

As a former member of the NRT Committee (the people who, among other things, have the very difficult job of deciding who are to receive NRT scholarships), I was not able to listen to the NRT Meeting last Tuesday evening without a bit of consternation. No one needs to be told how much picking and choosing, consideration of character of both girl and job, value judgement, etc., have to go into the final decisions on who is granted a scholarship. I was therefore highly offended when one of this year's recipients glibly announced before a good percentage of students and faculty on Tuesday that, "I got an NRT scholarship, but I spent it all on Christmas presents." Even more disturbing was the audience's reaction: laughter. Is it cute, cool, brave or what to say something like this? I suppose it was this girl's prerogative to do what she liked with whatever amount of money received, although in her case it seems especially dishonest as she was involved in an experimental Bennington Project and working with several other students.

Perhaps the money was not spent on Christmas gifts, but that's immaterial. The point and principle of the matter is that one just does not say things like that.

I'm concerned, not about this girl, but about the character of a school that allows a thing like this to pass over without comment (or only with a comment of laughter). Sure, we're not moralists - that would be the most degrading label anyone could give us! But we are people, or rather, we're becoming people, and for those of us who are in the first stages of this becoming, I do not consider this "grooviness of character" to be a very good image after which some may choose to mould themselves.

I do not question the morals of the school, but doesn't it perhaps occur to even a few that this money, whether the sum was large or small, whether it was spent on gifts or train fare or whatever, could have been used by someone else who perhaps couldn't accept the job she wanted for lack of funds?

There's been a lot of talk about the "purposes of the NRT program". I suppose its main purpose is learning, and we try to find jobs where we can learn the most (some students prefer or need to drop the "I" there but forget that - idealistically it is knowledge that Bennington students seek, both in and out of college). We should be able to take jobs we think are to our advantage, and to help us do it, we have a scholarship fund. It is only fair that the money which is distributed be used honestly by each recipient, or else we might just as well forget the whole thing (the NRT Committee wouldn't mind - it's a yearly headache for all concerned.)

.....m.s.