AIMING HIGHER

Toward A Better Educated America

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Foreword

The pages that follow were written between June 1992 and January 1993, when I served as a consultant to Carolynn Reid-Wallace at the United States Department of Education. Working under Cabinet member Lamar Alexander, Carolynn was nearing the end of her tenure as Assistant Secretary for Postsecondary Education, and she asked me to provide some reflections on academic standards.

Carolynn and I had spent several years as colleagues at the National Endowment for the Humanities, where I was Deputy Director of the Division of Education Programs between the summer of 1984 and the spring of 1988. We enjoyed numerous discussions of the issues that were being debated during that period, and by the time I was called upon to compile the present document there were reasons for optimism that the reform movement prompted by *A Nation at Risk* might result in a significant improvements. Whether those hopes were justified is now a matter of opinion. All we can say for certain is that most if not all of the problems enumerated in this report are still begging for attention.

Because of the time constraints I was under as my analysis came to its o'erhasty conclusion, I was unable to finish the notes that would otherwise have accompanied this text. And owing to another project that commenced shortly following the inauguration of President Clinton (a 16-volume annotated paperback edition, *The Everyman Shakespeare*, which I produced between 1993 and 2000 for Orion Books in London), I was prevented from exploring the feasibility of preparing these remarks for publication.

Here they are, then, warts and all, and I preserve them solely for any light they may shed on the way observers such as I viewed America's pedagogical landscape as the twentieth century entered the middle years of its final decade.

John F. Andrews
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A Nation Still At Risk

Prologue

In 1983, after two years of reconnaissance and reflection, a task force appointed by the United States Secretary of Education sounded its sternest alarum: notwithstanding all appearances to the contrary, the mightiest power on Earth was *A Nation At Risk.*

With an urgency that made its message one of the most electrifying utterances of the decade, the National Commission on Excellence in Education told Secretary Terrel H. Bell and America's other decision-makers that a cornerstone of the republic's infrastructure had fallen into a critical state of deterioration. The pedagogical system upon which our national security relied was no longer fulfilling its "basic purposes."

According to the Commission that issued *A Nation At Risk*, America's elementary and secondary schools had become so fettered by bureaucratic constraints, so lethargized by regulatory inertia, and so distracted by extraneous preoccupations, many of them incompatible with one another and with the schools' traditional missions, that they could no longer be asked to discharge their primary responsibilities with anything approaching peak efficiency. Our superintendents, principals, and teachers had ceased to insist upon levels of performance that would once have been considered routine. Our classrooms had degenerated into dreary dead-end confinements for ill-trained, overextended, and chronically dispirited instructors, and in these cheerless surroundings far too many of our adolescents, including some of the most talented, were being permitted to atrophy into idlers, underachievers, or functional illiterates. As a consequence our community leaders and parents were having to push harder and harder to persuade marginal students that there was any object to their enduring a tedious treadmill long enough to collect diplomas they could scarcely decipher, our teenagers were spurning the values of elders they'd come to despise as petty prison wardens, and our graduation certificates were losing their capacity to guarantee even minimal competence in such indispensable subject areas as language arts, mathematics, general science, history, and geography.

Not surprisingly, given the uncongenial circumstances in most of the nation's precollegiate settings, our postsecondary facilities were being overrun by enrollees who felt compelled to seek further schooling but who were arriving on campus with inadequate motivation, background, and

ability for baccalaureate studies of any depth or complexity. Institutions of higher learning were finding it necessary to ease their admission criteria, augment their remediation services, dilute their normal course offerings, soften their grading practices, and downscale their exit requirements. Meanwhile our unemployment and public assistance rosters were growing more and more bloated, our streets were becoming infested with drug-dealers, addicts, and derelicts, our crime rates and penal expenditures were accelerating with unbridled rapidity, and our workplaces were being inundated by "a rising tide of mediocrity" at the very moment when employers from Connecticut to California were clamoring for young adults with substantially more "skilled intelligence," adaptability, and occupational autonomy than their more versatile and resilient predecessors had brought to less mentally demanding vocations in the past.

To an extent that now appears prescient, *A Nation At Risk* defined America's vulnerability not in military terms but in terms of the country's precipitously eroding economic, demographic, and geopolitical condition. The report warned that millions of our residents were in danger of becoming "effectively disenfranchised," not only from the privilege to enjoy "the material rewards" that U.S. citizens had long regarded as their birthright, but also from "the chance to participate fully" in the pursuits and prerogatives of a "free, democratic society." Commission members noted that America's "once unchallenged preeminence in commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation" was rapidly yielding ground to rivals from other regions of the world. They maintained that the United States was neglecting to equip its upcoming generations for high-quality contributions to an increasingly complicated and uncompromising global marketplace, and they forecast that the years ahead would call for a populace with appreciably more analytical capability, communicative proficiency, intellectual breadth, cultural sophistication, integrative imagination, and creative initiative than most of our schools, colleges, and universities believed it conceivable to instill in the majority of their charges.

A Nation At Risk rang out with eloquent authority, and it elicited reverberative chords from virtually every corner of American society. It stimulated philosophical and pragmatic debates over the surest route to more rigorous standards. It prompted statistical surveys, enrollment projections, and policy appraisals by municipal, state, regional, and federal agencies. It galvanized professional associations, corporate organizations, private foundations, and representatives of the key scholarly disciplines to review their procedures and reorder many of their priorities. It instigated curricular adjustments and program reconfigurations in one departmental context after another. It catalyzed a progressively expanding cluster of cooperative ventures. In short, it fostered a comprehensive, multipronged reform movement, and that movement has had a dramatic impact on the way many Americans think about the importance of knowledge in their own lives and in the lives of their children.

The Present Juncture

During the last nine years a great deal has been done to focus resources on the maladies diagnosed in *A Nation At Risk*. It's much too early to expect the most pressing problems to have been solved, of course, but recent compilations of pertinent data have disclosed what some ob-

servers interpret as signs of progress in confronting a number of them. At every instructional interval from pre-school through graduate school we see evidence of stronger connective tissues within individual institutions, firmer ties among collateral institutions, and tighter relationships between institutions and groups of institutions at different positions on the academic ascent. In many locales consortial mechanisms have been devised to cultivate and disseminate the methods most appropriate for introducing significant material at particular stages to specific categories of learners.

There have been successes, then, and in places impressive ones. No one can deny that hundreds of schoolhouses, lecture halls, laboratories, and seminar rooms are starting to hum with unaccustomed vigor. But there have also been disappointments and setbacks. And even the most optimistic and dynamic of today's educators would argue that much more needs to be done, and with an escalated commitment to radical restitution, if we hope to arrest the decay that will otherwise undermine our country's stability and efface the most precious features of the American way of life.

It's by no means too late to aspire to a more productive, equitable, harmonious, and sustainable social order, both for our own benefit and for the health of a planet whose well-being is ineluctably bound up with our own. If we elect to act upon such aspirations, however, we must do so boldly and conscientiously. If we don't, if we prove unable or unwilling to respond to the nation's danger with the wisdom and resolve our better angels urge us to, we may soon discover that we've allowed our polity to succumb to an insurgency that should have spurred us to "promote the general Welfare and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity."

Defining and Addressing

The Nature of Our Peril

Recognizing a Systemic Problem

In the wake of *A Nation At Risk* a plethora of follow-up reports and opinion pieces appeared, a few of them lengthy and a number of them to the accompaniment of approbation or acrimony in the press. Some limited themselves exclusively, or almost exclusively, to remedies for the weakneses in America's elementary and secondary schools. Others restricted their scope to higher education, with little or no attention to how the deficiencies to be lamented in many of our colleges and universities might be related to the dilapidation a national Commission had detected in the republic's pre-baccalaureate underpinnings.

From time to time we also heard reminders that no strand of what Ernest Boyer has compared, somewhat optimally, to a "seamless web" could be totally dissociated from the other fibers in our pedagogical fabric. If flaws cropped up in one portion of the weave, we were advised, we should be on the lookout for further imperfections elsewhere in a texture that was almost certain to be marred in its entirety.

Harold L. Hodgkinson gave eloquent voice to this caveat in 1985 when he predicted that reformers would be frustrated in their attempts to mend any of the nation's instructional units until they acknowledged that it was necessary to treat all of them simultaneously, as elements of "One System" that extended from "Kindergarten through Graduate School." Unfortunately, as Hodgkinson himself took pains to stress, the "System" he referred to was, and is, anything but systematic in the way it conducts a student along its tortuous and often fragmented route complex. With a jigsaw topography whose fault lines make it resemble a fissured maze, American education can intimidate even the intrepid with its perplexing and overlapping patchwork of involutions, detours, and cul-de-sacs.

Partly for this reason, an unacceptably large percentage of today's young people, especially those with linguistic, cultural, or economic handicaps to impede a pilgrimage that can be excruciating under the best of arrangements, are failing to complete the basic sequence from grade school through high school. Many of these dropouts return to their books later and take the tests that will qualify them for general equivalency certificates. Some enter apprenticeships and work their way into the blue-collar trades. A few go on to other forms of postsecondary schooling. But

most loiter aimlessly from one siege of menial labor to the next, with no one to direct them to the kinds of training that would open the portals to a more stable and fulfilling livelihood. Before long, unless they are lucky or exceptional, hordes of these blighted souls fall prey to the afflictions that feed on disillusionment and desperation.

The wretches who rot in the shadowy corners of America's bleak, menacing ghettos are undoubtedly the most pathetic byproducts of this country's dysfunctional hodgepodge of instructional domains. Yet they are in no sense the only detritus our wasteful "System" dispenses. To be sure, the young men and women who break off their education before they reach maturity become the citizens least equipped to fend for themselves in a world that's increasingly harsh to the disadvantaged. But for every bored, impoverished, downtrodden, alcohol-abusing, or drug-dependent adolescent who leaves a poor rural or inner-city school by the age of sixteen, there are legions who end up with almost as little to show for the resignation that keeps them trudging to class long enough to garner what for many of them is a meaningless piece of parchment. All told, it's a debasing charade, and one whose disgrace is compounded by the additional shame that thousands of the teenagers who don't quit -- who apply themselves to their assignments, who take part in worthy extracurricular activities, and who approach commencement with the expectation of proceeding to more advanced learning in the years that follow high school -- are stymied by what can strike even the studious as a dismaying battery of postsecondary options.

For today's well-bred, affluent pupils -- especially those who attend richly endowed private or suburban schools -- there is seldom any dilemma about what to do after graduation. By the time they're ready to promenade in their ceremonial mortarboards, the most gifted and self-possessed of our young people have usually grown accustomed to the positive reinforcements of ability grouping and curricular tracking, and they can rest assured that they will continue to enjoy the tutelage of watchful guardians until they obtain diplomas from conventional baccalaureate institutions. Once they receive their B.A.'s, a choice cadre of these favored youth will move on to master's degrees or to doctoral fellowships in intellectual and scientific disciplines. A larger cohort will vie for induction to the lucrative white-collar professions (normally by means of pre-law, pre-medical, or pre-business modules followed by internships and clinical residencies), while still others will elect work-study combinations that lead to encouraging futures in fields such as aerospace, biotechnology, computer science, and electrical engineering.

But what about the less confident, less talented, and less well-to-do of today's high school alumni? Some are interested primarily in acquiring the skills they'll need for mechanical, clerical, and social-service occupations. They gravitate either to proprietary institutes or to the vocational-technical programs now prominent at many of the nation's community colleges. Others are more disposed to the arts and sciences but feel disinclined to subject themselves immediately to the price-tags and temporal demands of four-year undergraduate regimens. They believe they'll be safer commuting to less expensive, conveniently located two-year colleges. So in the unpressured, part-time environments these institutions provide they begin accumulating the introductory and intermediate courses they'll need for associate of arts certification. Some of these students will be quite content to round off their formal education with the receipt of an A.A. degree. Others will embark on their community-college studies with plans to transfer at

the appropriate point to a four-year campus that awards bachelor's degrees. Regrettably, a significant number of these young adults will receive insufficient counseling on how to juggle their quotidian obligations with the evening classes they sign up for, and before they realize it a lot of them will have so many conflicting claims on their time, interests, energy, and finances that they're helplessly befuddled. In the end only a small minority will prove equal to all the gauntlets they're fated to encounter, even if they get far enough along in their efforts to try meshing their lower-division community-college credits with the frequently unduplicable prerequisites for upper-division work at four-year institutions to which they wish to apply.

Until they obtain the B.A., the credential that constitutes the most important threshold to adequate incomes in the United States, the majority of these community-college students will be severely limited in their earning power. Noting this, the more-than-usually ambitious will press themselves forward to the finish line. Others will not, but as they age many of them will nevertheless take continuing-education courses designed to broaden their understanding of selected topics or introduce them to information and skills that may be pertinent to their employment situations.

It would be unfair to suggest that there are no virtues in America's present medley of postsecondary facilities. It's more byzantine than it should be, but for adults with ingenuity, perseverance, and access to the necessary data and monetary support it can be edifying and utilitarian. For the less fortunate or capable among us, on the other hand, it presents obstacles that are widely, and correctly, perceived as far too daunting to be negotiated without help from above.

If today's array of instructional opportunities were to be appraised as a Darwinian mechanism to cull out and reward certain types of desirables and discard certain types of undesirables, it would have much to commend it. But if we were to evaluate it as an implement to fill an expansive cornucopia with industrious, prosperous, and hearty citizens, we could only pronounce it a failure. With an efficiency that would be cruel if it were premeditated, it puts the fruits of knowledge beyond the reach of multitudes, and it thereby prevents us from even dreaming about the bounteous nation our founders envisaged, let alone aspiring to the hale and caring civilization we must become if we wish to live in concord with one another and with our fellow Earthlings in other lands.

In recent years a number of concerned educational leaders have been patiently campaigning for more comprehensive approaches to America's disconcerting assortment of institutional learning disorders. It's heartening to note that these critics of the status quo are finally being heeded when they tell us that we can no longer afford to dally over half measures. What most reformers construe as a swing toward realism is exceedingly encouraging, because holistic applications, even for a potentially lethal convergence of systemic ills, have always aroused resistance on these shores, most of it stemming either from the sanctity we accord local and regional school jurisdictions or from the pride we rightly take in the variety that distinguishes U.S. colleges and universities from their less multifarious counterparts on other continents.

It goes without saying that there are venerable traditions behind the American predilection for

institutional diversity, and there is surely no one who would advocate a consolidation of offerings that yielded a monotonous and rigid homogeneity. At the same time, there are many who've now concluded that more coherence and coordination will be required in every aspect of our pedagogical enterprise if the United States is to effect the kind of economic and cultural transition an importunate Zeitgeist demands. For these thinkers the only remaining issue is how to generate a climate conducive to the rejuvenation our emergency renders mandatory.

Seeking a Systemic Approach to the Problem

In the November 1991 *Bulletin* of the American Association for Higher Education, Theodore J. Marchese notes that a growing congregation of college and university executives, impressed by the stellar records of some of their more innovative colleagues in industry and government, are praising a doctrine that is usually denominated "Total Quality Management."

The concept behind what is becoming a popular approach to academic administration is anything but novel. Its lineage can be traced back to the 1950s, when an American statistician named W. Edwards Deming commended a premium on excellence to Japanese industrialists who'd asked him what to strive for in goods to be manufactured for would-be purchasers in Western democracies. Along with Joseph M. Juran, Philip B. Crosby, and a handful of other consultants, Deming showed post-war Japan how to make and distribute superior merchandise. While doing so he launched a revolution. As we all know, it's had an astonishing impact on the attitudes and buying proclivities of consumers in the United States and elsewhere. As we also know, its clarion is only now being heard at full pitch by scores of American companies who figured out too late that it was a miscalculation to take even their own domestic markets for granted.

"Total Quality Management" asserts no claim to uniqueness. Its guidelines, or corollaries of them, have informed "Management by Objectives" and dozens of other prescriptions for well-crafted products and efficient customer services. Whatever a person says about its pedigree, however, this reaffirmation of Deming principles has several features that make it appealing: its unremitting concentration on achieving better and better results at lower and lower costs, its refusal to tolerate excuses for shoddy workmanship, and its message that seemingly impossible goals can be accomplished and even surpassed if all the people associated with a project will pledge themselves to cooperate in the manner most suited to the highest levels of attainment.

Total Quality Management is justly described, if somewhat unjustly derided, as a fad. It's become a cliche in corporate boardrooms and legislative corridors, and its detractors are no doubt correct in their prediction that, in nomenclature at least, it will eventually go the way of previous panaceas. For all its trendiness, however, indeed in part owing to it, "TQM" has demonstrated its reliability as a tool for the toughest of tasks. It would thus seem to have earned at least a respectful hearing from an educational establishment that can count on ever-mounting duress, if not outright decimation, unless it does something to win back a public that is no longer happy with the way its schools, colleges, and universities are handling the responsibilities and resources entrusted to them.

As a term "Total Quality Management" dates from the 1980s, when it was coined by the United States Navy. By that point, of course, the notions TQM embodies had already been deployed by dozens of others who'd purveyed them under different labels. Many of those labels persist in current parlance, and new ones turn up practically every time "strategic quality management" finds a more elegant way to effect "quality control" in the name of "constant improvement."

TQ emphases are now omnipresent in America's most forward-looking corporations, but Corning, Disney, Ford, Hewlett-Packard, IBM, and Westinghouse are the firms that win kudos for pioneering what has been called a "paradigm shift" from the business-as-usual mindset of the 1970s to the quality-above-all mentality that began taking hold a decade ago. Two federal agencies, the Department of Defense and the Department of Commerce, have become well known for their commitment to Deming methods, and since 1987 Congress has appropriated funds for an annual Malcolm Balridge Quality Award to be bestowed on the person or group whose performance most fully exemplifies the ideals espoused by the late Secretary of Commerce.

During the last two years the Department of Education has been introducing an in-house TQM plan at the behest of Deputy Secretary David Kearns, who'd earned acclaim for the enlightened leadership he brought to Xerox ten years before he generously consented to make his counsel available to Secretary Lamar Alexander and the nation's educators. Meanwhile such universities as Carnegie-Mellon, Georgia Tech, Harvard, Oregon State, Pennsylvania, and Wyoming have begun using Total Quality Management in their governance, and a recent issue of *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (August 12, 1992) cites enthusiastic testimony about TQM from a number of smaller institutions, among them Fox Valley Technical College and the Rochester Institute of Technology.

To date, the Deming movement's most prolific exponent in academic circles has been Daniel T. Seymour. In articles and speeches and in such books as *On Q: Causing Quality in Higher Education* (New York: Macmillan for the American Council on Education, 1992), Seymour urges America's colleges and universities to apply more consistent oversight to each of their functions. In his view, an institution that knows what it's doing will orient all its activities to exceeding even the loftiest expectations of its "education consumers." It will analyze the processes entailed in the creation and delivery of its services, and it will dedicate itself to continual refinements in each of those processes. With minute attention to detail, it will set ever-rising standards for its various components, and it will foster a spirit of teamwork that actively involves everyone with even the remotest bearing on the achievement of those standards.

Seymour warns that without an elevated vision of the way America's colleges and universities can best serve society, and without the vigilance required to follow that vision to its realization, both they and the nation that looks to them for guidance will continue to ebb. With such a vision, however, and with the character to hold steady to it, both can set their prows for the new millennium atop a tide that is going their way.

Like most futurists, Seymour insists that "we are kidding ourselves if we believe that educating people for the year 2000 is essentially the same as educating them for the year 1975." It's funda-

mental to recognize that "everything has changed -- technology, lifestyles, culture." It's equally basic to recognize that "our educational institutions must change as well."

If Seymour is correct, many of us need to alter our assumptions about who we are and what we are about. No college or university that hopes to survive the twentieth century, let alone thrive in the twenty-first, can afford the delusion that it is "an Island, entire of it self." To provide a fruitful habitat for its students, faculty, staff, administration, and extended family, an organization devoted to higher learning must acknowledge that it depends upon healthy, ongoing interchanges with the constituencies that surround and sustain it. To maintain a compelling *raison d'etre*, a legitimate justification for its perpetuation, it must regularly review and renew its mission in relation to the social, cultural, econonic, and political currents that affect and are affected by it.

In times of stress most of us are prone to slip into solipsism. But Seymour cautions against any temptation to ignore or try retreating from the external influences that condition our evolving identity in the larger scheme of things. It's vital to steer by the lodestar that keeps us alert to what gives our purpose distinction. By the same token it's folly to disregard the impediments that dictate an occasional tack from what might appear to be our most obvious route to a prescribed destination. And, needless to say, it can be fatal to fix our attention too immovably on the images that recede in the rear-view mirror.

Most of Seymour's recommendations pertain to the problems peculiar to individual colleges and universities. He implores presidents, provosts, deans, and division heads to provide more intelligent, sensitive, hands-on supervision to the instructional segments for which they are accountable. He advises all decision-makers to consult and listen to their subordinates as well as to their peers and superiors as they develop and implement policy. He exhorts professors, academic counselors, and administrative personnel to be perennially aware that educational institutions are in business not to aggrandize themselves but to assist others. All in all, he pleads for a "Culture of Quality" in which each member of a college or university structure becomes a "service fanatic" and cheerfully applies a helpful disposition to the most mundane of duties.

It's gratifying to observe that TQM is catching on, that one campus after another is rallying to "the unifying focus a customer-driven organization naturally strives for." From Florida to Alaska, instructional communities are benefiting from the synergy that accompanies properly integrated operations. They're dismantling the barriers that hinder communication and collaboration. They're restoring the morale -- and as a consequence they're gaining replenishment from the valuable insights -- of employees who'd been made to feel insignificant and who'd therefore had no incentive to propose improvements in ineffective procedures or to expend extra energy making ill-conceived directives work. They're experiencing the economies that derive from a determination to forestall malfunctions rather than allocating precious time and money to locate and repair breakdowns that needn't have occurred in the first place. In sum, to quote Peter Senge -- *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization* (New York: Doubleday, 1991) -- they're seeing good things happen because they've enhanced "their ability" to bring about "the results in life they truly seek."

There's more to be said about the harvest a better way of doing its job can produce in a given college or university. But there's also a lot to be said about the transformations a sane modus operandi can effect in the spheres that encompass multiple institutions. In his remarks on the price we're all too frequently content to pay for "un-quality," Seymour notes that

> as downstream customers of high schools our service quality expectations are clearly not being met. So what do we do about it? Do we return the defective product? Most high school students don't come with a money-back guarantee, so returning them is not an option. Often we ignore the problem and reduce our own expectations. Other times we don't perceive we have a choice and attempt to perform expensive, Hubble-like rework. All of this, of course, is in contrast with the notion of helping to ensure that things are done right for the first time, or reducing the cost of rework and scrap by "protecting our supply."

Seymour's comments about higher education and its "suppliers" are perfectly apt. And they open the door to a key question: what *should* colleges and universities be doing about schools that are sending inferior raw materials to America's institutions of higher education?

One response to this kind of query is provided by reformers such as Theodore R. Sizer, former Dean of the Harvard Graduate School of Education and now Professor of Education at Brown University. In a recent interview the founder of a much-lauded Coalition of Essential Schools was asked why he encourages colleges and universities to form partnerships with elementary and secondary institutions. Sizer's initial reason was "to be neighborly." His second was "self-interest." His third, combining the first two, was that "universities should be more concerned with the shape of society."

Universities should be more concerned with the shape of society. Whether or not he did so consciously, Sizer echoed the motto Woodrow Wilson left with Nassau Hall when he moved on to the New Jersey governorship and from there to the White House in 1913: "Princeton in the Nation's Service." It's an eloquent expression of the patriotism prudence calls for today, and it epitomizes the spirit higher education will be asked to contribute to a series of Herculean labors in the adventure that lies before us.

Bringing Higher Education into the Solution of the Problem

In a July/August 1992 *Change* article about "Reclaiming the Public Trust," the immediate past President of Harvard University observes that while American higher education is "universally admired abroad," it is under almost daily assault in its own country. How can this discrepancy be explained? After weighing various hypotheses and finding them wanting, Derek Bok's answer is that the U.S. public has "come to believe quite strongly that our institutions -- particularly our leading universities -- are not making the education of students a top priority."

Bok concedes that there is merit to the charge, and like Iris Molotsky of the American Associa-

tion of University Professors he finds what she describes as a deleterious "imbalance between research and teaching" on many of our campuses (*Washington Post*, September 15, 1992). At the root of the problem, Bok confesses, is a reward structure so skewed toward publication and other non-instructional endeavors that it makes little provision for -- indeed, militates against -- a dedication to excellence in the classroom.

The only thing newsworthy about Bok's judgment is that it comes from the former chief executive of an institution whose reputation has been built and maintained, to a large degree, on precisely the reward structure he wants revamped. His commentary recalls a line from *Integrity in the College Curriculum* (Washington: Association of American Colleges, 1985), where we read that "professors speak of teaching *loads* and research *opportunities*, never the reverse." And of course it strikes with riveting impact at a time when the so-called "Impostors" in our "Temple" are also being bombarded from without by an unrelenting fusillade of jeremiads.

What Bok says about the public's disenchantment with what it reaps from its investment in higher education is reinforced by the conclusions of a just-completed inquiry by the House Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families. In the words of Colorado's Representative Patricia Schroeder, who chaired the Committee, "When it comes to college education, American families are paying more and getting less." According to a September 14th Associated Press summary of the Committee's report,

> Tuition and fees rose by 141 percent at public four-year colleges and universities from 1980 to 1990, and by 12 percent for the 1991-92 school year. Inflation in the 1980s was 63.6 percent, 3.2 percent last year.
>
> The teaching load of professors has dropped from the traditional 15 hours per semester to as low as six hours to allow more time for research. More than half of all professors, however, devote fewer than five hours a week to research, while up to a third say they do none at all.
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> Lecture classes are becoming larger. For example, the University of Colorado has a marketing class with 618 students and the University of Illionis has a political science class of 1,156.

"Among our inattentions to undergraduate quality," Derek Bok asserts, an especially revealing iniquity is our "lack of effort to examine the effectiveness of our educational programs -- to really try to find out which methods work well and which do not, why our students have difficulty understanding different kinds of material, and whether computers and other new technologies are actually helping them to learn." Bok considers it paradoxical that

> universities are very eager to do research on every institution in society except themselves. We know a lot about how smart our students are when they arrive, but we know very little about how much they have learned by the time they leave. Because we do not investigate how well we teach or how much our students learn, we do not have

> any process of enlightened trial and error by which to improve our methods of instruction. And so teaching remains one of the few human activities that does not get demonstrably better from one generation to the next.

Bok is "deeply convinced that this does not have to be." In words that allude to the matters addressed by Daniel Seymour, he reminds his fellow educators that "all across the country" people "hear about enterprises of every kind facing competitive challenges and having to pay much closer attention to the quality of everything they do. This is the revolution that is sweeping this country; the public naturally expects us to participate."

Looking back to the 1950s and '60s, Bok recalls that when the United States was "building the greatest research establishment in the world," universities enjoyed "an active, ongoing alliance with government, with business and foundations, with the whole American people in pursuit of goals that everybody agreed were important." Now they "need new ways to serve the public." They need to be associated "once again with efforts to solve problems that really concern the people of this country."

So what should America's colleges and universities do? Among other things, Bok suggests that they modify their medical schools in ways that will lead to more equitable, accessible, reliable, and affordable health care for our entire population. He also recommends that American business schools conduct broad-ranging analyses of how U.S. corporations can function with greater efficacy in a global economy. Above all else, however, he urges higher education to become thoroughly engaged in the renewal of America's elementary and secondary schools. "Here is a problem of importance to the nation -- surely important to universities as well -- and terribly important to the vitality of our economy and our democracy. And universities plainly have an indispensable contribution to make: it is they that train the teachers, it is they that train the principals and superintendents, it is they that develop better classroom materials and discover new ways to help students learn."

What Derek Bok and Ted Sizer have to say about higher education and school reform is echoed by yet another leader from America's oldest and most celebrated institution of higher learning, Patricia Albjerg Graham, who left the deanship of the Harvard Graduate School of Education a few months ago to direct the Chicago-based Spencer Foundation. In *S.O.S.: Sustain Our Schools* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992), Professor Graham notes that "one of the most deeply suppressed truths in America is that elementary/secondary education and higher education are part of the same enterprise." She goes on to observe that

> Indications of growing similarity with their fellow educators in the elementary/secondary sector may not be apparent to most university faculty members, but at least some in the professoriat and many in college and university administrations who are paid to worry about such matters have come to see that the schools are in trouble and that the colleges and universities may need to do something about it. Higher education is not only recognizing its increasing professional solidarity with the schools around a common educational mission, but also realizing how much colleges and universities depend upon having the

> schools produce enough high-school graduates who can and will undertake college work. Since the numbers of eighteen-year-olds began to decline a decade ago, the colleges have become more attentive. For too long, the cultural and social differences between higher education and elementary/secondary education have obscured the powerful self-interest that the colleges have in developing a close and congenial relationship with the high schools.

Similar reflections appear in Ernest L. Boyer's *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate* (Princeton: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1990). Boyer contends that "if anything is clear from the debate" of the last decade, "it is that the various levels of formal learning cannot operate in isolation." He sees "what we have" in many colleges and universities today as "a crisis of purpose," and he shares Bok's belief that the situation will only worsen until higher education gets serious about "connecting the work of the academy to the social and environmental challenges beyond the campus." In Boyer's opinion university "research" will be "crucial" to this undertaking; but he also calls for a strengthened "commitment to service," one that builds upon "linkages between the campus and contemporary problems."

OK, we may ask, but where do we begin? How do we decide which problems to tackle first?

Suppose we assume that clarity begins at home. Suppose we focus initially upon cleaning up the mess we've made of our own nest. This would appear to be an intelligent plan, and surely it is. But if Marc S. Tucker is right, we'd be deceiving ourselves to think that even the boldest strategy in keeping with this objective will release us from the imperative to "start everywhere" else simultaneously. Tucker insists that it won't be easy to disentangle our filigree of postsecondary networks and interstices from all the lattices with which they are now so contortingly intertwined. He warns us that we still lack a legibly delineated route map, and in words of even wider pertinence than those of Harold L. Hodgkinson he argues that we can't realistically look for cohesion and fluid articulation in our instructional and training programs until we reconcile ourselves to the necessity of unraveling and then reconstituting "the whole system at once."

In an interview with Laurel Sharper Walters in *The Christian Science Monitor* (September 28, 1992), Tucker points out that while "the needs of the American economy have changed dramatically" in the last half-century, "the shape" of American education "has hardly changed at all." Along with former Secretary of Labor Ray Marshall, the co-author of *Thinking for a Living* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), Tucker allows that we had "one of the best national education systems in the entire world in the years between World War I and World War II." The trouble was that we felt no impetus to improve upon it. We "just stood still," and while we lounged on our laurels other nations passed "right by us."

The moral of the story is that we got smug and relaxed our guard. In our all-too-finite wisdom we presumed that we no longer had to stay alert to hold our position. We fell asleep on the job, and by the time we began lifting our eyelids we found, like Gulliver, that our sinews were being secured by geopolitical allies we'd complacently discounted as fiscal Lilliputians.

So how do we extricate ourselves from the snare we've engineered for our own undoing? One step, clearly, is to admit that we're all in this plight together and confess that there's plenty of culpability to go around. Another is to be cognizant that we'll need to pull as one if we wish to liberate an imperiled giant from its enervating bondage.

No one doubts that higher education can, and should, be integral to America's recovery. As we bestir ourselves on behalf of the body politic, however, we must also begin ministering to those ills of our own that lie within our practice. Perhaps we can draw a bracing charge from Mel Elfin's peroration to the most recent survey (*U.S. News & World Report*, September 28, 1992) of "America's Best Colleges."

> At this critical juncture in the history of higher education, college presidents need three items in even shorter supply on campus than money. They need vision to meld all the ideas for change into a viable and coherent picture of what the American college and university can and should become in the next century; they need leadership to persuade the academic world's many fractious constituencies that realizing the vision is worth the sacrifices and effort it will require, and they need courage to overcome the inevitable resistance of those with vested interests in maintaining the status quo. The question is whether the otherwise talented, intelligent, and discerning leaders of the nation's colleges and universities fully sense the opportunity that is at hand. It is time for them to seize the moment.