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## BANQUET ADDRESS

HIGHER EDUCATION: A CRISIS IN CONFIDENCE

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It is indeed a pleasure to have an opportunity to share some thoughts on higher education with those most involved. The past several months have been spent facing audiences whose concerns about our colleges and universities focus on Angela Davis, the length of hair of faculty and students, and high taxes. I hasten to add that discussion with many groups has demonstrated, beyond doubt, that the bulk of the informed public has lost neither its interest in quality education nor its desire to understand more clearly what is going on in our institutions. What is apparent is our failure to bring along the public, including parents of our own students, with us, step by step, through the past decade of turmoil and change.

Today, I am going to begin by sketching what I see to be the background of the current loss of confidence in higher education, how this has already contributed to fiscal crisis for most institutions, and what seems to be ahead. Much of what will be said relates to institutions in their totality and may or may not relate directly to any given segment.

I will start by conceding freely that there is indeed a crisis of confidence in public education -- a crisis which is especially sharp for higher education -- but it is by no means a situation peculiar to the groves of academe. On the contrary, it is part and parcel of some very fundamental issues confronting our society as a whole.

Our time is characterized by organizations -- often huge organizations -- and our society is, in large measure, an organizational society. Organizations process and control -- even dominate -- our essential needs in communications, transportation, education, defense, recreation, justice, and in matters of the spirit. In sum, they constitute society's principal mechanism to provide for common needs and for protection of persons and resources. And our assent to the system is understood to be exchanged for the benefits that only these social instruments can bestow.

Our society is so geared to complex organizations that we invest heavy proportions of our faith, future, and fortunes in them, thus becoming dependent on them. As a result, organizational ineptitude or failure can have shattering consequences for individuals, communities, and nations.

Organizations, of course, are not uniquely modern. What distinguishes the modern organization from its antecedents is not so much its bewildering complexity as its rationality and efficiency. The crisis in confidence in public education, however, cannot be blamed totally on rationality and efficiency. It is rather change and the pace of change -- the society in flux -- that we must turn to for an understanding of the forces that shape our institutions and their present troubles.

Change is a dominant characteristic of the twentieth century. Consider for a moment the following:

1. The separation of ownership from management
2. The decline of the classical competitive economy and its substantial replacement by a system of administered prices, production, and relationships between capital and labor
3. The concentration of economic power
4. The growth of science and technology
5. The development of mass production and mass markets
6. The rise in education
7. The decline of individual autonomy

8. The specialization of labor
9. The emergence of an employee society
10. The decline of the family
11. The increase in personal and social mobility
12. The growth in size and power of government
13. The rise of urbanization
14. The spread of secularization
15. The growth in population.

We've been bombarded within the span of a single lifetime by changes which have affected in a radical way how we view ourselves, our institutions, and our society. Life styles, attitudes, interests, expectations, needs, and values of our people have been significantly altered. The American university has been centrally involved in giving rise to change and is today a pivotal institution in contemporary society. It is the chief institution for discovering, organizing, evaluating, and transmitting knowledge. In a very real sense "knowledge itself is power". Thus, the university is a prize to be sought and secured by those who would sustain the established order as much as by those who would dismantle it. The turmoil on our campuses results not only from efforts to destroy the university, but also -- and perhaps to a greater extent -- from the competition of its suitors, competitors whose dissimilar social, political, and economic goals affect directly the vitality of the essential linkages between the university and the larger community.

For the university, the problem is especially complicated by the pronounced difference in values between those it is responsible for educating and those who provide resources to the university for carrying out this task. While many of the differences are trivial, many others are substantive and have quite profound implications. There are, for example, basic differences about the value, worth, importance, and relevance of private property. And concepts of personal responsibility, self-discipline, and societal responsibility are equally at variance with the majority view.

Organized education, of course, is dominated not by students, but by the priorities, aspiration and behavioral preferences of the earlier generation whose own sense of identity, individual worth, and security were and are formed by older and different values. Thus, for the student to reject older values and the society they produced is to threaten not only the established order but also the educational requirements seen by him as designed to nurture and sustain it rather than change it. For the student to accept those values and the institutions that currently prevail is to compromise his perception of the world in which he will live. Students are impatient with a system of education seemingly more committed to serving the established order than to preparing them for the social, cultural, political, and environmental dislocations with which their generation will be expected to cope. Their impatience, however, is rivalled by the sense of outrage in those who are offended and threatened by the students' ingratitude and by their demonstrations of discontent.

But the problems of the university do not end here, for along with most of the nation's other major institutions, it also suffers from a very real and growing lack of credibility for reasons that may be only partially inferred from the preceding.

The country as a whole is undergoing fundamental political change, a crisis of legitimacy. Confidence in formal authority and acknowledgement of it are waning for a variety of philosophical, social, and political reasons, and the legitimacy of the structure itself and of the aims of its institutions are sharply questioned by significant numbers in our society. Indeed, that legitimacy is under concerted attack by a few self-declared political revolutionaries, so far located at the fringes.

This erosion of confidence and trust has given voice to the demand that there be more consent of the governed, not less, more participation, more involvement, more influence, and more power in the formulation of decisions affecting the vital areas of one's life and work. The impact of these forces on American higher education in recent years has been evident even to the most casual observer.

It should not be surprising that the university was the first of the nation's principal institutions to be hit by heavy pressure for change. Among them, it is the freest and most open, and, consequently, among the most vulnerable.

But while the university may have been the first of the nation's major institutions to be jarred, it will most assuredly not be the last! The same winds of change are now blowing over both government and industry where the scale, remoteness, impersonality, and complexity of modern bureaucracy diminishes an employee's sense of identification with the corporate, political, educational, and governmental processes. There is an increasing reluctance to acknowledge -- let alone to have confidence in -- either the outcomes of these processes or the authority of persons who implement them.

From this growing sense of alienation has come the strident demand for fundamental change, emphasizing the right of those affected by institutional processes to consent in more measurable and personally telling ways.

In the universities, the demand for a greater measure of involvement -- despite all the publicity -- is not confined to alienated students. On the contrary, we have found nearly everybody associated with higher education to be restless and unsatisfied. In varying degrees, a kind of alienation affects our legislative appropriations, gubernatorial policies on higher education, congressional legislation and Federal contracts involving universities and colleges, and the activities and interests of alumni, parents, and taxpayers. Disquiet seems to be a common thread running through otherwise diverse groups.

How, then, is the university in America to chart its course and weave its way through this bewildering complex of sometimes contradictory but always insistent pressures? However hazardous may be the answer and however risky may be the accommodations our universities make with changing times, our centers of higher learning are well advised to try something new -- to venture into untried and uncertain arrangements -- for few options are as certain to be as perilous for our universities as the illusion that the status quo is sustainable.

It is within this climate of concern, bordering on dissatisfaction, that nearly all institutions of higher education are currently operating. It is also within this environment, complicated by the pressures for expanding governmental services in such fields as health care and welfare, that our budgets are voted. Unfortunately, we have provided a poorly guarded target of opportunity for those seeking to reduce, maintain at past levels, or increase expenditures too little relative to growth and inflation in some areas in order to increase in others.

The contrast in environment with that of the previous decade is particularly sharp. The 1960's were years of most rapid growth and development of our colleges and universities in our history. Enrollments swelled as the number of young people reached unprecedented levels and the proportion seeking higher education rose steadily. Institutions for higher education were able to absorb increasing enrollments. State government appropriations, massive Federal aid, private contributions, and increasing student fees reflected a strong appreciation of the role and contribution of higher education to the national welfare.

During this period, nearly all institutions increased the quality and breadth of offerings and, concurrently, turned their attention to broadening the opportunity for participation in higher education. Toward the end of the decade, costs per student as well as in total were rising sharply in the face of a slowdown in rate of increase in funding from several sources.

As support budgets have failed to keep up with growth and inflation, nearly every institution is attempting to follow an internal strategy of maintaining quality in the instructional and research programs by reducing all budgetary categories except faculty positions and support. This practice has led to a second phase attack specifically directed at faculty teaching workloads and state support of research.

With respect to teaching, the common charge is made that the faculty is not spending sufficient time with students, particularly undergraduates, in formal class situations involving substantial numbers of students. Tutorial instruction, except for some graduate levels, and small classes are considered to be luxuries that publicly-supported institutions should minimize. So far, the traditional counter arguments have been less than successful in changing this thinking.



Several states have passed "workload" laws specifying formal class contact hours for various types of institutions. While we have forestalled passage of such a law in California up to the present, we do face a concurrent legislative resolution, sponsored by a group of legislators representing the full political spectrum, which calls on the University of California to do the following:

1. Reorganize its priorities in the use of faculty time as to increase significantly the time spent by the faculty in activities which involve direct association with students in teaching and learning situations.
2. Establish effective policies of reporting which will yield information about the amounts of time devoted by the several faculty ranks to combined teaching, learning, and research activities with students enrolled at the various levels (lower division, upper division, graduate).
3. Review its academic programs, department by department, campus by campus, and, also, in relation to the university as a whole, looking for ways to eliminate unnecessary duplication of courses and programs and possible inefficiencies, while continuing to meet the needs of students and the university's responsibilities of providing research and public service of high quality; and further the University of California is requested to report to the Legislature by April 1, 1972, on the policies it has established and the measures it has taken to accomplish the foregoing objectives, such report to include, but need not be limited to, steps taken by the University of California specifically to:
  1. Eliminate unnecessary program and course duplication.
  2. Eliminate unnecessary small classes.
  3. Assess the priority of research projects to assure that research efforts which are unrelated to teaching contribute to the solution of important contemporary problems.
  4. Ensure that a greater amount of faculty time is devoted to direct association with students in teaching and learning situations, with special consideration given to undergraduate students.

Simplistic workload laws do little for the improvement of instruction, for the productivity of the instructional function in the absence of strict control of course sizes and numbers, or for the efficiency with which university faculty members carry out their several responsibilities. On the other hand, it is clear that a redressing of the balance between teaching and other functions in favor of a greater proportion of time being devoted to teaching will have to be accomplished as budgets fail to keep up with student growth and as those providing the funding continue to seek ways of bringing about what they refer to as increased productivity in the instructional process. Most colleges and universities not yet faced with specific formulae are attempting to address the problem on their own terms. I am not optimistic, though, for the principle counter-argument that competitive institutions have lower or equal teaching loads seems to be relatively short-lived.

On the research side, publicly-supported agricultural research is constantly under attack on the false grounds that it serves the few in agriculture. In approving augmentations for research budgets over those initially recommended by the governor, the legislature included language which would have precluded the restoration of any of the agricultural experiment station research funds. This language was subsequently taken out by the governor -- but so was the money!

The research contribution of the university is not well understood by the general public. Where public officials used to assist in bringing about greater understanding, we are now finding the burden of proof falling increasingly on our own faculty and staff. I suspect the answer lies, in part, in an increased emphasis on productive problem-oriented research that touches the major urban problems visibly. I see no other way, at present, to gain the required level of understanding.

But, this must be done with extreme care, for public emotional commitment in many of the potentially more productive research areas is extremely high. To name a few -- health care delivery, air and water pollution, land use regulation, urban redevelopment, regional government, and tax policy. Yet in these areas so much more can be done to point out

possible solutions, evaluate alternative means and their consequences in an objective manner scrupulously avoiding the posture of advocacy.

Efforts in the recent past to move meaningfully into research in these areas have not been received with great enthusiasm in all quarters. Some obviously do not care to have the impetus of university research interfering with the status quo as they see it. A few fail to understand the contribution of research in dealing with these problems. Others would rather have the research done by agencies over which more control can be exercised. A fourth group is not convinced that our universities can deliver meaningful and useful research results in an acceptable time frame.

Additional issues are exerting substantial influence in the shaping of public policy for higher education today. First is the question of future growth and enrollment patterns. Recent population statistics clearly indicate that the college-age population will drop substantially after 1980. In the absence of a marked increase in participation rate, total undergraduate enrollment may stabilize or drop off for a significant period of years beginning in the next decade. At the graduate level, recent studies forecast a sharp curtailment in Ph.D. enrollments. These forecasts are based largely on academic market criteria. They do not differentiate clearly between fields of study, supplying institutions, or types of postgraduate education. In any case, the evidence strongly suggests that graduate growth may shift markedly toward the professional schools and away from the traditional Ph.D. programs. These trends are widely known and are certainly having an impact on both internal and external planning for higher education.

A second issue relates to the comparative roles of the public and private universities. Mass public education of a high quality as developed in the United States represents a large social investment particularly for the individual states. Unfortunately, it is frequently looked on strictly as a cost, difficult to meet currently, and likely to demand additional resources in the future.

In the absence of appreciation for the magnitude of the educational commitment in a relatively free and affluent society, the position is sometimes taken that the private sector can or should carry a larger load, particularly in the more expensive fields of education such as medicine. There are also those who contend that this type of education of top quality should be available to those who can afford it. Others would modify this position by introducing a system of vouchers which would permit deferral of the cost of education to a later period when earnings would support repayment. In either case, the commitment to quality publicly-supported education for those who qualify academically would be seriously eroded.

In short, the fiscal crisis, reinforced by direct pressures from funding sources, will inevitably lead to some changes. Institutions of higher education must take and hold the initiative in this reform if they are to retain their integrity. Particular attention must be directed internally to eliminating unnecessary duplicative courses and programs; increasing the productivity of selected programs, particularly at the graduate level; increasing the quality of the undergraduate educational experience in a variety of ways; and achieving greater understanding of the research function through some increased emphasis on problem-solving research. Short of these measures, external decisions on academic programs can be expected.

It is premature to forecast, in any detail, specific changes that will occur in higher education in the next decade. But, the forces shaping change are emerging clearly, and the directions of change are quite obvious. I have attempted to identify some of the more important ones.

Colleges and universities have a positive obligation to be sensitive and appropriately responsive to the diversity of needs and interests of those they serve, and will serve, and on balance, I think they are. We also have an obligation to inform the public and its elected representatives as to what colleges and universities can and do contribute and what given levels of public commitment can achieve. The choice of level of support for public higher education as opposed to that for other services must be a conscious and informed public choice. In any case, we have an overriding obligation to sustain the integrity of our main business: the discovery and transmission of truth. This purpose cannot be governed by majority rule but only by the application of rigorous and enlightened professional standards coupled with unwavering protection of intellectual freedom. We must hold to this principle.

#### FOOTNOTES

- 1/ See [1] for a lucid analysis based on in-depth study of financial conditions at 41 colleges and universities.

#### REFERENCES

1. Cheit, Earl F., The New Depression in Higher Education, (A General Report for the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education and the Ford Foundation). McGraw-Hill, 1971.