

CAMPUS NOTES

Students don't see visiting leaders: Hindi riots worry

A University Correspondent

LAST week the University of Delhi honoured two distinguished visitors: French Prime Minister Pompidou, and Finland's President Dr Urho Kaleva Kekkonen.

But it was "news" to several students. Pardonably so, as such special convocations are strictly official; invited are the heads of various departments in the three faculties and the colleges. A few passes are distributed to various colleges for some lecturers and students. But they are often not used.

Why? "If these convocations are meant merely to confer formal honours on visiting dignitaries, the students perhaps are disinterested. We wish they could provide the guests with an opportunity to meet the students, to speak to them," some students say.

The "commerce of spirit" (to quote the French Premier) could perhaps be established if these convocations are more informal and meaningful.

PURPOSE AND VALUES

Most of the colleges, meanwhile, are winding up their cultural, social and literary activities for this session: there are less than eight weeks to go for the examinations. One of the more exciting year-end debates at a college hostel of the Delhi University was on the statement

that: "The predicament of modern Indian youth is its total loss of values." Some of the speeches had both clarity and depth, seeking to distinguish between values and purpose—values defined as ideal terms of reference, and purpose as an ambition or goal. It was slippery going, though, when some argued that values could change in terms of a desired goal. There was hope that out of their present confrontation with the traditional and Western, a new set of values would emerge capable of meeting the needs of the modern age.

CONCERN OVER HINDI RIOTS

An edge was lent to such basic debates by news of the anti-Hindi agitations in the South, and the acts of self-immolation which rocked the campus last week.

What exactly do students in the South want? This is being discussed at the cafe and elsewhere. That Hindi is being imposed on any one is not accepted. Quite a few firmly believe "that the purpose of declaring Hindi as the principal official language is to provide in practice what the law had laid down 15 years ago. This is to establish a link language which is both native and understood by the majority."

The distress of those who have not learnt Hindi is understood, but it is argued they have time to acquire an adequate working knowledge of the language.

There are several, however, who believe the riots resulted from a general feeling of distrust and fear. "Even the Government announced its policy in firm and unequivocal terms only when the riots had spread widely and public life had been disrupted in Madras," these students say.

Violence is not justified, but the thought occurs that some of the non-Hindi speaking people might feel sentimental about language.

There is relief that reason has at last prevailed. But to what extent has the concept of unity diminished because of the agitation? How "fragile" are the bonds between the States? These thoughts worry.