

The Senior College for Women

(Extract from remarks of President Robert D. Leigh at the opening of the first Community meeting at Bennington College, Vermont, the new college for women, which has just entered upon its third year with a student body of 228 and a faculty of 37).

What we have been doing in these first two years at Bennington College is essentially to complete the secondary school process. The Junior Division period of individual exploration and test to discover and prove interests and capabilities in fields of socially significant achievement can certainly be included in the ~~pre~~ pre-college education of the type of student who is now being admitted to our and similar colleges. At present these last two or three school years are a peculiarly devitalized part of our educational system. But the colleges, which have been partially responsible for this through their definitions of entrance requirements and unimaginative testing program, are opening the way. And in this through their own process of in the process of modernizing and vitalizing their own first two years they are commencing to see the possibilities of extending improvements downward. Through their liberal attitude of two dozen and more secondary schools have been officially

Commissioned to reorganize the last three school years. If they can recruit adequate teaching personnel and leadership these schools and a score of others by the end of ten or fifteen years should be performing our Junior Division task. Until the trend is fully developed, of course, Bennington will continue to perform its present function for its entering students.

ahead to the day after graduation, rather than
back to the schools

But with the promotion of our first group of students to the Senior Division of the College our thought turns naturally to the fundamental problems of the advanced education of women and ^{their} its realistic adjustment to the contemporary world of shifting values and aspects. For the last ten months our faculty discussions and planning have been directed toward and has been facing squarely at least three essential questions which ~~are~~ have been much discussed not only in academic circles but by parents in family council and over dinner tables, and by excited bachelors and resolute or tired feminists in magazine articles. We have not solved these problems. But I believe we have faced them honestly in our plans for our and taken them fully into account in our program for the Senior Division.

First, is the question as to whether young women should in these days receive a general, or so-called liberal education, or should be trained for definite occupations, ^{graduate and professional schools} ~~where women~~ open to women. Second, should they receive either liberal ^{miscellaneous} or occupational training as contrasted with experience and training directly taking into account the fact that marriage and motherhood form the ~~exp~~ ^{sensible} future expectation of all of them and statistically speaking will actually engage the attention of at least every other one of them - that it is definitely

and requires training to be done intelligently.

the most frequent and typical vocation for them. ~~Third~~ The third
a query as to whether the atmosphere of college, particularly the
woman's college and the two senior years of college is such as to develop
habits, attitudes and values which will lead to a normally happy
adjustment to the woman's real adult world of today.

To the first question our answer is that realistic analysis destroys the dilemma of vocational vs liberal and that escape from its two horns is not compromise but practical wisdom. There is tragedy in the traditional definition of liberal education as that of subjects possessing the magic power of training the mind

Closes once a week - not grade - final exams.

Student Body: never mass. Talked heaviest. indiv. programs & problems

Faculty - youths, cooperative. Said can't get. Now won't stay. Take odds.

Trustees - 30 by thread. go ahead laconically. Select principle then Trustees.

Tuition - needs. Pres. very polite. mention over dinner table
before called to order needs & acutes.

Called to order: Kaleidoscope

Realms of prophecy

1. Go Benn Prep. for the Future.

Well, certly Benn is ^{not escape.} not prep. for the Past. ^{alive to Present} must

Eyes fix on gl. past look fow into future.

2. For Present

yes. Good life her & now.

Not ideal - too much stimulation

III The Future

Estim Limit. pres. task next 50 years

What that future holds.

I don't know - presid. infallibility. You don't. None of us does.

Yet that defines problems

Recent 50 years. biology. Evol. psych. waltz. jazz. world. d. of res.

Comm in Russia.

1. Awareness world about them.

2. Vol. learning - self deprec.

Knowledge accumulat. Learn thru life

Sel. of content - ad hand & chaotic. method

Old idea.

~~3.4~~ Nothing stable.

3. Function family & marriage

50% uncertainty 1/4. greater. 2nd less.

Nursery School. Human Descent.

(2)

II Kaleidoscopic impressions.

Multitude, these 2 yrs 1/4

Evening recital - music - art - drama - dance Modern

Restoring Greek valuation.

Quite exciting stirrings Dance inspired teaching & comb music

Physical proximity. Drama from art. from Dance.

Dance from music. music from Dance. Relationship a reality

Literature - more in Dance. Buffalo Bill. Creative: found techniques

Buckle: essence thing in its circumference, not center

Literature: experiment writing. Idea commercial, public only.

Social Studies: Mr Lullberg bldg a lab. our region

not unique. Cities. Not smaller, simpler more use.

Science - human deepend - surprise seeing to it

Cty govt: Store. Theatre coop relationships. E.P.C.

Standards multiplicity of rules: Mollie Page - conscience

New Eng. conscience. Incliv & soul respect.

Phil - History - Religion: depth or worse outside. pervasive all faculty
↳ no history. Everywhere.

Architecture: monuments eternal. workshops. per. experiment
above my head.

Sports: no checking. adult. spontaneity organiz. touch football ^{in room}
for sd hockey game

- Recreation mental & physical. again physical. Early middle age

4. Social function

Security & insecurity

Several yrs ago: Chalm school: Horatio Alger Jr. movie
success. marriage - econ security.

Marriage

Simple living aim security

Great fields: leisure & jobs: any civilization want

a. Art - music - Dance Drama

brood & flexible volunteers - actresses - concert dancers - poets, painters
designer on job

b. Literature: writing & criticism: valuable skill & background.

mod flow. ~~deserts~~

c. Social - pol - econ insts.

More underst. Import. decisions - hardly dare ignorant

Scholars, investigate contrib: Challenges spec. kn.

readjust. job as ministry New Eng. by lawyers?

Values great. trained core workers. Japan, Russia, Italy, Eng.

d. Science

Here too few - lifelong job.

Don't guar. a job. guar usefulness.

This sense of security

Summarizing

1. Awareness change
2. Lifelong learning habits: deep awareness
3. Tradition function
4. Cultural function
5. Simplicity of wants.

This our best thinking: find & 2 yes & no.

Too imp. to be dogmatic

Above all realistic

Someone read stars & div. future - help us.

most anxious to improve

Preparing for uncertainty.

What college untrammelled. Larger than our concls & many concls.

Present & future

Present:

Future:

next 50 years

Not secure.

Change.

1. No false security

2. Final but incised.

School.

Stable.

Family & marriage.

Leisure & occup.

An interest & skill.

2000 words
Photography

College: Preparing for an Unknown Future

1. Young women, 18 yrs. - don't know. realism not resolution
2. World 1/2 century from now - more not less change. Soul.
3. Need some security. sense of values survive
4. Adult educ. concept. leisure. voluntary learning and teaching
5. Accum. of knowl. concept
6. Easy formula displacing training & not some few. bad enough. All but gone. ^{Tramway have cost} superstition. load its value
vested group.
- for large. few science
need see sci.
7. Idea of function - survive.
- 8 Among them human development: Serial Division. Broad & narrow
Specializ. vs breadth - can't do
Vocall vs avocall. ^{as it is in life}
9. Curric. aughts. admission
interest & cultivate it
general training
work by selves & vol
intent.
10. Series