

Galley

May 19, 1969

A PARTIAL REMINDER

It is curious, in view of the fact that all, or nearly all, Bennington seniors, having been educated in the use of the English language and graduated from the nation's high school, almost to the point of nausea, that so many mis-sentences are still in evidence.

Miss Doreen Seidler has recently observed with regard to last spring's men-in-rooms controversy that "the parietals was used...as a vehicle for the expression of profound disenchantment and regret with the apparent direction in which Bennington seemed to be moving." Puzzled, a newcomer, I begin to see light--it wasn't men-in-rooms at all. It was disenchantment and regret. Why, it was all a sham, it was all a vehicle for expression.

But why that vehicle? I murmur, still puzzled. Why not use language, say what's regrettable and disenchanting? There is much to recommend this practice; language is ready-to-hand, often understood, capable of clarity and grace. Of course, it is difficult; it often seems easier, safer, to obfuscate and becloud the "real issue" behind the seizure of an irrelevant one (especially when we can't quite get clear what the real one is).\*

Was men-in-rooms irrelevant? What was the source of Miss Seidler's disenchantment? Not Bennington's failures as an experimental college--she explicitly rejects that: "It is a gross confounding, nay, a profanation, to associate the men in rooms issue with the notion of an experimental college." Not that. But what? It was, apparently, "larger concerns with educational policy and orientation". Have these concerns, then, nothing to do with the notion of an experimental college? Surely Miss Seidler means that it was precisely this notion which occupied her.

But the talk, remember, was men-in-rooms, and it wasn't handed down from heaven. Who seems to have profaned and confounded? Miss Seidler covers this ground: "Whether the hours issue was the best or potentially most successful vehicle for the expression of those concerns is not properly at issue here." It is now at issue. It was not.

John Cairns

\*I have heard it said that Bennington students sometimes neglect development in Western modes of thought in thier impatience to look eastward: I refer you to a recent work by one of my poet colleagues--"If God Wanted Me to Read the Pibetan Book of the Dead He Would Have Made Me Tibetan".