

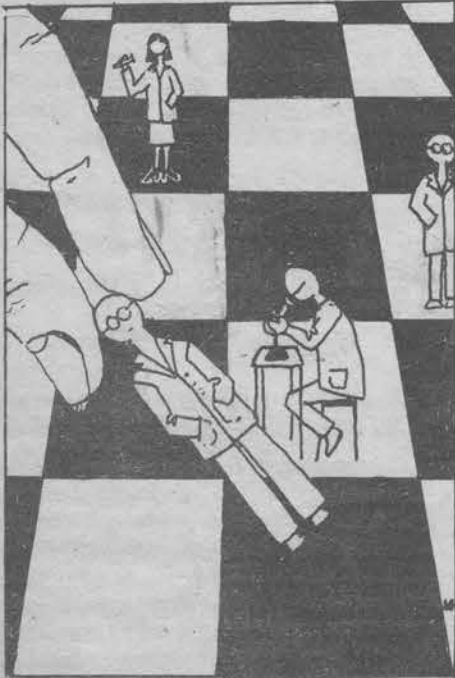
# The New Paper

November 1977

Bennington College

Vol. III Issue III

## FEPC Science Decision



Drawing by Liz Cobbett

By COLM DOBBYN

In a 5-2 decision with 2 abstentions, the Faculty Educational Policies Committee voted on Oct. 26 that one of the faculty positions assigned to biology will become a permanently rotating one-year position when it becomes vacant at the end of this academic year.

Division secretary Edward Flaccus responded for the division on Nov. 7 with a letter to the FEPC which opened with: "The science division continues to be unanimously convinced that requiring one of its two replacements in Biology to be a 1-year rotating position will seriously damage its program." The matter is expected to be taken up again by FEPC in a special meeting, the outcome of which could have major ramifications for the college as a whole.

In the spring of 1977, the FEPC in-

stituted a new policy that each of the five largest divisions should establish a permanently rotating position when positions open. Dance and drama would continue to rotate their ½ time positions. Since no additional faculty are to be hired under the plan, in effect one member would be lost to one discipline in each division, which is the slot to be shared by the division at large, according to one FEPC member. This policy was not taken to the body of the faculty and is being questioned for the first time in the science decision, according to various sources in and out of the science faculty.

The science division presented arguments before the FEPC on Oct. 12 and Oct. 19, maintaining that a rotating position would not work well in science because of the small faculty size and that the necessary orderly development of study in biology would be hampered by yearly changes in faculty.

In a letter to committee chairman and Dean of Faculty Don Brown, the division stated on Oct. 3 that it would be "excited by" an extra rotating position, but that if the position "were to come at the expense of any of our three biology positions, a huge bite would be taken out of our programs."

The SEPC on Oct. 19 accepted unanimously a strongly worded resolution introduced by the science student representatives. It stated, "Failure to maintain full teaching capability in the Science Division would imply that Bennington's commitment to the ideal of the liberal education has been abandoned," the SEPC urged that "the FEPC grant the request of the Science Division that both of the openings in biology be replaced as permanent, full-time faculty positions in biology."

In a more recent action, the science SEPC representatives met with 39 science students on Nov. 11 to discuss the effects of the FEPC decision on the curriculum,

particularly tentative plans, and on the continued viability of Bennington as a place to study science.

As the curriculum is now set up, biological science is subdivided into three distinct areas based on organization, with little overlap. Courses are offered in community and ecological biology, organismal biology (zoology), and cellular (micro) biology. The science faculty feel that to continue offering a pre-medical program in addition to a biology-liberal arts major, all three areas are essential. By imposing a rotating position it would be "self defeating because the position would be used to fill the same eliminated spot every year" according to one faculty member.

Using the position in the division at large, as originally proposed by FEPC would be "replacing a necessity with a luxury" according to chemist Dennis Aebersold. "If the FEPC thinks that a rotating position here would be for the good of the school even though we don't think so, then they owe us and you an explanation."

The following interview conducted with President Joseph Murphy (Nov. 3) is designed to elucidate the position of the

FEPC on the matter.

Q: Could you talk about what you see as the advantages of rotating positions, and do you think the concept can work equally well in all divisions?

A: Let me explain something of the history of the situation. Most institutions became accustomed to an expanding economy, one of abundance until several years ago. Each year's increasing pool of resources only had to be allotted among the various divisions. With the oncoming of the present period of stasis, that is neither scarcity nor surplus, FEPC's job become more difficult. Its responsibility has traditionally been to allocate resources old and new, and that includes examining a line when it becomes available to determine what its best use is. The alternative is to mindlessly reinvest in an activity without re-examining its value or justification at a given time. This policy applies equally to all divisions and was applied in the case of the history position last year.

The division of course should and does have standards as to how it sees the use of the position, but at the same time we are a tiny community and the whole college

Continued on Page 5

## Interview With Don Brown

by Darlene Rossi

NP: In regard to the decision made by FEPC to establish a rotating position in the Science department were there any other options?

Brown: Actually there were many. FEPC started the discussion last spring of how it should meet its obligations to the college in relation to what is often referred to as resource allocation...

Theoretically if the faculty is to comment on the use of money, equipment or positions, it would all come under the category of resource applications. The one resource that they are particularly concerned with is the resource of faculty positions. There was a period sort of a happy enterprise, when we were adding to the faculty. It was less happy perhaps that we were adding to the student body. In other words it was becoming a larger community. In that period the administration would say "next year there will be two new faculty positions to which position should they be allocated.. and EPC would say we have reviewed all the divisions and this is how it should be used." That was rather pleasant because it was meeting college needs and no one was losing by it. During Gail's (Parker) stay here at one point she came to the conclusion that two and one half positions had to be cut from the faculty, and EPC was asked to participate in that discussion and we did. That is a less happy situation.

...The position we are in now is of simply managing a college. There has to be some central view of how these vacant positions are used. EPC agreed last spring, that as these positions become vacant they will review them, and the most drastic thing that they can do is to take the position away from a division and use it for something else. Theoretically that would be the first option in this case... I don't mean first option, rather the more drastic

measure to consider, that the position in Biology could be used to have another musician, or someone to do voice and movement in drama, or any number of areas. Another possibility is to use it some other way in Science, for instance a second physicist. That would be the most obvious possibility. Some wilder ones, would be to start teaching some astronomy, geology, or computer science or something. In other words the position would be put elsewhere in science.

The EPC last spring discussed how it should make these decisions. What principles should apply. I suggested that they consider four different areas. One was to have a core curriculum where there are some disciplines in the college or in each division that is more important than other disciplines. If that were the case then when a position became available it would be easier for us to already come to a conclusion on the issue of whether it was something we clearly wanted to reproduce or something that was more peripheral to the benefit of the college...

One of the areas in which EPC came to a definite conclusion is each of the five largest divisions should have one untenured position. One position where the person in that division would be appointed for only one year at a time. In that way you would have some built-in flexibility ... Then you could have a biologist one year, a physicist the next, and so on ... Or you could use it to supplement one of the basic areas that the science divisions provides. But you would not have to make a decision four or five years that later whether this person was suited for tenure. It would mean that you would have more flexibility not all of your positions would be open pen to tenure at some point ... EPC decided that the four larger divisions would have a whole rotating position,

Continued on Page 5

## Admissions: 80% Of Last Year's Applicants Accepted

by Kevin Farley

The Bennington College Admissions Office reported that last year out of 500 applicants to the college, 400 were accepted. Half those chose to come to Bennington.

According to John Nissen, Coordinator of Admissions, Bennington is the type of school that tends to attract more serious students. He said that that is why such a high percentage of those students who were actually accepted chose to come to Bennington. He added when students see the admissions process and decide to apply that this is a good indication they are serious about coming here.

Concerning the future outlook of college admissions Nissen recently reported to the trustees he is "cautiously optimistic." He reports that the applications for the Spring term are a little ahead of last year's

figures. Meanwhile, the applications for Fall '78 are going at about the same rate as last year.

To increase the application pool the Admission Office has revised their approach towards attracting students. This new format will conform to a recent societal fluctuation from a so-called "college market" to a "student's market." The advent of the "student's market" is the result of the decrease in the youth population in recent years. Because predictions for the future are bleak for many colleges in the United States the focus in admissions offices across the country is on selling their product to prospective students.

Nissen says an effort is being made to establish Bennington's reputation as a fine educational institution. Public relations

Continued on Page 5



# LETTERS

To the Editor of the New Paper:

During the past few weeks many students have been concerned about the controversy regarding the faculty openings in biology. As I understand that this issue of the New Paper will include a report on the situation, I will not attempt here to define or discuss all of the issues involved. One aspect, however, deserves further comment.

I have personally been angered and dismayed by the repeated allegations by the Administration of faculty manipulation of student opinion. Insofar as I know, there has been no such intrigue. Robert Davis and I have attempted to fulfill our responsibilities as the S.E.P.C. members from the Science Division by informing the student population, soliciting student opinion, and coordinating the presentation of such opinion to the members of F.E.P.C. and the President. We have initiated these efforts without the prompting of, or prior consultation with, the Science faculty.

I interpret the Administration's contention that we have acted on the behalf of arm-twisting teachers as an unprovoked attack upon the integrity and sincerity of both students and faculty members. Our President seems to think that students (or perhaps only science students) are a naive and impressionable group and are easily swayed by a domineering faculty.

The unsubstantiated accusations by the Administration have made constructive dialogue with students on this issue infinitely more difficult. I suggest that the Administration either document its allegations publicly or withdraw them and refrain from further gratuitous commentary. I do not like being called a pawn. Unfounded name-calling can only exacerbate the growing animosity among the students, the faculty, the F.E.P.C. and the administration.

Yours truly,  
Claude Brachfeld

Dear Sour Grapes:

I would like to try to clarify some of the apparently numerous faults you have found with Security in the past.

1) As for the dorms not being locked; I understand that a proposal was made and agreed upon by students to leave the dorms unlocked until 2 A.M. weekdays and 3 A.M. on weekends. So you must be an early bird. I believe this proposal was made for the convenience of students who work late. Security is not in favor of this because it leaves the dorms wide open at the most crucial hours.

2) In regards to cars parked all over the roads; lawns, improper parking areas

etc., I'm sure, if you take the time to check with the Business Office you will find that these violators are paying for their offenses. As for the apparent mistake made on your ticket the whole matter could have been cleared up if the ticket had been taken to the Security Booth and the problem discussed with the proper person.

3) Concerning the asthma attack last term — It may have been an oversight on your part, but you forgot to mention that when Security went to Booth house to answer the call for help, one Security man was nipped by a large black dog who I might add has attacked many Security men in the past. For some reason, Security cannot get Student Services to get this dog off campus. As for the late ambulance, before one can be called or a student transported to the hospital, you must first call the nurse and explain your illness and if she deems necessary an ambulance will be called or Security will take you to the hospital.

We are now in the process of getting more help in the Security Dept. and also new uniforms which will identify us as Security and at last a suitable vehicle. I hope you will be satisfied with the New Security.

I hope this letter will clarify any questions anyone has had in these matters, and I feel that in the future, Security and the College Community will be able to work in harmony.

Sincerely yours,  
Concerned Security.

Dear Madame;

I hope that the word New in your title does not come to mean Nuisance. Mr. Fernandez may enjoy being misquoted, but I do not. Now, it's only happened twice this semester, and I'm willing to believe that will be all. Thanks.

Sincerely,  
Wynn Miller

## Ed. Note

In a subsequent conversation with Mr. Miller he referred to two articles in which he was misquoted. The first misquote occurred in the first issue of this semester in a story about the Student Council debates. The second misquote occurred in the second issue in an "interview" with Mr. Miller concerning cockroaches in Welling Town House. The New Paper was under the impression that Mr. Miller wrote that interview himself. Mr. Miller denies that this was the case.

Will the real author of that mystery article please stand up?

## EDITORS NOTE

The New Paper Staff would enjoy input from the community. Let us know how you feel about the paper, local events or the world situation. This paper is Bennington's paper and we want to serve your needs.

# The New Paper

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The New Paper is published every three weeks. Written contributions welcome. Any photograph submitted and published is worth \$4. Submit material to Boxes 662 and 578.

To the Editor:

I am generally tolerant about a lot of the unmitigated crap that is fed to students concerning certain facets of life at Bennington. I try to balance the pluses with the minuses, (and there is no question that the positives do outweigh the negatives) and I do believe the student body at Bennington is kept considerably well informed on issues surrounding the physical running of the college itself. Unfortunately, though, I do have a complaint to register.

As a freshperson, one hears a lot about the extravagant and mysterious VAPA, supposedly the cultural and performing Mecca of Bennington. Initially, I was quite impressed by its ominous silence, excusing the wasteful construction as a triviality, and anxiously awaiting the first performance.

Arriving early so as to be sure to get a

seat, I patiently waited as a small group of reserved seat-holders filed in. There were no more than 15 people left without seats, who were subsequently told there were none left. He was very sorry. So was I.

This was the building extolled for its spacious availability, and yet there was not sufficient room for an audience of 50 people. That would mean that with four performances, not even half of the community-at-large could possibly see that particular event. Perhaps this is not a common occurrence, but it is ironic, as a student attending one of the costliest schools of higher education in this country, to be unable to attend a community event, or for that matter, have access to an adequate library. Sometimes it is difficult for me to rationalize the whole situation, so I don't. But I'm still angry.

Sincerely,  
Name Withheld

## COMMENTARY

by Judith Berman

The current controversy over the science division's rotating faculty position is of major importance for the college and calls into question our commitment to the liberal arts at Bennington: This is an issue of which all must be made aware.

In their reactions to the controversy people seem to fall into three categories. There are those directly involved, science students and faculty. There are those who have heard about it and are interested and concerned, but for whom there is no immediate relevance. But the majority are those who might have heard about it, might not have; but are indifferent, for whom the science division is a half-mythical entity; for whom Dickinson is another world, a blank spot on the path between VAPA and Commons; for whom science itself is just a bad memory of ripple tanks, high school algebra, and sticking pins into fetal pigs.

Particularly in the latter group there seems to be an attitude that we tolerate science in this school to give those who want to an opportunity to dabble in ecology, or to learn how to grow plants in the greenhouse. For them an advanced class in calculus is far more esoteric than a tutorial in practical linguistics for the anthropologist in the field... A science major is looked upon as a kind of strange animal. He is usually bound for graduate school; he takes exams rather than writes papers; he is urged to achieve a certain level both of theoretical understanding and of proficiency in lab and problem-solving techniques.

It has been said that the strength of this college lies in its creative and performing arts. Yet too often the faculty in those disciplines appear philosophically opposed to applying rigorous standards to and demanding professional quality from the work of their students. (This not to say that there are no talented people here. But we hear too often "What was he attempting to do?" Whatever happened to "Did it succeed?")

I believe a student would rather be told plainly and simply that he doesn't measure up, than be encouraged by silence to have illusions about himself.

That this does not always happen strengthens my belief that the faculty in the creative and performing disciplines tend to treat us as rich dilettantes rather than serious students with serious artistic,

intellectual, or financial goals who want to make their course of study into a career.

The most positive aspects of Bennington are reflected in the academic divisions. Small class size, the individual attention received, lack of detrimental competition, the tutorial system, and a faculty which professes to be primarily oriented towards teaching for teaching's sake, are almost unique in undergraduate education. Compare, say, any course here with the similar course at a large university, where lectures are shown on video to 600 students in an auditorium and the TA's are made responsible for the classes because the professors are busy with their own little research projects — and the uniqueness of this college springs into sharp focus.

It is encouraging, then, that science is becoming a strong element of Bennington education. Enrollment in the science division is steadily climbing. There are currently more science majors than majors in Dance, Drama, Music, or Black Music; and science graduates have had very good luck with graduate schools. But there remain only eight faculty members in science.

It is silly in the first place to expect that eight teachers could adequately cover the wide-ranging and extremely specialized disciplines of science, even given the promised-long-ago-but-somehow - never-delivered equipment for Dickinson. To eliminate a tenure hack post in the division's biggest discipline, biology, may further reduce its effectiveness. We must never forget that a strong science division is essential to any genuinely liberal arts curriculum, to any academic program with pretensions to quality.

In the academic divisions high standards are more often than not applied. We must ensure that this trend continues here and that it is strengthened in the creative disciplines.

Bennington is an institution where academic excellence still manages to coexist with sometimes dubious creative activities, and where academic excellence still maintains the upper hand. If we tilt this balance too far we become no better than a Bard or a Goddard, a playground for rich dilettantes.

## Correction

In the last issue of the New Paper Juan Vlaero was incorrectly cited as being a new assistant language instructor this semester. He, in fact, arrived last fall. The staff extends its sincerest apologies.



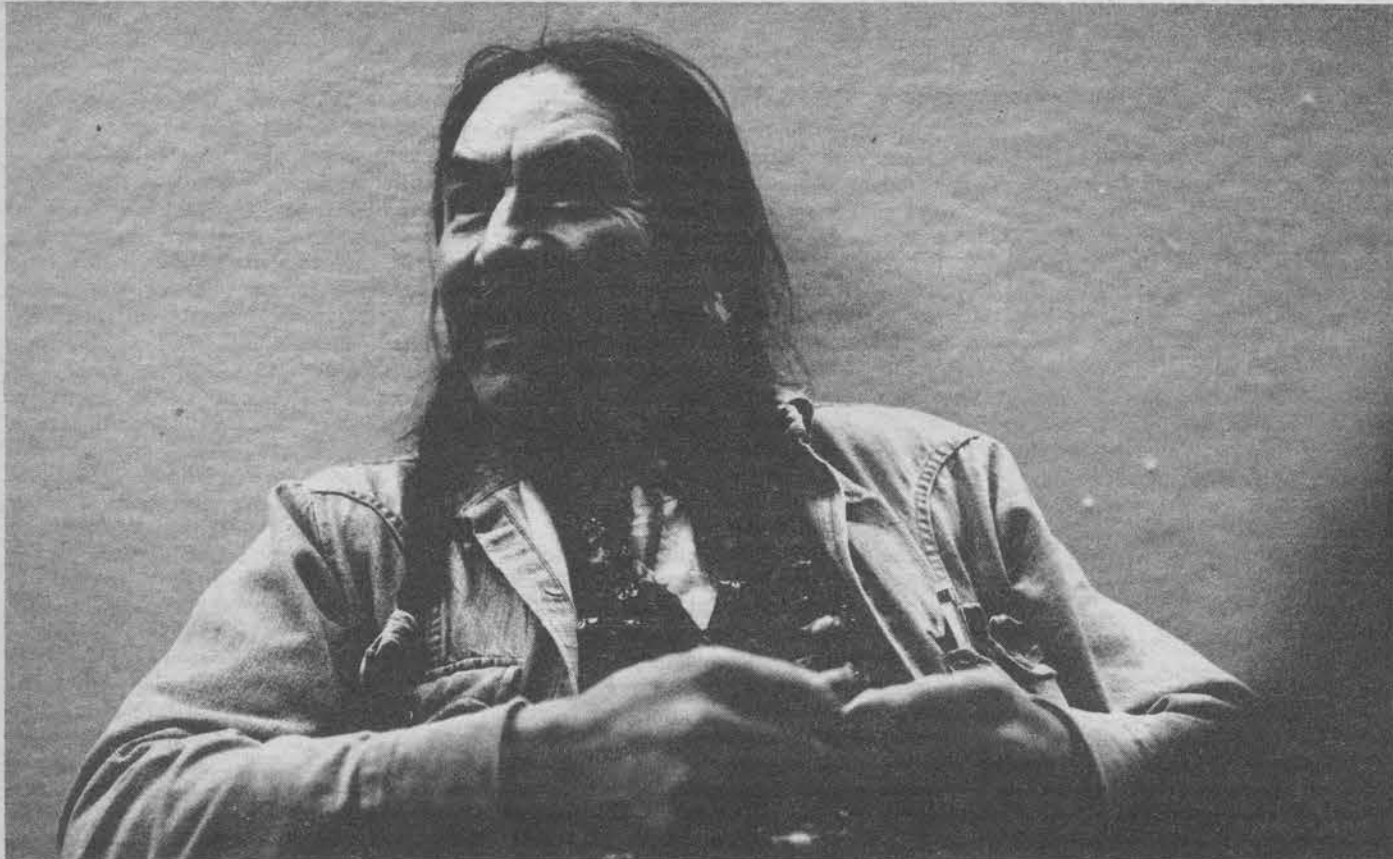


Photo by Mark Lyon

## THE FOUR ARROWS BRING INDIAN CULTURE TO BENNINGTON

by Anne Schwarz

The Four Arrows, a group of Indian spiritual leaders, activists, writers, craftsmen, musicians, weavers, and dancers from the U.S., Canada, Mexico, and Guatemala, visited Bennington College last week. They travel throughout the country to colleges and other places educating people about their culture.

The Four Arrows were originally involved with an American Indian newspaper called the Akewesasne Notes, which was formed by Rarihokwats in 1968. Rondi Bergendoff, a Bennington student, has been reading the paper since 1970, and she considers it one of the more reliable Indian newspapers. Through the newspaper she became interested in the Four Arrows, and decided that she wanted to bring the group to Bennington this fall. She wrote to them to arrange the visit, and then set about trying to get funds for the project.

"After trying to organize this project I realized just how conservative Bennington College really is," she says. She met with opposition because she was trying to arrange the events without a sponsor. People were afraid that she wouldn't be able to do it, or that some sort of trouble would come of it. Ms. Bergendoff began her search for funds by approaching the Anthropology department, but she had no luck. Then she approached President Murphy, who made a personal contribution. After getting donations from the Black Music, Dance, and Drama divisions and from Student Council, she had a total of \$700. The Four Arrows confirmed their appointment two weeks before their arrival, during which time Ms. Bergendoff managed to arrange for the guests to eat and sleep in rooms with students who volunteered space.

Their arrival was delayed for a day by a bus breakdown, so all of the events took place on Thursday, November 3. During the day films were shown in Tishman Hall dealing with the history, culture, and pride of the Indian people. The films expressed the views of Indians on the subjects of assimilation and the need to preserve their traditions.

There were exhibits and sales of hand-made articles including clothing, jewelry, blankets, and other woven things. There was also an opportunity to converse with the Indians on an informal basis in a tipi

which was set up outside V.A.P.A.

There were several lectures in the afternoon in Newman Court in V.A.P.A. Adrian Chavez, a Mayan elder, spoke about his life and his work, and Cyote, another Indian spoke about Guatemala. Attendance was rather small, but interesting discussions took place.

Two dance performances were given by Las Danzas De Conquista, a group from Tenochtitlan. The dance was a spiritual one which represented the creation and the cycles of life common to all human beings. The group had dinner and informal discussions in the New Dining Room, and at 8:00 there was a social dance around the drum in Greenwall. Students, faculty

members, and community members all joined in and learned a loose approximation of the dances being done. The event began and ended with a Thanksgiving prayer, and between dances several of the visiting Indians spoke about their feelings about the occasion and about life and religion in general.

Rondi Bergendoff spoke to Alexandre, one of the translators for the Four Arrows about the success of the events. He said that he felt the trip to Bennington was a good one because although there weren't any large audiences those who did come seemed genuinely interested in learning about the Indians, their culture, and their movement.

## Bennington Review Returns: Bennington College Publishes Art and Literary Journal

by Elizabeth Shacknove

The Bennington Review, a magazine formerly published between 1969-71 will return at the end of April, 1978. Robert Boyers, the editor of the forthcoming REVIEW plans that this new issue will have a strong emphasis upon the contemporary arts and literary scene. It would be misleading to tell what the new magazine will be like from old issues of the REVIEW. According to Boyers, it will resemble the former only in name.

Boyers, a professor of English at Skidmore College as well as publisher of SALMAGUNDI, a journal of the humanities and the social sciences, already knows how the magazine will be formed by his present commitments from writers and artists. The magazine will contain articles about the arts as well as original fiction, poetry, plays, photographs, works of art, and bits and fragments of musical scores. In addition, there will be a series about American dancers and choreographers talking about their work as it evolves. Marshall Berman, author of *The Politics of Authenticity* will write a regular political column.

Joe Murphy initiated the republishing of the REVIEW after faculty members

approached him with the idea. Ben Belitt suggested Boyers as a possible choice for Editor. When Murphy was at Queen's College he was very supportive of departmental level publications and has wide experience with professional academic journals.

Boyers is drawing from every source possible; he wants the magazine to be the best that it can be, right from the start. Boyers is soliciting material from all over the world. He holds a commitment to contemporary culture and art no matter from where it originates. Faculty and students of Bennington College will receive equal priority for publication of art and literary works as any other individual who submits work to the journal.

There will be no prejudice for or against anyone from the Bennington Community. A number of faculty members, Nicholas Delbanco, Ben Belitt, and Stephen Sandy are acting as an Editorial Board, and are available for consultation and discussions with Boyers about submitted work.

The REVIEW is intended for the reader who does not necessarily consider himself a specialist in the art or literary world. Boyers hopes to reach a large range of

readers. The magazine will be distributed throughout England, France and Canada and various other nations. Boyers feels confident about the magazine reaching an audience in Chicago, California, and the East Coast, but he is not as confident about the places inbetween.

The magazine will be published in September, December and April. In early March, Boyers will request assistance from qualified students for proofreading, typing and occasional research work.

Alex Brown, Production Manager, will deal with the graphic art aspects of the magazine. Ms. Brown says she is looking forward to working on the magazine and hopes that the final outcome will be "a visually spectacular publication."

Christine Graham, Director of Special Projects and who was an Editorial Assistant for the former BENNINGTON REVIEW is also very excited about the project. She feels there is large support from the community and that the magazine will not only give Bennington College more exposure but will bring artistic integrity by demonstrating that the college has the resources for a project of this nature.

## Films Released

The winning films in the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences 1977 Student Film Award Program are now available free of charge from Bell Telephone Companies or the American Telephone and Telegraph Company for showing at universities and colleges. The four-year-old program of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and the Academy Foundation was established to recognize the top creative talent among the country's ever-growing body of student filmmakers. The program has been co-sponsored by American Telephone and Telegraph Company for the past three years.

The program is designed to be shown to campus-wide audiences through the sponsorship of either student organizations or departments of film and/or communications. A Bell System speaker is usually available to accompany the film and answer questions about the contest and programs.

This year films in four categories were honored. Carol Dysinger of New York University won the Dramatic Achievement Award for her film "Sixteen Down," concerned with the growing pains of a young girl coming to grips with a broken home. Ms. Dysinger and the other three Achievement Award winners — Frank H. Binney of the University of Texas at Austin for his documentary "The Last of the Little Breweries," Phillip W. Pura of Boston University for his experimental film "TRANSCENDance," and Paul Demeyer of the California Institute of the Arts for his animated film "The Muse" — all received \$1,000 each and a special trophy, plus the opportunity to have their winning films included in a special presentation that AT&T will present free of charge on college campuses across the country in the fall. A fifth winner in this year's competition, Rob Williams of Western States Film Institute-Metropolitan College, won a \$500 Merit Award for his documentary "Guitar Craft."

Requests for the film, which are printed on two reels with a running time of 72 minutes, should be made by writing Student Film Awards, England Strohl Associates, Room 507, 133 East 58th Street, New York, New York 10022 or by contacting the public relations department of the local Bell Telephone Company.



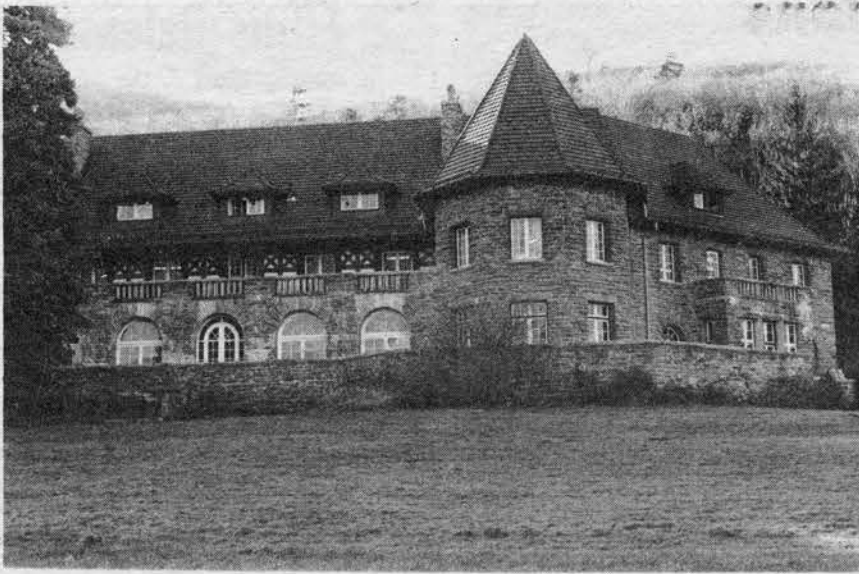


Photo by M.E. Stringos

The old Everett mansion built in 1910 at a cost of \$2,000,000 is the present home of Southern Vermont College.

## A VISIT WITH SVC

by Mary Ellen Stringos

The campus of Southern Vermont College is a most impressive sight and an interesting place to explore. The first time I visited SVC was on a weekend. It was deserted. I felt as though I was walking onto a stage set for the "Sound of Music."

Everything was very quiet and birds were singing.

Originally, the campus was owned by Edward Hamlin Everett who built it in 1910 at the approximate cost of \$2,000,000.

Masons were imported from France to build this 14th century style, English Norman mansion. The residence had 27 rooms including 10 master bedrooms and 9 servant bedrooms. Now Everett Manor is the main building of the campus. It houses administration and faculty offices, classrooms, the library, the dining hall, and one dormitory. The lack of space is a problem at SVC.

The estate is meticulously planned, Edward Everett spared no cost in designing it. He earned his wealth making glass bottles and in his astute investments.

He returned to Bennington where he had lived as a boy, settled on his estate and grew apples. His holdings extended 10 miles south of his estate over Carpenter Hill to Pownal, constituting the world's largest private orchard. Ah, the simple country life. I heard stories that he thought himself a feudal lord living in his manor with the town of Bennington at his feet.

The view is magnificent from the mountain mansion, and Bennington is literally spread out in front of you. It is enough to give anyone a sense of power.

The environment at SVC is magical.

Unexpectedly, you run into marble fauns, stone benches and gazebos in the woods.

Looking upwards from the court yard is a lengthy tiered cascade of hand-cut stone that was once a waterfall. On top of that is a small clearing and an outdoor stage. The biggest extravaganza is the tunnel he bore through the mountain which opens into a nearby town. I was told by students that the tunnel still exists but one has to crawl to get through as the ceiling has sunken.

The 32 masons did a magnificent job. The red roof tiles and the marble for the fireplaces came from Italy, the chandeliers, windows, and door handles from England. I especially like the wrought iron gate standing unused at the original entrance.

The second time I visited the college was during the week, and I met faculty, administrators, and students. Everyone was very friendly and helpful. The college is small with its 450 students; half of them

from Vermont. The whole curriculum is career oriented and emphasizes a practical approach to life. The largest department is business and management.

One student I talked to said that he had gone to Bennington earlier but the tuition was too expensive for him to remain. The total cost for tuition, room, and board at SVC is \$3,520 per year. I asked another student why he came to SVC, and he replied that he left the city to be in the country. He was also attracted by the smallness of the school, and the student faculty ratio. He had gone to prep school in Massachusetts.

What do SVC students think of Bennington? For the most part we are thought to be highbrow snobs, and very wealthy.

Someone referred to it as a finishing school. SVC students come over to Bennington, not for our "social life," but use our library. On Halloween the Bennington band, Stratus, played at their costume keg party. Vocalist Anna Rivera reported that the party was really "smoking." I heard rumors from new students that Bennington was the place where "Satan School for Girls" was filmed, and that all of the students wore outlandish costumes.

Truth is stranger than fiction. I only wonder what the New York Times discovered in their recent visit to Bennington College.

## Soviet Dissident Speaks on Russia

by Judith Berman

Soviet dissident Dimitri Panin, who was the real life model for Dmitri Sologdin, one of the main characters in Solzhenitsyn's *The First Circle*, spoke Monday evening in Barn I on the history of religion and belief in Soviet Russia.

According to Panin, in the past 60 years more than 30 million people have been killed for their faith, and hundreds of thousands of churches and monasteries destroyed or closed. In addition, the few congregations that remained were reorganized in such a way as to facilitate the harassment and surveillance of the faithful. Despite all this, more than 30 percent of the population remain believers, and more young people in the cities are being baptized than ever before.

In a long question and answer period, Mr. Panin, through interpreters, explained his views on detente, the dissident 'movement,' and the mood of the Soviet workers and peasants. In his view, detente as it currently exists is "one-sided" with

all efforts on its behalf being made by the West. Meanwhile, we continue to provide the Soviet government with the information and the instruments they need to close the wide technology gap, information which could someday be used against us. Panin also feels that it is morally wrong to thus help a regime maintain its power over a people which has so often demonstrated its desire for freedom.

As examples of the still existent spirit of the Russian people he cites food riots and strikes in recent years where tanks had to be called in to quell the disturbances. A more widespread form of resistance is the lack of enthusiasm the workers and peasants have for their government-assigned labor, resulting in inferior quality goods and a constant shortage of grain. As far as they are concerned Marxism has proved to be no more than empty slogans. According to Panin, there are very few serious Marxists left. Far more often today, Marxism is the topic of jokes.

Mr. Panin feels that many of the so-called dissidents in Russia cannot understand what the majority of the population wants. The enormous distance in social status between the intellectuals and the working masses has prevented adequate communication. He himself has had greater opportunity to converse with the ordinary workers from his long term in prison camps and his former work as an engineer.

Panin is the author of a number of books, including *Solzhenitsyn and Reality*, *The Oscillating World*, and the *Notebooks of Sologdin*. He and his wife have settled in Paris, where he publishes a political journal, "Friends of Panin." Currently he is a visiting lecturer at Queen's College in Kingston, Ontario, on a Canada Council exchange obtained by the Russian department there.

After the talk there was a reception for Mr. and Madame Panin in the faculty lounge.

## VPIRG

by Kevin Farley

An effort is being made to establish Bennington College as a member of the Vermont Public Interest Research Group (VPIRG). VPIRG is a statewide organization that originated from an idea fostered by Ralph Nader. His notion was that student-directed and funded PIRGs would focus student idealism, skills, and energy for instituting effective social change. The state of Oregon had the first PIRG. There are now more than 30 PIRGs in the United States and Canada. (The VPIRG started in 1971 with the University of Vermont as its first member school. There are six other colleges in Vermont that have joined since.)

The organization has an annual budget of \$45,000 which goes toward the lobbying, publications, court costs, and support of student research. Lately, inflation has hurt the purchasing power of the VPIRG's budget. Almost all of the money comes from the students of the member schools.

Pamphlets have been published informing Vermont citizens on food and drug prices, small claims court, mobile homes, nuclear power and fuel, and electric bills.

VPIRG spends a considerable amount of time to lobby before the Vermont Legislature in support of consumer-orientated bills. VPIRG is one of the most successful PIRGs existing. They have had health care bills passed, like proper dental care for children, institution of health insurance for newborn children, and the closer monitoring of medical x-rays to protect the health of the patients. They have helped institute environmental controls like halting unneeded highway construction, strengthening of Vermont's bottle deposit law to make sure that the bottles were recycled rather than thrown away, and have made studies on Vermont's drinking water, showing that many communities had unhealthy drinking water.

VPIRG has been working hard on nuclear power issues and successfully lobbied for the passage of a bill that requires legislative approval prior to the construction of a new nuclear power plant. They have been advocating stringent procedures in case of nuclear accidents and published a report on careless transportation of nuclear materials showing photos of trucks straddling center lines of roads and traveling over treacherous highways. Recently, VPIRG helped the passage of a bill requiring legislative approval of the construction of a radioactive waste storage site. Vermont would be an ideal location for such sites because of the state's abundance of solid

stable granite. Vermont now has the strongest nuclear control laws in the nation.

VPIRG has also asked that the Public Service Board oppose telephone rate increases that seemed unwarranted and asked that Vermont rate-payers would not have to pay for the pro-nuke advertising campaigns by the Central Vermont Public Service Corporation.

The organization's goal is to make sure that: "a) private economic decisions which have impact on the public welfare are thoroughly studied and discussed; b) government policy takes into consideration the views and needs of more groups in society; c) and new methods are developed to ensure consideration of the public interest in private economic decisions and government policy."

The manner in which a school becomes a member is that students agree by a petition of a majority that they will agree to tax themselves \$3 per semester, or \$6 per year, to support an interdisciplinary professional staff to work with them on consumer, environmental, health, and other public interest issues affecting citizens of the state. The fee would be put on the tuition bill and would be optional.

Each member school has delegated representatives that make up the VPIRG Board of Trustees. The number of trustees depends on the size of the school. The Board of Trustees is the main decision maker of the VPIRG.

A group of students have already planned a campaign to establish Bennington College as a member of VPIRG. Starting Sunday, November 13, VPIRG representatives from Montpelier will be visiting the houses during coffee hour to inform students about VPIRG. On Monday, November 22, a movie will be shown in Tishman called "Lovejoy's Nuclear War," a highly acclaimed film concerning the nuclear industry. A petition drive will attempt to gather the needed majority of names in order to become a member. This petition, if sufficient, will be presented to the Student Council and the Trustees for approval.

Other possibilities at Bennington include lectures given by VPIRG representatives, slide shows on public interest issues, and the offering of NRT jobs dealing with VPIRG work in Montpelier. VPIRG also offers spring internships working in one of the areas of consumer policy. There is also the possibility of a student lobbying mechanism being set up, as well as the lobbying done by the VPIRG staff. VPIRG often offers research projects for students of its member schools.



# Admissions

Continued from Page 1

plays a large role in reaching this goal.

The Public Relations Office, headed by Alex Brown, assisted in designing the new application forms. They also released news stories which highlight the various aspects of Bennington such as the Non-Resident Term Program and the low student-faculty ratio.

Nissen also pointed out that the alumni have become a very large factor in the promotion of Bennington outside the college community. Because they are the "finished product" of Bennington College

they are the greatest producers of new applicants. Some of these alumni are now working in newly established positions as field representatives.

Presently, there are representatives in Boston, Chicago, New York, Miami, Madison, Minneapolis, Denver, Los Angeles, and Berkeley. The Admissions Office is still in the process of recruiting in other cities especially in the southern and western regions of the country.

The admissions staff utilizes other methods which they hope will enlarge the applicant pool. Visiting high schools and attending college fairs involves a lot of

traveling for certain members of the staff. College fairs, a recent phenomenon, are another result of the advent of the "student market." At these fairs representatives from various schools set up booths in a large room and sell their college to prospective students.

The Admissions Office has also tried to obtain mailing lists from organizations such as the College Testing Service so that mail packets may be sent to high schools. Brad Craig, a consultant to Bennington Admissions, said these mailings have been productive.

In addition to utilizing these various

methods Nissen stated it was very important for Admissions to stress the "human element" in the application process rather than treating the applicant like a computer card. Nissen also stated it is important to get a "complete picture" of each prospective student.

As far as the quality of the staff is concerned, Craig said they are "very enthusiastic and dedicated." He added that the alumni he has met are very dedicated too. Craig further summarized the entire situation by pointing out that the efforts of the Admissions Office came down to "a matter of survival."

## Brown

Continued from Page 1

dance and drama a half, and black music because they only have three half-time faculty members in the division.

The EPC has listened to the views of the divisions concerning biology and the science division feels that they do not want a rotating position under any circumstances.

NP: You view this decision as being flexible as far as the divisional curriculum goes?

Brown: Yes... Yes I do. I would be happy to hear other arguments... Oh yes, there is one other point that I forgot to mention, part of what EPC decided in the spring, was that there would be a presumption that the next position that became available would be rotating, but that every division would be invited to make a counter-proposal if they felt it necessary, in other words if they felt that the position should be used in other ways... So this is also involved in what's going on at the moment. They told us of their preferred alternative and we've told them four expectations. We told them we thought that the position should be rotating, and I just got a note from the science division today that I haven't gotten a chance to read so, I'm not sure what the next step is.

In any case, the purpose of all of this, which to me is far more important than the principle of rotating position, is to open up a dialogue between EPC and the divisions about their use of their faculties assets. About how they see their science degree. This is one of the areas I think you were asking about, EPC's reasons, the sense that I've had, is that they are uneasy about not having a full drawn academic discussion about their use of positions in the science division. We've not heard with convincing clarity why a second physicist is not of equal importance to a third biologist.

NP: Do you think that there was sufficient communication between EPC and divisional faculty throughout the process?

Brown: In retrospect, there clearly could have been more. There are two problems of communications at least, one of them is internally at EPC. Of the names that I gave you, only three of the faculty were participants of last spring's discussions, although Mike, Joe and I were there, neither of the students participated. So there were five of the new faculty who had to consider this question for the very first time. So they may not in each case have known what questions to ask the science division or what kind of problems may have been associated with this kind of a discussion. We feel that we haven't gotten a full range of response from the science division. In other words we asked them specifically how they would use a rotating position and we're still not sure, in fact, the only thing we are sure about, is that they don't want a rotating position in the science division.

NP: Have they pointed out to you the importance they see in the pre medical program that exists now, the area where biology is represented?

Brown: They pointed out the importance to them but EPC feels that it has not been explained to them. In other words it's been

said that there is this interest, this concern, but here are also pre-medical requirements in organic chemistry in mathematics and physics. So it's not clear to me that both sides are clear on this issue of exactly what takes place in the pre medical....

You see there is another area here where all of these issues raise serious questions for EPC, if you think of them in terms of principles. In other words, Bennington for quite a few years has as a matter of principle, denied that it should train undergraduates for graduate level work. They have assumed that the undergraduate education is an end in itself, that the purpose is to be liberally educated and that we shouldn't allow our curriculum to be dominated by the needs of other schools that set themselves up for other purposes. It is not that they don't have the right to do so, but simply that we should not guide our curriculum decisions in terms of meeting those needs. This is a constant tension and we try to accommodate both, in other words I feel that we do well in both areas actually. Our students do well in graduate school, medical schools, and other schools. But, there is a difference between training students who are admitted and do well and letting the graduate schools decide for us what we should include in our curriculum.

NP: How does this philosophical question relate to the rotating position?

Brown: There are a couple of possibilities here: one, it would seem to me that the

rotating position is in congruence with the general philosophical position, so I am at ease with that generally. The way I tend to think of this myself is that there are important ways in which Bennington has a faculty and not a curriculum. In other words, and it really makes an important difference in attitude toward what we do here, because if we think of ourselves as merely providing a curriculum. Then a good school would have a hundred courses in politics, biology, and would have 30 to 35 members to the staff. If you think of yourself as providing a paired down curriculum then the definition of your enterprise is bound to be that of a very sparse effort, and it is going to be niggardly, virtually, and if that were your only intention then I would advise you go elsewhere. If the purpose were to gain access to the diversity available in any discipline, then I would not advise you to go to Bennington. So this notion of a paired down curriculum is one that I'm proud and very interested in. It seems to imply that, gee it would be nice to have a third biologist, but we really should have 20. Three might sound good but 18 more would be even better. We aren't even coming close with three! The alternative to that view is what we do provide is a faculty that is flexible enough not only to cover basic fields but tutorials in specialized areas. And the strength of the effort lies in the closeness of the faculty, and the ability for them to give tutorials. Something that very few institutions provide.

NP: The Science division particularly in

biology, has a very structured discipline wouldn't the diversity of the eighth position, particularly in biology be adverse to its organization?

Brown: This is one reason why I'm not terribly pleased with the position the EPC is in. You asked what alternatives were available, one alternative would have been that the position go to another division. What we have done is as it turns out in retrospect, is to put together in an attempt to compromise two points of opposing view.

In effect what we tried to say was yes, you want biology therefore you can have it, but we want a rotating position therefore you should have a rotating biologist. Now it's not clear to me that it serves either side well and that it's only a formal compromise. In order for this to work well both sides would have to understand and be sympathetic with the concerns with the other side. The science division in order to use a rotating position well would have to be imaginatively. And if they said we don't want to do what you are doing, but since we feel we have to, we'll just appoint a biologist every year a different one for the next five years. That would succeed in some of the purposes but certainly not all. It wouldn't be used in anything like the way in which the FEPC hoped that it would be used. So, it would make more sense; if the rotating position would be applied to science to have a physicist one year a mathematician another, even if it were mechanically to move through the four disciplines.

## Science

level and quality of science education. What factors caused EPC to go ahead with this decision despite the unanimous opposition of the science faculty?

A: I am not the chairman of EPC, and cannot give a synthesis of the points of view raised, but from my position I heard claims but certainly wasn't persuaded by all of the arguments. Anyone in this community has a right to ask why things are done in a certain way, I had hoped civility was not raised to such an art form here that no questions can be asked. Accountability, with a minimum of self-deception, is necessary on all levels of higher education, no one should be in a position where they are not responsible to someone else.

Q: In light of the subsequent concern which has been raised by the science division, do you think its interests were fairly represented in the FEPC proceedings?

A: The division's secretary made a two-hour presentation, and was present along with another member of the divisional faculty for most of another meeting. I'm sure more opportunity will be available if they want it in the future to represent the interests of the division, but the committee has the larger responsibility to do what it deems best for the college.

Q: Do you see any problems in maintaining a quality curriculum or in attracting quality faculty as a result of the decision to go to a rotating position?

A: Leaving aside science, there is no question that there is ample opportunity for maintaining continuity in a curriculum by having people come in from outside. In terms of attracting good quality faculty, it is often easier to attract good people on a one year basis than for longer terms. People take sabbaticals periodically, 12 or 14 of our faculty did this year for instance. Additionally, the market is saturated with very well qualified people now, though perhaps less so in science than in social science. The science division has not had that presumed continuity with which to compare anyway. Did the curriculum suffer? Why should it not be assumed that we could not attract someone from another institution in midcareer who couldn't come otherwise because of tenure or other commitments?

Q: Has it been decided that the position is to be a permanently rotating one-year position?

A: I don't think any decision around Bennington is permanent.

Q: If the rotating position is to be kept in biology as is now envisioned, instead of shared around the division, do you see its effectiveness being decreased?

A: The fact is that what they teach is to a large extent determined by the way in which the curriculum is structured. It is conceivable that after the science division examines itself a bit more closely perhaps than it has; it may decide that it requires a

Continued on Page 8  
The Newspaper, Nov. 1977-5



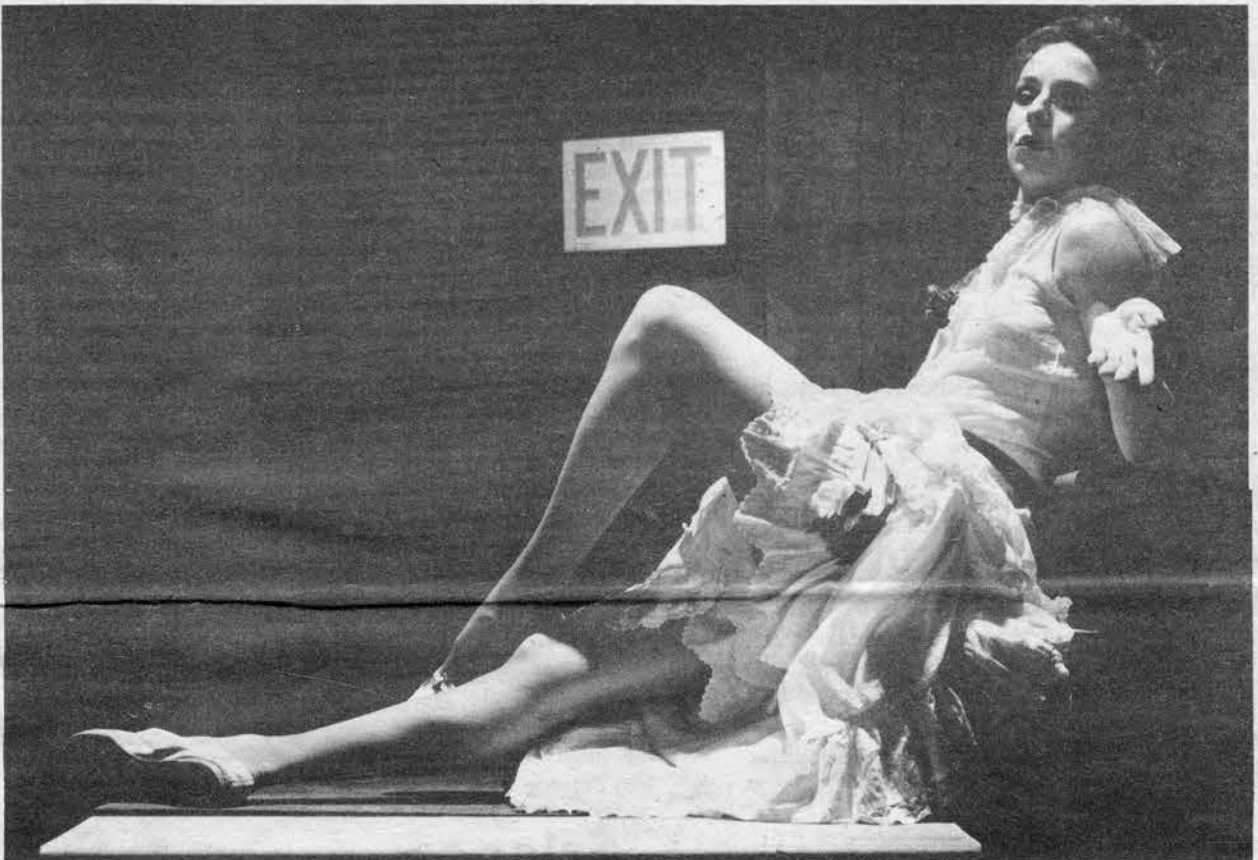


**"CALL IN FROM THE FUNHOUSE WITH MY SONG, WE'VE BEEN SEPARATED FAR TOO LONG." Rick Oller, Julia Palmore, and Bibi Humes in Allison Gobbeo-Harris' Master's Project, "The Balcony."**

**Pala Zaitz as "Claire" in "Outcry."**

**Mitchell Lichtenstein and Pala Zaitz star in Tennessee Williams, "Outcry." Directed by Lawrence O'Dwyer.**

Picture by Holly Block



Picture by Joy Davis



Picture by Joy Davis



# THE ARTS

## Records Reviewed

### Dead

It seems that Jerry Garcia and the gang have risen from the Dead with a funky sound that makes nostalgic protest, Haight Ashbury and aoulsley acid melt away.

The album has both strong and weak points. With the demise of Ron McKern and the addition of Donna Goodchaux, the famous Dead vocal harmonies often sound like four Ostriches at a tea party. In "Passenger" and "Samson and Delilah," the vocals are reminiscent of Jefferson Starship's weaker moments, while "Dancin' in the Streets" may be a little too alive for the Dead to handle. Nevertheless, the title cut; "Terrapin Station" will probably go down in the Dead annals as a classic. The song takes up one side of the

album and is mostly composed by Garcia and Hunter. Another song worth listening to is "Estimated Prophet," the first cut on the album. Its reggae style immediately tells you this is not just another dead Dead album.

The record itself is well produced. The strongest songs are the first and last ones with the constructive uses of saxophones, orchestra and chorus. A surprising thing about the album is that it is well recorded, a quality not easily found on recorded albums this year.

All in all the record is good. For that matter, so was the Dead's tour this year. Do not expect another American Beauty. Just take this record for what it is, not what the Grateful Dead were.

### Weather Report

From the moment the record begins, a sense of energy comes blasting through, that has never been heard before in any Weather Report album. This recording possesses vitality and is full of tasteful sax solo's and some great transitions.

Unlike past Weather Report albums, it concentrates more on harmonic structure and the changing of sound textures. The album is more colorful and taps on greater possibilities than their previous work. In the past, Weather Report album's have dealt with a type of collective improvisation over a pulsating backbone of rhythm. It's what they are known for. By the time Weather Report's "Black Market" album came out, the group had cut down somewhat on its improvisation, developing a more complex percussion link with the help of Chester Thompson,

who in my own opinion, is one of the best commercial drummers now playing.

Right after "Black Market" came "Heavy Weather." With it came songs such as "Birdland" and "The Juggler" that are simply two of the best songs I've heard this year. Other songs such as "A Remark You Made," and "Harlequin" feature some very mellow sax work. And even with the loss of Chester Thompson, the percussion pieces "Teentown" and "Rumba Mama" come off very well. There is also a good amount of that collective improvisation.

In all, **Heavy Weather** is one of the best things Weather Report has done. However there is still some jelling needed between all the different sounds they experiment with, and I have a feeling their next album will be even more incredible.

### Gabriel

Perhaps the most surprising new record on the market is Peter Gabriel's solo album. It is full of color, sound, and imagination. From the moment the listener places the record on the table, the fairy talelike mysticism, that only Gabriel can weave, entwines and captivates its audience.

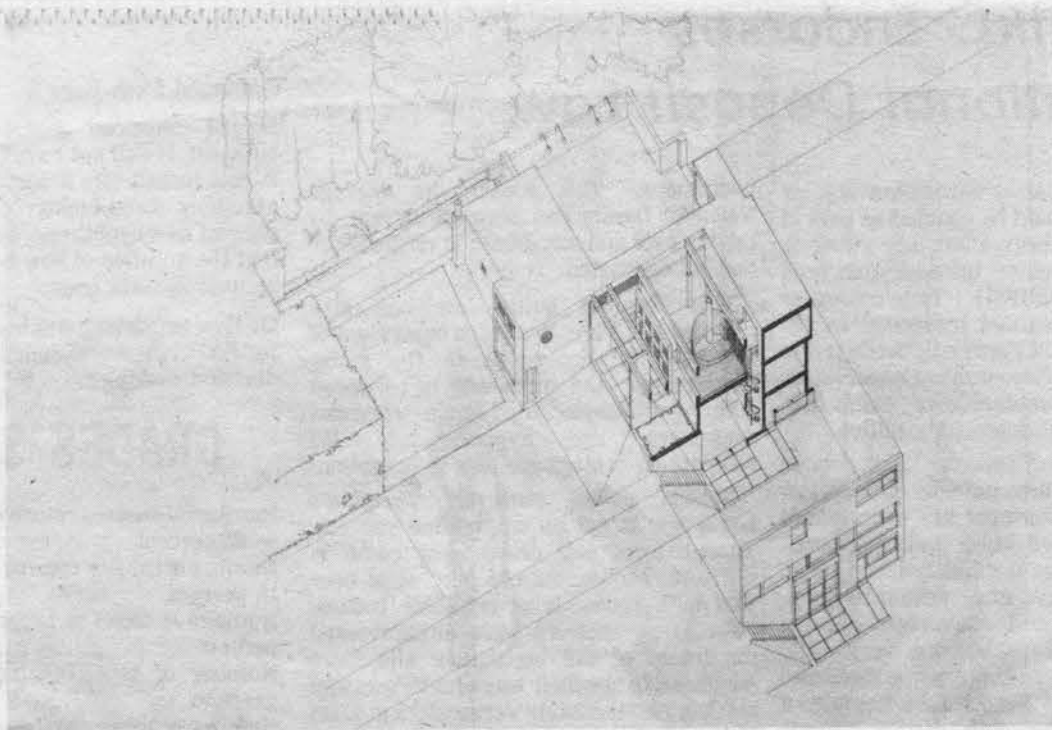
His first tale "Mroibound The Burgermeister," takes the listener to a strange land with seemingly mutated people ruled by a schizoid Burgermeister. To those who are familiar with Genesis, this is similar to "The Colony of Slippermen," from the album **The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway**. Incidentally, that was the last album Peter Gabriel worked on with Genesis. On Gabriel's current album, only two other songs, "Slowburn" and "Herer Comes the Flood" resemble previous Genesis material.

Other songs demonstrate a diverse style

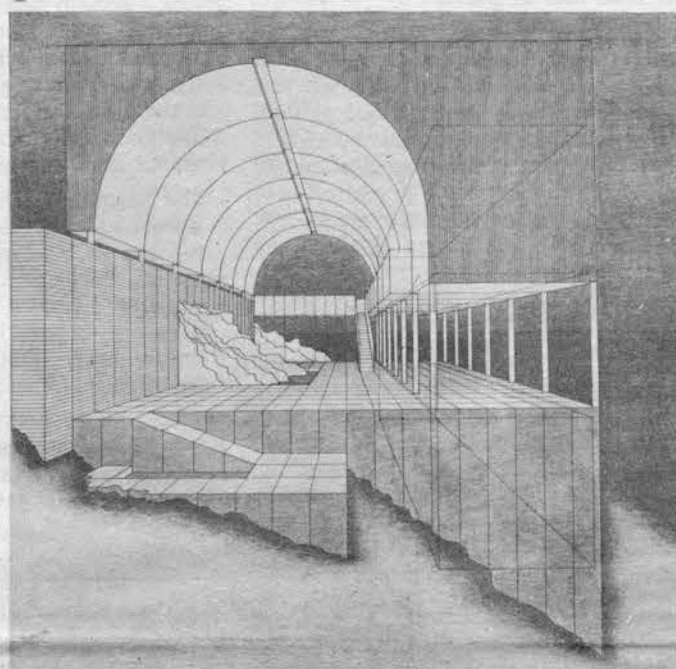
as he performs one ballad, two hard rock numbers, a barbershop quartet, a spaced-out rhumba, and a blues song. There are no printed lyrics with the album, a feature that any Genesis fan will tell you, Gabriel has always supplied. This is the time Gabriel has not presented to any extent a concept album.

All this, plus the lack of complicated symbolism in the lyrics leads me to believe that a personal change has occurred in Peter Gabriel. His songs are still meaningful, but the message lacks the usual Genesis depth. Nevertheless, Peter is singing better than ever and with personnel such as Robert Fripp and Larry Fast the album is really quite good. Some Genesis fans might be disappointed but Peter Gabriel's fans have been starved. It's been three long years since **The Lamb** and I don't think many will be disappointed.

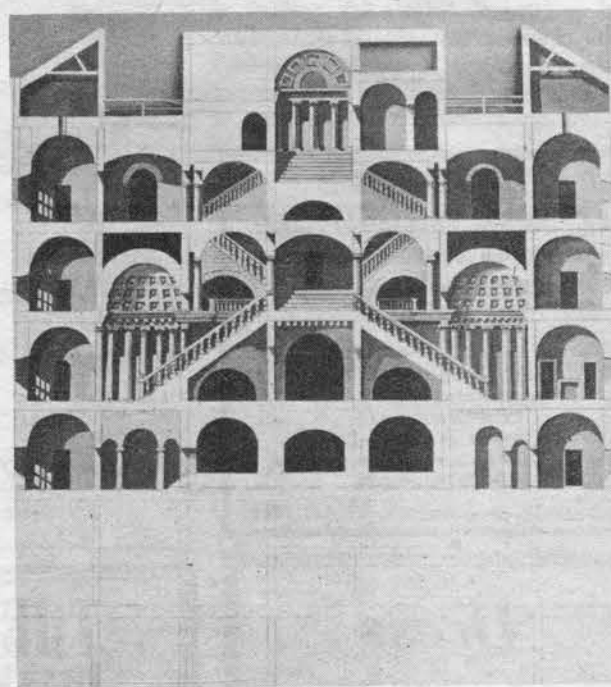




# ARCHITECTS DISPLAY WORK



# THROUGH DECEMBER 8 USDAN GALLERY



The Architectural Drawing Show at Bennington College contains a historical section as well as a selection of drawings from eight architects from Europe and America. The historical section traces the development of architectural draughtsmanship from the perfection of perspective in 1800 and the Beaux Arts system to the modernists' preoccupation with planar structures and axonometric projections. These changes indicate a shifting conception of the role of the architect, from his position as an artist in 1800 to an alliance with the engineer in the machine age idealism of the 1920s and '30s. The contemporary selection of drawings reflects the fragmentation within the architectural profession that occurred

following the collapse of modernism. Several different strands of development may be seen. These range from an anarchistic anti-technological counter culture (Harper) to a continued belief in the multiple choices, power + beauty of rationalized technology (St. Florian). Between these two poles may be found a variety of positions. Mark Fisher presents a more responsive and miniaturized technology. Peter Cook imagines a series of Arcadia's, idealized suburbs and city centers for the post technical age, Bernard Tschumi's Joyce Garden searches for new urban forms. Leo Krier's three country houses, all towers, are built of rough materials and search for a renewed rural vernacular. The Lowenstein House of the

Chimacoff-Peterson partnership, while it is more sophisticated in its construction, is also evidence of an attempt to develop beyond the tight restraints of the modernist period. Steve Peterson's Urban Fantasies suggest an interesting reintegration of pre-modern architectural history, including the Beaux Arts, within the contemporary field of urban research.

The exhibition was organized by Grahame Shane, the architecture instructor at Bennington College, with the support of the Art Division and the help of students from the architecture studios. It will close on December 8, 1977 and is open each day from 2 to 5 p.m. A show of student work will be held in the BARN Gallery during the same period.



# VPIRG Endorses National Deposit Law

A national container deposit law similar to Vermont's should be enacted as part of the National Energy Plan, according to the Vermont Public Interest Research Group, Inc. (VPIRG). The consumer group today submitted testimony on the positive impacts of Vermont's bottle law to the federal Resource Conservation Committee, a cabinet-level committee studying national deposit legislation.

VPIRG Assistant Director Leigh Seddon called for a uniform national deposit law so the benefits Vermont has experienced could be realized on a national level. "Vermont's bottle law has reduced litter, lowered energy and resource consumption, lowered beverage prices, created new jobs, required very little administration, and enjoys widespread popular support," Seddon said. He noted a recent poll by U.S. Rep. James Jeffords indicated that 93 percent of Vermonters favor such national legislation.

According to Seddon the first and most visible effect of Vermont's bottle law was to reduce roadside litter. In 1973 a Highway Department survey documented a 76 percent decrease in beverage litter and an overall litter reduction of 36 percent. "In 1973 this saved Vermont taxpayers \$45,000, a figure which has grown substantially since that time due to today's higher clean-up costs and a higher bottle return rate," Seddon said.

The VPIRG researcher noted the real impact of Vermont's bottle law has been to reduce energy consumption and beverage prices. "According to one conservative estimate, our bottle law can save the equivalent of 4.6 million gallons of number 2 home heating oil every year," Seddon said. "That's enough oil to meet the heating needs of 15,500 Vermonters," he added.

Because of these energy savings, beverages in refillable bottles are considerably less expensive than the same brand in cans or throwaway bottles. A VPIRG price survey done in June, 1977 showed beverages in refillable bottles were an average of 10 percent cheaper than the same brand in other types of

containers. "This means the average Vermont family can save \$60 a year by buying beer and soft drinks in refillables," Seddon estimated.

The Vermont bottle law has also resulted in the creation of the equivalent of over 350 full-time jobs in the state. Distributors and retailers have hired additional people to handle returned containers, and approximately 100 redemption centers are now in operation.

Seddon noted, however, Vermont's bottle law is not an unqualified success. Though most soft drinks now come in refillable bottles, only 30 percent of beer sold in Vermont is in refillable bottles. "The large brewers have circumvented the intent of the legislature and have continued to use their wasteful throwaway bottles. This is costing Vermonters at least \$1.5 million a year in higher beverage prices," Seddon said.

VPIRG will lobby this year for strengthening amendments to Vermont's bottle law. These amendments will tighten the definition of what qualifies as a refillable bottle so that all bottles sold in Vermont must actually be refilled.

The Resource Conservation Committee is a cabinet-level interagency committee composed of the heads of seven federal agencies, including the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Interior, Commerce, Labor, Treasury, Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

The Committee is responsible for studying and making recommendations on a wide range of resource conservation policies, and is currently gathering public comments on federal deposit legislation.

## Science

Continued from Page 5

second physicist instead of a third biologist. It will not have that flexibility if it gets locked into a position too early of assuming three biology positions. This I suggest as a hypothesis, but I also suggest that the question of how best the resource be used remain open.

Q: How important was student input, i.e., the SEPC memorandum of Oct. 19, in the decision making?

## GRADES SURVEY

Number of student returns — 129 out of 600 — 22 percent  
Number of faculty returns — 11 out of 70 — 16 percent  
Number of those in favor of option — 66 percent  
Number of those against option — 33 percent  
Number of those going to graduate school in favor of grades — 65 percent  
Number of those going to graduate school against grades — 24 percent  
Number of those who think grades are objective — 16 percent  
Number of those who don't think grades are objective — 60 percent  
Number of those who think that grades are sometimes objective — 40 percent  
Number of those satisfied with grades — 73 percent  
Number of those unsatisfied with comments — 7 percent  
Number of those who think comments are sometimes satisfactory — 20 percent  
Number of those who think that grades undermine learning — 35 percent  
Number of those who think that grades do not undermine learning — 45 percent  
Number of those who think that grades maybe undermine learning — 32 percent

A: It is my understanding that there were two voting student members on the committee. Power is diffuse in this organization, it is not a matter of one or another group (students, faculty, president, etc.) having it and others not possessing it. It is distributed widely, and in such a populistically democratic society as this, decisions are not predictable.

Q: In the past you have said that you do not have an educational philosophy. Was your role on the committee to deal with economic issues?

A: I fail to see how the decision could be taken to have been made along economic lines, the budget will continue to be based on 70 faculty. No one is looking to cut the faculty, if that ever happens, I will say so as that is my responsibility. The allocation of those 70 faculty within the college is not my responsibility, however, but rather is reached as a result of the consensus of the committee charged with and elected to determine educational philosophy.

Q: It has been said that you have approached science faculty and accused them of attempting to sequester student support. Please respond.

A: My notion is that there are many ways in which decisions are made ranging from totalitarian approaches to those made out of sheer intimidation. When one explores the motives behind decisions, it is easy to become tangled up in motives and other shadowy, amorphous tangles. I only ask that decisions be made on the basis of the best data and evidence available, and that they not be changed because of a howling mob. I couldn't imagine anyone trying to politicize this issue because we are not considering something that could hurt the entire community, that is to say we are not talking about a reduction in faculty level.

There is no economic advantage to raising this question, there is a simple motive, which I share of using our resources in the best possible manner for the students and for the enrichment of the community in the most efficient way. I hope the faculty shares this motive. That commitment includes everything from 65 degree temperature in here to larger sacrifices.

In the end whatever resources we have should be used on the one worthwhile investment — the faculty. They are what makes the school.

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# COMMENTARY: THE CASE FOR GRADES

by Barry Weinbaum

The recent mid-term comments have generated inevitable questions as to the feasibility and purpose of the present system of student evaluation at Bennington. The present method of grading, in which teachers merely write out comments and appraisals, seems well in order for a change; it is at best a detailed portrait of the student and his work, and at worst a cursory listing that may hinder the student's chances for further education.

Undeniably, the absence of grades at Bennington does help foster the atmosphere of creativity for which the College is known. Without grades, the usual competition that hallmarks many larger schools is conspicuously missing.

Yet for all the seeming advantages of an evaluation system which is predicated on a foundation of learning without traditional pressures and confines, it remains that the present system has disintegrated into an ideology rather than a pragmatic method of rating student performance.

To begin with, in many cases comments are virtually useless. They offer none of the brilliant perceptions or insights that

have a tendency to be romanticized into such a system. Rather, comments are often almost indistinguishable from one another within a given class, seemingly picked randomly, with catchisms and sweeping statements that could apply to anyone. And it is just this type of comment which negates the whole premise, the whole purpose of comments: to offer a more individually tailored, personal

evaluation than a grade could convey.

Perhaps most important to the argument for the restoration of grades is the long term effect comments have on students interested in proceeding beyond Bennington. With the skyrocketing increases in both the number of applicants to graduate school and in the credentials these applicants have, graduate admissions committees are placing more

and more emphasis on grades; and in the long run, where applications are shuffled over with hardly a glance, it seems to be to the obvious detriment of schools like Bennington to have comments, when they are obviously not read or are at best superficially scanned. Instead, in the absence of grades, the inclination seems to be toward placing the bulk of the emphasis for admission on the Graduate Record Examinations.

At one time Bennington was undoubtedly a trendsetter in its innovative efforts toward a progressive system of education that strove toward extreme individualism. But the reason that Bennington was such a trendsetter was due in large part to the fact it wanted to change

its educational philosophy to a more realistic, functional one. A reordering of the evaluation system, incorporating one of the myriad grade option plans, does not imply a redefinition of Bennington's educational philosophies. Rather, such a revision would seem to be a desperately needed shift toward recognizing the realistic aspects of education which Bennington once exemplified.

"...the present system has disintegrated into an ideology rather than a pragmatic method of rating student performance."

"To rescind the current policy now would be tantamount to taking a step backwards"...

by Amy Spound

In 1974 Bennington College adopted a no-grades policy substituting written evaluations for letter grades. Since then, the issue has refused to die.

These sporadic waves of protest over our unique evaluation system has not been centered around the virtues and vices of a quantitative evaluation system. The majority of responses to the survey expressed an over-all dissatisfaction with the effectiveness of grades in evaluating a student's progress or ability although most thought grades should be optional.

Rather, the controversy focuses on the issue of graduate schools and whether or not grades are absolutely instrumental in graduate school admissions processes.

Horror stories stemming from numerous sources have filtered onto the campus. They tell of students (not necessarily from Bennington) not being able to get into graduate school because they lacked grades. From these bits of evidence certain students and members of the faculty have constructed a theory that our current evaluation system will spell disaster for professionally minded students and the institution as well.

Their solution is to offer grades as an option in addition to written evaluations.

While it is understandable that individuals might harbor certain anxieties concerning the lack of grades especially since it seems at times we are looking down a long dark tunnel, it is still hard to believe that certain members of an institution as reputedly individualistic and experimental as Bennington are having second thoughts over our latest academic adventure.

Admittedly, the outcome of the ex-

periment could prove that grades are an absolute asset for graduate school applicants. However, those individuals who seem to be the so-called "guinea pigs" will not find it difficult to rectify the situation by asking for grades from former teachers. It is certain they will be happy to comply. No future careers will be threatened and the whole affair will be no more than a matter of inconvenience.

Undeniably, grades may provide a useful and often necessary criteria for graduate school admission. Yet, evaluations might prove to be an advantage over grades. President Murphy, during a community meeting last spring, commented upon the transcript which would be presented to graduate school admissions committees. He described the Bennington College transcript as being a virtual "biography" which would stand

out in a pile of ordinary graded transcripts. Furthermore, written evaluations would give admissions officers a more precise idea of a student's ability to articulate on paper, the student's capacity for doing imaginative and disciplined work, and the nature of the work the student did in each of his or her courses.

The most important factor to consider is that not having grades at Bennington College further emphasizes the importance of competition as a result of self-motivation. This is a crucial aspect of the Bennington philosophy. While grades were a part of the evaluation system for a long time one could think of the current policy as a completion of a commitment to the Bennington educational philosophy. To rescind the current policy now would be tantamount to taking a step backwards and no less than an unnecessary com-

promise of that philosophy.

One other consideration is the over-all attitude towards education we as students have at a school like Bennington. In the past, Bennington College has been a useful stepping stone for students who wanted to go to graduate school. There is no reason why Bennington cannot continue in the future as an institution which prepares students for the various professions and more specialized educational pursuits.

However, is it more important that we be concerned with Keeping the institution in pace "with the time" transforming it into just another preparatory undergraduate institution where careers are a neurotic obsession to which the learning process must take a subordinate position? Or can we safely continue as an institution where the learning process is an end in itself and careers are a by-product of that philosophy. Hopefully, this institution will adhere to the latter concept in the future.

Indeed, it would be no less than a crime if this experiment were arrested in mid-stream without waiting for any results.

Admittedly, if the no-grades policy is a complete failure than a grades option should be substituted, but not until the final results are in. Bennington College in the past has been a pioneer in the educational world. There is no reason why it should not have the courage to continue to do so in the future. Who knows. If the no-grades experiment is successful other colleges might follow our path. Thus graduate institutions might be forced to re-examine their own attitude towards quantitative evaluation systems as being the only accurate indicator of student's ability to do graduate work.

# COMMENTARY: THE CASE AGAINST GRADES



# FOREIGN STUDENTS

by Jay Ladinsky

Of the 600 students who attend Bennington over 40 are from foreign countries. Students come from as far away as Malaysia and Turkey, and as close as Canada.

When foreign students apply to Bennington the same agonies confront them as confront American students. However, there are a few more hardships. Ms. Thelma Bullock, Assistant Director of Admissions, handles many of the foreign students applications. She stated that it is exceptionally hard to select prospective students from the many foreign student applications which are submitted. According to Ms. Bullock, not only transcripts and recommendations must be taken into account but it must be judged whether the student is capable of making

the transition from their country to ours with a certain amount of facility. Ms. Bullock stated that this "God-type" position is especially difficult for the staff mainly because no one knows what a student is capable of if given the chance to try. Ms. Bullock said that the difficulties are amplified due to the fact that those students applying to Bennington are often the "cream of the crop" and therefore one must carefully consider all factors concerning the students enrollment.

It is necessary for each prospective candidate to go through a rigorous series of tests in order to make decisions easier for the admissions office. One of the main concerns of new foreign students is the ability to converse and write in English.

Therefore, each student is required to take

TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) as well as the SAT. It is found that for the most part that they have an excellent command of the English language. Those students who do not fare as well in the beginning are sent to the School of International Studies in Putney, Vermont. These students reside at the school for one term and then return to Bennington, with an increased proficiency in English, allowing them to be more comfortable at the school in general.

On the subject of Bennington College and the American way of life several students did not grade Bennington and America on the same levels of social atmosphere. These students felt that America, on the whole, was an exciting place upon first arriving, but gradually the initial excitement subsided and was replaced by a longing for Europe. Many of the students, although born in non-European nations, were educated in Europe therefore many of the comparisons concern Europe and the United States. One student stated that she found American life a little bit tedious compared to European life. She said that in America there tends to be one universal idea of what a citizen should be. According to her, in Europe, there are a multitude of different languages and cultures available within easy driving distance.

As for comments about the college, many students felt that Bennington is very different from America in general. They felt that this is because of a diverse student and faculty population which provides for an unusual atmosphere.

Social relations at Bennington were also a topic of concern. Some students felt that there should be more interaction between students, although some felt that Bennington students are perhaps a little too open in their feelings concerning many situations which they felt should be kept

more or less private. One student commented on Women's Liberation at Bennington. She stated that in her country women are treated as "women" and many social boundaries remain. Here in America, men and women are essentially on equal footing. She finds this situation beneficial in some respects, but disadvantageous in others, and that perhaps the situation has gone a little overboard. She then added that this would certainly be up to the individual.

Another student commented on the situation concerning the American child. This student had lived in both America and Europe and has found that American children are exceptionally cruel when confronted with a new and different situation. The student noted that she has not run into such a situation involving children of her country, but doubts that it exists to such an extent. Most of the other students felt that the European child tends to mature faster than the American child and is therefore more able to accept a new situation with a little more confidence.

## Council Rescinds Boycott

The Student Council voted to officially rescind the student boycott of registration in their meeting on Tuesday night. Bernie Iser, Business Manager of Bennington College, spoke at the meeting about the reasons for the institution of a \$250.00 registration fee which had prompted the official boycott started by student council on November 8th.

Members of Student Council asked Iser why the fee had been raised from \$100.00. Mr. Iser replied that the raise had been in response to the rising attrition rate at the college. He hopes that the new fee will make it more "painful" for students to leave as suddenly as they have in the past. Consequently, this would help the college more accurately predict enrollment for the following semester.

According to Iser, accurate enrollment predictions are important in allowing the total cost of coming to Bennington to be "held even" with the percentage of income

spent on room and board. Inaccurate enrollment predictions cause college expenses, which already take up a major percentage of income, to rise.

Mr. Iser further cited academic divisions and on-campus housing as being other areas which would benefit from more accurate predictions of enrollment.

One member of Student Council asked why students had not received notification of the change in registration fee. Mr. Iser replied that notification had been sent last summer with tuition bills. Mr. Iser further noted that the decision to raise the registration fee had been made last spring. It was not enforced at the time because President Murphy and Mr. Iser concluded that students would not have been able to scrape up the money on such short notice.

Mr. Iser also stated if any student has trouble in coming up with \$250.00 before registration ends, exceptions can be made.

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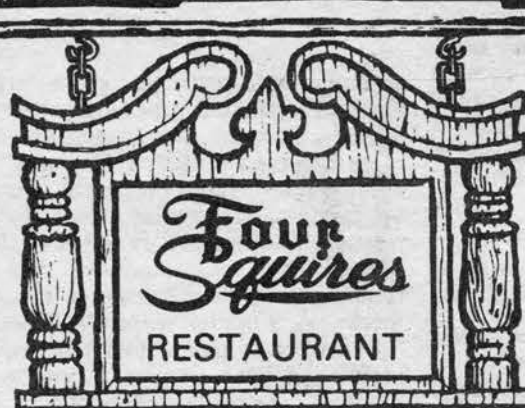


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# PET REGULATIONS: ARE THEY EFFECTIVE?



Photo by Philip Scott

The problems associated with campus pets has been an ongoing issue for as long as the college has been in existence. In the last few years the number of pets on campus has been steadily increasing, along with the magnitude of the problems involved, and the dissension between pet owners and non-pet owners. Various efforts aimed towards some kind of resolution or compromise of the situation have been attempted but so far with no results.

Last spring a Proposal for Pet Regulations was drawn up and presented to Student Council although no action was taken by the committee. This term, a pet committee has been established in an effort to clarify the proposal, and organize the institution of the regulations. The committee presently consists of five members and will become a standing

subcommittee of Student Council to handle all disputes and judicial proceeding concerning pet control.

After much discussion and careful consideration of all the aspects involved, the pet committee rewrote the original pet proposal, including an enforcement clause. The enforcement clause states that a pet monitor will be hired each term to pick up any strays or unregistered animals and take them to the local Humane Society.

When formulating the proposal, the pet committee felt that the best procedure would be to first inform students of the regulations this term so that pet owners would know exactly what to expect next term. This way students who could not afford, or who were not willing to pay the registration fees could find other homes for their pets. The pet committee feels that



Photo by Philip Scott

it is highly unfair to spring these regulations on students unexpectedly in the middle of the term.

Registration of animals this term was initiated by the Student Services office. The pet committee was not consulted or even notified. Earlier, in a brief interview with President Murphy about campus pets, he had stressed the fact that the regulation of pets should not be an administrative decision, but rather — should be resolved by the students. Most members of the pet committee feel that their purpose and power, have been invalidated.

## Community Meeting

A community meeting, sponsored by the Constitutional Committee, will be held in Tishman Auditorium on Monday, November 28th at 8:30 p.m. The future of Student Council and possible alternative forms of student government will be the discussion topic.

The Constitutional Committee feels that it is important for students to attend this

meeting. The primary aim of the meeting is to receive student feedback on feelings of the effectiveness of the current student government and how certain problems might be ameliorated. Alternative systems such as "town meeting" will be considered.

Claude Brachfeld, chairman of the Constitutional Committee, will lead the discussion.

by Kathy Killion

Short Aldrich, Director of Student Services, recently presented a Pet Regulation proposal to the Art and Architecture committee and the Board of Trustees. The proposal passed through both committees and is now official. However, due to an unfortunate misunderstanding, the assumption is that the proposal will go into effect this term. The pet committee had strongly advised against such action and Student Council passed the proposal contingent upon the fact that it would not be instituted until next term.



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