PROFESSORS

The Dissenters

Some 300 young faculty members and graduate students from 68 U.S. campuses met at the University of Chicago last week with a grandiose goal: to design "a comprehensive program for radical university reform." Composed mainly of leftist activists, old and new, the "New University Conference" was infected with what one of its organizers called "the rampant disease of individualism." Nevertheless, the individualists agreed enough to set up committees to open a national office and try to start radical movements within their home faculties.

The conference was the latest example of a cascading cry within academe that big universities have lost their critical function, become captives of Government, business and military research. The dissidents are especially concerned that values inherent in the humanities are not being applied to real-life problems. A university, argues University of Chicago Sociologist Richard Flacks, one of the conference organizers, must not be "just a service station for the establishment, but a place where people can work for the dispossessed, the poor, and those out of power."

Sterile Scholarship. A basic manifesto for the movement is a collection of eleven essays, *The Dissenting Academy* (Pantheon, $6.95), edited by Historian Theodore Roszak of California State College at Hayward. In the lead essay, Roszak contends that professors, pampered by their own rising affluence and coddled by Government grants, have let their research and teaching turn sterile. They gain no professional esteem from lively teaching, find no joy in pursuing a social cause, even lack loyalty to their own schools. Their main aim is to score points within their department or professional society. "Professional politicking and scholarly publication are all that academic success requires," claims Roszak.

Roszak notes that reporters rarely find anything newsworthy at conferences of such groups as the American Political Science Association or the American Sociological Association. The meetings, he says, have "no more socially significant purpose in mind than an assembly of plumbers or hotel managers." Today's academics, he notes, take a "strange kind of pride in recognizing a problem, but not in solving it."

Genteel Banter. M.I.T. Humanities Professor Louis Kampf contends that many English teachers now recoil from stressing literature's illumination of life. They fear that voicing strong opinions is not only "a bad breach of manners," but might jeopardize their careers; thus confine themselves to "genteel banter." Historian Staughton Lynd, who has carried his beliefs into angry dissent from the Viet Nam war, criticizes historians who limit themselves to defining and analyzing forces in society. He asks acidly: "Should we be content with measuring the dimension of our prison instead of chipping, however inadequately, against the bars?"

Some of the dissenters insist that many scholars are too beholden to Government research grants. Marshall Windmiller, an international-relations teacher at San Francisco State College, charges that "specialists in international affairs are not only failing to distinguish between the aims of the Government and the aims of the academy, but are allowing themselves to be made over into instruments of the state." Former University of Oregon Anthropologist Kathleen Gough argues that U.S. anthropology has become "a child of Western capitalist imperialism" and that the U.S. "power elite" uses anthropologists to help delay "social change throughout two-thirds of the world."

Professors should indeed profess with a passion, and scholarship should not remain aloof from social ends. But in their obsession with the failure of scholars to change the Government's Viet Nam policies, the dissenters run the danger of creating a restrictive dogma of their own. When the radicals contend, as did many of those at the conference, that "you can't change society through conventional political channels," they risk rendering their own efforts irrelevant. Instead of copping out, they might better examine the way thousands of their own students are now trying to topple a President—by working for opposing political candidates. Thus far, the 1968 campaign suggests that some professors have quite a bit to learn from students.

PRIVATE SCHOOLS

Mixing Races in Manhattan

As urban public schools grow increasingly black, city private schools are thriving—as select enclaves for ever brighter whites. Many such schools are seeking more Negroes, but in New York City, for example, private-school enrollment is still only about 3% black. Now one unusual school is showing others how to break the racial barriers.

After eight years of teaching at Manhattan's Dalton School, Augustus Trowbridge felt frustrated in the face of his students' uniform brilliance, decided "there is no justification for the perpetuation of institutions that represent only one society." In 1966 he started his own Manhattan Country School, which has a 30% Negro and Puerto Rican enrollment, hopes to serve as "a private model for public education."

Trowbridge, 33, a private-school product of Philadelphia's Chestnut Hill Academy and Vermont's Putney School, shuns the liberal notion that racial differences should be ignored. Manhattan Country's Negro pupils, most of whom are from poverty areas in East Harlem, may wear "Afro" haircuts with pride, knowing that their white classmates from high-rise apartment buildings cannot match them. No one pretends that there are no racial tensions at the school—but whenever a child tosses a racial slur, it becomes a topic of freewheeling discussion in which teachers lead the students in discovering the falseness of their generalizations.

Picking Beads. Manhattan Country's 102 children and ten teachers occupy three floors of a baroque mansion just off Fifth Avenue. So far, the children are in six classes, ranging from nursery school to a combined fourth and fifth grade. A $60,000 grant from the Ket-

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TROWBRIDGE & MANHATTAN COUNTRY KINDERGARTEN
Shunning the notion that differences should be ignored.

tering Foundation helped start the school, but despite scattered donations from some 30 foundations, it is hard-pressed for the scholarship funds it needs to retain its racial mix. Half the students get financial aid in meeting the tuition, which runs from $1,050 to $1,700 a year. Already 500 applicants are competing for 25 openings next year. They will be chosen mainly on the basis of highly subjective interviews. "It's like having a tray of beads," says Associate Director Ruth Cooke. "You pick out those with a certain sparkle."

The curriculum accents learning by "discovery" and subtly prods the children to teach one another. To act out childhood fantasies, they create weird costumes and run off in them to Central Park, where, as one student wrote in his daily journal, he simply "spied on people." One classroom contains eight doves, a skink, boa constrictor, canary, goldfish, turtles and families of gerbils and mice. The mating habits of a pair of doves, Hawk and Paloma, led to a highly explicit discussion of reproduction, all duly recorded in a scrapbook labeled the "Dove Book." The animals provide a common community of interest—and creating a community is a main Trowbridge aim.

Being Themselves. Such togetherness is turned to individual advantage. When a nine-year-old boy with a reading problem was asked to help second-graders with their reading, he became so proud that he not only overcame his own difficulty, but proved a highly effective teacher as well. A Negro girl, too repressed to talk, was handed a doll by a white girl, who told her: "You're the mother—and mothers have *got* to talk to their children." She did.

The paradoxical school name stems from the fact that the school has a 300-acre farm in upstate New York, where students spend occasional weeks in nature study. The advantage of the rural experience, says Trowbridge, is that "the farm is neutral in a way the city is not—it makes the same demands on the deprived kids as it makes upon the middle-class kid." To avoid pressuring all students to conform to middle-class values, there is no grading or assignment to ability "tracks"—all in line with Trowbridge's theory that "if children were not always measured comparatively, they might have the incentive to be themselves."

Actually, the faculty finds that the white youngsters seem to benefit more from the integration than do the Negroes. They learn to admire the independence and street savvy of the black children, such as that of the five-year-old who pushes alone into crowded rush-hour buses to attend school—a trip that would frighten his sheltered white classmates. The school has been so successful that only one student has dropped out. He was withdrawn by parents who objected to such close association with children from the ghetto. His parents are middle-class Negroes.

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