

AGENDA

Faculty Meeting

17 November 1965

Minutes of the meeting of September 15 (distributed)

President's remarks

the Dollard Fund

building plans

Federal funds

Committee reports -- none

Old business -- none

New business -- Nemerov proposal

Announcements

Art and Architecture will meet at 7 p.m.  
in Barn 82

Adjournment

OCT 26 1965

Suggested to the Bennington College Faculty.

That we spend a week of the Spring Term exchanging courses so that each of us, for that week, teaches something he knows nothing about. The immediate objection that we are doing just that year after year already has been entertained and thrown away. This, let us say, would be different.

Before everyone begins screaming, let me put in a few words more. Such an adventure could work out without involving anyone who didn't want to give it a try; and no one ought to give it a try who would feel seriously embarrassed, or who believes that his course(s) would suffer an irremediable setback during that week.

What is envisioned? why should we do this? Ah, why indeed? But a few pleas may be entered for an idea that sounds so silly it ought at least to be harmless.

This is a liberal arts college, or anyhow it is piously said to be. The question for such a college is of a central humane education directed at the layman, the amateur, the humanist, so far as these titles distinguish anyone from the specialist at something: in this sense alone, we ought somehow -- even if not in the way I suggest -- experience our own ignorance, if only for the mere sport of it. We know and feel too little of one another's modes, concerns, difficulties.

The objective immediately behind the suggestion is I think of evident value: the students, naturally, would do the teaching. I mean to say that I might go in to talk to a class of painters and anticipate that as soon as I made my first egregiously silly remark (within the first minute and a half) someone would put me straight; and that this would go on happening, to the somewhat odd edification of all parties.

The last anticipation is so immodest that I shall give it the barest mention: but it is just possible that out of such fooling around An Idea may arise. I observe that people in the liberal education business spend an increasing amount of time sitting around in committees waiting for an idea to arise, and I suggest only that we now allow, in the way of a sacrifice if you like, one week next term to seeing if such a thing won't happen by accident (after all, we've tried the other way).

Howard Nemerov

PS Copies of this go to all faculty and administration. The FEPC and the several Divisions may or may not wish to discuss it, but it seemed to me best to broadcast it for individual reflexion and informal debate. I shall welcome whatever remarks any of you may care to make.