

REMARKS

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LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

NOVEMBER 22, 1969

All of us who have had exposure to the university community are aware of the dollar gap between tuition and the soaring costs of educating young scholars today.

This year, with the national government engaged in a massive slowdown on education funding, it is more essential than ever that private contributors assist our universities in making up this deficit.

It is of vital importance to the survival and health of this nation that we find ways for the institutions that control opportunity in our society to cherish and nurture a variety of talents -- without taking into consideration their ability to pay their own way.

In an era when forty percent of our high school graduates go on to college, we cannot afford to make education a matter of birth and privilege -- or to allow our college admission procedures to be a matter of self-selection of the wealthy.

The trustees and administration of Brandeis University know this well, but without the support of those outside the academic community, such knowledge is of little practical value.

The changes we have seen in the nature of society during the course of this century makes this a matter of critical urgency.

Education, which once served as a means of ascendance for the poor, is in danger of becoming a bar to the new poor. As more and more employers require degrees for more and more jobs -- whether or not they are really essential to the nature of the task -- more and more of our less fortunate citizens are locked into menial jobs.

As more and more of our less fortunate citizens are locked into menial jobs, fewer and fewer of their children can afford the fruits of higher education.

Thus the cycle perpetuates itself.

When our colleges and schools are compelled to act as selection agents on an economic basis, a concurrent racial bias is an unavoidable consequence.

Thus our educational institutions are increasingly unable to serve as purveyors of equal opportunity.

In this past decade, the Congress has done some creative new thinking about ways to achieve equal opportunity in our elementary and secondary schools. They concluded that we do not achieve equality by treating all pupils alike; that many of our youngsters enter school with a deficit and must be offered a richer educational diet if we are indeed to equalize their educational opportunities.

To a limited extent -- through NDEA and other college loan legislation, the Federal government has made a similiar effort to equalize access to higher education. It was never enough -- and it is even less this year.

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You may feel that these matters are primarily the proper concern of our public institutions. You may well feel that Brandeis has enough trouble garnering the funds to make up the difference between tuition fees and the actual cost of educating a given student.

There is considerable justification for such a premise.

But I think we should remember that as educators -- and as concerned citizens -- we are going to lose a lot of "mute, inglorious Miltons" if we can't find ways to equalize educational opportunity beyond high school.

Those of us in the private institutions will find we are penalizing ourselves if we limit membership in our student bodies to the select group whose parents can pay their way -- plus a small "quota" of deprived youngsters.

I am long on record in opposition to racial, religious or geographic quotas for educational institutions and I would like to add to this list my opposition to economic quotas.

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I recognize the practical problems that would result from such a solution, but I do think it would be a fine thing if admission officers would examine the qualifications of all applicants, admit them on the basis of very flexible criteria -- and then guarantee to all accepted applicants that the university would make it possible for all who need financial aid to receive it -- in jobs, loans, or scholarships.

This suggestion is by no means the rambling of an unrealistic visionary. The University of Chicago already makes such a commitment to all its applicants. Though they retain stringent academic criteria for admission, Chicago has eliminated financial inequities by promising that all applicants admitted to the university will receive whatever financial assistance they require in order to attend.

But I would like to see our institutional efforts go beyond this elimination of economic criteria. I would like to see us develop some admissions officers who know how to recognize a

spark in the eye -- when it doesn't necessarily show up on a college entrance examination. I want to see us go beyond the admission of qualified but less wealthy youngsters into our hallowed halls. I think we need to admit some youngsters who have yet to demonstrate their qualifications in ordinary ways.

And -- if we do this -- we must also provide the special help and support that can make academic success possible. We can't just let them go if they start to fail.

This may require some major curricular adjustments. I do not mean to suggest that we lower standards -- not for a minute. But I do suggest the introduction of flexibility.

Former United States Commissioner of Education  Harold Howe once suggested that universities might add a whole year of pre-college compensatory work to the regular curricular offerings. "We're all living longer nowadays," Howe said, "There is no reason that some of us can't take five years to get through college. If the added time will bring success, it's more than worth it."

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I think Mr. Howe has a point. If our universities are to remain centers of learning and enlightenment in our society, then those of us involved in the educational enterprise must find ways to match our concern for academic excellence with a concern for the real problems of the real world.

If we are able to do this, then we can indeed lay claim to academic excellence.

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