

interplay of fact, opinion and argument

which gave to the teach-ins the form of their name.

The idea spread amazingly quickly. The Johnson Administration (the President's strangely intense dislike of disagreement unquestionably being responsible for much of the teach-ins' impact) reacted at first somewhat ineptly.

McGeorge Bundy and Dean Rusk both issued tactless statements, which so outraged the professional feelings of the academic community, the Administration found itself on the defensive.

Then the Administration sent out Truth Squads (by the way, did they get the idea from Judy LaMarsh or did she copy it from some American precedent?) to present its case on the campuses.

But meanwhile it had become obvious to many of the organizers of teach-ins that, if the teach-ins were to be justified as an educational experience it would be best if the Administration's point of view was represented as well as the critics,

Moreover, they were confident they could tear the Administration's case to bits.

Thus it became generally accepted that a teach-in is not complete without the fullest possible representation of all the leading viewpoints on a given situation.

To sum up:

- The first teach-ins were undoubtedly vehicles of protest.

- But it was thought, to "sell" the idea of the teach-ins, they were best presented as an educational experience.

- Even at its most respectable and sedate, the teach-in remains a form of protest, since if one agrees with accepted policy one is unlikely to go to the trouble of organizing a debate on it.

The trouble is everything which was said about the educational effectiveness of the teach-in is true. So it must now be seen in relation to the educational establishment.

That there is a ferment in American higher education has become almost a cliché since the troubles at Berkeley last year. Although the only fermenting that seems to affect our own campus at the moment is involved in the production of certain liquids, there seems no reason to doubt the discontents which exploded in Berkeley will eventually make themselves felt in Edmonton.

At the heart of the complaints heard against the large American universities can usually be found two words: impersonality and irrelevance.

That is: as universities get better and bigger, professors become increasingly out of contact with, and

hence uninterested in, their students; and as the possibilities for immediate, useful social action expand (the civil rights battle, the Peace Corps, the War on Poverty), the university tends to seem more and more isolated from the real battles.

Now the teach-in provides an excellent opportunity for student-staff contact; the very fact the students are watching their professors taking a definite stand on a controversial topic is important.

But the real value of the teach-in in higher education surely is students can watch, live, the sort of arguments with which their history and philosophy courses are littered.

The justification of historical scholarship and ethical enquiry is surely they enable us to deal more wisely with our immediately pressing problems. Otherwise the "ivory tower" jibes that used to be so commonly thrown at the academic community are at least partly justified.

No meditating on the crazy, uncontrollable progression of events leading up to the First World War can be as "educational" as debate in which is brought out the same mad but seemingly inevitable motion towards disaster in which we are involved right now.

No abstract speculations regarding the ethical problems posed by war are worth a dime if they are not tied to specific knowledge of the deaths and the tortures, and of the almost equally agonizing "decisions that must be taken", which is obtainable only from considering the wars that currently stain our hands.

And no demonstration of the beauty of dialectics can match the effectiveness of an actual debate.

Hence, well-organized teach-ins have often struck students as the most valuable single educational experience they have encountered at university.

Quite apart from this matter of immediacy and relevance, the content kicked around in the course of a good teach-in is both immensely valuable and difficult otherwise to obtain.

One-newspaper towns are often not supplied with both sides of every question, needless to say; and a great number of American newspapers are oriented so far to the right The Edmonton Journal seems wildly radical in comparison.

In such circumstances, it becomes vital some forum exist through which students may become aware that other points of view exist and deserve serious consideration. The teach-ins are but the latest attempt to provide such a forum.

There are many who see the teach-in as the beginning of an even more significant educational trend.

One of the perennial problems

facing any teaching institution is keeping up. New developments come faster and faster; by the nature of things, the curriculum must always lag behind. But the

teach-in can be used to provide students with a view of things as they actually are in their chosen fields—rapidly changing and evolving.

Thus we may see teach-ins dealing with latest developments in chemistry, in physics, in education—one could go on endlessly. Obviously, the teach-in when it reaches this point is no longer a vehicle of protest, except insofar as it is a "protest" against the out-of-dateness of the curriculum.

Indeed, it would seem better to find a new name for this sort of teach-in, except the new name would not be so exciting.

The Toronto teach-in, the Viet Nam session of which will be piped into MP 126 and form the nucleus of the Thanksgiving Saturday Edmonton teach-in, falls somewhere between the extremes of protest-gesture and dialogue-of-experts-plus-audience.

There will be less emphasis on changing people's minds and more on evolving general theories on the basis of the known facts of the situation which may enable future administrations to cope more intelligently with leftist nationalist groups. However, there are sure to be some exciting clashes between the extremely diverse viewpoints represented.

It seems likely, since the teach-in is basically a theatrical occasion, any attempt to tame it too much, to return to the fine old standards of scholarly decorum, will negate everything which makes the teach-in movement seem worthy of attention.

Take away the drama, and what is left that couldn't have been picked up by the students through a bit of reading?

It is certainly too early to make great windy generalizations about possible contributions the teach-in may make to the democratic process. But since the development of institutions of discussion is really what democracy is all about, it will do no harm to keep our eyes open.

After all, it has been evident for some time the American legislature in particular and democratic legislatures in general tend to leave unrepresented the views of such important but "nonpopular" minorities as the academic community.

And in a broader sense, it is vital discussion be stimulated in every section of the community. The universities are in a good position to take the lead; but if they do nothing to raise the level of knowledgeability and concern among the greater public, they will find themselves increasingly islands of sanity in a sea of prejudice and emotionalism.

There are many who would chart the recent history of the democracies as a steady wearing-away of the Right to Speak One's Mind and Be Heard. Objectively this is perhaps nonsense; but as populations grow, and governments expand, the sense of one's voice not being heard increases.

The teach-in just may develop into a wider and more permanent forum, with its roots in the academic world but its branches extending throughout our society. If so, we will all remember the year 1965 for something more than a pale election campaign.

So on with the noise and the discussion. The heat and the light.

