

The Dormitory Campaign

FRATERNITY and independent students at the University of Oklahoma joined last month in an aggressive campaign to secure approval of the State Legislature for the proposed dormitory bond issue. Leaders in the Interfraternity Council and the Independent Men's Association organized every facility available to inform parents of students, members of the legislature, University alumni and the general public about the present housing situation at the University.

The Board of Regents has asked the State Legislature to authorize a self-liquidating bond issue in the amount of \$1,000,000 to construct dormitories at the University. The Regents took this action after considering the report of a special faculty committee which investigated the housing problem resulting from the steady increase in University enrolment.

The faculty committee, headed by W. W. Kraft, superintendent of University utilities, predicted a housing crisis next September. The housing survey showed that the unoccupied space in present approved houses would accommodate only 113 more individuals. If enrolment continues to increase at the normal rate there will be 500 more students on the campus in September, 1939, and the question as to where these students will live is unanswered.

A dormitory, if granted, would not be fully opened for occupancy until 1940, which means that by the time it is opened, another increase of approximately 500 students might be anticipated and would require additional housing. In other words, the dormitory units, if constructed as planned, would relieve the housing crisis but would still require as many students to live in boarding houses as at present, the committee believes.

THE committee declared that there are very few additional rooms that could be secured for students beyond those now on the University approved list, and the committee believes that a number of the rooms of low quality—probably accommodations for 300 students—should be eliminated.

Because of the steady increase in the number of students coming to Norman, University authorities have felt compelled to approve a number of rooms that otherwise would have been eliminated. Some of the accommodations rated "average" to "poor" were found to be actually unhealthy due to improper ventilation, poor building construction or inadequate heat. Many students in attempting to reduce room costs agree to care for their own rooms and to provide and launder bedding. In most instances this results in



Only state-owned dormitories now operating at the University are Hester and Robertson Halls for women students, containing accommodations for only 244.

undesirable living standards. Practically all houses occupied by students are frame construction and in their present crowded condition are in many instances fire hazards. The difficulties that confront a student in a poorly constructed, overcrowded, inadequately supervised rooming house are a perennial problem for faculty and students.

The survey revealed 94 basement rooms which in many cases have little or nothing to recommend them except that they are cheap in price. In many of the men's rooming houses the committee found as many as eight or more boys using one lavatory. In 274 houses on the men's list, rooms are heated by open gas fires and only a few of these are vented. Many rooms have inadequate lighting fixtures for study.

The committee commented that "housing students in private homes on a semi-commercial basis is at best unsatisfactory and at worst is positively detrimental to the educational process."

"To be a real part of the educational process" the committee said, "it is necessary for the institution to carry its own responsibility for housing—and this can mean but one thing—institutionally operated dormitories. Many institutions have come to feel that fraternity and sorority students must not be the only ones who shall enjoy adequate housing. These institutions feel that justice to the non-fraternity men and women demands that these students be provided much better rooms than can be secured in the average rooming house so that disparity between the living conditions of these two divisions of the student body will be eliminated. Perhaps the time is not far off when to be 'non-fraternity' does not necessarily

mean that one is forced to live in rooming conditions that are often unsatisfactory."

The housing survey revealed that 1,411 students are housed in fraternity and sorority houses; 489 live in five dormitories, three of which are privately owned; 1,754 students (married, working for room, living at home or with relatives) are not living in rooming houses; 730 are commuters; and 2,282 are living in 407 approved rooming houses.

The fraternity and sorority houses are practically full, the committee reports, although some have room space unfilled. Others are overcrowded and the total number varies but little from year to year. The dormitories are at present well occupied and no appreciable room space can be found there. The committee expressed belief that many students now commuting would live in Norman if a more favorable room situation existed. It is pointed out that commuting is not entirely satisfactory because it handicaps the students in the use of the University library and other study facilities.

IN asking approval of the dormitory bond issue proposal, the Regents are not asking the state legislature to make any appropriation whatever. The Regents ask only for authority to offer a bond issue to be financed by private funds. These bonds would be retired by the earnings of the dormitory. The project would be self-liquidating and would add no burden of expense to the state.

Although dormitories at some of the state schools have had financial difficulties, all interest and bond payments on the two dormitories built at the University of Oklahoma in 1926 are paid to date.