

SUB Cafeteria

New Garden of Eatin'

by John DeMont

Squished like the innards of a ham sandwich beneath the Student Union office on the 2nd floor and the games Room in the basement, the SUB cafeteria on the main floor was for many the heart—or the stomach—of the Student Union Building. We say "was" because the SUB "caf", that renowned haven of grease, smoke and coffee slurping students has undergone the culinary equivalent of a sex-change operation. Renovations have transformed the old SUB caf into the "Garden Cafeteria".

The "Gardens" predecessor, the much maligned "S.U.B. Cafeteria" according to John Graham, the head of the S.U.B., "had the appearance of a lumber camp or military barracks." It consisted of a one level serving line cafeteria, with a seating area devoid of anything which, even in the loosest sense, could be termed atmosphere.

Probably its greatest fault, according to Graham, was that it was dated, a 1960's set-up operating in the 1970s. "Food service has changed a great deal since then. People are now concerned with having a limited menu of quality food. Self-service has been replaced by fast food."

Graham could actually be termed the "Gardens" mentor, having travelled throughout North America, inspecting the various University food services in an effort to decide upon the appropriate form the new S.U.B. cafeteria should take. The present "Garden" operation is actually an adaptation similar to the method used in U.C.L.A., which has also integrated all of the successful, proven concepts of Beaver Foods and its predecessors, Saga Foods and Kater Plan, into one design.

The changes taking place in the cafeteria fall into two categories: those on the consumption end and those on the production end. One of the most important changes, from the consumption point of view, was the creation of a cozier, more pleasant atmosphere.

Graham said, "We tried to make the area brighter and more pleasant. Allowing it all the advantages of a large room and the feeling of a smaller, more personal room." This was achieved through a re-organization and redecoration of the cafeteria, especially the eating area, partitioning it off and making it split-level. "By cutting it off," continues Graham, "We have also increased the seating by about 30 people."

The method of service, which in the past was mainly self service, is now done completely by the Garden staff. This change, according to Ewald Mertens, "allows a higher quality and more personal service, as well as increasing overall operating efficiency." "In addition, says Mertens, "it also provides more part-time employment of students."

The production end, stage two, is still in the transformation process. In the past food production was inefficient. Food was prepared in the kitchen downstairs, and then taken up to the serving area where it was placed in a steamer to keep it hot. Unfortunately this did not always work and as a result food was often dried out. Also the long cafeteria process, which included waiting in meal, beverage and cashier lines, often insured that by the time a student got to his table his food would be cold.

When the new production system is completed by the second week in November, it will have three advantages

over the old one: greater speed going through the lines, increased efficiency of labor and an increased quality of the food.

In the past, a student would have to wait in three lines (beverage, meal and cashier) for the average meal, it is now only necessary to wait in one line. There are exceptions to this rule. For instance if you wanted to purchase a salad and a hot meal it would be necessary to wait in two lines, but the the most part the four stations exist independent of each other.

The new set-up also enables areas not in use to be closed down so that the staff can be redistributed to busier areas. Under the old system it was also necessary to wheel much of the food in the various display counters, out in the morning and back in again at night. The new system makes this unnecessary.

When all of the new equipment comes in, such as, refrigeration units, special chutes with infra-red heaters to keep the food warm, and the various preparation tables and storage facilities, it will enable the "Garden" to produce all of the food on one level.

The end result should be an operation where the students will be able to get a more specialized type of well-prepared food. If this specialization is one of the "Gardens" pluses, it is also a negative aspect, as menu variety has been sacrificed to fulfill this objective. Graham himself admits, "I don't like fast food services, but we have no choice, if we are going to produce what people want, this is what we are going to have to do."

From a management point of view, the "Garden" has been a success. Mertens says complaints are only one-tenth

of what they were last year. Profits are also up, an increase of 20% over this time last year. Even the staff members are pleased. Mrs. Beatrice Edwards, says students complaints are way down, and also praises the new system which allows them to serve more customers during a shorter period of time.

Student sentiment, the really important gauge of the "Gardens" success, is very diverse. Comments of stu-

dents interviewed range from mild obscenities to rather conservative praise. However, there is a general consensus that the "Garden" is a good deal better than the operations in the past at the S.U.B. Whether or not this reflects the high quality of the "Garden" or the low quality of its predecessors is undetermined. But one thing is certain, it is definitely a step in the right direction.

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