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Speaker says JFK Center to fill real need

University of Montana--Missoula. Office of University Relations

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SPEAKER SAYS
JFK CENTER TO FILL
REAL NEED

MISSOULA---

Roger L. Stevens told an audience of 200 University of Montana students and faculty members Wednesday that The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C., will fill a real need because "there is no decent center for the performing arts" at this time.

Stevens, who lives in the nation's capital, addressed students and faculty Wednesday afternoon before leaving for Helena with Dr. Charles W. Bolen, UM dean of the School of Fine Arts, to attend the second Montana Governor's Conference on the Arts.

The conference is coordinated by the Montana Arts Council, which is under the chairmanship of Dr. Bolen.

Stevens said raising funds for the \$60-million structure has posed some problems "because no one was willing to give us large amounts of money" for construction.

He said construction finally was launched with federal and private funds and the grand opening of the huge facility is scheduled for late 1970.

The Center includes three auditoriums and a regular movie theater so that persons from all walks of life will show an interest in the presentations put on there. The Center will be for "rich and poor alike," he emphasized.

Stevens said he hopes to establish the First National American Theater at the JFK Center. Emphasizing the variety of performances to take place at the Center, Stevens added that opera companies have indicated an interest in the facility as well as the American Ballet Co. and entertainers in popular music fields.

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Stevens said a great deal of financial help for building the Center will come from the College Festival, scheduled for this year in Washington by 10 leading university entertainment groups from throughout the nation. The groups will put on plays to raise money for construction.

Mentioning the political aspects of federal endowments to fine arts, Stevens said he expects to see the Nixon administration seek increases in federal appropriations for the betterment of fine arts largely because there are more Republicans in leadership roles affiliated with fine arts.

Stevens said the Center was named in Kennedy's honor because of the great interest shown by the late President in the performing arts.

Stevens is a former real estate broker and JFK adviser. He once sold the Empire State Building. Prior to entering government service he was a producing partner in more than 100 Broadway shows, including "West Side Story," "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof" and "Tea and Sympathy."

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