

# Oslo Scholars Recount International Experience

Last year we saw Martha Jarvis' energetic enthusiasm, Ruth Bennett's dreamy-eyed look, and Lynn Hamrick's longing sighs as they reminisced over their summer experiences as Oslo scholars — and we looked forward to a wonderful and exciting summer. Now we are accused of showing the same enthusiasm, longing sighs, and dreamy looks. We've even adopted their determined motto: Some day we must go back to Norway—and the rest of Europe.

The Oslo summer school is a special session that follows the American college system. This year we were part of the largest group the summer school has accommodated: about 180 Americans and Canadians and around 40 other students from many countries, including Norway, France, Italy, Germany, Belgium, England, Poland, Turkey, India, and China. The courses, all taught in English, dealt with practically every phase of Norwegian culture and politics, and most of the teachers were the regular Oslo University professors. In the International Relations course, we were fortunate to have lecturers from high state positions in Norway; for example, one speaker was an expert on international law at The Hague.

Of all the souvenirs we brought back from our summer as Strong Scholarship students, the most valuable ones are the new ideas obtained, not only from the classroom, but by talking with people of other countries and backgrounds.

We were introduced to the life and culture of a hardy, warm-hearted group of people called Norwegians. Besides the eighteen Norwegian summer school students, we met and visited in the homes of many others. One of these you probably have seen: Agnes Sende, now a part of our Salem life. Although we are quite against the



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idea of generalizing about a whole nationality after meeting a few representatives, we did notice some traits peculiar to all the Norwegians we met. In the first place—and a Norwegian warned us about this—they hardly ever accept compliments. In answer to a flattering remark, they will reply: "Oh, you don't really mean that." Try this on Aggie sometimes. We did, and it worked. We were also warned that all Norwegians are conceited—about Norway. Many times, in and out of the classroom, we heard,

"I do not mean to be bragging, but . . ." After seeing their country—the clear, narrow fjords, the rugged mountains, the "midnight sun" — we understand this strong national pride. A clear evidence of their real affection for Norway is their great respect for the Norwegian national anthem. This beautiful patriotic song was used only for appropriate occasions and never in jest.

Many Norwegians accused us Americans of hanging on to old Victorian attitudes. We admitted that we were rather shocked by our first swimming outing. Some of the Norwegians changed into their bathing suits on the beach—and the children under about five years old just didn't bother with any clothes at all.

We naturally took a great interest in the Norwegian food. For six weeks our diet included a daily supply of potatoes, cheese, open-faced sandwiches, and plenty of fish. One day we were served a meat that tasted like a cross between rather tough roast beef and liver. Lots of us thought it was pretty good—until we found out it was whale meat! At one of the private Norwegian parties to which we two were invited, the main dish was shrimp: unshelled! A huge platter was brought out of shrimp complete with heads, legs and "antennas". A Norwegian showed us the proper etiquette for shelling them: first you pull off the head and tail; then come the legs; and last of all you make sure all the

shell is off before you pop the delicious meat into your mouth. We got along fine: the problem was the two beady eyes staring at us from the plate.

In addition to our Norwegian friends, we met and became friends with many of the other foreign students. One of the most interesting



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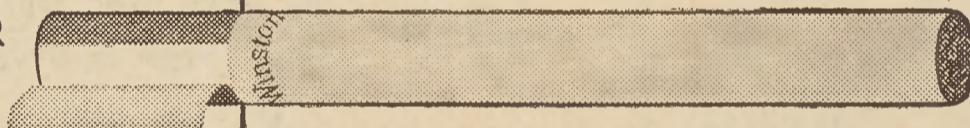
of these was Stanislaw Kowalski, our Communist friend from Poland. He told us about his idea of a "democratic communism", about the American failures that are most useful to the Russians as propaganda, and about the life and ideas of Russian young people. "Stan" tried to make us understand that our democracy is only one concept of the democratic idea: political equality and freedom. His view of communism is another democratic concept: economic and social

equality. He dislikes the Russian "communism" as much as we do; in fact, he was ousted from the Polish Communist Party because of his radical communistic ideas. As we expected, Stan said that the most successful topic of Soviet propaganda is the segregation problem.

Perhaps one of the experiences which will remain in our minds the longest was a series of international evenings which were held almost every week during our stay in Oslo. While we learned a great deal about other countries, probably the most thought-provoking meeting was the one given on our country by two young men, one from Chile and one from Italy. After a year's visit in the U. S. they were given the difficult topic of "Why I still would not like to live in America." It seemed to be a rather unusual approach, and yet the ideas which they presented to us were quite valid and worthy of our thought. The one point which they, as well as others who had visited America, brought out was one of conformity in our country. To many of them, we are people ruled by social pressure and group standards. During the remainder of the school session, many of our discussions came back to this one thought.

Yes, the longing sighs, the enthusiasm, and the dreamy-eyed look are all a result of an indescribably enriching summer in Oslo. As it has been said before, "Some-day we must go back".

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