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FOR

BENNINGTON COLLEGE
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MASS EDUCATION A WEAPON IN WORLD POWER STRUGGLE,
BENNINGTON PRESIDENT WARNS

Russian Education Severely Restricted by Party Line,
Kathleen Harriman, Daughter of Commerce Secretary Reports

Educators must not let today's unprecedented influx of students into colleges sidetrack them from their most urgent task of restating democratic values, Lewis Webster Jones, president of Bennington College, warned last night (Monday, Oct. 21). He spoke at a "coming-of-age" dinner given at the Cosmopolitan Club by Bennington trustees to celebrate the 21st anniversary of the "Bennington Idea" for individualized college education for women.

Pointing out that no country can afford not to educate its citizenry, Dr. Jones declared that "mass education, whether we like it or not, has become a weapon in the international struggle for power." While it is a simple problem of indoctrination and force for a totalitarian regime, "for the democracies, the task is more complex, but infinitely more valuable to the future of humanity," he said.

The two million students crowding into colleges this year have created an educational revolution unequalled in the world's history, according to Dr. Jones. He added: "It will be a tragic day for American civilization and for a world desperately in need of new faith and direction in human values if this unparalleled renaissance of interest in and hunger for education is permitted to derail our colleges and universities, instead of inspiring them to take leadership in finding the new goals and values we must have for survival.

"We have a blind faith in something called education. We have tended to regard it as a kind of mechanical can-opener to full employment and the good

life. One unhappy result has been to give liberal arts colleges a trade-school complex. Fortunately, the mood seems to be changing largely because more and more students are disdaining the trade-school approach and demanding something more basic of higher education. The veterans, particularly, want a sense of direction from a college education. They want to know who they are, where they are and where civilization as a whole may conceivably be going."

Arthur W. Page, vice president of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company and former chairman of the Bennington board of trustees, served as presiding chairman of the dinner attended by 250 trustees, sponsors, alumnae and friends. The guest speakers included Frederick Lewis Allen, editor of Harper's Magazine and a former trustee of the college; Kathleen Harriman, a Bennington graduate of 1940 and daughter of W. Averell Harriman, Secretary of Commerce; and John S. Sinclair, a trustee of the college and vice president of the New York Life Insurance Company.

"Russian education is not progressive by American standards because the ideological party line severely restricts academic freedom," Kathleen Harriman declared. A Bennington graduate of 1940, she made first-hand observations of Russian high schools, kindergarten and nursery schools during her two-year stay in Moscow from 1943 to 1945 when her father served as United States Ambassador to Soviet Russia.

"While children in American schools follow the fortunes of Superman, their Soviet counterparts read about Soviet heroes and learn of the new five-year plan and how to serve it," she pointed out. "Education there is a means to an end and the end is to serve the state," Miss Harriman declared, adding that there is no undergraduate liberal arts education comparable to that in American colleges. Instead, there are "institutes" resembling our technical schools. Miss Harriman said she found no basis for the idea that Russians don't like Americans.

Bennington Pioneers In Basic Studies

Stressing that education is a complicated thing, Frederick Lewis Allen

took issue with the "100 Great Books boys, the Common Core boys" and other ardent exponents of specific educational philosophies, for over-simplifying. He paid tribute to Bennington for recognizing the complexity of its task and "never getting settled in its own rut."

Mr. Allen cited the college's inauguration of a Basic Studies program in 1942 as a pioneer instance of continuing experimentation. He pointed out that Harvard's report on General Education in a Free Society last year wound up by proposing basic study programs similar to those Bennington has established several years before. Because Bennington "refuses to regard any program as a panacea," it plays an important role in these days when "ignorant dogmas clash by night," he added.

A drive to raise an \$850,000 fund for Bennington is being launched by trustees and alumnae, John S. Sinclair reported, in outlining the college's need for increased financial support. The fund is urgently needed for scholarships, a new library, increased faculty salaries and adequate facilities for community meetings and the performing arts, he said. Pointing out that approximately one-third of Bennington students are on full or partial scholarship, Mr. Sinclair said the college was particularly eager to maintain and enlarge its scholarship fund for students of high quality.

According to Mr. Sinclair, the college, which was launched in 1925 and formally opened in 1932, has now "come of age" and passed its formative stage. "It does not seek assistance to grow in size but rather to stabilize and enrich what it has. This is refreshing in these days when mere size is often cited as an indication of greatness and outstanding achievement," he added.

Education For The Needs of Our Times

Reviewing Bennington's development as an outgrowth of the movement for educational reform in the 1920's, President Jones said: "Bennington College has

been trying from the start to resolve the apparent dilemmas between the development of individuals with a basic sense of direction and the needs for technical competence; between the requirements of specialized education and those of citizenship. We have been working towards a restatement of liberal education to meet the needs of our times.

Because "the development of the individual as a whole required some concept of the culture as a whole, if specialized interests were not to lead to ultimate isolation and sterility," Dr. Jones stated that Bennington set up its Basic Studies program, a group of courses running through all four years and combined with a student's special field of concentration. They were designed to "focus the attention of students and faculty alike on the basic elements of our cultural tradition seen as a whole," he added.

Unlike the typical survey courses, Bennington's Basic Studies program is flexible and changing, according to Mr. Jones. It seeks to "give students a direct insight into the various aspects of our Western culture, to learn by manipulating the concepts and techniques in each field instead of merely reading about them," he said. The main purpose is "to teach students to read and write, to see and hear, to understand the non-verbal languages of the sciences, to stress inter-relationships between fields, to develop historical perspective and philosophical understanding."

To eliminate the split between the "academic and the practical," Bennington has endeavored to draw its faculty from active practitioners in their fields, getting, for instance, writers to teach writing and painters to teach painting, Dr. Jones pointed out. The non-resident winter term also sends students out into the working world for a part of each year, he said.

Education has a formidable task "if a world civilization is to come into being by any other road than force and the annihilation of all opposition," Dr. Jones declared. He concluded: "It is because Bennington is small enough and

flexible enough to tackle the fundamental problems of American education that I believe it has a significance which may extend far beyond its immediate orbit. In these days of sheer bigness with its attendant surface complexities, of the too-pat answers and the slick formulae, it is our unique privilege and obligation to face squarely the fundamental complexities of the individual and his relationship to society and of the real goal of higher education. It is our first duty to steer clear of the shoals of dogmatism. It is our hard task to recognize and act on the need for change without espousing change for its own sake. It is our challenge as a part of this generation to try to achieve a cultural synthesis which can give meaning and significance to the contemporary world. It is a challenge which Bennington humbly but gladly accepts."

The New York Women's Committee for the dinner was headed by Mrs. George S. Franklin of New York, chairman of the board of trustees. The committee included: Mrs. Arthur J. Cohen; Mrs. John Foster Dulles; Mrs. Gordon Glass; Mrs. Henry Goddard Leach; Mrs. Samuel A. Lewisohn; Mrs. Wilton Lloyd-Smith; Mrs. Ewen MacVeagh; Mrs. Matthew Meyer; Mrs. Charles Reitell; Mrs. Edgar Rossin; Mrs. Fordyce St. John; Mrs. Vanderbilt Webb; Mrs. Amy Wertheimer; and Mrs. Keyes Winter.

Lindsay Bradford served as chairman of the New York Men's Committee for the dinner which included: S. Sloan Colt; James S. Dennis; Charles Dollard; William Franke; William Fraser; I. S. Greenfeld; Wallace K. Harrison; Nicholas Kelley; Langdon P. Marvin; George W. Perkins; Victor Schoepperle; John S. Sinclair; Levi P. Smith; John P. Stevens; David Tishman; and Carl E. Troy.

Sponsors for the dinner were: Miss Katherine Cornell; Mr. and Mrs. Frank Altschul; Mr. and Mrs. Arthur A. Ballantine; Mr. & Mrs. Richard S. Childs; Mr. and Mrs. Walter Damrosch; Mr. and Mrs. Howland S. Davis; Mrs. Mary Childs Draper; Mr. and Mrs. Allen W. Dulles; Mr. and Mrs. Ferdinand Eberstadt; Mr. and Mrs. George Ellis; Mrs. Shirley C. Fisk; Mr. Abraham Flexner; Miss Martha Graham; Judge and Mrs. Augustus N. Hand; Mrs. Raymond Ingersoll; Mrs. Henry Ittelson; Miss Marion Jewell.

Also, Mr. and Mrs. Devereux Josephs; Miss Charlotte Keefe; Dr. William H.

Kilpatrick; Mr. and Mrs. Russell C. Leffingwell; Mr. and Mrs. Hall Park McCullough; Mrs. Millicent C. McIntosh; Mr. and Mrs. Ferdinand Mayer; Mr. Gordon R. Merrick; Dr. and Mrs. Walter W. Palmer; Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Poole; Mr. Henry Varnum Poor; Mr. Benjamin Steigman; Mr. Walter W. Stewart; Miss Ethel Stringfellow; Mrs. Diego Suarez; Mr. and Mrs. Joseph R. Swan.

New York trustees of the college are: Mrs. Franklin; Charles Dollard; Wallace K. Harrison; Nicholas Kelley; Mrs. Henry Goddard Leach; Mrs. Ewen MacVeagh; Mrs. Matthew Meyer; and John S. Sinclair. Other trustees are: James S. Dennis and Mrs. William H. Wills of Old Bennington, Vermont; Francis H. Eldridge of Albany; Philip Price of Philadelphia; Mrs. Henry Saltonstall of Merion, Pennsylvania; Charles E. Spencer, Jr. of Boston; and Levi P. Smith of Burlington.

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