

Mr. Burkhardt's Remarks at Commencement July 2, 1949.

15th

"There are formally assembled here in regular session the Board of Trustees and the President and Faculty of Bennington College for the purpose of making the last official decisions leading to the award of the bachelor of arts degree to the members of the 14th graduating class. We are gathered here as teachers, parents, fellow students, townsmen and friends to honor and to share a common pride in the achievements of the young women who have presented themselves for the award of the degree.

These commencement exercises are a fitting occasion to reaffirm the ideals of this College. Let us consider them, and the present graduating class in their light.

Bennington seeks to provide its students with a broad liberal education - with an understanding of our cultural heritage as a whole.

It seeks to provide its students with intensive instruction which shall lead to competence in one of the important fields of human achievement.

It seeks to develop the whole person - to develop the natural endowment of individuals in rich variety and to direct them toward constructive purposes. It seeks to train the imagination and sensibility, the moral and emotional aspects of personality as well as the intellectual. Its concern is with all-inclusive character.

It seeks to develop free citizens dedicated to civilized values, capable of energetic and constructive membership in modern society by sponsoring in its students active participation in their own education and the practice of the liberties and responsibilities of a democratic community.

The award of the bachelor of arts degree certifies that these students have successfully met the standards of quality in work and in citizenship set by this College. The extent of their accomplishment in our other aims cannot be formally certified, but the degree does express our confidence in them as creative civilized persons. We who are concerned in awarding it have borne in mind that those who receive it represent the standards and ideals of Bennington College. Of each individual in the class before us it can be said: The College is content to be judged by her.

At Bennington, the award of the degree means at least one other thing. The nature of education here is a reciprocal affair. It is such that we can say in all seriousness and without hypocrisy that we who are charged with instruction and educational policy have received as well as given, learned from these students as well as taught them. The conferring of the degree is thus an acknowledgment of the contribution to us and to our practices which these students have made in the years they have been here.

We who have worked with them shall continue to follow them with interest and affection as they go to do their part in other communities. To those communities we confidently recommend them."