university president to avoid university politics, Naftalin said.

The Cheston committee was the successor of a committee set up by Wilson in May 1964 and headed by Prof. David Cooperman, chairman of the Social Science Program.

The Cooperman committee proposed such a center. Shunting aside possible objections, it said the university cannot remain "an ivory tower," with the clear implication that the risks take a public university takes in helping to resolve sometimes sensitive issues, is worth it and, indeed, necessary.



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