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DRAFT
HARRY SNYDER SPEECH
COMMENCEMENT, WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY
AUGUST 4, 1978

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS . . . PEOPLE PRESENT, ETC.

I AM ~~EXTREMELY~~ ^{very} COMPLIMENTED THAT PRESIDENT DOWNING AND THE BOARD OF REGENTS ASKED ME TO BE HERE TODAY ^{this evening} . . . TO BE WITH YOU AT THESE COMMENCEMENT EXERCISES . . . AND TO SHARE WITH YOU SOME THINGS THAT I HOPE WILL INTEREST YOU.

BACK ABOUT 1914, SOMEONE ASKED THE LATE WALT WHITMAN WHAT HE WOULD SAY ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY AND MODERN LIFE. THE POET REPLIED ^{to the query} "I WOULDN'T SAY ANYTHING. I'D RATHER BE EXCUSED." I THINK THAT THE MAN OF WORDS WAS SIMPLY OBSERVING THE OLD ADMONITION . . . "IF YOU CAN'T SAY SOMETHING NICE, DON'T SAY ANYTHING AT ALL."

I CAN SYMPATHIZE WITH WHITMAN TO SOME DEGREE. HIGHER EDUCATION ^{in the US as well as in my} FACES SO MANY DIFFICULT QUESTIONS THAT SOMETIMES IT IS HARD TO GET AROUND THEM TO THAT WHICH ^{is} ~~IS~~ MORE PLEASANT. BUT UNLIKE WHITMAN, I'M READY TO DECLAIM ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY AND MODERN LIFE . . . BECAUSE I DO HAVE SOME NICE THINGS TO SAY ABOUT IT.

CANDOR REQUIRES ME TO SAY THAT I COULD TOUCH ON SOME OF THOSE DIFFICULT QUESTIONS ^{which I mention} . . . THOSE OF FUNDING . . . OF PUBLIC DISAFFECTION WITH EDUCATION . . . OF DECLINING ENROLLMENT RATES . . . OF INCREASING OPERATING RATES . . . OF UNDESIRABLE PROGRAM DUPLICATION . . . OR OF CAPITAL CONSTRUCTION DIFFICULTIES. BUT I WON'T. ^{so won't spend} NOT ON THIS OCCASION, ANYWAY.

this occ. by discussing these things.

INSTEAD, I'D LIKE TO USE THIS MEMORABLE OCCASION TO SPEAK ALOUD SOME THOUGHTS I'VE HAD ABOUT THE MEANING OF HIGHER EDUCATION . . . ABOUT ITS VALUE . . . ABOUT ITS WORTH . . . ABOUT THE CHANGES AND BENEFITS IT BRINGS TO THOSE WHO PURSUE IT AND OBTAIN IT . . . ABOUT THE CHANGES AND BENEFITS IT BRINGS TO OUR SOCIETY.

has but it will come to

I'LL CONCEDE THAT GOING AFTER A COLLEGE DEGREE -- ASSOCIATE, OR BACHELOR'S, OR MASTER'S OR BEYOND ~~OR WHATEVER~~ -- CAN BE AN AWFUL GRIND. AT TIMES IT CAN BE A STEP TO NOWHERE. BUT IT CAN OPEN ~~UP~~ UNTOLD POSSIBILITIES FOR THOSE WHO SUCCEED IN FULLY GRASPING WHAT IS OFFERED ALONG THE ROAD TO THAT DEGREE.

ALL OF YOU WHOM WE HONOR HERE ~~TODAY~~ KNOW THAT THE COLLEGE EXPERIENCE IS WHAT YOU MAKE OF IT. AND IT'S THAT WAY, OF COURSE, WITH MOST OF LIFE. SO DESPITE ALL THE POINTS MADE BY THOSE WHO ARGUE THE CURRENTLY POPULAR "CASE AGAINST COLLEGE," THE FACT REMAINS THAT IN A COLLEGE DEGREE -- OR DEGREES -- IS POTENTIALLY MORE POWER TO CHANGE YOUR LIFE -- TO MAKE IT RICHER AND BETTER -- THAN IN ANYTHING ELSE, EXCEPT FOR LOVE OR FRIENDSHIP . . . OR A HUGE INHERITANCE.

BUT IF YOU THINK THAT THE DEGREE YOU WILL RECEIVE TODAY AMOUNTS TO A BONDED WARRANTY TO A SUCCESSFUL CAREER OR A GUARANTEED SHARE IN THE GREAT AMERICAN DREAM, IT IS POSSIBLE THAT YOU MIGHT BE DISAPPOINTED. WHAT WILL MAKE YOUR LIFE RICH AND PUT YOU ^{or keep you} IN TOUCH -- OR KEEP YOU IN TOUCH -- WITH THE YEARS AHEAD IS NOT THE FACT THAT YOU HAVE EARNED THE PROPER CREDITS IN THE PROPER ACADEMIC AREAS AND THEREBY QUALIFIED FOR A SHEEPSKIN. WHAT WILL DO THOSE THINGS IS YOUR DISCOVERY -- AND DEVELOPMENT -- OF NEW AND DIFFERENT ABILITIES AND INTERESTS AND TALENTS AND KNOWLEDGE.

IN OTHER WORDS, YOU SHOULD LEAVE HERE ^{today} ~~TODAY~~ -- ~~NEW~~ DEGREE IN HAND -- WITH THE REALIZATION THAT YOU HAVE DONE MUCH MORE THAN PREPARE YOURSELF FOR A HIGHER STEP ON THE EMPLOYMENT OR SOCIAL LADDER.

THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT A COLLEGE EDUCATION ENHANCES EARNINGS. RECENT FIGURES SHOW THAT A DEGREE -- OR DEGREES -- ON AVERAGE ARE WORTH ABOUT THREE TIMES ^{then} ~~THE~~ COST.

BUT THE NONMONETARY BENEFITS -- THOSE BENEFITS WHICH MAKE A COLLEGE EDUCATION FAR MORE PRECIOUS THAN A STEPPINGSTONE TO A JOB OR A BETTER JOB OR ^{even} BETTER PAY -- THOSE BENEFITS SUCH AS PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT, LIFE ENRICHMENT, AND THE ADVANCEMENT OF KNOWLEDGE AND SATISFACTION ARE FAR GREATER THAN THE MONETARY BENEFITS.

A FAIRLY RECENT REPORT OF THE CARNEGIE COUNCIL ON POLICY STUDIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION ~~WHICH IS AN EXTREMELY PRESTIGIOUS ORGANIZATION DEVOTED TO THE STUDY OF HIGHER EDUCATION -- A RECENT REPORT OF THAT ORGANIZATION~~ TOOK THE SAME STANCE AS I ABOUT THE WORTH OF HIGHER EDUCATION. THE REPORT OUTLINED SOME OF THE BENEFITS OF A COLLEGE EDUCATION APART FROM THE MONETARY ONES. FOR INSTANCE . . .

. . . ON FAMILY . . . COLLEGE EDUCATION NARROWS THE TRADITIONAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MARRIED COUPLES IN INTERESTS, ATTITUDES, AND BEHAVIOR PATTERNS. OFFSPRING ARE HIGHER THAN AVERAGE ACHIEVERS AND GET MORE EDUCATION . . .

. . . ON LEISURE . . . COLLEGE GRADUATES HAVE WIDER INTERESTS, TEND LESS TO BE ADDICTED TO TELEVISION, AND ARE MORE INCLINED TO READ, TO ATTEND CULTURAL EVENTS, AND TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ARTS . . .

. . . ON HEALTH . . . COLLEGE EDUCATED PERSONS ARE, ON AVERAGE, MORE HEALTHY THAN OTHER *persons* . . .

. . . ON SPENDING . . . COLLEGE EDUCATED PERSONS TEND TO BE RELATIVELY EFFICIENT CONSUMERS, AND GET SOMEWHAT HIGHER RETURNS FROM GIVEN LEVELS OF INCOME THAN DO OTHER PEOPLE . . .

. . . ON CITIZENSHIP . . . COLLEGE PRODUCES SHIFTS TOWARD GREATER INTEREST, INFORMATION, ~~AND~~ INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICAL AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS, AND TOWARD A GREATER INCLINATION TO VOTE. COLLEGE EDUCATED PERSONS ARE MORE ACTIVE IN COMMUNITY AFFAIRS.

. . . ON EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT . . . COLLEGE APPEARS TO STRENGTHEN SOCIAL MATURITY. IT INCREASES SELF-ASSURANCE AND CONFIDENCE, LESSENS ANXIETY AND ALIENATION, AND INCREASES SELF-ESTEEM AND CONTROL OVER ONE'S DESTINY.

THE REPORT LISTED ^{many} OTHER BENEFITS, BUT I'M SURE THE ONES I'VE MENTIONED MAKE THE POINT RATHER ^{well enough} WELL . . . YOU WHO RECEIVE DEGREES HERE TODAY ARE -- OR SHOULD BE -- MUCH MORE THAN MERELY TRAINED OR PREPARED FOR JOBS. YOU ARE ~~OR SHOULD BE~~ - EDUCATED.

I THINK THAT IT'S AWFULLY IMPORTANT THAT WE REMEMBER THE TRUTH OF WHAT THE ENGLISH NOVELIST AND HISTORIAN, H.G. WELLS, ONCE WROTE. ^{Wells said} ~~THAT IS,~~ "HUMAN HISTORY BECOMES MORE AND MORE A RACE BETWEEN EDUCATION AND CATASTROPHE."

I THINK WE MUST ALSO REMEMBER THAT THE WORLD HAS NEVER INSISTED THAT THERE BE LESS EDUCATION . . . THAT THE WORLD HAS NEVER INSISTED ON IGNORANCE . . . THAT THE FREEST PEOPLE HAVE BEEN THE BEST EDUCATED . . . THAT THE RICHEST NATIONS HAVE BEEN THOSE WHICH BELIEVE IN EDUCATION.

WHAT, THEN, IS THE PURPOSE AND VALUE OF HIGHER EDUCATION? IS IT TO PREPARE THOSE OF YOU WHOM WE HONOR TODAY FOR PRODUCTIVE EMPLOYMENT? IS IT TO HELP YOU MAINTAIN OR INCREASE THE PROFESSIONAL SKILLS NEEDED TO CONTINUE YOUR PROFESSIONS? IS IT TO ENRICH YOUR LIVES IN NONMONETARY WAYS . . . TO MAKE YOUR LIVES FULLER AND MORE SATISFYING?

IT IS, OF COURSE, ALL THESE THINGS. BUT IT IS ALSO SOMETHING ~~MORE~~ WHICH MAY BE MORE IMPORTANT THAN ALL THE OTHERS COMBINED. ITS PURPOSE IS ALSO TO MAKE YOU INTO THE BEST KINDS OF CITIZENS POSSIBLE. AND THAT IS ALSO PERHAPS ITS GREATEST VALUE.

ITS PURPOSE, WHETHER IT ENDS WITH AN ASSOCIATE DEGREE, OR A BACCALAUREATE DEGREE, OR A MASTER'S DEGREE, OR WITH A PROFESSIONAL OR DOCTORAL DEGREE, OR WHETHER IT CONTINUES THROUGHOUT A LIFETIME, IS TO HELP OUR COUNTRY REMAIN THE FREEST^{country} ON EARTH . . . TO HELP US CONTINUE OUR ESCAPE FROM SUSPICION AND PREJUDICE AND IGNORANCE -- THE CATASTROPHE THAT H.G. WELLS ^{made} WROTE ABOUT.

IN FACT, THE CARNEGIE COUNCIL REPORT FROM WHICH I ENUMERATED SOME OF THE BENEFITS OF A COLLEGE EDUCATION LISTED AT LEAST ONE OTHER WHICH PARALLELS THE POINT WELLS MADE. THE REPORT SAID THAT IN THE AREA OF HUMAN UNDERSTANDING . . . COLLEGE REDUCES PREJUDICE, AUTHORITARIANISM, AND DOGMATISM.

THERE WAS A TIME WHEN WE BELIEVED THE DAY WAS AT HAND WHEN MACHINES COULD BE FREELY SUBSTITUTED FOR PEOPLE, A DAY WHEN ALL OF US WOULD BE AS REPLACEABLE AS A BURNED OUT LIGHT BULB. BUT EVENTS IN RECENT YEARS HERE IN OUR OWN COUNTRY AND ABROAD HAVE LED US TO THE DISCOVERY THAT WHAT IS BEST IN PEOPLE -- THE HUMAN QUALITIES THAT

COME, OR SHOULD COME, WITH A COLLEGE EDUCATION -- ARE LESS REPLACEABLE THAN EVER.

WHATEVER OUR FUTURE, WE WILL NEED PEOPLE WITH HUMAN CAPABILITIES, PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT ONLY TECHNICALLY EXPERT, BUT ALSO IMBUED WITH SOME LARGER, PHILOSOPHICAL, PURPOSEFUL WHOLE.

PLEASE ~~D~~ DON'T MISUNDERSTAND ME. WE NEED -- AND WILL CONTINUE TO NEED -- COLLEGE-TRAINED PEOPLE WHO PERFORM MIRACLES IN BUSINESS, ~~AND~~ INDUSTRY, ~~IN~~ HEALTH CARE, ~~IN~~ AGRICULTURE, ~~IN~~ EDUCATION, ~~IN~~ TECHNOLOGY, ~~IN~~ GOVERNMENT, ~~IN~~ CONSERVATION, IN THE WHOLE SPECTRUM OF ENDEAVOR THAT MAKES OUR EXISTENCE A COMFORTABLE, PROSPEROUS ONE.

BUT TODAY, MORE THAN EVER, WE ALSO NEED PEOPLE WHO PERFORM MIRACLES IN HUMAN RELATIONS. WE NEED PEOPLE WHO HAVE THE QUALITIES OF INTELLECT AND IMAGINATION . . . WHO HAVE THE ABILITY TO COME TO SOUND, INFORMED JUDGMENTS AND TO ACT UPON THEM. WE NEED PEOPLE WHOSE EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND HAS MADE THEM TOLERANT OF OTHERS WHOSE BACKGROUND OR IDEALS ARE DIFFERENT . . . AND WHOSE ACCEPTANCE OR REJECTION OF THAT WHICH IS DIFFERENT IS BASED UPON REASON. WE NEED PEOPLE, AND LEADERS, WHO ARE NECESSARY FOR A DEMOCRACY. WE NEED PEOPLE WHO HAVE SOUGHT AND OBTAINED NEW AND DIFFERENT ABILITIES AND INTERESTS AND TALENTS AND KNOWLEDGE. WE NEED EDUCATED PEOPLE . . . PEOPLE LIKE YOU WHO ARE RECEIVING DEGREES HERE TODAY.

YOU ARE PRODUCTS OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM. EACH OF YOU WILL BENEFIT OR HAVE BENEFITED -- AND TO AS MANY VARYING EXTENTS AS THERE ARE DIFFERENT FACES BEFORE ME -- FROM WHAT HIGHER EDUCATION HAS TO OFFER. AND MORE IMPORTANT, EACH OF YOU IS PREPARED TO PERFORM

THE MIRACLES THAT MAKE OUR EXISTENCE A COMFORTABLE, PROSPEROUS ONE . . . AND TO PERFORM THE MIRACLES ESSENTIAL FOR A DEMOCRACY -- IF, INDEED, YOU HAVE NOT ALREADY ^{done them} ~~BEEN PERFORMING THEM.~~

I ASK YOU, AS PRODUCTS OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM, TO BECOME DEFENDERS OF IT. IF YOU MUST CRITICIZE ^{it}, MAKE IT CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM . . . CRITICISM WHICH WILL INCREASE ITS VALUE AND WORTH AND BENEFITS. DON'T BLAME ^{us} ~~IT~~ FOR THINGS NOT ^{our} ~~ITS~~ FAULT . . . BE SUPPORTIVE ^{of higher ed} . . . SHARE YOUR GOOD AND BAD EXPERIENCES WITH THOSE WHO CAN PROFIT FROM BOTH.

I ALSO ASK THAT YOU ~~TOO~~ BE UNLIKE WALT WHITMAN. IF ASKED ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY AND MODERN LIFE, DON'T ASK TO BE EXCUSED. TELL OTHERS ABOUT THE MEANING OF HIGHER EDUCATION . . . ABOUT ITS VALUE . . . ABOUT ITS WORTH . . . ABOUT THE CHANGES AND BENEFITS IT BRINGS TO THOSE WHO PURSUE IT AND OBTAIN IT . . . ~~ABOUT ITS VALUE TO OUR SOCIETY.~~

TELL OTHERS THAT THROUGH IT WE CONTINUE OUR ESCAPE FROM SUSPICION AND IGNORANCE AND PREJUDICE -- [↑] ~~FROM~~ CATASTROPHE. TELL OTHERS THAT EDUCATION -- AND EDUCATED PEOPLE -- ARE A SOCIAL WEALTH FAR BEYOND ANY MEASURE.

AND FOR YOURSELVES, ~~ON THIS SPECIAL OCCASION IN WHICH I AM PLEASED AND THANKFUL TO HAVE PARTICIPATED~~, TAKE EXTREME PRIDE THAT YOU ARE A PART OF THAT WEALTH.

~~I~~ THANK YOU ~~VERY MUCH.~~