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REMARKS FOR THE UTAH ADVERTISING FEDERATION

HOTEL UTAH

JANUARY 19, 1977

"DO WE WANT A CAPITAL 'U' IN UTAH"?

BY

PRESIDENT DAVID P. GARDNER
UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

I am glad to be here. I appreciate the invitation to meet with members of an association as influential in our society as is yours. Your profession is powerful enough, in fact, that you have been called the "hidden persuaders" and the "makers of presidents." As an educator, I can only hope for a fraction of the influence you wield, and, therefore, ask that on this occasion you help me communicate a message as significant to the future of our state and the wellbeing of its people as any you are likely to deal with during this new year.

Actually, your profession and mine have much in common: we both disseminate information, knowledge, and ideas about our world to others. We both perform vital functions, first in acquainting the public with the manifold options our abundant society makes possible -- materially, intellectually, culturally -- and, second, in helping that public make choices, hopefully as wise in the long run as they seem to be at the moment.

In the case of my profession, the "consumer" is the part-time, full-time, or life-long student whose expanding knowledge and continuing education confront him and her with a world so full of possibilities that the difficulty of choice is made more rather than less complex. Freedom of choice, of course, is the essence of freedom itself and is the reason why western civilization has both

valued education and secured it within institutions protected against the vagaries and potentially unfriendly influences of the political and governmental systems. This protection is especially crucial for universities because they are society's chief instrument for the discovery, organization, analysis, and transmission of knowledge; and, as we all know, ideas and knowledge are the most powerful influences in our world, and are, therefore, as much a threat to the established order as they are essential to the functioning of any civilization committed to individual liberty and personal freedom.

Thus, it is with particular discomfort, that one notes in the land today a tempting heresy, fashionable and appealing to a good many, and yet, if fully realized, destructive of free-standing, self-directing, intellectually autonomous institutions of higher learning. It is, simply put, the proposition that universities are just one more agency of government subject to essentially the same bureaucratic controls, measures, expectations, and efficiencies as any other. Universities, especially state-supported ones, are becoming what Clark Kerr calls "regulated public utilities" with bureaucracies at both the Federal and State levels rising up to do the job of regulating them.

A university, of course, is an especially vulnerable place, as fragile as truth itself, and as subject to compromise from within as from without, as the decade just past made amply clear. "The University is an intensely

human enterprise," as President Harold Enarson of Ohio State recently said, and "it is not so much managed as it is led."

Regulation of the sort now characterizing so much of the Federal interest in higher education is not new to the business community but it is new to the nation's universities. Because of this regulation, both business and the universities are experiencing rising costs, less efficiency and a frustration and irritation that push the upper levels of tolerance and good will. If taken to extremes, such government regulations as we are now experiencing and can anticipate will make wards both of the private sector and of our country's universities. Each has a vital stake in the outcome as both depend upon the exercise of individual opportunity and personal freedom to obtain their essential purposes; and should such die in the one it will surely in time die in the other.

Similar bureaucratic influences, if not regulations, are at work at the State level as well, especially as the nation's colleges and universities are gathered together into state systems of higher education in contrast to their being governed as single institutions. Such systems tend to standardize course offerings for lower division work, mandate uniform teaching loads, fix common salary schedules, adopt common space standards and criteria for library acquisitions -- as though there were no distinctions to be

made among and between colleges and universities in the quality of their work, in their respective missions, in their learning environment, in the desires and abilities of their student bodies, in their basic character, in their inner selves.

Utah, although it has aggregated its colleges and universities into a single system, has not moved as far down the path of standardization as have some other states, but the pressure to do so is omnipresent. The budgetary, bureaucratic, and political processes tend invariably to favor a more ordered, rational, and quantifiable environment and to disfavor variations from the norm, qualitative differences, and dissimilarities in style and institutional character.

"We talk a lot about pluralism," President Richard Lyman of Stanford recently noted, "but we are in fact in danger of becoming standardized, and on a basis that would make the survival of great universities impossible." High aspirations, intense effort, and rigorous standards are all under attack today, to a degree that would have been unthinkable fifteen years ago. We must recommit ourselves to excellence and do so within the purpose of our respective missions. We must also develop a greater willingness to change and to challenge familiar and comfortable patterns of work.

Distinguished universities, of course, have the least to gain and the most to lose under the conditions I have been

describing. Education at the most advanced levels is expensive. It is very expensive! It is unavoidably expensive if it is to be done well; and, if it is to be done poorly, it ought not to be done at all. Universities must build, maintain and operate expensive facilities, equipment, libraries, computers, and laboratories for these "are essential instruments on the frontiers of new knowledge, where universities must live if they are to live at all."

Universities are not vocational or technical colleges. They are not junior colleges. They are not four-year state colleges. These institutions, of course, are essential and their recent development in American higher education has contributed in the most fundamental of ways to the broadening of educational opportunity for our youth; but they are not universities. Universities trace their origins back to the thirteenth century with "its guild movement, its cathedral schools, and especially its great struggle between the Chancellor of Paris and the society of masters." In the form in which we have them, "teaching corporations, courses of study, examinations, degrees are all a direct inheritance from the universities of Europe in The Middle Ages." Even in the most modern of universities, there are customs, offices, titles, for the explanation of which we must turn to the great institutions of learning of The Middle Ages." Unlike other institutions of higher learning in

modern America, universities are alone charged as much to advance knowledge as to disseminate it, as much to ask as to teach. They are unique institutions in our country's constellation of post-secondary schools with their own raison d'etre. The University's purpose is to educate, not merely to train. The duty of its students and its faculty alike is to learn. The duty of the administration is to secure the conditions under which learning will occur, where a respect for others and a tolerance of competing ideas can be developed and issues examined with a clear edge given to intellect rather than to passion. The duty of the Regents (the governing board for higher education in Utah) is to govern by framing policies suited to the distinctive nature and fundamental purposes of the institutions for which under law they are held accountable, and to secure those institutions against inappropriate expressions of political or partisan interest in their internal affairs and educational programs. The duty of the legislature and executive branches of government is to monitor the work and effectiveness of the governing board and its executive officers, to hold them accountable for the honorable discharge of their responsibilities, to determine and fix the level of financial support to be accorded to the colleges and universities by the people of the State and to respect the distance that must necessarily exist between the political and the educational systems in a free society. On balance and over time, Utah can be very proud indeed of its record

in those respects. My concern today, however, is less for the past than for the future.

In addition to the array of Federal and State regulatory agencies interested in the affairs of our universities and to the bureaucratization that is occurring in connection with the rise of State systems of higher education, one must also take account of the current debate over the future worth and significance of a university degree. "Why go to college?" and "The case against college" are an insistent refrain today. We are increasingly hearing from students themselves that jobs and careers, not the cherished goals of liberal learning -- "the broadening of horizons, the developing of critical intellectual skills, the forming of an informed, civilized public," -- are the reasons for their enrollment and interest in our institutions of higher learning. There is a real and enduring danger here that the idea of education and the notion of training will become confused, to the detriment of both.

To train for a job is to prepare for a particular kind of work with a necessarily focused view and relatively fixed objective. In this respect, vocational and technical education fit the definition, as, we might add, do also the study of law, medicine, and the other professions. To be educated, however, is to prepare for life and living in a more inclusive and profound sense than is envisioned in

what has come to be called "career education" or "education for work" or "job-related education."

To the incoming class at Harvard last fall, President Bok noted that "Undergraduate education . . . is not designed to prepare you for any specific vocation . . . What society lacks today is not people who are trained for skilled jobs and professional careers. What society needs are people with a sufficient breadth of knowledge to provide them with judgment, perspective, and taste -- people with a sensitivity for the problems of others and a strong sense of ethical principles. These are the subtle goals of a liberal arts education and it would be tragic if you were to disregard them in favor of a shortsighted effort to use these college years to get a head start on your professional training."

I am tempted to say that there are fads not so much in education as in our thinking about education; and a university inevitably reflects the mood and character and aims of the society it serves. I find it significant that a former Secretary of Labor, (I repeat of Labor) Willard W. Wirtz, in the debate over career education versus liberal education throws his weight onto the liberal scale: "When I hear these arguments about the 'value of a college education' translated into the earning capacity of people, it makes me shudder," he says. "When I realize that work occupies only one-third as much of the waking hours of the human being today as it did in the year 1900 for men and women alike, I wonder

what kind of mistake is about to be made when we put the measure of the value of education in terms of the earnings, the wages, on a particular piece of the enjoyment of that adult activity . . . it seems to me that the evidence is mounting that there is a danger of our taking a shortcut across quicksand, that that danger is increasing every month that the unemployment figures stay where they are, and that it is becoming a great danger as far as all of us are concerned."

The forces at work to which I have been referring all carry adverse implications for the future well-being of the University of Utah: first, Governmental regulatory agencies are costing us hundreds of thousands of dollars a year in administrative expenses (unrecovered, I might add, from either the Federal or State governments) and are diverting the energy and time of members of the faculty and administration from educational to noneducational purposes. They are also threatening to involve the government in University decisions with regard to who should and should not be admitted as students and who should and should not be employed on our faculties and staffs; second, the Utah State System of Higher Education, despite genuine efforts to the contrary on the part of all those involved, seems to be inching its way toward a homogenization of the colleges and universities comprising the system. This takes place because the differences among and between the institutions tend to

be subordinated in our decision-making process to quantifiably convenient measures that neglect essential institutional distinctions; and, finally, the influence being exerted upon the State's policy makers to reduce support at the universities in order to increase support at the vocational and technical colleges divides the higher education community, unfairly demeans the value of a liberal education, and actually restricts educational opportunities for the young men and women studying in our vocational and technical colleges.

Unchecked, the three forces just mentioned bode ill for the future of the University of Utah as an institution enjoying national distinction based on the quality, breadth, and depth of its academic programs, on the contributions and frequent brilliance of its research, and on the eminence of its graduates who hold responsible positions throughout the world in science, business, education, government, and the professions.

The University of Utah is the product of the efforts of some of the ablest sons and daughters of our state, both native born and adopted, and of thousands of dedicated men and women, and of several administrations. And it is above all a living tribute to the people of Utah whose treasure, good will, and respect have sustained it for nearly 127 years.

If we truly want a capital "U" in Utah, we must not narrow the University's task to the single purpose of linking up the high school graduate with a job -- and we must equip our students to cope with the complexities of a global world whether their life's work finds them here in our valley or in Teheran or Taiwain. We must develop in our students a capacity for clear thinking, for living with uncertainty and ambiguity, for understanding oneself and others, for communicating with effect, for tolerance and respect for those whose views and opinions may be at odds with our own and for an appreciation of the physical, natural and social world in which we live. We must assure a governing arrangement and administrative procedures that take account of the University's uniqueness and special mission. We must not build walls around our state or its educational system designed to direct and contain the returns on its investment here. Knowledge respects no boundaries. Our state is part of a national enterprise in education: we benefit from the contributions of institutions elsewhere as they benefit from ours, whether in the form of enlightened students who become good and productive citizens or in the form of the results of research done here. We cannot afford either a narrow base or a narrow outlook. The oak, we are told, "does not grow . . . with the intention of being built into ships and tables, yet a wise nation will take care to preserve its forests. It is the oak's business

to grow good oak."

The block U our alumni have constructed on the hill overlooking the valley flashes when we win a game. It burns steady in defeat. I like it either way -- we rejoice when things come our way; we stand firm when they do not. And this University will stand firm for its freedoms, for its standards, and for its future. In this way only will it best serve the people of Utah and the needs and potential of our own children.

Thank you for inviting me.