



THE FUSS dies down, the dust begins to settle, and the nine days' wonder passes into its tenth day, as the Brains Trust, tamed and groomed, subsides into an established national institution for the weekly delivery of decorous lecturettes by eminent persons in reply to guaranteed non-inflammable questions.

The original association of Huxley, Campbell, and myself on the Brains Trust was largely accidental; yet the combination proved unexpectedly effective. The public liked to hear the scraping which Huxley and I brought to the discussion of such questions as the relation between the brain and the mind; it liked still more to hear Campbell keeping his end up with both of us—when he was clearly shown to be wrong by Huxley or even, on occasion, by myself, he would get scores of letters from sympathetic listeners testifying to their faith and trust in him—and on occasion hitting the bowling all round the wicket.

For example, after Campbell had made the country roar with laughter by his illustration of the use of the word "allergic" from persons who could not eat marmalade because it made their head steam, he discomfited the scoffers by triumphantly producing letters from marmalade-head-steamers congratulating him on his knowledge of their peculiarity. The Brains Trust also introduced thousands of people for the first time to the interchange of ideas. At its best it conveyed the suggestion of a good after-dinner discussion between educated persons on matters in regard to which the truth is not known. Thus listening gave many people the sense of enjoying a new

experience. It was, again, a source of perennial satisfaction to hear the experts caught out . . .

These were only some of the many incidental reasons for the popularity of the Brains Trust. For the root causes I think one must go deeper. I venture to suggest three. First, that there exists among people an accumulated fund of unexpected seriousness. There has been a good deal of sporadic evidence of this during the war. Army classes and discussion groups, A.B.C.A. lectures, Mass Observation reports indicating renewed interest in religious questions, the revival of music to which the success of C.E.M.A. testifies—all these are straws that show which way the wind is blowing. The Brains Trust is, I think, the outstanding piece of evidence. Nor is the fact surprising. There have been ages crueller, wickeder, more brutal, but never so silly an age as the one before the war. Eight out of nine of us did no serious reading of any kind after we left school at fourteen; only 10 per cent. had contact with any religious organization, and by most of us the questions with which religion has historically concerned itself were ignored. It was not that they were not answered; they were not asked. Very few young people, less than 2 per cent. of those under twenty-three, were members of a political party.

The press, I think, consistently underrated the underlying seriousness of a public whom it fed with crosswords, football pools, crime stories, sex stories, and snippets of gossip and gobbets of news, on the assumption that the powers of the average man's concentration were exhausted by two minutes' reading on