

We feel that it is important to attempt to extract an essence from the material discussed at last night's Community Meeting. It often appeared that multiple questions in reference to mechanics were pressing for a clear-cut definition of college policy on certain issues. Such questioning implies that external standards are being sought as a substitute for examination of internal motivation. Those students who are advocating freedom are, by asking for delineation, negating that freedom. The questions, the fears about limitation of freedom stem from what we would like to think is non-recognition of, but may well be withdrawal from, the underlying working concept of this community, one which we would like to call the concept of ambiguity.....a working principle which involves grays, shadows, uncertainties rather than sharp distinctions. It is this concept which must be investigated and confronted.

Bennington has established its few rules and regulations in order to permit maximum individual freedom within a functioning community. Much of the excitement of being part of such a community comes from the possibility of open individual choice. Ideally, such choice is an act of assumption of responsibility. By asking for clear-cut statements of policy, one is denying the chance for choice; the chance for assumption of responsibility; the chance to develop responsibility and clarity through the confrontation of opposition. The opposition confronting open (honest) choice may come from many sources either within or outside of the college community. But if an individual choice results from the careful consideration which the ambiguous situation requires, then and only then that choice has meaning and one readily accepts the consequences of one's action.

We recognize that the Administration, more than the rest of us, must mediate between the college and outside communities. At present, the Administration's policy seems to be the elimination of ambiguity only when absolutely necessary in situations involving an outside community (i.e., liquor laws). In essence, it is the Administration's policy which permits the existence of ambiguity and we are asking those students who seem to want delineation to recognize the value of this ambiguity. But do not misunderstand us. We do not believe that this is or should be a hands-off policy. For example, as mediator, the Administration has every right to take a student to task for some action which has caused difficulty for the college in its relation with another community. And the Administration and Faculty not only have the right but should expose students to other orientations when necessary. The student always has the right to agree or to disagree and this confrontation of opposition is what we point to as a major value of "ambiguity". Students too often forget, while advocating freedom to express their individual values, that other constituencies have the same right. Constituencies can express beliefs without creating law. We make a plea then, that, wherever possible, a distinction be articulated between official college policy and off-the-cuff communication.

Ambiguity, or rather, the necessity for the possibility of choice, permeates every area of concern at Bennington, only one of which was touched upon at this, the first, we hope, of several Community Meetings. There are many more issues to discuss one of which perhaps might be the extent to which ambiguity should be permitted to exist in other areas of community concern. We have felt the need to affirm the necessity for individual choice and the possibility of such in the present college community.

Marti Hollins

Carol Munter