

N.S. Blacks Gather at St. F.X. Teach-In

"We are refused the right to be!" cried Dr. W.P. Oliver.

"Let them be reconciled to us!" rose the cry of the blacks who attended the multi-sponsor teach-in "The Black Man" at St. Francis Xavier University over the weekend. So marked the tenor of the two-day proceedings, adding one new phase in the ever-heightening awareness by N.S. blacks of the need for them to assert their equality with the white race and to press for the power to determine the forces which shape their lives, to destroy the forces of their oppression and to build up a new force born of a belief in their own inherent creativity as "a beautiful race of people", in the words of black leader Rocky Jones.

Central figure at the teach-in was Rocky Jones, who made it quite plain from the start of his remarks to the eight hundred listeners that he was there to speak to his black brothers, the whites being "only spectators in a thing happening between a family". Point being that speaking to white audiences for the past four years had had little result, and that only the black people could define their situation and their goals. Jones also clarified his much-questioned position on tactics to be used in the black struggle: "You, as our oppressors, will determine the means we must choose to end our struggle." On being questioned by a black as to why the blacks should struggle against white society at all, he countered: "Hitler killed six million Jews because they didn't resist. Do you want to play Jew?!!!" This leader's response indicates his grave concern that, by forcing the blacks to conform to the customs and laws and mores of white society, white society is in effect destroying his people as a race.

The following day, much to the surprise and, in some cases, outright dismay of the teach-in organizers e.g. white co-chairman Xavier student Bill O'Brien, the blacks in attendance called for a closed meeting unlike the "closed meeting" prescribed by the teach-in planners, which had allowed for both blacks and a few white "invited guests". But black chairman Xavier student Howie Phee asked that the white audience leave in order to allow a free, frank, and familiar-type discussion.

The point that "from now on, everything we do will be without precedent" was clearly brought out by the film "Challenge for Change", shown to all. It depicted the struggle of the black organization FIGHT and the professional organizer and trouble-shooter whom they employed (Saul Alinsky) against the contract breaches made by Eastman Kodak in Rochester, New York. Alinsky's imaginative style of approach was well illustrated in his plan to gain a large voice for the black people by soliciting stockholders to grant the right of proxy at the stockholders' meetings. The film was also a clear example of

the developing sophistication in attempts by the blacks to gain a broad-based hold in what constitutes, in effect, the governing structure of Western nations today. -- the corporation hierarchies.

Concurrent with the black meeting was a gathering of interested whites with Bill O'Brien and newly-appointed Human Rights Director Marvin Schiff leading the discussion. As well as voicing the previously mentioned sentiments of dismay, there was a purposeless attempt by O'Brien and some others to ascertain just who among the group would, once the point came, choose to support violence as an aid to achieving the power of self-determination for the

blacks -- which really begs the question of any prior commitment on the black power issue. But, for those who are willing to commit themselves to the struggle of the blacks (as of all peoples who fight for an equal voice), they may find their mandate in Rocky Jones' summary: "I live for the emancipation of my people. I believe it will take a total revolution on a world-wide scale. I believe that that revolution will not be a non-violent revolution but a confrontation between blacks and whites UNLESS white society wises up and goes out and educates their own people. Because WE are organizing, every day, walking and talking amongst our own people..."

General Disinterest To Defeat Polisci Union?

The question of a course union has arisen in the Political Science department, and a number of students in that faculty are interested. The main idea appears to be a sort of beef board where everyone gets together and some people air specific problems, augmented by a speaker series.

This in turn raises more questions. For instance, what is the attitude on campus toward a course union? There has been a lot of publicity from other campuses where course unions have organized strikes and sit-ins. At McGill the Political Science Union occupied an entire floor of one of the main buildings to get demands. However, Dalhousie is a more conservative campus and most students here who mentally associated course unions with 'radical activity' would shy away immediately. Yet the purpose of this type of organization is to co-ordinate student problems and demands and use the union as a power base to bargain with faculty and administration. Attendance at the two meetings held so far has been low - fewer than twenty each time - although publicity has been relatively inconspicuous. That still shows apparent disinterest, considering there are more than 250 Political Science students at the 100 level alone.

There appears to be a general indifference attitude on campus to any kind of new or 'rock the boat' activity. Few students realize that they have representatives on the Senate, let alone how many, who they are, how they are chosen, etc. Student power awareness has not reached Dalhousie with the intensity found on most other campuses.

Then where does the interest come from, and who will a course union benefit? The situation in the first respect is typical - the senior and graduate students have instigated the movement, mainly because they know most about the department from the student viewpoint, and they are more vociferous in expressing their complaints. Theoretically the course union is designed to benefit everyone, and if criticism and reaction to criticism are both constructive, then there is a possibility that a course union could be an advantage to everyone. That is a tremendous undertaking and needs the support of all the students, not just twenty.

An organization of this type originates at the top and the motivating force tends to remain at the top. Even in a small group, there was a clear distinction between those who discussed the third and fourth year courses intelligently, and those who were forced to sit and listen. It only encourages those students who definitely intend to specialize and unless there is a speaker, makes it a waste of time for the general student.

There is little planned for the rest of this year aside from a tentative speaker series. A Chairman has been appointed for a committee to draw up a questionnaire for all students to fill in. Reaction to a questionnaire is rarely enthusiastic, and just how closely related the results will be to actual student opinion is at best highly problematic. A re-assessment of the idea even at this early stage, in direct relation with Dalhousie campus could make a course union more relevant and more constructive.



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