PART II-- THOUGHTS ON THE NEXT STEOP AT WISCONSIN

The Teach-In is a tactic that can be useful and productive for specific issues at certain times. It was conceived as a substitute for a strike, and can best be understood and used within that framework. It combines education and protest in a dramatic and psychologically effective manner.

As with the strike itself, however, the Teach-In cannot be used as a regular mode of action. It loses its effectiveness because it ceases to be meaningful either to the participants or to the larger public. Both groups lose interest, and ultimately become indifferent or openly antagonistic.

I

Hence the Teach-In should be reserved for very particular circumstances. These are essentially defined by the existence of a highly focused issue in connection with which there is general uneasiness, general lack of hard information, a dearth of critical analysis, and a paucity of actionable alternatives.

These conditions no longer exist in the United States with reference to the war in Vietnam. Given the failure of the Teach-In movement (along with its allies in the Establishment) to prevent the escalation of direct U. S. participation in the war, the dynamism of the war moved beyond the reach of such a tactic. The fulcrum on which the lever of the Teach-In rested -- the public feelings of unease and disapproval prior to the decision to escalate -- was smashed by the government through its action in escalating the war. In addition, the government created a new fulcrum for its own purposes out of the alloy of patriotism, pride and confidence in victory.

Another Teach-In on Vietnam _at this time_ could only serve to anneal that alloy of patriotism, pride and confidence.

The only circumstances appropriate to another Teach-In on Vietnam will involve two conditions. First: a new decision-point in the war. This might come through a turn by the National Liberation Front to political action in South Vietnam (possibly in combination with a serious showcase effort by the Russians in North Vietnam); or, on the other hand, it might come via the U. S. government's decision to go the the conference table as a political strategy for the domestic elections of 1966. Second: a clear consensus involving critics inside the Establishment that another Teach-In would be effective in pushing the government toward accepting an end of the war, and toward such further actions as a political settlement involving China, the withdrawal of all foreign military elements from all of Vietnam, and a guarantee for a Vietnam reunified by the Vietnamese themselves. Under those kind of circumstances, and if carried through with the collaboration of such critics inside the Establishment, a nationally coordinated Teach-In m ght well swing the balance of power toward positive goals.

II

There is a further and more important reason not to hold another Teach-In on the War in Vietnam. This involves the two fundamental traditions of this University. One of these is the tradition of conceiving creative alternatives to an unsatisfactory status-quo. The other is the tradition of educating and involving the people of the state (and the nation) in realizing such alternatives.

This University played a very early (in some ways original), and a highly significant and consequential, role in recognizing the failures of 19th century laissez-faire capitalism and in evolving the alternative or corporate welfare capitalism. And it translated that alternative into concrete attitudes, programs, and legislation through a vigorous and mutually responsive alliance with the citizens of the state.

All of us can, of course, criticize corporate welfare capitalism. But we must acknowledge that corporate welfare capitalism has been an improvement over 19th century individualist and entrepreneurial capitalism. And to sidetrack ourselves by concentrating on a critique of corporate welfare capitalism, either in general or in particular, is to fail our own tradition here at Wisconsin. It is also to fail intellectually. The analysis and critique of corporate welfare capitalism, and of its political ideology of modern liberalism, already exist in considerable power and refinement.

The Wisconsin traditions call at this point for the evolution and propagation of a creative alternative. The war in Vietnam, and other such pathologies and abberations as the draft, can be dealt with more effectively within this framework than by treating them as primary issues.

The central issue is the moral and practical necessity of a creative alternative to corporate welfare capitalism. The reasons that this is so, and the primary importance of moving on to a broader approach, are outlined in the attached paper on "Radicals and American Foreign Policy."

III

For these reasons, therefore, I propose the our future program be cast simply and explicitly in terms of The Wisconsin Serminar on Creating an American Community. There may be some reason to operate in the idiom of a "Free University" at such private institutions as Columbia, Yale, or Harvard, and even at some state universities and collages. But in my view, at any rate, the argument for resorting to such an approach here at Wisconsin is not at all persuasive. We are the living people responsible for sustaining a viable tradition of our own. If we are good enough to do so, furthermore, we may well win the administration of this university to our view and create a truly national center of positive ideas, ideals, leadership, and power.

This does not mean an end to protests against the war in Vietnam. It does not mean an end to protests against civil rights violations, and so forth.

But it does mean that we conceive and execute such protests within the framework, and within the strategy, of leading this campus and this immediate community of Madison into an exploration of a different and better America. That exploration can — and should — lead to concrete proposals which can be carried into the political arena at the local, state, and national levels. I myself think it entirely possible that we might enter candidates in carefully selected campaigns in the fall elections of 1966. Perhaps even more importantly, such an exploration can create a coalition of generations, and that kind of coalition can be sustained after graduation whereas the tenuous coalition of students and professors cannot be sustained after graduation.

The Seminar should, of course, be started with a dramatic and powerful program lasting at least two days, and perhaps more. But that opening blast must be followed with regular and sustained activities.

The Seminar should also be started by Wisconsin people. The national names, and other organizations, can opt-in at a later date — after we have defined the approach.

The idea of launching such a Seminar on the eve of the Christmas Holidays is attractive for many reasons, but those appeals should not be decisive in reaching a decision. The vital consideration must be the quality and the power of our initial operation.

We must define the subjects with great care and rigor, and we must involve students and adults beyond the core of radical students and faculty. We need lawyers (such as Hurst) as well as economists (such as Lampman). We need politicians (such as young LaFollette) as well as housewives (non-academmic ones, that is). We need dirt farmers (I know some who are radicals) as well as historians. We need businessmen as well as psychologists. We need poor white people as well as Negro students. We need stenographers and truck drivers as well as ministers. We need drop-outs as well as high school teachers (such as Omar Kussow) and high school students. And we need conservatives as well as liberals.

We need to — and must — involve these people within the context and orientation of the vision and the realisty of an American community. We need their candid, human expressions of what's wrong with their lives under corporate welfare capitalism. We need to learn from them the reaity of this society; and, as they teach us those things, we need to help them (and ourselves) to realize the limits of even their fondest dreams within this society. And we need to have them move on and begin to think and talk about how to build a community.

IV

Hence we will have to begin among ourselves by developing a bomb of a program and preparing the material. Once that is done we can go to other people and ask them to participate in a dialogue around the ideas we have focused and developed. We should even be prepared to have copies of our major papers available for distribution to key people prior to the program date. I suggest that our work should be orientated around the following themes:

A. The Nature and Tradition of Community

    1. In the Western World
    2. In the Eastern World

B. The American Tradition of Community

    1. 17th and 18th centuries
    2. 19th century
    3. 20th century

C. Limits Imposed on Community by Corporate Welfare Capitalism

    D. The Active Constriction and Destruction of Community in the Function-
       ing of Corporate Welfare Capitalism

       1. Domestically
       2. In Foreign Affairs

    E. The Need to Create an American Community

       1. Moral and psychological
       2. Political and economic

    F. The Technological and Economic Feasibility of Community

    G. Alternate Models of an American Community

       1. The structure per se
         a. centralized option
         b. de-centralized option
       2. The primary elements and issues (see attached essay)

I do not think we can prepare a first-rate, dramatic, and exciting program of this kind before the Second Semester. What we can prepare for in December, however, is a high-powered symposium on the Seminar. We can announce, introduce, and outline what we are going to do. We can personally work to attract a broad audience to this symposium, And we can perform well enough in the symposium to involve those people in thinking about what they can do in the Seminar when it is launched at the outset of the second semester.

Hence I propose that our program for December be such a symposium on The Wisconsin Seminar on Creating an American Community .