

GALLEY

The following is offered in the interest of continuing discussion of the issues raised Monday night, but in the context of the views expressed by the man who provided the educational philosophy behind Bennington's form of education. The quotation is taken from pages 24-26 of Dewey's Democracy and Education and, though he was concerned with public elementary and secondary schools here, it also seems appropriate for Bennington College.

"The first office of the social organ we call the school is to provide a simplified environment. It selects the features which are fairly fundamental and capable of being responded to ...Then it establishes a progressive order, using the factors first acquired as means of gaining insight into what is more complicated.

In the second place, it is the business of the school environment to eliminate, so far as possible, the unworthy features of the existing environment from influence upon the mental habits. It establishes a purified medium of action. Selection aims not only at purifying but at weeding out what is undesirable...

In the third place, it is the office of the school environment to balance the various elements in the social environment, and to see to it that each individual gets an opportunity to escape from the limitations of the social group in which he was born, and to come into living contact with a broader environment...

The intermingling in the school of youth of different races, differing religions, and unlike customs creates for all a new and broader environment.

...The school has the function...of coordinating within the disposition of each individual the diverse influences of the various social environments into which he enters. One code prevails in the family; another, on the street; a third, in the workshop...; a fourth, in the religious association. As a person passes from one of the environments to another, he is subjected to antagonistic pulls, and is in danger of being split into a being having different standards of judgement and emotions for different occasions. This danger imposes upon the school a steady and integrating office."

Louis Carini