

NEW EXPERIMENTAL COLLEGE

a college of Nordenfjord World University

skyum bjerge . 7752 snedsted . thy . danmark



NEW EXPERIMENTAL COLLEGE

Administration & Admission Offices:

SLOTSHERRENSVEJ 21
VANLØSE
COPENHAGEN - DENMARK

For Release April 1962

MAN - THE GREATEST UNDERDEVELOPED AREA IN THE WORLD -
BASIS FOR NEW EXPERIMENTAL COLLEGE

FUTURE LEADERS SOUGHT AMONG COLLEGE DROP-OUTS
DEVELOPMENT, BUDGETS, AND ACCREDITATION WILL BE JOINT
STUDENT-FACULTY MATTERS IN NEW COLLEGE

"... whole problems cannot be solved by partial approaches to them. The experimental college is one way, and perhaps the most practical way, in which colleges and universities can "do what they must" and all that they must, if they are to have an appreciable effect on the patterns of higher education."

New Dimensions in Higher Education
The Experimental College, OE-50010
U. S. Department of Health, Education
and Welfare, Office of Education.

A new international college will open in Denmark in the fall of 1962. Student body and faculty will be drawn from all parts of the world. The college will be governed by a joint student-faculty board in cooperation with an international advisory council. The English language will be used in instruction and colloquia. New Experimental College will be a supplementary institution of higher learning offering programs which the student may incorporate into his own graduate or undergraduate work.

A detailed declaration of procedures and goals will automatically prescribe undue boundaries. Consequently, the college curriculum will first be firmly structured after the faculty and students are assembled. However, on the undergraduate level, faculty and facilities will be available in the following areas: Literature, Philosophy, Modern Language, Fine Arts, History, Sociology, Anthropology, Economics, and World Geography. Initially the graduate school will offer programs in the following areas: Business Administration, Architecture, Adult Education, Civil Leadership, and Applied Liberal Arts.

Why establish a supplementary college? Contemporary man has an urgent need for an integration of thought and being, a release of creativity through a synthesis of intelligence and the X of man's experience; our world civilization requires the activation of some common human denominators, and both these needs can only be met through the development of confidence in man's ability to grasp the "wholes" of experience; through a world community intent upon facing these problems head on; and perhaps through the discovery of a completely new ontology of man which is at once scientific, humanistic and personal. These are our objectives.

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Regarding methodology, it can initially be said that emphasis will be placed upon the use of the dialog and problem-methods of sustained inquiry taking form in core courses, colloquia, and independent projects. New approaches and recent laboratory findings in learning theory, creativity, technique etc. will also consistently be explored. In general, the creative arts, as such, will be given extensive attention, and plans are being made to give artists from all over the world an experimental workshop on the college campus. The Danish Film Academy will cooperate with the college in the area of dramatic arts and communications via the film media.

All aspects of higher education will be subject to experimentation, entrance requirements included. Countless significant contributions to world civilization have been made by men and women who were "unwilling" or "unable" to yield to the social and academic status quo. Thus, the leaders of the new college will explore the potential of the "genuine original" or the "unsuccessful" individual, offering him the opportunity for realization. Therefore, students who are often not considered academically qualified, as well as the uninspired or highly dissatisfied "good" students, drop-outs, and nonplussed students are also encouraged to apply.

Another phase of experimentation will be in the realm of the measurement of proficiency. Man has gotten into the habit of trusting his mind only when he operates on isolated problems in the humanities as well as in science. The resulting compartmentalization of our knowledge has forced us towards a fragmentation of the human personality with a concurrent loss of individual vitality, creativity, and meaning, thus the "alienation of man from nature and from himself" becomes a cultural and academic threat. The new school will therefore place great emphasis on the individual's ability to "make significant sense" out of his studies; to achieve a meaningful and personal synthesis of what he learns. Experimentation in proficiency measurements will involve both faculty and students on a reciprocal basis. Descriptive Certificates of Accomplishment will be given to each student based on demonstrated achievement.

Cosmopolitan Copenhagen, the location of the new school, will give additional resources for academic and social life. For all students a natural, organic contact with present-day Europe, as part of this educational venture, will be matter-of-course. For students who so desire, arrangements will be made for learning a Scandinavian language and for participating in programs offered at Scandinavian educational institutions.

Private and non-profit, the college will be directed by Aage Rosendal Nielsen, the founder and for twelve years director of the Scandinavian Seminar. The faculty-student ratio will be one to eight. The fee including room, board, and tuition is Danish kroner 5,000 or U. S. dollars 735 per semester. Students without the possibility of financial support will also be considered. Students may enroll from one to three semesters with between semester periods being given to research on individual projects on campus, employment; traveling seminars in Europe, or individual endeavors off campus. Semesters begin August 15, 1962, and February 7, 1963.

Interested persons are encouraged to write to New Experimental College, Office of Admissions, Slotsherrensvej 21, Vanløse, Denmark.

Note to the Editor:

Reprints of articles will be greatly appreciated and further inquiry into any phase of the college will be welcomed.

1965

AKTUELT



Skolens elever og lærere forsamlet til »Verdensstings«. Fra venstre Susan Herman, Sallie Smith, Ronald Mannheim, Peter Stansill, Philip Traficeb, forstærderen Aage Rosendal Nielsen, Sara Nielsen og Karl Miller



Denne villa på Slotsherrensvej i Vanløse huser en af verdens mest særpregede læreanstalter — »New Experimental College»

LÆRERNE BETALER FOR AT UNDERVISE

»New Experimental College i Vanløse

DET er et stort spørgsmål om humanistisk undervisning overhovedet skal have et bestemt formål, siger AGE ROSENDAHL NIELSEN, der leder en af de mest særpregede læreanstalter i verden, »New Experimental College«, Slotsherrensvej 21, Vanløse. Formålet med denne læreanstalt er ikke at lære kendsgerninger, men at lære at tænke abstrakt og at finde ud af sig selv og hvad man vil.

— Vi stiller, at de problemer, vi står overfor her i det mikrokosmos, skolen er, er de samme som man står overfor ude i livet, og ved at løse problemerna her, bliver vi derfor også i stand til at løse vore problemer i et større sammenhæng, siger Aage Rosendahl Nielsen. Det viser sig i øvrigt, at mange af de mennesker, der kommer her som besøgende, ender med at blive temmelig konservative. De begynder med et forkæstet hals-samtal, men ender med at acceptere det som en del af deres baggrund.

»New Experimental College« blev grundlagt i 1962, og i de tre år siden da har der været 186 elever og lærere fra alleve lande. For sjældenhed er der en halv snes elever, hovedsageligt amerikanere. Skolens højeste myndighed er »Verdensstings«, der består af alle elever og lærere. Enhver kan indlede til fregnsede med tyve minutter varsel og forlange ethvert problem, fra opvæksten til hans egne kontaktproblemer, gennemdrøftet.

Vi vil tænke rationelt

— Da vi oprettede Verdensstinget, undersøgte vi alle tidligere konstitutioner, som FN's charter, erklæringen om menneskerettighederne og den amerikanske konstitution. fortæller PETER STANSILL, der

er en af eleverne. Vi fandt ud af, at de alle bygger på en forestilling om arvefynd og hvordan man skal få det bedste ud af en verdens, der er fyndet af denne arvefynd. Vi er ikke sikker på, at vi anerkender denne forudsættelse.

»New Experimental College« har planer om store udvidelser. Dels vil man oprette et særligt center i Thy, dels vil man øge at udvide

dette college til et egentligt verdensuniversitet, hvor folk fra alle lande kan studere.

— Det økonomiske grundlag for foretagendet er, at både elever og lærere betaler, fortæller Aage Rosendahl Nielsen. Elever betaler 1500 kroner om måneden, inklusive kost og logi i den villa, der huser universitetet, og lærere betaler 750 kroner. Vi tror nok på sværdet af vort eksperiment til at være billige til at betale for det.

Vores forelæsninger og studie-fag kan måske lyde overvaskende. I sidste semester holdt vi således en forelæsningsrække over en af lærernes personlighed, for at lære ham at kende. Men sådanne forsøg på at finde ud af den menneskelige personlighed er måske mere

værdifulde end en akademisk uddannelse. De egenskaber, der sætter folk høje eller stansede i private virksomheder eller statens tjeneste, er ofte lige så meget et resultat af fordomme og magt som af rationel tænkning.

Vi har også forsøgt med halfu-nation-transmitterende markotika som pebberbøn, som vi undersøgte i samarbejde med Kommunehospitalet. Men vi har fundet ud af, at en endnu bedre metode end indtagelsen af disse markotika for at opnå frørelse, simpelt hen er at tænke klart. Og det er det vi forsøger på. For at nå frem til det kan vi ikke begynde med en akademisk undervisning, men må starte fra begyndelsen med at finde ud af os selv og hvad vi egentlig vil.

N.E.C. Opens In Denmark; Offers Independent Study

The New Experimental College in Copenhagen, Denmark, is accepting applications for this year's spring semester. Designed as an educational community for students and teachers from all countries of the world, the college offers opportunities to work, study, and research.

The New Experimental College began in Copenhagen in 1962 as a nonprofit educational institution. Its courses are of a supplementary and complementary nature, designed to help students at all stages of academic learning.

The college operates under the controlling idea "that contemporary man has an urgent need for integration of thought and being, a release of creativity through synthesis of intelligence," and that "these needs can only be met through the development of confidence in man's ability to grasp the 'wholes' of experience, through a world community intent on facing these problems head-on."

The six-month spring semester will begin on February 12 and will close on August 8. Two programs are offered to students. One program will include a three-month study of the Danish language in Danish houses and high schools and studies in social sciences and humanities. Four one-week evaluation seminars will be interspersed throughout the semester.

Another program offers group therapy sessions and a study of the meaning of learning in an 18-week spring semester beginning February 12. This program is intended particularly for unchallenged good students and drop-outs. It is divided into three six-week phases, each with five weeks of work and one week of vacation.

Top students who have completed the spring semester will be eligible to enter an 18-week fall semester beginning September 9. Emphasis will be placed on philosophy and economics.

A summer school session and special short-term program can also be arranged.

Students interested in applying to the New Experimental College should write a letter of introduction stating situation and interests to New Experimental College, Administrative and Admissions Offices, Slotsherrensvej 21, Copenhagen, Denmark.

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NEW EXPERIMENTAL COLLEGE

Administration & Admission Offices

Slotsherrensvej 21
Vanløse
Copenhagen - Denmark
Spring 1962

Appendix 18

Dear Student,

Thank you for your letter. We appreciate it, the interest you have expressed in our new college, and the many encouraging and uplifting comments often included therein.

Enclosed you will find the preliminary program outline for the first year's operation of New Experimental College. On the reverse side of this letter you will find the procedure for admission to the college. The program, we hope, will answer many of your questions about the college, and those yet unanswered we ask you to state on page four of your application.

We can best begin to deal individually with each student after learning more about you. Therefore, we ask you to submit your application which will better acquaint us and assist us in judging how the college can best help you. If possible, we ask you to make your application in duplicate, and keep one copy to bring with you if you are accepted by the college. Do not be alarmed at the prospect of creating your own application. We do not expect an intellectualized treatise, but rather a simple expression or reflection of you. Do not compose. Relax, write, and relate. You may expect a reply to your application within two weeks after it has been received.

In deciding if you wish to apply for the coming academic year or for the fall of 1963, keep in mind that due to the very nature of the college, the students and faculty of the first year will be its real founders. This means a number of things with regard to the type of experience it will be. The first year will be less formal as no precedents of any sort will have been set. In addition, besides each individual's own study program, some considerable time will be used in speculating together upon what kind of an institution we would like to create. Though probably proving to be the most exciting college year, it will require initiative, self-reliance, hard-work, and foresight on the part of all of us. Reconsider your own goals in relation to what you feel you can gain and do with us here, and then let us hear from you.

We look forward to your next letter and to a very stimulating "first year".

Sincerely yours,

Aage Rosendal Nielsen



NEW UNIVERSITY
VANLØSE - COPENHAGEN

Newsrelease to American College and University press for release
Oct. 3 1961.

NEW WORLD UNIVERSITY OPENS IN DENMARK

^A The University ^{for} of the "Republic Earth" will open in Copenhagen, Denmark
October 3, 1961.

The school, which is to be an institution of highest learning, will
be called NEW UNIVERSITY. It will open with ~~10 Danish and American~~ ^{graduate}
~~students~~ ^{students} and 3 professors. The president will be Aage Rosendal Nielsen,
who is the founder of the Scandinavian Seminar, one of the ^{largest} ~~biggest~~ and
most unique study-abroad programs.

Students from all over the world will be invited to NEW UNIVERSITY
whose philosophical basis is related to that of the Lisle Fellowship
(an international institution founded in 1936) and of the Scandinavian
Folkehøjskole (the most democratic and significant ^{adult} educational movement
in Scandinavia). ^{The}

Furthermore the education ^{also} philosophy of NEW UNIVERSITY is ^{also} inspired
by the philosophy of William Blake and ^{by} with the belief that a new
Plato Academy is needed in ^{this world of the} ~~the~~ late 20th century world.

^{not} ^{for} All students and teachers will be offered Reading Dynamics instruction
integrated into their regular courses.

* The University will be governed by a board of students ~~and~~ faculty ^{board}
and by a board of trustees ^{composed of leading} ~~of leading~~ artists and businessmen.

* A fund-raising campaign to secure 4 million dollars to the NEW
UNIVERSITY has been started. The NEW UNIVERSITY budget and financial
statement will be made available to all persons interested. A joint student

MAR APR. 1962.

and faculty committee will prepare the yearly budgets to be
approved by the board of trustees. The total tuition and living
fee will be 1600 dollars for an Academic year, but all needy,
accepted students can be granted up to 80 per cent loan or
scholarship.

* The University will be a private, international school with
a positive attitude to work with governmental and other official
organisations.

It believes that no idea is greater than that of Man himself.

* A Centre of Development will be associated with the University,
where students from all over the world at the University and other
institutions in Scandinavia will also receive technical training
and as teams go out to different development areas in the world.

* NEW UNIVERSITY will also be affiliated with the Danish Film
Academy, which will have Scandinavia's biggest film studio on
the campus. In addition to the regular film work carried out here
the University and the Film Academy will each year jointly produce
a film dealing with a central idea, which the University will use
as a theme or underlying question for that particular year's work.

Special emphasis will be put on all creative fields, and all
creative fields taken up will be made creative.

All students will take part in a core course dealing especially
with 20th century, and by using the Dynamic Reading method it should
be possible in that particular seminar, which meets once a week
for two hours, to cover as much reading material as is usually
done at other universities during a period of four years.

MAR APR. 1962.

Student inquiries and applications listed by countries.

	Inquiries	Applicants
Africa		
Tanganyika		1
Congo	1	
Asia		
India	2	
China	4	
Phillipines	1	1
Japan	4	
New Zealand	1	
Europe		
England	7	1
(of these 7, 2 are Indian, 1 Pakistani, one is from the Canary Isles and one is Nigerian)		
Spain	1	
Poland		1
Italy		
Germany	1	

United States 116
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Pierce Hazelton has submitted an article to University of California about publication on assignment. Article pertains to student exchange programs summarizing with an indication of the need for experimental colleges.

1st Week of September 1962

- III. SAC's extension services with training courses with emphasis on to implement a budget, May 10.
- IV. A bank account has been opened in the name of SAC. A report of income sources and expenditures will be compiled by SAC.
- V. Inquiries to date:
Students - 37
Faculty - 3
Organizations - 2
Business - 1
- VI. There are realistic possibilities for opening the college this year with 12 faculty members and 24-30 students.
- VII. SAC takes as of this date:
Funds
Location
Faculty
Library and Supplies
- VIII. Necessary activities to be fulfilled:
a. Response to inquiries
1. Prospectus
2. Application
3. Student letter

Spring 1962

FACULTY MEMBERS WHO WILL PARTICIPATE IN THE FOUNDING OF NEW EXPERIMENTAL COLLEGE.

Beginning September, 1962.

Name	Latest Professional Affiliation	Area Experience
Henning Berthelsen	Danish Government Copenhagen	Economics World Geography
James Bowers	University of Redlands California	19th Century Studies Ibsen, Work & Times
Fidelisa Glinska	Niels Bohr Institute Copenhagen	Elementary Physics Russian
Edward F. Haskell	Chairman, Council for Unified Research and Education New York	Cybernetics Introduction to Unified Science
Pierce Hazelton	University of California	Literature Languages - English and Danish
Layne Longfellow	University of Michigan Ann Arbor	Psychology
Wallace MacDonald	University of California	Political Science Adult Education Sociology
Aage Rosendal Nielsen	Scandinavian Seminar New York - Copenhagen	Philosophy Administration
Mogens Vincentz	Manufacturer & Inventor Copenhagen	Philosophical Implications of Technical Development.

Joining the college as circumstances allow.

Edna and DeWitt C. Baldwin	Co-Directors, Lisle Fellowship & University of Michigan	.00
Henry Koerner	Artist, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania	.00
William P. Livant	Mental Health Research Institute Ann Arbor, Michigan	
Basil J. Reppas	State University of Iowa	
Judith & David Thompson (Now representing N.E.C. in the United States.)	Pennsylvania State University (2006 Highland Drive, State College, Pennsylvania.)	.00 .00
Venturino Venturini	Stephens College, Missouri	.00
Warren L. Ziegler	American Foundation for Continuing Education Washington, D.C.	

(This list, still in process, is for internal use only.)

Aage Rosendal Nielsen

New Experimental College

— Learning how to live together

By Jakob Jakobsen

New Experimental College opened its door for the first time at the beginning of September 1962. This was the official opening of the experimental institution and also the first day of school for about 20 people, half of them students and half of them teachers, as related in Aage Rosendal Nielsen's autobiographical book *Kære venner og naboer* (*Dear Friends and Neighbours*) published almost ten years later. The new college didn't open in a dedicated building with architecture laid out to facilitate and manage a university, but in a suburban villa in Vanløse just outside Copenhagen. The building was a domestic red brick house similar to the other houses on the street. It was large, with a spacious basement and a first floor with several bedrooms. Around the building there was a big garden with a lawn and fruit trees. This was the home of Sara Bryson and Aage Rosendal, but from September 1962 it was also becoming a new experimental college.

What later became the motto of New Experimental College, 'The program is the people that come', was already the spirit from the beginning, and there were no plans or schedule for the first semester. The intention was that this group of students and teachers was going to develop an experimental college. They were in reality neither students nor teachers but – in practice – founders of this new college.

As stated in a 'Progress Report' dated Fall 1962: 'During the first semester primary emphasis and energy have been directed toward activities fundamental to the development of the college.' What was put in place rather early in the process, was an ad-hoc course structure, possibly catalysed by an unconscious reflex to reproduce known educational situations of conventional universities and their teacher/student roles.

The people at NEC were a mixed group of very different backgrounds, ages, and nationalities; this diversity was an indication of the radical aspirations of the new college. The heterogeneous quality of the group went against the specialisation and separation that characterised most universities of the late 1950s. The group knew what they didn't know, they understood the limits of their own knowledge. Present in the villa in Vanløse there was an openness to experimentation in education and learning.

The group was brought together through an extensive information campaign across the world. A 'Spring Invitation' was sent to 3000 universities, especially in the United States, where Aage Rosendal and Sara Bryson were well-connected and had been working and studying for several years. The 'Spring Invitation' was supplemented by a public announcement sent to the media with several headlines to choose between. One of them was: 'Development, Budgets, And Accreditation Will Be Joint Student-Faculty Matters In New College.' Another was 'Future Leaders Sought Among College Drop-outs'. In this way, the founding group-to-be was prepared for the kind of project they were entering. Another portion of this founding group came out of the

collapsed Scandinavian Seminar College that Aage Rosendal had developed and worked on since 1960. When the economy and infrastructure didn't match the ambitions and the college didn't materialise, Aage Rosendal was fired by the mother organisation, the Scandinavian Seminar. This organisation had for over a decade been bringing students from the US to Scandinavia to live and study at the local People's High Schools for a period varying from six months to a whole year. Rosendal himself founded this organisation in 1949, but years down the road eventually fell out with the board. Some of the abandoned Americans students left without a home, then moved on to the independent initiative of the New Experimental College.

The group of teachers were mainly American academics who were specialised in history, psychology, political science, management, cybernetics, and education. In addition there were two Danes: a biochemist, and an economist and geographer, as well as a Russian nuclear physicist working at the Niels Bohr Institute in Copenhagen. There were 19 people on the faculty list, but not all were present in the beginning of the fall semester 1962. Some actually never showed up. One of these absentees was Henri Koener, an American visual artist, who was the only declared artist on faculty. The main part of the faculty had an academic background, although the new set-up was initiated on the basis of clear non-conformity with the fossilised mainstream university structures in place at the time. Those were the same structures that the American intellectual and anarchist Paul Goodman had criticised and scorned in several of his books on the educational system published around that time. In *Growing Up Absurd* (1960) and especially in *The Community of Scholars* (1962) he lambasted the American university system. Instead of the alienating learning machines of the modern university, he called for a new form of learning community that should be:

'Anarchically self-regulating or at least self-governed; animally and civilly unrestrained; yet itself an intramural city with a universal culture walled from the world; yet active in the world; living in a characteristically planned neighbourhood according to the principles of mutual aid; and with its members in oathbound fealty to one another as teachers and students.'

Paul Goodman's books were on the library-shelves of the New Experimental College. Goodman later became interested in NEC, which led him to organise a visit to Denmark for a month in 1965.

According to Aage Rosendal the first was 'a strange semester'. The teachers who had initiated courses in their field of specialisation while promising to treat the subject matter with an experimental approach were soon facing problems. The students, which included faulty, began to lose interest in the courses offered and soon were not showing up for the sessions. All courses

offered by faculty, except one, slowly fell apart due to ebbing interest. This was cause for upset among part of the faculty, but underlined the critical and complex questions about teaching and education that the New Experimental College wanted to investigate through experiment and improvisation. In a working document from NEC the process of the first semester is described like this:

'Within a few weeks, there developed on the surface a complete disorder that most students and teachers have probably experienced. There was lack of clarity and direction on all levels, and within a short time most classes were discontinued first, because the students did not come, and later because most of the teachers lost interest.'

This description of confusion and disorientation is followed up by a short sentence summing up the core nature of the intention of experimentation: 'Still, seeing this first semester in retrospect, it appeared to be one of the most valuable learning experiences for all persons involved.' In another reflection on the first semester called 'Poetry of our Progress', this paradox is further explained: 'The original precept insisted that we must expand the field of attention to be "all" of life itself as manifest in the learning situation. Still the founders who came had to ask again, do we dare to do it? And how?' What seemed to work better than the faculty's courses, perhaps due to the informality, were the communal meetings that took place several times a week to discuss the potentials of the college. The so-called students appreciated these exchanges on the future perspectives of their school. These meetings became a main space of communal debate – and the nature of these gatherings was in itself a rejection of the ghostly university structures that had haunted the college. What became clear in this process was that the experience of building community and communal-ity in relation to learning was what was desired, as opposed to being academically lectured or directed.

Some structures, however, were in place and settled when NEC opened for the first semester in September 1962. The college clearly declared its independence in terms of economy, which meant that the running of the project was based on students paying fees. This structure was known from the US university system and was considered normal for most of the American students. You had to pay for your education – and their parents did so. This tuition payment was not, at the time, a requirement for most European students that were offered free university education by the emerging European welfare states. A fundamental difference between NEC and the American and European systems was that the faculty were also expected to pay. This 'everybody pays' arrangement was not always clear-cut and in many cases the faculty paid NEC through their own labour. Thus the faculty did not receive a wage for their work there, which deconstructed the traditional hierarchy of

the university, kept in place significantly by the payment structure. As declared in one of the initial statements of NEC, the budget was also a part of the curriculum and it was to be taken care of by the community at the college. Aage Rosendal and Sara Bryson did have a special status, as initiators of the College and owners of the house on Slotsherrensvej. They did not pay and did not get paid either, but their room and board were covered by the community. The same went for Peter Stansill, who arrived some years later and worked as administrator and secretary of NEC during his stay. In all, the principle of non-payment for faculty at NEC was maintained systematically over the years. A study grant called 'Capital Investment in the Future' appeared later on and a study loan system developed, making it possible for less affluent students to attend NEC. People signed contracts promising to pay back fees in the future – if they ever became able to. This system was mainly based on trust relations and many of these loans were never paid back.

Another structure at NEC that stayed in place since the initiation of the college was the semester system based on the American university model with a Spring and Fall semester as well as a Summer School. Semesters started at the beginning of the months of February and September. The Summer School normally lasted eight weeks. But the structure and the scheduling of the semesters were developed organically according to the communal dynamic at NEC. Some structure appeared already within the first 'strange' semester after the course plan collapsed. In an internal working document this new adjustment is described:

'After five weeks, some of the students decided that they wanted to take the week off, and in this way we developed our semester schedule which consists of 3 times 5 weeks interrupted by a week of evaluation and field trips, and concluded by a week of examinations'.

In this way the four-month long semesters were divided into three phases with short breaks in between. These temporal modules underlined how lived time and different ways of coming together or types of gatherings became the structuring rhythm of NEC, as opposed to thematic projects and specialised courses. In the prospectus of the Spring semester of 1965, the three phases are listed with dates and duration and only very brief descriptions of a probable thematic focus: the September 9–October 13 period is defined as 'Planned Study Period' interrupted by a board meeting on September 24, and 'A day to feel bad' on September 29. The October 14–21 period was reserved for 'evaluation and planning of phase II'. The following two phases were similarly structured with one exception: November 24 was scheduled as 'A day to feel Good'. This non-schedule ends with an anonymous quote stating: 'Let time be what it is'. NEC's semester-structure transferred the traditional discourse-centred education that characterises most modern

University of Chicago Maroon page 1.

Feb 68

New college embodies Goodman's ideas

by Vicky Shiefman

"The more one examines the colleges from the president himself down through the deans and admissions officers—the clearer it must become that modern administration is the peculiar college disease; and it is spreading," writes Paul Goodman in the November issue of Harper's magazine.

The article contains the same thesis Goodman employs in his new book *Community of Scholars*. Goodman claims that the administration disease incapacitates both the faculty and the student.

He envisions the ideal university as a peculiar place which is a "small, face-to-face community of scholars."

In the medieval community, Teaching and Learning was a personal relation necessary for both the teacher and the student.

Most important in this medieval concept, the teacher was also a

veteran in his field. The law professor alternated between practicing law and teaching so that he brought a vitality to the classroom and acquired a combined sense of the practical and the theoretical.

At present, the only way to establish such an university would be for professors and students to secede from their schools and set up their own association, Goodman decides. This association would in turn be attached to a degree granting institution. Goodman estimates the tuition for such a school to be \$693.

Goodman feels that this secession would counteract the fact that

"Many of our most sensitive youngsters simply throw up their hands. They turn their back on the whole process . . . increasingly, the able students are among those who leave before graduation," which Professor Oscar Handlin of Harvard described in Harper's last May.

Goodman suggested the same ideas at UC last spring when he spoke during the Aims of Education week sponsored by o-Board.

A group of informed professors and students are trying to put Goodman's ideas into practice. This fall, New Experimental College in Denmark, Copenhagen, where a student may enroll for one to three semesters work which he may incorporate into his own graduate or undergraduate program.

Student body and faculty will be drawn from all over the world. UC students Ruth Bilger and Tom Bailey are now participating in the program. The student-faculty ratio was one-to-one last semester.

The College is governed by a joint student-faculty board in cooperation with international advisory council. The English lan-

guage is used in instruction and colloquia.

At present, three core courses and a variety of additional regular courses are offered. A course in creativity is given by Mogens Vincentz, manufacturer and prolific inventor. In applied liberal arts, Aage Rosendal Nielsen seeks to organize and unite the theory and practice of economics, poetry, and education. Wallace MacDonald's courses in a new world renaissance is designed to promote the student's awareness of a modern-day renaissance as a potential force.

Classes are also held in the areas of abnormal psychology, relativity, literature, Danish, Russian, and film-making. Guest lecturers in cybernetics, geography, and dialectical materialism are also scheduled.

The New Experimental college believes that the "compartmentalization of our knowledge has forced us towards a fragmentation of the human personality with a concurrent loss of individual vitality, creativity and meaning," thus the "Alienation of man from nature and from himself" becomes "A cultural and academic threat."

The College will experiment with all aspects of higher education including entrance requirements. Its

information leaflet explains, "Countless significant contributions to world civilization have been made by men and women who were unwilling or unable to yield to the social and academic status quo."

Thus, the leaders of the new college will explore the potential of the genuine original or the unsuccessful individual, offering him the opportunity for realizations."

The school is located in Copenhagen a cosmopolitan center which will provide additional resources for academic and social life. Arrangements will be made for students who wish to learn a Scandinavian language.

The fees including room, board, and tuition are \$735 a semester. Scholarships are offered when necessary.

Interested persons may obtain more information from the New Experimental College, Office of Admissions, Slotsherrensvej, Copenhagen.

universities, towards a shared rhythm of being together. A ‘structureless structure’ as Sara Bryson Damskier describes it.

In light of the focus on ‘the people that come’ and the interaction and development of the NEC community towards learning, an important factor was that NEC was not just a day school. It was not possible to delimit the learning experience to studies and scheduled activities on nine-to-five weekdays. Most of the students of the first semester also lived, dined and slept at Slotsherrensvej. This included the main part of the ‘faculty’, including Sara Bryson, Aage Rosendal, and Wallace and Elaine MacDonald. Wallace and Elaine also brought their two kids along with them from California. The remaining faculty – Mogens Vincent, Stephan Stephansky, Verner Albrecht, David Silber, Fidelisa Glin-ska and Henning Berthelsen – lived outside the college. The tradition of integration of living and learning was, in the case of NEC, linking back to the 19th century tradition of the People’s High School. The People’s High School system was developed in Denmark to give peasants and farm workers access to basic education and learning in culture, everyday skills and spirituality. The main instigators of this popular system of education were Grundtvig and Kresten Kold. This was a break with the exclusive system of Latin schools, which mainly served the bourgeoisie, and which reproduced a ‘cultured’ curriculum based on classical disciplines. At the People’s High Schools engagement, social interaction and a populist vision of ‘enlightenment’ were the central factors. Based on admission for all and with no exams, the development of basic life skills was the central objective. They were a call for a new kind of school, a ‘School for Life’. Significantly, People’s High Schools were mainly situated in the countryside far away from urban life, and the pupils who attended lived at the school for a few months. Normally this time would correspond to winter periods when there was less of a demand for farm work. The People’s High Schools integrated living and learning into a whole, where the teaching of basic skills such as reading and writing were combined with communal cultural activities such as singing and dinners.

The ambition of creating a ‘School for Life’ was also the aim of the NEC. Many of the forms of living and learning together that the People’s High Schools advocated – processed and adapted for a contemporary international school project – were integrated into NEC. As it was stated in NEC’s Spring 1962 statement: ‘The college will attempt to provide a *whole* learning experience in which all aspects of life, from book-learning to providing for one’s daily bread, are faced and met.’ As with the People’s High Schools there were no admission requirements at NEC (other than the fee), which allowed a diverse group of people to come together despite differences in social and cultural background, academic knowledge, age, literacy and outlook. While in ‘normal’ universities, admission requirements and specialised qualifications were prerequisites, forming part of higher education’s politics of segregation, at NEC a heterogeneous group of people met at the beginning of every semester to figure out what to do despite their differences and antagonisms. The NEC group was a not meeting exclusively around books or academic

subjects, but also had to figure out how to live together in an everyday domestic setting. In this way NEC was a combination of commune and learning community.

The trajectory of NEC was not only inspired by the Scandinavian tradition of People’s High Schools, but also influenced by the problems within the Western university system that Paul Goodman had pointed out. A new generation of young people, born during and after World War II, were growing up and facing a university structure that was based on a disciplinarian and administrative culture that was not fit to handle the masses of student youth wanting a university education. The university was opening up for the masses but still reproducing a structure that was meant for a privileged few. Even the US Department of Health, Education, and Welfare was becoming aware of this problem and published in 1960 a White Paper titled *The Experimental College*. This was a call for universities to set up experimental colleges with an emphasis on student-directed education and independent studies. The paper somehow acknowledged that reform didn’t have much of a chance and wouldn’t reach far enough within established universities, and referred to a series of experimental colleges across the US, places like: Bard, Goddard, Hofstra, The New College, and Monteith, where students were – to a certain degree – encouraged to develop their own study programmes. Ron Manheimer, who became a central figure at NEC, attended Monteith College at Wayne State University and was invited to NEC to talk about his experiences in an American experimental college. The NEC Spring Statement of 1962 opened with a quote from the US department White Paper: ‘... whole problems cannot be solved by partial approaches to them. The experimental college is one way, and perhaps the most practical way, in which colleges and universities can “do what they must” and all that they must, if they are to have an appreciable effect on the patterns of higher education.’

The New Experimental College took on this task in an even more radical way by setting up an independent and self-organised college to challenge the stiff old patterns of bourgeois education. The main practice that NEC brought in from the American experimental colleges was student-directed study, which became their core activity. This was realised through individual study, where students spent their time developing projects that inquired into a specific field of investigation. This could be artistic, academic, or personal; there were no limits or requirements.

The late 1950s and early 1960s were a period when the Cold War was becoming an important factor. This was not only for the geopolitical powers, but also became a concern for many citizens in terms of the imminent threat of nuclear annihilation. The anti-nuclear movement was becoming stronger and many transnational organisations worked for international cultural exchange and global peace. The idea of a world university grew out of this climate of fear and insecurity. Such an international institution was meant to mediate human interaction and understanding against the conditions of separation and hostility

created by the war rhetoric of the major powers at the time, the US and the Soviet Union. In NEC’s archive there are several documents around a proposed UN University from the late 1950s, a project that Aage Rosendal found very urgent and that he promoted and supported in his international network. As science played a special and destructive role in the nuclear arms race, a world education could counter this through a union of sciences in world universities. A NEC statement from 1963 expressed it in this way: ‘... we must be made effective in unifying science, in achieving unity beyond conflict.’ Another organisation that worked with a similar international and interhuman perspective, also important for the development of NEC, was the Lisle Fellowship in the US. The Lisle Fellowship was an exchange programme whose mission was intercultural exchange. They organised American students’ visits and stays with families across the world. NEC hosted several Lisle Fellows over the years.

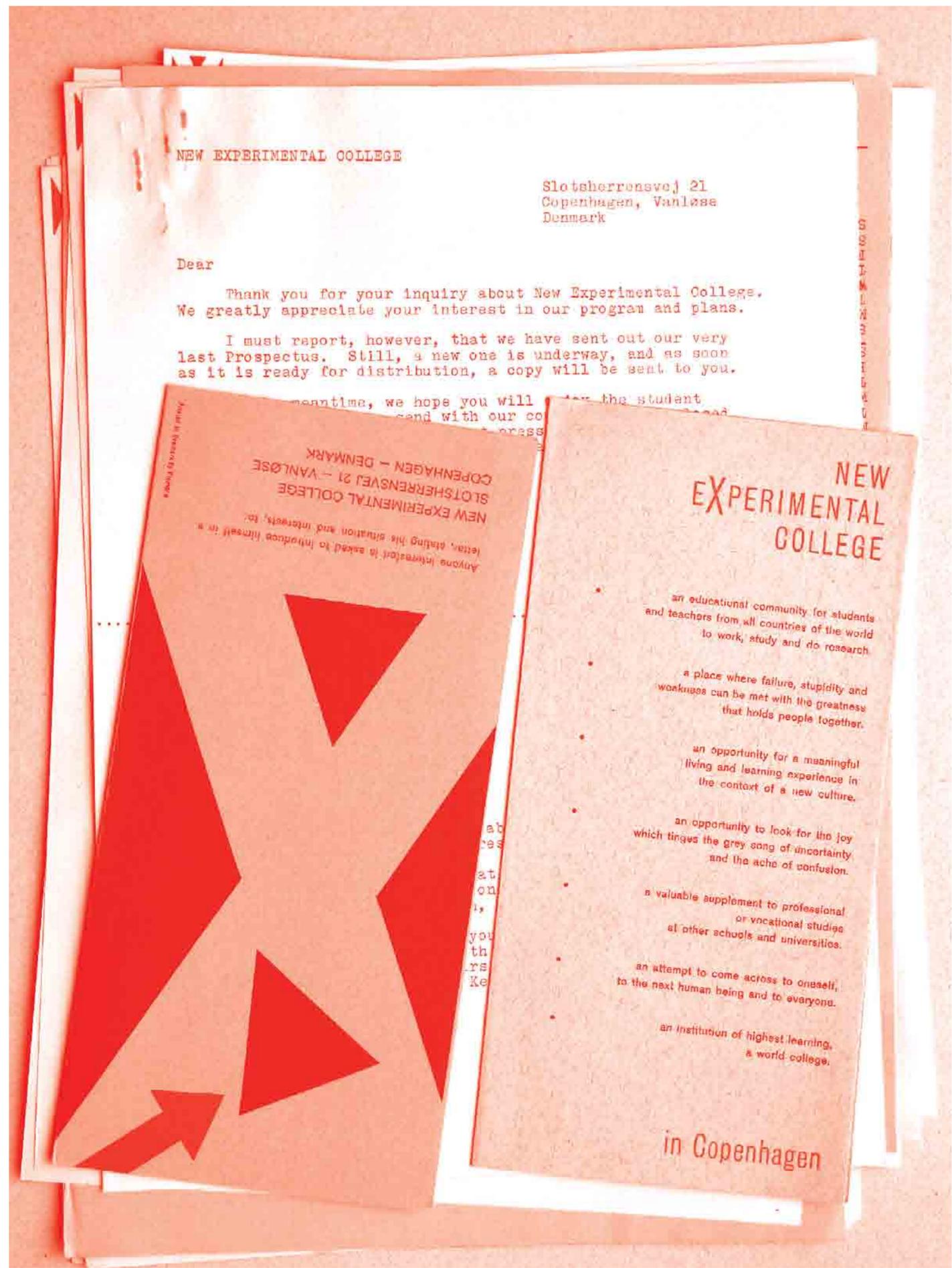
The idea of a world university was already present before the inauguration of NEC, and the college accordingly operated as a truly international space bringing together students from many parts of the world, although the main part of the student body was American. The fact that the working language at NEC was English made this institution rather exceptional at a time when Copenhagen, not to mention the whole of Denmark, was pretty insular and provincial. Nevertheless every year they would make the additional effort of teaching Danish to the international students. In a document from 1961 titled ‘The New University’ – probably written during the development process of what was to become NEC – there are references to three lines of inspiration: Grundtvig and the People’s High Schools, the Lisle Fellowship, and William Blake’s revoking of the platonic academy.

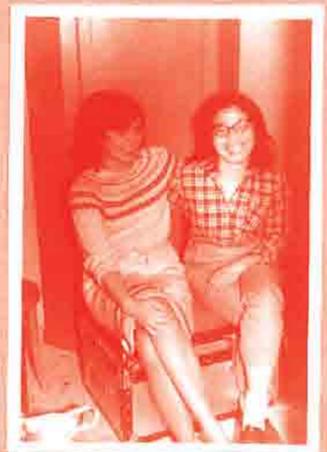
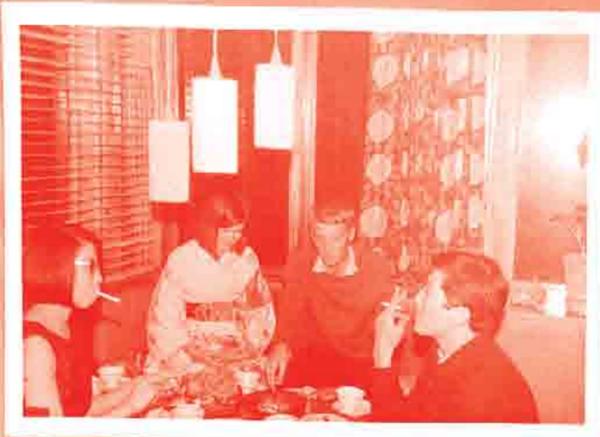
In 1965 a process to deepen the democratic structures of NEC was initiated. Until then there had been a preliminary constitution under constant revision, but never a clearly defined structure of decision-making and governance for NEC where the students and faculty could have a binding say within a formal structure. The improvised and organic structurelessness had its potential as learning process, but some sort of formal framework was needed to counter hidden power structures. Up until that point NEC had been run as any other organisation. The director, Aage Rosendal, was the person legally and economically responsible for the institution. The intentions of ‘the people present’ acting as the governing body, also in terms of budgets and administration, as it was stated in one of the early NEC documents, was only a reality inside the building – if at all. During this period Sara Bryson spent time studying historical systems of government and forms of decision-making. There are always paradoxes when it comes to the organisational structures of self-governing communities, which produce contradictions between the social and the individual, especially in a context where one of the mottos was ‘The individual is the highest authority’. The construction of an organisational structure that could facilitate the organic, volatile and improvised everyday at NEC was not an easy task, and the whole community was involved: the Spring semester of 1965

focused on historical and contemporary modes of organisation and decision-making structures.

Bryson became interested in the traditional Nordic way of government facilitated through a ‘Ting’ meeting. In the Roman senator Tacitus’ writings from 98 AD, in his account of how the Teutons almost conquered Rome, he describes their way of organising through Ting meetings. The Ting meetings secured equal rights and say for the people present and the leader of the Ting was considered the ‘first among equals’. Although in the times of the Teutons the Ting was only open for a privileged few, the concept of decision-making through discussion and vote among equals, was an inspiration for the Ting Meetings implemented at NEC. The NEC Ting Meeting was adapted to the rhythms, size and social dynamic of the community and it was decided that anyone at NEC could call for a Ting Meeting to take place within 20 minutes, day or night. Anyone who stayed overnight at NEC automatically became a member of the Ting – and decisions were only taken unanimously, so no decision could be made with even one person in opposition. In that way the individual remained the highest authority within a communal and socialised process. The meetings were not solely about making decisions about practical and organisational issues, but also became an arena for collectively discussing problems and conflicts as well as personal misgivings. According to *Dear Friends and Neighbours* Ting Meetings were called around three times a week. This process of incipient formalisation of the social life at NEC also found other new platforms in the Celebration Dinner that took place regularly on Friday evenings and the Sabbath Lecture on Saturday mornings. As daily life at NEC included making food and eating together, Friday evening became the time of a special celebration dinner with table talks and guests from outside the college. The Sabbath Lecture was the stage where one of the students or faculty could present thoughts, ideas or other modes of expression in relation to their studies at NEC, for example playing a piece of music or reading a poem. These new forms of encounter, mediating life at NEC, were developed as part of the constitution of the learning community itself. As new communal hubs of social interaction they became important dimensions of the learning process – practically, theoretically and personally.

During the same spring semester of 1965, Paul Goodman visited New Experimental College and stayed at Slotsherrensvej for a month. He arrived with his family and moved in, forming part of the learning community. In his book *Compulsory Mis-Education*, published that same year, he had challenged the negative effects of higher education: ‘long schooling is not only inept, it is psychologically, politically and professionally damaging.’ He suggests that instead people should be experimenting with ‘different kinds of schools, no school at all, the real city as school, farm schools, practical apprenticeships, guided travel, work camps, little theatres and local newspapers, or community service’. During his stay a special NEC group session with Goodman was arranged at a conference centre in Humlebeek, north of Copenhagen. It lasted almost two weeks and the focus was world education and experimental colleges.





Goodman reflected on a world curriculum, 'one world' ideology, and its implications for anthropology, for language, and other areas. According to Peter Stansill the encounter between Paul Goodman and the openness of educational interaction that characterised NEC was not very successful. Despite Goodman's thorough and fundamental critique of the outdated American university system, he couldn't cope with the lack of structure and the horizontality that had been developed by NEC. When it came to the teaching situation he was used to a more or less traditional lecturer/student set-up, which the NEC had left behind already in the first semester of its existence. Ron Manheimer had that year written a paper called 'The Success of Failure', explaining the agnostic and self-critical approach to the social dynamic of learning being developed by the NEC community. In it he reflected on what could be learned from a situation of social misunderstanding: 'To fail to meet the demands of another person gives insight into new approaches and studies which we had never before recognised. The discovery of what is unknown or uncertain forms the basis for future programs.' Goodman's call for alternatives in education did not include such a radical approach, despite his demand for scholars to practice what they were teaching.

After the two-week session in Humlebæk Goodman joined the NEC contingent on one of their first field trips to Thy, north of Jutland, where NEC would be moving to the following year. Aage Rosendal was born in Thy and NEC already had a small farm there, Fosdalgård, that students could use for retreats and self-study. The NEC group in Thy included Susan Herman, Peter Stansill, Ron Manheimer, all of whom became central to the further development of NEC. According to Aage Rosendal, Paul Goodman supported NEC's plans to leave Copenhagen and make Thy their new home, far from the hustle and bustle of the big city. Perhaps he saw parallels to the 'community of scholars' that he had written about in his book of the same name in 1962. There he outlined a proposal, inspired by the medieval university without administration and management, that focused on the potential of a self-governed learning community shielded from the rhythms and demands of contemporary consumer society. The 19th century Danish educator and politician Grundtvig also saw a point in taking the peasants out of their laborious everyday and allowing them to study freely and interact socially at the People's High Schools. For Aage Rosendal it might have been a homecoming, but for the learning community of NEC the move would further their experiment into new forms of living together. In early summer 1966 the farm Fjordvang was acquired, offering a beautiful landscape in the hills facing the waters of the Limfjord. This new setting also made it possible to expand the New Experimental College into a world university. In February 1967 the first semester at the farm Fjordvang in Thy commenced. As usual, there was a rather small number of people complementing the core faculty group.

In many respects NEC was already an international college. Most of the students were not local Danes and NEC's connections with likeminded projects and initiatives across the world were constantly ex-

panding. For example, in the NEC archive there is substantial correspondence with the Institute for Cybercultural Research in New York City, the Institute for Training in Non-Violence in London, as well as some exchange with parallel university experiments such as the Albert Schweitzer Institute in Geneva, Friends World College in New York, University Without Walls in Rhode Island, and the Antiuniversity of London. In the spring of 1967 the people at NEC were invited to take part in the international congress 'Dialectics of Liberation' in London, which brought together intellectuals and political activists from across the world to discuss violence in all its dimensions. The congress was planned to take place the first two weeks of July, during a period that would be remembered as the Summer of Love. The congress was organised by the Institute of Phenomenological Studies. This was a group consisting of anti-psychiatrists who had set up a therapeutic community at Kingsley Hall in East London, where they lived together with people suffering from mental distress. They attempted to 'unlearn the hospital' by confronting the institutional structures established by society to control and isolate mental illness. The aim of the congress was to explore the violence of these and other institutional structures used to discipline and control peoples lives in modern society, such as the hospital, the family, the school or the university. As NEC had been 'unlearning the university' since 1962, the invitation seemed like a relevant one and was seen as a good opportunity to meet like-minded people as well as potential future students. Seven students and faculty left Thy in the NEC Volkswagen minibus and headed for London. There they experienced the Black Power militancy of Stokely Carmichael, Ronald Laing's critique of the family, the critique of civilisation by Herbert Marcuse, the ideas about radical education presented by their old friend Paul Goodman, and the call for world peace by Beat poet Allan Ginsberg. What seemed to have been the most impressive experience at the congress was the interaction and engagement of all participants – that turned up in their hundreds – from London and the international countercultural scene. In a way a world university emerged over those two weeks through all the workshops and self-initiated groups that sprung from this gathering. The ex-NEC Peter Stansill, who had already become an integrated figure of the London counterculture scene as editor of the underground newspaper *International Times*, had facilitated the connection between the main organiser of the congress Joe Berke and NEC. Aage Rosendal was invited to make a presentation as part of the Anti-institution seminar together with student activists from Amsterdam and Berlin. It was there that the group met Angela West, who later moved to Thy to become a part of the community. Through this participations in such international networks that shared their experimental ideas and revolutionary outlook, the farm in Thy was in many ways closer to the world than the suburban houses of Copenhagen, where NEC started out. A world university in Thy was possible.

Nordenfjord World University was founded on May 31, 1969. This came out of an organic process with former students and other people wanting to join or come

back to NEC, but wishing to focus on more specific practices and areas of learning. One of the first centres to emerged was Præstegården, set up by David Nelson, who had been a student at NEC in Vanløse and now wanted to come back and re-join the project. He aimed to set up a film and photography school. In July 1969 two students at NEC, Julie Fivel and Susan Williamson, rented another farm called Trægården. It was set up as a centre for arts and crafts. These World University centres were small family-like communities that hosted a handful of people at a time. In December of that same year Trægården caught fire, most likely due to a candle in one of the bedrooms. The farm burned down and the centre had to cease its artistic activities. This was of course a traumatic incident but it paved the way for a new development in Thy. The site of the fire was subsequently bought by 'The New Society', an organisation that planned to set up a community experimenting with new forms of life beyond consumer society and the tyranny of capitalism. The organisation came to Thy, because they had heard of NEC and the beautiful landscape north of the Limfjord. This was due to John Lennon's famous visit to NEC in 1967, which had caught the attention of the countercultural scene in Copenhagen. In the summer of 1970 the New Society inaugurated their project, Thy Camp. The locals called it the Frøstrup Camp since it was not geographically located in Thy, but in the Han Herred region. The Camp and the New Society brought a whole new group of people to the vicinity of Thy, with an openness to experimentation and communal life. NEC was present at the first day at the camp with a teepee inspired tent where Aage Rosendal and a small NEC group distributed flyers and engaged in conversation with the people of the New Society. The Camp had opened after a special dedicated train had brought a large group of people from Copenhagen to Thy. The Thy Camp wasn't just another music festival but a sincere attempt to make and develop a new settlement based on self-organisation and self-government. However, Preben Maegaard, one of the organisers of Thy Camp, quickly became disillusioned by the egocentric behaviour of the new settlers and left the adventure. He went on to establish a new centre of the World University in a farm called Asgård. The centre opened in 1971 as a centre for arts and crafts picking up where Trægård had left due to the fire. Asgård developed a program closely connected to the environment at the farm working with local materials such as wool. Later in the development of the World University the Little School House opened in the former community school of Nors set up by Ron and Caroline Manheimer, who had been affiliated with NEC over several years. This centre focused on 'independent-interdependent study' that, according to their brochure, should consist of 'self-motivated, self-directed inquiry' very much in line with what already had been practiced at NEC. Due to Ron's interest in philosophy the centre had an emphasis on theoretical inquiry. In 1974 Sara Bryson opened Bhedanta, a centre focussing on yoga and meditation and one of the last centres to be set up within the network that was Nordenfjord World University. The centres were connected through the Friday evening Celebration Dinners and

the Sabbath Lectures that brought most of the people from the 12 centres together in one of the locations. As there were no rules or requirements for becoming a part of Nordenfjord World University, anyone was welcome to set up a centre.

NEC and the World University had what could be considered its culmination in 1973-74, in terms of incoming students and the development of the centre network. NEC was very much connected to the optimism of the massive generations of youth that in the early 1960s were offered free education – also in many places in the US – as well as a wide array of job opportunities. This was a generation that came into conflict with the very same social structures that enabled them to access higher education and the labour market. A social system that in many ways kept reproducing outdated and repressive structures of sexuality, gender, race and ways of life. This conflict was expressed partially through the unrest that sprung up in universities in the US and Europe from the mid-1960s onwards. This crisis in systemic reproduction was deepened by the oil crisis of 1973 which led to massive unemployment, cutbacks in public spending, and the privatisation of education. When the oil crisis took hold, the inflow of students from the US coming to Thy and NEC dried up, and the Nordenfjord World University stopped being a true world university. Many of the centres shut down. In 1974 Ron and Caroline Manheimer returned to the US and the Little School House ceased to exist, Asgård stopped offering courses that same year, and the Nordenfjord World University collapsed in many regards.

Possibly the journey of NEC did not come to an end solely because of a capitalist world crisis. Perhaps the self-governing community had also found its own limits, connected to the organisational challenge of an extended network of centres involving large numbers of people across the north of Jutland. Perhaps the 'individual as the highest authority' actually ended up clashing with the values of a growing community of learners and seekers. NEC never gave up having a director and *de facto* leader in Aage Rosendal, and if the project was to create a self-directed community no matter what the consequences, then maybe it needed to develop more equal forms of distributing rights and powers. This also throws into question the learning community, and its ability to empower itself through these collective processes. Nevertheless, NEC consistently refused to offer itself as an exemplary 'model' to be followed, and in this sense their experimentation into 'learning to live together' was absolutely consequent, despite and probably also due to their self-admitted paradoxes. In any case, all these questions can be asked of NEC, whose statements, organic practice and dynamic structure still constitute a promising outlook for anyone interested in experimental education and learning communities, and is especially worth revisiting in today's crisis of education.

Jakob Jakobsen is an artist and organiser living in Copenhagen

I travelled from being very verbal to embracing the opposite

Conversation with Sara Bryson Damskier, Brønderslev & Copenhagen October 10 2014

Sara Bryson Damskier: What is your driving power in this? What makes you want to do this project, Jakob?

Jakob Jakobsen: *I have always been interested in education, and different methods of organising community, or of being together. And what is interesting to me now is this school, NEC, in which people were learning how to live together.*

SBD: And how to grow together.

JJ: *Yes. I think that is so different from official institutions today. Learning and education can be very different things. Introducing learning about life into education means asking very basic questions. Sara, I don't expect you to remember exactly what was going on. All these things that took place over 50 years ago. But I would like to ask you to reflect on what you were part of at NEC, what you call your 'earlier life'.*

SBD: What I came to be a part of at NEC, and that is just another way of saying, what I came to be a part of in marrying Aage Rosendal, was an extended journey of the self that I had become in my university years. My major at the University of Mary Washington was philosophy. And as everyone knows, the introductory, inspiring Socratic method is one which in a very living manner combines thought and introspection – bringing out the innate knowledge which is within you. That's the beginning of a philosophic study and one that kindles a new way of approaching learning. Further on in that study one is required to study the philosophers whose approaches are more theoretical, more devoid of life.

Fortunately there was a professor, Kurt Leidecker, at the university who was the head of all the Buddhist Associations in the United States. He had lived and worked in Burma for eight years and was a truly living philosopher, very knowledgeable, but not just a theoretician. Choosing Kurt Leidecker as my mentor was choosing a new way of being. Then when I got to know Aage, I saw in him the use of another non-theoretical, almost

oriental approach to a study of life, which opened new territory for students. So I was hooked, you might say.

To take an example of Aage at work, I recall one very long discussion where one set of philosophical theorems after another was being scrutinised by the group. And each one who was advocating his or her academic theory could be seen to be attached to those ideas. That created a kind of tense 'who's on top of the mountain' atmosphere. At a certain point Aage broke in and said something like: 'I don't care about all these ideas. I'm only interested in what *works*. Who can tell me that?' It was as though someone had pushed a stop button – then when at length the discussion resumed, it was on a completely different level.

JJ: *In reflecting on NEC today, what else of importance comes to mind?*

SBD: The institution of the Ting. I'm sure you've heard about the Ting Meetings. When we were deciding what governing body or what deliberating-forum we would like to have, I was reading about this practice in Scandinavia, and I said, well, what about the Ting? It belongs here, and I love this idea of 'the first among equals'.

In the historic usage as I understand it, the first among equals might alter depending upon the qualifications necessary to deal with the issue at hand. That required a form of consensus about who that might be. At our Ting Meetings, everyone could think that they were the first among equals! Once again, who's on top of the mountain. Nonetheless a lot of good things could come out of the discussions, and sometimes things even got decided in spite of the need for consensus. But a lot of stagnation could happen too. We could be up way into the night talking.

JJ: *The Ting Meetings were premised on honesty in a way, and being able to talk about anything and everything. What blocked you in these processes?*

SBD: Why did I feel that the richness of the Ting meetings was not always rich?! There was a lot of repetition. People sometimes wanted to show themselves, to manifest themselves, and their egos through their intellect. And that can lead into hours and hours of debate, when one ego, faces another ego and so on. And which is the greatest? You know.

That was also why I got into my thing of taking people away to Fosdalsgård by the North Sea. These were periods of retreat. Some sessions there were totally silent. During others we might have two set hours a day allocated for speaking. When you take people into silence, first of all one experiences that communication is still happening. In silence you are still communicating. At Fosdalsgård, which is where my centre was, we had a large dining room table, and at that table someone could be reading, another writing poetry, another painting, or knitting. While there was no verbal communication, there was a communication, a communion of *being*. That kind of communication is hard to arrive at, if people want to shine themselves up with a lot of words.

I wouldn't say that most of the Ting Meetings didn't have value, of course they did, even great value, but they could just sometimes get off track. And at three o'clock in the morning, I might have had enough.

The Celebration Meal on Friday evenings was also a good thing. Mostly I stood for those, at least in the beginning. I cooked with the help of a few others. Then there was the weekly cleaning of the house in preparation for the meal, because that was a prerequisite for getting your food! Once a week we needed that kind of an all-over cleansing ritual. And after the meal there were the dinner speeches.

JJ: *Who could speak at the Celebration Meal?*

SBD: Anyone. Just knock on your glass, like the Danes do. The speeches were not lengthy ones or anything that one felt compelled to comment on. On the contrary they were the inputs of individuals looking back on their week or looking far into the future – whatever was on their mind that they had an inclination to share. Then the next day was the Sabbath Lecture which was a gathering attended by all the members from all the centres. These lectures were longer, more thought out. Then there were programmed presentations by one individual followed up by discussions which could carry on into lunch and beyond. All of these ways of relating together were important.

JJ: *At the Celebration Meals and at the Ting Meetings, was there a facilitator or moderator of the conversations?*

SBD: No. And it was good that there wasn't one, otherwise that person would have had a special role in the group.

JJ: *That also gave the authority over to the community.*

SBD: Exactly. That was a good part about it, I think. You asked, what did people do? But really, in each semester each group was different. There could be semesters where a lot of music was played and semesters where a lot of reading was done both individually and collaboratively. For instance we had one student, Phillip Trafican. He and his wife were at NEC for two whole years, if you combine their sepa-

rate stays all together. Phil did his exam at NEC, and it was accepted as valid in the US. When I talked to him years later he said, 'When I came back to the States after I had graduated from studying philosophy at NEC, I found out these Americans were dealing with excerpts of things. I had read all the original works.' He was in a completely different position in relation to them. Phil was very much one of those in their rooms reading. And playing cards. I can't remember what they played, as I didn't play. But Aage played cards and chess with them a lot.

JJ: *When the school was in Copenhagen, it was also about exploring the city?*

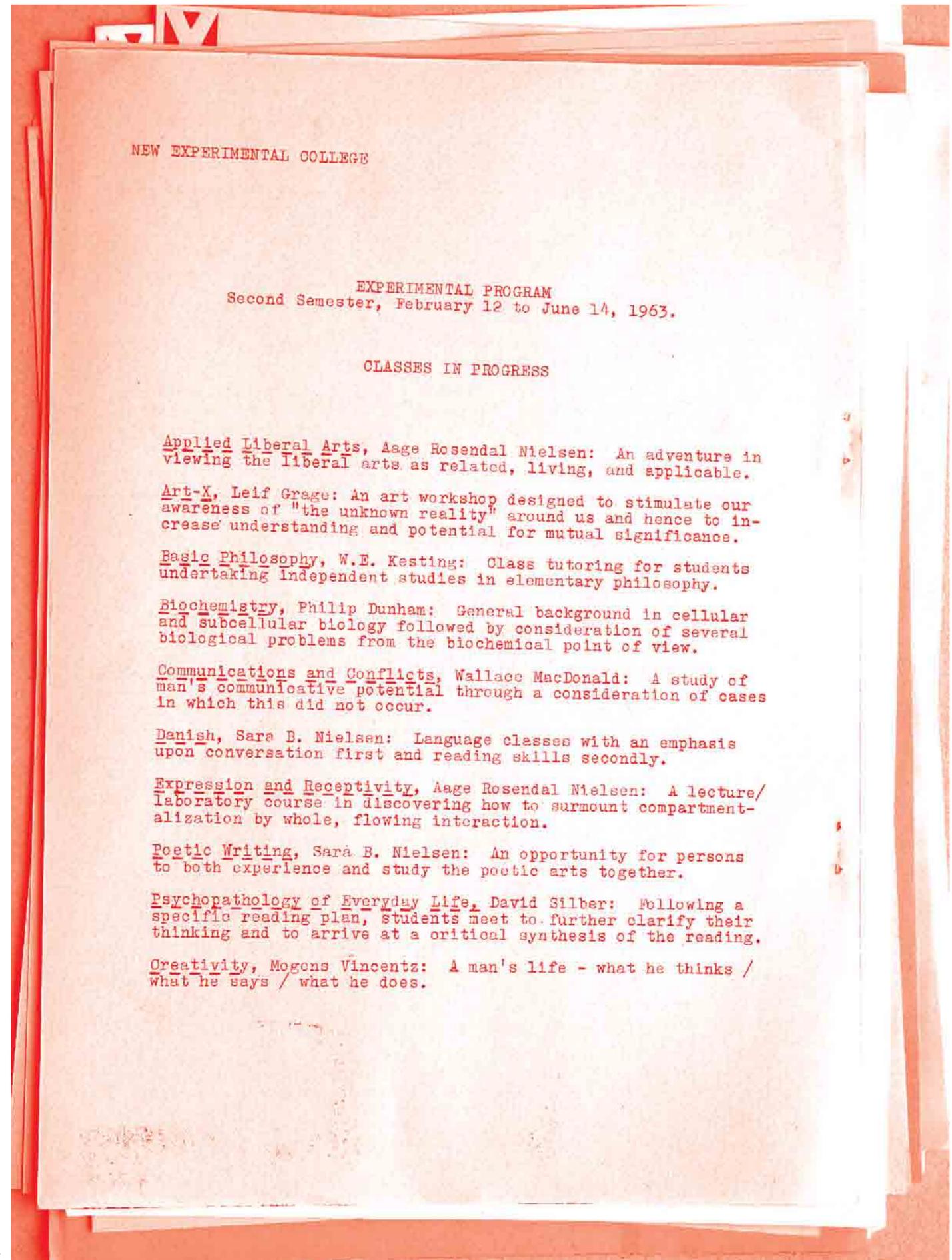
SBD: Yes, they did do that. I don't know much about that. But that was one of the things that Aage felt was a distraction. Moving to Thy was a way of removing that distraction. Most of the participants came from big cities, so Copenhagen was something built on top of what they already knew – just a Danish variety – whereas taking them off to the country! Everyone said it wasn't going to work, and that no one would want to come. But it did work. I don't think we had fewer people interested after the move. It was for sure quite a different experience being immersed in nature and in the midst of Thyboer whose culture was an unknown to all but Aage who grew up in Thy. One of the things I did in Thy was to teach English to the Danish neighbours. As did Ron Manheimer. There would be evenings where we were each teaching a group, and then we would meet with all the students for coffee and cake afterwards. That made very real contact between the local people and the students, who then also practiced the Danish they were learning with them. So mutual learning of a language created a bridge between the college and the community.

JJ: *You got closer to the local community when you got outside of the city.*

SBD: Yes, you're right. These were a very different kind of people. They weren't cosmopolitan. These were the original Danes. [*Impersonation of the Danish glottal sounds. Laughter*] The neighbours were wonderful. There is a nice story I remember. Aage would often have long talks with the postman, his name was Thomas, and he delivered the mail directly to Aage's desk. He didn't put it in a mailbox outside somewhere or leave it at the entrance. Often he would sit down with Aage, and they would have a long talk. Once someone asked: 'What in the world do you talk with the postman about all that time?', Aage replied, 'About all the rumours I want to get spread.' If he wanted something to get out about us, he would tell the postman, because he knew that that news would quickly be heard by all sorts of people.

JJ: *I read that you were trying to develop the organisation of NEC after some years at Vanløse, and that you suggested the Ting as a forum after you had been looking into many forms of organisation or ways of decision making in a community.*

SBD: The Ting was a good thing, but it requires a certain amount of maturity. If it gets to be ego against ego, you can call it any-Ting! It becomes a circus! There were some very good Ting Meetings, but there was a lot of dragging out, because Aage never stopped it. He never said, that's enough. There was free reign for everything.



NEW EXPERIMENTAL COLLEGE

Spring Semester, 1963

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

PHASE I

(February 12 - March 24)

	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	22
Mon.	INDEPENDENT STUDY		Communications	Danish			Bio-chemistry	
Tues.	INDEPENDENT STUDY		Art-X	Expression & Receptivity			Psychopathology	
Wed.	INDEPENDENT STUDY		Poetic Writing	Applied Liberal Arts			Danish	
Thurs.	INDEPENDENT STUDY AND FIELD TRIPS							
Fri.	INDEPENDENT STUDY		Basic Philology	Expression & Receptivity			Lectures (See below)	
Sat.			True Creativity					
Sunday	9	11	13	15	17	19	21	

Unless otherwise resituated, classes will be held in the library with the following exceptions: Poetic Writing to be held in the MacDonald's living room; and laboratory sessions - Expression and Receptivity - to be held in the dining room.

Lectures on Economy, World Geography and Dialectic Materialism by Henning Berthelsen and Stefan Stefanski alternately are planned, and notices will be posted once dates and hours have been verified. Notices of other guest lecturers will likewise be posted.

Blank copies of the schedule have been inserted in the program for use in drawing up one's own schedule, on which can be included outside work commitments and/or other college work and activities.

JJ: *Could there be very intimate or personal questions in the Ting Meeting?*

SBD: Yes there could - even hurt-filled things from the past or from the present. Things which needed healing could come up and at times be dealt with very tenderly. At other times a person might bring something out in the open, but decide not to delve into it at that Ting. The issue could be raised to just more or less say, 'So then, now you know that's why I'm the way I am.'

JJ: *But what for example could you present at a Ting? Normally, we have the Folketing [Parliament] in Denmark, that's not very intimate or personal.*

SBD: No, but our Tings could be very personal. Much more personal than the Folketing! Maybe you could better compare some aspects of ours to the British Parliament instead, where those highly educated gentlemen sometimes take things quite personally and allow themselves to get really agitated with one another and raise their voices loudly in protest. That could happen too. Anything could happen on a personal level.

JJ: *What I have learned by looking at NEC is that it is about the community of people there, and how to live together. And that fascinates me. There was no curriculum and you didn't have to read specific things. It was instead about how to organise life together.*

SBD: As far as the curriculum was concerned, everyone was more or less doing their own thing. But they were doing it, they were into it. There was one student by the name of Tom. Tom actually still lives in Denmark where he is a musician. He called the student body together one day to present his work in a Ting Meeting in which he read for us the most wonderful poems which he had written. And someone said how much they were looking forward to his next poems. And Tom said: 'No, I've shot my wad, that was it!' That kind of thing was so wonderful. One never knew what was being created behind closed doors or how what was created would evolve. But Tom had no intention of going on with it. It came, was there, and was a gift. The rest of his creativity continued to go into music.

JJ: *On the question of how to live together, it is my impression that you were concerned with this issue. You suggested the Ting, and perhaps this came from a desire to bring some regularity in - or some regulation of how to be together, over an idea of having no structure whatsoever.*

SBD: Yes, this is true. Sometimes the young people yearned for structure, to a certain extent.

JJ: *How was this desire for structure expressed?*

SBD: Well for example in their interest in going off for some time to the centre at Fosdalsgård which entailed being in a very structured environment. Meditation at 5am, and then food at a certain time, and then a time when you could speak. And they ate it up, they really liked it. It had a temporal boundary which they knew: a beginning and end. So they weren't really going into a monastery or nunnery or whatever you want to call it. Maybe it could be called a temporary retreat from open-endedness.

There were also professors who came with children. You can see in some of the photos children sitting at the meetings. But it could be boring for them. So when

there were enough of them, I took them off with one parent - only one parent, because parents are the most difficult people to have around when you are with children - and that was good. The children would then have their own kind of Ting Meetings. We'd put blankets over the big dining room table and then go under the table and talk in the darkness about whatever they were thinking or feeling! They had to have their own way of getting things out. And I think the children got just as much out of their Tings as the adults did.

JJ: *There were kids staying at the school together with their parents for several months?*

SBD: There were as well as for half a year or even a year sometimes. This experience was just as groundbreaking for them as for the adults, who often came as teachers. The teachers came in part to learn more about how they as teachers affected people and how they could better affect people. You, the teacher, are the knower, the one who is supposed to affect others by being the one who knows, and how do you do that?

At NEC nobody put the teachers on a pedestal. Everyone was just themselves, and it was harder to be oneself than to be a professor and have some image around you. Also the teachers had to pay their own way too, you know - for themselves and for their families. There was no one there on a free ride. If they hadn't enjoyed it and gained something from it, they would have left.

JJ: *My impression is that professors often struggled with that horizontal structure, where they were on the same level as the kids for example, and were no longer distinguished from them with their titles.*

SBD: That's true.

JJ: *From speaking with Ron Manheimer, Angela West, and Preben Maegaard, I have the impression that NEC has been an important part of people's lives. Important in a way that is not only or simply positive, but rather groundbreaking, shaping through both good and bad experiences.*

SBD: True. I have often said to people, you never get as close to another human being as when you live with them in shared quarters and take the good with the not so good. I really think often of those people with whom I spent so much time every day in the same building. There are friends you make in childhood, and then there are friends you make, when you are an adult, and there is a big difference. But the relationships you have with people you have lived and shared deep processes with over an extended period of time are in a category for themselves. You can get very close and appreciative of that relationship. And you don't forget it even though your lives separate afterwards.

JJ: *Can you describe this closeness?*

SBD: People could go through some very emotional processes. For example, someone might take up an issues related to their parents. They had gotten away from home and into a new situation that was also different from university life, and they found that they had things to work through. And you became a part of that process and related your caring through your participation. That made for closeness. You didn't know their parents, but everyone could relate to their projection of them and everyone could relate and use

one another relative to the issue at hand. Everyone has parents themselves, so these issues had a kind of universality which, when recognised, provided a kind of relief in itself.

JJ: *It wasn't people you chose to be with, it was the people who came.*

SBD: That is right. You didn't choose to be with them, and some of them were absolutely crazy! There was one guy who came with a gun. He was the son of a professor. No one knew he had a gun, and one day he was standing on top of a car outside with this gun! It was just a kind of demonstration on his part but one couldn't know that at the outset! There's another phase that entered in in the 1960's with the advent of LSD. Should I tell you this story?

JJ: *Yes please.*

SBD: It was a long time ago, when it was a completely legal and also essentially unknown phenomenon. It was certainly unknown to Aage and me. But it became known to us when one of the students took a piece of the school's letterhead without our knowledge. On that letterhead he wrote a letter to Aldous Huxley from - I think it was - the 'Chemistry Department' of the New Experiment College. In the letter he said something like: 'We are very interested in the work you have been doing with LSD.' He presented himself as faculty at a university when in fact he was one of the students! Through Huxley, who bought into the deception, the students could get LSD in the mail in kilogram packages! You can't do that today, of course. Fortunately, because the order was referred by Huxley, it was a completely 'clean' chemical. And so there were these 'chemists' in the basement experimenting with LSD. The effect on the student body was enormous and therefore couldn't be kept secret for long. Lots of things surface in people under the influence of LSD. It can literally turn the contents of peoples' insides out. And so we had to deal with a whole new situation with no guidelines to go by. Not far into this phase Aage determined that we couldn't know what was going on, unless we tried it ourselves. This could be a very lengthy tale, but I'll just say that for my own part, I took it three times. People always talk about these bad trips. For me it was always wonderful, I never had a moment of badness, except for the preliminary stomach upset. At the same time I also experienced that it wasn't 'the way'. You are chemically interfering with yourself. Meditation is a different thing. You allow yourself to enter into other dimensions, you are not thrown into something. Whatever the value that comes with LSD, you've got a one-way ticket until it runs out! You can't do anything about it.

JJ: *I am interested because it relates to your search at NEC for a deeper understanding of being together and different kinds of relationships, also relationships that are not simply mediated by the intellect. And LSD is a very sensual experience.*

SBD: Very sensual and the colours are fantastic. It brings forward what is in you and what you could see and feel, if you could see and feel. So it is true that if someone has internal problems, it could come out as a 'bad trip'.

JJ: *But you had a positive experience?*

SBD: Wonderful.

JJ: ...

SBD: Have you read Grundtvig's 'Om Nordens Videnskabelig Forening' ('The Scientific Union of the North')?

JJ: *The one about the University of the North?*

SBD: In that he more or less says, that those people who would participate have had countless years of education, so put them together and let them loose. They didn't need more of the same thing. That was extremely inspiring for us. But Grundtvig's proposed project never happened, as far as I know.

JJ: *Let them loose?*

SBD: Just allow them to be together and 'exponere sig selv' - how would you say that in English? Reveal their potential? There is one type of learning which takes place in the universities where we all come from. We have all been through it. But there is another kind of learning, which I think the Orientals show the way towards, which combines body, mind and spirit. As in the teachings of, say, Lao Tse. While delving deeply into the universality of the human being, he is still completely grounded. When I encounter his perceptions, I think, how could this be known about me?

JJ: *I read a paper of yours from 1965. There you were talking about different kinds of learning - about experiential, intellectual and essential learning. It is a big question, but can you reflect on this idea of essential learning?*

SBD: As I see it, essential learning combines the others. It goes to your essence. It is not something that you categorise intellectually. Nor is it simply emotion, because that comes and goes. And our intellectual knowledge is always growing, our feelings also get revised as we mature. But that which becomes real is what touches your essence, and that never leaves you, because it becomes part of your being. I don't think we realise enough how our relative beings influence one another. You can meet an individual, maybe you haven't yet related to that individual on the level of feeling or on an intellectual level, but you may sense the being of that individual. And that is what pulls you to him, or not.

JJ: *So essential learning is not necessarily individual learning?*

SBD: Well, it is in the sense that each of us has our own essence. But essence is also universal, and we can recognise it when we meet it in other people. I think that some of the young people who were with us were influenced to such a degree that there was development at the level of essence, not just intellectual or emotional development. What often happens is you can say 'that's all intellectual stuff, I can see the holes in it', and so on, and then the intellect and the emotions are used against each other...but I'm remembering now! Once a visiting student said to me, 'you are the most despicable person I've ever met', and it was because in an interchange with him, I had fallen to the level where I thought I knew what was true for him too. I was on an intellectual level, and I used intellect to 'prove him wrong'. I took the last word and he was furious. That was a terrible memory! Ouch! But I did learn. I think we all have had such incidents in our past. We were raised to be known by our intellectual prowess. Then, what often happens is the need to get to the heart. But the heart is both feeling and emotion and that's really tricky. Feelings need to be allowed expression, but when let loose, a lot of what has been

**NEW
EXPERIMENTAL
COLLEGE**

Administration & Admission Offices:
SLOTSHERRENSVEJ 21
VANLØSE · TEL. 71 75 30
COPENHAGEN · DENMARK

COPY

Statesmen

John F. Kennedy and Nikita Krushchev
President, Chairman of the Council
United States of Ministers,
of America Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

It is my privilege to write you concerning a matter of great and obvious importance to all of us.

The exploration and development of man's basic potential through cooperative experimentation on an intercultural level is imperative to the achieving of a united world. In essence this means that some of us must begin living in the world of tomorrow. To this end I ask you to help promote the establishment of as many world universities as is practically possible.

A world university is a community of highest education whose purpose is an awakening of universal consciousness. It is a proving ground where new generations may dare venture into the unknown. It is an opportunity to experience the world as a society of persons.

Man may fully meet himself and his fellow man through side-by-side creating self-governing, politically independent centers for learning. In such living world institutions built by those who are that world, he may better prepare himself to represent her within that area called "my native land", among nations, and eventually beyond our atmosphere.

We have no blueprint for a citizen of the world, nor do we choose to draw one. Let each discover for himself what common human denominators exist. Awakened to and inspired by yet unrevealed potential, each will find his way through whatever medium is most appropriate for him.

Many educators around the world are working with the idea of world educational institutions. New Experimental College is our attempt toward creating a world university. The college is a cooperative endeavor initiated in 1962 by students and teachers who responded to an invitation sent to every nation in the world. We invite you to send both students and teachers to come and be with us.

We invite also representatives from your countries to attend a Conference for the Exploration and Promotion of World Universities which we will sponsor in the spring of 1965.

In turning to leading statesmen of our times, we ask that you make these ideas and opportunities known to the peoples of your countries.

We furthermore request that you together openly encourage peoples from all nations to join, support or themselves create such world universities. A joint action on your parts would in itself be a vitally significant step toward realizing man's capability for unity beyond all conflict.

I extend to you the friendship of our world community. Through it we pledge our will and efforts to serve all men and nations by providing the peoples of the world with a center for a concerted quest into the essential nature of man and his destiny.

Sincerely yours,

Aage Rosendal Nielsen
Rector
New Experimental College

Copenhagen
April 30, 1963

This letter has also been sent to:

Statesmen

Mao Tse-tung and
Chairman of the Central Committee,
People's Republic of China

David Ben-Gurion and
Premier,
State of Israel

Henrik Frensch Verwoerd and
Prime Minister,
Union of South Africa

Lester Pearson
Prime Minister,
Canada

Gamal Abdul Nasser
President,
United Arab Republic

Cyrille Adoula
Prime Minister,
Republic of Congo

Copies have been sent to:

His Majesty King Frederik IX of Denmark

Secretary General U Thant, United Nations Organization

Supreme Pontiff John XXIII, State of Vatican City

Chairman Just Lunning, Board of the Scandinavian Seminar

Laurel Rosendal Nielsen

X

EX

WHY WORLD UNIVERSITIES?

We undertake this endeavor in response to our conviction that contemporary man has an urgent need for integration of thought and being, a release of creativity through synthesis of intelligence and the X of man's experience; that our world civilization requires the activation of some common human denominators; and that both these needs can only be met through the development of confidence in man's ability to grasp the "wholes" of experience, through a world community intent upon facing these problems head on, and perhaps through the discovery of a completely new ontology of man, which is, at once, scientific, humanistic and personal. These are our objectives.

N.E.C. Prospectus, Spring 1962.

We further ascertain that this very basic integrative process is so vital for science, for humanity and for the individual, that it must be carried out by men as laymen!

Who are we who are qualified to initiate this task? We, the experts, the specialists, the men of one or another racial viewpoint, national opinion, cultural conditioning, we, the poor and the illiterate.

Effective within the framework of compartmentalization, we must be made effective in unifying science, in achieving unity beyond conflict, in activating human common denominators, and in according as much worth to the unknown as to the known.

It is we who must pioneer this adventure. We must qualify ourselves, and this requires that we meet as Men, from backgrounds of any and all fields and nationalities, and that we meet in a process of confrontation.

Confrontation of self, confrontation of one's immediate other(s), confrontation of humanity inclusive of all its collective knowledge and culture, and finally confrontation of the unknown.

Through this the integrative process can begin!

November 1963

Co-Founders
New Experimental College
Slotsherrensvej 21
Copenhagen

NOT FOR

repressed may surface. And you may have emotions on your hands that you don't know what to do with. But emotions can be evolved to feeling.

JJ: *So there is a difference?*
SBD: Yes, as I see it. But it is very much unknown territory. To recognise the difference between emotion and feeling is a process. Some never get there, because they love emotions! Temper tantrums and so on. But feeling is on a completely different level, and it is a part of what essential learning is. But Jakob, these are just my opinions, there are surely many different so-called truths about this. And if we were to continue along this line, we would soon need to talk about the influence of the solar plexus in this distinction and that could lead us way beyond our present discussion.

JJ: *But that is what I am asking you about. You also mention this work of 'clearing the way to learning'. You mention this also in that paper from 1965. It sounds like the main work you did at NEC was 'clearing the way'.*

SBD: Yes. That's right. And there's no one recipe. But once the door is open, people find their own routes through it. And that inspires other people, like Tom with his poetry. Suddenly there was this silent musician who never used words, translating feelings into words.

JJ: *I also wanted to ask you about the Sabbath Lecture. What could that be and how was it structured?*

SBD: It could be anything, and it wasn't structured. It was taken very seriously though. We all met - all the centres coming together that day - and each Sabbath lecturer of any particular day chose their own subject. There wasn't a feeling that the person should be judged by their lecture, nonetheless they judged themselves, asking themselves, 'where am I in relation to my presentation?' Every Saturday someone would do something different, and you could see how they might get attention, and you could experience their sincerity. But the subject could be anything, and you didn't know until you came, what it would be.

JJ: *Was it at lunchtime or after a meal?*

SBD: It was in the morning. Then we had lunch together.

JJ: *If you were the person presenting, would it be right to say that you had the authority or that you were facilitating? Was it structured like that?*

SBD: It was structured by the clock. The Lecture started at a certain time, no one introduced you. Once it started, that person was the centre of attention and interest. Ron gave a lot of the lectures. He was very important, because no matter how broad the context of our commonality was, he was never down on the intellect - he held his stance.

JJ: *In this community with no authority, other than itself, how was safety established? How did you take care of each other, if there was a serious problem or conflict?*

SBD: Well, nothing was pushed underground, nothing was repressed. There could be two or three people around someone going through a crisis, or there could be a Ting Meeting, where mediating between persons took place. Whomever was the recipient of help was their own authority. You went as far as they wanted. And Aage was always in there, turning things around. Someone might be talking

about their mother and father, and he'd say 'and what about you?!' You must have been terrible! How could they have lived with you? You know! And the person is sitting there feeling very sorry for themselves, having to look at things in a very different way. Aage's two qualities were, being able to turn things around, igniting something in another, and then allowing anything to come of it.

JJ: *This structurelessness cleared the way - or de-specialised everyone - if you arrived as a professor, or a housewife - and then you were left in this void where there is hardly any structure. This can also be...*

SBD: ...threatening.

JJ: *Yes.*

SBD: Exactly. But you knew you were going to be threatened, just by the literature we sent out. You couldn't find anything there that was going to tell you what to do. So it was voluntary, but that doesn't mean it wasn't threatening. It was something of your own free will. A person could back off and say, 'that's not where I'm going'. That was respected too. Not by Aage! But by everyone else!

JJ: *Coming back to the paper you wrote, which was called 'Rationale for the Spring Semester, 1965', so three years down the road from when you started in 1962, you are quite critical of the social dynamic that didn't happen. And this led to introducing some structures.*

SBD: Well, introducing some 'sharing of a perspective'. I don't know if it came to structures!

JJ: *But the Ting Meeting was introduced in 1965.*

SBD: Yes. That was structure. But I would call it structureless-structure. Because there was only the clock - everything was ordered by the clock. And with regard to the Sabbath Lecture, it always led to a discussion afterwards, and the person holding the lecture wouldn't know where it would go, because it was thrown out as a statement to be discussed. I could make myself very unpopular. Sometimes I would feel that the opportunity was being lost, and it could be so much more. Have you seen any of the *Physiognomy* magazines?

JJ: *Yes.*

SBD: Okay, so anybody could submit anything to the editors of *Physiognomy*. And once I had this image of a young person lying on the floor with their legs up against the wall. That's what I did myself when talking on the telephone at home. Maybe that's why I created the image in that stance. Then under it I made this poem: 'There he lies, regretting the past, neglecting the present, all for a future which will never come.' Now that can sound really negative, but it can also spur you to think that if the present is neglected, that future you're imagining is not going to come. A future will come, but not what could have come, if you didn't expend energy in regretting the past and you didn't neglect the present. So they put the picture of the boy with his legs up in the magazine but NO poem!

JJ: *Ok.*

SBD: I just remember entering it into the magazine and the poem didn't appear.

JJ: *That was censored?*

SBD: Yes, the editors could censor anything.

JJ: *You eventually went on and made your own centre at Fosdalsgård, Bhedanta, and you mentioned that life there was extremely structured.*

SBD: Yes, very structured. But that gave another kind of freedom, because we could be together, without so much personality. We got more on a level of essence. There could be a really irritating person that had ways of doing things that you found annoying, but if you sat in silence with that person, you got a completely different feeling. That appealed to me.

JJ: *Was there a learning process in yourself, from the early 1960s structurelessness, to then introducing the Ting and other ways of meeting, and eventually making your own centre where life was even more structured?*

SBD: There was. I travelled from being very verbal to embracing the opposite. At Fosdalsgård in the hours when we did have speech, it was not structured. It was open-ended. But then it was again followed up with hours of silence. And things can happen in silence that cannot happen through speech. It is that simple. But it is not really simple because - if we're talking about what's threatening - silence can be very threatening. How do you look at a person with whom you are not speaking? We give all sorts of signals in our speech and in our facial expressions when we speak. But if you're not saying anything, what does your face look like? Faces often reflect what we are communicating. So what does a face look like that is not communicating verbally? You become naked, and that is not what everyone wants.

JJ: *How long would that last? A month, or more?*

SBD: No! Only a week! People knew they could get out of it then. And very seldom was it complete silence. Sometimes we did a whole week in complete silence, which was difficult, but it could occasionally be funny too, as for example when you are all chewing celery sticks at the table and the crunching is making a lot of noise. Because people would start laughing!

JJ: *This make me think of the Thy Camp. Preben came up north to do that...*

SBD: He did all the plumbing at Thy Camp.

JJ: *... and he told me, he didn't like the irresponsibility and hedonism of the hippies at the Thy Camp - so he left. He went on to open his own centre of the World University...*

SBD: I went to Thy Camp twice. We bought a big tent to support the project and to accommodate us, when we might be there. No one knew at the outset what it was or how it was going to be, so we just set up a post there. The next time we went, the tent was occupied.

It was not our tent. I couldn't relate to it at all. It wasn't where I was at. But it started a lot of things for a lot of people. But it was really raucous! Preben was not that kind of person at all. I think he has done fantastic things - as part of World University, yes, but more especially on his own afterwards.

JJ: *What I was also hinting at was a difference between what you could call the individualised desires and the community trying to live together. What Preben was disillusioned about at the Thy Camp was this individualism - or egotism. There was no real care for the other. What I see in NEC is this radical openness to the other. Also, in the slow development of structures over the years I see an attempt to relate to the community, and establish small institutions to regulate it, enabling those involved to express themselves well. But with respect for the community.*

SBD: Well I think it was about introducing caring and encompassing, and not making rules for it.

JJ: *In what way?*

SBD: If caring is expressed, by one to another, or to the group, then it is not regulated, but it is introduced. This is a good way to be, because then I can relax and be myself.

JJ: *Was there any relation between the world education movement in the early 1960s, and the peace movement and the nuclear disarmament movement? Where you involved in either of these?*

SBD: Only on the periphery.

JJ: *The reason I ask is because in this idea of a 'world university', by bringing a diverse group of people together, there was a similar ethos there.*

SBD: That's true, but I didn't go on peace marches. There were a lot of peace marches, but not so many in Thy! [Laughs] Have you looked into 'The Association of World Universities'?

JJ: *Yes, I spoke to Aage Rosendal before he died. I have been interested in NEC for many years, on a personal level, and now I wanted to make this interest more public. When I spoke to him, he told me to get in touch with this association.*

SBD: We had the first and founding meeting at NEC, it was wonderful, there were people from many lands. I remember this one Indian, he was so grateful, because there were things he didn't eat. So on the buffet I would put food he could eat with his name next to it. Years later I visited his university in Amedabad in India and gave a lecture. The young people were all sitting on the floor spinning with spinning wheels. Ghandi advocated that. One student there said: 'Isn't it better to sit in a chair?' and I said, 'I've been studying human anatomy through my yoga for many years. All of you sitting on the floor are in sublime positions.' And they were so happy, because they thought they should have chairs. I told them, you know, in the old days, the chief or most important person was on a throne, and everyone else was on the floor. So when they began to be liberated, what happened? Everyone wanted a throne. Instead of putting him on the floor which would have been healthier!

JJ: *Students were spinning wool?*

SBD: Or maybe cotton, but they were spinning the whole time. Doing something practical while listening. And that was Gandhi's influence. It was a Gandhian university, through and through. And we can still go on learning from Gandhi. He provided us with a valuable example through the manner in which he lived his life: he 'walked his talk'.

Sara Bryson Damskier co-founded NEC in 1962 and Nordenfjord World University in 1969. Her Bhedanta Center in Han Herred was a part of the World University until the mid-70's. Today Sara Damskier has Nordenfjord Miljø.

PROCEDURE FOR ADMISSION

Each applicant is asked to make his own application on four sheets of paper of approximately this size. (Place name and page number at the top of each.) One purpose of this mode of application is to give the student an opportunity to crystalize in his own mind and on paper, his motivation and objectives in wanting to join the college. Another is to give the college a realistic opportunity to determine the extent to which it can be of service to the student. Please relate the following:

Page One

Front: WHO ARE YOU - statistically?

Give all practical data, as to name, sex, birth date, nationality, addresses - temporary and permanent, telephone, physical and/or mental disorders, if any, parents' names, address, occupation, etc.

Back: WHO ARE YOU - personally?

Give briefly your own description of yourself. What do you live for? What are your interests, failures and successes? What do you as a person hope to attain or be? Then write two references for yourself, again brief and to the point. The first giving your impression of what your best professor might write regarding your strongest personal and academic sides. The second giving your impression of what the teacher who likes you least might write about your weakest academic and personal abilities.

Page Two

Front: WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?

Describe, in short form, your educational background and work experience, including dates. Review and evaluate your academic record.

Back: WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO?

Give some indication of your educational and vocational aspirations, and how you plan to attain these goals.

Page Three

Front: WHAT DO YOU WISH TO ATTAIN AT NEC?

List the academic areas in which you wish to study indicating those of greatest interest. Graduates should specify any independent projects they wish to undertake. Uncertainties should also be stated. This listing may be followed by a statement of the intangible benefits you hope to gain.

Back: WHAT DO YOU FEEL YOU CAN CONTRIBUTE TO NEC?

Any thoughts you might have on this subject.

Page Four

Front: YOUR ANSWERS TO OUR QUESTIONS.

Semester you desire entrance, between-semester interests, employment interests, group travel, housing, etc. State also how you plan to finance your study here, and how your previous education has been financed.

Back: YOUR UNANSWERED QUESTIONS.

State all your unanswered questions regarding the college and your own particular situation here. Use the first half of the page for practical questions, and the second half for more philosophical or ideological questions.

It is about education, it is about community

Conversation with Peter Stansill, Portland & Copenhagen, October 12, 2014

Jakob Jakobsen: *You are one of the people, as far as I have found, that goes the furthest back in the history of New Experimental College. Sara Bryson was also there when they set up NEC, but you came into the frame quite early.*

Peter Stansill: Well I arrived in June 1964. I had been travelling around Europe and North Africa, hitchhiking and working the grape fields and selling blood, as young travellers used to do! We were having a year or two on the road in 1964. I'd already trained as a journalist and was fully qualified at 20 years old, and I wanted to see the world.

I set off with two cousins. We all had the same name, Tony Stansill, Clive Stansill and Peter Stansill. Tony Stansill just died in Copenhagen in May of this year. I went to see him last year and we had a wonderful day together. Clive lives in Israel.

We split up. I worked in Cyprus during these travels. I got a job as a war correspondent, and they both went to Israel and then went back to England. I did my stint as a war correspondent for Radio Press International in the civil war and then got back to England with lots of money, having worked in a war zone while they were sending money to my bank account. They didn't think I'd get home alive!

When I got home there was a letter waiting from Copenhagen. I'd never been to Copenhagen. It was from Tony Stansill, my cousin. It said, 'you've got to come here, it's really cool. The beer is really good, the girls are gorgeous. Come immediately!' So I hitchhiked to Copenhagen. I got the ferry across to the Hook of Holland from Hull, and got to Puttgarten and got the ferry there, hitchhiking up from Rødbyhavn to Toftegårdsplads. I rang our contact there who was the friend of Tony's. Tony's sister lived next door to this guy's mother. He picked me up at Vanløse station. His wife had been Aage Rosendal's secretary at the Scandinavian Seminar. So this was the random connection. Tony, Clive and I all signed up almost immediately at a summer school at NEC. We didn't have much money, so Aage said, 'We'll give you a scholarship.' There were

about 10 or 12 American college girls, so we said, 'Yeah let's do this!' And that was my introduction to Aage Rosendal and Sara Bryson in the summer of 1964.

Aage later asked me, 'Do you want to stay at NEC and work for us? You'd get free room and board and continue your education.' I said, 'Sure'. This sounded like a suitably drastic change from working as a war correspondent. So I became Aage's assistant for two years. I was fascinated with everything that went on. My title was Student Dean. So I was in charge of students and their health, education and welfare, as we would say as a joke. I loved the job, and I was very close to Aage. He was my mentor, teaching me many things that I otherwise would never have learned. I did all his correspondence; that was the most important thing as he had to write a lot of letters. He couldn't really type and I was a very good typist. So he would just dictate them in his broken English and I would put them into proper English. I learned Danish very quickly.

JJ: *When you came to NEC in Vanløse, Copenhagen, what did you see there? What was happening there?*

PS: It was a large house, one of the old villas on the corner of Slotsherrensvej and Egelystvej. I believe now it's about six apartments! It had a very large garden and a big basement where we could sleep 10 people. It was several storeys. It was like a large family, more than an educational institution. At any given time we would have up to 20 people, most of them living there, as well as lots of local Danish visitors, mostly young people. There were some teachers, especially from the Folkehøjskoler. It was family-like. Later it became clear that it was an 'intentional community'. That is, a community of scholars, seekers and adventurers, but with a certain self-consciousness. It means a community that is conscious of itself, that is constantly examining its reality and all the interactions of all its members. There were many buzzwords that Aage used. One of them was, 'The individual is the highest authority.' That came from the 19th

century Danish renaissance, with Kierkegaard and Grundtvig, and Kristen Kold, the old Danish educators and philosophers from that era. Aage was very inspired by them. Of course, I knew nothing of it at the time. Kierkegaard talked about '*hin Enhelt*', that individual, that one. This was, I think, a great inspiration. It was fascinating. But nobody was really allowed to be totally within themselves, you had to share yourself with the community. Everyone did this. Some people were not used to it. You could also call it a therapeutic community, which was very big at the time in the 1960s. It was a revolutionary time. Even though Denmark was not very revolutionary at the time, it was '*de glade tressere*', 'the happy sixties'. The Danes were very satisfied with themselves, as they still are. The background was Denmark, and I absolutely loved Copenhagen in the 1960s. It was very free, everything was accessible and the Danes were extremely friendly. Very few foreigners lived in Denmark at that time, so we foreigners were quite exotic. There was no trace of the prejudice about race that you now see in Denmark. Well that was the background. The daily reality of NEC was that we were always in meetings - community meetings - together. If anyone had anything to say, they were encouraged, even required, to say it to the community. This was really interesting and very unlike the American educational system. It was person-based; the education of the soul, as it were.

JJ: *This was a therapeutic community, as you say, but done in an educational structure, with semesters, and the like.*

PS: Exactly. We had a formal infrastructure with semesters, but there was no curriculum in the traditional sense. One of our expressions was: 'The curriculum at New Experimental College is the people who come. The programme is whatever they do!' [Laughs] That left a lot of leeway, a lot of latitude. Whatever people brought that was within themselves, and then shared, that became the curriculum. Now that was revolutionary. It was highly unusual. There were a few places at the time do-

ing similar things. A.S. Neill's Summerhill, he was one of the inspirations. There was also Black Mountain College in upstate New York. We had several people come from there, including Paul Goodman, who was quite famous at the time. He was one of the originators of Gestalt Therapy. He spent a semester - the summer of 1966 - at NEC.

JJ: *I actually wanted to ask you about Paul Goodman. You had a long session with him in Humlebæk?*

PS: Yes we did.

JJ: *I know it's many, many years ago, Peter, but what do you recall or think about when reflecting on NEC in relation to Paul Goodman?*

PS: He was a very controversial figure in America. He came with his wife and his little daughter. She was maybe three years old. Either his wife or his daughter was called Peggy, I can't remember. He had a son but he lost his son many years later. There was some conflict between Aage and Paul Goodman because Paul was very formalistic. He was a little narcissistic and so convinced of his own brilliance and correctness that it irritated Aage and Sara. I found him fascinating. His vision of education was much more traditional, and there was some disappointment about his contribution.

JJ: *In what way was it traditional?*

PS: He was used to holding seminars and being the talking head of traditional education. The lecturer standing in front of a class of 100 just talking with no interaction while he delivers wisdom, everyone is supposed to write it down and absorb it. That is not what happened at NEC. It was totally interactive, and he didn't quite understand what the process was. There was some disappointment. That is one of my memories.

JJ: *He wrote this book, 'The Community of Scholars. That sounds a little like NEC.'*

PS: Maybe that is why he came. I've never read that book actually. We had all read one of his early books, *Growing Up Absurd*. This was his most famous book and was very interesting. Pretty much all the students had read it. He was such an inspiration as a writer that when he came there was a little letdown and disappointment that his personal demeanour and attitude didn't reflect what he had written in that book.

JJ: *Did he stay at Slotsherrensvej - with the community?*

PS: Yes, that was the home base. Then we had a two-week seminar up in Humlebæk at a big Conference Centre.

JJ: *For me it was interesting to find out that Paul Goodman worked at NEC, but I'm also interested to hear your experience of that. How was it that you had the confidence at NEC to create this, more or less non-hierarchical structure without a curriculum? It sounds extremely progressive for back then - and for today.*

PS: This was an experiment in process at the time. We were developing ideas, saying, 'let's do this and see what happens'. People responded very positively to it in general. Some people got lost, because they were so used to being told what to do. They were used to the syllabus and curriculum and, as you say, the hierarchy of the university. These things didn't exist here. 'The individual is the highest authority', this was Aage's mantra. You say what you want, you tell the community what your reality is. All the resources in the

community are yours to use, and you can then find your own path. What developed out of that was the concept that you would design your own degree programme. People thought we were crazy. The idea was: you design and plan your own degree and then you evaluate it yourself. That, at the time, was so revolutionary that it was almost illegal. Now it is completely normal in the experimental universities in America – of which there are now several – you do design your own degree programme. This is one of the contributions Aage Rosendal made to world education. Students are perfectly capable of designing, planning and executing their own education and evaluating it themselves. You can't kid around, because you would be fooling yourself. So you have to be very honest about what you have done, what you can do and who you are. NEC was where this idea took hold first, perhaps in the world. But it was never really acknowledged by the Danish authorities. In fact, at the Danish Embassy in New York, whenever someone said, 'I want to send my kid to NEC, I need to check with the Danish Embassy', they would be told, 'This is not recognised in Denmark and we don't like it.' And this went on for years.

JJ: *In Vanløse did you have your own course of study? Did you develop your own research programme at that time, or have a project?*

PS: I was studying psychology and philosophy, as well as linguistics, which was one of my fields. I was already a highly qualified journalist at this point. I didn't have a specific project because I *worked* at NEC. I worked with Aage. We were the administration: Aage, Sara and I, for two years. So I was facilitating the learning process of all these students who were mostly from America, and a few other countries too. From the UK, Namibia, Malaysia, we had people from all over the world. The big thing was organising a summer school every year. We'd get up to 40 or 50 people so we'd rent a Conference Centre to accommodate so many people. I was administering the summer school and doing all the correspondence. My personal education was: how do you run an organisation? [*Laughs*] I learned by doing, but I didn't really have an academic project at NEC.

JJ: *But that was not needed, I guess, as it was about the community.*

PS: Exactly. I learned about community, and what is called 'group therapy', if you like. The dynamics of the group, that in a way was my major study. This has been developed to a very high level, especially here in America since then. This is almost 50 years ago. 50 years since I arrived in Copenhagen. My God!

JJ: *When you came, there was a process where you tried to formalise the modes of interaction, for example with the Ting Meeting and the Celebration Dinners. The Sabbath Lecture was also introduced as a platform of discussion. All this came into place around 1964 or 1965?*

PS: The structure grew very organically out of what we did. The Ting Meeting was really interesting. Of course, it comes from the old Viking idea of the Ting, where the person who had the horn could speak. Everybody had the right to speak and to be heard and there was no hierarchy. Anyone could call a Ting meeting at any time, 24 hours a day. It rarely happened, but sometimes we did have meetings at midnight, or six o'clock in the morning, but

rarely during sleep time. You could call a Ting meeting for any reason. For example, if you were unhappy with a person, you could say, 'I am going to call a Ting Meeting on you!' Then you could air your concerns or worries publicly. Everything was kept in the community. You didn't really have strangers coming in to Ting Meetings, although they could be invited. The whole point of the Ting Meeting was that it was the essence of the therapeutic experience of the group. It also could be an intellectual thing. If somebody was worried about an idea, you could call a Ting Meeting. Aage called most of the Ting Meetings because he had the most to say, but not exclusively.

The Celebration Dinner was where we all got together. We broke bread together. It was very much a ritual where we shared food and everybody had to be there. You could invite guests; that was a big thing. A lot of people would be invited from the outside. That is where the interaction would be with the larger, outside community. That was on Friday night, and then on Saturday at 10am was the Sabbath meeting. The Shabbat is the Jewish name for Saturday, and it was called a Sabbath Lecture. Usually one of the students would give the Sabbath Lecture, or someone would be invited from the larger community. Ron Manheimer gave several Sabbath Lectures that I remember and so did Sara. But they weren't formal lectures, they were presentations. They were very loosely structured. We called them a 'lecture' but that is really stretching the meaning of the word. They were what we would now call presentations. They could be about anything. It was usually about an idea or a line of study, or observations about the world. Some of them were really interesting. Some of them were highly academic. There was a lot of latitude with the Sabbath Lectures.

JJ: *Was anything accepted? Could you just read a poem or play the guitar?*

PS: You weren't required to give a lecture. You could give a recital, a guitar recital, or read your own poetry. It didn't have to be long. Usually it would be half an hour, sometimes an hour. These got to be quite big. At Fjordvang in Thy we converted the barn, cowshed and pigsty – all the outer buildings – it was a very elaborate conversion of a very traditional Danish farm into an institutional setting. It had dormitories upstairs, a huge lecture room and dining room and kitchen that looked almost like a restaurant! The big community room and big lecture hall where we had the Sabbath Meetings could fit up to 70 or 80 people in the old barn. All the local craftsmen did the conversion, builders from around Thy.

JJ: *How did money operate at NEC? People had to pay? How did that work out in practice? Who controlled it?*

PS: People paid, and this is why it was mostly Americans, because Americans have always paid for their own higher education, unlike Denmark. Now, of course, many countries do. In the UK you now pay £9000 a year for university. In the 1960s that was not true, you didn't pay anything and the government gave you money. This is like the student grant that still exists in Denmark that you can basically live on. There has never been free higher education in America, so they were used to it.

Parents save money to send their kids to college. The funds were available from parents, or from student loans, it was quite normal. NEC wasn't as expensive as college. Each semester they would pay, and it would go into the NEC accounts. Aage ran the accounts. I worked on the budgeting. All the bills could be paid. There was never any problem about that. We lived quite frugally, but well.

JJ: *As a co-founder, you were not paid? Or was your wage room and board?*

PS: Exactly, I never got paid. I worked for room and board. I worked my way through so I never had to pay anything.

JJ: *So in a way you lived there without money, and could take food from the kitchen when you needed and so on. Everyone could do that?*

PS: Exactly, you only had to bring your own toothbrush and toothpaste! Everything else was provided. If you wanted to go out and drink some beer at night, you paid for it obviously.

JJ: *In terms on kitchen duties and so on, was there a certain division of labour, did you take turns when making food?*

PS: We had a kitchen crew. You would basically be in a crew of two or three and would make dinner for everyone, maybe once a week. It would depend on how many people were there. It might be once every 10 days you were responsible for feeding everyone. Buying the supplies, Sara took a lot of responsibility for that. We had deliveries from the fishmonger and butcher and for vegetables. Out there in Jutland it is not easy. We went to Brugsen supermarket a lot, with a shopping list. It was very well organised. The students really understood that. What do we need to feed 30 people? And they could figure it out. People learned 'home economics', if you like. We would divide the labour so that there would be one good cook and two assistants. If someone said they couldn't cook or hadn't ever before, they'd be a *sous-chef*, do as you're told and do the dishes! Actually no, we had a separate dish-washing crew. It was very well organised actually. We ate well, no one went hungry. Good, solid, Danish food.

JJ: *Was eating viewed as important?*

PS: Yes it was. Sitting down together and eating was always important. Almost everybody would be there. If someone had an errand or another commitment, they couldn't make it, but people were expected to be there. In the Celebration Dinner on the Friday, there was 'table talk', which was important. You would bang your fork on your glass and stand up and say whatever was on your mind. This was spontaneous table talk that we used to do. You could do that for any dinner. We sat there for an hour, and it was part of the community experience. If somebody wanted to stand up and say something, that was an opportunity quite apart from the Ting Meeting.

JJ: *This learning and living together is so different from the compartmentalised form of study today.*

PS: Right. Who was it who said '*først opleve, så oplyse*', 'First enliven, then enlighten'...

That is kind of what we were doing. We were combining the '*oplevelse*' with '*oplysning*' – experience and enlightenment went together, and that was a theme that we lived with.

JJ: *In Vanløse were you connected with the local community?*

PS: In Vanløse not at all. I don't think I met any of the neighbours. It was usually people who came in that the students had met. I brought in many people. And then others who had heard about it on the grapevine would come. But that really blossomed later at Fjordvang into something very big. Then all these other centres of Nordenfjord World University were set up. By this time Ron Manheimer was very involved and David Nelson, who sadly died a few years ago. David was a very good friend of mine. Whenever I visited I always stayed at David's place, that was the Præstegård Film School. Preben Maegaard started Asgård, which is the only centre surviving, reborn as the Nordic Centre for Renewable Energy.

JJ: *Coming back to what you call a therapeutic community, I want to think about this in relation to a learning community. Therapy is about healing, or treating some imbalance...*

PS: It can mean that, but I think a therapeutic community means striving for wholeness, for completing yourself. Therapy, not necessarily psychotherapy – although that was certainly a part of it – is really the integration of the person. People compartmentalise their lives. They have their work, their leisure time and friends and wife and family. And it is all in these little boxes and they are not joined together. What we were doing was integrating all personal experience. So you had an integrated personality – that was really the goal.

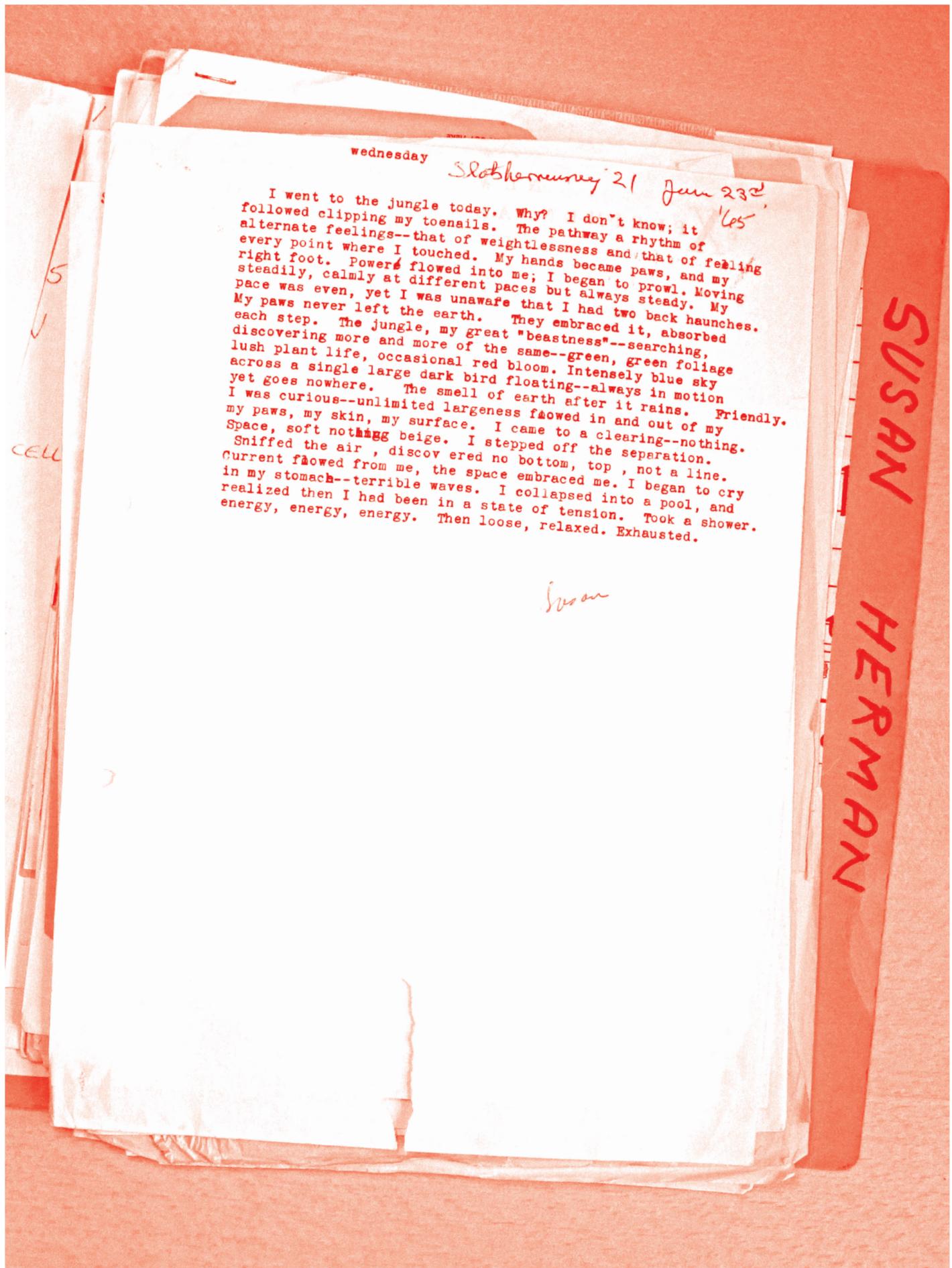
JJ: *When the therapeutic community meets the learning community, what kinds of therapy were you practicing there?*

PS: We weren't really practicing therapy or a therapeutic modality. What we were doing was practicing therapy through the dynamics of the community. In other words, something organic and natural would happen in a community that would promote healing and wholeness and personal integration. So this idea of the individual being the highest authority meant that the integrity of the individual and the acceptance of oneself and one's place in the community was the therapy. Nowadays when you say therapeutic community, it is like 'Alcoholics Anonymous'! Or group therapy. That is not what we meant at that time. I know this because my wife is a psychotherapist and my daughter is a psychotherapist! [*Laughs*]

JJ: *Normally, when you go to a college or university, you are specialising. There is a certain level of abstraction and you distance yourself.*

PS: Exactly, you become alienated. Your education alienates you from yourself. You compartmentalise your education in a separate box from yourself. Then you use it to make a living. That is the fragmentation of the human being that has become accepted. It is even worse now than it was 50 years ago. In fact, it is far worse now with neoliberalism, where it is now all about achievement at the expense of everyone around you, at the expense of the planet, and at the expense of your personal mental health. This is why psychotherapy is the fastest growing industry in America.

I left Nordenfjord and Thy in August 1966. I had two years. Aage and I agreed that I had to move on. I was very conflicted about leaving because I was very close to Aage.



Grundtvig's Philosophy of Enlightenment and Education

By Ove Korsgaard

Preface

In the spring of 1972 I had planned to go to Paris for three months to stay with a friend. Shortly before my departure to the metropolis, my friend sent me a message saying that he had sold his apartment because he was going to Africa for work. This meant that I suddenly had three months available for rescheduling. One of my friends had previously asked me if I had been to Nordenfjord World University in Thy. What? A World University in Thy! It sounded far-fetched to me. I come from the island Mors, in the fjord south of Thy, and we islanders used to say that the best thing Thy had to offer was the view of Mors. For me it was incomprehensible that a university could have been established in Thy. How could it be that the people in Thy had set up a university, more so a World University? There were even rumours that John Lennon of the Beatles had studied at this university for a period of time. What the heck were the people in Thy doing better than the people in Mors? As a person from Mors I felt it was almost a duty to investigate this matter a little more closely. So instead of traveling to Paris, I contacted Aage Rosendal Nielsen and set off to the New Experimental College (NEC), the hub of the World University in Thy. When I arrived it turned out that the NEC was really an experimental project. There were no hired teachers; if you wanted to learn something you had to take the initiative yourself, build on the knowledge of the group and what you could find in the library.

Aage Rosendal himself came from Thy. He was brought up on a farm in Stagstrup. Despite being the eldest son of five children, he chose to leave agriculture behind and explore the world of education. Thanks to the support of his first teacher, who saw in Aage Rosendal a would-be scholar, after secondary school he was accepted in the prestigious boarding school Sorø Academy. There he distinguished himself by failing the necessary exam to pass onto graduation year. That same day, on his way home, he met a gravedigger at the cemetery who helped him understand that degrees were not really necessary by pointing out that he, a simple gravedigger, had many fine people under him. A typical Aage Rosendal anecdote.

In 1947, due to a one-year scholarship from the Denmark-America Foundation, Rosendal travelled to Grand New College in the United States to study theology. But soon enough he became a kind of missionary for N.F.S. Grundtvig and the Danish Folk High School system. In 1949 he established the Scandinavian Seminar. For decades this organisation sent students from American universities to Denmark; during six months the students were privately accommodat-

ed in order to learn the language, they then spent another six months in a Danish, Norwegian or Swedish Folk High School.

In 1962 the New Experimental College was established in a house on Slotsherrensvej in Copenhagen by Aage Rosendal and Sara Bryson, his American wife. Four years later NEC moved to the farm Fjordvang in Skjumbjerge, which they had purchased some years earlier. In 1969 Aage Rosendal and his growing group of followers founded Northern Fjords World University, which consisted of several small institutions that were established in the Thy area. One of these institutions was led by Preben Maegaard whose farm in Ylby later became the Centre for Renewable Energy. Another was an international film school, set up by Aage's student, David Nelson, in the former rectory of the village Kettrup. It was Nelson who introduced Aage to John Lennon during Christmas in 1969. When Lennon met Aage, wearing clogs, in the yard, he asked 'what do you do in Nordenfjord World University?' Aage responded that he was a 'kind of janitor there', and asked in return: 'What do you do?' Lennon said 'I make music', Aage continued 'Can you live from that?' to which Lennon replied 'Yes, its possible.' When Aage told these kinds of anecdotes you never knew whether they were true in the factual sense, as he was well-known for telling a good story.

Was the idea of a World University in Thy far-fetched? Of course it was. But I have never before or since experienced such a direct interaction between the 'local' and the 'global'. At Nordenfjord World University the door to the world was open. For Aage Rosendal the global did not have the national as its starting point, but the local. Most likely the route from Thy to New York, went over Copenhagen travel-wise, but not mentally; the route went directly from NEC, in Skjumbjerge, to the United Nations in New York. Aage Rosendal was deeply inspired by the Danish Folk High School tradition, but he integrated Grundtvig's ideas of the Folk High School with his own ideas for a university. When I arrived in NEC Aage gave me a copy of Grundtvig's treatise On the Scientific Union of the North (1839) which I was not previously familiar with. In this text Grundtvig calls for a joint Nordic University in Gothenburg, Sweden, that should address human communality from a scientific basis. Grundtvig's two institutions, the Folk High School and the University of the North, had their point of departure and horizon in the folkelige ('popular') and the 'universal', but more significantly there is a profound and dynamic interrelation between the two.

Philosophy of Education

N.F.S. Grundtvig was born in 1783, into a time when education was establishing itself as a central concept. He himself came to belong to a group of educational philosophers that included Rousseau (1712-1778), Herder (1744-1803), Kant (1724-1804), Fichte (1762-1814), Steffens (1773-1845), Humboldt (1765-1835), Schiller (1759-1805), Hegel (1770-1831), and others, all of whom in various ways contributed to the formation of modern educational philosophy. Even though philosophy of education does not constitute a single cohesive theory, there are a number of common features in its theoretical foundations – features that are often overlooked in the interest of pointing out differences. Philosophy of education builds on the common idea that human beings have a threefold relation: to themselves, to society, and to the world. If we disregard one of these dimensions, we are not seeing the world from the perspective of a modern philosophy of education.

Grundtvig's educational philosophy also follows this trichotomy. True enlightenment, he says in 'Education for the State' (1834), must take as its starting point the fact that as individuals we only exist by virtue of our community with our people and, by extension, with the whole world. He praises 'such an enlightenment – which by extending itself to the whole of human life and showing the deep connection between the life of the individual, the nation, and the whole human race, develops a way of thinking that is desirable for all social relations'. The task is 'to develop a complete human enlightenment' which will have the threefold effect of illuminating:

- 'the everyday life of the moment'
- 'the life of the people over centuries'
- 'human life over millennia'

Like many other great educational philosophers of the day Grundtvig is not a 'thinker' in the narrow sense of the word. His thought on schools and education arises from his reflections on what it means to be human. In this context it is important to note that from the outset his concept of education is not about teaching methods but involves a far greater compass: namely, that the individual's learning processes are connected to other learning processes in history and nature.

Grundtvig's times

Why were the great philosophers of the time so preoccupied with the concept of 'education'? Why not continue to talk about 'upbringing'? What is the background for the growth in a 'philosophy' of education emphasising self-determination, self-activation, and freedom? The answers to all these questions lie in the new understanding of the relation between the individual and society – an understanding that leads to a transformation of the concept of 'the people' from subject to sovereign.

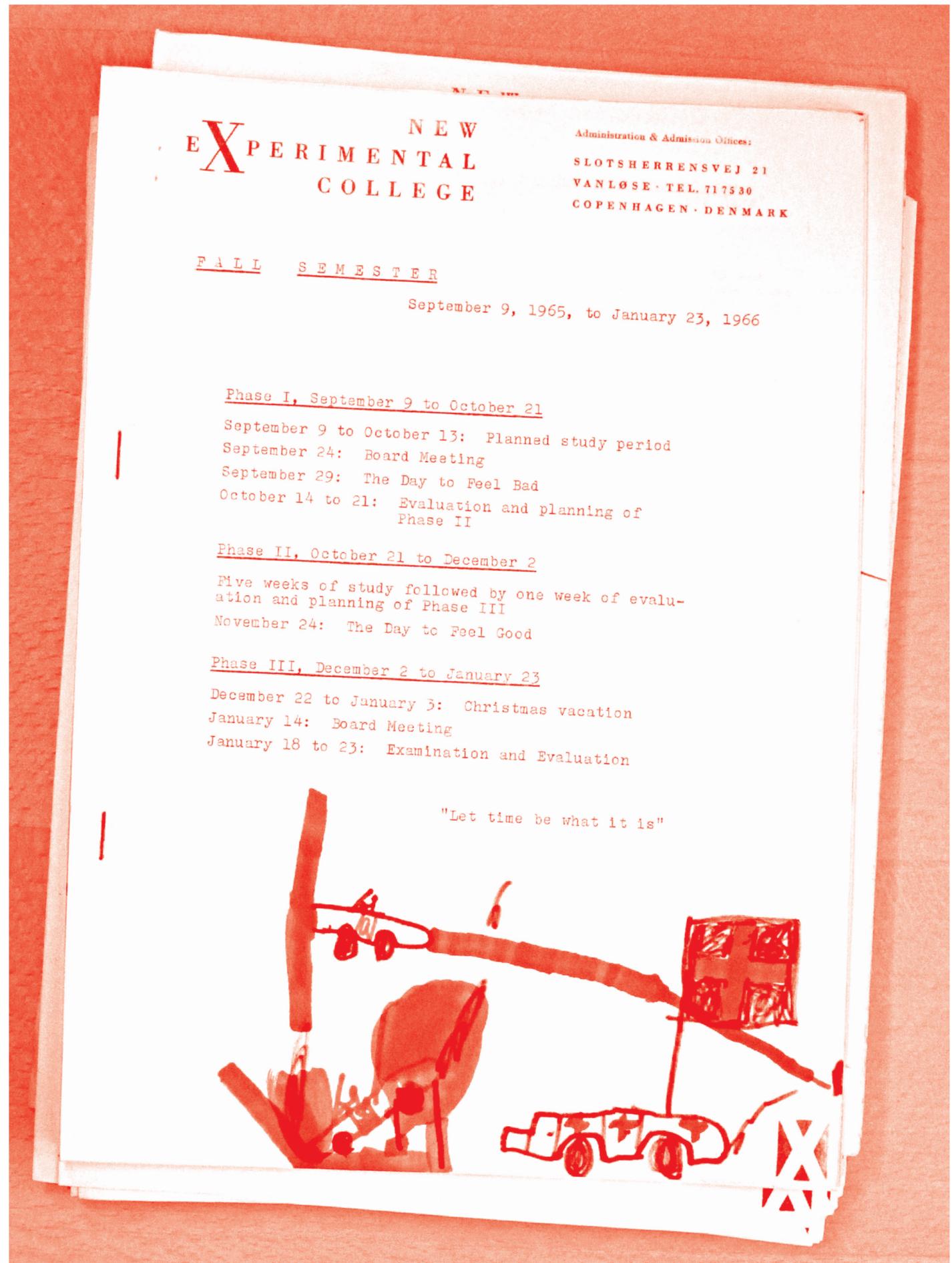
Under the old system 'the people' were always placed under a guardianship of some kind, be it in the household, the country, or their Christian faith. 'The people' were not masters in their own house, but were subordinate to the guardians of their fortunes. Education as something other than 'upbringing' was thus a response to the problem that arose with the transformation from princely to popular

sovereignty taking place at the core of the political system. The new understanding of 'the people' comes about in conjunction with the dramatic changes in the view of sovereignty that characterise the second half of the 18th century. Rather than the people being subject to princely sovereignty, there is a philosophical and popular movement towards a political system based on the sovereignty of the people. With the American Declaration of Independence in 1776, the American Constitution in 1787, and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man in 1789, 'the people' and 'the nation' are installed as sovereign powers. Indeed, the American Constitution actually begins with: 'We, the people of the United States...' Kings and princes as father figures were replaced by a social order based on democratic and national fellow feeling under the revolutionary slogan: 'Liberty, Equality and Brotherhood'.

The change from princely to popular rule required an upgrading of the concept of 'the people'. Born only seven years after the American Revolution and six years before the French Revolution, Grundtvig more than anyone contributed to this process. The Danish nation and the Danish state cannot be understood without an appreciation of the contribution made by Grundtvig.

The impulse from England

The charge against Grundtvig of self-contradiction for his many inconsistent views can be made largely because he stands at a crossroads in the history of ideas between British liberalism and German idealism. He is deeply influenced by German philosophers such as Herder, Fichte, and Hegel, but it is equally clear that he is indebted to John Locke and the ideals of liberty in English liberalism. Grundtvig undertakes four trips to England – in 1829, 1830, 1831, and 1843 – which have a great influence on his thinking, not least in the field of educational theory and practice. In England he comes face to face with modern society. Although he is horrified at the shadow side of industrialism, he is also enthused by the power and energy that he witnesses. In his meeting with modernity he sharpens his understanding of the importance of the liberal view of liberty, economics, politics, and the life of the spirit, and this leads him to write a call to arms under the title 'Nordic Mythology' (1832). He has become a champion of freedom, as can be seen from his introduction to the work, in which spirit and freedom constitute the core of his program. He gives the essence of this view in poetic form: 'Freedom for Loki as well as for Thor'. The two Nordic Gods, Loki and Thor, each have their view of the world, but both must enjoy the same freedom. It may well be that the majority side with Thor, but there must be room for Loki's worldview too, although his concept of freedom is egocentric. Despite the fact that Grundtvig is critical of the selfish tendency in Loki's concept of freedom he gives the provocative trickster a special place in the introductory poem. It is Loki who with his teasing wit ensures that the battle is fought with word and spirit as weapons rather than the fist. Grundtvig argues for a freedom that is not only tolerant of divergent thinking but is itself the condition for an exchange of views in a living interplay.



NEW EXPERIMENTAL COLLEGE

Program and Practical Information

Summer Session

July 1 - August 30, 1967.

NEW
EXPERIMENTAL
COLLEGE

I.

The program is the people who come.

II.

The Summer Session at New Experimental College is designed to provide optimum conditions for work, study, and research. It comprises moreover both group process and individual self-development. Participants are given full range of basic facilities: people (other students and teachers, local Danes), sunshine, water (fjord), farm country, books, and a good room.

In terms of continuity and direction, the present group proposes the following theme as a valuable meeting point for the summer months:

The phenomenology of the seeker, the search, and the sought.

III.

Program activities will be scheduled in 10-day periods. Every other period consisting of concentrated seminars and classes and every other period independent work, study and field trips. The last 10-day period will be devoted to evaluation and examinations for those who request them. The College can accommodate 25 students in the Summer Session.

Selected students will have the opportunity to attend a Congress in London from July 15-30 on the Dialectic of Liberation sponsored by the Institute of Phenomenological Studies. (The additional Congress expenses of 500 kroner (app. 70 dollars) plus travel are paid by the participant.)

IV.

Costs for the two month Summer Session are kr. 3,000 (440 dollars) per person which covers board, room and expenses at the College. The fee does not include travel and trips away from the College. Fees are paid one month in advance - kr. 2,000 by July 1st and kr. 1,500 by August 1st. Fees are non-refundable.

V.

New Experimental College is a World College governed by its student-faculty. It is a non-profit educational institution. The NEC campus is located on the Limfjord in Thy (the northwestern region of Denmark). Applications should be addressed to NEC:

SKYUM BJERGE PR. HØRDUM, THY, DENMARK, TELF. 0791, KOLDBY 234

Even though there is a kinship between Hegel and Grundtvig's philosophy of history, over the years Grundtvig grows increasingly critical of Hegel's view of liberty and his theory of the state. In the third volume of his *Handbook of World History* (1843) he clearly distances himself from what he calls Hegel's obsessive idea that it should be the Germans who create the complete state, with freedom and necessity in union. In an article on civil liberty in his journal, *The Dane* (1849), Grundtvig contrasts what he calls the English and the German idea of freedom. He laments that the Danes 'have allowed ourselves to be taken in tow by the Germans without being able to live off their "idea"; it is beyond dispute that we should be much better off with a free imitation of the English'. Grundtvig clearly has Hegel's idea of freedom in mind. 'If we ask the Germans... how we are to acquire and maintain "civil liberty"... they give us a long sermon or lecture on the great struggle between "liberty and necessity" and they impress upon us that all outer liberty is only a delusion, if the inner liberty is lacking.' German thought gives pre-eminence to the spirit and inner freedom: '... inner freedom is a treasure that must never be lost, and the outer physical servitude for the free soul is only empty appearance that in every case disappears with death'. But the idea that spiritual freedom can exist with physical servitude goes against all experience and good sense.

Fortunately, says Grundtvig, the Danes can learn from the English, who point to 'the so-called Habeas Corpus Act as the firm foundation of their freedom'. By this act no one can be denied physical freedom without a legal judgment to that effect. The Englishman argues that the act ensures that the physical liberty of the individual is absolutely crucial: 'He really does regard having your body in your power as the essence of freedom.' However, according to Grundtvig, it is not only Hegel who fails to assign decisive significance to the body, it is also many Christians. In *Handbook of World History* he again stresses the importance of the Habeas Corpus Act: 'What the English call the freedom of the body (Habeas Corpus) has always been disparaged by the scribes, because they fail to appreciate human nature and life's enterprise and dreadfully misunderstand the deep yet obscure truth that the body only exists for the sake of the spirit, and time for the sake of eternity. The English on the other hand, with their unparalleled enterprise and their hawk-eye for the conditions of industriousness, endeavoured as best they could in their ancient charter of freedom (Magna Carta) to ensure 'a free foot' which alone allows for 'a free hand', so no one was to be imprisoned except for a particular, stated, charge.'

Grundtvig thus supports a central concept in democracy: that freedom depends on whether one has power over one's body. We might even say that his most important contribution to the development of democracy is his repeated emphasis on the indissolubility of spiritual freedom and physical freedom. This explains his great enthusiasm for the Habeas Corpus Act, which must be regarded as a milestone in the establishment of a legal basis for liberal democracy.

Where Hegel sees the state as the instance which must ultimately ensure morality, Grundtvig regards the state as a form under which human life in all its powers should grow as wholly and as freely as possible. To ensure a free engagement in this struggle, the state should be neither church nor school; what the state should take care of is the creation of a serviceable framework for a spiritual battle, not a power battle. Grundtvig maintains his liberal view of the state's function for the rest of his life. In 1863, at the age of 80, he makes a speech in which he agrees with Luther's view of religious freedom but disagrees with him on the state church. Freedom requires a quite different magnitude from what Luther imagined. Grundtvig has seen it for himself in England, 'which in those days was the only safe harbour for freedom in the whole of Europe'.

Grundtvig's praise of England as the home of liberty leads to a deep disagreement with Hegel's view that the state should be the guarantor of social norms. Instead he takes the radical step of making the conversation in pursuit of the truth the authoritative instance of his age. Placing the conversation at the heart of the matter entails the rejection of institutions such as the church or the state, or even a book such as the Bible, as the guarantor of truth.

The impulse from the Continent

It is not just the influence from England that forms the background for Grundtvig's educational writings; there are also influences from the rest of Europe, including Denmark. Events on the Continent, in particular the July Revolution in Paris in 1830, play a decisive role for Grundtvig's entry into the political arena. The national and democratic ideas that are emerging in a number of countries also reach Denmark, where in 1830 a proclamation is issued advocating a free constitution for the two duchies of Schleswig and Holstein. In 1831, moreover, it is announced that to promote the democratic process Provincial Advisory Assemblies are to be established in Denmark, which will further Grundtvig's ideas on politics and education. He realises that the new pre-democratic institutions can benefit the country, if the members of the assemblies are given a better education. This will require a new form of High School that builds not on the exclusion but on the inclusion of the people - and of the vernacular language. Grundtvig gives form to the revolutionary idea that anyone can be enlightened and educated via the language of the people. In Denmark it is Danish. This ideal of enlightenment and education leads him to direct a vehement attack on the academic schools that maintain Latin as their entry ticket to education. Since only a small minority of the population attends the grammar schools, where they learn Latin, the idea of an unbreakable link between Latin and education has led inevitably to a sharp distinction between 'the scholars' and 'the people'. What Grundtvig wants is 'to connect academic with popular education'. However, 'the people', understood as the lower class, cannot yet be allowed to run the country; a genuine rule 'by the people' requires first that they have access to education. It is significant that Grundtvig writes most of his works on education between 1831 and 1847, in the period between the an-

nouncement of the Provisional Advisory Assemblies in 1831 and the transformation of the political system to democracy in 1848-49. He too is attempting to influence the change.

When the second wave of democratic revolution rolls through Europe in the spring of 1848, it also washes over Denmark. After a number of stormy meetings in Copenhagen in March 1848 culminating in a demonstration on 21 March, the newly crowned King Frederik VII ends the rule of absolute monarchy, begun in 1660, and the first steps towards a new political system are taken. The assemblies of 150 men from the bourgeoisie, the so-called National Liberals, are the prime movers in the change of system to the 1849 Constitution. They take it for granted that the new democracy should be led by the educated and the affluent. Grundtvig, who is himself a member of the Constitutional Assembly that passes the new constitution into law, nevertheless abstains, primarily because he is opposed to the establishment of an upper house (Landsting) based on the privileged wealth of the nation. If democracy is to be introduced into Denmark, it must be firmly and broadly anchored in 'the people'. And this requires popular education.

Grundtvig's anthropology

In the same way that communication and interaction constitute the core ideas in the anthropology and educational thinking of the American philosopher John Dewey, so is a living interaction the central concept in Grundtvig's educational thought. Time and again he emphasises the importance of a living interplay between teacher and student, between past and present, between earth and heaven, between soul and body, and between hand and mouth. The interaction between hand and mouth becomes Grundtvig's standard example of a general principle to which he gives the following poetic form: 'Hand' with 'spirit' - and vice versa, yet they each have their own way, just as hand and mouth contending for life's prize combine each day; 'hand and mouth' in their transcendence and reciprocal dependence interact most wondrously.'

The same principle of interplay between 'hand and mouth' is found in Grundtvig's writings on education. In 'The School for Life & the Academy in Sorø' (1838) he criticises the educational practice that builds on an incompatibility between soul and body:

'The fundamental error to which our school-madness for boys' scholarship, or rather for the underground gods, can be traced, is, as the English doctors quite rightly observe, the conflict that is imagined between the body and the soul, so that what the body loses, the soul must win.'

But for Grundtvig body and soul are united. If the body is mistreated, the soul is also affected.

The hand and the sense of touch play a major role in Grundtvig's anthropology. In the child's first stage of development there is a natural instinct to grasp something with in its reach. The child begins its appropriation of the world by grasping what comes into its hands. Often it reaches out in vain.

The crucial point for Grundtvig is not whether reality lives up to expectation, but that the soul has a tireless ability and eagerness to grasp at and connect with what is at any time separated from itself. He calls this eagerness 'desire'. In itself desire is not negative, but is primarily an expression of our natural longing for union - and for enlightenment. The child's learning process is long, and moves from the grasp of the hand to the acquisition of language that enables it to comprehend - to grasp metaphorically. When we contemplate the senses, says Grundtvig in his article 'On Man in the World' (1817): '...the hands must immediately attract our attention: they are the sense-instruments that stand on the border to a certain independence; they are in a way outside our body; they can to some degree more or less oblige certain things to be sensed; they can feel the whole body, but they are also a tool for the most developed sense without which the act of sensing cannot be completed, cannot offer full certainty and specific conceptions. For sense perception, which starts with a vague, indefinable feeling through touch, clearly ends in the hand with the clearest, most assured feeling, with the sense of feeling.'

For Grundtvig the hands represent the 'border' between the animal and the human being. The animal's lack of ability to understand itself is linked to its lack of an anterior pituitary in the brain, a 'handle' that the human brain possesses. In no animal, Grundtvig writes, have we 'found an instrument for the sense of touch that serves the hand'. This is more important than it may seem at first glance, for it is at this starting-point that 'the human being rises above the animal'. The idea that it is the use of the hand that helps raise us above the animal world is shared by Karl Marx, but where Marx sees the hand as a productive tool, Grundtvig links it primarily to the mouth and to its reflexive potential. He argues that the feeling 'which develops in the hand is already playing on the lips and seeks its explanation on the tongue'. The hand is thus in an intimate relation with the lips, the tongue, and the mouth - in other words with language, consciousness, and reflection on the self. Grundtvig sees this almost miraculous connection between the physical and mental act of grasping as applying to body and language as well as to hand and mouth. Not only can the one not live without the other, but there is an ascent in consciousness between the physical and the mental. What the newborn child's hand senses is speech without words; but soon the words will be articulated. Words are the most important medium with which to grasp the world, for language has the highest degree of human awareness linked to it, namely self-awareness. According to Grundtvig, the power and meaning of language stem from its concrete sensuous experiences. Words can only grasp by being linked to the hand's grasp; they can only be 'living' by being linked to the physical, organic life in an amicable interplay. So for Grundtvig, what is 'tangible' possesses both a physical and a spiritual dimension.

To the anthropological and psychological use of the hand Grundtvig adds a historical and social perspective. In *Nordic*

Mythology (1832) ‘the hand’ plays a major role, for it is in England that he has just met ‘the world of the hand’ in full force in what he calls ‘mechanical masterpieces’. He realises that what is happening in England will take on a universal character. Whether or not this change will lead to a universal crisis will depend on the view of enlightenment and knowledge that comes to dominate. He looks for an accord between the Nordic countries and England in order to develop the form of enlightenment and knowledge that will overcome the cultural crisis engulfing his times. The main problem, he believes, is the disparity between the worlds of the hand and the spirit; it is the division between hand and mouth that is the cause of the whole wretched situation. They must be reunited. For if the hand is given a free hand, so to speak, it will create a spiritless mechanical culture that will lead to a comprehensive disaster.

Grundtvig’s social philosophy

In Grundtvig’s view, the Renaissance and the Reformation represent a historical paradigm shift in bringing about an increasing individualisation and self-awareness. To a much greater degree than before, ‘the individual’ now enters the stage of history – witness such great figures as Shakespeare, Luther, and Columbus. The individualisation and subjectivisation that they symbolise is very significant, but, in Grundtvig’s view, individualisation and subjectivisation also represent an extremely dangerous phase in the historical process – the French Revolution has demonstrated how dangerous. For in France the relation between the individual’s desire for liberty and the state’s concern for the common good was destroyed – with fatal consequences as the revolution descended into chaos and destruction.

The desire for liberty can easily lead to the individual breaking away from civil life and regarding himself as his own master. Grundtvig does not restrict his criticism to the individual but extends it to ‘the age of the individual’ as a particular epoch in world history, which he also calls the age of the school and reflection. In his somewhat poetic or prophetic terminology, the age of the individual and the school is also ‘the age of individualisation’ in which man’s relationship to himself is central. Self-education becomes the starting-point for general education.

Also with the Renaissance and the Reformation come distinctive changes in the relationship between the three institutions: church, state, and school. The school takes on a far greater significance for social education than before. In Grundtvig’s view, these three institutions are expressions of three fundamental social relations in life: the church has to do with man’s relation to the divine; the state with man’s relation to humankind; and the school with man’s relation to himself. All other institutions are derived from these three. The concept of the state, for instance, includes the social and legal institutions, while the concept of the school encompasses what we today would call research, as well as educational and cultural institutions.

The immediate purpose of ‘the school’ is to make people useful citizens, but that is not its ultimate aim. According to Grundtvig, ‘The school must strive to de-

velop man to perfection.’ Although as a good Christian Grundtvig rejects the idea that man can perfect himself by his own efforts, he nevertheless propounds perfection as the aim of the school! Man may not be able to save himself, but he can do some good. He may not be able to comprehend God, but he can learn to understand himself as a spiritual being placed in a created world. In his article ‘On the Philosophical Century’ (1816) Grundtvig declares: ‘Truly to understand oneself is the great goal of human reason, the apex of human education’. For Grundtvig, this ‘education’ is to be acquired through the union of knowledge and philosophy.

The increasing focus on the individual and self-awareness that characterises the age of individualisation and the school necessitates new conditions for social education. In Grundtvig’s view, this means that education must play a much greater role than before in the relation between the individual and society. Where the church previously enjoyed a close relationship with the state, it is now the school that moves to the centre of social education. For all governments, says Grundtvig, ‘the encouragement of education is the most important affair of state, since the welfare of the state now and hereafter depends upon it.’ At the same time Grundtvig is well aware that education is a double-edged sword. For how can the necessary bonds be secured between the individual and the community, when education inevitably leads to increasing individualisation and self-awareness? Grundtvig circles around the dilemma, which can be formulated as follows: On the one hand education promotes individualisation, on the other hand it is education and not power that ensures social cohesion. As he says, “‘Enlightenment’ is a very ambiguous word’. It has a Janus face. The state can risk ‘perishing from enlightenment’. This, in Grundtvig’s view, is because there exist both a true and a false enlightenment. False enlightenment is that ‘which always begins with the needs of the individual’, and as such ‘it is a serious danger to civil society in all ages and under all skies’, because all societies rest on ‘a respect for a higher right than the individual’s’. If enlightenment undermines the individual’s sense for the community and the common bonds among people, then the base on which social education rests is threatened. True enlightenment has its origin in the fact that as individuals we exist only by virtue of our community – not just with ‘the people’ but with all mankind.

Despite Grundtvig’s view that liberty can undermine society’s necessary sense of the common good, he does not argue for less freedom than before the French Revolution, but for more. To be a member of a community means taking a responsibility for its common life. And this is best ensured if the community allows each individual the liberty to do so. Grundtvig’s social philosophy rests on the liberal view that only in freedom will individuals freely impose on themselves the necessary bonds. Grundtvig does not argue for total individual freedom. Such an understanding of freedom will in the long run lead to the dissolution of society. Boundless freedom is not an option for ‘the citizen’. Absolute individualism is incompatible with any idea of a society, for every society is dependent on the ties between the individual and the

state, the people and the nation. Social education always builds on a certain agreement on the common good. Where this understanding does not exist, the survival of the fittest takes over.

Without some agreement on ‘the common good’ the relationship between the individual and the state therefore reaches a deadlock. How can this then be resolved? And if the damage has been done, can the knot be undone by any other means than the sword? This is where the school becomes a vital institution. For, according to Grundtvig, it is the historical task of the school to loosen the knot between the individual and the state by other means than force. In ‘Education and the State’ (1834) he writes:

‘This is the knot, the Gordian knot in human development, which, when all is said and done, has up to now been cut by the sword of Alexander, but which must be untied with caution and with patience wherever the state is to be rescued and ‘genuine’ human enlightenment is to progress to the end of days. It is not just a single deep-thinking philosopher who must understand that imagination and feeling belong as much to a proper person as reason, and that, like reason, they have both virtues and defects.’

Rather than the sword, it is education that must serve the overriding goal of loosening the knot – without loosening the ties – between the individual and the state, the people and the nation.

One of the knots that Grundtvig regards as extremely problematic is the knot between state and church. In his youth he had fought to retain the church and Christianity as the foundation of the state, but his views change in favour of a radical liberalisation of church life. In his ‘Foreword to Handbook of World History’ (1833) he writes:

‘I have gradually learned to distinguish sharply between church and school, faith and knowledge, temporal and eternal, and I realise clearly that just as strongly as the church must repudiate every attempt by the state and school to reform it as it pleases, just as unjustified is it for the church to foist a church figure on either the state or the school.’

Under the premises for the church at the time Grundtvig now supports freedom of religion, freedom of preaching, and the possibility of loosening the ‘parish-tie’.

In 1836 Grundtvig writes an article with the rhetorical title ‘Is Faith Truly a School Matter?’ His answer is in the negative – keep faith out of the school. Grundtvig consequently argues for a radical change in the very purpose of Christian confirmation. Rather than a ‘church’ confirmation he prefers a ‘civil’ confirmation. Its purpose is not admission for the candidates to the life of the church but – and without the least concern for the candidates’ faith – their ‘admission to civil society’. Instead of teaching ‘matters of faith’ the school should provide an introduction to what it means to live as a decent citizen of a society, for ‘that is the same for Christians, Jews, and heathens alike, and ought to remain very much outside matters of faith’.

Logos and dia-logos

In his educational writing ‘Education for the State’ (1834), Grundtvig makes no

secret of the fact that ‘enlightenment’ is a difficult word to define and ‘a difficult subject to talk about’. As he says: ‘When one begins to think about the word “enlightenment” one soon discovers... that there are as many kinds of enlightenments as there are heads with eyes in them.’ In other words, that there are as many ‘enlightenments’ as there are individuals. But, does the word still make sense if ‘enlightenment’ is individualised? Yes, in one way it does, says Grundtvig.

‘For just as I was despairing over the many kinds of enlightenments, it of course occurred to me that since it suits me very well to have a head with eyes in it, I am thereby helped and know very well what I am saying when I speak of the people’s enlightenment; for I know that above all it is their own enlightenment I mean.’

For Grundtvig, enlightenment and empowerment come primarily from within. Grundtvig probably finds a basis for this belief in the last resort, enlightenment is self-enlightenment and self-insight. We can see this in Luke’s Gospel, where Jesus says, ‘Why don’t you judge for yourselves what is right?’

Grundtvig’s belief that enlightenment is first and foremost ‘self-enlightenment’ is based on the idea that in ‘words’ everyone has access to enlightenment about life. In the ‘little word’ everyone shares in the logos of the ‘great word’. The central biblical passage for Grundtvig’s theology of the word is the prologue to John’s Gospel. Its introductory words – ‘In the beginning was the Word’ – are the foundation of his educational program. In *Elementary Christian Teachings* (1855-61) he writes: ‘...it is important to know that “Logos” in Greek corresponds to “Word” in Danish’. Grundtvig often calls Jesus logos, but at the same time he makes a distinction between logos and dia-logos. Man does not have direct access to the logos of the great word, the divine reason, but must manage with the little word, the truth of which must be tested through dia-logos. Since the basis for enlightenment and education is the self, the world cannot be observed from a panoptic vantage point but must be viewed with different eyes and from different angles. Truth thereby appears only in the interplay between various truths. Using a modern concept we can say that for Grundtvig enlightenment is a discursive concept, a concept of struggle. No one can claim to possess absolute Truth, for we perceive only piece by piece.

Grundtvig sees no contradiction between interaction and hierarchy. On the contrary, interaction can only work by virtue of a hierarchy between, for example, truth and lying. If truth is not ‘better than’ lying, the whole foundation for a living interaction collapses. But does not the principle of contradiction exclude every form of ambiguity? That is not how Grundtvig sees it. He is well aware that it is not always possible to say of a particular phenomenon what is true and what is false, but that does not invalidate the principle of contradiction. For then the truth is that the phenomenon in question is ambiguous. Grundtvig, however, has a strong belief that the day will come when others will contradict this truth with the claim that the phenomenon is unambiguous, that the riddle has been solved.

Declaration of Interdependence

In the pursuit of truth, we the students of a World College declare as a natural right, our individual and collective dependence and interdependence with all and each human being.

We declare as our right freely to associate with him and he with us.

As a manifestation of this natural right, we are developing a University Free State for the pursuit of Learning on the highest level, where all individuals are invited to come.

We will develop this Free State of Learning as an interdependent identity, second to no other state or country, realizing its natural relation with all states and countries.

I. Its power shall be its wisdom and its concern.

II. Its jurisdiction shall be all its membership.

III. Its laws shall be its own only recognizing the yet disunified conception and implementations of local and international law.

IV. It shall until recognized by all other states, understand and comply with any local law until such are resolved to its human status.

V. It shall develop all its rules and regulations for the full function and support of a Free State.

Be it thus known to all and each man that this is his opportunity to declare himself as the highest authority in all matters where his goals and means are not interdependence with one or all men.

Be it thus know to all and each man and woman that he learns fully and what he wants in relation to this high goal, and that his world is made through this his doing.

That is the object of a world Free State for Learning.

June 3rd 1965

Aage Rosendal Nielsen

entered as an official document of the New Experimental College in connection with the adoption of its provisional constitution.

Logos and Eros

In his poem ‘Enlightenment’ (1839) Grundtvig places great emphasis on the light coming from below: ‘The sunrise on the peasant shines, / but on the scholar never’, he says. In so doing, he distances himself from European rationalism and its idea of enlightenment. However, Grundtvig does not reject the idea of enlightenment as such; instead, he incorporates it into an interplay with eros. Enlightenment comes about in the field of tension between logos and eros, between the creative force from above and the creative drive from below.

Grundtvig has had deep personal experience of this field of tension. A single episode will suffice by way of example. At a dinner party in London in June 1830 he meets an English lady, Clara Bolton, with whom he converses until one o’clock in the morning. He is 46; she is 26, and married. She frequents the company of well-known literary people, including the young writer and politician Benjamin Disraeli. Despite their only meeting once, Clara Bolton leaves an indelible impression on Grundtvig, as can be seen from the letter he writes, but never sends, to the host of the dinner party: ‘...since I arrived at the years of discretion, and that is a good while ago, I have not been so captivated, not to say more than that, by any lady in the world’. In Kaj Thaning’s groundbreaking doctoral thesis ‘First a Man – Grundtvig’s clash with himself’ (1963) he argues that Grundtvig’s meeting with Clara Bolton changes his whole view of life, which in turn influenced his educational ideas. Indeed, Clara Bolton has been called the ‘mother of the People’s High School’!

Grundtvig leaves his impression of her in a poem, which remains unpublished until after his death:

‘There I met a coal-black eye that penetrated to my heart, lightning-flashes from on high that cracked my whole desire apart; She set, in spite of pain and ire, my eye alight, my breast afire. Clara’s breath my mouth unlocked, the rock was split, the water streamed; Like a morning dream she knocked, then disappeared – or so it seemed: For ev’ry time a harp-string sighs, Clara floats before my eyes!’

Clara Bolton is no doubt still floating before Grundtvig’s inner eye as he writes the canonical work of the People’s High School, the ‘Nordic Mythology’ (1832). He now shifts the balance between male and female, history and nature, logos and eros, in each case in favour of the latter. His conception of enlightenment concludes that if logos is left to itself, the brain becomes overwrought, whereas when logos and eros go hand in hand, light is brought to heat: ‘Light without heat’, says Grundtvig, is a ‘torment of hell’.

The enlightenment of the people is an enlightenment that comes from below. It directs itself first and foremost towards the domains of the heart and the hands, that is, to the life of the emotions and the will – towards growth processes and creation processes. Grundtvig thereby forges a close link between enlightenment and poetry. The word ‘poetry’ comes from Greek and means ‘making’ or ‘creation’. For Grundtvig creation is not only an event that took

place ‘in the beginning’; it is an ongoing event in the life of both the individual and society. The relationship between the three institutions of church, state, and school, is, as we have seen, neither eternal nor unchangeable. The ideals, the system of government, and the cultural rituals of a society are all movable phenomena and subject to the forces of time, history, and change. Since ‘creation’ is an ongoing event, education must aim at more than the ability to copy (called ‘evidence-based knowledge’ in our time); it must build on sensitivity to what is in the making. In order to contribute to this ongoing creation and genesis process, education must be what Grundtvig calls ‘historic-poetic’. Only such a method can call forth the life forces that lie dormant in the times. The precondition for being able to link education and eros is a rejection of the form of rationalism that alone emphasises logical thinking. The emphasis must be on poetic thinking. Grundtvig’s historic-poetic method should in no way exclude reason. His aim is ‘to make the whole school marriage plan fit for use: between the intellect and dramatic poetry’.

Grundtvig distinguishes between logical scientific education and historic-poetic education, stressing the latter without overlooking the former. If a school bases itself on logical scientific thought alone, that school will petrify. Such an approach lacks any relation to creation, in the form of poetry and, in a deeper sense, eros. This does not imply that Grundtvig in any way wishes to exclude natural sciences from schooling. The university that he dreams of opening in Gothenburg should have two faculties, one for the natural sciences and one for history (which today would be called the humanities). It is only if natural sciences seek a monopoly on the explanation of life that Grundtvig will beat the drum!

So, concepts that nowadays are known as narrative thought or the narrative method are already important elements of Grundtvig’s historic-poetic method. Life as it is lived and history as it has been experienced, constitute the narrative element in Grundtvig’s educational thinking. More than any of his contemporaries he is aware that personal identity and collective communities have a narrative as their prerequisite. Without narratives there is no individual and popular identity. The narratives that are passed on to the next generation structure human life and social life. According to Grundtvig, ‘the School for Life’ must build on the narrative and the dialogue as its most important educational methods.

Grundtvig’s educational thinking

Towards the end of the 18th century a wide range of educational reforms is introduced in Denmark, driven by enterprising citizens and eager landowners influenced by the ideas of the Enlightenment. Despite the country going bankrupt in 1813 in the crisis of the Napoleonic wars, and despite the loss of Norway to the Swedes the following year, the push for change culminates in the great School Reform of 1814. Through this great leap forward Denmark becomes only the second country in the world (after Prussia) to introduce compulsory education for all children between the ages of 7 and 14. It is now the task of

the school to instill into the children ‘the knowledge and skills that are necessary for them to become useful citizens of the state’. The religious justification for school education is retained, however, with its aim of making children ‘good, upright people in accordance with the teaching of evangelical Christianity’. Luther’s *Small Catechism* (1529) is still regarded as the primary book on the school curriculum – and is still learned by heart. But from the 1830s such teaching comes in for sharp criticism from Grundtvig and from others inspired by his thinking.

At the practical level Grundtvig becomes seriously involved in the work of Queen Caroline Amalie’s asylum (kindergarten), established in 1829. In connection with this institution an asylum school is created in 1841 based on modern, ‘Grundtvigian’ principles. Grundtvig himself even takes on the task of director of the management board during its early years.

On the subject of what and how actually to teach schoolchildren at primary level, he provides only outlines, chiefly in ‘Education for the State’ (1834). Here we find two strongly held views: the teaching of Christianity should be discontinued; the main subjects should be Danish history and Danish literature. In abolishing the teaching of Christianity – for centuries the central subject for the creation of identity – and replacing it with Danish history and literature, Grundtvig wishes to create a new identity for the school. The church can take care of Christianity; the school must take care of the people and society. Thus it is the specifically Danish narrative subjects that Grundtvig wishes for his school, whether it be the Village School, or the People’s High School: ‘The history of our country – its ancient history, pithy proverbs, and all the language of the people in the mother-tongue – that is what should be the subject of conversation in the Village School in order to nourish the imagination and the feelings in an inoffensive direction that is equally useful to the state and the individual.’

The school must help in the construction of an uplifting community life, and this cannot be done by force or by soul-destroying rote learning. An indirect method must be employed: namely, the telling of stories about the fatherland, the mother-tongue, and human life in such a way as to lead the young people in the direction of the community. Telling the stories and singing the folk songs in Danish will help them to love life, including the ‘life of the people’. This is the point of origin for all true education: a care for the subject. As he writes in the poem ‘The Golden Year’ (1834): ‘No man in the land can e’er understand what he did not care for first.’

Grundtvig is known in educational circles around the world for developing the idea that lies behind a completely new form of school, the People’s High School (also known as the Folk High School). In fact his ideas also reach further, for they embrace both a pan-Nordic university and a form of church school. In ‘The School for Life & the Academy in Sorø’ (1838) he writes: ‘Since human life in all its complexity may nevertheless be classified into three main branches – the religious, the social, and

the academic – one could correspondingly imagine three sorts of Schools for Life: the Church School, the People’s High School, and the University. These must of course have the same diversity as their corresponding life in society.’

The first of these – the Church School, representing the holy and the mystical – is not developed in Grundtvig’s educational writings and need not detain us here. But the amazingly ambitious plan that he unfolds in his other educational writings is to establish an educational system that builds on the twin pillars of the people and the human race. The one pillar should bear up the new People’s High School, the other the new University of the North. Vocational training and the training of civil servants should take place at specific schools for those professions. Between the People’s High School and the University there should be both a difference and a relation, which in Grundtvig’s parlance means a tension between the universal and the particular i.e. the specific, the limited, the present.

From where does Grundtvig gather his ideas for these schools for young adults? In ‘On the Union of Learning in the North’ (1839), he mentions how the first seeds were sown when as a 19-year-old he heard his cousin Henrik Steffens introduce romanticism to Scandinavia in a series of lectures in Copenhagen. These seeds are brought to life through his three England trips in 1829, 1830, and 1831, which brings him into contact with, among others, Cambridge University:

‘I can clearly see that I owe my own education to this glimpse of a true university, just as it was my visit to Trinity College that first showed me what such a fellowship could and would be when it is inspired by a true spirit of learning with all eyes open to the whole of human life and its great natural laws, forces, and purposes.’

During his stay in Cambridge in the summer of 1831 he is invited to dine together with the students and the dons, and in letters from Cambridge (14 and 19 June 1831) he writes home to his wife, Lise, full of enthusiasm: ‘At the colleges they dined in a large hall with long tables and benches, as in a farmhouse, and since the staff can invite whom they like, I dined here, there, and everywhere – wherever those who know one another meet.’

The first time that Grundtvig formulates his idea of a new form of university is in the fragment on ‘The University in London and the Academy at Sorø’ (1827), where he refers to the significance which ‘the cloistered schools at Oxford and Cambridge’ have had for the British. Grundtvig is not only impressed by the life and ethos at the famous universities; he is also inspired with the idea of a ‘People’s High School’. The first time he employs this expression is in an article from 1831 entitled ‘Political Considerations, with a Glance at Denmark and Holstein’, where he regrets that ‘in few places, if anywhere, is there a High School for popular learning and civic education that gives “the non-academic” the opportunity for both education and skills training.’

The People’s High School that Grundtvig envisages in the historic town of Sorø is a large, state-run, educational establishment for the adult youth of Denmark. It is clearly the struggle between Latin-based education and Danish/Nordic-based education that in his view necessitates a Danish People’s High School. In Grundtvig’s youth, Latin was still considered superior to the Danish language, and grammar schools of his time are still known as ‘Latin schools’, since Latin is their main subject. University lectures and doctoral theses are delivered in Latin. Latin and cultivation are considered two sides of the same coin. According to Grundtvig therefore, to have Danish recognised as an educative language in culture and education is crucial for both the elite and the people; only thus can a sense of community be developed between them to the benefit of the country. Grundtvig does not work out a detailed curriculum as such for his High School, but he does emphasise in various contexts the importance of History, Mythology, and Poetry as well as Facts and Figures, the Constitution, and Commerce. The actual teaching should not be primarily based on books but on the living, spoken word in the mother tongue. The aim is for the teacher’s monologue to be turned into dialogue at the first opportunity in order to promote interaction between teacher and student and between the students themselves. Grundtvig is no enemy of book learning – indeed he himself is an inveterate bookworm, who reads and writes his whole life through – but, all things being equal, he regards the difference between the spoken and the written word as similar to that between life and death. The advantage of the spoken word is that one person thereby meets another – in body and spirit.

In his address ‘To the Norwegians Concerning a Norwegian High School’ (1837) Grundtvig raises the question: How can popular education be reconciled with ‘serious learning and genuine scholarship’? The People’s High School cannot manage both, so a new university must be established. Readers are assured that once each Nordic country has its own People’s High School, this will lead to the foundation of ‘a major academic high school... for the progress and enlightenment of the people in all their mysterious depth and glorious variety – a university’.

Grundtvig reveals his ideas for a university to their fullest extent in his essay, ‘On the Union of Learning in the North’ (1839), where he proposes the establishment of a major, pan-Nordic university in Gothenburg. There are to be 300 scholars in the course of 30 years whose work will be for ‘the honour, benefit, and happiness of the human race’. The university is to enjoy the status of a free city and be ‘the workshop for a most vivifying scholarship’. The constant refrain throughout the essay is that the laws of life take precedence over the laws of death. The first step, or transition, from death to life is unquestionably the most important – the introduction of “the mouth and the mother-tongue” within their indispensable rights’. The university’s two faculties – of natural sciences and history (humanities) – must relate to each either through interaction. Of course there will be ‘a certain division’ between the physical and the human sciences, says Grundtvig, but since ‘universal history’ em-

braces the entire field of human activity, it must also include all scholarly and scientific endeavours. In the attempt ‘to interpret the entire sphere of human knowledge in the interests of life’, scholars at the university in Gothenburg will strive towards what is of an inclusive, all-embracing, general character – towards the universal.

In his writings Grundtvig uses various designations for the two educational institutions he dreams of: The People’s High School is called variously a ‘Danish High School’, a ‘scholarly high school’, ‘the high school in Sorø’, or ‘the School for Life’. The University of the North in Gothenburg on the other hand is the ‘School for Passion’. Where Grundtvig’s People’s High School – the School for Life – is rooted in the here and now, his university – the School for Passion – is rooted in the universal. The School for Passion is partly a ‘School for Fun and Games’, says Grundtvig in ‘Education for the State’ (1834), for there must be room to proceed by trial and error. Time will tell which distorted and crazy ideas and images of the world are tenable.

Grundtvig’s educational ideas and their historical influence

An important feature of Denmark’s formation as a nation-state in the 19th century is that the impetus comes very much from below. When the people finally summon up the courage to demand a democratic constitution from their absolute monarch, they march up the main street in Copenhagen to demand their rights from King Frederik VII – while Grundtvig was looking from a first-floor window. This being Denmark and not France, the King grants the people their request on the spot. The People’s High School becomes an important symbol of an institution set up from below. Even if Grundtvig’s High School in Sorø never gets off the ground, a People’s High School is established in 1844 in Rødding in Schleswig, to be followed by a number of others in subsequent years, though not all of them Grundtvig-inspired.

The most significant figure in the ‘High School movement’ is Chresten Kold (1816-70). As a young schoolteacher Kold rejects the catechismal method, which has forced pupils to learn by heart specific answers to the teacher’s questions on religious subjects. Instead, he tells his pupils stories from the Bible and Danish history. After his refusal to be ‘disciplined’ he is dismissed. Eventually in 1851 he sets up his own People’s High School – a ‘school for confirmed young people’ – and in 1852 he establishes his own Free School for Children near Ryslinge on Funen. At both types of schools he employs narrative teaching as his primary educational method. In his lifetime he is involved in the establishment of no fewer than a hundred Free Schools on Funen and Zealand.

Kold pays less attention to logical-scientific thought in favour of the narrative. His primary concern is emotionality, or ‘the education of the heart’, and he draws on Herder’s idea of discovering the ‘natural, authentic self’. According to both Grundtvig and Kold, the prerequisite for finding this genuine self is the use of the language learned at our mother’s knee, i.e. the mother tongue. Their insistence that this peasant language can form the basis of ‘education’ – indeed that it is a better aid

than Latin for the purpose – is the starting point for what they both call ‘popular education’. While Grundtvig has often been referred to as the first philosopher of adult education, Kold has been called an educational genius, due to his understanding of the art of evoking ‘the people’ and ‘the nation’ as – in the words of Benedict Anderson’s famous definition of a nation – ‘imagined communities’. Kold’s narrative stories and histories call up pictures in the mind’s eye, which the common people take possession of as their own, seeing themselves in a new light.

The major breakthrough for the People’s High School movement occurs after ‘the great accident’ in 1864, when Denmark is defeated by Prussia and Austria and loses the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein. The old multinational and multilingual state is finally destroyed, and Denmark now comes close to fulfilling the ideal requirements of a nation state, i.e. the complete overlap of state, nation, people, and language. The defeat in 1864 discredits the political elite, with the resulting political vacuum being in part filled by the movements associated with ‘Grundtvigianism’ (as the movement came to be known) and the Danish farmers. The narrative of the Danish peasants often begins with the slogan: ‘What is outwardly lost must be inwardly gained!’ This watchword has been repeated again and again since 1864. Denmark has lost the war, but gains other things instead, among them fifty People’s High Schools founded in just seven years (1865-72). The majority of these are based on the ideas of Grundtvig and Kold.

With the loss of Schleswig, Rodding People’s High School reopens north of the new border in Askov in 1865. Since that date the newly named Askov People’s High School has been the leading school of its type in Scandinavia. The other Nordic countries follow suit, with the first People’s High Schools opening in Norway (1864), Sweden (1868), and Finland (1889).

The curriculum at the various Danish schools places an emphasis not only on skills training but also on civic education and empowerment. The schools create a new vision for young peasant farmers by differentiating between the two concepts of ‘commoners’ and ‘people’, which have hitherto been more or less synonymous terms. The young farmers learn not to regard themselves as commoners but as equal members of the Danish ‘people’. ‘From commoners to people’ becomes a motto for the people’s enlightenment at the People’s High Schools, which are the key institutions in what has been called the Grundtvigian Cultural Revolution in Denmark. The new thinking has a tremendous impact on the growth of civil society, and also influences the Danish capitalist market economy. The movement towards internationalisation in the 1870s – the first step in the process of globalisation – entails a radical increase in agricultural competition. Cheap grain, predominantly from the United States, gains a foothold in European markets. New railroads and steamboats facilitate the transport of American grain to Europe while still keeping prices competitive.

Although the growing crisis in Danish farming brings a demand for excise regulations, the call for protectionist policies is never really heeded; instead the agricultur-

al industry responds to the crisis by turning from grain to livestock production. This reorientation results in increased research and a reform of the current agricultural training, as well as the establishment of a new ‘agribusiness’ involving the processing industry, with dairies and slaughterhouses and the setting up of a new distribution network. A key concern is whether the laws of capitalism should govern these ‘agribusinesses’, as the urban industries have been, or whether they should be based on ideas of cooperation.

The Danish farmers’ prevailing choice is to organise dairies and slaughterhouses as cooperative companies. The emphasis on the empowerment of the people in the People’s High Schools has often been seen as the determining influence on the Danish farmers’ choice of the cooperative model. The People’s High Schools and the cooperative movement gain international renown in the 20th century, inspiring a series of reform movements in Eastern Europe in the interwar period and in the Third World in the decades after World War II.

This school form has attracted many people around the world. Grundtvig’s educational ideas and the story of the People’s High School have become two sides of the same coin, despite his plans only being realised in a very limited way. Among the ideas that remained on the drawing board, however, was that of a joint Nordic university to help solve the riddles of human life.

The particular and the common

There is no doubt that Grundtvig considered this joint Nordic University to be the crown of his educational thought. The task of any university is to place the people’s own limited reality in a context that goes above and beyond the particular. For Grundtvig, the individual people’s history always forms part of mankind’s history in general, and nowhere is this direction made plainer than in his final major writing on education, ‘A Congratulation to Denmark on the Danish Dimwit and the Danish High School’ (1847). Here he emphasises that the inherent educational goal of the Danish people, its telos, is always what is common to all mankind. His hope is thus that the Danes will

‘acquire all that is so-called “foreign”, provided that it is human. It will therefore never destroy or oppress what belongs to the people, but only complement what the Danes deliberately remain open to, so as not to miss out on what is universal and common to all mankind, and in which of course everything that is truly “of the people” will eventually find its purpose and be illuminated’.

It is living interaction between the individual, the people, and the world that makes up the fundamental structure of Grundtvig’s idea of enlightenment and education.

Ove Korsgaard is professor at Aarhus University, Departent of Education. In 1972-73 he was enrolled at NEC and Nordenfjord World University

PROPOSAL FOR A NEC CENTER IN THY

Purpose:

To provide an environment for a student initiated and developed center concerned centrally with self-development and mutual self-exploration. This center might be conceived as an experimental proving grounds for people with undefined goals to try and evolve a direction and course of study which would also suggest direction for further developments at the Thy Center as well as for the College as a whole. In terms of the prospectus this center could come under program I or II, but neither, as yet, satisfactorily define it.

Plan:

We would begin with a small group of people (about 5) who would establish themselves at Skyum Bjerge and begin repairs on the old farm so that they could move in within two weeks. This means that the roof, windows, and any other openings in the structure would need be repaired and some form of initial heating system introduced (such as a used coal oven). A few pieces of furniture and bedding would also be necessary. Temporary repairs finished, we would set up what ever beginnings we felt important and begin the long process of repair work which would eventually put the farm in usable order for increasing numbers.

Possibilities: This site could provide a number of possibilities to students. Certain qualities might include: (1) an inspiring aesthetic environment now so lacking at Slot. 21; (2) an opportunity to contribute to our own and the College's development in concrete ways - such as building and planning; (3) the notion of listing opportunities for student's experimentations with labor and life styles by serving as fishermen, farmers, or doing crafts, etc; (4) establishing a relationship to a new environment and society; and, (5) being in a situation reasonably removed from immediate society allowing considerable freedom for possibly asocial and/or socially dissonant activities.

Economics:

The donation of labor and planning time could be reasons to consider the members of the Thy center as "interns", financially speaking. However, in the beginning, such measure is presumptuous and impossible., unless supplementary funds were forth coming. Students, however, might pay the standard 1500 kr. monthly fee deducting the value they place on their contribution. The subtracted sum could then be reapplied to expenses for building repairs if the individual wished to make that donation. Hopefully, with some preliminary success, other funds could be solicited on the basis of concrete needs and plans which could be easily demonstrated by examples of new proposals and increasing numbers of students.

Drawbacks:

Some of the difficulties involved with the Thy Project are: (1) distance from social and cultural activities - f. ex. in Ålborg, Århus, Thisted, and Copenhagen; plus the cost of such trips; (2) no means of transportation

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for bringing food and materials to the site; (3) remoteness as a psychological factor - i.e. isolation or a sense of alienation; (4) extremely primitive conditions with no running water, electricity, plumbing, etc., especially from the standpoint of view of new people coming from more civilized standards, and this combined with the harsh weather found in North Jutland,

General Thoughts:

The Thy Project, considered as a part and extension of our present situation at NEC, offers students and faculty members a chance to evolve or change their life styles. For many such an opportunity is rare since most situations have established patterns and accepted modes and levels of expression. Also, this location would most likely separate out people who intended coming to NEC simply to use it as a base for social explorations in Copenhagen or as a comfortable home for doing nothing. These people might be given special therapeutic sessions with Åge at Slot. 21. In short then, the center would be for people who were interested in actively participating in their own development. As part of a degree program the Thy Center could be part of a liberal arts, or better a "living arts" curriculum with explorations of life styles, self-development, expression, and enlightenment (both aesthetic and worldly). Just what role faculty members or lectures would have is yet undefined and needs clarification. But the work in Thy seems to imply the possibilities for continuing on to perhaps more defined or special independent studies and this suggest the need for a third center. How or if functions would be divided is also part of the overall experiment. But it is hoped that Thy could form part of a dialectic with another center and with the Scandinavian Studies people and that out of this would come the Center's development.

November 22, 1965

Ron Manheimer

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The Detroit Free Press, March 6, 1966

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The Detroit Free Press, March 6, 1966

New Experimental College



POST- OG TELEGRAFVÆSENET

Telegrafstation: _____ Fra: _____ Kl. _____ Af: _____
Dato: _____ Til: _____ Kl. _____ Af: _____

Art	Afsendt fra				
	urgent københavn				
Nr.	Antal ord	Indl. d.	Kl.	Tj. bom.	
d658	66/65	22 1970	15,37		

Adresse: _____
urgent mr. John Lennon
N.E.C. Skyum Snedsted

Takst: _____

a picture of a crewcut beatles is worth a furtune stop you know it and
wie know itstop allow us to take that picture and wie will giwe the world
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522 Flemming Hasager Editor inchief

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EKSTRA BLADET
Jan 23, 1970

NEW EXPERIMENTAL COLLEGE

Administration & Admission Offices:
 SLOTSHERRENSVEJ 21
 VANLØSE · TEL. 7175 30
 COPENHAGEN · DENMARK

SPRING SEMESTER, 1965.

Orientation Seminar at Humlebæk (Center for Leisure) *is the necessary?*
 February 12 to 28.

DAILY SCHEDULE

7.55 a.m.

Somebody is late for getting breakfast ready by 8.00.

8.25 - 8.40

Cleaning of individual rooms.

8.45 to 10.20

Constitutional meeting on individual rights and wrongs. A study carried on through the two weeks to give ~~the~~ students opportunity to develop his concept of man, as a basis from which he can develop learning theories for himself and in general - a study to be continued at N.E.C. to develop its constitution. Among the material used will be the U.S. Constitution, the Bill of Rights, "On Natural Rights" by G.B. Shaw, the U.N. Declaration on Human Rights and N.E.C.'s statements on the individual.

What shall we do?

10.30

Happening.

11.00

Some people will work, others will study and others will get lunch ready by 12.05.

1.15 p.m.

Such a beautiful beach to walk on - or a nap might fit in here.

2.15

~~A~~ seminar with a visiting intern professor (see enclosed list) *alternating with an introduction to Denmark and Danish. Anything left to be done?*

4.45

Who is in the kitchen?

5.55

Who will say "Værsgod"?

7.30

~~A~~ general council on all issues concerning all of us - introduction to Denmark and Danish. Topics and plans to be covered at the general council in the two weeks include individual and school planning for the rest of the semester and beyond, the development of the first draft of N.E.C.'s catalogue, etc.

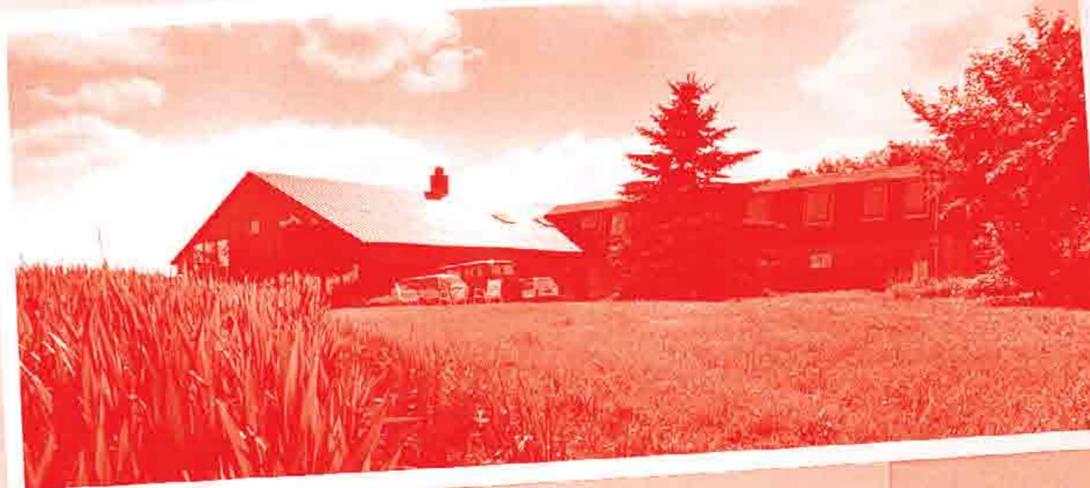
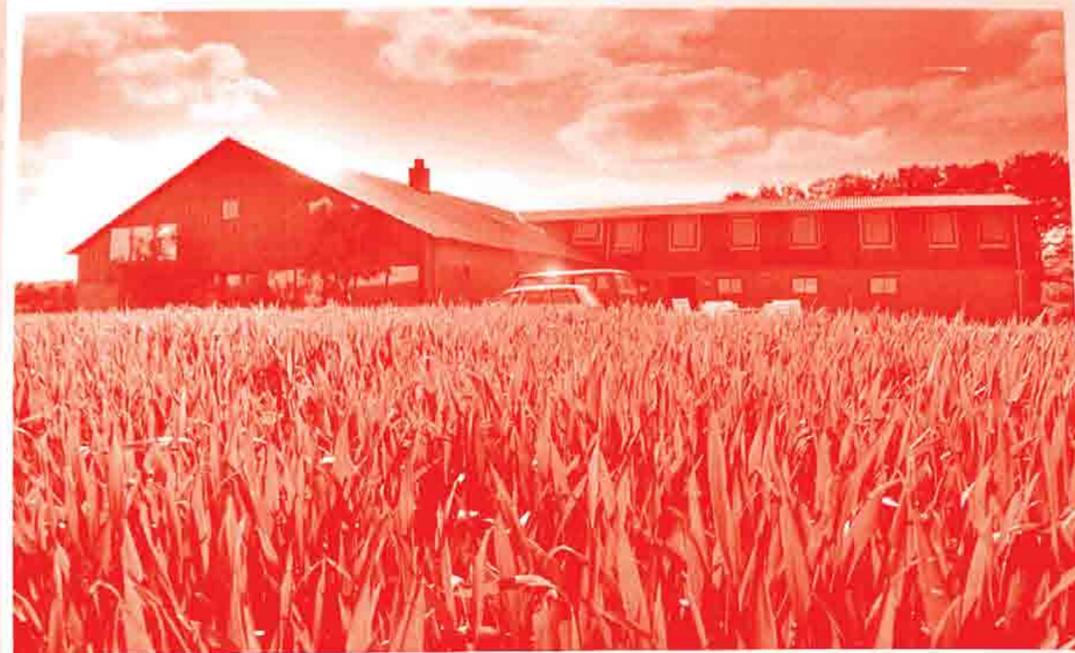
alternating with an
Was it worthwhile?

9.30

Tea. Think, ~~xxx~~ contemplate about what you are saying in informal get-togethers.

10.30

Stille. Tak for idag.



New Experimental College
 exterior - billedet (neutral)

Skyum

undervisning / diverse undervisning
 t.d. 30.05.90

Concerning the Newness at
New Experimental College

as it begins its 6th year with a Spring Semester
in its own buildings in Skyum Bjerge, Feb. 12, 1967.

This newness is thirteen rooms which have never been lived in before. It is three bathrooms which have never been done in before or washed in before. This newness is the people at the school's relationships with our neighbors in Skyum, the rest of Thy and possibly on Mors. This newness is five to ten craftsmen working in the other end of the building for a greater part of the semester.

It is new. It is sparkling. It is white.

What does that newness mean to those of us who have been at NEC before and what does it mean to the new students who will be becoming acquainted with NEC in this new situation? What does it mean?

To me it means that part of my own greatness and some of my visions have become more concrete and have given some results. It also means that I will expect more of myself and of each person I come in contact with this semester than I have ever expected before. I will expect of myself that I daily genuinely demonstrate what I stand for. I stand for freedom, selfishness and an inquiring and helpful attitude in any human situation. And I expect of anyone who lives in the rooms at New Experimental College that they learn to keep their rooms clean and the place neat and relate to anyone they meet here. I expect that each one here learns to speak up in a group, write down their thoughts and think about the future and the past by fully living each moment.

I will suggest that a group of us daily go and drink coffee and be with the workmen from 9:00 to 9:20. Get to know them and give them a chance to know you! It is possible that some of you will earn part of your stay here by working with these workmen who are completing the rest of our building. Then I suggest that we three times a week at 9:20 right after your session with the workmen *have a class*. I think and believe that these people who work here as craftsmen truly represent the people in Thy with whom we are developing a university.

The newness in our situation now also entails that almost all of us will have our own rooms to work and be in. The individual as the highest authority at New Experimental has now a new dimension which may bless us and which will qualify us in our individual direction towards excellence.

SPRING SEM. 1967

Dialectics of Liberation

Institute of Phenomenological Studies

65A Belsize Park Gardens, London, N.W.3.

01-586-2320

June 14, 1967

Dr. Joseph Berke
Dialectics of Liberation
Institute of Phenomenological Studies
65A Belsize Park Gardens, London, N.W.3.

Dear Joe,

Thank you for telephoning me and encouraging people from N.E.C. to attend your Congress on the Dialectics of Liberation the last two weeks of July.

I am enclosing a copy (s) of the poster that we have printed to give information of the Congress. ~~As a matter of fact we will make the Congress an integral part of our summer program of which I am enclosing a copy. I appreciate very much that you allowed the delegation from N.E.C. to come at half price. If the fee is to be paid in advance please instruct me so and I will have our bank send a check. If not we will bring the money. It is possible that a couple more people may want to attend, it is also possible that some of our people cannot stay all the time.~~

I would be pleased to send you any further copies of the poster or reduced price if you are unable to give a talk about our work at N.E.C. at the Congress I can assure you that each member of our delegation will gladly tell you about some of the things we do. If you want me during the Congress to give a talk or an introduction to a discussion it would be something in the nature of "The Functional Reality of Choice-making as a Basis for Any Liberating Action". Under such a theme I would develop my personal philosophical concept in regards to my concept of what man is and is not and in regards to which I act in and for N.E.C. You can use this and me as you see fit. At the same time I want to emphasize that the individual members at N.E.C. will speak for themselves and for the college as they see fit.

Sincerely,
We all look forward to the Congress. I congratulate you with this action and I look forward to meeting you this July.

Sincerely yours,
Dr. Joseph Berke
Organizing Secretary

Aage Rosendal Nielsen

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DIALECTICS OF THE SEARCH AND RESEARCH
FOR A WORLD UNIVERSITY

by Angela West

During the summer of 1967, the year of my graduation, I attended a conference in London called "The Dialectics of Liberation"; and at that conference I met Åge for the first time. I found him with a small group that had collected on the fringes, busy trying, in his usual fashion, to count in the people who counted themselves out in one way or another. The subject of discussion of this particular group was educational community; and somehow I also got counted in as a member of it.

At that time in my life, I was struggling very hard to come to terms with the effects of some of the negative educational experiences that had been my lot, and had left me with a legacy of frustration and unexplored neurosis, and this painful impetus of incompleteness spurred me on to try and analyse and evaluate these experiences and interpret them in the context of the culture which permitted them to occur. And for this, Dialectics was an admirable occasion, calling valiantly, as it did for the demystification of violence, it assembled under the wide roof of the Round House, a crowd of radical dissenters who came to protest with varying degrees of violence, at the technological typhoon of our society which had swept them aside in the course of its powerful progress, and thrown them like a litter of cracked pots and split souls, helter-skelter into the pain of modern existence which the rest of the body refused to feel.

And so, along with my fellow Dialectical Liberators, both the purely crazy and the almost enlightened, I was searching for an answer to the problem of the mutilated soul, and to the society whose institutions fostered such monstrosities, and passed them off as whole. And in my mind, I worked with the model of an institution that would not perpetuate this disastrous split between mind and soul, but would seek instead to beat it and bring about a true and fruitful union between them. I called this creation of my imagination a "communiversity."

And at this point I met the man from Denmark who said that he came from an educational community that was a world college. It was, as it said, in the little brochure that he gave us, "a place where failure, stupidity and weakness can be met with the greatness that holds people together -- an opportunity for a meaningful living and learning experience in the context of a new culture --

The permission to fail was very important

Conversation with Angela West, Monmouth, Wales, January 17 2014

Jakob Jakobsen: *You started as a student at Sussex University in the mid-1960s.*

Angela West: Yes, I left school in 1963, and then had a sort of 'gap year' in Rhodesia – but only for a few months – teaching. And so I started in 1964 and graduated in 1967.

JJ: *And what kind of university was Sussex?*

AW: It was a new university, and so there was quite a lot of media interest in it. There were the old high-status universities – like Oxford and Cambridge – and then what were called the 'Red Brick Universities'. Then there was this latest type of university, like Sussex, which they dubbed the 'Plate Glass Universities'! It had only been going about three years when I went there. So we were really the first large intake of students, which created its own problems.

JJ: *But it was known to be an experimental university?*

AW: I don't know that it was exactly experimental. I think it was founded by a group of people who felt they were going to take the best from the old universities like Oxford and Cambridge, but they were also going to organise things differently. So there wasn't the usual subject faculty, but instead a School of African and Asian Studies, a School of English and American Studies, and so on. The teaching wasn't all done by lectures, on the arts side anyway. It was taught by weekly tutorials, with two students, a tutor and weekly essays. Sometimes also by seminar groups. On the teaching side it was quite good – very stimulating but sometimes overwhelming. On the social side – social isn't quite the right word – it was pretty difficult because we were such a large intake of students. And so the relatively small group that had been there before were sort of squeezed to the margins, and we didn't quite know how we were supposed to behave in this new situation.

Most of us were very young. There were a few mature students. I remember reading the statistics for my year, for mental breakdown and mental health problems it was very high! The buildings were open-plan, and I remember reading that people felt terrified about walking across the common room because there were no small spaces where people could hide and get together. It was all open-plan.

There was a book written by the Vice Chancellor, Asa Briggs, at the time I was there, called *The Idea of a New University*. He had plenty of ideas about how it

was going to be, but as students we felt a bit like guinea pigs being observed. I don't think the authorities thought of themselves exactly as experimental, but they believed they were pioneering a new model in some respects. That made me conscious of ideas about education, because you did feel to some extent that you were part of an experiment, although it wasn't 'alternative' in that sense. It was government-funded and everything. But it was a stimulus to thinking about education at that level.

JJ: *You wrote quite a critical text about your experience at Sussex University. You mention that every student had to be a member of the Student Union, and that the Student Union had quite a big influence in terms of how the university was structured.*

AW: Yes. I don't know if everyone had to be a member, I think that just by being a student they were considered to be a member. The problem was that certain things had to be decided at Union meetings, but in order to make any decisions there had to be a quorum. Thus, if you've got, say, 100 people in the meeting, in order to make a decision, you need to have two thirds of the 100 present. But as you can imagine, as they went through all the everyday business, a lot of people got bored and left! So if there was a quorum at the beginning, by the time they came to make decisions, there weren't enough people. I suppose it was an idealistic thing – that decisions must be democratic – but in practice it broke down, because most people just weren't that interested in the details. They might be interested in the big issues where there was a debate but they weren't interested in sitting through a business meeting.

That was certainly one of the things that struck me: the fact that democratic decision-making just wasn't working in practice because of the size.

JJ: *There was a lot of responsibility put on the shoulders of the students in that way.*

AW: I was one of those who wasn't very active in Union affairs. But in comparison with now, yes: there was great encouragement for students to participate. But it just didn't seem to work well in practice.

I was very interested in this article of yours in the *Antiuniversity Tabloid* about London University and how they are getting rid of public space in the University and student democracy. But Sussex was the opposite! There were masses of public space and encouragement to take part in

everything. But very often, for 17- and 18-year olds who were away from home for the first time, it was just overwhelming. People seemed to prefer to find a smaller environment which they could cope with. It almost felt like too much responsibility. There was no one to learn from, because we were the first large intake. The others before us had been a much smaller group.

So there were problems with the social dynamics of it really, which meant that it was often psychologically alienating, even though it was intellectually very stimulating. The teaching methods were quite good, really. And there was a commitment to being interdisciplinary so that, for example, you'd study a topic like 'Imperialism and Nationalism' and you might have a seminar on this. One week it might be led by anthropologists, and the next by historians. It was a positive commitment, but it was sometimes also confusing to be chucked into one discipline, with all its particular language and then the next week, into a different one! In retrospect I can see what they were trying to do, but it didn't always work, or at least it was a kind of overload.

JJ: *What kind of decision-making was given to the community of students? Was it specifically about teaching?*

AW: No, I don't think it was. It wasn't in relation to the academic programme. It was other things like student facilities, and so on. As I say, I wasn't much involved in the Union, so I'm not quite sure. But the Union wasn't involved in the planning the courses. There might have been student representatives involved in certain committees, but I don't know about that to be honest. I think that's all I can say.

JJ: *And what did you study?*

AW: I was originally going to study English Literature but when I was in Africa I got very interested in it and I had a cousin who was a history professor, and he said, 'Why do you want to do English Literature? History is much more interesting!' And because Sussex had this School of African and Asian Studies, I decided that I wanted to switch to that. So that's what I did and I'm glad I did.

Everyone on the arts side had to do a philosophy course, which was called 'Language and Values'. It was supposed to develop your critical faculties! But it was very much based on a linguistic analysis approach to philosophy. And so you'd be presented with a theory one week, like Utilitarianism, and then you'd read all the people who had criticised or dismissed it: and then the next week you'd have another theory. And I have to say I developed a contempt for it! Again it may have had good ideals, but it gave me a very negative impression of philosophy. This only changed when I went to New Experimental College, and started learning something about classical philosophy, Plato and so on. The classical tradition was not so much dismissed at Sussex, as assumed, by the people who were teaching us philosophy. They'd done all that, they knew all about it – so we didn't need to know! [Laughs] I've since read other criticisms of the kind of linguistic philosophy we had, and I think it's totally out of fashion now. But that was the fashion in philosophy at the time that I was there.

JJ: *In terms of the specific study programme*

you had, you said it was interdisciplinary, but how was the teaching structured in relation to the students? Were you working in seminar groups, or was it more individualised?

AW: Yes, there were seminars from time to time. But the normal course teaching was based on an individual tutorial. You usually had a tutorial partner and would meet with the tutor each week and be given a topic for an essay that had to be written for the next week. It wasn't just based on lectures and examinations. We had tutors for each course and generally it was well-taught. The chief problem was this overload. You can overestimate what people who have just left school can cope with! The people who designed the programme had already gone through quite a lot of educational formation and had developed critical perspectives. But to expect 17 and 18 year olds to suddenly develop these critical perspectives when they know very little is somewhat unrealistic, and quite a burden. Academically it was stimulating, but there were these problems.

JJ: *And your tutorial partner was one of your co-students, right? Was it the same one always?*

AW: No, it depended on the course you were doing. It would be one of the other students who were doing that particular course, which would usually last for a term. Probably you did three courses in a year. I can't remember exactly.

JJ: *You didn't have to write your essay together, that was individual work?*

AW: Yes, that was done individually. For some courses, toward the second year, you did a dissertation on a special subject, which was much longer than an essay.

JJ: *And you were writing a lot of essays?*

AW: Yes, more or less a weekly essay. I think that was good. Some universities are much more lecture-based. I don't know exactly what it was like for the sciences at Sussex, probably a bit more formal teaching and lectures. There were lectures for arts subjects but they weren't the substance of the course, the tutorials were.

JJ: *So you had quite a lot of time with your teacher?*

AW: Well, yes and no. You met them in the tutorial, so in that sense you did have a personal relationship. And everybody had to have a 'personal tutor' who was supposed to look after your welfare, but this didn't always work particularly well. I don't have any recollection of getting to know a personal tutor. But I had a history tutor who was teaching me British History and as it happened he was a Labour Party candidate in the elections. I did get to know him quite well as I and some other students helped him with his election campaign in Hornsey in London. We went round knocking on doors, posting leaflets, etcetera. But that's the way: sometimes relationships spring up and sometimes there's no connection. Other people I would just see in tutorials and that was it.

JJ: *Sussex at that time was one of the new mass universities?*

AW: Yes, that's right. It was a new university. I think the other one was Kent – or Essex. So there was quite a lot of media interest.

JJ: *I guess you also felt part of a bigger group of students, not just a little class.*

AW: Yes. I don't know the numbers exactly, but we were the first really big intake

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of students. There was interest in seeing how it worked out.

JJ: *Did you have a group of students that you thought of as your class?*

AW: No, not consistently. In the first year we lived in guesthouses in Brighton, so you got to know people in your year and who you shared a room with. That was probably the main division: which year you were in. In my third year, when I was mainly revising for exams, I lived in London and just travelled down to Brighton every week. It varied according to which year you were in and how things were structured.

JJ: *In London at that time, the cultural scene was quite vibrant, and there was lots of counterculture going on.*

AW: Yes there was, but I don't think I became involved in it whilst I was actually at Sussex. I started to read books by Ronnie Laing, because I also had some kind of psychological crisis – in the second year – though not exactly a breakdown. I was referred to the student psychiatrist on campus and I think that's when I started to read Ronnie Laing and get interested in his ideas. And it's probably why I ended up going to 'Dialectics', ['Dialectics of Liberation', July 1967] because by then I recognised his name and had read some of his books. I think that was my main exposure to the counterculture in London, going to 'Dialectics'.

JJ: *You lived in London at the time?*

AW: I had been living with a friend in South London and finishing my degree, and there was the business of travelling down to Brighton. So I wasn't actually directly involved in the counterculture at that point. Not until 'Dialectics' – by which time I had just graduated.

JJ: *Could you describe what 'Dialectics' was to you?*

AW: Well, it was an amazing experience; to have all those people gathered in this rather unique environment. The Round House at that time was basically an old engine shed, it hadn't been done up at all. The speakers were talking about lots of things that were new to me. I didn't know much about the black revolt in America, for example. When I went to London it was mainly to take part in big demonstrations, not poetry readings and that sort of thing. It was to take part in marches about Martin Luther King or Vietnam. I had been in Rhodesia in 1964, and UDI [Unilateral Declaration of Independence] was declared in 1965, so a group of us decided to form a Rhodesia Action Group. We had a demonstration in Brighton as well. That was the kind of thing I was taking part in, more political. Not particularly student politics or about the structure of the university, but on other, wider matters.

JJ: *Social and political.*

AW: Yes, Political issues really. So yes, 'Dialectics' – I just found it amazing! Those who went to it were not all British, but also American and from other places.

JJ: *Do you remember how you heard about it? Was it a flyer?*

AW: Probably, something like that. A flyer or poster at Sussex.

JJ: *How did you attend? It was a two-week-long event. Did you go the first day?*

AW: Yes, I think I took part in most of it. I was staying in London, so it wasn't a question of travelling up from Brighton. The main lectures were fascinating but

what was perhaps even more interesting were the little groups – the discussion groups – and meeting with people around the edges. This was fascinating. At one group I took part in at the Round House, there was a rope suspended from a metal girder in the ceiling, and one of the participants had made a seat on this rope: so whenever he wanted to make a point in the discussion, he'd swing in to the centre of the group on his rope. It was amazing! [Laughs]

And of course it was at 'Dialectics' that I met the group from NEC, and they gave me that little flyer that you've seen. At that stage I was quite focussed on questions about education. As I say, Sussex wasn't exactly an experimental university, but sometimes it did feel like we were being experimented on. So I was reacting to that. You could say I was developing this critical perspective that they wanted us to develop.

JJ: *But to stay a little with 'Dialectics', how were these working groups organised? Do you remember any of the topics? For example, which topic was it with the guy on the swing?*

AW: They were probably topics that came out of the lectures, but I can't remember exactly how it was organised. It was fairly informal. You didn't have the sense that it had been highly structured beforehand. I've been to many conferences, and these workshops sometimes become a ritual and don't always work very well. It was two weeks, so you had a bit more time than normal to get to know people in the groups. But honestly I can't remember.

JJ: *Do you remember any of the lectures or keynote speeches?*

AW: I remember Bateson, Gregory Bateson. And I remember Ronnie Laing because I had read books by him. And Allen Ginsberg too. And Stokely Carmichael because one of my friends at the time, David, a Nigerian who had been studying at Kings College, in London. He'd been doing a theology degree which was chiefly designed for ordinands. And when they came to do their degree, there was a 66% failure rate. They only passed a tiny group, mainly the ordinands. He was a good student, and not getting his degree was very traumatic for him. So when he heard Stokely Carmichael speak about the black movement in the US, it had a tremendous effect on him. It stirred up all this humiliation he was feeling about this degree course. I mean, to fail 66% of your students is just unbelievable! Their teaching staff couldn't have been doing their job. It was appalling really. And it had a major effect on his life. So of course I remember Carmichael, and the effect it had upon David. I think those were the main people I remember. The others I hadn't really heard of and didn't know.

JJ: *Didn't Aage Rosendal also speak?*

AW: He spoke in one of the small groups, but he wasn't a platform speaker as I remember.

JJ: *He had a talk called 'The Anti-Institution Seminar' or something like that.*

AW: Right. Well if it was a seminar, there were topics, and you joined according to what interested you. Certainly I was in with the Danish group, with Aage Rosendal, and they had come over in a minibus. But I only really remember Aage Rosendal and Ron Manheimer. There

must have been others.

JJ: *Do you remember what he spoke about? Or what you discussed in that group?*

AW: If that was the title of the lecture, that was probably what we were talking about! I had become in some way critical of the kind of programme we had at Sussex, even though there were many good things about it. But there were other things I thought were not right, and so I would have been attracted to that sort of title. And that's probably why I ended up in that group.

JJ: *And then you became interested in the New Experimental College?*

AW: Yes, because it seemed to be – from what they were saying – that they were addressing some of the things I felt hadn't worked very well at Sussex. In that sense, NEC did provide a completely different environment, and one which was quite helpful to me at that stage in my career. I think that if I had never previously been to a university or had any idea of formalised learning, it would have been deficient in some major respects! But at that point, it was the environment that was helpful to me. I went there first in 1968, but I came and went over a period of about seven years. So I saw it at different stages of its development. When I first went, I think they had just moved up from Copenhagen and so it was close to the beginning of it in Thy. And it was just NEC at that stage. Later there were people who came and started centres near by. And for that winter – I got there in January – it was just seven of us most of the time! Until the summer.

JJ: *And you had to pay a fee to go?*

AW: Yes, you did have to pay. I think that is why I didn't go immediately. I was trying to get some money together, and I did various jobs. My parents gave me some money towards it. But that was it. People had to pay to be there. And for Americans that was quite normal because they were paying university fees. But in Britain that wasn't so normal, because we had state-funded education, and we could get a grant to go to university. I had to find ways of paying for it, and that was a problem.

JJ: *But in this half year before, what kind of school or educational institution did you imagine you were going to attend? You must have been quite fascinated, or attracted to it, to want to go.*

AW: Yes. I think I felt that there was no sense of community in the way that Sussex was structured – although they felt they were doing a good job with these tutorials and stuff – it was still a formal system. Maybe some of the people who were teaching there had come from an Oxbridge background, so these are very ancient institutions, and they have colleges, and each has its own ethos. They probably took all that for granted, and they wanted to get away from some of that, as they felt it was reactionary. But for us coming into Sussex, we hadn't had that experience. In many ways it was like a vast cafeteria where you chose your education from the menu. And there were all sorts of things about personal development and living in a community that just didn't happen, really. Despite all the high ideals that Sussex had, I did find it, in many ways, alienating personally and socially. I was looking for a smaller environment, where you could

relate consistently to a smaller group of people. And NEC was that! It was right up in the north of Jutland, and in some ways it was isolated. But Aage Rosendal was a local man, so he knew the area because he had grown up there. So we weren't totally isolated, a totally foreign body in that environment. Some of us were foreigners, but Aage wasn't. He had all the links and contacts in a society where he had actually grown up. I look fondly on that time, but part of that was about being in Denmark, which is a very different place to where I had grown up. I think there was something positive about it. For me, the experience was also about being in Denmark – a very different society from my own British background. Not just NEC really.

JJ: *Do you remember what kind of place you arrived to? To a farm, I guess.*

AW: Well, that was just it, it was a farmhouse that had been partly converted. It revolved really around Aage Rosendal. It had the strengths and weaknesses of any group that is founded around one person. So it was him and his projects and his way of teaching – if you call it teaching – because it wasn't formalised. But in a way it was a kind of teaching. The only formal structures were very few, but enough to give some kind of shape to our being there.

JJ: *Could you describe the formal structures?*

AW: Well, there was the Ting Meeting. Anybody could call a Ting Meeting, more or less any time of the day or night, though I don't actually remember any at night. And if a Ting Meeting was called by anyone, you had to just drop whatever you were doing and attend this meeting. And it could go on for ages! It could be about a personal issue. Someone might say, 'I don't think I'm getting on with So-and-so'. Or something like that, and you'd spend hours discussing the problem! So there was very little formalised learning, though people were encouraged to have their own learning programme, and at various stages to present something to the group.

JJ: *Did you make your own learning programme? How did that work?*

AW: I think I was still working on ideas to do with my reactions to Sussex, and the only thing that I did was what got into that book, *Lust for Learning*, of 1968, which Aage was writing at the time – and we were helping him prepare it for publication.

JJ: *'The Experience of the Experiment'?*

AW: Yes. Later on, I don't think it was in 1968, probably in the 1970s, I did write a paper, which was more about NEC and the Nordenfjord World University as it had now become. I can't find it, though last night I thought of a place it might be. I did present that to a group and got some feedback on it. But not everybody did that sort of thing. Writing is the way I express myself, but other people did different things. It could be a photography exhibition.

One of the other formal elements was the Sabbath Lecture, and I think it was Aage Rosendal who would ask someone: 'Will you do it?'

JJ: *What could a Sabbath Lecture be?*

AW: I can't remember any specifically, but I remember Ron did some. Some on Plato, or on Kierkegaard. He also ran a Plato seminar, and later a 'Philosophical

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ALL men are in chains. There is the bondage of poverty and starvation: the bondage of lust for power, status, possessions.

A REIGN of terror is now perpetrated and perpetuated on a global scale.

IN the affluent societies, it is masked. There, children are conditioned by violence called love to assume their position as the would-be inheritors of the fruits of the earth. But, in the process, they are reduced to little more than hypothetical points on a dehumanised co-ordinate system.

FOR the rest, terror is not masked. It is torture, cold, starvation, death.

THE whole world is now an irreducible whole.

THE properties of this whole world system force us to submit to the fatality of Vietnam, the starvation of the third world, etc.

IN total context, culture is against us, education enslaves us, technology kills us.

WE must confront this. We must destroy our vested illusions as to who, what, where we are. We must combat our self-pretended ignorance as to what goes on and our consequent non-reaction to what we refuse to know.

WE experience what is and what is being done through the filter of our socially approved lies. But what is, is not the limit of what is possible.

WE shall meet in London on the basis of a wide range of expert knowledge.

THE dialectics of liberation begin with the clarification of our present condition.

Autobiography’ seminar. So the ‘academic’ input that I mainly remember was from him. Other people occasionally gave lectures, and in the summer more people came who only stayed for a short time. Not everyone stayed for months, some were just there for a week or a weekend.

JJ: *But there were the Ting Meetings that could happen at any time – and the Sabbath Lecture, which was scheduled...?*

AW: There was also a Sabbath meal on Fridays. You could say it was in the Jewish tradition, but with a bit of Lutheranism thrown in! Aage used to encourage people to give ‘table talks’, which I think is more of a Lutheran custom. But it had a Sabbath aspect to it, sometimes lighting the candles, with a blessing. A lot of people that came were Jewish Americans so they were familiar with lighting the Sabbath candles. And that meal was always a special one. If we had guests from the locality that would be the meal they would be invited to. When I first went there, we just had an old kitchen in the farmhouse building, but later on we had a much bigger and smarter kitchen and dining area. You could have quite a big group come to that. Sometimes the guests were encouraged to give little talks or reflections at the table.

There was also something called Week-in-Review, and people took it in turns to do that, so that one person was responsible for keeping a kind of community diary of the week from their own perspective.

Later on, more centres were established around in Thy, like Asgård, for example, which Preben Maegaard was running with his wife. Asgård had an art and craft focus. Sometimes we would go to one of these centres on Saturday morning and they would be the host for that Sabbath Lecture. To be honest, I can’t remember specific input, but at Asgård it would have been about art and the kind of activities that were going on there. Later on there was a centre run by David Nelson who was a friend of Peter Stansill, and the focus there was photography. We were usually a small enough group that we could all get in the minibus to go to the other centre. And we also had some links with a local folk high school, near Thisted, and sometimes we went there too. They also hosted events, which were more formally set up and had many more students. As I said, in the summer there were more people around, because it was the time when a lot of young Americans were roaming around Europe and sometimes they would end up at NEC or one of the Nordenfjod centres. So it was a rather different feeling in the summer.

JJ: *The first time you were there, was it structured around a semester?*

AW: Yes, by semester. Aage Rosendal was familiar with the American system, so he talked about semesters, not terms, as we do in Britain. Most of the students who came for a longer term were Americans, at least in my experience. They had had some Czech students, and in fact when I was there in 1968, that was when Soviet tanks invaded Czechoslovakia. I remember we had a small demonstration in Thisted and marched around the town with a banner!

In some ways I think that we weren’t very political, considering what was happening in places like Detroit. Some of the

people I was at NEC with, like Ron, Alan Kobernick and Elaine Messer and Susan Herman, actually came from that city. In retrospect it surprises me that we didn’t really talk about it much. In fact, I am much more aware now that those things were happening than I was at the time.

When I was writing something recently I corresponded with Elaine, who told me she had witnessed some of the riots from on top of a tall building in Detroit, where she was working as a waitress. It must have been quite dramatic, but I don’t remember her ever mentioning it at the time.

JJ: *About the black riots?*

AW: Yes, so I wouldn’t say that we were very political in that sense. People may have been involved in politics back home – as I had – but it was almost as if when they got to Denmark, they forgot about it, because it was no longer immediate.

JJ: *Even in Denmark, Thy is far away.*

AW: Absolutely. Aage and Sara still had the house in Slotsherrensvej in Copenhagen and sometimes people went and stayed there, but I don’t remember there being any strong link with student action in Denmark, in Copenhagen for instance. But I wasn’t at NEC all the time so my perspective is limited. If you talk to Peter Stansill for example, he had a lot of contact with people in Copenhagen. And he would have a very different perspective on it.

JJ: *Was a semester half a year? A fixed period of time?*

AW: Yes I suppose the year was roughly two semesters and then the summer school.

JJ: *So you arrived in the winter in this farmhouse and were with a tiny group of people.*

AW: Very tiny!

JJ: *Could you say that the people who were there committed to the project and would stay together for a semester?*

AW: We had different commitments as to how long we were staying. Alan Kobernick and Elaine Messer were the other couple that were there, I think they left before the summer. The summer was different, with more coming and going. And yes we did think roughly in terms of semesters and as you said, I arrived in the middle really. There were two other young Americans there when I arrived but they left quite soon.

JJ: *Who were the seven people you were together with?*

AW: They were: Aage and Sara Bryson Nielsen, Susan Herman...

JJ: *Sara and Susan were Americans, but they had been there for a while?*

AW: Yes. Sara was an American and Susan too. And Alan and Elaine were Americans, and then me, English, and Aage. So one Dane, one Brit, and the rest Americans! I think Ron came back in the summer.

JJ: *And Peter Stansill?*

AW: Another Brit. He’d been there at the beginning in Copenhagen. I don’t think I met him in 1968 at all, not until 1971 or 1972.

JJ: *What was also special about NEC, as well as being far away, was that you were living together.*

AW: Yes, we had study bedrooms. Everyone had their own room. The lower floor was this big barn area and that is where we had the Ting Meetings.

JJ: *Did you have to get up in the mornings,*

at 8am, for example?

AW: No! Nothing like that at all! There was a meditation room because Sara was doing yoga and meditation. Susan was almost as personal assistant to Aage. She typed out a lot of the letters that he dictated. So she had a particular role, but she was also a very unique sort of person whose real role in the place is hard to describe... People were encouraged to say what they were trying to do and what their project was. But there wasn’t any formal guidance about that. When you say teaching, I can’t help laughing in a way, because there wasn’t really that kind of thing. Aage himself had a somewhat ambivalent attitude to actual academic learning! And if you had a serious project, like doing a PhD or something, NEC wouldn’t be an ideal place, as you could be interrupted at any minute by someone calling a Ting. There was no one there who acted as a tutor to keep you focused on the work you were doing (if you were doing any). A lot of it was personal dynamics. For me that was ok at the beginning. It was what Sussex hadn’t addressed, because theirs was a much more formal programme. So I didn’t mind. But later on it was a bit different. When you are involved in something for a number of years, your own perspective changes. And also the place itself was changing. Other people were attracted to the project and came to Thy and set up their own little satellites, as it were.

JJ: *In the everyday, it was not structured...*

AW: It was structured around meals. We had to have a rota for cooking, and for keeping the place in some kind of order. I think Sara tried to organise that. We had something that was euphemistically called Recreation Period which basically meant cleaning the place up. We were also encouraged to fix up a stay with a local Danish family so that we could learn Danish.

JJ: *Who do you do that in the first year?*

AW: I can’t remember if it was the first year, or if it was later, but I did certainly do it. I stayed at a farm called Bisgaard which had been a family farm for generations. They were lovely people who were very kind to me. I remember they spoke the local dialect. Towards the end of the period I had learned some elementary Danish and by the time I was staying at Møllegård with Nina Sørensen I could sometimes follow conversations... But it was quite a struggle to speak and articulate in Danish! Especially if you were discussing ideas... I couldn’t really do that in Danish, but day to day things I could more or less manage.

JJ: *So the working language was English?*

AW: Oh definitely, at NEC it was English. Sometimes Aage would have meetings – this was later, when the kitchen and dining area was much more developed, and he would invite Danes from the area – or elsewhere – to come to a meeting, which would be all in Danish. It was mainly for neighbours and other friends. He felt the need, I think, to sometimes invite people in and tell them what we were doing, because local people were a bit curious to know what on earth was happening at this ‘hippie university’ as they called it!

JJ: *I’m trying to get my head around the structure and informality. The Ting Meeting would happen once a week, or every day?*

AW: It could, theoretically, happen every

ry day. And I think it probably happened once or twice – sometimes more than that – in a week.

JJ: *And this brought everyone together?*

AW: Yes, that brought us together. Later on, they devised a form of examination – it may have been Ron that introduced it. It wasn’t just a written examination, but somebody would say what their project was, and they would produce some sort of paper about this. Then they would choose two examiners and then there would be a meeting. By that time, we had this large meeting room at the end, where the pigsties had once been! It was a nice place to meet. So the examiners and the candidate would be up in front and everyone else would be the audience. The examiners would question the candidate, and the candidate would give an account of whatever it was he or she had presented for examination. There was no set paper or anything like that. The candidates had presented what they wanted to be examined on. It was structurally more like a viva for a PhD perhaps. The examiners would ask questions and then people from the floor would ask some. I can’t quite remember the format, but there was probably some summing up at the end. I thought that was a useful thing, because there was a degree of formality about it, and people had to prepare something – and really think about it before putting it before all those people. But that was something that evolved later on.

JJ: *What could the topic for an examination be?*

AW: It might be that someone had made a study of a particular book, or author. It could be something more practical. If someone’s interest was photography, it could be an exhibition or something like that. They would still have to write something to describe what they were trying to do, but what they would be examined on would be their project. Part of it was self-examination. I notice they do this now in the British education system. Reports are not just what your teachers think, but they also ask the student to say how well they think they’ve done, and whether they’ve failed or succeeded at something. I think there was that kind of element at NEC as well. It was like a self-examination but with help from your peers. The candidate would choose her or his examiners. So she would choose someone she thought would be most helpful on that particular topic. And that was a good thing.

JJ: *Did you go through this?*

AW: I don’t think I did. I may not have been living at NEC at the time. I might have been at one of the centres. I did write a paper on NEC and present it, but it wasn’t used for an exam.

JJ: *The learning was not meant to be quantified. If there were examinations, then there was no degrees. And I tend to think that you learned through the social dynamic of living everyday together.*

AW: Yes, that was a kind of learning that we did.

JJ: *Do you have any reflections on that aspect of setting up a school focusing on the social dynamic?*

AW: I think that it would only work if there is someone with this kind of charisma initially. Although, of course, that can become a liability too. Otherwise you

can’t imagine why all these people would move to this part of rural Denmark!

There has to be some kind of pull. In that sense, Aage was a key factor, and there has to be someone like that to get it going.

JJ: *And was he around all the time? For example in the first winter, was he always there?*

AW: He was living there, yes but he was also dealing with local people to organise the conversion of the place. He dealt with all the financial side. Sara definitely played an important role in that too. It had the capacity for growth, but it also had instabilities. There was lots of working together too with Preben, Sara and Ron and others. There were meetings and often a good spirit of cooperation – but also inevitably sometimes, big tensions between particular individuals. In a fragile situation that sort of thing can blow things apart, whereas in a more formal situation, there are always the same tensions, but because it’s formal, it tends to survive.

JJ: *It seems like even the ‘failure’ of being together was valued.*

AW: Well yes, and that was one of our slogans: ‘the success of failure’. You can come across it in *Lust for Learning*. Looking back on it, there is something quite Buddhist about it really, in the sense that you are encouraged to look at what was actually happening, not just what we would like to happen. The permission to fail was very important, and that is what you don’t get at a place like Sussex. So it was very supportive, in that sense, but you also have to live with the consequences. Ultimately NEC did fail in the sense that it didn’t continue.

JJ: *You can think about a learning situation in a much smaller perspective, for example, looking at the ‘everyday’ in a space together. There’s something to be said for this, and not always wanting to be ‘productive’.*

AW: But it is a balance. Human beings are innately ritualistic and so you can do something like have a Ting Meeting, or have an exchange, and it can be a learning situation. But there is always a tendency to repeat something – it gives a kind of security when there’s repetition.

So Ting Meetings could become repetitive and even when you are looking at tensions, you can create a language that quickly begins to operate through clichés. It is never as simple as saying: there is the bad world out there that’s formal, and this is the good world where we are informal and creative. Even in informal situations you can become stuck and repeat old patterns. Actually, I don’t think all ritual is bad or restrictive: in fact, some rituals are really important for social solidarity. I think the whole thing would have disintegrated much sooner if we hadn’t had these rituals: the Sabbath Lecture, the Week-in-Review, the Ting Meeting.

However, there are other kinds of ritual where you are not moving on, just a way of getting stuck. Sometimes to be creative *is* to be formal, to create new forms – like for instance, the examination, which I thought was a very interesting development. It had taken the institution of the examination, as you find it at normal universities, and recreated it. So in general, there were some very good aspects of the Nordenfjord World University – as we pretentiously called it! But like any situation, it had the capacity to degenerate...

JJ: *The college being really far away from*

other infrastructure made it almost monastic. Have you any reflections on that?

AW: Well, I never experienced being in Copenhagen, but I heard people talking about it. In Copenhagen there was always the possibility of going out and attending something in the big city. But, stuck in a farmhouse in the countryside, there wasn’t that kind of opportunity! It did very much focus on the dynamics of the people living there – and sexual dynamics were certainly part of that. ‘The Sexual Aspect of Scholarship’ Aage called it in his book *Lust for Learning*. So we weren’t monastic in that sense (though actually monasteries also have sexual dynamics too!)

JJ: *But the three months...*

AW: Of Danish winter! Yes it was tough. But it was extremely formative. There is something very beautiful about that landscape and the Limfjord and the special ‘Lyse Nætte’, the light nights. I have very good memories of all that, and the landscape, the tractors going over the wide open fields with the seagulls following. There was nothing to compare with it. If you read Ron’s obituary of Aage, he has some rather nostalgic reflections about the place, and what our life was like up there beyond the Limfjord. And I share them in some ways.

JJ: *You were encouraged to open up to the landscape? You had the space to walk around.*

AW: I certainly walked around, and I think most people did. The landscape did make a big impression on me, even though I wasn’t a photographer and I wasn’t particularly sensitive to that. It was kind of overwhelming in a way, a very beautiful place. You couldn’t ignore the landscape.

Alan was interested in photography and so was out taking pictures of it. You can gather from Ron’s comments that he was affected by it quite strongly. It wasn’t at all incidental that we were in Denmark, and in that particular part of Denmark.

JJ: *Also, the withdrawal from urban life.*

AW: Exactly. It was very different from urban – or suburban – life. I hadn’t personally experienced the shift from Copenhagen, but I had made my own shift from Sussex – and my home in Surrey – to Thy. Aage used to talk about how people who lived north of the Limfjord were independent-minded and were not like those in Copenhagen who listened to the King, and all that. People in Thy, he said, had always been independent, they were governed by local Ting meetings not the government far away in Copenhagen!

JJ: *Yesterday you spoke about doing nothing.*

AW: Yes, I remember walking around the whole area beside the Limfjord. One day, I was lying down in the sun and thinking, ‘I am doing nothing. It’s great to be doing nothing.’ Because I had always been in a situation where you have to study, take exams, and so on. My mind felt as though it had been crammed. It was not that it had been dull, it had often been very stimulating. But I felt I had been force-fed intellectually. So for me, at that time, it was very good to not have to do all of that. That’s why I do appreciate what it gave me.

I understand what you are saying about a thing not needing to be continuous, but if something can be sustainable it can provide opportunity for other people, and

that is important. There is the ‘success of failure’, but there are also failures, things that fail to realise their potential and give what they might have provided for other people. The Antiuniversity was in the end just an antiuniversity, and I get the feeling that it didn’t actually manage to create an alternative. But NEC did provide a new learning experience – for a period anyway. It was due to Aage that it happened, and also no doubt due to him that it died! Though probably it was also a product of those times. The 1960s (and 1970s) came to an end and so did NEC – perhaps inevitably. But because of its good aspects, I am sorry that it is not there for other people. That is the sad part about it not being sustainable.

JJ: *But it was a changing structure. The setting up of NEC developed into the World University. You can say this was a learning process on it’s own.*

AW: It was. It was important, particularly for those who had a longer association. But I don’t think there is much point in only being negative about institutions, because people, when they are creative, can create institutions. I mean NEC and the World University were institutions of a particular type and they had creative parts. I would have liked to have seen those things continue in some form. So I have a certain sense of regret. Here I’m telling you what it meant to me, but if you speak to Peter, Ron or Sara, they will probably give you a somewhat different picture.

JJ: *Coming back to the monastic model, some monasteries last for a thousand years...*

AW: Exactly. But they have strong rituals, structures, and belief systems. NEC had some of its own rituals, and characteristic beliefs as I’ve mentioned. It did have potential. But in order to continue it would have meant a stable team that could really collaborate. There certainly was teamwork. Ron and Sara collaborated very well. I don’t know about Ron and Preben. But Aage was something of an individualist, who always tended to get excluded or somehow exclude himself from the things he’d helped into being. And there were also things I wasn’t aware of at the time, certain tensions... I was rather young and caught up with my own concerns. So all sorts of things were happening that I didn’t know about!

JJ: *There was also some critique of the feminist movement in the early 1970s, in a text that was called ‘The Tyranny of Structurelessness’.*

AW: Ah, that is what I was actually thinking about! ‘The Tyranny of Structurelessness’. There was no feminist critique at NEC, but when I left I became involved in feminism. It was precisely that: the tyranny of structurelessness that took place and I started to develop a critique of it.

JJ: *Of NEC? Or in general?*

AW: Not NEC specifically, although what I had been through at NEC enabled me to see it, when it began to happen in the feminist movement. There was the Greenham movement, for instance, where our women’s group went to do the night watch on a monthly basis. And some big conflicts developed in that context, I remember. Often those kind of movements aren’t very good at resolving conflict, so there tend to be splits. And if you can’t deal with conflict and disagreement in

your own movement, there is not much chance of challenging repressive structures. They don’t need to worry because you’ll fall apart sooner or later, usually sooner.

JJ: *And that was a problem also at NEC? Conflict and leadership?*

AW: Yes it was a problem, but at the same time, Aage’s charismatic leadership made it possible in the first place. Some of the rituals he introduced gave it a structure that often doesn’t happen. Like in some of the peace and women’s movement things, conflict would come very soon, so nothing would ever really get set up. If a thing is going to work at all, it has to have institutions in the sense of things which belong to everyone and which everyone knows will happen. Otherwise it is just personality clashes. There has to be a ritual and institutional structure, even though there can be good and bad institutions, those which inhibit and those which can facilitate. I am somewhat sceptical about the idea of freedom as just expressing yourself! I think freedom is about creating something that works for other people as well, and has some potential for sustainability. It is really quite naive to say ‘all structures are bad’. Language has a structure and that enables us to communicate. Anti-authoritarian rhetoric tends to get people stuck in immaturity. Being creative is moving through phases, and getting to the stage where you can offer things to other people. To set up an antiuniversity with no reliable structure, no way for people to know where and when things are happening, is not very helpful. Being creative, I think, is to create new structures which are sustainable, even though none are sustainable forever.

JJ: *You can say you almost had a dialectical journey, through Sussex to NEC.*

AW: Definitely.

JJ: *Could you say what the synthesis was from those two extremes?*

AW: Well I wish there was one. I may have come to a synthesis in my thoughts, but I don’t think it is people’s individual thoughts which count, it is also about creating structures that work for other people.

Angela West is a writer and works as a community education teacher with Muslim women in Newport, Wales. She took part in the Dialectics of Liberation conference in 1967, and spent six months at NEC in 1968. She continued to be involved with Nordenfjord World University from 1968-74.

The Institute of Phenomenological Studies

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4, ST. GEORGE'S TERRACE, LONDON, N.W.1.

01-722-1789

19th January, 1968

Dear Aage Nielsen,

Stemming from the discussions that took place at the Dialectics of Liberation Congress last summer, members of the Institute, together with others at the Congress, have founded what we call the Antiuniversity of London.

The purpose of the Antiuniversity is to provide a context for the original and radical scholars, artists and activists residing in London, as well as Europe and America, to communicate their work to young people and others outside the usual institutional channels.

We have a building for the school opening the week of February 12th, 1968. Many of the people who will be "teaching" there, you met at the Congress. We are preparing a catalogue at the moment and I will send you one as soon as it is printed.

The School has been planned so that people who will be "teaching" will not be giving formal courses as such, but will spend an evening (2 or 3 hours) once a week or fortnight, discussing their work.

We would be very pleased if you would consider joining the faculty of the School. The distances are very great between you and us, so that, of course, it would be impossible for you to be with us on a regular basis as much as we would like this, however, it would be very good if you would consider joining the "Visiting Faculty". As a member of which, we would ask you if you were in London, or the London vicinity, if you would be willing to spend a few hours meeting with people either formally or informally at the School. Naturally, if you were to be in London for any extended period of time, we would be very glad if you would join us on a regular basis. (All members of the Visiting Faculty will be paid a commensurate fee for their work at the School).

Your expertise in understanding "What is going on in the World" would indeed be a great asset to the School.

The Antiuniversity sees itself as serving, not only the London area, but all Western Europe and the United States and will be associated with similar centres which are now being initiated in other countries.

All of us here, would be very pleased if you would consider joining the Visiting Faculty and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Joseph Berke, M.D.

Organizing Secretary.

→ Please fold here ←

Sender's name and address:

Dr. Joseph Berke,

4, St. George's Terrace,

London, N.W.1.

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Give Idea
Give Exam
Give March



Aage Nielsen,
New Experimental College,
Ved Skovvej, 11
PT Hordum,
Denmark.

New Experimental College
Appendix to the Budget for 1968

Commentary on the economic life of the school.

Income in the budget is based upon a minimum, median and maximum income in kroner which corresponds to respectively 10, 15, and 20 persons who pay the entire fee in cash during the course of the year.

Expenditures on the other hand account for the support of 15, 20, and 25 persons respectively. The 5 additional persons accounted for include the three filling the roles of director, secretary, and bursar, as well as 2 persons or fractions thereof who are carrying out other work-roles for the College, or who are in some manner currently carried in whole or part by the College's operating budget.

Therefore over and ^{above} ~~and~~ the immediate cash transactions specified in the budget for any given year are three value-transactions which must be accounted for in our budget considerations:

I. Work-payments.

Payments made in the form of work which has in any given semester been determined to have monetary value for the educational community. A student-faculty resident may therefor pay his fees partly in cash and partly in completed work contracted at the set monetary value. The work payment may not exceed 1/3 of the student-faculty member's fee unless so deemed by the unanimous Ting.

Total work payments may not exceed 10% of the projected student-faculty income unless stipulated by the Board. For 1968 this would equal 16,500kr. (24,700 median, & 33,000 maximum).

II. Long-term loans: (unfixed conditions)

Until a separate loan fund is established for the College, a certain number of participants will have to be carried by the operating budget on a loan basis. The loans referred to here are those extended to persons whose ability to return on their loan in the near future is dubious, for whatever reasons. Loans requested to cover 100% of the student-faculty fee may also be repaid in part by work-payments, and a unanimous Ting may actually require this.

Long term loans may not exceed 5% of the previous year's student-faculty income, unless the Board so moves. For 1968 this would be equivalent to kroner 7,000.

III. Credit loans. (fixed conditions)

These loans are extended to some student-faculty members, generally to cover a proportion of their fees. The terms of such loans must be recorded in a signed statement with the Treasurer. Interest on such loans will generally be set on such loans at the mean interest being paid by the College to its collective creditors. The unanimous Ting may also require that a certain proportion of the requested loan be repaid in a work-payment.

These loans may not exceed 10% of the projected student-faculty income unless the Board so moves. For 1968 this would equal 16,500 kroner (24,700 median, & 33,000 maximum.)

Sara Bryson Nielsen
Treasurer

Week in Review, September 28-October 4 Terry Fritchman

(Poems for the first part from Ezra Pound, Selected Poems.)

Fall Semester Shape 1968

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
6:00							
7:00							
8:00							
9:00							
10:00	Independent Work and Study						
11:00	DYNAMIC READING Practice	DYNAMIC READING Poetic	DYNAMIC READING Theory	DYNAMIC READING Poetic	DYNAMIC READING Theory		
12:00	Independent Activity						
13:00							
14:00							
15:00							
16:00	DANISH I	DANISH I	DANISH I	DANISH I	DANISH I		
17:00	DANISH II	DANISH II	DANISH II	DANISH II	DANISH II		
18:00	Classes	Classes	Classes	Classes	Classes		
19:00							
20:00							
21:00							
22:00							

Independent Work and Study

Independent Activity

Classes

Classes

Classes

Classes

DYNAMIC READING Poetic

DYNAMIC READING Theory

DYNAMIC READING Theory

the Sabbath lecture

A semester evolved by Sara at least for her use.

Re-creation

Celebration meal and the week-in-review

And no sun comes
And I am torn against the jagged dark,
And no light beats upon me, and you say
No word, day after day.

Yet it is quiet here:
I do not go.
(note: though I didn't use it, Ruth has pointed out to me
that the next poem, Portrait D'une Femme, is even more appropriate)



You would hear yourself talking about things that you'd never tried to talk about before

Conversation with Ron Manheimer, Nørrebro, Copenhagen, August 1, 2014

Jakob Jakobsen: *Education has been an interest of mine over many years. Perhaps due to my own bad experiences, I don't know. You had a long engagement with the New Experimental College, first in Copenhagen, later in Thy, Northern Denmark. I think there is much to learn today from these kinds of educational experiments that were quite common in the 1960s.*

Ron Manheimer: I'm trying to think about whether there have been other periods when there was a more student-directed education. In a lot of universities in Europe, after you had finished your basic studies you would work with a tutor to develop a curriculum that you had set up and agreed on, worked your way through it. Then you went off and got the different skills that you needed for your area of expertise. There was a lot more self-direction that was called for. That always amazed me, coming from the United States to hear about English university education, because our education in the US was so much more like a continuation of high school. You had to 'go to class'. They took attendance. And if you didn't attend, you failed. We'd hear about Europeans who'd say 'You don't need to go to lectures, it's up to you. But when the exam time comes, if you fail the exam then you fail, but if you can pass the exam – however you want to do it – great, you do what you want to'. And we'd think, are people disciplined enough to do that? It's so different.

I have a friend who teaches at the University of Madrid, and he was telling me about the formation of a unified curriculum across all the universities, so that students could take courses in different countries in the EU. There would be enough uniformity that if you had taken 'Sociology I' in Madrid, you could go on to 'Sociology II' at the university of Copenhagen. They wouldn't say that they didn't count it, so you would have to start all over again.

JJ: *It is called the 'Bologna Process'. I think it was very much about turning education into a common market, and less about the students.*

RM: Is that right? Well, it makes sense. But I thought the good part of it was that students could take classes in different countries. This could be wonderful, to learn different languages and learn the cultures of those countries, while you were a student. At the end of that process you would have a lot of perspective on social change, cultures, and still you could get your degree done, instead of having to take time off to do all these exciting things. That was what I thought was the positive side of it.

JJ: *That is positive. But I think students have always been traveling. From my point of view it is not so much for the students' sake but for business interests.*

RM: This does lead directly into the approach of NEC and Nordenfjord World

University. I had been very interested in that from my first involvement. Maybe it is in that little brochure with the 'X' but there was the idea that 'the programme is the people who come'. A simple idea and very revolutionary. And people would ask, 'Who is the teacher there, and who is the student?' And we'd say that we didn't know yet. And this was the really interesting thing to me. We'd have people who came to NEC and some of them were professors who were on sabbatical or whatever. And we had kids, students of 18 or 19, and they were trying to find themselves and explore the world. At the beginning of each semester we would all sit together and figure out what the programme was going to be, and who would teach, and so on. And I remember a number of times that we would look to the people who were teachers and they'd say, 'I'd like to offer a little seminar on philosophy or literature, and give a few talks.' And people would say that that sounded great. But there were also some other students who had decided, for example we had this one guy who said, 'I am going to read the Bible, all the way through, from the beginning to the end. I am not necessarily religious but I want to know what is in this book. Then I'll figure out what I want to do about that.' And we thought that sounded good. And maybe he would want to make a presentation about it at some point. But in this unstructured environment, what would happen was that the people who were teachers would fizzle out. It would turn out that there were all these other things going on. And the teachers didn't really want to do this, they needed to do their own inner work, and they would kind of collapse and would stop being teachers and would say, 'This is not what I want to do with my life right now. I just want to go for walks, and I have a lot of issues from back home that I have to think about, and I want to talk about my personal life and what is happening to me. Maybe I will write something about my experiences.' Some of the young people who were students would say, 'I'd like to try and share some of what I am learning about Kierkegaard, or whatever it was, so I will teach a class. But we will have to do it together because I am not an expert, so I need help from everybody.'

JJ: *How were the semesters structured?*

RM: The semesters seemed to go in phases. People had left their home place and come to this – it was not a vacuum – it was an open space for whatever you wanted it to be. For most people, they had never been in an open space before. There was nothing to force them or confine them to what they had been doing. When the force was removed, they might not want to do what they had been doing. Now they could be whatever and see what

came. Sometimes that was painful, it was a psychological process. They were going through a lot of soul searching. You had to wait for the curriculum to evolve.

What kept that from deteriorating into a vacuum or a free-for-all was the Ting Meetings and the Sabbath Lectures. The Ting Meeting, anyone could call, day or night, with 20 minutes notice, and everyone had to show up for it. You never knew what it was going to be about. Sometimes it was a relationship issue with someone else there. Sometimes it was somebody coming out and saying 'Ok, nobody knows this about me, but I want to tell you.' They didn't use the term 'gay' at the time, but, essentially, 'I'm homosexual. I need to figure out what to do.' So, this is the programme.

JJ: *Did you ever call a Ting Meeting?*

RM: Yes, I don't know what I called it about. I'd have to think about what I might have called one about. Some of the Ting Meetings could be so frustrating! Because they were often about power and authority. For most people, in this open space, they had never felt that they were powerful, you know, had a voice. Suddenly they had this tool by which they could command everyone to listen to them and whatever they wanted to talk about. And they could misuse this power at first, because they felt no one had ever paid serious attention to them. Now they were going to get their attention. That could be really annoying. Over and over, we'd ask, 'what is the issue?'

I can remember some Ting Meetings which were also pretty annoying and frustrating, because the person who called them had a lot of issues about power in their life and feeling like they were missing power and so it was like being with a therapist, the problem was there wasn't a therapist. But these things take a long time. Once people start to open them up, that's just the beginning. Part of it was that you would hear yourself talking about things that you'd never tried to talk about before. You didn't really have a vocabulary for, and you had this devoted audience of people who were listening attentively and not saying anything. They were not supposed to give you advice. The rule was, you can respond from your experience but don't tell people what to do. If you wanted to say 'I had an experience like that too', you could.

I thought that was a very beneficial tool. Another small bit of formalisation was also the Friday evening – Aage Rosendal gave it this name – Sabbath Dinner. On Friday night we had a nice dinner, and all the members of the community cooked for each other, taking turns from a weekly list. That was another thing: serving other people, in this very direct and simple way. A lot of people had never cooked in their lives. They'd say that their mother did that.

And we'd say to them that they are doing it now. Cooking for 20 or more people, if you don't know how... we'd say to them 'here's a cookbook and you'll be with a team of people'. These things are so simple in a way, but they are profound. And they had a profound effect on people.

JJ: *The dinner was also including the Week-in-Review?*

RM: No, the Week-in-Review usually came on Saturday at the Sabbath Lecture. The dinner on Friday night was followed by 'table talks'. I think Aage took the idea from Grundtvig, who took it from Oxford University where students had meals with their professors and people got up and gave talks and speeches. We were to do that, this was the tradition. People could get up and say, 'Something very important happened for me this week. I was reading this book, or I took this walk, or I had this conversation with Bob, and I figured out something that I had never understood before, and I want to say that's what happened and thank you.' And then they'd sit down. So we had these talks around dinner. So you had this open space, but then you had these little formal arrangements which were also open spaces which were undefined, but there was a sense of 'this is what we do now'. You could do it, or not do it, or do it in the way you want to.

JJ: *There were no rules of how to do it, or how to respond?*

RM: No, there really weren't. On Saturday morning we had the Week-in-Review. This was pre-planned. So during the week, the person who would do it was supposed to pay attention to things that had been going on, because they were expected to make a presentation that would go on for ten minutes reviewing what had happened during the week for the community that they considered important. This was a very beneficial exercise I think. In a way, each time you were out of yourself, looking around you as an observer, it helped you develop observational skills because you knew you would have to report something. If you said, 'Oh I don't really remember, I really slept most of the time.' Everyone would be like, 'come on! What's the deal? You knew you were going to do this presentation, and you let us down. You could have done it any way you wanted to.' For example you could say 'each day there was a special quality of light that I saw', or whatever. But nothing! You can't do nothing.

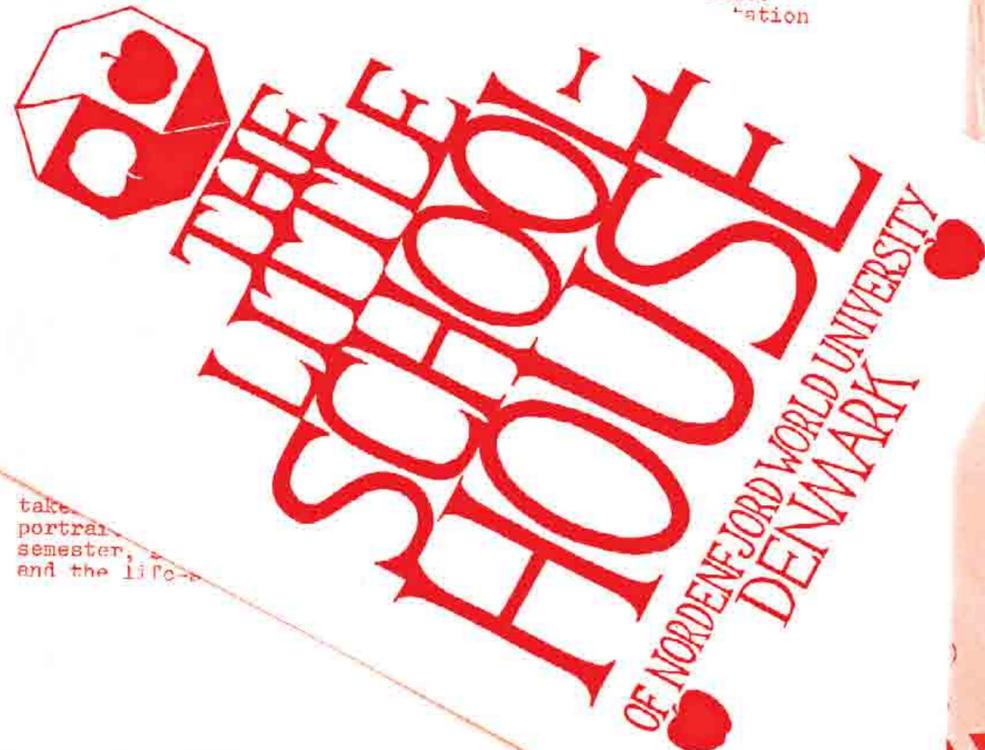
And somebody would have agreed in advance to give a lecture, on something they were working on, and we would sit and they would give their lecture and we would ask questions. Then we would have a celebration meal afterwards.

JJ: *What could a lecture be about? Did you give lectures?*

RM: Yes, I gave lectures mostly on stuff that I was working on. In that period I became very interested in a Jungian called Eric Neumann who wrote a book called *The Origins and History of Consciousness*. It was looking into mythology as the early consciousness and following consciousness into modern times, doing a comparative mythology study with a special focus on religious symbols, using a Jungian interpretation of symbols and the archetypes of the unconscious and that kind of material. Very interesting stuff, and complicated. So it was great to know that I was going

The Little Schoolhouse
a center for philosophical
research and expression
of Nordenfjord World University
"Report on the Second Semester"
Feb. 9 to June 3, 1973

The Little Schoolhouse is founded on the idea that in each person's life history there is a principle of self-knowledge which is their potential source for an enlightened interpretive ability for both inward and outward directed consciousness. Members of the Schoolhouse research their areas while carrying out concrete projects in master areas seek to understand, to gain skills in or assist in the development of professional competence. The working method tested is that pre-reflective and reflective activities in a life-history contain the desire to further life by expressing it in the form of expression. In this process, it is furthered by the development of personal projects in a community of work, born out of a tradition of education.



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to have to talk about it, because it made learning about it more active. I would have to take notes and think about how to present this book to my peers if they hadn't read it. There are a lot of things about it that – if you don't have any background information – are difficult to explain. It was a very good exercise.

I once gave a non-lecture. It is embarrassing to even talk about. We had a group coming from the US in the summer. Ben Wright taught psychology at the University of Chicago and he was also a mathematician. He worked with a famous Danish mathematician, Georg Rasch, in the summer. He had some very radical theories about mathematics, that Ben was very interested in. Ben wrote articles about him. Ben had a course called 'The Psychology of Being a Teacher'. It was a course for teachers. And it asked them, 'Why did you choose this career? What happened in your life?' And how it turned out was that people would either talk about when they were kids and they had this inspiring teacher and they wanted to be like them, or they had a terrible experience as a student, and now they wanted to fix it, by being a teacher and repairing this terrible experience they had themselves. The stuff that would come out was really interesting. It was helpful to free up the motivation. Most people had not thought about it in a long time, or never really thought about what had really happened to them, or lost touch with it. Ben was very smart. He had a sixth sense as a psychologist. He was astute. He could pick up on very subtle things about people. It was a gift. Aage had this gift too. That is why they would fight a little, I think.

So anyway, one year I was supposed to give a talk to this group after they had arrived. It was a Sabbath Lecture. I had been working on something that I was going to talk about. And then I got to some point in it and thought, this is bullshit. And I said to myself, 'you don't really care about any of this. This is not real. There is really all this other stuff going on you're not dealing with, but you have to give this talk, so you need to pretend that you're really interested in it and just do it.'

So I went there, and everyone was there waiting for me and they'd all heard about 'Ron, who is one of Aage's favourite students', and all that. And I say: 'I can't give this talk. You'll have to ask me questions, I am too shut down, and have too many things going on. I thought what I was working on was interesting, but I've lost track of it, and now if I were to try and give this talk it would be inauthentic.' Ben's group from the US was there and they were nice, so they say 'tell us about it. Why did you decide you wanted to talk about this?' And I talked, and they say 'that's interesting, why does it not interest you now?' I say, 'I'm having this issue about my parents, and I realise something about myself and I'm upset about it.' And they'd say 'don't you think that fits in and is related to this book about Jungian psychology?' And I say, 'How is it related?!' And they say, 'You're talking about this psychology, and you're going through that, and it seems very much connected.' And I say, 'Oh, I hadn't thought about that. That is interesting.' So, suddenly, everyone is super-involved in my lecture. Later Aage said, 'That is best lecture you ever gave!' From his point of

view, I was being in the moment, no matter what, taking the risk.

JJ: *What do you think happened there, for you?*

RM: For me, it was a positive lesson that I could take chances and do something like that, and that maybe something good came out of it. If we really meant that the process of what we are doing is more important than the content, then it was being true to the process. People coming and seeing this might have said, 'isn't it interesting to be in a place where someone can do that? We would never dare do that. We would be mortified to reveal that we had these weaknesses. You can't be a teacher and show these parts of yourself, because it is not acceptable.' I had some experiences like that, though not so intense. Once I was giving a lecture in a philosophy class at San Diego State and I was going on about something and I thought, wait a second, that isn't right. And I said to my students, 'this is not correct.' And I saw on the faces of some of the students a reaction like, 'he doesn't know!? You're the professor here. You're supposed to know!' Sometimes you work through something and realise that you've got it wrong and that you have to rethink this. Some students would have thought, 'this guy is a loser, he's stupid. Send him back.' But for others it was like, 'it's not all done when you get your doctorate?! You don't just know it?' No, you are always in the process. So I think it was beneficial.

JJ: *You had a script ready for that lecture, I imagine?*

RM: Well, I never write lectures, but I had an outline of what I was going to talk about. I had prepared, but in the process of preparing, it fell apart. It felt like I didn't have a point of view or a position on why I am doing this; I didn't know why this was supposed to be important.

JJ: *You said that the community made you de-specialise in relation to your intended role at the beginning. You wanted to make a lecture on philosophy to a group of non-specialists, and in that way you were forced to ask questions about this specialisation.*

RM: I think that the key here is that your interest of study in an area of academic knowledge and your personal life were to be integrated. When you take a class in a university, in most cases, no one is interested in your personal life. That is your business. Some teachers do – depending on the subject matter – feel that they want that, to start making it personal. That is my style as a teacher. It has always been to encourage students to look at the personal aspect of something they are studying as well as the academic part, and to see how to integrate that into their own life. I have done that through various kinds of writing exercises and so on.

JJ: *In an educational institution like NEC, what kind of dialectics was going on between the personal approach and the more institutional framework? What was specific about NEC in relation to that?*

RM: It comes back to issues about authority, and knowing your interests. The experience of the open space of NEC was that Aage would always say, 'the individual is the highest authority – and the group is the even higher authority.' This is a paradox. It is easy to say things like that and easy to say to others, 'you are your own authority'. You can respond, 'of course I

am'. But to actually practice that is a whole other matter. To take responsibility for it too. That was a very precious part of what could happen there.

What grew out of that was that students were encouraged to develop their own degree programme, if they wanted to. We started to formalise this a little. 'If you want to have a degree for your year here, you need to develop a curriculum of what you want to do and how you are going to do it and who needs to help you, if there are people here who can be of help to you. If we don't have people in NEC, maybe there are people in the community who you can go and meet with. At the end of the year, you will have an oral examination, and you will also present a paper about what you have learned this year.' I call it a self-qualified degree programme. There were only a few people – in the time I was there – who did that. That was taking the whole idea another step. Terry Harlow, the guy who edited the *Physiognomy* journal, I remember his exam, and a few other people's. It was great. They took themselves seriously about their own learning processes. They were giving themselves a degree and we were the witnesses.

JJ: *This was the institutional framework?*

RM: It was but the framework wasn't authorised by the Danish State. There was no evaluation of the institution by some accrediting agency. The idea was, you are responsible for your own learning because it is what you are going to do with it; no one will do it for you. It was very powerful. The guy who read through the Bible – David Brown – when I ran another programme called The Little School House, he was one of our students. He was very difficult. He spent a lot of time drinking coffee and smoking and didn't talk very much. He did share a few interesting experiences, but he was very serious, and he did read the whole Bible. He did write and give a talk, and he took it seriously, and he did quite well.

JJ: *Knowledge and institutionalisation is so much about distance. And that is different in relation to NEC.*

RM: It is very different. I had been fortunate enough to have been a teacher in places that were more open to these connections between the academic and the personal. But in a lot of other places it is just not done. You would be ridiculed. Too touchy-feely. Your role is to be a professional educator and write research papers and go to conferences. If you don't do that, you are out of a job. But you can do both, that is my experience. I did both. It needn't be one or the other. If you believe that what you are teaching is valuable and you want students to learn it, and you also want students to connect personally with the material, then that is fine, you can do that. I haven't often found teachers who are like that; who were willing to reveal what their personal connection with the subject matter was, or to invite that in their students. If their students did that on their own, that was great but they didn't feel they were going to take the time in a classroom to do that. That's not the way I was educated either. I went to an experimental college and we had a lot of class discussion groups and also informal meetings with our teachers.

JJ: *This was before...*

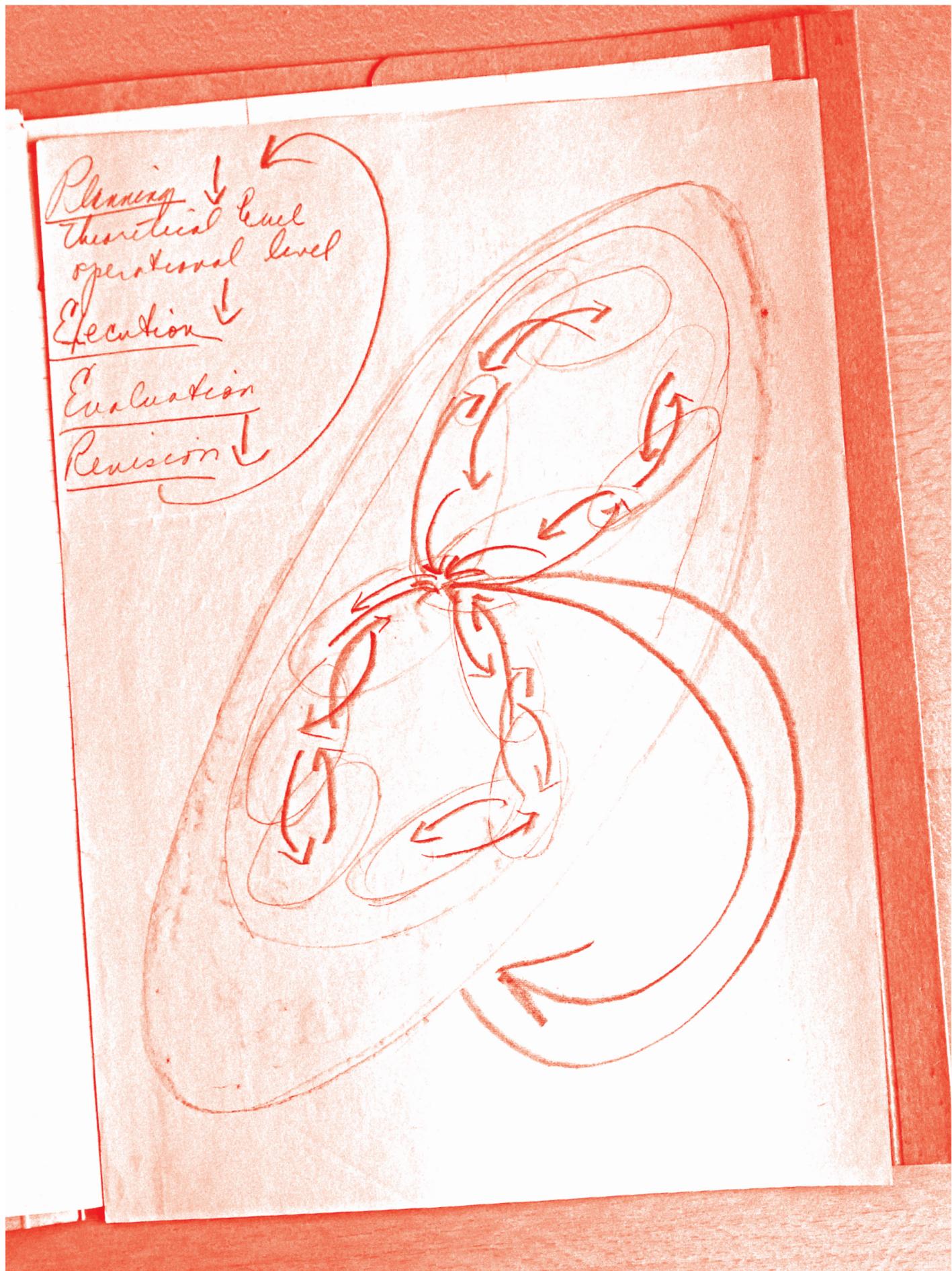
RM: I was an undergraduate in Detroit,

Michigan, at this experimental college. Most of our teachers were interested in having us talk about what the studies meant to us. We'd be reading Durkheim or Freud, we had attended the lectures, and, we'd be asked 'What did we think?' At first, we'd say, 'We don't think anything. We don't know anything'. And our teachers would come back with, 'What?! Come on'. So we were encouraged to form our own opinions and express what we felt or saw in the theory. You would listen to other students talk about it and think, 'I missed that completely. Where did he pick that up from?' That was how I was educated, by teachers who were dedicated to us as students. They were student centred, but they didn't neglect the material. They felt they could help us make those connections. And they'd certainly challenge us.

JJ: *You lived at NEC. You were there every day so it was not just about the courses. What did that mean, that you spent every day together?*

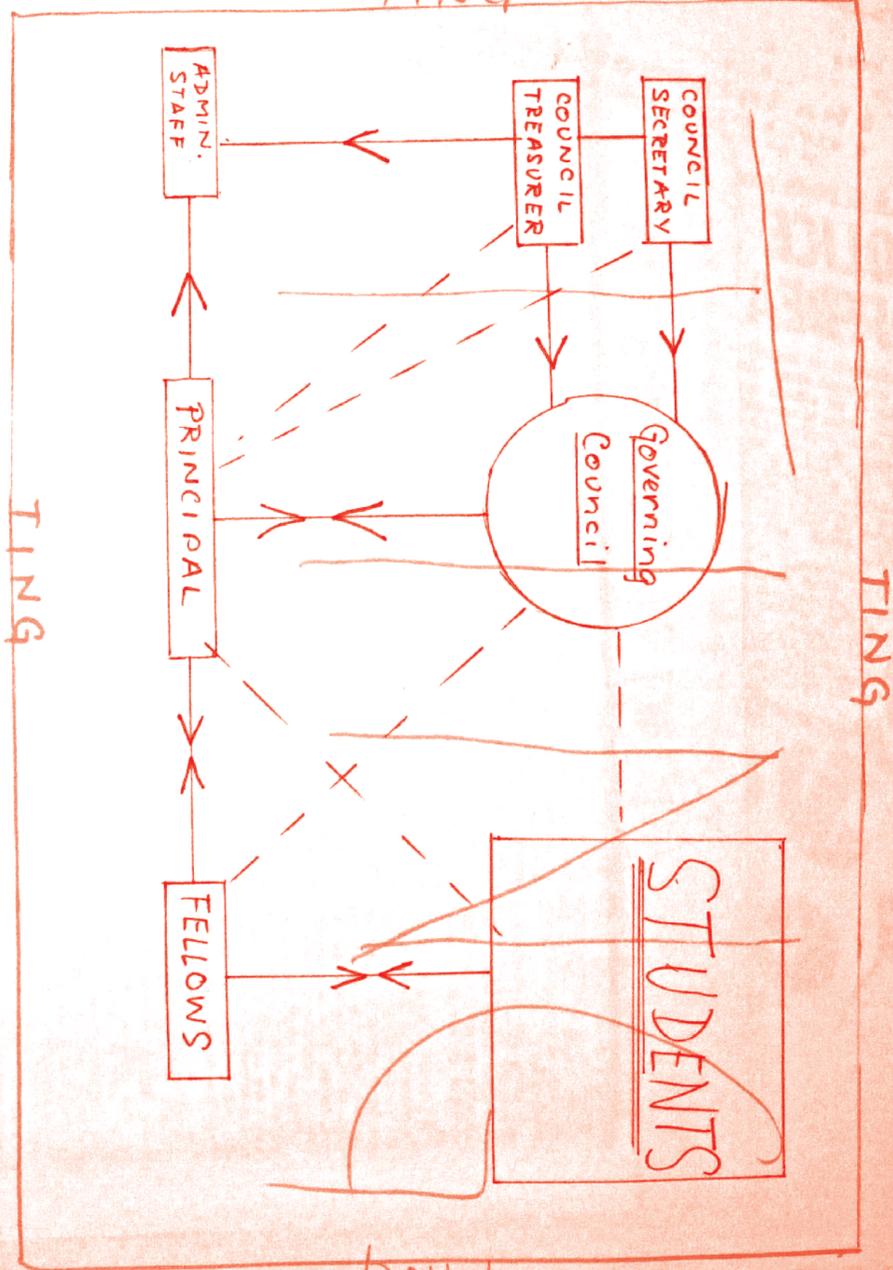
RM: We were more like a learning community, and everything that went on was part of the learning process. Preparing meals, cleaning up the place, going to Ting Meetings, going on fieldtrips, looking after each other, and knowing a lot about other people's lives – that was all part of the curriculum. Respecting other people, interpersonal relationships. This was part of the whole learning process. And it was very different after, coming back to the States, and teaching at UC Santa Cruz. At first it was odd to have a seminar and then all go on our separate way. Shouldn't we all be going to have lunch together? That was not part of what you did. People had other things they had to go do. So it wasn't a community in that sense. That was so different. Living together with people and learning together is different.

In that period of the 1960s and 1970s, there were quite a number of small colleges within universities where the students lived together in a dormitory and took courses there, and had more of this communal living together. They didn't cook for each other or anything like that but the idea was to make a learning and living community inside a big university. Some of those colleges were very popular and good. We have this pendulum swing in education. There will be a period of great interest in making education more real, relevant and personal, and connected with community and civic engagement, and then other periods where these programmes all disappear and it is all about getting a job, career development, internships. And now people say, this is what kids want or what we need. That was the 1960s or the 1970s. That's over. Now we're doing this. My feeling is that it will go back again. It is a pendulum swing. It is not a one-way process. My experience now teaching older adults is interesting, especially teaching Philosophy. Because for a lot of people, they say, 'I didn't have time for this when I was a student, because I was in Engineering or I needed to earn a living, and I didn't feel I could take the time. Maybe I had a Philosophy course, but I don't remember a thing about it. Now I really want to learn about these things'. Now you have this community of learners teaching each other and feeling very free to challenge their teachers, ask questions, disagree, because there are no grades and you call them by their first name and you are all on



What Does It All Mean?

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These are two levels :-

- 1) Everyone is a Ting member
- 2) Some people have jobs - i.e. Fellows, Principals, Council officers, Students.

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We call this human Relations

the same level. Not that you don't honour them or recognise their expertise, but you don't have the same experience of hierarchy. And that was somewhat similar to my early experiences. You have a framework for self-directed learning communities within a college or university that draws on people's motivations rather than on any requirements. They don't need to be there, they want to be there. They have an interest. It is exciting to teach there.

In that programme for older learners, besides lecture classes and so on, there are learning circles, where there is no teacher but a facilitator and a subject matter, and everyone is in a seminar together. There are a lot of people who really prefer that. That is an outgrowth of this educational movement, the study circle idea. There are techniques for doing it well and there is a little training programme to prepare people to be a good study circle leader, because it takes talent. It doesn't work to just have a free-for-all. It is important to be a facilitator and make sure people don't dominate others, and help people who are quiet, help them to open up a little and get into the process, help the group stay focused, and so on.

JJ: Is this within universities?

RM: This is within this 'Lifelong Learning Programme'.

JJ: When you didn't have a specific curriculum or subject matter at NEC, this openness or - some would call it 'void' - must also have caused frustration and misunderstanding and conflicts?

RM: It can, of course. In a study circle you have all these different personalities. Some people have an opinion about everything, even if they don't have any knowledge. I often found this frustrating as a teacher of university undergrads, that some of my best students would be very quiet. I would get their paper, and it would be the best in the class, and I'd say, 'you have all this ability. Why don't you ever say anything in the group?' They'd say, 'Oh that's just my thinking.' I'd tell them they had a responsibility to help teach your fellow students. And they'd be surprised. 'This is a seminar, what do you think this is?' They'd reply, 'I don't know. I didn't think I was supposed to teach others.'

It's like that in the study circles. People have to learn how to support mutuality through their own collective education. A lot of times people have said, 'I am always thinking of what I'm going to say, and then by the time I'm ready to say it, the discussion has moved on to something else.' So I've said to them, 'Why don't you ask questions instead?' And they hadn't thought about that, and of course they do have questions, but they are thinking they need to be 'saying something' and trying to get it all together. So then they learn to ask questions, which is a great art. It is a process that people have to learn their way into. It can be very frustrating.

JJ: Going back to NEC, what kind of ethics would regulate your interaction? When is it too much? When do you contribute too little or too much? There must have been some sort of ethics.

RM: I don't know that they were ever articulated. Some of that gets determined by peer pressure and by each group setting its own level, and by a set of expectations. Psychologically in a group process I know that's what happens. You have someone who has been quiet a long time and who

never says anything in the meetings, and gradually everyone is looking at them. 'So, what's your story, you never say anything. What do you think? You never express an opinion.' They are put on the spot. They may try to respond and become frightened or upset or defensive, and afraid to say anything. That is not fair in a way. It is painful to that person. But then, why are they there? They must have known somehow that this was going to happen, and have put themselves in that situation. It is an issue. There are a lot of ways it can go wrong.

JJ: The politics of small groups.

RM: Yes. For instance, you begin to realise that the more emotional you become and the more you tell it all, the more people are excited and think that this is great. So people start to really do it. And then it becomes so dramatic. Is this real? How does this get regulated, I don't know. I don't think we had any rules about this, or guidance. Are we really using these forums appropriately? Are we being fair to each other?

JJ: So, do you remember more specifically what could happen within this kind of learning community?

RM: Here's what used to happen. I used to prepare people for going home. Your going back to your family, so let's do some role play. I'm your uncle Max and you've come back: 'So, I understand you were in Denmark at this school, what was it like?' So you start to give this thoughtful answer and Uncle Max interrupts, 'Well it sounds very interesting... By the way did you see that show on TV. last week?' Be prepared. Especially when you start to talk about really personal things. 'When I was there I realised that I hated my father, and had to work through that.' And Uncle Max says, 'Well that's good to think about your father, and so on. By the way, what are doing next in life?' I'd ask them how they were going to deal with that. This is the way things work in the regular world. People don't sit down and talk like this to each other. You have had a special and precious experience, but it isn't the way things usually work. You need to start preparing yourself for how to reintegrate yourself, so that you can feel ok. Can you translate your experience to something that other people would understand? For example, 'I learned a lot about Danish culture, and they have all these traditions, and we learned a new form of education that was very interesting.' Then if they say, 'Tell me more about it', you can. But if they start talking about the weather or TV shows, you stop. You don't try and push this, because they don't want to hear it.

JJ: You are speaking of the experience and practices that people developed at NEC. How to bring them back to the network that they came from? The family, etcetera.

RM: Yes. If you had been in a group therapy process for months, and then somebody asked what that is like, how do you want to tell them, or can you tell them? Can you take that experience and talk about it conceptually? Or is it still too raw that you don't have the terms and language to share it without other people, without going back into the process itself? Some people are not prepared for something like that, so they'd feel awkward, vulnerable. It is too personal.

JJ: ...Not prepared to develop a language for

these complex emotions?

RM: Yes, and what language would that be? We all learn some language about that, maybe professionally, or as a psychologist or sociologist, or postmodernist, or feminist, or whatever. You get a vocabulary for saying, this is what's that's about. That is helpful. But then you structure it in a way that can also falsify some of it, or make it more static. The way you discovered those things are lost, and now it is just the result.

JJ: So coming back to the process, you wrote an article, 'The Success of Failure'. Maybe you could reflect on the background to that article? It was written in 1966.

RM: It was a long time ago. I don't know if I remember the content of it. It was a term that Aage used. Somebody recently said to me, 'there's no such thing as failure, there are only lesser forms of success'. That was important. I don't remember what we were doing that semester, but with anything that is experimental, you see things that don't work very well, and some things that do. But you don't just discard what didn't work, you have discovered something about that. 'Shall we try this again in a different way now?' I don't know what the failure was. Something didn't happen in a way I wanted it to, or the group wanted it to, but it could be seen as a discovery process. Something was successful about that.

JJ: I guess openness to failure is a way of learning.

RM: I said to my thesis advisor, Albert Hofstadter, while I was writing on certain ideas, 'I thought this was going to be valuable, but then it seemed to peter out like water in the desert.' And he said, 'Well, now you know that.' And I agreed. That was a great example. Now I know that is not going to work. I have to go somewhere else with it. In most classes, you don't get much opportunity to fail, because then you fail and you are penalised for it.

JJ: To go back to the beginning, how did you learn about NEC? When was that?

RM: When I graduated from high school, I applied to some universities. I wasn't a very good student in high school, I didn't have very high grades. I had to take an entrance exam to get into this big university in Detroit, Wayne State University. I was accepted. But then I got a letter, inviting me to be part of a new college. It would have small discussion groups and be focused on students, and would have its own faculty. I felt very flattered that I had been invited. I was the first in my family to go to college. I thought, they want me so I'll say yes. It turned out that they sent this letter to one in three of the newly admitted students. It had nothing to do with me. It was just accidental or random. So I became a student in this college. It was wonderful. That introduced me to other experimental colleges in the US. We would hear about them from our teachers. About Goddard College in Putney, Vermont, etcetera. How were they doing it, what kind of experiments? When I was in - I think - my last year, Aage Rosendal and Sara Bryson had been going around, talking to people in the US about starting this new school. I didn't go to the talk, but I heard about it. My girlfriend at the time, Susan Herman, attended and they must have talked about the program that Aage had started years earlier, so she decided to go to the Scandinavian Seminar for Cul-

tural Studies, that Aage had started before NEC. He was already out of it though.

So she wanted to go to Denmark - and I graduated and went to hitchhike around the UK. I had an idea about living in London and trying to become a writer. I would correspond with Susan, and at some point she invited me to visit her in Copenhagen. She had lived with a family for a month, studied Danish... She was ready to go to Bornholm Folk High School. I visited her. She took me to this island, I got a job on a farm and started to live there and learn Danish on my own, and learn about farm labouring. When Susan had finished, we visited Aage and Sara in Copenhagen. I already knew about this school, and it was something I believed in, so after that I decided to spend some time there, and be involved.

JJ: You moved to Slotsherrensvej?

RM: Yes.

JJ: This was 1964 or 1965?

RM: 1965. We had visited briefly when Susan was on break. But I went back in the summer of 1965 when the whole group was staying in a hotel in Humlebaek and Paul Goodman, the American writer and radical theorist, was there at the time. I'd read his book, *Growing Up Absurd*, when I was an undergrad. He was there was his wife.

JJ: Staying there?

RM: Yes, and with their daughter, too, I think. He was there a while, then they went to Greece. He must have been on sabbatical, though I don't know whether he was teaching at a university at the time, because he had been thrown out of different schools for so many reasons. He was the first openly gay person I had ever met. He was very out.

I had been studying initially American intellectual history on my own when I lived on Bornholm and getting books from the American Embassy library, which they would send to you. Then I got interested in European intellectual history and then history of consciousness. So I was somewhere in that process and that was what I was leading discussion groups on and teaching on.

JJ: Most students stayed for a semester and then moved on. What made you stay there for longer?

RM: I started working with Aage, and became part of the institution, helping develop the ideas and take groups through this year-long process. Then we bought the land and moved up to Thy.

JJ: This process of moving out of Copenhagen, was this already starting when you came here in 1965?

RM: I don't know where that idea came from, that they should move. It was a big deal for Aage, to go back where he had grown up, where he had been the black sheep of the family. He'd gone off. He'd started his Scandinavian Seminar at his parents' farm and then built it up to become a well-known organisation with a distinguished board and he was earning a pretty good salary. He had really been a big shot. And then they fired him. In that period he had gotten more interested in world education and was trying to create a world college. Then to go back to Thy was an important step for him, to go back home. I wasn't privileged to know how he and Sara had talked about this and why he wanted to start over again. Aage was

good at that. He had started over a lot of things in his life, he was then in a second marriage. In Thy we had a bigger place, we could be out more in the natural surroundings. There were exciting advantages, but we were away from the big city.

When we lived in Vanløse, we didn't learn much about Danish history or explore Copenhagen. We didn't go to museums as a group. You could do that individually and some did. I think we turned more and more into this little group, this little sheltered and safe community. In a way it needed to have some corrective, to take people out of that more often.

JJ: *What did you think about the move to Thy at the time?*

RM: I thought it was very exciting. I loved it, partly because I felt that so much of what we do is internal anyway, so it is a safer place for people to let go. They can go for walks and not get drunk, well, they still could! We had a lot more to do with the neighbours. They were sort of mystified by what all these foreigners were doing here. Aage was trying to sell it to them as an economic development. I'm bringing all these young people to Thy because it's such a great place and the people are so wonderful and they will benefit from this. People said yes, we are wonderful people, and this is a wonderful place, so, this sounds good.

We did some things with the community and a local school. Sometimes when groups would come – we did this with the group Ben Wright from Chicago was in – all of the people went off to live with Danish farmers. They would be brought there each day for the programme and then would go home to their families. It was great.

JJ: *You were more open to the social environment.*

RM: Exactly. That was great for everyone. For those who came, they could see the inside of Danish rural life, and meet people. They couldn't speak the language but were figuring out ways to communicate with each other. Some years later, it was in 1971, we opened the Little School House too. My former wife, Caroline, taught Batik, and we taught English in the Aftenskole programme. A lot of neighbours came, partly because they were curious about who we were and what went on inside. This gave them an excuse to come. They met people, and had a good time. We became part of this community. We were more integrated. And we got invitations from neighbours to come to parties.

JJ: *For some years you were still working at NEC, but then the idea of the World University with all the centres, the Little School House among others, came about. Can you describe that process?*

RM: That was Aage's idea. He was going back to this initial idea of world education, and amongst our little group, there was a discussion about how we would do things together. Each centre should be a part of the totality, that we would call Nordenfjord World University. The idea was that this was Grundtvig's University of the North. We would be able to step out of our narrow, cultural, ideological perspectives to look at the world and the world's problems in a more – not neutral – but in a larger perspective, through what we were doing together. The different centres were specialising: into crafts, the environ-

ment, film, Folk High Schools, and then more and more people started to move up there to make their own centres. That was exciting, because we were evolving into something more serious and bigger. Once a month we had our Sabbath Lecture all together at one of the places, and they would host it, with everyone bringing food for the Sabbath Lunch. These were good ideas. It is around that time that I began to realise it would never really work out.

JJ: *You were, together with your wife, running the Little School House. What was specific about that?*

RM: It was supposed to be about self-initiated projects. Each person was to come with a project they wanted to work on.

JJ: *You had methods of making contracts in teaching, where you made a contract with the student about what they wanted to do, and then talk about how they would succeed in doing that.*

RM: This was taking up the idea of the self-qualified degree programme. You applied and said what you wanted to work on while you were there. There was an expectation that you would make presentations on the progress you were making and everyone would support and witness this, and you would do the same for them. It was a learning community. It wasn't so open-ended. People would come who had already figured out something that they wanted to work on, and we would start from there. But that didn't always happen. Sometimes people came and they thought they did, or said they did, but it didn't hold up. It held up where they came from, but once they came out of that milieu, it didn't make any sense anymore. It didn't seem important to them anymore. So they had to start over. That was good for them but made the process more difficult than I had realised. I wanted to have a place that was more intellectually oriented, and a little less emotionally oriented, and it was. But that is still a difficult process to harness. When you put people in a retreat-like setting in a foreign country, naturally, there's a process of adjustment.

We did do some interesting things. I was interested in autobiography and memory and so we had this seminar one semester where every evening someone would talk about a life experience from memory. I wrote an article about that. Generally when we started out, people would tell their whole life story, but then next time they had another turn, so what were they going to talk about? They would focus in on a period. Then they had another turn, and it got down to smaller and smaller memory focus, until it was one focus, like a certain moment or a certain image. That was fascinating.

JJ: *And the time made it possible.*

RM: We had the time. We had already heard the previous stories, so you couldn't do the same thing. It got more focused, to something that, it turned out, was presently very important to them. That was a critical moment. You don't know how much the peer pressure of, 'so-and-so is doing it that way, so you will too' was a factor, and I may have guided it more than I realised. I wanted to develop more structure than was present at NEC. I wanted to ensure that people had something they came away with at the end. They could say, 'this is what I did at the Little School House in Nors, Denmark. I wrote something. I made an

artwork. I have something to show for it.'

I taught philosophy. I taught Kierkegaard. I ran a seminar where we read *Either/Or*. Each person would read aloud for a few minutes, or until someone would say stop, and ask what that meant. We would then talk about it. I could explain a bit of background, about Hegel or Kant. This is what's Kierkegaard's alluding to here. Then we went on. It was fascinating. I learnt a lot about how people read and misread, read things that were not words in the text. I did things like that. More intellectual content but trying to stay connected to people's personal processes.

JJ: *How many people were you all at the beginning?*

RM: A small group of anywhere between seven and twelve people. We ran this programme in a former schoolhouse. It was the little school for Nors at one time, the elementary school. It was L-shaped. The house at the front was where the teacher lived and then it had a big schoolroom. It had been purchased by an electrician and he converted it into a workshop for his electrical work. He built bedrooms in the attic and rented them out. It had quite a few rooms. We could have about ten people and my wife and I and our one child. We then had a child who was born there. We had interesting people come. An Israeli guy who came for a year, Joseph Ben Dak, who had his PhD from the University of Michigan. An interesting and smart guy. We had some Czech students, a Canadian. A bit more than just Americans.

I have the Ting books of the Little School House and I haven't opened them. I need to decide whether to turn them in, throw them away, or burn them. I don't know. I am ambivalent about this whole history. There are many good things about it, but it was very naive and idealistic also. Thinking that the whole world needed to be saved by this kind of process. I think this is good for some people at certain times, but I don't think it is good for everyone. This issue of, 'do people know what they are getting into and do they want this?' That is really important. It is not for everyone, and not everyone always. For other people it is not a good thing. You get involved in people's psychological life, but no one is really trained to take care of someone if they get in trouble. Seriously in trouble. We don't know how to help them or what to do. You have to respect some limits. So I realised a lot later on and with other experiences. These programmes are not very well-documented, and not just these programmes. I have done a lot of grant-funded programmes over the years and you always have to submit a report to the funding organisation. I have learned that there are so many programmes that failed, or had serious problems, and they don't write about it. They turn in a report that glosses over it and then it's over.

JJ: *That is fairly useless.*

RM: How can we build something, if people won't say, this part was good and this part was not good? Why not? We did some things and we were wrong. We missed out. Like you are saying, I see in retrospect that we should have had more goals, should have agreed on the structure. It's like co-housing communities that were started in Denmark. They have written a book on this, on how you do it. And part of it is, you have to have the group go

through this process, before you do anything, so that people really agree about what it is that they want. Spell it out before you have an architect come and design for this community. Because a lot of the time what happens is that people have completely different ideas about what it is supposed to be, but they are all calling it the same thing. And it's not going to work. So don't wait until you build it and it all falls apart. Figure it out before. And if some people say, 'this group of people agree, and so does this other group. So why don't we form two groups? Or is there some way we can accommodate both kinds of goals?' ... They have outlined all of this. How communities are successful and how they are not. Why not? What happened? Don't repeat the same mistake.

I just gave a talk two days ago for a conference about lifelong learning about some of the key principles for developing programmes of this kind and the ways programmes can fail or go wrong. Saying the process of involving people democratically is crucial to the programme you're going to develop means the process is not just something you have to get through. The process is the programme. If it is not part of the programme, it isn't going to work. If you don't involve your members and then say, 'we've decided you're going to have this kind of programme', then it probably won't be successful.

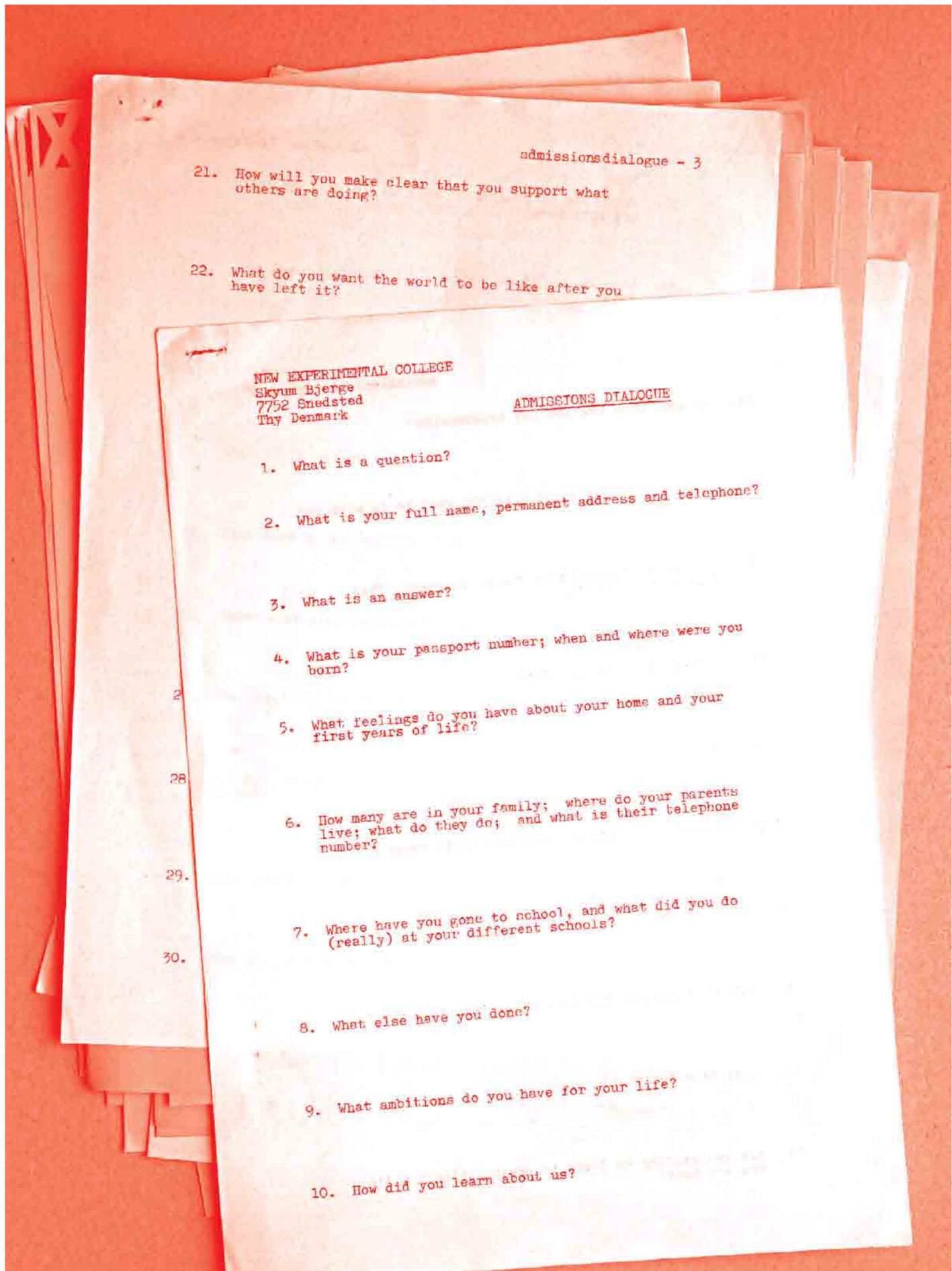
JJ: *To wrap up then, when did you leave Thy and the Little School House?*

RM: In 1974, after the oil crisis, we had only four students coming to Denmark for our programme, and I could see that the Nordenfjord World University idea was never going to happen. There were too many personality conflicts. I decided it was time for me to pick up my toys and go home to the States. We sold everything – the car, the furniture – and we left. I was fortunate to get a job as a sabbatical replacement teacher and had to start all over again. I never intended to be a philosophy professor. I studied philosophy because I thought it was the most useful discipline for running community learning programmes. Then what do you do with that skill? I didn't know. I had a PhD in philosophy, so I started teaching.

JJ: *You had learned some methods after all.*

RM: Yes. It was a great learning experience. But I had to figure out what I could apply to a conventional university setting where we were not making lunch for each other or living together, but that was still valid for a class meeting three times a week for 40 students and reading papers and giving them grades. Very different sets of limitations or constraints. Mostly what I did was figure out how to give assignments that invited students to think personally about what we were studying and to try to write about that, drawing examples from their own life experiences.

Ron Manheimer holds a PhD in philosophy from the University of California at Santa Cruz and is the author of several books on philosophy including Kierkegaard As Educator and A Map to the End of Time. He lived at NEC, Nordenfjord World University and the Little School House between 1965 and 1974.



Kunstnerens eller fiskerens måde

Samtale med Preben Maegaard, Nordisk Folkecenter for Vedvarende Energi, Sdr. Ydby. 3. juni 2014

Jakob Jakobsen: *Preben, du har været med til at grundlægge og været leder af Nordisk Folkecenter for Vedvarende Energi her i Thy indtil sidste år. Dets historie går tilbage til New Experimental College og Nordenfjords Verdensuniversitet?*

Preben Maegaard: Folkecenteret startede for akkurat 40 år siden, og vi holdt et jubilæum her for få uger siden, hvor vi netop fejrede den store forandring, vi har været med til at indlede. Det var faktisk den 12. januar 1974 på NEC, at vi havde et møde i en helt anden anledning. Det foregik virkelig i Aage Rosendals ånd. Vi havde fået nogle penge til et UNESCO-projekt, der hed 'optimal udnyttelse af lokale menneskelige og teknologiske ressourcer' – men Aage Rosendal så det nok mere som menneskelige ressourcer, for han gik jo ind for den spirituelle, filosofiske eller teologiske linje, og det bekom ham ikke så vel, at vi var nogle stykker, der den dag sagde, at 'vi er midt i oliekrisen her og nu – det er krisen uden ende! Folk sidder ude i deres huse og fryser. Det er ikke tiden at drøfte abstrakte emner, det må vente. Vi skal i gang med at omstille os til en tid, hvor ressourcegrundlaget, olien, ikke er der længere.' Oliens varme folks huse op. De havde smidt alt det gamle skidt ud med kakkelovne og brænde og så videre. Det var sådan set begyndelsen på mit arbejde med vedvarende energi på lokalt plan. Det har ført mig vidt omkring – ind i nationale organisationer – med nationalt arbejde men også senere i endnu højere grad internationalt. Og det er jeg med i stadigvæk, kan man så sige. Det har jo ændret sig meget de senere år, men bare for et par årtier siden var uvidenheden jo næsten total på det her område. Og det er også bemærkelsesværdigt, at vores såkaldt højtudviklede samfund, med så mange læreanstalter og så meget forskning, ikke har kunnet forske sig frem til, at det fossile ressourcegrundlag er begrænset. Og hvad kommer efter det? Hvad gør vi så, når det ikke er der længere? Men det har været en stort set ikkeeksisterende forsk-

ning. Og især den teknik, man skal bruge til at udnytte energiressourcerne fra solen og vinden og biomassen, det fandtes jo reelt ikke. Man kunne knap nok finde et billede af en vindmølle i 1974.

JJ: *Jeg er egentlig også interesseret i centerets rødder i forbindelse med min interesse for uddannelse og andre former for læring – andre former for forståelse af verden. Før 1974 var der nogle år, hvor du måske bevægede dig fra at være engageret i uddannelse til...*

PM: ... Jeg var i midten af 1960'erne involveret i noget der hedder 'Den eksperimenterende kunstskole' i København. En række af dem, der var der, fik ganske stor indflydelse på, hvordan samfundet udviklede sig. Men der blev vi enige om at bygge et stort kollektivhus. Vi stillede spørgsmålstegn ved sådan noget som; hvad er det at bo? – 'det er godt, at bo godt', lød boligsekskabernes reklame. Men hvad er det at bo? Stillede vi så spørgsmålstegn ved. Det førte til, at vi byggede et kollektivhus. Men det var mere processen i byggeriet, der optog os. For da det var bygget færdigt, gik vi hver især til andre opgaver. Men vi var nogle i det kollektivbyggeri, som havde fundet sammen om at starte det, vi kan kalde, en arbejdende højskole i København – altså netop en slags protest imod det meget programlagte og det meget formaliserede undervisningssystem. Der er en stor del af de unge, som ikke egner sig til den meget teoretiske uddannelse, som stort set er det eneste, man kan tilbyde dem. Noget af det man diskuterer netop i disse år er jo, at man skal give dem, der går til erhvervsuddannelserne nogle flere muligheder – nogle andre muligheder. Det er ikke alle, der er bogligt disponeret. Det er ikke alle, der behøver at tage en studentereksamen. Man kan også have intelligente hænder. Det var det, vi gik ud fra dengang.

JJ: *Hvad var det for en højskole?*

PM: Den blev ikke bygget. Der er mange ting, der blev tænkt og udført. Vi havde gode politiske forbindelser. Men den borgmester, Eigil Brinch, som vi havde gode forbindelser til og som ville

hjælpe os med at etablere sådan en højskole i Brøndby Strand, som var et nyt sted i vækst på det tidspunkt, han blev ikke valgt. Han var socialdemokraternes spidskandidat, men det var en Thorkild Rasmussen, som var en outsider, der blev valgt og kom til at sidde der i mange år. Men det betød altså, at der var nogle tanker og planer, der blev modnet, for vi havde trykt mange papirer og skrevet mange ting omkring sådan nogle skoleplaner. Og i forbindelse med det arbejde, blev jeg kontaktet af dem, der arrangerede Thylejren. Og jeg kom så til Thy omkring april-maj 1970, og var den, der tog sig af de praktiske ting omkring Thylejren. Jeg investerede også penge i Thylejren, som jeg dog heldigvis fik igen. Det var ikke nogen enkel sag, at få de penge tilbage – men jeg fik dem igen. Der møder jeg så Aage Rosendal. Og det han havde arbejdet med af skoletanker – altså det han arbejdede med i forbindelse med New Experimental College – det var stort set opstået på samme tidspunkt som – og var på nogle felter det samme, som vi arbejdede med i Brøndby Strand projektet, om man kan kalde det sådan. Så vi fik selvfølgelig en udmærket samtale, og han hjalp med, at vi kunne finde den ejendom her, og sagde at: 'der er elever nok at få – jeg kan skaffe alle de elever, det skal være' – og i god Aage-stil, passede det selvfølgelig ikke. Så dér stod man så – havde købt en ejendom, og måtte tage sig af det hele selv. Så det var en del af uddannelsen.

JJ: *Var du tilknyttet New Experimental College, da det lå på Fjordvang?*

PM: Jeg møder Aage, og Aage tilskynder folk til at etablere et center – men alle er uafhængige og samarbejder i et åbent, frit og uforpligtende samarbejde. Men jeg kom ind i det, og Aage siger, 'jeg kan hjælpe jer med at skaffe elever', og selvfølgelig er der økonomi involveret i sådan nogle ting. Og økonomien har at gøre med, om man kan skaffe elever. Det var et dejligt ubureaukratisk system uden statsilskud og godkendelser og så videre. Og der kom altså en masse unge ameri-

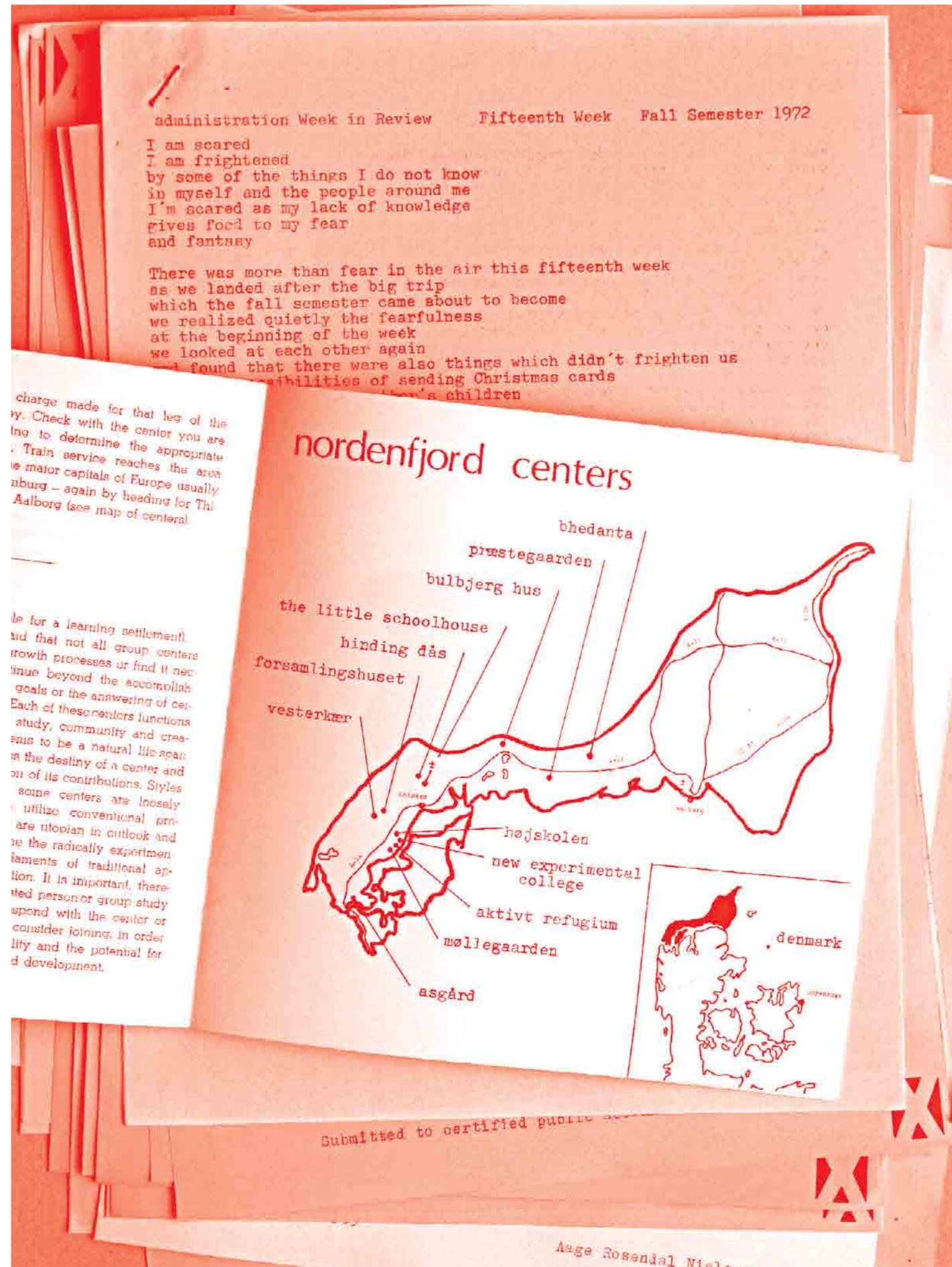
kanere, som var flygtet fra Vietnamkrigen – eller i hvert fald fra et samfund, der var præget af Vietnamkrigen. Der er det så, at jeg karakteriserer Aage på den måde, at han er meget generøs – meget gavmild – i sine løfter, men ikke i opfyldelsen af dem. Og derfor står man dér... men skolesamfundet er jo et fællesskab omkring nogle idéer. Men det er uforpligtende. Der er ikke nogen økonomi i det. Alle er med i det. Og noget af det var mere levedygtigt end andet. Det center vi har her, er tilsyneladende det eneste, der viste sig at være levedygtigt.

JJ: *Men det betød, at det som center som hed Asgård, det blev så oprettet efter, at du havde været tilknyttet Thylejren...?*

PM: Ja, omkring den 1. juli 1970 besluttede jeg mig for, at jeg ikke længere ville have at gøre med det deroppe, fordi det tog en retning, som ikke passede mig, og som ikke var i overensstemmelse med de idéer, det blev grundlagt på.

JJ: *Kan du kort sige, hvad det drejer sig om? Hvad det var, der var i uoverensstemmelse med dine værdier?*

PM: Udgangspunktet var det, der hed 'det ny samfund'. Et nyt samfund er jo en anden måde at indrette sig på, hvor man ophæver normalsamfundets opdeling mellem begreberne arbejde og fritid, som sådan et gammelmarxistisk begreb, kan man måske kalde det – og som i dag jo er samfundets selvforståelse; 'nu arbejder jeg' – 'og nu har jeg fritid'. Alt er jo sat i et system til at opdele livet på den måde. Opdelingen mellem 'her bor jeg' – 'her arbejder jeg', med stor afstand imellem, er jo også en del af modernismen – og at man har meget organiserede arbejdspladser. På mange måder er man uforpligtet. Man er ikke forpligtet over for et arbejdssted. Man leverer nogle timer og henter sig en løn. Man kan sige farvel og tak i morgen, og så har man ikke mere med det at gøre. Det er jo til stor forskel fra nogle traditionelle kulturer, hvor man hører til et sted på et livslangt grundlag. Her gør man sig selv til en vare – og sælger sig selv som en vare. Sådan er det så-



Mandag 6. juli 1970

THISTED DAGBLAD

De stille dage i Frøstrup er nu begyndt at svinge

500-600 aktivister »blander miljøer« og søger nye kontakter - Flere hundrede overværede lørdag aften festival-sæertogets ankomst til Thisted

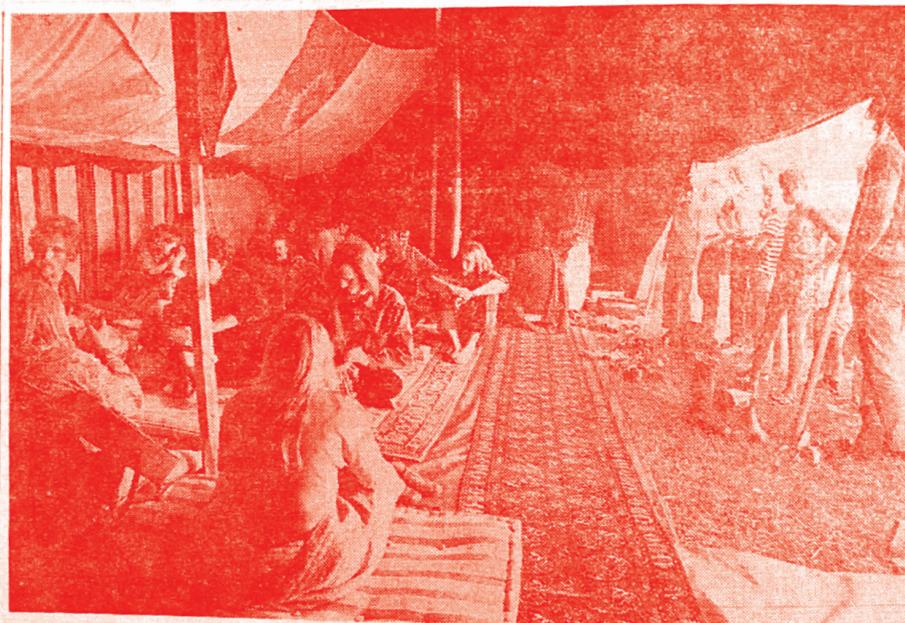
Børn, unge og ældre, mange langhårede, ofte i farvestrålende påklædninger, går rundt og slår en sludder af og stifter bekendtskaber - eller ligesom i græsset og læser i en bog - eller drikker en bajer eller vand - eller lytter til beatmusik for fuld udblæsning fra orkestertribunen - eller sover, mens solen skinner. - Sådan så det i det mindste også ud i det ny samfunds festival-lejr ved Frøstrup i går, søndag. De stille dage i Frøstrup er begyndt at svinge.

Åbningen af lejren lørdag blev ikke markeret. Der var ingen taler, ingen officiel velkomst. Man kom bare. Med de 300 fra sæertoget kom deltagerantallet foreløbig op på 500-600, idet 200-300 var »sivet ind« inden lørdag.

På Thisted Banegård var flere hundrede mennesker mødt op lørdag aften for »at tage imod«. Ankomsten blev knap så festlig som ventet. Toget var ikke smykket som bebudet. DSB havde nedlagt forbud, og den specielle festivalmelodi, beatgruppen »Blue Sun« har komponeret, spillede orkestret ikke ved ankomsten. En passager mente, at gruppen på det tidspunkt »var coxet ud« efter at have spillet en tid lang i toget.

★ På hesteryg fra Thisted til Frøstrup

De fleste var trætte efter rejsen og slæbte straks deres habengut og husdyr med sig ind i de ventende busser. Flere medbragte



Nysgerrige lokale indvånere skuer ind i et te-telt, hvis beboere sidder i næsten luksuriøse omgivelser. Der er persiske tæpper på gulvet.

skildpadder, katte og hunde. Studerende ved Københavns Universitet, Gilbert Jespersen, sadlede sin hest, »Kaktus«, der også var med toget, og red i ensom majestæt i vejsiden fra Thisted til Frøstrup-lejren, hvortil han ankom halvanden time efter sine kammerater i busserne.

Han havde haft en dejlig ridetur, sagde han ved ankomsten til lejren. Kun havde han haft svært ved at holde »Kaktus« borte fra de pøngedårde, de passerede. Når han tog hesten med, var det fordi,

han syntes, det var synd, at den skulle opstaldes i København, når han tog på ferie.

Om sine bevæggrunde til at deltage i lejren, sagde Gilbert Jespersen. - Jeg søger måske en ny livsopfattelse, nye miljømuligheder, og så er jeg naturligvis også kommet bare for at holde ferie blandt mennesker, jeg synes om.

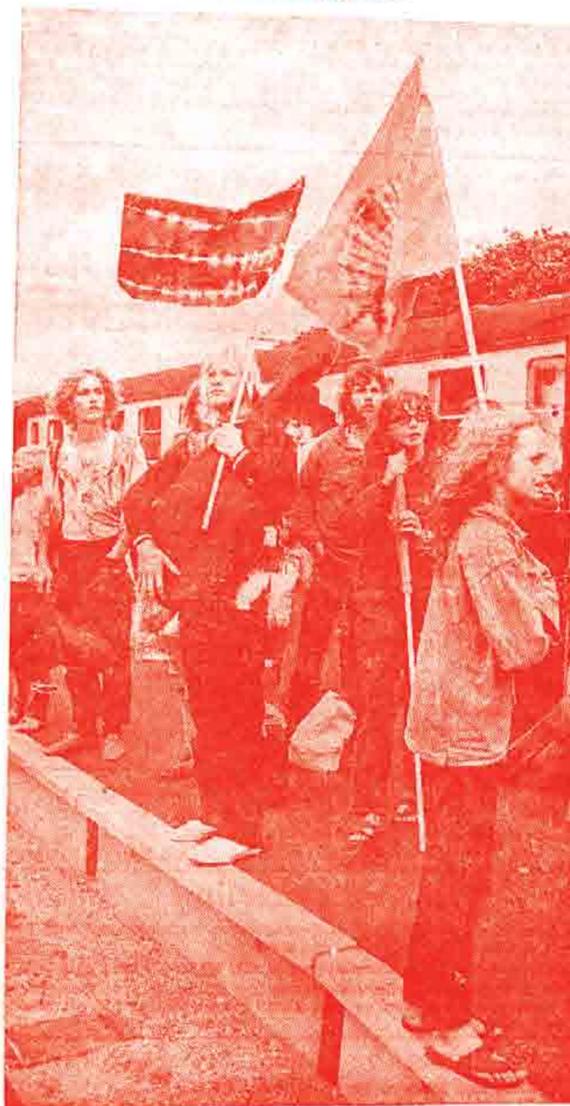
- Foreløbig bliver jeg 14 dage, så skal jeg til København for at tjene nogle penge, men vender så tilbage. »Kaktus« opstaldes i lejren, mens jeg er væk.

distiske film, og der bliver lys-spil, værksteder, seminar over sociologiske, psykologiske og biologiske teorier.

Lejrens deltagere er i alle aldre fra spæde til 60-70-årige. Flere nationaliteter er repræsenteret, og hvad angår udseende, er der langhårede, indianerklædte, topløse og »almindelige mennesker« mellem hinanden.



Reservepostbud Thomas de Lasson, Frøstrup, »kiggede indenfor« lørdag aften.



Fra ankomsten til Thisted Banegaard lørdag aften. Lejrdeltagerne var godt trætte efter rejsen og slæbte straks deres habengut til busserne.

★ Nød solnedgangen

Lederen af New Experimental College i Skyum, Aage Rosendahl Nielsen, sad med læppe over skulderen på en balle høm foran sit telt og glædede sig over solnedgangen.

- New Experimental College og filmskolen i Kettrup har lejet et telt for hele perioden, og vi vil antagelig konstant have fire til syv folk med i lejren, og jeg tager første turn.

- Hvis vi ser bort fra solnedgangen, hvorfor er De så kommet?

- For at deltage i samværet og søge at få positive diskussioner i gang.

- Hvad forstår De ved »positive diskussioner«?

- Det er efter min mening diskussioner, der tjener til at få et hvilket som helst menneskeligt synspunkt frem.

Reservepostbud Thomas de Lasson, Frøstrup, der bringer post til lejren, »kiggede indenfor« i løbet af aftenen:

- Jeg synes, det er nogle flinke unge mennesker, der er her i lejren. De ser anderledes ud end de fleste af os andre. Men det kan vel lige så godt være os, der er noget i vejen med, ikke? I hvert fald præger hjælpsomhed og venlighed dem.

★ Vil blande miljøer

Om formålet med det hele, sagde Leif Varmark, medlem af lejrens initiativudvalg:

- Vi vil blande forskellige sociale miljøer og håber derved at kunne inspirere hinanden. Vi fra lejriedelsen arrangerer kun de ydre rammer. Det er så op til folk selv, hvad de vil putte i dem.

- I øvrigt påtænker lejriedelsen at trække sig tilbage i løbet af få dage. Vi kunne tænke os, at der blev oprettet 7-8 distriktsråd - et råd i hvert teltområde og eventuelt et centralt råd af medlemmer fra distriktsrådene. Derved kan vi komme bort fra, at vi, der har startet lejren, kommer til at sidde som en flok pampere og bestemmer det hele, hvad vi ikke har ansete om.

Lejren ligger »sidylisk« med et græs- og lyngtæppe, omkranset og afskærmet af grantræer 100 meter fra Hovedvej A 11 få kilometer fra Frøstrup. Foruden beatgruppen »Blue Sun« er grupperne »Gnags« og »Hurdy Gurdy« kommet. Til deres og andres udfoldelser er der bygget en udendørs tribune af jernbanesveller. Også teatergruppen »Secret Service« er kommet.

Videns kan nævnes, at Det ny Samfund laver sit eget barneteater. Der bliver blograf med avantgar-



Studerende Gilbert Jespersen til hest fra Thisted til Frøstrup-lejren.



Lederen af New Experimental College i Skyum, Aage Rosendahl Nielsen, sad og nød solnedgangen på en balle høm foran sit telt.

kaldte arbejds*marked*. Og hvis man ikke er på arbejds*markedet* er man stort set udenfor samfundet. Det var også sådan nogle idéer; vi prøvede at gøre op med. Der sker så noget undervejs. Alle havde nogle opgaver. Alle var deltagerer i opbygningen af et samfund. Det at indsamle affald var også en vigtig opgave, der skulle udføres. Der var, så vidt jeg husker, en højesteretsdommer i København, der påtog sig det arbejde sammen med nogle andre.

Det var på mange måder en ny måde at anskue tingene på, men som altså også var i overensstemmelse med den lange tradition. Men så er det, at de nydelsessyge rykker ind fra de store byer og siger; 'her er dog en vældig frihed! Her er dog en vældig tolerance over for at gøre, som man har lyst til!'. Og så kommer de med hele arsenalet af argumenter og siger, at der er udbygning hér og udbygning dér. For eksempel dem, der står op tidligt om morgenen og går hen i den lokale brugs og indkøber dagligvarer, for at de kan åbne butikken kl. 8 om morgenen, og så sælge det til Thylejrens beboere – de blev selvfølgelig anklaget for at være nogle slemme kapitalister med argumenterne; 'du står dér og har varer, og jeg står hér og har ingen penge og er sulten – så må du give det til mig'. Det kom op på fællesmøder, og under det pres, der så udspringer af det, er der nogle der siger, at nu fjerner vi disken, og så kan folk gå ind og betjene sig selv. Og efter ganske kort tid var der hverken varer eller penge i butikken. Selvfølgelig var det en illusion hos de forlystelsesglade mennesker – at man alle betale for tingene – den dér elementære sammenhæng mellem tingene, den havde de ikke lige fået med sig hjemmefra gennem deres opvækst. De kiggede efter nogle løsninger. Hvad går livet i grunden ud på? Dér sker så en voldsom desillusion i lejren. Hurtigt sker der et nedbrud af de værdier, som den var baseret på. Nogle af os, der syntes, at det kunne være interessant at være med til at bygge det dér op – og også at gentage det i efterfølgende år, oplevede, at det er nogle andre kræfter, der er rykket ind nu. Så tog jeg mit tøj og sagde farvel og tak.

JJ: *Men så blev du heroppe?*
PM: Jamen, jeg havde jo mødt Aage – NEC var også heroppe. Aage inddrog alle, der kom i nærheden af ham, ved at sige; 'vi har lige brug for dig', og folk vil jo gerne høre, at man er en vigtig person. Jeg tog så tingene, som de kom. Da jeg fandt ud af, at Aage ikke var i stand til at skaffe de dér studerende, gik vi selv i gang. Og der var nok af dem. For Europa var fyldt op med amerikanere, der søgte efter et andet stæded. Så det fortsatte i nogle år – måske til 1973-74?

JJ: *Hvad var det for nogle værdier Asgård stod for?*

PM: Det var sådan set de samme værdier som NEC. Der er ikke nogen særlig forskel, for det udsprang af de samme tanker. Hvad er det for en situation, vi befinder os i historisk, kulturelt, menneskeligt og undervisningsmæssigt?

JJ: *I havde kunst på programmet, kunne jeg se?*

PM: Det er for så vidt ligegyldigt. Om man arbejder med det ene eller det andet eller det femte daglige emne gør ingen forskel i den sammenhæng, jeg fortæller om her. Det er selvudvikling og selvansvar – at man er i nogle fysiske rammer og

lever i ansvar over for hinanden. Der er en åben økonomi, og det er små steder, og der er det, vi kalder en 'forpligtethed'. For mange af de studerende, var det også et chok at komme her. Men jeg kan huske, at der var nogle der sagde, at det var første gang, de havde siddet sammen omkring et bord med nogen og spist i længere tid. I deres hjem havde de stort set aldrig spist sammen med deres forældre. Det var folk fra USA's forstadskvarterer – folk med gode indtægter. Men det vi kender til overmål i dag, hvor børnene vokser op i en institutionsverden og har meget travle forældre, der har hver deres projekt, og børnene har hver deres værelse og hver deres projekt, og maden står i køleskabet og venter og kan tages frem og er nem at tilberede – rent materielt er der ikke nogen af dem, der lider afsavn. Men det gør de måske på de menneskelige værdier og i henhold til udveksling af idéer. Man hører til ude i massesamfundet og er en del af det og lever sit liv derefter, hvor det så er individualismen, der er afgørende; at man får sin uddannelse, sit job, sit kontonummer i banken og et cpr-nummer og så lever man livet, inden for det.

JJ: *Men jeg kunne se, at der blev lagt meget vægt på håndens arbejde.*

PM: Ja, men det kunne lige så godt have været noget andet. Det var fordi, nogle af dem, jeg fandt sammen med, lagde vægt på det. Man skal jo ikke forsage den materielle del af tilværelsen. Vi lever i en del af verden, og i et klima, hvor der skal være lys og varme og mad på bordet. Vi lever ikke midt på Serengeti-sletten i det østlige Afrika, hvor man kan lægge sig ned på jorden og sove, hvor som helst – og hvor man række hånden op i et træ og altid plukke de fornødne frugter. Vi lever i en kultur, hvor man skal samle mad til huset om sommeren og gemme den, så der er noget at leve af om vinteren. Overlevelse er også en del af det at opbygge en kultur. NEC fokuserede meget på åndelige, spirituelle, teologiske og filosofiske værdier – men dem kan man jo godt have med sig og samtidig have en materiel forbindelse til tilværelsen. På NEC skulle de også have noget at spise og drikke. De skulle have varme i huset. De skulle betale husleje. Og hvor kom det fra? Man kan sige, at det kan man jo bare hente henne i supermarkedet. Der er altid mælk nok henne i supermarkedet. Men hvor får supermarkedet det fra? Hvilket grundlag er det frembragt på? Hvor kommer varmen og lyset, de har i huset, fra? Man kan så skubbe det til side, og sige, at det tager vi ikke alvorligt. Men det er efter min forståelse også en del af den samlede tilværelse.

JJ: *Hvordan vil du så karakterisere jeres liv her på Asgård i de første år?*
PM: Det var i praksis et socialt fællesskab, som det var på NEC.

JJ: *Jeg kunne se, at I havde semestre – var der en udskiftning i gruppen af studerende?*
PM: Det var også ligesom på NEC. De kom et par gange om året. Og så kunne man blive 3 eller 6 måneder. Der var ingen planlagt undervisning. Man havde de samme tingmøder, når der var behov for at diskutere noget. Og så deltog vi i sabbatmøder – fredagsmåltiderne. Det var nogle af de faste ingredienser i dagligdagen. Men der er den forskel – og der kommer forskellen mellem det spirituelle og det materielle ind – at på NEC kunne

man indkaldte til tingmøde, hvis man havde ondt i sjælen. Og så begyndte man at bore sig ned i sig selv, og kunne nogen gange ikke udholde synet af sig selv. Vi var mere praktisk orienterede; hvordan skaffer vi ild? For eksempel. Og hvilken slags ild skaffer man? Hvordan skaffer vi ditten og datten? Og hvad er baggrunden for det? Hvilke er de traditionelle kulturer, der ligger bagved de forskellige materialer, man har brug for? Det var nok mere på den måde, at der var forskel. Det var så også nogle, der ikke var tiltrukket af den spirituelle del, hvor man borer sig ind i sin egen og andres sjæle. Der var da også nogle gange, hvor man diskuterede sociale forhold; hvordan indretter man sig? Det kunne være, hvis der var nogen, der var rejst væk, uden at fortælle andre hvorfor. Der var også nogle, der havde taget gæster med ind, uden at man havde talt om, hvem de var, og hvilken politik man skulle have omkring besøgende. Men vi begyndte i høj grad enhver ny gruppe med et friskt blad, hvor man talte om, hvad vil det sige at være en gruppe? Hvad vil det sige, at have fælles ansvar og fælles økonomi? – At indrette sig efter hinanden og opbygge fælles rammer – men altså også have nogle opgaver, man gerne vil fuldføre?

JJ: *Så man betalte en afgift?*

PM: Ja, man betalte 3.000 kr. om måneden, og så fik man ophold og logi og ekskursioner, og hvad der ellers hørte til. Så fik man sine daglige behov dækket inden for det beløb.

JJ: *Så var der ingen penge i hverdagen i princippet? Man kunne gå i køleskabet og tage, hvad man havde lyst til?*

PM: Ja, der var frihed til at indrette sig. Men så kunne det jo komme op, at køleskabet var fuldt om aftenen, og om morgenen var det væk alt sammen, og nu skulle vi altså have morgenmad. Hvad var der sket i mellemtiden? Det er selvfølgelig så et anliggende, man tager op. Det er et oplagt spørgsmål at stille. Men sådan foregik socialiseringsprocessen.

JJ: *Så ambitionen var at komme tæt på et sundt eller et godt socialt og materielt liv?*

PM: Jamen de ting opstår jo, når man sidder overfor hinanden. Når man, så at sige, har meldt sig ind i et fællesskab. Hvad vil det så sige, at komme ind i et fællesskab? Hvilke krav stiller det til én? Det må man diskutere. Bare tag sådan noget som transport. Vi bor langt ude på landet, og der var et par biler til rådighed. Så opstår det problem, at man sætter sig i bilen, og så er den tom for benzin. Hvad er der sket? Det er jo ikke, fordi benzintanken er utæt. Hvilket problem står vi med her? Det er som udgangspunkt et godt tema. Så kan man få en vigtig diskussion ud af det, og spørge; 'hvem har sidst været ude at køre i bilen?' – 'hvor har I været henne, og har I fulgt med i benzinmåleren?'. Det fører ind i nogle meget elementære ting. Og hvis det måske er nogle, der har gjort det samme tidligere, begynder man at bore endnu mere ned i sådan et problem med spørgsmål om, hvad vil det sige at være i et fællesskab? Hvad vil det sige, at tage hensyn til andre? Det er den sociale del af det. Så er der også den faglige del.

Der var nogle, der virkelig fik et personligt gennembrud med nogle af de ting, de arbejdede med. De har ofte siddet i glimrende skoler rundt omkring – i USA og måske Canada – og lært alverdens ting

og sager. De har haft semestre, hvor de har arbejdet med det ene og det andet, så de har fået prøvet alle deres evner af. Men når semestret er forbi, stopper man med det, man var i gang med, og det kunne måske være noget, man var meget interesseret i og følte, at hér var man virkelig god. Det er typisk det, vi gav mulighed for; at hvis man var glad for at arbejde med et bestemt materiale – det kunne være med ild eller mange andre ting – vi havde en del værksteder – så kunne man, i bedste danske højskoletradition, komme og videreudvikle det, som man fra sin universitetstud fandt særligt interessant. Hvis man for eksempel har drømt om at skrive en bog , og man har den indre kraft og disciplin til at sætte sig hver dag og researche til bogen og få det skrevet. Eller hvis man gerne vil være maler. Får man nu også malet det, man gerne vil? Har man den personlige disciplin til at blive maler med alt, hvad det indebærer?

Der er jo stor usikkerhed og krav om at tage personligt ansvar, fremfor at man går hen et sted, hvor klokken ringer kl. 8 og man går ind og alt er tilrettelagt i de faste rammer, man træder ind i. Det er vigtigt, at få prøvet det af. Hvad var det, jeg ville med mit liv? Var det den vej, jeg ville gå? Var det det, jeg gerne ville arbejde med? For nogen *var* det det rigtige. De *blev* kunstnere. De fandt ud af, at det var deres kald. Det var det, de ville i fremtiden. Og nogle hoppede fra det ene til det andet og det tredje og nåede endelig frem til at se sig selv – det var også noget, vi drøftede undervejs – at det vist var bedre, at gå tilbage og færdiguddanne sig inden for det formelle uddannelsessystems rammer. Det var der også nogle der gjorde, og klarede sig godt.

JJ: *Så de åbne rammer...*

PM: ... De havde til formål at skabe afklaring og ligger i forlængelse af den almindelige danske højskoletradition. Kold siger et sted, at et menneske har mange slags evner, og dem alle skal det have mulighed for at øve sig i, for at det bedste i et menneske kan komme til udfoldelse.

JJ: *Det lyder som om, der ikke bliver stillet nogen krav...*

PM: Kravene kommer indefra. Der var ingen eksamener. Det var krav til én selv om at finde ud af, hvorhen man ville med sit liv. Men det liv skulle altså leves, inden for en fælles ramme. Med et fælles ansvar over for de mennesker, man havde omkring sig. Så det var en del af udfordringen.

JJ: *Hvem boede her?*

PM: Jeg var blevet gift i 1960'erne, og Ulla var min daværende kone. Vi fik et barn i 1971 og igen i 1974. På den måde var vi en almindelig familie, men vi levede også vores liv i fællesskabet.

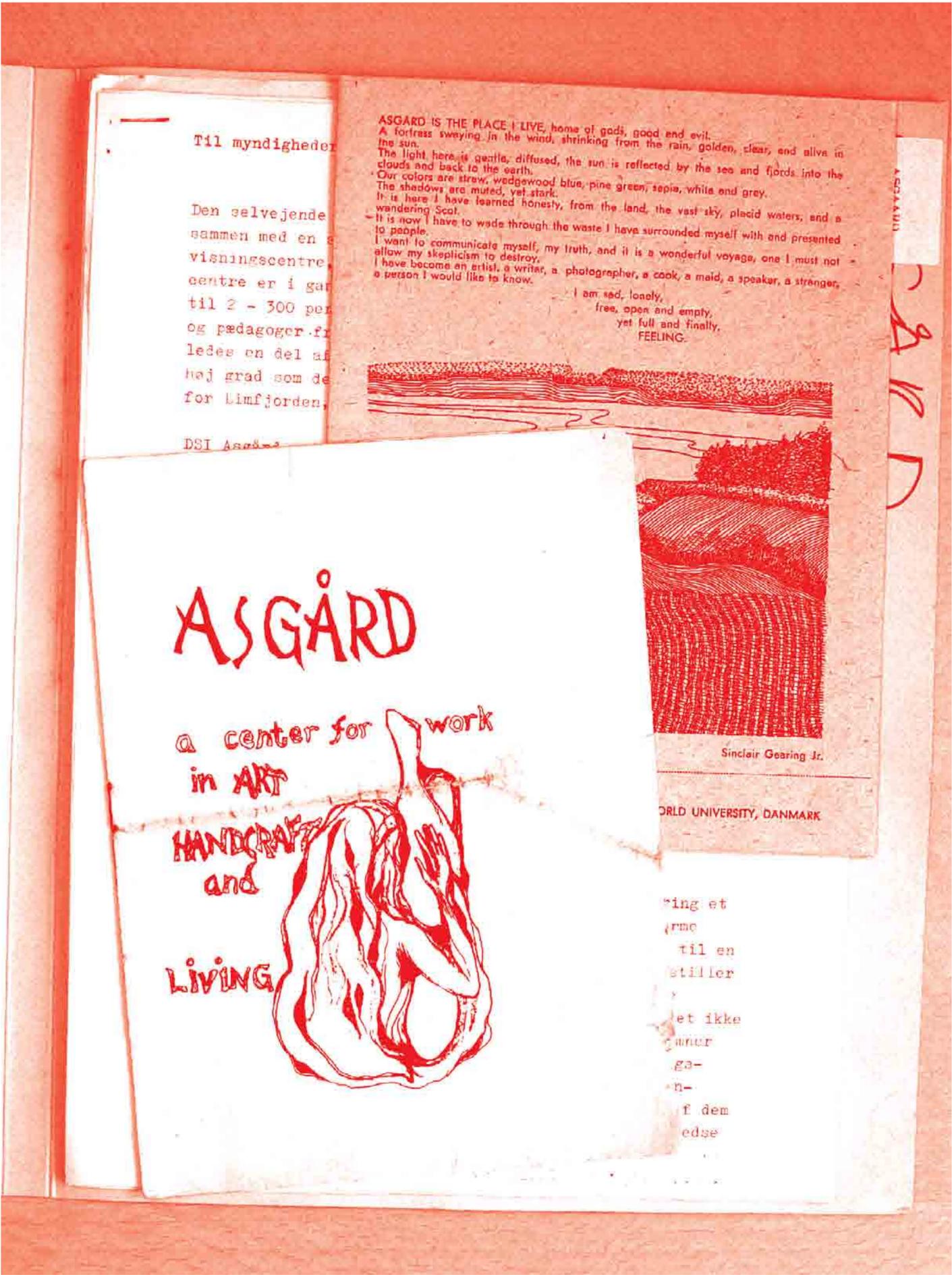
JJ: *Så kom der 10-12 elever ad gangen?*

PM: Ja, højst. Det var, hvad der var plads til.

JJ: *Og det var vigtigt, at det foregik på landet, og at folk boede på skolen?*

PM: Ja, det tror jeg, var meget vigtigt. For det ville nok distrahere meget, hvis man havde boet i et bysamfund og kunne benytte sig af byens forlystelser og gå på McDonald's, og jeg ved ikke hvad. Men det passede også mig fint, for jeg er opvokset på landet i en tilsvarende – relativ – akademisk isolation.

JJ: *Hvordan var forbindelsen til de andre centre?*



PM: De havde det samme udgangspunkt og arbejdede med forskellige ting, men var ikke økonomisk og organisatorisk afhængige af hinanden. De måtte hver især stride deres egen strid. Men så mødtes man en gang om ugen. Det foregik især på NEC. Man havde det, der blev kaldt en ’celebration dinner’. Den blev man inviteret til. Der skulle man rejse sig og sige et par ord ved middagsmåltidet om aftenen. Man mødtes også andre steder. Og så havde man lørdagsmøderne – ’sabbatmøder’ – hvor der også blev afgivet en lille rapport fra hvert sted. Det var den måde, vi havde et fællesskab på centrene imellem. Det gik ikke ret meget videre. Det mest omfattende vi rent konkret nåede at udføre som en fælles opgave var at lave et katalog sammen. Det var Sara Rosendal – Sara Damskier, som hun hedder nu – der var primusmotor i det. Det var en skuffelse for mange af os, at vi ikke kunne få et tættere samarbejde, men det stod Aage i vejen for.

JJ: *Hvad var grunden til det?*

PM: Han var individualist og improviserede sig igennem hverdagen. Han kunne samle folk til møderne, men derudover ville Aage ikke tage ansvar og være med til at opbygge en organisation.

JJ: *Jeg er interesseret i overgangen fra læringsfællesskabet – læringsamfundet – her på Asgård til Folkecenter for Vedvarende Energi, for jeg synes jo, at det på mange måder giver ret god mening...*

PM: Nu startede jeg med at nævne oliekrisen, og i tiden derefter trængte for mig spørgsmålet på, hvordan man vægter ting, her i livet. Hvis man har en person i familien, som er meget syg, kan man så tolerere, at der er nogle, der sidder og beskæftiger sig med åndelige sysler og bare lade den syge passe sig selv? Det er lidt en tilsvarende situation jeg oplevede at vi befandt os i i midten af 1970’erne. Jeg kunne også hente nogle værdier og forbilleder i sådan noget som afholdsbevægelsen. Det der påvirkede mig, da jeg kom til det vestjyske, det kender man også fra Hans Kirks bøger. Jeg bruger det her billede til at forklare nogle af de ting, vi taler om: Der var nogle fiskere ude ved kysten, nogle få kilometer herfra, som var omkommet under stormvejret. Koner og børn og gamle var afhængige af deres forsørgelse, for der var ingen socialstat til at tage sig af dem. Men der var så også nogle, som havde slået sig på flasken, og der var billig brændevin. Men så kom afholdsfolkene og sagde: ’Så kammerater! Nu skal i op og arbejde. Nu er det slut med at sidde og drikke, for der skal mad på bordet. I skal ud og fiske, for ellers går det samfund, som I er en del af, til grunde.’

Jeg kan trække billeder fra livet hos vestkystens fiskere over til vores fælles fremtid. For med det overflodssamfund vi lever i – med den stadigt øgende verdensbefolkning – er det nødvendigt at spørge? Er der et materielt grundlag for, at vi kan fortsætte sådan, uden at vi brænder jorden af? Vi har allerede her i landet et forbrug, hvor der er brug for to jordkloder. Hvornår rejser nogen sig op og siger; ’Så er det nok!’ Jeg ved ikke, hvor meget, det er nok. Men der er en grænse. Og den grænse er besynderligt nok ikke et emne i samfundsdebatten. Drømmen er at få en lidt større bil og lidt flere rejser. Ganske jævne mennesker med mellemindkomster drager på krydstogt jorden rundt i vild

lüksus. Det kan nogle gøre. Men jordens ressourcegrundlag kan selvfølgelig ikke holde til det som livsstil for flere milliarder mennesker. Det er sådan nogle grundværdier jeg beskæftiger mig med; jeg er præget af spørgsmålet om grænser for vækst. Derfor kunne vi dengang i 1970’erne ikke bare sidde og beskæftige os med spirituelle og åndelige sysler. Det var en luksus. Men også i samfundet skal der ske et skift. Midt i 1960’erne var jeg for første gang stødt ind i alt det der oplevedes som ressourcekriser, ødelæggelse af naturgrundlaget, forbrug som livsopfyldelse, udnyttelse af ulandene, krige om råstofferne mv. Men hvor går man hen med det, når det er en individuel oplevelse? Da oliekrisen bryder ud, er det pludselig en kollektiv oplevelse. Derfor trådte jeg ind og sagde, at nu kunne vi altså tale frit og åbent om det – og finde sammen om et stort kollektivt og globalt problem. Og så får vi meningsfæller på det felt. Dér glider det fra at være en personlig interesse til at være en kollektiv interesse. Den gik jeg ind i, og jeg har været i den siden.

JJ: *Arbejdede I her på Asgård med idéen om at være selvforsynende?*

PM: Ja, det var vi også på en række felter.

JJ: *Dyrkede I jorden?*

PM: Vi dyrkede jorden lidt, det er forholdsvis let at gøre sig selvforsynende med grøntsager. Det var ikke sat rigtigt i system, for folk var kommet med en anden opgave, og så kan man ikke drive dem ud og dyrke jorden. Så det lå ikke i programmet, som det primære. Folk kom til højskolen på grund af nogle ting, de havde været optaget af i deres studietid, og som de gerne ville videreudvikle, og så kan man ikke bare sige, at nu skal de ud og grave have. Men en del af den daglige selvforsyning er jo også at tilberede maden til daglig – at man ikke bare henter den i en kantine eller som take-away, men at man får fat i råvarerne, og at man også er en del af en fælles økonomi. Men samtidig med at der med oliekrisen er en ny erkendelse af skrøbeligheden af grundlaget for det moderne industrisamfund, sker der et andet skift i 1974 – dér forsvinder grundlaget for Nordenfjord World University; der er pludselig ingen studerende længere. For Vietnamkrigen er forbi. Den sluttede i 1973. Hvor det indtil da var nemt at få elever, var der pludselig ingen tilbage. Det var der heller ikke på NEC. Det ville være forkert at sige, at der sker noget væsentlig på NEC efter 1973. Det fortsætter som institution, men de mennesker, der kommer dér er ikke længere ressourcestærke. Derefter er det i stedet ressourcetsvage mennesker, der kommer, som er usikre omkring, hvad de vil med deres liv, og som har nok i at tage vare på dem selv. Da får NEC mere karakter af en social institution.

JJ: *Hvordan føler du, at forbindelsen var fra det, der skete her, da det var et læringsfællesskab til at ...*

PM: Når de mennesker, der er *mindede* for den form for undervisningskultur, som vi har bygget op omkring NEC og Nordenfjord World University, ikke længere kommer, så må der ske en forandring.

JJ: *Nu har jeg jo lige mødt en hel gruppe af studerende heroppe...*

PM: Jamen, det er en anden vej rundt, disse studerende kommer ind i billedet, for her taler vi om studerende på Folke-

centeret, som er kommet hertil fra hele verden, i høj grad også udviklingslandene, siden 1986. Det er en anden historie. Der er ikke nogen organisatorisk overgang fra Nordenfjord World University. Der var noget der gik ned. Og det gik ned.

JJ: *Det var måske også de værdier, som du førte ind i Asgård omkring håndens arbejde og en nærhed til det materielle liv og naturen, som du førte videre...*

PM: ...Det er det, der føres videre. Men jeg stod også med nogle bygninger og skaffer mig frihed ved at lave noget mere ordinært. Og det var Aage meget fortrydelig over, for det passede jo ikke ind i rammerne med en stor åndelig overbygning over tingene. Seks måneder om året lejede jeg bygningerne ud til lejrskole. Det var ikke fint ud fra den forståelse, som Aage mente, vi skulle arbejde efter. Men det gjorde jeg, fordi jeg skulle tjene penge. Jeg skulle overleve, betale terminer og for dagen og vejen. Men parallelt med det, var jeg med til at opbygge sektoren for vedvarende energi – både lokalt men også nationalt. Og senere – i slutningen af 1970’erne – bliver der en stadig større kreds af folk, som deler de samme perspektiver. I 1980-81 må vi bygge egentlige institutionelle rammer op omkring det. Dér havde jeg skabt et bredt netværk, lokalt som nationalt, så vi får afholdt et møde, hvortil vi har inviteret Lone Dybkjær, radikal politiker og en af de meget få, der ville lytte til græsrodderne og gøre noget for dem på Christiansborg. Mødet, hvor vi stifter Folkecenteret det foregår på Vildsund Kro – og læg mærke til, at det ikke foregår på NEC. Dér var der 60-70 mennesker, som skrev under på, at de gerne ville støtte etableringen af sådan et center. Dermed blev der skabt støttekredsen til noget, som jeg siden har været forpligtet over for. Jeg fik et mandat til at arbejde videre med et sådant center. Jeg blev ved med at udbygge netværket – ikke mindst til nogen med indflydelse. Vi får bygget det op som organisation og får politisk opbakning til det, vi har som bestræbelse – og i 1983 kommer vi på finansloven første gang. Det var vi så indtil den forfærdelige statsminister, Fogh Rasmussen, kom til i 2002.

JJ: *På den måde er du blevet inden for det felt som du var med til at udstikke med den Arbejdende Højskole helt tilbage i 1960.*

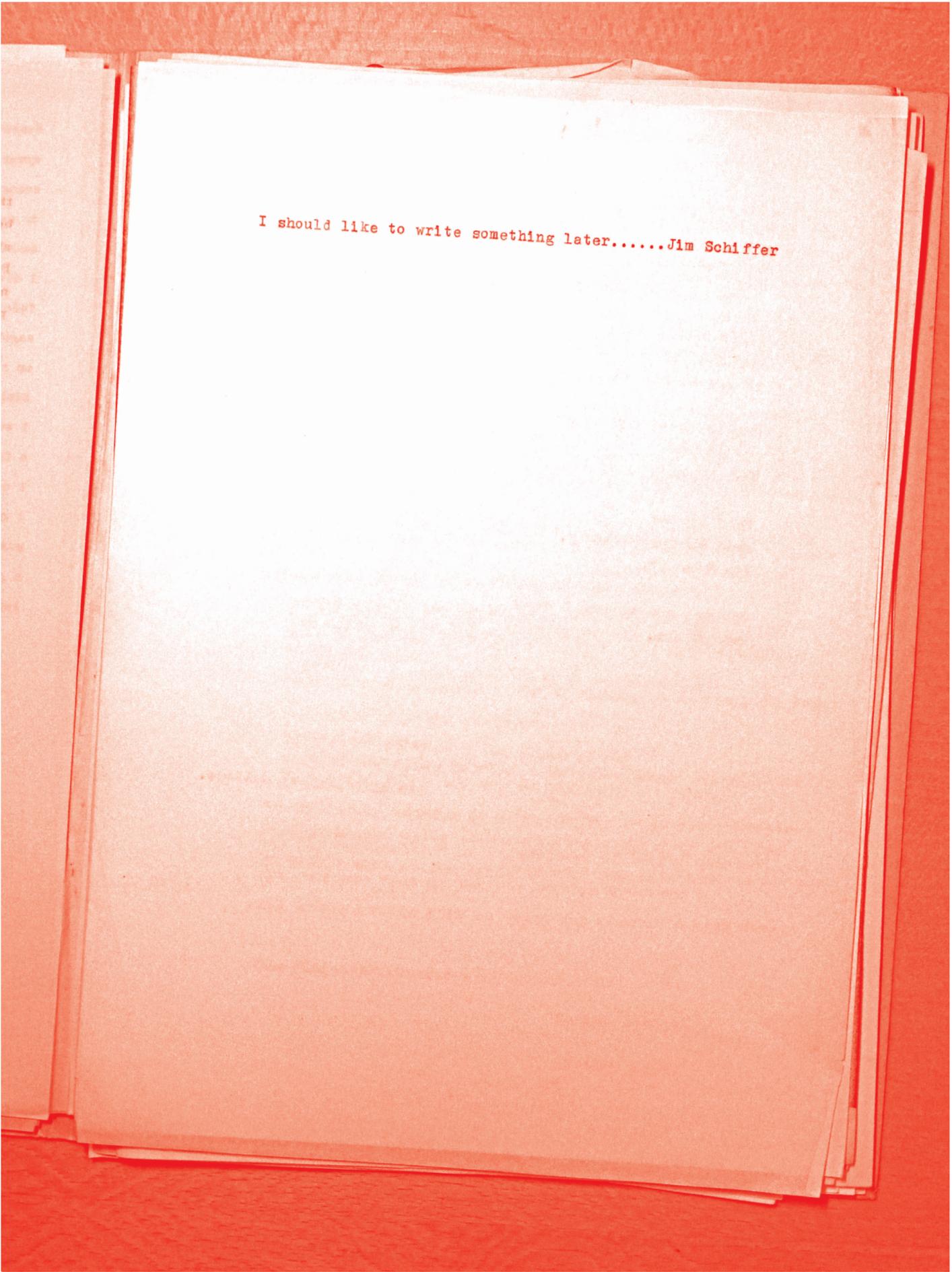
PM: Ja, det er kunstnerens eller fiskerens måde at arbejde på, som man kan betegne som en slags forbillede. Hvor smider man sine garn ud? Der er ikke nogen til at hjælpe én dér. Der er ikke nogen, der sætter programmerne for én udefra og alligevel er vi i meget høj grad en del af samfundets fælles udfordringer. Jeg har hentet meget mere dér. Jeg har altid haft det godt med at leve i den usikkerhed, der er når man går ind i noget nyt og uprøvet, så at sige i ukendt land. Jeg har kunnet leve med den usikkerhed, som fiskeren også havde indtil der kom ekkolod og sonar, som kan se hvor fiskestimerne står. Jeg har fyldt olietanken på båden op, og vi har proviant om bord, og nu tager vi ud og sejler, og smider vi nettet ud. Men fiskeren kan jo ikke vide, om der er fangst. Det er hans intuition og personlighed, der er afgørende for, om han smider nettet ud det rigtige sted. For han kan jo af gode grunde ikke vide, om der er fisk dér, hvor han smider nettet ud. Men han klarer sig på sin intuition og lever også

med den usikkerhed, der er i den måde at leve på. På samme måde går kunstneren ud og stiller sig op med sit lærred og maler på det, men kan jo ikke vide, om billedet bliver godt, og om nogen vil købe det. For han er jo afhængig af, at nogen vil købe hans billede. Hvordan skal han ellers få noget i spisekammeret? Det har jeg så kunne omsætte institutionelt. Det har været en af mine roller for at skabe grundlaget for en omstilling.

Vi står som tidligere sagt i 1970’erne, og der findes knap et billede af en vindmølle. Fakulteterne – det er en morsom ting – vi har den frie forskning på universiteterne, som er meget omtalt og hyldet – men hvor fri er den i grunden, når der ikke er en eneste forsker, der får den tanke, at det er vigtigt at forske i vindenergi eller andre former for vedvarende? Du kunne ikke finde et eneste af dem i 1975 – hverken i Danmark eller andre steder. Ikke på et eneste fakultet. Hvorimod der var masser uddannelsesmuligheder i atomkraft og fossile energiformer – altså alt det, der ikke tilhører fremtiden. Men ikke inden for vedvarende energi. Men hvad institutionerne, hvad samfundene og staterne ikke kan klare, dér har det enkelte menneske stadig muligheden for at sige: ’jeg vil en anden vej, med mit eget liv’. Den frihed er der trods alt. Og dér har vi så siden 1984 sagt, at I kan godt komme her, hvor vi kan dele den viden, vi har om vedvarende energi. I kan få viden og inspiration, og I kan få nogle færdigheder. Og der har været en del hundrede meget dygtige mennesker, forskere såvel som studerende, som har haft et godt teoretisk grundlag som biologer eller fysikere eller ingeniører eller hvad det nu kan være. Det er i grunden ikke så afgørende. Det er mere om folk siger, at de vil en anden vej med deres liv. De kunne så komme her og få nogle teoretiske og praktiske færdigheder. Og med deres eksamener fra det mere ordinære uddannelsessystem og ideer, visioner, erfaringer og færdigheder, som de henter her hos os, er der en anden vej at gå, når det drejer sig om energi og miljø og bæredygtighed.

Det er i dag tydeligt, at vi foruden det tekniske også må have styr på de økonomiske og organisatoriske kræfter, så omstillingen ikke bliver til berigelse af nogle få, men at brede lag i befolkningerne hilser den nye teknologi velkommen og kommer til at være med til at høste frugterne.

Preben Maegaard har siden 1984 været forstander for Nordisk Folkecenter for Vedvarende Energi. 1971-1974 drev han Asgård som et center i Nordenfjords Verdensuniversitet.



Inventory for Vang (from Møllegaarden - Dec. 1971)

- 1 dishtub
- 1 dishmat (plastic)
- 1 strainer
- 1 dustbin
- 1 breadbox
- 5 pots + 5 lids
- 2 frying pans
- 3 platters (pl.)
- 5 plates (orange)
- 5 bowls "
- 1 bowl (larger)
- 23 dinnerplates
- 18 small plates
- 10 saucers
- 13 cups
- 9 small white bowls
- 1 larger " "
- 2 trays
- 2 small pitchers
- 1 measure cup
- 1 shredder
- 1 breadknife
- 1 meatknife
- 2 pallette-knives
- 1 woodenspoon
- 1 plasticspoon
- 1 canopener
- 1 beeropener
- 1 big knife
- 1 corkscrew
- 2 knifeboxes
- 8 teaspoons
- 1 littele fork
- 3 knives (steel)
- 3 forks
- 4 tablespoons
- 9 plastic knives
- 13 " forks
- 3 " teaspoons
- 2 cutting boards
- 1 steelbowl
- 1 kettle

[Handwritten signature]

Gen Jorden

Rektor = Skjelberg

NEW
EXPERIMENTAL
COLLEGE

MEMORANDUM TO STUDENTS WHO WANT TO SUBMIT A REQUEST FOR AN EXAMINATION
AT NEW EXPERIMENTAL COLLEGE

- 1- State in writing, please, in what academic area you want your examiners to examine your knowledge, insight, experience and reading.
- 2- Submit in writing a list of books you have read in depth in the given area both while you have been at NEO or before.
- 3- Please submit in writing a list of all the books you have read while you have been at New Experimental College. Please order the books in categories which are meaningful to you and add possible comments in relation to your experience with these books.
- 4- Please submit in writing your data, that is the time you spent at NEO and other institutions, your work experience, etc.
- 5- Please submit an outline of how you spend your time at NEO, indicating what way you found most profitable, enjoyable and reasonable.
- 6- Please outline what kind of relationship you now want to be the most desirable one with NEO in the future.
- 7- Please submit any other writings which you feel are pertinent and which you want the college to have to be kept in your file. Include in this, papers and other written work you have done while you were here.

For the benefit of your examiners and your future reference, it is asked that you submit the above statement in three typewritten copies.

It should be understood that the college, for the time being represented by Age, will see that the most demanding examiners available will take part in your examination and will examine you and pass secondary judgment on your situation, your person and your work as it will be revealed at your examination, written and/or oral.

It is finally understood that the last and primary judgment on your work and your situation will be yours.

April 22, 1968
ARN



SKYUM RJERGE PR. HØRDUM, THY, DENMARK, TELF. 0781, KOLD. Y 234

1968

The Lack of Freedom at NEC

It is really nebulous to talk about the lack of freedom at a so-called "free" school. We find any rule that is made will have countless exceptions, but in order for us to keep and exercise the freedom that is sacred and different in each of our hearts, you should be told about the limits we face now.

1) 1) The Ting meeting is the way we govern ourselves. All decisions that effect the group in any way go through the Ting. It is based on the following assumptions:

a) We live communally. We've experienced that if the community is strong then our independent searches can be full. A strong community grows from a complete involvement by all its members ie. keeping others in touch with what you are doing, feeling, observing or planning, and a willingness to listen in turn.

b) Your actions affect the people you live with. It is an illusion to think you can live in close contact with other people without affecting them and being influenced by them.

c) Any group of people can create a common ground, if they are willing. Creating this is not always an easy process, often requiring intense examination. The Ting assumes that you want to find that commonness. To open up in itself is uplifting.

d) We want our institutions to be an extension of us. This means that no rules are steadfast. We are constantly growing and changing; so will our limitations.

e) The individual is the highest authority. No group decision can be made in the Ting without complete unanimity. Any person can veto any measure at any time, and it is your responsibility to voice yourself.

2) Dope is illegal in Denmark. You may not bring it into the country, and you may not buy it or sell it once you are here. It's true that for a first offense you will probably just get a warning, but you can be deported, which is the easiest thing for the government to do with aliens. The ministry that handles drug problems also issues visas for NEC students. This may lead to complications for people who want to stay here for an extended period. The police do not want to bother with the use of drugs here, and neither do we.

3) We are people, and we are all contradictory and conditioned. No one yet has discovered how to build NEC, so that it is consistently expanding and open in the way we want to profess. The structure that would insure a perfect semester has not been developed yet. This is probably because what goes on here is dependent on you, the people who come. What we bring is what exists and belongs. So far no one has come who is perfect enough, or mature enough, or evolved enough, to form this place into a situation where no one feels there freedom to be restricted in any way. The largest factor that inhibits freedom in a community is that most of us are not even ready to have it as individuals.

All three of us have lived at NEC for a number of semesters now and will continue for one more. This is our perspective on commonly raised issues, and how we would like to see the next semester take form.

Anne Dudley, Christy Bidstrup, Andy Schloss

EARTHGAARD
CENTER FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF ECOLOGY & EKISTICS

PRAESTGAARD
EARTHGAARD
A SCHOOL OF THE NORDEN FJORD WORLD UNIVERSITY

ECOLOGY
CINEMA

AND

THE STUDY OF EKISTACLG
STILL PHOTOGRAPHY
SCIENCES



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DENMARK

PRAESTGAARD

A SCHOOL OF THE NORDEN FJORD WORLD UNIVERSITY

CINEMA

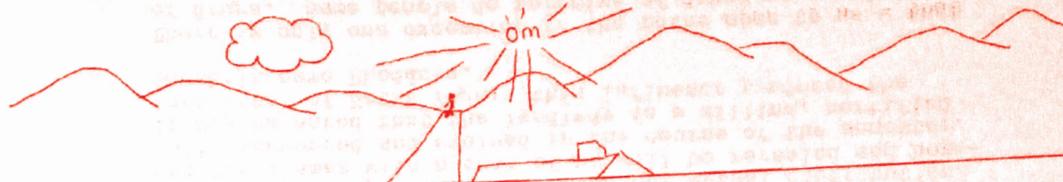
STILL PHOTOGRAPHY

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bhedanta
bhedanta
bhedanta



COVER STORY

Bhedanta: The End of Separation
Sara Seeks New Frontier

Bhedanta is an outgrowth of the lifeblood and vision of New Experimental College and will continue to share in these though experimenting with an approach of its own. Since 1970 students of NEC have participated in contemplative periods of study and solitude at Fosdalsgaard, which will now serve as the home of Bhedanta. The joy of these experiences also served to inspire and to foster this new school. Fosdalsgaard is a farm on the moors of Han Herred which lies within walking distance of the North Sea and of the old coastline formed by the last ice age.

Bhedanta means "the end of separation". Separation from what? - From that greater reality which is the source of light and strength and knowledge in the life of man. The presence of this reality and our relatedness to it comprises a basic assumption upon which Bhedanta is built. This common assumption is linked as well to common goals and to a common life.

Common goals are reflected in the work at Bhedanta which centers around:

- Study - both of schools of thought which purport knowledge of an infinite reality and of Life as it speaks to us of this mystery;
- Self-realization - which aims at evolving our relatedness to this resource and our ability to draw upon it; and
- Creativity - the manifestations in thought, word and deed which capture fragments of 'the light' and help to illuminate our world.

Much of the common life at Bhedanta is prescribed with the exception of the week-end from Saturday noon to Sunday evening. The discipline of a well-regulated life is utilized as a tool for the intensifying and optimizing of each day. Time is spelled out for periods of meditation, spiritual edification, silence and speech. These activities, the carefully planned diet and the ecological considerations of every aspect of our life together are designed to give depth to a central though ancient query: "What is man that thou art, mindful of him?" (Psalms)

Many people anticipate the insights which long periods of silence infer, but often revelations concerning old-established misuses of speech prophesy more. "Let thy speech be better than silence . . . or be silent". were the words of Dionysus the Elder.

MOLLEGAARDEN

Møllegaarden is the home of Nina Sørensen, who is retired and currently working on her autobiography. For more than fifty years, she has been in contact with Danish public life, both through her marriage with the writer and politician, Arne Sørensen, and also through her own interest and participation in many issues of social and political concern. She and her husband lived in U.S.A. for nine years, and she has also spent a year in Greenland as a teacher. During the war she was a refugee in Sweden together with her four children. She has travelled in Europe and the Far East, and can speak some French and German in addition to a fluent knowledge of English. For many years, she has taken an active part in the Danish "FOLKEVIRKE" movement which as its aim that women should have the opportunity to explore a wider conception of life and society than that which their immediate environment provides, and should be enabled to realise fully their own role and potential for contributing to the community in which they live, as well as to humanity as a whole. This policy of 'an open door' to social liberation and personal enlightenment, has been a source of inspiration and support to her through many years and now stands as one of the principles behind the project at Møllegaarden.

Angela West, who also lives at Møllegaarden, is from England. She studied History at the University of Sussex, in the School of African and Asian Studies and graduated in 1967. She has been a teacher in Rhodesia (1964) and in Tanzania (1970-71) as well as in London, and has also travelled in Europe and in China (1966). In addition to the teaching experience in primary and secondary schools in Africa and England, she has also taught English as a foreign language to adults, and was trained by the Berlitz School of Languages in London. At Møllegaarden she is offering intensive courses in English for business, travel or study purposes, and these can be arranged either individually or in small groups to suit the needs and requirements of those who are interested. She is also currently working on her own study project, which attempts to connect her life experiences to the evolving idea of Nordenfjord World University, and to relate this historically to the concept of the Community of Scholars and the idea of a University, through its origins and expression in various forms in the history of European culture.

Møllegaarden as a centre, is conceived as a dialogue. The dialogue between the primary participants, (at the time of writing) Nina and Angela, spans a difference of generation, and a difference of nationality, but has common ground in the European cultural heritage. It is a dialogue which involves us in a continuing communication and mutual exchange with all our friends and neighbours, which include the local people of the area here in Thy, the other centres of Nordenfjord, and many other friends, relatives and comrades in different parts of the world, who share our concern for the world we share with them.

Those who are looking for an opportunity to become better acquainted with the land and language of Denmark, and to come into contact with its history and culture, are welcome to visit Møllegaarden: also those, from within or outside Denmark, who would like to learn English in the context of this special setting. There is also the possibility for small groups (of up to ten people, Danish or English speaking) to use the facilities of Møllegaarden, and the hospitality of some of our neighbours, to hold a workshop or small conference here on any topic of mutual interest.

The individual projects of the permanent participants require an atmosphere of quietness and concentration, and it is hoped to preserve at Møllegaarden such an atmosphere, of peaceful intensity pervaded by light, that is characteristic of the land around the Limfjord, where the house is situated. We welcome to Møllegaarden all those who would appreciate this kind of environment, and would like to take part in this dialogue with us: and we look forward to gaining inspiration and enrichment from this dialogue with our guests, both in our individual projects and in that which we share, namely our common participation in the creation of a world university, and in the evolution of a humane and just world society for the future.

"Møllegaarden"
Skyum,
7752 Snedsted,
Thy.

NINA SØRENSEN
Møllegaarden

NINA SØRENSEN

"Møllegaarden"

New Experimental College Tabloid | All material compiled and edited by Jakob Jakobsen | The Antihistory blog, where data-mining around the New Experimental College and related initiatives is ongoing, can be found at antihistory.org | This tabloid is produced in collaboration with Kunsthal Aarhus and Thisted Kommune Lokalhistorisk Arkiv, which hosts papers from NEC and the Nordenfjords World University. Additional material has been retrieved from the NEC Corner at Nordisk Folkecenter for Vedvarende Energi/Nordic Folkecenter for Renewable Energy and various personal collections | The NEC Tabloid will be available for free at Kunsthal Aarhus, Folkecenter for Renewable Energy and Thisted Kommune Lokalhistorisk Arkiv, and other spaces interested in the histories of struggle | Copy-edited by Robbie Ellen, Marina Vishmidt and María Berríos | Designed by Jakob Jakobsen, assisted by Åge Eg Jørgensen | Published by Kunsthal Aarhus in collaboration with Thisted Kommune Lokalhistorisk Arkiv, Denmark 2014 | Thanks to Angela West, Ron Manheimer, Ove Korsgaard, Peter Stansill, Sara Damskier, Preben Maegaard, Troels Maegaard, Jytte Gehrke, Orla Poulsen, María Berríos, Martin Levy, Leon Redler, Marina Vishmidt, Joasia Krysa, Andreo Mielczarek, Jeanett Stampe, Lars Bang Larsen, Åse Eg Jørgensen, Kate & Erik Hovgaard Jakobsen | ISBN 978-87-984896-3-4

June 26, 1971

Hi Trafican!

Tak for letter. Yes, tak for letter. . .

Concerning the clipping, of practical reasons next time put the date and the publication of such clippings so we can know.

Yes, we did hear from one more of your friends. Stephanie Jurs.

It is Saturday afternoon. Richard and Ron are pruning the trees and we are doing the final cleaning.

And I am getting anxious about this birthday celebration (Hi Phil! Aage is talking with Skammelsen. It is green, heavy cloudy warm today and Susanne is sleeping on Aage's back. S)

Well, I will almost approve that you and Kay work separately together, just pray with me the truth that the more separate you are the more togetherness you have. As you know, Phil, glory is circular.

Hastily regards and so long,

Aage -- I am glad that you are in touch constantly with these people!

LEARN IN DENM- ARK

Nordenfjord World University, an affiliation of experimental colleges in northern Denmark, is accepting American students for its Fall and Spring semesters. Located in the Limfjord region, it consists of 12 small colleges countryside are housed in 3 to 40 colleges having enrollment based on old Danish farm houses. Nordenfjord is a communal living situation which students are expected to carry out—whether these programs are specialized field or not. Each college lead ecology, psychology, included are philosophy, writing, film production, photography, production, arts and crafts, etc. Programs are conducted in English. The colleges are international and are, on all levels, demanding. Students who can be responsible for their own education, and who are interested can call 763-2254 (Oakland).

Trafican Promotion