

September 11, 1972

UTAH CONFERENCE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Panel Comments by Jay L. Nelson  
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"SHOULD MANPOWER NEEDS DICTATE HIGHER EDUCATION CURRICULUM?"

AT THE OUTSET, I'D LIKE TO REVERSE THE QUESTION POSED IN THE TITLE AND ASK, "HAS THE TRADITIONAL COLLEGE STRUCTURE PROVIDED FOR MANPOWER NEEDS?" THAT QUESTION WOULD HAVE TO BE ANSWERED WITH AN AMPHATIC "NO." BECAUSE OF THIS, NEW INSTITUTIONS HAVE DEVELOPED IN THE FORM OF COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGES. THESE NEW INSTITUTIONS ARE ACCEPTED AS PART OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION FAMILY, AND IT SEEMS RATHER APPARENT THAT THEY HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED BECAUSE THEY ARE ABLE OR HAVE BEEN WILLING TO RESPOND MORE READILY TO THE NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY THAN THE TRADITIONAL COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY.

THE HIGHER EDUCATION CONCEPT SINCE THE INCEPTION OF COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES HAS BEEN TO PRESERVE THE CULTURE AND DEVELOP THE INTELLECTUAL CAPACITIES OF THE INDIVIDUAL. IT IS PROPER THAT WE SHOULD ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO THINK, TO DEVELOP SOCIAL GRACES, AND TO DEVELOP AN APPRECIATION FOR THE HUMANITIES; HOWEVER, SOCIETY TODAY EXPECTS MORE THAN THIS. THE NEW CONCEPT IN EDUCATION IS THAT THE STUDENT WILL NOT ONLY EMERGE FROM THE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE WITH THESE QUALITIES BUT ALSO WITH A VOCATIONAL COMPETENCE THAT WILL ENABLE HIM TO GET A JOB AND EARN A RESPECTABLE LIVELIHOOD.

THE U.S. COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION, DR. SIDNEY P. MARLAND, JR., IN HIS EXPLANATIONS OF HIS CONCEPT OF EDUCATION, SAYS THAT ALL EDUCATION SHOULD BE CAREER EDUCATION. HE MAINTAINS THAT EVERY STUDENT LEAVING

SCHOOL SHOULD POSSESS THE SKILLS NECESSARY TO GIVE HIM A START IN MAKING A LIVELIHOOD. HE ALSO MAINTAINS THAT THE STUDENT SHOULD BE GUARANTEED HELP IN FINDING A JOB WHENEVER HE DECIDES HE IS READY TO ENTER THE WORKING WORLD.

THE INFERENCE IS CLEAR TO ME. WE HAVE THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PREPARE STUDENTS FOR SUCCESS RATHER THAN FRUSTRATION. IF WE PREPARE FOR NOTHING SPECIFIC OR JOBS THAT ARE NON-EXISTENT, EDUCATION CERTAINLY ISN'T RELEVANT. CONSEQUENTLY MANY MAINTAIN THAT THE CURRICULUM SHOULD BE DIRECTED TOWARD PREPARING THE STUDENT TO LIVE AND WORK IN TODAY'S TECHNICAL WORLD.

IN MY OPINION, IF WE IN HIGHER EDUCATION IS NOT RESPONSIVE TO THE EXPECTATIONS OF THE CITIZENRY AND THE NEEDS OF THE STUDENTS, OUR DAYS ARE NUMBERED. THE PUBLIC AND THE LEGISLATORS ARE SHOUTING LOUDLY THAT THEY WILL NOT SUPPORT ANY INSTITUTION FOR WHICH THERE IS NO NEED.

IT SEEMS TO ME THAT THE CITIZENRY IS LOOKING TO HIGHER EDUCATION TO SOLVE THE ILLS OF SOCIETY THROUGH EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMS DESIGNED TO PLACE THE DISADVANTAGED AND DOWNTRODDEN IN PRODUCTIVE EMPLOYMENT. ALTHOUGH THESE PROBLEMS ARE MORE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL THAN EDUCATIONAL, WE ARE EXPECTED TO PROVIDE SOLUTIONS TO SALVE AND SOLVE THE PROBLEMS.

TO KEEP THE HIGHER EDUCATION CURRICULUM IN BALANCE WITH JOBS IS, I'LL ADMIT, IDEALISTIC BUT CERTAINLY WORTHY OF STRIVING FOR. WE CAN POINT WITH PRIDE TO THREE NOTABLE EXAMPLES IN UTAH WHERE CHANGES IN POLICY HAVE BEEN INSTIGATED AND IS BEING FORMULATED IN RESPONSE TO MANPOWER NEEDS IN UTAH.

1. EDUCATIONAL PREPARATION OF TEACHERS. THE UTAH SYSTEM OF HIGHER EDUCATION HAS DIRECTED THE STATE INSTITUTIONS TO CURTAIL TRAINING FOR THE

PREPARATION OF TEACHERS TO BALANCE THE SUPPLY WITH THE DEMAND. THE PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS HAVE ALSO BEEN CONTACTED AND HAVE INDICATED THEIR WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE COORDINATION AND SOLUTION OF THE PROBLEMS.

2. PREPARATION OF MEDICAL DOCTORS IS ANOTHER NOTABLE ATTEMPT TO CHANGE IN ORDER TO MEET THE DEMAND. IN THIS SITUATION WE SEE THE REVERSE OF THE TEACHER PROBLEM. WE HAVE AN UNDERSUPPLY OF DOCTORS. ALL THOSE INVOLVED FROM THE GOVERNOR ON DOWN HAVE BEEN INSISTENT ON CHANGING THE PROGRAMS TO INCREASE THE OUTPUT OF DOCTORS AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE MEDICAL TEAM.

3. NOTABLE EXAMPLES IN MY OWN FIELD ARE THE ATTEMPTS OF ADVISORY COMMITTEES OVER THE YEARS TO EXPAND OR CONTRACT THE NUMBER OF SKILLED WORKERS BEING TRAINED. IN YEARS PAST WE WERE CAUTIONED NOT TO TRAIN ADDITIONAL CARPENTERS OR ELECTRICIANS BECAUSE THE POSSIBILITY OF JOBS WAS NOT PROMISING. IN RECENT YEARS WE HAVE BEEN ENCOURAGED BY THE ADVISORY COMMITTEES TO SPEED UP THE TRAINING TO MEET THE DEMANDS.

IF HIGHER EDUCATION IS TO ACCEPT THE RESPONSIBILITY TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE INDIVIDUALS AND TO WEAVE THESE INDIVIDUALS INTO SOCIETY IN PRODUCTIVE OR GAINFUL EMPLOYMENT, THEN IT WOULD SEEM THAT AN AGENCY OR A DEPARTMENT IS NEEDED TO ANALYZE THE JOB MARKET AND INFORM EDUCATION OF THE PRESENT AND FUTURE NEEDS OR REQUIREMENTS.

SEVERAL AGENCIES ARE NOW PROVIDING THIS INFORMATION. HOWEVER, IT DOESN'T APPEAR TO BE ADEQUATE NOR IS IT COORDINATED.

ONE DEFINITE DANGER IN ATTEMPTING TO ADJUST THE CURRICULUM TO MEET THE DEMAND FOR JOBS MIGHT BE THAT SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS WOULD EXERCISE

GREAT PRESSURES TO HOLD DOWN THE NUMBERS BEING TRAINED IN ORDER TO INSURE THEIR OWN WELFARE .

FROM MY REVIEW AND DISCUSSION OF THE SUBJECT "SHOULD MANPOWER NEEDS DICTATE THE HIGHER EDUCATION CURRICULUM" IT WOULD APPEAR THAT

1. WE NEED THE TRADITIONAL COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY PROGRAMS BUT WE ALSO NEED TO DEAL MORE SPECIFICALLY WITH THE MANPOWER NEEDS OF THE INDIVIDUALS AND INDUSTRY . THE TRADITIONAL ROLES SHOULD BE RETAINED , BUT THE UNIVERSITY SHOULD BE REVITALIZED WITH NEW AND RELEVANT OPTIONS AND ALTERNATIVES .

2. TO KEEP THE CURRICULUM IN BALANCE WITH THE JOB MARKET IS PERHAPS TOO IDEALISTIC , BUT WE SHOULD AT LEAST STRIVE TO ACCOMPLISH A REASONABLE BALANCE .

3. STUDENTS WHO ENTER HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS DO SO WITH THE EXPECTATION THAT THEY WILL BE PREPARED TO DO SOMETHING TO EARN A RESPECTABLE LIVING WHEN THEY GRADUATE OR COMPLETE THEIR TRAINING . WE CANNOT DISAPPOINT THIS EXPECTATION !