

NOTES ON DINNER DISCUSSION

May 12, 1965

911
PWP
CREATIVE WR.

- GF: Can foundations promote high-quality writing and literary scholarship through institutional grants?
- KUNITZ: Would favor more the type of program RF is doing at the moment. Very important. Less formalized and has much more freedom than any other program. Much more diffident about "schools of writing." Believe individual and peripatetic roles played by such people as Saul Bellow, Stanley Kunitz, etc., can be important.
- BELLOW: Amen. Feel the institutional programs have not produced quality amongst either students or faculties.
- LOWELL: I have a slightly different view. For instance, at places such as Kenyon - very modest experience - with only small faculty and few students, can be exciting at times. Essentially a one-man job.
- GF: To summarize: You would think it worthwhile exploring if there is a person in a Center who can really build around him people of genuine potential talent and great promise; e.g., Ransome and some others.
- LLOYD: Do you bring the students to the teacher or the teacher to the student?
- BELLOW: The most important thing in my view, is to put the students in touch with writers who can demonstrate that it is possible to be a writer. This is much better than any course in writing.

[JKS then explained the history of RF preference for grants being made for administration by an institution.]

General discussion of institutional syndrome in the United States. Kunitz in favor of any way to deflect from this. GF raised question as to whether we should look for a person to study English departments throughout the country, a la Conant on Education.

Kunitz mentioned his earlier proposal for "in service" training of school teachers which he feels could have enormous impact throughout the country.

Future of the RF program

Bellow would think we must wait for the results of present meeting to see where it comes out.

- KUNITZ: I would reiterate my feeling that the RF program is quite different and far more important than other available alternatives.
- LOWELL: Concur - RF program was much more flexible and sensitive than any other program.
- GF: I would mention RF's earlier support to the "little magazines." Can this be done again? BELLOW - KUNITZ - LOWELL: All agreed that there is no high-level cultural literary magazine in this country at this time.