

BENNINGTON COLLEGE

A d d r e s s e s

At Meeting at Home of Mrs. Stephen C.  
Clark, 48 East 70th St., New York Ap-  
ril 26, 1928, at 9 P.M.

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The shorthand reporter was provided with a table, evidently a card table, with narrow, apparently foldable base, on which a top of about three and a half or four feet in diameter was loosely set. He threw one leg around the base, while trying to hold the top of the table static and the note book in position with the left hand, while the right hand made shorthand marks. He managed some way to get through the <sup>early</sup> speeches, and about one-third through Dr. Leigh's speech, but by this time his leg was asleep and all his muscles cramped, and when Dr. Leigh began talking against time, the combination was too much for the reporter, and he finds the notes illegible. He has written out the first part of Dr. Leigh's speech, and suggests this be submitted to Dr. Leigh with the request to rewrite the speech from memory. He may be able to write an even better one.

B E N N I N G T O N      C O L L E G E

Meeting at Home of Mrs. STEPHEN C. CLARK, 46 East 70th St.,  
New York, April 26, at 9 P.M.

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MRS. HALL PARK McCULLOUGH: As Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Bennington College, it is my privilege to introduce to you Dr. Lois Meek, Educational Secretary of the National Association of University Women, who is particularly fitted to be our presiding officer this evening, as she has had personal experience of the new principles of modern education. Dr. Meek. (Applause).

DR. LOIS MEEK: We are invited this evening, you and I, to take part in a family celebration. It is a celebration of the Bennington family, a celebration which has been brought about because the Bennington family have a child of whom they are very, very proud. Now, modern psychology tells us that it is not a very good thing to show off our child, no matter how smart or how clever or how very unusual that child may be. But the Bennington family think that perhaps they have chosen friends to come to their party, who will be wise in not overindulging and spoiling, and who will also not inhibit by being too critical; and so they have invited you to come in to their family party and enjoy with them some of the things that have been happening for four years in the growth



and the development of this child of theirs.

But you may wonder just why I, one who is not a member of the Bennington family, should preside at this meeting. I wonder at it myself. I wonder just what my relationship is to a woman's college, since I never attended a woman's college. And yet I feel quite sure that the speakers on the program are in a like situation. (Laughter).

It is rather significant to me, this program with its presiding officer and its speakers to speak on a woman's college, because it seems rather significant about the whole policy of Bennington. The Bennington family are interested in new beginnings and fresh starts. They are attempting to bring a child up on the basis of the modern theory of education, and it is a very difficult thing to do, especially when there is not much precedent to go by.

Now, it might help us just a little, in listening to the other speakers, especially if they are not as clear as they might be, if we looked over this modern theory of education, some of these principles, in a rather superficial way, to call to our minds some of the things that we know are going on.

What is this modern theory of education? What does it mean? Where did it come from? Probably the best way to find out about any theory is to see it in practice, and there are places in the United States today where the modern theory of



education is in practice.

If we took a paint brush and filled it full with rich yellow paint and then streaked it across the canvas, from left to right, until we had used up the last bit of streak, you would find that at the left there was a thick, rich yellowness, and that that thick, rich yellowness gradually got thinner and thinner, and towards the end those streaks separated, and maybe a few splotches toward the end. If you look at education in the United States today, that is what you find from the standpoint of the modern or progressive educator. With the children we have much richness in the early grades of our schools; we are putting into practice many of the theories of modern education and in many places; but as you go on to the higher grades, you notice it gets thinner and thinner, and when you get up to the college years it is very streaky, -- in fact, there are more open spaces than there are streaks, and when we get into the regular college life, there is only a little splotch now and then that we could call entirely modern or progressive.

If we go into a primary grade, we can see evidence of this progressive movement. Such evidences stand out just on the face of things, very different from the primary grade which you and I went to. First of all is the activity of the children. That is one of the first things you notice, that children are doing things, that the principle of learning



by doing is actively being used. Another thing you see, superficially, is the difference in what the teacher is doing. She is just as busy as she was before, but with a different type of activity, a mental activity in studying equipment, studying her pupils -- a teacher who depends not upon herself alone as a source of knowledge, but uses other sources, and with direct contacts for knowledge. And then, you notice a different kind of an environment, an environment filled with usable things, things that can be manipulated by children or can be turned to their own needs, an environment that is flexible and changing, and not static, an environment that gives freedom of space, of space for activity. And then you notice very quickly the difference in the whole social organization, the opportunity which is given these children for social intercourse, for learning from each other, for getting acquainted with each other -- a very different picture from the picture where each little desk and each little chair was a society by itself, and communication across the aisles and back and forth was absolutely denied, except when the teacher's back was turned --- today a different type of social organization going on. And, last of all, you will notice, if you stay a little bit longer, that in that school room there is a respect for and interest for individual differences in children -- not decrying them and smoothing them over, but catching hold



of them as something to be developed, certain capacities, certain interests, certain special traits which should be made much of, rather than ignored.

Now, what are those giving and receiving? What are the conceptions of educational theory underlying this change of practice in the primary grades? In the primary grades the situation is different from the college, but the conception that belongs to this type of school is the same for the college as it is for the primary school. The principles and theories of modern education do not stop there; they go straight through in all distinctions of learning or education.

I think there are two things that we must think of. One of them is the change in the emphasis from subject matter to children. Educators and pedagogues today are interested, first of all, in children. They are interested to know more about children -- why they do such things, what they are interested in, and what kinds of activities are the best for them. And then, they are interested in watching how children learn. There has been a decided change of interest from teaching to learning. We used to advise how things are taught, and now we think in terms of how things are learned. We used to think in terms of what the teacher was doing, and now we are inquiring what other learners are doing. It is not so much what and how to teach as what and how to learn.



Education, because it has been watching children, has become interested not only in just a small specific piece of learning, like history or mathematics or Latin or reading, but has become interested in the whole child, what that child is doing at any one time, and also what the continuity of that child's learning experience is. We might speak of one side of it as integration, an interest in the integration of a child's life, that all things may come together at one time, making a harmonious whole; and the other we might think of as continuity in life -- the going on from one step to the other, filling each day's activity, each moment's activity, with the one before and the one to come; and last of all, we are interested in our new status of education, not only in the child's information, but we are interested in his likes and his dislikes, his prejudices for and against, his interests, the full emotional life which we call personality,--all that which goes to make the motives and the drives for individual human beings is of interest to modern educators.

So much for the conceptions that come out of our study of children. Very closely related to the other side of the picture is our study of social life. What education to-day is trying to do is to build a process of education which will be in terms of life today, that will build up a type of individual who best lives in to-day's life, and through



a study of our social order educators have realized that there is no life to-day, because it is a continually changing life, that civilization, that the whole social order, that all of the things that go to make up our social living are in continual flux of change -- not disorganized, not so that we cannot tell at all what is going to happen, but so changing that we cannot ever think of a static world to train a child to go into, that we must think of a moving, changing world.

Out of these two conceptions of an individual with traits that we must take into consideration and of a social order that is continually changing and flexible, we have built up the philosophy which is known as the philosophy of growth. Those words of John Dewey, "Education is growth," is the keynote of modern educational theory, and will be the keynote of the discussions to-night.

I want to give you, as your introduction to the whole problem, just a short quotation from Mr. John Dewey's "Democracy and Education":

"Education means the enterprise of supplying the conditions which insure growth or adequacy of the life, irrespective of age."

To-night's program will discuss in some measure a program for the conditions which insure growth in an institution for adolescent girls.



The first speaker on the program is Dr. Coss. Before introducing him, I want to tell you Dr. Coss belongs to the Bennington family -- this is really an adopted child of ours -- I didn't tell you at the beginning, but it is -- the Bennington family, in planning for the care of this adopted child of theirs, looked over the whole United States and probably beyond its borders for the right kind of person to tutor and take care of and provide for this child. They were not satisfied with many, and there were rumors in the educational world for several years that Bennington was looking for some one to care for that child, and then lo! Dr. Coss found the child. And so I think it is quite appropriate that he should be your first speaker, for it is due to him that Bennington College has its present president.. Dr. John J. Coss is Professor of Philosophy and Director of the Summer Sessions of Columbia University, who will speak on the subject, "How to Bind College Life Closer to Life." Dr. Coss. (Applause).

DR. JOHN J. COSS: If you are as pleased as I am that Robert Leigh is the President of Bennington, you are very pleased indeed; and I have known him long enough to be fairly confident that he is exactly the right kind of president.

Now, what is this binding of the college to life?



That is rather a formidable topic. I have only three points (I am not to speak very long), and these three points are, first, that the college has perhaps the last educational opportunity to encourage individuals to be really skillful in something about which they are learning; the second point is that while these individuals are learning things in college, it is possible to present the things they are learning in such fashion as to make them seem real and full of life; and the third point is, that as students are in college it is conceivable, though rarely as yet accomplished, that they may, in their wider community, whether country or village or smallish town, exert some influence on the life of the community.

Now about this first point, about skill: Every year a great many boys go through Columbia College, whom I know, and some of them seem very well poised, very happy, very competent; they seem to know how to do something and do it thoroughly and enjoy doing it; and there are a certain number who are ill at ease, unhappy, trying to find amusement, and not at all able to maintain themselves by themselves. I feel very sorry for them, because they have not anything in which they are expert. Now, I don't suppose, by any means, that we can look for a college in which all the students are going to be expert in particular subject



matters. I think that is most unlikely and probably highly undesirable. But they ought to be expert about something. They come up through these elementary schools, about which we have heard, and which are improving year by year, and the secondary schools, with a great wealth of interest and frequently also real continuity, and here they are in college, and it is the last chance. And it is not all they have had; they have had home, they have had travel, they have had experience in society, they have frequently had experience in the woods; they have been growing, but some way or other, college has got to help pull all this together and give it a kind of integration, and, frankly, college does not know how to do it. There is a group of some twenty of us meeting on Monday and Tuesday of this week to consider personnel methods in the colleges, and that is a rather unpleasant word, and people don't like it, and I had better say to consider ways of taking care of the individual students in colleges, and we got to discussing about what we call the tools, our various tests and other facilities and vocational descriptions, and so on -- all of these things that we are trying to provide for college use and needs. They are to the college merely tools to help us further develop individual character. And then they asked, "Now, how are you going to do this?" and nobody had



any answer. We have learned fairly well how to teach arithmetic, even the calculus. We have not learned how to teach what college has to teach.

Now, Bennington is going to find out how to bring together all the interests, efforts, imaginations, desires, emotions, upon a goal or upon multiple goals, so as to make the individual able to carry through to the realization of some one excellent form of life.

Now, I think that is the college's job, and I think it is an experimental one, but one which is very likely to succeed, if all the time we are working on curricula and on housing, on gymnasiums and playing fields, upon music and arts and social functions, we are thinking about students as individuals who are now having the last institutional opportunity to bring themselves together into human beings of skill and usefulness, who can maintain themselves by themselves.

Now, the second point. What is life and teaching? If you take some of the older textbooks in history, you will find that they are talking about kings and queens, battles and dynasties, and that is about all -- plenty of dates and lots of kings and queens -- but very little picture of an actual, going concern, as we know our own times. Some of the modern books are called social histories, some



of the ultra modern books are called intellectual histories, which are attempts to make past times appear in as vivid fashion to the beholder as contemporary civilization may appear to an imaginative, shrewd observer of our times. Now, that is a very great gain, and it makes of our contemporary social studies a subject matter which may be of absorbing interest. It is thoroughly interesting to study the glorious revolution of 1688, if you know something about the condition of England before and after, and how the economic life of England and the Continent were bound up in the incidents, and how England, because of it, stood at a certain place, and France stood in another place, and how philosophy came in to justify, and how religious tolerance was treated; and all those things taken together make a picture of absorbing interest. Now, that has to do with social studies; but here is Latin and Greek. Will people sigh about Latin and Greek? I am convinced that Latin and Greek have both had their hard times, because the scholars in Greek and Latin got all obsessed with the importance of Greek roots and were not at all able -- though frequently they saw it themselves -- to bring to their students any picture of the Greek and Roman life which had produced the literature; though Greek and Latin can be as fascinating today, or even more fascinating than the very latest play of



O'Neill. I really think that the Greek tragedies have something to be said for them when you get inside of them, but not so many people know how to open the door; but there are some.

Now, this emphasis upon an attempt to study literature and history as real stories, like our own times, is a part of the remaking of the curriculum so that it may talk about life. And another part is that more recently in this country we have been trying to bring the study of our social conditions down to the actual moment; we are trying to come down to our contemporary situation; but we know of course that we are dealing with problems which we are not solving, that we are trying to make clear what is going on, and if we have any sense at all, we are refraining from saying, "This <sup>is</sup> the way out," though we may say, "These are many of the proposed ways out." In science I think we are getting away from the professional treatment and into a much more humane treatment of particular sciences. At the present time, if you ask a man in chemistry what he expects his students in the first year to do, he may tell you, "Why, they are getting ready for the second year of chemistry." Well, many of them are, and they may do very well in the second year, but a lot of the students in the first year are not going to have any second year,

don't want any second year, and wouldn't think of taking one after they have had the first. And we are trying to get into a situation where they want to have a year of chemistry, and they want to have a year of zoology, where the subject matters have been reworked to make them do what the students want them to do, namely, give them some kind of an understandable picture of what it is all about. And they are not going to be zoologists, and they are not going to be chemists, but they would like to be educated people.

Then about this community idea, the third point. This is much simpler. Here Bennington is going to be in a community. What is the presence of Bennington in that community going to mean for the community? At a certain day in the year, enormous loads of trunks will come in, to be stored in Bennington, and then at another time of the year the same trunks will be taken out of storage and big trucks will back up and take the trunks to the station. But I hope it can be something else, that Bennington can be a different place -- I will take that back, it cannot look different and yet be as lovely as it is -- that Bennington can be even better than Bennington is because the college is there; that the girls may feel it is their place, as the boys feel some of the places in which their own institutions are located or carrying the name of the institution, feel that these places



belong to them. But I think already there is a particularly happy situation for that manner of feeling to grow up. It is fearfully hard to get such a feeling in a large city, but I think it is very easy to have the girls feel about the community in Bennington that it is a place to which they want to go back every year, just so long as they can get there; and I think it is possible for the community to feel that when the college came, the greatest thing happened to Bennington that could possibly be thought of; and if the girls can do this, then it is part of their growing up, it is part of their integrating, it is one part of the first point, it is part of getting able to be something well, and in that being something well there is the appreciation of the meaning of the course of history and Bennington's contribution to the community. (Applause).

DR. MEEK: I suppose there never has been a family who with their first child did not begin to worry, as the child got to be three or four years of age, about how to arrange the budget of that child the rest of her life, especially if the child should be a girl. As the years go on, it looks as though it is going to be a bigger and bigger task and take more out of the family budget. Now, the Bennington family are not different from any of the rest of us, and they began to have qualms about the future cost

of this child of theirs; but they have been wise enough to call in an expert in financial matters, who is not a member of the family, and who can look at the situation objectively and with not any of the feelings that the aunt might have or the doting father or even the old grandfather; and so Dr. Arnett has come to talk to the Bennington family quite in private about financial situations. Dr. Arnett is really a financial expert. You would hardly believe me if I told you all the things I read about him in "Who's Who." When I looked up to find out just who he was and why he was, I found out so many financial things about him, that I decided I would just generalize and say that he had had all the experience possible in finances, that he had held nearly every position possible in a large university, that university being Chicago, and that finally he seems to have settled down in New York City (if one does settle down in New York) as a member of the General Education Board. It is with great pleasure that I introduce Dr. Trevor Arnett, a member of the General Education Board, who will talk on college finances. Dr. Arnett. (Applause.)

DR. TREVOR ARNETT: It is very interesting to be introduced in the way that Dr. Meek has introduced me, and it reminds me very much of a man who had come into possession of some money, at least he had a considerable sum of money,



and some enterprising reporters visited him to learn how to become successful. They thought he probably could tell them about some of the secrets of making money. He said he was very glad to do so, that he had tried for about forty years and he had saved about a dollar; he now had about fifty thousand dollars, but the rest of it had come to him by a bequest -- that is the way he had been successful in getting this sum of money. (Laughter).

I am asked to speak on the material side of the college. Dr. Coss has already indicated how the college should be bound to the life of the community, and Dr. Leigh is going to tell you what the educational program is; but you know, in any sandwich there always has to be some meat or something practical and solid, so I am asked to speak of the financial situation of Bennington College.

Now, I feel very much like the little girl who was asked if she could spell banana. "Why," she said, "of course I can spell banana -- b-a-n-a-n-a-n-a-na -- I never know when to stop -- banana." <sup>(Laughter)</sup> And it is true when I start to spell banana, and when I start to speak of college finances, I am very much tempted to exceed my time, and I understand my time is somewhat limited, so I have put my remarks in written form, so that I shall not exceed the time which I have allowed me.

(Here take in prepared speech).

DR. MEEK: The real fate of the Bennington family's child lies in the hands of our next speaker, who is the president-elect of Bennington College. During the past year of 1937 there were, I think, twenty-one college presidents inaugurated in the United States, and most of these college presidents made inaugural addresses and most of them were published. If you did not meet them in school or society, they were sent to you in printed form. A great many of them have come over my desk during the past year. I have been struck, in a rather disconcerting manner, by the lack of an educational program in any of the inaugural addresses. In other words, what I am trying to say is that most of these addresses pick out some of the faults of a college, some of the good things, and are trying to bolster up the old structure to make it look presentable, to make it be idealistic, and to try to fix the front part of the building, at least, so that it seems in keeping with the modern world. Not many of these addresses (in fact, I have missed it if they have had it in them) -- not many of them that I have seen had in them any building up of an educational philosophy in terms of adolescent boys and girls who have reached college age. Now, it may be that some of them have such a philosophy and do not dare spread it abroad for fear of disconcerting their comfortable faculties, and it may be that some of them are planning much



better things than these inaugural addresses would make us believe. To me it is a challenge, the greatest challenge of any project in education, to watch what will come forth from this Bennington College by a new president who can build from the ground up, who has no faculty from whom he must hide his ideas, who has a board of trustees who look to him as a leader and hope that he will be far-reaching in his work. Dr. Robert Devore Leigh, who is Hepburn Professor of Government at Williams College, and who is president-elect of Bennington College, is the next speaker, and is going to tell us of a proposed program in education. Dr. Leigh. (Applause).

DR. ROBERT DEVORE LEIGH: Mr. Chairman and friends: As the hour is moving on, I think I will tell you at the outset that I am not going to make my inaugural address; nor am I going to pose tonight as an expert on higher education, nor am I going to take the even more perilous position of an expert on the education of women. But I would like to give a dress rehearsal, I suppose one might say, of an inaugural address, by talking with you frankly of the ideas that have come to me out of the garden variety of college teachers' experience of students over a term of fifteen years in all kinds of institutions, on the east coast and west coast, in the universities and small inde-

pendent colleges of the country. Since within the last few months I have been rather suddenly thrust into close association with Bennington College, I have been impressed with the idea that the movement for the establishment of Bennington College is perhaps more significant than the personal things connected with its immediate establishment, and I would like to pay my tribute at the outset, after coming into the proposal of the establishment of Bennington at a rather late date, to those people who four years ago took a rather reasonable and common idea of people living in a beautiful New England town, that they would like to take a college and raise it into the focusing of the thought of the people in the college world as to what a new college should be. Now, if I had not been an actual college teacher, I probably would have been more surprised at the very eager comments of people everywhere when I talked before them, both teachers and students of private schools, or college teachers, the very eager response and the very eager interest that they have in the particular plans which we propose to have for Bennington -- I say, I would have been more surprised if I had not been teaching students in some of our typical colleges for the last few years; because any one familiar with the undergraduate of today knows that there is a great stirring in the American colleges. You who may be parents I do not believe realize



yourselves how very interesting and how very interested a man or woman the undergraduate is in his or her own education, and I would be inclined to attribute the changes which are taking place in our existing colleges, so radical that it is difficult to keep up with them, first of all to the fact that the average undergraduate may appear to the faculty and perhaps in the classroom as a rather negative person, not much interested in the education that we propose to give him; but he or she is continually asking the question whether the kind of education that is being given to him or her is worth anything, and that undergraduate has some very definite proposals to make, and so also some of the undergraduates and some of the younger members of the faculty are very critical of our modern institution, and as we know, there is hardly a first-rate college in the East or West that is today not considering rather seriously the remaking of this part of its curriculum or changing that part of its methods or constitutional arrangements. And it is for the very reason that these tendencies today are known and that that yellow streak which has swept across the educational system of this country has reached the colleges, that people, I think, everywhere in the college world have been much interested in this rather stirring proposal: What would you do if you did not have a faculty on your hands, and you did not have an alumni body on

your hands, and you had no dormitories in their existing forms and no buildings built as they were -- what would you do if you were going to build a college from the ground up? And I feel that my own position is merely that of a representative of a very strong groundswell of sober sentiment on the part of the existing college teachers, representative of the interest that they have in trying to build a college upon promises that we think exist in the undergraduate and upon the basis of the educational ideas and methods which have made such a distinct impression upon secondary and lower schools.

Now, I say it would be a great mistake, I say it would be a rather foolish mistake for us to think that Bennington offered the way out for the educational world. Certainly, from the substantial point of view, if the American college is going to continue to contribute to American life and culture as it has in the past, it is going to do so by the gradual reorganization of the existing college. But I think that it is also true that Bennington is going to be a source of absorbing interest to the existing colleges in showing what can be done in applying the principles of modern education as exemplified in the lower and secondary schools to a college starting from the ground up, without certain limitations which all existing college presidents and faculties realize inhere in very old institutions.



Now, I think that if one attempts to paint the picture of the difficulties of change in our existing colleges, we can not say any longer that college faculties are not interested in changing their curricula, that students are no longer interested in coöperating with the faculty. But when we look at the average college campus, we see a picture which somehow, to the person who has been associated with it, and even to the stranger, is one of a baffling ineffectiveness; and that picture, I think, is more really true of the undergraduate college than it is of the professional school, and than it is of many of our lower schools. The difficulty really lies at the root of the institutional organization, and that is why it is one can have a very comfortable feeling about the changes going on in our entire college activities, and it is a rather easy thing to move from point to point in making changes. One reason I think that a new college is necessary is because really significant and important changes in American undergraduate life are likely to come from rather radical reconstruction of the institution, not only including curriculum and method, but including all institutional organization from the ground up.

If we look at the average college of today, we find a rather strange picture of duality. There is the college of the faculty. The faculty member has charge of the

classroom. His conception of the fundamental purpose of the college is that serious intellectual work should be centered around the classroom and the curriculum, and in the classroom he expends himself in a great deal of initiative; he has certainly quite often a great deal of enthusiasm; he does a great deal of organization, I think he gets a great deal of education out of traveling. On the other hand, by and large, the undergraduate in the classroom (there are of course in every institution a great many exceptions) takes a rather passive part, exercising little initiative, displaying only occasional enthusiasm, and if not representing any actually contradictory attitude towards what is going on in the classroom, he accepts it as a matter of course.

Now, that is the picture of the college as it appears to the college teacher who attempts, very enthusiastically at first, and then I would say with increasing irritation, to believe that the work that he is doing is going to be of important educational service.

On the other hand, if we step outside of the classroom, we see a surprising<sup>ly</sup> different picture. We find the student engaged in things that he has built up for himself, and principally in the last generation of two, with a great deal of energy, with a great deal of enthusiasm, carrying on under his own direction a great deal of hard



work with amazing willingness. In fact, the only thing he seems to lack is moderation in the sense of proportion in the carrying on of what we call undergraduate or student activities, and it is a part of the college world in which the faculty member takes very little interest and in which he himself plays a passive role. There is nothing revolutionary or novel about setting before ourselves that picture of the forces that are at work. Students' editorials, statements of educators, minutes of faculty meetings, and so forth, reveal that that is recognized by any of the older educators and is seen as an outstanding fact by all of those engaged in the existing college institutions. The recognized condition is a baffling problem, but the is something that can be removed. There are questions in a good many people's minds what to do. The traditions of an institution are such that when one says that probably you could remove that rather ineffective division of aims on the part of the students and the faculty, you do not understand undergraduates or you do not understand college life. But it seems to me that if one looks at the things which are being done on the American college campus, not to mention the things that are being done by lower schools, we can see that it is something that can be greatly modified, if not completely changed, and that there can be, if not in

our existing colleges, created out of the new environment a college where there will be a uniform purpose. So that, more than anything else, if we tried to present the program of Bennington College in the form of a picture, this is what I think we should strive after -- the organization of a college life where the faculty and the students will be engaged on a common program. If you will go to the graduate school or to the professional school, you may find a sort of traditional opposition between the pedagogue and the pupil, but on the whole you have a feeling that students and teachers are out for the same purpose, and what college life goes on out of the classroom is closely related to the life of the classroom; and I believe that that is essentially the kind of thing that may exist everywhere in college education.

Now, there is no time tonight, even if I had the ability, to tell you how we made a beginning at this problem of building an institution where you should replace this ineffectiveness which is the baffling element in the American college by a more unified attitude. In the first place, though, I should say that we would have to remake the college world for the faculty; and for a few minutes it may be worth while to indicate how that may be attempted, at least.



In the first place, as has been suggested in the previous talk, we have to learn a great deal more about our students than we know now. After we have admitted our students to college, we go through the routine process of definitely signing them up for a series of courses which the faculty thinks the students ought to have; but it seems to me, if we are going to engage a student's interest in the kind of education that will spur him, we have to find out first of all what intellectual or esthetic interests he comes to college with, and then we have to build immediately upon that interest. The student who comes to college with a definite interest in literature should, it seems to me, be engaged directly for four years, if that is a fairly mature and permanent interest, in the study of literature. If the student has an interest in history, she should be engaged in the study of history. There are many students who come to our colleges with not a great degree of maturity, who, I think we can say as a result of defective experience in the lower grades of the college, are leading a life of irritation and inefficiency, and are likely to be discouraged from the work that they get to in the junior and senior years. The undergraduates I have known of recent years are of that sort. The first two years are the critical years at college. . . . .

But the more typical situation is a group of freshman girls who come to college with a reasonable degree of competence, that is the reason they are admitted to college, the basis of their being admitted, and having ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ obtained a distinct intellectual tone, but who themselves do not confess to having any very distinct or permanent intellectual interests. The college then is faced with the problem of trying to adapt that student to the work of the curriculum. So far I think we have had the beginnings of a move in that direction in having ~~the~~ a compulsory series of courses in various fields, but those courses to date have been with all kinds of purposes, with all kinds of aims, with all kinds of inefficiency, and to say that the student in the first two years of average college activities with intellectual interests would probably be going too far. In the organization of a college, it would seem to me that one of the first things we should do would be to discard presenting to a student the

We should present to the freshman and ~~uqrjq~~ with as great art as we can the to these students the intellectual and esthetic possibility of becoming connected with work in each of these fields. Now, it seems to me that for the average student that would be the main object



of our first two years of college. If we do it

of the attainment of a certain competence and interest, ready to go on <sup>with</sup> ~~for~~ more work. If the student at the end of two years of as well organized courses as we can make has not shown any competence in any field and has not developed an interest in any one field, it seems to me highly wasteful of that student's money and the college's time to continue her education in a presumed field of interest for the last two years, and it would be better for her either to stop and do something else more along the line of what may be her permanent interests outside of our particular college, or it may be if she has competence to continue to try to back that interest, but not to go through some lockstep.

If at the end of two years the student has an interest and has shown competence, the rest of the college work is fairly easy for the most of our colleges have for an advanced student what is called work, where the students and the faculty quite informally carry on in conference groups with that major interest, the intensive and extensive study in the field of the student's interests for two or more years. At the end of that period revealing the competence obtained by

Now, it seems to me that novel results or procedures are things that the faculty must do in the beginning

in order to attempt to                      student when the student enters the college, and try to find out what the student was interested in and show the student what intellectual and esthetic

otherwise she will be ~~missing~~

only one side of the picture, the student life

a more drastic step in the institution rather in the curriculum . The first step, in the physical of view , that we must take is actually and physically to associate the students with the faculty, in the dwelling or dining hall life. At Bennington we propose to have rather small dining halls, with the kind of organization, although not the defects of the organization, which the students have devised for themselves under the names of their social groups. The first thought of the faculty was that the students should live in barracks and be put upon the town boarding house keepers for food. The students rejected that rather drab picture of life and created their fraternities and sororities, which