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"THE INVESTMENT THE PUBLIC MAKES IN HIGHER EDUCATION"

LEGISLATIVE BREAKFAST
BOISE, IDAHO

January 13, 1976

7 a.m.

Union Building, Boise Idaho University

Speaker

David P. Gardner
President
University of Utah

I am pleased to be here and happy to respond to President Barnes' invitation to discuss "The Investment That The Public Makes in Higher Education."

That investment is considerable (through the taxes people pay, the gifts they make, the tuitions they meet, and the time and energy they put forth in behalf of so much of what the university does.) My experience convinces me that most people are well aware of that fact and by and large willing to invest their means, time, and energy in behalf of the cause. Less well recognized, however, are the extent and variety of returns on the higher education investment.

I could take all of my allotted time this morning in offering you data on how higher education increases individual earning power, contributes services to the community, and adds to our fund of knowledge in every field of learning. But I do not intend to do so.

Similarly, I could detail how funds invested in higher education come back to industry, government, and the community in taxes, sales, vital services, and ideas well beyond the dollars invested. But I do not intend to do so.

I could spend your time and mine this morning cataloging the services, both direct and indirect, which flow to communities, states, and our nation as higher education routinely fulfills its basic mission. But I do not intend to do so.

I could document the progress our society has made in science, industry, agriculture, and the arts as a direct result of the university's research, teaching, and public service. But I do not intend to do so.

And, finally, I could spend more time than either you or I have available informing you of the human drama that occurs in the lives of universities every

day as students and their teachers work their way through problems together, as teachers sometimes successfully and sometimes not strive to excite their students both about their subjects and each young person's potential, and how students struggle to meet the demands placed on them while refining and tempering their own sense of self, present and future. But I do not intend to do so.

All this you already know, and if you do not by now, my presence this morning is unlikely to have much impact, in any event.

Instead, I want to share with you this morning some thoughts on the essence of learning and the essential nature of the enterprise we call the university.

Universities are society's chief instrument for the discovery, organization, analysis and transmission of knowledge; and knowledge in our age is the hinge connecting our present and future, swinging our hopes shut -- or open to a brighter day.

We are not living in the industrial revolution, as too many people still suggest. We are living in the scientific revolution and the university has been the chief instrument for assuring our nation both the ideas and skilled manpower essential to the country's world leadership.

The university is also society's chief instrument for assuring young people with talent, competence, promise, and drive the opportunity to work out their future dreams -- independent of one's economic or social status, ethnicity or sex; and for older people the opportunity to keep abreast of their professions and work, their world and themselves.

The universities in America have traditionally been the principal source of new ideas in the arts, sciences, humanities, and the professions. They have also served as the protectors of the culture and the principal means of transmitting it from one generation to the next.

Thus, my life and work are dedicated to the belief that learning -- the process of gaining knowledge, comprehension, skills -- is intrinsically worthwhile, that in and of itself learning has value.

I believe that through learning, every life may be strengthened and bettered, and that every individual comes closest to knowing his own reality as he strives to learn about others and of the ideas, values and systems of thought that have meaning for his fellow man.

Year by year an individual is shaped by the ideas with which he comes into contact. Consciously or not, he is forever adding to or subtracting from his beliefs, his attitudes, his responses. Education gives direction, and hopefully understanding, to this purpose.

I believe there is great dignity in the effort to learn. Aristotle wrote that, "learning is not child's play; we cannot learn without pain," yet the pain of learning is small compared to the satisfaction and delight of knowing...understanding...growing.

I believe that learning is the surest way to self renewal, that we are invigorated by the disciplined use of our minds and that our spirits grow as knowledge and understanding grow.

I believe that the higher learning, provided by colleges and universities, sustains the life of the mind and the traditions of our culture and the need of a free people for free exchange and examination of ideas.

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I believe that learning increases options for everyone, that it can set directions never before considered possible.

I believe that the higher learning provided by colleges and universities sustains the life of the mind the traditions of our culture and our on-going need for free inquiry and discussion. It is the means by which we reach out to new knowledge. Continuous learning, which is

the province of higher education, is not only the process by which we accumulate a body of knowledge to be put to use in bettering the quality of life for individuals and society, it is, most importantly, the process by which we come to know the meaning and method of being true to ourselves.

Being true to one's self is a dynamic process, not a static one. It is a matter of self-realization, an unwillingness to betray the highest potential of body, mind, and spirit. Being true to one's self is complex: does it mean only conformity to everything in our training that has given us the self as we have it at this moment? Or might it mean being true to the self of our dreams and imaginings, a future self? Being true to one's self raises important questions about what has come into the making of that self that is worth our loyalty and equally, what further possibilities deserve our nurturing attentions.

Benjamin Franklin once described himself as a book awaiting reissue in the hereafter. Franklin's career may be considered successive editions of himself. Was he being true to the first chapter, the foreward only, or to the last page his life and career, fully exercised, would enable him to write?

In one of the early buildings constructed on the University of Utah campus one will find the following quotation from Milton inscribed in marble: "What in me is dark, illumine, what is low raise and support." Thus expressed is the university's essential purpose, starkly, beautifully simple, yet enduring and fixed as the marble in which it is inscribed. It is a motto, a means, an end, inclusive of our essence, tarnished in practice, but elevating in concept.

My view of the university's mission is avowedly traditional. I believe that the function of the university is to seek and transmit knowledge and to train students in the processes whereby truth may be made known. I believe that ideas are to be tested in the marketplace, not suppressed, and that truth can be relied upon to combat error. I believe that our obligation in the university is to assure the conditions under which learning will occur, where a respect for others and a tolerance for competing ideas can be developed and issues examined, with a clear edge given to intellect rather than to passion. I believe that the underlying values of academic life include what Martin Trow has called "patient inquiry, the sequential development of ideas, the emphasis on reasonable discussion and criticism, (and) the continued reference to evidence."

"There is only one good, namely knowledge and one evil, namely ignorance." So reads another inscription on our campus -- this one on Kingsbury Hall. But "knowledge without responsibility is more dangerous," as Bruce Clark reminds us. Events of recent years at the heart of our nation's public service have brought home the chilling truth of Theodore Roosevelt's words: "To educate a man in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace to society." And one may also ask "when was public virtue to be found when private was not?"

The malaise which has affected America will lift in time because of the essential strength of her institutions, her form of government and the bed rock ability of her people to discern right from wrong.

"What in me is dark, illumine, what is low raise and support." Knowledge and truth illumine, but what raises and supports? Knowledge and truth. But do not honesty, compassion, charity, humility, respect, tolerance, courage,

generosity, virtue and love also raise and support? And can we not foster these attributes in and out of the classroom, and in ourselves, not merely to lift the level of civility and taste on the campus but to impart a sense of moral responsibility to those who come to universities and colleges to study and to learn and to prepare for their place in our society? For, to quote William Penn, "If men be good, government cannot be bad"; and our universities cannot avoid their responsibilities in the matter without in the end compromising their own souls.

Universities in their long history have in fact been more responsive to both real and ideal demands than their critics in the sixties would have had us believe. The essayist John W. Gardner (not a relative of mine, though it would make me proud to claim him), has written: "It may be that we have expected too much of our universities, but I'm inclined to believe that such expectations are a mark of faith and respect. We expect much of the universities in terms of everyday, more or less conventional productivity -- teaching large numbers, advancing knowledge, serving the community. In quite prosaic terms, we expect them to carry heavy burdens in the heat of the day.

"But we expect more than this. We believe that out of those extraordinary institutions will come the deeper insights and understandings that will keep our civilization alive and keep it humane."

Universities are today and always have been in transition, not so much with respect to their underlying purposes as with respect to those whom they serve, when, where and how they serve them and under what conditions.

Universities are, in fact, like living organisms. As in all living organisms, change is ongoing, itself a kind of constant, and it proceeds in the main as steadily and quietly as cellular division, though sometimes very

visibly, like teenagers suddenly grown out of their sleeves. The university's metabolism is the sum of those social forces and those processes of discussion and decision-making by which change, whether gradual or dramatic, takes place, and which maintain the university and the society which nurtures it in healthy symbiosis. Continuity is as important as change.

Universities in the United States departed fundamentally from their British and continental models and adapted, especially in the nineteenth century, to democratic conditions. They proved in a remarkable way that practical and humane learning could be joined, that excellence need not be sacrificed to numbers, at least those numbers the colleges and universities then faced. The adoption of the elective system in undergraduate education and the massive infusion of the discipline of the German seminar in graduate work were momentous. The American university has in turn inspired its academic progenitors abroad, who are in this century broadening their own base of higher education in two directions: in serving larger numbers and in relating learning to everyday life.

In the United States the combination worked well, far into our own century. By the 1950's however, before the student unrest of the 1960's, there were signs that the system was beginning to unravel. Numbers and needs had outrun our readiness to deal with with them. The shortcoming was not only in our material resources. The shortcoming was in our imagination. Our perceptions were faulty. We had locked ourselves into familiar concepts of what colleges and universities should be and the schedules and procedures they should follow. Our system, though still young when measured against its European heritage, was prematurely arthritic, stiff in the joints.

Change had to come, whether by persuasion, by subversion, by evasion, or by external decision, the four ways Clark Kerr enumerates by which change may come to and in the university. Each of these means has consequences for the ends sought, and we shall have to take account of them as we consider the specific needs of our time and possible strategies for meeting them. But first something about the ends themselves, the purpose we conceive higher education to serve under today's greatly broadened mandate.

The most searching questions of our time touch, not only on the social, economic and political structure, our energy and environment, but upon life itself, as we contemplate the awesome possibilities of a conditioned or chemically altered man. The moral spectres we face, such as the question of genetic control, could not have been imagined a generation ago. Future shock is present fact.

The implication for higher learning is that both individual and social responsibility and freedom are entangled as never before. In a complex world, where fact and value shift relations with flashing swiftness, we urgently require nothing short of lifelong education, what the Europeans call recurrent education. We need what will enable us to expand the self in an endless process of self-realization as opposed to what contracts it.

Man has been called "pre-eminently an innovating creature," free, as Christian Bay maintains, "to the extent that he has the capacity, the opportunity, and the incentive to give expression to what is in him and to develop his potentialities." Man reaching for the tree of life by way of the tree of knowledge is an old picture but newly framed.

Capacity, opportunity, incentive. Higher learning can assist in providing all three conditions of freedom and in educating us into what we are to be free for. Such a hope for the university depends on no political or religious

creed; all faiths and persuasions may live at peace with it, because it emphasizes pluralism.

Today, universities and colleges in the United States are confronted with an array of fiscal, educational, social, and political problems not easily solved within the context of established educational conventions. Higher learning must cope with the diverse wants and needs of a student body and faculty more heterogeneous and less patient with the settled form of learning than before; with shifting governmental and social priorities which tend both to spread and to diminish resources available to colleges and universities; with costs which are rising at a faster rate than that of the nation's production of goods and services as a whole; with the rise of public interest in higher education and the consequent intervention of various governmental agencies in the internal affairs of our higher education institutions; and with the unmet needs of adults and unequal educational opportunities for the poor. "Hardly anywhere," as Roy Niblett has observed, "is it generally believed that the recipe for meeting the next twenty years is to continue to do, only better, what has been done in the last twenty." The more likely prospect is that higher education in this decade and the next can be expected to assimilate or at least accommodate a variety of alternative, experimental, and unconventional educational forms and structures. Five major forces for change will give rise to these innovations:

- 1) The impact on the educational system by the drive for greater access to higher education and more equal educational opportunity.
- 2) An inability to fund higher education in the future as in the past.
- 3) A marked increase of interest and involvement in the internal affairs of higher education by government at all levels.

- 4) The preference of some full-time students to mix part-time study with work and the growing desire of the fully employed to combine work on the job or at home with periodic full-time or part-time study.
- 5) The influence of communication technology on the typical time, space, and age requirements of the conventional learning process -- what the Carnegie Commission calls "the first great technological revolution in five centuries."

The program at Boise State University -- and, sister institutions everywhere -- will be shaped in some measure by every one of these forces. Flexibility and adaptability will be the watchwords, and a desire to maintain continuity in the midst of change.

I predict a long life for the educational ideal of "learning for better living" -- for the opportunity of learning and relearning the meaning and method of being true to one's self. One of our stalwart University of Utah professors, Waldemar Read maintained that "intellectual health is the capacity to continuously reconstruct one's ideas in the light of more adequate examination of the facts of experience." I can think of no better rationale for lifelong education -- or for public investment in higher education. In a time of stress in our national life, and in higher education, colleges and universities are conserving and enlarging our greatest national resource -- human skills and intelligence. "Chance," said Pasteur, "favors the prepared mind." Higher education seeks to improve that preparation and thereby increase the options which, through choice, give us a sense of greater control over our destinies. We may have to educate, as Lord Eric Ashby warns us, "for insecurity," but that insecurity will be less when we realize that opportunity knocks not only once but as many times as

we are prepared to open the door. Opportunity, in other words, is readiness. In a very real sense we create the opportunities through our preparation.

No social institution can surpass the finely-tuned and complicated instrument we call a university in providing the preparation which will keep all of us ready for whatever kinds of opportunities the future will require us to face.

That is the end that higher education, as enabler, seeks to serve. And that, ultimately, is the end, if well served, which entitles it to public support and regard.