

As the author of the galley that was distributed early Thursday morning, I am distressed about the interpretation given it by Mr. Pearson. I tried very hard to use a language and phraseology that would do justice to the scope of the problems and to the complexity with which our self-appointed group understood the smaller issues of sign-out, liquor, etc., to be related to a larger, purposive "vision" of Bennington. I made specific reference to the subjective nature of our interpretation of the Bennington ideal (noting that we had no illusions of being ultimately "right" or "wrong"), and tried to emphasize the need for an honest community evaluation of Bennington's role and the responsibilities that evolve therefrom.

Mr. Pearson, however, made it abundantly clear that he saw our words as the unworthy stammerings of nihilists. He, the rationalist, was at pains to point out the disadvantages of anarchy, the meaninglessness of chaos, and the presumptuousness of our requests.

The fact that he read what still looks to me like a reasonable and modest galley in such a manner incarnates the problem at hand. With what poetry must I flay my lower instincts, sing of community (not to mention spiritual) awareness, in order to be accorded the simple compliment of having recognized that larger scheme of things that justifies a considered protest? How esoteric can a knowledge of consequences be--is it strictly an "adult" larger understanding?--that he should assume narrowness and egocentricity for my motives, comprehension and reconciliation for his own? It is this type of attitude, it seems to me, more than any of the issues raised, that has caused the feeling of discomfort among the students in recent months.

I had thought that, with American society off the running for the moment as the best of all possible worlds, I was allowed to defy it in small ways--nothing flashy--and to expect from the like-minded what reinforcement they could feel good about extending. Now I learn that I want to be "coddled", to slip easy-minded from skepticism to amorality: since that is the quick transition peculiar to adolescence, it must be that I am here to pull off that thoughtless shuttle before a sympathetic audience.

Without waxing euphoric over brotherhood or berating radical individualism, I tried in my last galley to indicate that we are all responsible for "the evolution of the Bennington experiment." Probably the particular issues at hand had something to do with it, but even so I think it is indicative that Mr. Pearson read it as an irresponsible tract, the alarm-signal of the anarchist, calling her renegade hordes to battle.

I am aware that our fall from the paradise of mutual respect and trust does not originate at Bennington with Mr. Pearson. We have, I am sure, attributed to his administration more innovations than we should. But what I am wondering now is whether we should think ourselves caught in an irreversible process, or whether the feeling that developed last night among our community of thieves hasn't moved us to constructive thought. Whatever the differences among us, I think we started to carve out (at least negatively) some of the "standards of the community" that give structure and viability to a kind of community government Bennington may want to try again.

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