

UH Regents Hear What's in a Name

By Janos Gereben
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Five members of the University of Hawaii Board of Regents got an earful yesterday about the evils of racism — particularly of the white vs. Oriental variety.

Ironically, all five regents happen to be of Japanese ancestry.

In one of the liveliest meetings on the Manoa campus in recent months, 50 students and interested persons attended the session of the board's committee on physical facilities, headed by regent Tom Shibano.

THE TOPIC was a student petition to reconsider naming the new social studies building after Stanley David Porteus.

Porteus, a professor of psychology and anthropology at Manoa between 1922 and 1940, was "a racist," according to the students present yesterday.

"We've had a lack of input by students," Shibano said at one point.

There was no such lack yesterday when a dozen students and two members of the faculty spoke at a meeting in the Campus Center conference room.

THE SPEAKERS were members of a new group, the Coalition to Rename Porteus Hall.

Their aim was to have the regents call a public hearing on reconsidering their decision last July to name the building after Porteus.

Shibano said at the end of the meeting that the committee will take the request under consideration.

Richard Sasaki, who was chairman of the committee in July, said the group "had no idea" then about possible charges of racism in Porteus' works.

There was much laughter as students quoted from Porteus' 1926 work, "Temperament and Race":

HAWAIIANS — "the worst defects of the Hawaiian temperament are his deficiency of planning capacity, extreme suggestibility and instability of interest"

Japanese — "ready to combine for any purpose of group advancement, aggressive and rather untrustworthy when self interest is in question"

(Manoa chancellor Douglas Yamamura looked at acting president Richard Kosaki at this point and nodded, saying, "True, true.")

Chinese — "Somewhat less suggestible than the Japanese, they are therefore less adaptable, slower to assimilate Western ideas and thus less disposed to constitute a challenge to the supremacy of the ruling caste."

"FROM A point of view as selfish as his own, the Chinese is an almost ideal immigrant. He possesses all the virtues of a useful citizen without the embarrassing ambition to become one."

The last sentence of the Porteus quote about the Chinese brought a general outburst of laughter.

However, there was a hush over the audience when Sharon Lunaeco, a student, quoted a Porteus statement about Filipinos and then added, with her voice breaking,

"I am a Filipino and I am proud of that. I find his conclusions an insult to my ethnic heritage and pride."

The students also objected to lack of student participation in the procedure to name buildings.

For an hour and a half, the students and Daviana McGregor, acting director of the Ethnic Studies Program, quoted from Porteus' works and commented on "his blatant racism," his lending "scientific prestige to white exploitation and racist policies," his preaching white racist superiority.

A student, urging reconsideration, said "Let's pick a name that's not an insult to the people."