

GALLEY

Recently many people have been discussing the problems of community apathy, drugs, pregnancy, finances, and transferring. Perhaps during the tensions of paper week is the most appropriate time to re-examine some of the basic principles of the Bennington system which create these problems. Here are some of the questions which we feel should be raised:

Must Bennington cost so much, not just in dollars but in academic pressures and tensions?

Is a Bennington degree worth its costs?

Since at least half of the girls who come feel that it's not worth the problems it creates and transfer out, does the system complete the job it sets out to do?

Do we believe in our system?

One statement from the college catalogue pertains directly to the phenomenon of "paper week" and ties in many other campus problems under discussion. "There is no marked separation between the student's academic work and her extra-curricular activities." (p. 12)

Are there any extra-curricular activities at the College, or merely co-curricular activities?

If there are no real extra-curricular activities carried on by the College, isn't a very important part of the student's life ignored or left without adequate outlet while on campus?

Is the misuse of drugs, sex, cigarettes, liquor, the snack bar a product of the need to escape our own system?

Is NRT used as a form of escape when it's called "learning by doing"?

Should we have to escape from our community?

Does commitment to the Bennington College Community mean giving up a normal social life?

Is this a homosexual school?

Does the Bennington Community foster homosexuality?

Does it foster over intense heterosexual relationships?

Does it foster sexual relationships with the faculty?

Does the isolation of the community enhance these problems?

Must the community be so isolated?

Does the amount of academic work add to the physical isolation by making students feel they have too much work to leave?

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Should we feel guilty for going to a lecture, leaving for the weekend, taking a walk, reading an unrequired book?

Is student apathy or student guilt the problem on our campus?

Does Bennington give "significant weight to the emotional, moral, and aesthetic factors in personal growth" (College catalogue, p. 4) or can it really minister only to intellectual needs?

Is the idea of educating the whole person really in practice at this school?

Or is the practice to alternately gorge one half and starve the other?

What kind of woman does this system produce and set out into the world?

Another discrepancy between theory and practice which occurs within our institution and its relation to the rest of society is the comment-grade system.

Why does the catalogue say there is no "mechanical marking system" (p. 9) when we are being graded?

If the grades are for entrance into graduate school, why doesn't Bennington stand behind its ideals and reputation and present only comments?

Wouldn't this strengthen both the comment system and the curriculum?

Or else why doesn't Bennington just give grades and face within the system the reality which must be dealt with outside the system?

If grades are for transferring, are we not only sacrificing the educational ideal but also building its failure into the practical system?

Yet aren't most possibilities of transferring defeated by Bennington's unique educational system?

Why do so many students feel it necessary to transfer or to drop out?

Is Bennington a two-year finishing school which can't be taken seriously?

Or is it really so special that it can minister only to an elite of fifty or sixty girls who stay to graduate each year?

Or is it an educational institution with something unique to offer but with many outstanding problems?

Do we believe in our system, are we willing to make it work?

Are the exorbitant finances inherent in the educational ideal or products of the present system?

Wouldn't high tuition be more justifiable if expenses aside from tuition such as transportation and off-campus activities were not so absolutely necessary?

If a greater percentage of students remained to graduate, wouldn't there be more students with a greater community commitment; wouldn't there be more alumnae willing to help support the college?

Do we flip out en masse during paper week because we are afraid we are not fulfilling the Bennington ideal?

Yet doesn't the system fail us in many outstanding respects which cannot be blamed on personal deficiencies?

Are we willing to improve the system so that the ideals need not be thrown away?

Put this galley away and forget about it. Have a nice vacation. Enjoy your NRT thinking about just how special Bennington is. Come back and after one week here, read over these questions again.

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(It is interesting to note that this galley grew out of discussions on Black Power. What exactly is the relationship of the Bennington Establishment to the rest of America?)