North Shore teach-out

Thousands stage massive protest against pollution

By BONITA HARSH

The public—anxious, fearful, worried, and just plain curious—turned out 5,000 strong Friday night for a marathon kickoff to the crusade against pollution.

Concern about environmental decay has become fashionable, and the men whose prophecies of 20 years ago are now being heeded were in Northwestern University's Technological Institute to urge action.

"Government reacts to pressure, and you're the stimulus," said Peter Flawn, University of Texas director of the bureau of economic geology.

"Don't just sit here and bitch—sue somebody!" challenged environmental lawyer Victor Yannacone.

But it seemed that the teach-out, forerunner of 300 similar programs planned for other colleges, fulfilled the need for practical and pointed education. It was the girding before battle.

Pollution symbol

If you looked at it ironically, these people represented what was wrong with the world—overpopulation. Bodies pressed in the hallways during the pre-midnight coffee break, elbows jabbing, feet crushing. Cracked plastic coffee cups littered everywhere and hot coffee spilled on more than one unhappy participant. The air was close and slightly 'smoky from prohibited cigarettes.

It brought home Dr. Lamont Cole's belief that population growth is the No. 1 problem. Dr. Cole is a Chicago-born ecologist who specializes in the mathematics of population.

"If we can achieve zero population growth in the United States, then maybe we can convince the rest of the world to do the same," he said.

In a press conference after his speech, Dr. Cole denied that the current wave of enthusiasm over the pollution fight was just a "fad."

"The nation is seriously concerned," he said, wishfully eying a drink he hadn't had a moment to sample. "Five or six years ago congressmen were merely polite when we brought the problems of survival up to them; now they're alarmed."

But Dr. Paul Ehrlich, author of "The Population Bomb," wasn't so sure.

"Pollution control buys you a ticket to try to solve the other problems," he said. "The government doesn't have to be run by a group of elderly rustic boobs. Until they are cleared out and you get rid of the seniority system, we're not going to get anything done."

The scientists weren't pleased with President Nixon's state of the union message Thursday.

"Just to stay even with the environmental deterioration in the United States would cost $30 billion a year. President Nixon said we'd spend $2 billion for five years to clean up the water—that's certainly not going to clean up anything," criticized Dr. Cole.

Dr. Ehrlich praised Zero Population Growth, Inc., a Chicago-based agency that advocates a two-child maximum family size.

"There have been 600,000 American men killed in battle from 1776 to Vietnam. Since noon Tuesday to tonight (Friday), we just made up for that," he said.

Dr. Lawrence Slobodkin, professor of biology at Stony Brook University in New York, warned that efforts to fight pollution were being subverted by persons who used over-population as an escape route, claiming they cannot bear the responsibility.

Indians protest

His talk was interrupted when about 35 American Indians filed onstage to protest the government's pollution of their "lands, religions, and minds." On behalf of the Native American Committee of Chicago, they demanded that N.U. provide 15 employment opportunities and 15 scholarships for native Americans and engage committee speakers to tell students the truth about the American Indian.


"You've got to be the conscience," Atty. Gen. Scott told the predominantly college-age audience. "I think this is the beginning of one of the greatest crusades to hit college campuses."

But behind the optimism was the reality of past failures and present struggles.

"In 1969, all Lake County beaches were closed because raw sewage was poured into the lake. Unless we do something, by 1972 all the beaches on the Illinois shoreline will be closed."

'Risk posterity'

Treas. Stevenson commented, "We have risked posterity for the sake of prosperity. We spend more in Vietnam in two weeks than we have on air pollution in 10 years. We must stop being self-indulgent materialists.

"If we don't go out with a bang or a whimper, it may be with a cough," he warned.

Closing the program, Mr. Yannacone said we needed a World War III against the common enemy, pollution.

"We've got to clean up the effluent of the affluent," he purred. "The cost should be borne by industry, not the government. The time has come to housebreak business—like toilet training a puppy with a rolled up newspaper."

After his speech, people poured into the halls for coffee, donuts, and evaluations. All kinds of people were there—Lake Bluff widows, Evanston advertising executives, Wilmette mothers anxious about their children's future, a Detroit man desperately fighting to protect the endangered fishhawk, and blacks from Chicago.

"This is the issue of the 70's," said Howard Richards of Chicago, a Loop auditor.