

10/11/69

GALLEY

Ear of mankind
occupied with small sounds
would you hear?

These words, part of a poem by a woman called Nellie Sachs, I use here to plead with the 'Bennington Community' - of which I am a part - not to forget amid the paper work, the endless reading, the innumerable 'small sounds' that compose our daily life, that other community so little mentioned at Bennington. It is not that I wish to minimize such issues as pets, hours, regulations, constitutional legality etc., but that we enlarge the scope of our interests and our humanity. The situation here is perhaps analogous to the editorial section of the New York Times: it is almost impossible to talk about, write about, or even think about what is not being currently talked about, written about, or thought about.

The immediate interests, which we have made ours, subvert the consciousness (despite N.R.T.) of what is happening outside Bennington. It is in part by means of these immediate interests that we allow ourselves to block out and obliterate questions of greater significance realities of which we are to a great extent infinitely removed. Because the campus is geographically isolated, there is a prevalent tendency to reinforce this isolation by pseudo issues which have little or no significance to anyone not related to the Bennington community. A wider perspective is absolved by the 'creative souls' that emerge and the 'long history of individual achievement'. Let it be noted that other institutions, more unfree than Bennington, have also produced this same thing.

The trivialities which we discuss, debate and vote on in endless

succession are for the most part senseless and stupid. But there exists a reality which overshadows, breaks and refutes that of Bennington. It is not only Vietnam, but the 'whole', for the truth as Hegel says lies in the whole. Bennington is a part of that whole, much as we would like to deny it; it is a part of this society, produced by it, supported by it. It partakes of that whole in the same way that any other institution does to a greater or lesser degree; and precisely to that degree we are all destroyers, murderers, and prostitutes. (I do not mean this metaphorically.)

Sometimes it seems we encourage these 'small sounds' so that they may drown out the louder cries for a while and we may be allowed to forget Vietnam, Detroit, Roxbury, and perhaps too the town of Bennington (for which we have done so singularly little).

The last galley ends by saying that "In every way the vitality and significance of the College are threatened by the fact that we have not put our house in order." Perhaps we are unable to do so, and will remain unable to do so, until some vital and significant attempt is made to put the street, the block, the city 'in order'. Is this possible?

October 9

E. Stark

This galley is perhaps a futile attempt to make you feel, to make a dent, and I apologize now for bad grammar, inarticulateness, and spelling -- so please do not feel obliged to make a galley dealing with that, at least.