

August 21, 1934

Dr. John Dewey  
Columbia University  
New York, New York

Dear Dr. Dewey:

At Bennington College this year we are holding a running discussion in the evenings, with outside speakers and our own group, of the general principles and background of liberalism and democracy and the contrasting philosophies and machinery which have been growing up since the war under the terms Fascism and Communism. Especially do we wish to clarify the institutional and philosophical background of liberalism and democracy. Primarily this means an analysis of political and economic organization and foreign relations. Also, during the latter part of the year, we are attempting to see the application of the democratic philosophy and liberal view point in such fields as literature, art, science and religion.

As an introduction and especially to give the philosophical background, there is just one person whom we have to have, and that is you. We want especially the broader picture which will lay the foundation upon which the specialized speakers may afterwards build.

The audience at our evening meetings consists of about two hundred people, both faculty and students, and attendance is voluntary. The general purpose of these meetings is to correlate the various fields of college work and out of them to create something like a common basis for thinking and discussion. It holds, therefore, an exceptionally important place in the academic life of the College.

If you are able to accept our invitation I hope that you will also accept the very modest honorarium which we are able to offer--\$50 plus expenses--and we should of course wish to have you as our guest while you are here. As to date, I would suggest Thursday, October 4, but if that is inconvenient for you a more acceptable one could no doubt be arranged. We would think of this visit as serving a double purpose; one would be in the function indicated above, and the other would be the occasion for your becoming acquainted with Dewey House, the student dwelling named after you and your family. The visit for this latter purpose is long over-due.

Sincerely yours,

Robert D. Leigh  
President

