Obi Sets Down Goals at Open Meeting

By Jerry Gollinger

Last Friday's "Interracial Soul Search," the Obi Society's first public presentation, brought into clearer focus the forces acting for and against the newly formed society.

The 150 to 200 students and listeners who packed into room 15-8 were mainly white. The panel consisted of four representatives of the Obi Society, three representatives of student government and one independent.

Jim Koschuh, who is petitioning against the student government's recognizing and funding of the Obi Society, gave a short introductory speech in which he outlined his grievances. Koschuh has founded a counter group which he referred to as "S.O.U. L." - Students Opposed to Unjust Legislation.

Jack Merritt then gave an explanation of why he had circulated an earlier petition and why he had withdrawn it. He finally gave Obi his partial support by saying, "I don't want to be put in the position of being the great white leader on this campus, because there is no great white leader and there is no great white race and there is no great black race, so be open-minded and listen to them and ask questions because it will be good for them and it will be good for you."

A third prepared speech was delivered by Charles Canada. The speech seemed well-polished and reflected Canada's award-winning style in debate and oratory.

Canada first spoke generally, saying, "I foresee in the future one of two alternatives. Either we live together as brothers and sisters or we face total destruction."

He then went on to answer some questions raised by the first two speakers. He explained briefly Obi's scholarship fund and its membership policy.

The remainder of the session was a question and answer period.

It was said that Obi has no political ties, nor is it associated with the Black Panthers or other Black Nationalists.

Some students interpreted the poem, "Obi Won't Bite Unless the prime minister of the Obi Society, Jim Walton, extended an invitation saying, "Our doors are open to anybody who wants to expose themselves to Obi, and I wish more students would come down. Nobody is going to turn you away from Obi's office... so if you want to come in, come in, don't stand and peep in."

The student government's representatives explained why they increased Obi's budget overnight. It seems that they had more money than they thought they had and there were "threats" made by individuals.

Obi's prime minister pointed out to those who were arguing financial matters that the things Obi can do are hard to put a price on.

Finally, it was stated that Obi was for "Black people," not "Negroes." As Maurice Alexander put it, "There are many, numerous thousands, hundreds of thousands, millions of Negroes. There are very few Black people."

Prime Minister Walton of the Obi Society made a concluding speech urging students to come to the Obi office, room 18-4, for more information, and asking them to work to bring about the changes Obi is looking forward to.