

the teach-in

the university's role in the community

National Student Day Oct. 27 took many forms across the country, as university students marched, demonstrated, wrote briefs to governments and held forums and teach-ins in an attempt to make governments aware of goals set by the Canadian Union of Students earlier this fall. The goal: universal accessibility to post-secondary education, with the elimination of tuition fees as a first step.

At U of A, students collected about \$300 in a "coins for college" dime march in downtown Edmonton. The money is to be applied toward university scholarships for needy students.

But what will probably be remembered longest about this campus's first National Student Day was an eight-hour teach-in sponsored by the campus political science club in Con Hall, which focused public attention on the education question.

The first of four panels was held before a crowd estimated at more than 600, who listened to Alberta Premier E. C. Manning; philosophy lecturer Colwyn Williamson; Edmonton Journal publisher Basil Dean and law student Daniel Thachuk. Their subjects the university's role in the community.

Following is a complete transcription of the two-hour discussion, taken from tapes made by the U of A Radio Society.

• • •

round one:

the premier speaks

I have the privilege of starting off our discussion, perhaps I might be permitted to extend congratulations to the students' union and the political science club for arranging this function today. Particularly on this National Student Day I think they are deserving of the congratulations of all of us. The topic that has been assigned certainly has plenty of scope for interesting discussion.

A university, I would suggest to you, has two avenues through which it can and should make a very profound impact on the community at large. The first of course is obvious, its internal functions, and by this I mean the affording to young men and women the opportunity to acquire a deep knowledge of the humanities, and an opportunity to become trained in the professions which are essential to our modern society.

I think, however, above all, I would stress what I would call internal functions, the development of the mind or the encouragement of the development of the mind of each individual student—which certainly goes far beyond memorizing previously-discovered truths and recorded knowledge thus creating the urge and the art of developing the mind to chart its own new courses out into the deep immeasurable and as yet unexplored oceans of new wisdom and knowledge.

And finally I think we might add to those, as recognized internal activities of the university, the development of a sense of responsibility not only to himself as a student but to the society in which he is going to play a part.

Now I mention these well-recognized functions of any university in relation to this matter of the university's role in the community as a whole, because I would like to leave with you the idea that through these functions and through the students, both graduates and undergraduates, who go out from our universities every university can and should exercise a tremendous impact on every phase of community life and on society as a whole.

Now the second avenue through which a university plays its role in the community. This we perhaps might define for the sake of better words as the extra-curricular functions both on and off the university campus. Now what these activities properly should include is much more difficult to define than what I have referred to as the internal functions. I would suggest to you that society's concept of the university's role in the community at large is multiple and therefore always will be a complex assortment of frequently conflicting viewpoints and opinions.

It therefore is impossible in my view for any one person to truly reflect the answer of modern society to the question "what is the proper role of the university in the community at large." At best the answer must be an expression of individual opinion, and we all realize there is no lack of opinions among citizens generally. Many of course have very fixed and dogmatic views, but I stress we should recognize that in a question of this kind they are only opinions, so I can only express to you today a personal view.

I merely add that there are certain external functions of a university about which there seems to be very little room

today. In the first place I think we need to draw a distinction between a university as a state institution and the extra-curricular activities of both faculty members and students of a university.

Now the first of these, that is the university as a state institution, its role in the community is unavoidably circumscribed to some extent by the very nature of the institution. After all, a university is created by the people of society as a whole. The facilities are provided by society collectively; the faculty is paid by society collectively. And because it therefore has this direct association with society as a whole, it must, I think you would agree, be what we usually refer to as non-partisan, non-sectarian because it respects the conflicting viewpoints of people who comprise society. But these factors do not apply in my view to faculty members and members of the student body in their off-campus participation in the community in any issue of community or even wider interest.

But at the same time, we have a responsibility to bear in mind that whatever is said or done in the community, whether it be by members of the faculty or by members of the student body, it is unavoidable that in the public mind these things will be associated to a greater or lesser degree with the university as a whole.

Now this may be regrettable, but it is simply one of the facts we have to live with. I might by way of illustration say this is one of the unhappy facts we have to live with in the field of government.

Anything I say as an individual somebody is immediately going to say: "That is the government of Alberta speaking." This isn't necessarily the case at all! (applause) I'm sure you students will recognize that any man, whether he is on the faculty of a university or a member of the legislature of a government, a citizen has a right to his own viewpoint, his own opinion, and a right to an expression of those opinions.

But you can't avoid, and this is the only point I'm trying to mention, you can't avoid the public identifying his own personal views and his personal activities with the institution, whether it be university, the government, or any other institution.

Now, having to live with that fact, it seems to me, in this matter of the role of the university, faculty, student body and so on outside the internal operation of the university, requires two basic things that need to be developed. We certainly need to have a sense of responsibility, not just to a particular viewpoint or cause, but we have to remember, it seems to me, that just as a member in government in his personal conduct has to recognize his responsibility to the government that is identified with him so the faculty member and the student has to recognize he has a responsibility to the institution with whom he is going to be identified in the public mind.

Now the other ingredient that goes with that of course, is self-discipline. Now my proposition to you, ladies and gentlemen, is that if these two factors are present—a sense of responsibility and self-discipline—if they are present, it is my opinion that there is no need to circumscribe the scope to which participation in community issues should be confined.

I think these two ingredients are the things that primarily should determine the nature of participation rather than any arbitrary barriers that society, or groups in society, try to construct.

If these ingredients are lacking, in whole or even in part, then of course society's viewpoint as to what the function of the university in the community at large should be, will be very different and often it will be in open conflict. I think most of you would agree that when a group of students down in Berkeley University in California organized a filthy word society to establish the fact that there should be no restraints on freedom of speech, they may have had a pretty sound theoretical or academic argument, but their action was certainly irresponsible and I suggest lack-

ing in any sense of self-discipline. So as a result, all they did was make fools of themselves. They did the legitimate cause of free speech an immeasurable harm and they certainly impaired the reputation of both themselves and their university.

Now this I mention just as one simple little illustration. A very simple little illustration of what happens when people miss out on responsibility and self-discipline, which I submit to you, and this is my main point, I believe are the two things which should govern the extent and the nature of participation in community affairs by members of university faculties, by members of the student body in addition to the internal things I have mentioned.

• • •

round two:

mr. dean expounds

We have seen a fantastic expansion of universities in North America during the last 20 years, and it seems to me that this fact reflects something of far deeper significance than the bulge in the birth rate at the end of the 1930s, or the relative affluence of our society since 1945. It isn't enough and at best it's a gross oversimplification to say that universities have become bigger because more people have been in the position to undertake university training. The fact is that society has provided the facilities both through public funds and through private donations to accommodate this rapidly-rising student population, and it has provided these facilities at astronomical cost. Now this could have occurred only because society at large and the governments which it has elected have recognized that the nature of present-day society requires a rising ratio of university graduates.

Now I don't suppose that anywhere facilities have really kept pace with the pressure that has been put on them. And this is as obviously true in Alberta as it is anywhere else. And I imagine that if anybody 20 years ago had accurately predicted what the University of Alberta looks like today, he would have been denounced as an irresponsible visionary wholly detached from reality. Yet if we pay attention to what Dean Bladen has just said in his report, it is apparent that 20 years from now another dramatic transformation will have taken place.

Now I don't personally believe that this explosion in the university population has been wholly the result of an altruistic and idealistic search for knowledge for its own sake. Economics has had a good deal to do with it. The widely-held conviction that man must improve his individual knowledge and thereby his collective knowledge, in order to remain master of his environment, and of the world in which he finds himself. Everywhere we can see evidence that the untrained, uneducated man will have trouble making any kind of a living in the future. And it is perhaps fortunate for us that this awareness has come upon us at a time when, by and large, most people by one means or another can manage the costs involved in getting a university education. It certainly wasn't like this 25 or 30 years ago, when great numbers of young people with all the intellectual equipment couldn't go to university for the simple reason that they couldn't afford it.

And yet, despite this constant pressure on the universities to admit more students, and despite the vast numbers of students now on campuses all across this continent, it is possible to detect an undercurrent of frustration and discontent. Now some of this, like the protests against the war in Vietnam or against segregation, is at least ostensibly directed against targets which, taken at their face value, have no direct connection with the process of getting a university education as such. But I wonder whether they aren't just as symptomatic of this undercurrent of frustration as say the Free Speech Movement which Mr. Manning referred to, which enlivened the campus of the University of California last spring.

Students and faculty members alike are drawing attention in the most public possible way to the fact that there are things going on in the world which they



PREMIER MANNING

... responsibility, discipline needed

for argument or disagreement. Most communities, and the people of most communities I think, would expect universities would provide, for example, trained personnel to conduct studies and make analyses of the issues of matters of public interest and concern. They expect to obtain from universities men who are equipped to give leadership in a very wide range of community interests and problems.

I think there is very little room for disagreement in those areas, but the wide divergence of opinion arises when the question is one of involvement or non-involvement in various controversial issues on which public opinion and community interests differ very widely. I would suggest a few simple guide rules which may be of interest to you in our discussion