

Bennington College
May, 27, 1936

Minutes of Open Meeting for Discussion of Twelve O'clock Rule

A meeting for the discussion of the twelve o'clock rule which states that "girls shall not entertain men in the living rooms at night for more than half an hour any time after midnight", was held in the student lounge, Wednesday May 27, 1936 at 8:30 p.m.

Chairman Jane Hutchins opened the meeting by explaining that its purpose was ~~for~~ the discussion of objections which have been made to the 12:00 o'clock restriction. The history of the regulation was reviewed. In the first two years of the college the privilege of free use of the living rooms was abused, some men spending all night there in the company of students. It was found necessary by the Community at the end of the college's second year to deem it "unnecessary and inadvisable under ordinary conditions, to entertain men in the student houses after midnight." Further abuse of the privilege and a lack of responsibility shown by some students caused the Council in the fall of 1935 to limit the time for entertaining men after midnight to half an hour, and to provide a system whereby a report was automatically made to the Central Committee if men were entertained for a longer period of time.

The following criticisms were made of the restriction:

1. If the students are allowed to stay out as late as they wish in the evening, why ^{try} to restrict them by imposing such a rule on campus, which will not have a curbing effect but will be merely inconvenient?
2. It would be much more desirable to have girls stay up until all hours in the living rooms, than to have them stay in less desirable places, i.e. road houses, automobiles, etc..
3. As the ideal of the college is to educate the students socially as well as academically, why not have the regulation in the form of a standard rather than a rule? (The differences between rule, restriction, regulation and standard were here discussed. Some seemed to feel that a rule demanded punitive measures. The Central Committee explained its procedure and policy in talking with an offender as an educational measure, an endeavor to have her see wherein she is going against the best interests of the Community and herself, rather than as a punitive measure.)
4. The question was raised as to whether the restriction was made on the grounds of morals or to meet public opinion.
5. Some objectors felt that 12:00 was an arbitrary ^{hour} and that 1:00 or 2:00 would be a fairer time to set.

The objections were met as follows:

1. The Council realizes that it is impossible to regulate conduct off campus. It feels however, that in activities on campus from which a great deal of adverse criticism springs, something can be done when students show themselves unwilling and incapable of regulating themselves with regard to the Community as a whole.
2. The college's ideal certainly is to educate the students to their responsibilities, and that is what the Central Committee aims at in its discussions with offenders. As some students would not, or

could not assume their responsibilities without definite bounds being set, those who are willing to do their part have had to compromise for the protection of the community as a whole. The result has been the 12:00 O'clock rule in addition to the educational efforts made by the Council, the Central Committee and the Community.

3. The rule was made largely on the grounds of public opinion, which however, cannot be divorced from the question of morals.
4. Because of the public opinion factor as well as because 12:00 midnight seemed to the Council to be a fair and reasonable hour, that hour was set.

The following suggestions were made for the revision of, or alternatives to, the restriction:

1. If it is found necessary to retain the rule, to set the hour after which it goes into effect at 2:00a.m. rather than at midnight. It was felt that in view of the rest of the community's policies and habits, this would be a more reasonable hour.
2. Do away with the rule entirely, while retaining the system whereby the Council automatically learns of those who abuse their privileges. Leave this information in the hands of the Central Committee to use at its own discretion, in the same manner with which it, at present, deals with other information concerning the community.
3. Do away with the rule and institute a thorough program for the purpose of educating the community to live up to its standards. This might be done through small group discussions of the standards with the Council, each fall.

Respectfully Submitted

Constance Anderson, secretary