

G A L L E Y

5 April 1960

Statements on the Constitution Committee

"The fundamental problem facing the Constitution Committee is the devising of a constitution that will be simple, workable, and representative of the several Bennington interests and the interests of the Community at large. This is a practical problem, not necessarily to be solved by a rigid adherence to ~~one~~ theory of constitutional government or another. I would like to see a Committee that is not bound in advance to an inflexible point of view. What I want is a Committee that will shape its point of view to specific Bennington interests and needs, as it comes to understand them through the public hearings that the Community itself has gone on record as desiring. Therefore I hope that those faculty members and students who are elected to the Constitutional Revision Committee will explore every constitutional proposal brought before it, ~~before~~ drafting its own document. The general solution might then flow from particular questions and problems."

Gene Baro

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"To take a position on constitutional structure at the present time--before substantial exploration and deliberation--appears premature to me. I am aware that many individuals have so explored and deliberated, but the community has not. Without appropriate community deliberation a constitution can only be imposed, and not constructed.

"Furthermore, it seems to me that there is a logical priority to be observed in the consideration of constitutional problems. Whatever the list of problems (and I have no desire to limit it to the ones of concern to me) structural issues would seem to belong at the end. Two problems I would like to see thoroughly explored first, through open hearings and discussion would be:

"a) Jurisdiction: It has been noted by others that the Community contains divisions (specifically the administration, the faculty and the students) of substantially differing size, composition, interest and authority. What are the areas each group would insist upon keeping exempt from legislation by the other groups? Will the others agree? Only after a bill of rights and exemptions has been drawn up--and agreed to!--will it be possible to proceed with the problem of a constitution providing for the realistic legislation of other issues.

"b) Apathy: Are members of the Bennington Community truly uninterested in community government? If so, why? Is anything to be done about it? Perhaps what we call apathy is a complete absence of experience in group deliberation and action, plus an absence of clear and effective channels for the expression of group (and individual) interests. Any meaningful constitution will have to reflect a knowledge of the answers to these and similar questions.

"When matters such as the foregoing have been debated and settled satisfactorily, the committee will be able to move to the second order of business: structure, composition, representation and the like."

Morton Klass

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"Because I am not truly convinced of the validity of either the unitarian viewpoint or that of its opposition, I am submitting my name as an independent. It would be helpful if there were represented on the committee someone without definite prejudice. The goal of the committee formulating a constitution incorporating some of the objectives of both factions, which are radically different in orientation, thus resulting in a judicious, reasonable compromise, acceptable to the majority of students, faculty and administration. An independent is in a position to weigh evidence on both sides, thus facilitating the formulation of a constitution which is representative of the whole community, ~~xx~~ not distinct factions."

Thelma Bullock

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"Independent". - Brenda Goldberg

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"As a candidate for this committee, I am definitely committed to a pluralist point of view. I believe that it is desirable for decisions affecting the entire community to take place within the framework provided by our constitution, and that this can be effected only by recognizing the existence of factions with differing interests and areas of competence. An effective constitution must provide some initial outline of these areas. If it is to be realistic, it must recognize that certain areas of jurisdiction, (for example, the right of the faculty to vote on candidates for graduation), cannot be challenged. If it is to provide opportunity for genuine democratic government, it must provide channels through which most areas of jurisdiction can be challenged.

"I have chosen not to affiliate myself with those pluralists who are running as a group, because I believe that in the absence of an organized opposition the community cannot express its attitude toward the pluralist principle through its vote."

Jdane H. Terpening