

Teach-In: Fights & Speeches

Edward Rom

1966

Monday, Nov. 7, the Wayne Committee to End the War in Vietnam staged a Teach-In as part of the November Mobilization for Peace, Jobs, and Freedom at Wayne University's Community Arts Auditorium. Breakthrough, a militant right-wing group, provided a slight pause in the big action at the Teach-In.

Three members of Breakthrough attempted to elbow their way into the auditorium as Joe Mora, brother of Dennis Mora from the Fort Hood Three, was speaking. The Breakthrough group was met by a contingent from the WCEWV who attempted to remove the unruly group from the auditorium. As the two groups scuffled by the entrance, Donald Lob-singer, leader of Breakthrough, was struck solidly on the left cheek by an unidentified man.

The Wayne University police, in an attempt to control the situation, seized Jim Griffin, a WCEWV member, and pinned his arms behind his back. Richard Campbell, a Breakthrough member, wearing a red beret and carrying a baton, then struck Griffin in the chest with a karate blow. Griffin appeared unhurt by the incident.

Campbell, Griffin, and one other Breakthrough member were arrested for disturbing the peace. Campbell was later charged by the Prosecutor's Office with assault and battery against Griffin.

The situation was under control, Lobsinger yelled at the people in the lobby, "Not a leftist in this city that's safe anymore." He was greeted with laughter, and he yelled again, "Laugh now! You won't be laughing for long."

The incident caused a slight interruption to the teach-in. When the fracas started, Irving Kirsch, chairman of the teach-in asked the people in the audience to remain seated, and the program continued as planned.

Barry Sheppard, editor of *The Militant*, spoke on the morality of the war in Vietnam and the "Paradox of Power" encountered by the U.S. He compared the U.S. to Vietnam with the southern whites. The Southern whites, he said, can fulfill their will against the Negro in the South by violent means and can immediately see the result of their acts. The U.S. in Vietnam, while being the strongest and richest nation in the world, "cannot work its will in a small Asian nation."

This produces, Sheppard continued, "a schizophrenic personality of power" and creates an attempted internal "Great Society" in conflict with external foreign policy. Sheppard concluded his speech by saying the concern of the anti-war movement is with building political pressure to break the war. To this end, he said, "I have no solution."

James Aronson, editor of *The National Guardian*, spoke of LBJ's censorship of the press. He accused LBJ of applying pressure to newsmen and to the newspapers. The newspapers, he said, responded with a "self-imposed censorship." The result is that "the people of this country are not informed." Aronson continued his attack by saying editors rationalize their position by saying "a newspaper must be a profit making enterprise. But I add another requirement: it must inform the people."

After Aronson's talk, the war film, "Time of the Locust," was shown. Along with the voices of President Johnson and Secretary of Defense McNamara were scenes depicting the fear and brutality imposed upon the Vietnamese people. Many scenes were concerned with the torture and killing of Viet Cong prisoners. A quiet, heavy mood settled over the audience as the bloody, brutal film ended.

The quiet mood of the audience was quickly shattered by the editor of *The Minority of One*, M.S. Arnoni. Arnoni wore the thick black and white striped uniform he wore as a Jewish prisoner in a Nazi extermination camp. He

turned inside-out an over-used metaphor concerning the war in Vietnam. To him, the U. S. and not North Vietnam is the evil enemy of the war. “I no less uphold and condemn the American killing of the Vietnamese people as I uphold and condemn the Nazi killing of my people.”

Arnoni said America’s position in the war is unjust and immoral, and he wished “the Vietnamese people victory, real physical victory.” About Americans in the war, he said, “May their lives be spared, but may their defeat be complete. Arnoni concluded with, “As I once hoped with every fiber of my body for the defeat of Hitler and all the evil and suffering he represented, I now hope with every fiber of my body for the defeat of Johnson and all the evil and suffering he represents.”

The last two speakers interpreted the war in Vietnam as “a white man’s war” and said the only solution to the war and to the condition of the Negro in the U.S. is Black Power.

Rev. Albert Cleage said “the war in Vietnam is a war for white supremacy... white supremacy in Asia because of American world domination. The torture and barbarism,” he said, “is accepted in Vietnam because it is against black people, and all people are black if they’re not white.” Reverend Cleage equated the war in Vietnam with the war of the black man in the U.S. and set the tone for McKissick’s speech.

Floyd McKissick, National Director of CORE, said, “The same people who make the illegal war in Vietnam are the same people who pass a Civil Rights Law and don’t enforce it.” His concern was that of the Negro through Black Power. He said, “Any changes to be made rest with the black masses.”

Alluding to the 22% Negro casualty figure in Vietnam, he said, “McNamara says we gonna retrain the black man so he can have equality—in death.”

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McKissick, the last speaker of the night, ended his speech by talking about Black Power. He said, “Forget about the Civil Rights movement, it’s dead. Forget about it! It’s no more a Civil Rights movement. It’s a black revolution.”



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