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Listening may be key to society's problems, Utah educator says

University of Montana--Missoula. Office of University Relations

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LISTENING MAY BE KEY
TO SOCIETY'S PROBLEMS,
UTAH EDUCATOR SAYS

MISSOULA---

Learning to listen to other peoples' problems may be the key to the solution of racial problems and other problems in our society, according to Dr. Quinn G. McKay, a Utah educator.

Dr. McKay, who is dean of the College of Business and Economics at Weber State College, Tuesday night discussed "The Problems of Human Communication in Contemporary Society" before an audience of ministers and lay religious leaders attending the University of Montana's 1968 Churchman's Workshop.

Speaking at the University Congregational Church Tuesday night, Dr. McKay said, "We need to learn to listen with understanding, if we are going to communicate. Most of us are very poor listeners.

"Silence is not listening," he emphasized. "I am listening only when I see as he sees and feel as he feels. This may be the source of our Negro problem today."

Dr. McKay said it is difficult for many people to learn to listen.

"Whenever I really listen with understanding," he emphasized, "I run the risk of being converted to the other man's idea. And most of us are not secure enough to run that risk."

Dr. McKay said the inability to listen to and attempt to understand another's problems also is the cause of the problems "in labor and management today."

He said it is possible for two people seeing opposite things to both be right. Accepting the fact that the other person can be right "tends to facilitate communication," Dr. McKay added.

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Dr. McKay utilized several pictures to emphasize his points. One picture was that of a young woman, another was that of an old woman and the third was a composite of the two.

After half the audience viewed the picture of the young woman for a minute, it was difficult, and in most cases impossible, for that segment of the audience to see the old woman in the composite picture. Conversely, the segment of the audience viewing the picture of the old woman found it difficult, in most cases impossible, to see the young woman in the composite picture.

Dr. McKay said the purpose of the experience was "to build up an ego-bind" in the minds of the audience.

"An ego-bind," he explained, "occurs when a person gets a concept in his mind and the individual's neutral defense mechanisms lock this concept in. Rather than trying to understand or see the other person's point of view, he spends his energy in defending his own point of view."

Dr. McKay also stressed the importance of conditioning in our lives. He said this conditioning results in perception and the perception, in turn, results in behavior.

The 1968 Churchman's Workshop will continue through Thursday, May 2.

Dr. McKay will give an address Wednesday, May 1, entitled "Large Organizations and Problems of Communication." The speech will follow a dinner at 5:30 p.m. in the Yellowstone Room of the UM Lodge.