

INTER-OFFICE MEMO

TO: Mr. Jones

Bennington College
September 25, 1945

FROM: Mrs. Cooke

Re: Report of my trip through Vermont and New Hampshire
checking operation of other colleges and exchanging ideas.

Last term I found most difficult as Director of Dining Halls and Residences to give the students and faculty the kind of service I felt they should have. Although war conditions existed all over - food was scarce, help was scarce - I am sure many did not understand that it also affected us. I began to doubt my ability and so made this tour with the approval of the Comptroller, Miss Jones.

In checking Middlebury, University of Vermont, Goddard, and Dartmouth, I found worse conditions than we had here at Bennington College. Dormitories and buildings were sadly neglected, storerooms were depleted, little or no meat and all the ills we knew here. In the kitchens, they were using high school boys and girls, and elderly women. In checking menus, I found the diets were no better than ours and in some cases not nearly as good. I also found Directors in three of the colleges were just leaving. At Middlebury, the Director, after 23 years with the College, felt she couldn't stay due to her health breaking under the strain of war conditions. At the University of Vermont, the Director and Dietitian had both left due to the same conditions, and a complete new setup was about to be put into effect. At Goddard College they had no Dietitian, just someone pinch-hitting for the summer. The Army is at Norwich and conditions there I would say were not good. The Navy is at Dartmouth and there they have no help, much less than we have, and the condition of the kitchen and dormitories quite bad. On the whole, we have

here higher wages, better living conditions for the help and all around, much more to offer employees. Our houses are in better condition than any I saw on my tour. Our kitchen equipment is in far better condition than any that I saw with the exception of one house at Middlebury. We have, of course, outgrown some of our equipment but what is needed is not too costly and when the items become available, we shall have them. Miss Jones and I have discussed this matter.

We still have a shortage of help in our kitchen, five in fact, but the houses are now completely covered by efficient maids. Our supplies are coming in somewhat better than last semester although we are still controlled by red points. Butter is back on the table twice a day - meat and poultry as it was the first year of the war when meat rationing was put into effect.

Much of this no doubt you may be aware of, but I felt you ought to know what I found on my tour during the college recess. I think in the future a trip of this sort should be made to other colleges. I did this at Williams and it was most helpful. I am satisfied we have not let students or faculty down and I am sure we have much to be grateful for here at Bennington. Our Quick Freeze, of course, saved our situation. Without it I am sure we would have been in real trouble. I found the trip quite advantageous and exchanging ideas I found to be quite helpful. I came back with greater confidence in myself as Director and with the feeling that we are better set up to start off a post war period than most places.