

**THE EXPERIMENTAL COLLEGE:
ITS HERITAGE, ITS FUTURE**

Remarks by:

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INTRODUCTION

I am delighted to join you at this special celebration.

I well recall, traveling to Olympia, ten years ago

- o to work intensely for several days
- o in a motel conference room
- o planning a new instituion called
Evergreen State College.
- o An institution committed to excellence and
innovation.

Returning ten years later, it is reassuring to see that
vision maganificently fulfilled.

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My own introduction to the experimental college goes
back to 1957 when I was asked to participate in a
conference at Goddard College.

- o On that occasion I was introduced to
that remarkable college president,
Tim Pitkin.
- o Tim argued aggressively that college
was not a place--it was a process--
with students at the center.

I found Tim Pitkin intellectually most appealing and I liked the way he'd interrupt fund raising campaigns by irrevocably asking other college presidents

- o How will more money help the students get a better education?

I was also bemused to see how many of Tim's colleagues found the question enormously distracting.

My own views about education were shaped dramatically by Tim and by his colleagues at Reed and Antioch, Black Mountain and Monteith and Bennigton, and by Ralph Tyler-experimentalists who were not interested in change for the sake of change. They wanted change for the sake of students.

In those days there was a group of institutions clearly identified as "Experimental" led by imaginative teachers who banded together to form the Union of Experimenting Colleges.

And as I look back on the decade of the 1950's it seems clear that while many of these pioneers were respected--they were also--in a large part ignored--by the more traditional institutions who were smugly growong in response to the baby boom.

Ironically the profound the penetrating questions that Tim Pitkin asked twenty-years ago began to receive answers in the 1960's not in the classrooms, but on the barricades.

- o New slogans were blowing in the wind.
- o The Beattles replaced the Kingston Trio and the free speech movement was reported in Time Magazine, and by Huntly and Brinkly on the evening news.

Students who only a few years earlier had dutifully read college catalogues as sacred writing suddenly declare "I am a human being. Do not fold, spindle or mutilate."

- We winced at the five letter words that came over the loudspeakers on the campus.
- But there was no denying that students would no longer be ignored.

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At the same time, another powerful movement swept across our land.

- The historic U.S. Supreme Court's 1954 decision struck down segregation in the schools.
- College students joined the great civil rights crusade.
- They spent their summers in Jackson, Mississippi.
- They marched in Americus, Georgia, and in Selma, Alabama.
- Those students were different people when they returned to campus.
- They had marched for the rights of blacks, and they became impatient with what they considered academic games.

So it was that education reform moved from a cluster of innovative colleges to the streets.

- o It became a student movement, helped along by sympathetic faculty.

Then came Vietnam--casting its long shadow across the campuses.

- o The educational movement that had demanded free speech, a free campus press, open dormitories and a respect for individuals was fertile ground for anti-war confrontations.

During these unhappy days darker impulses were born.

- o An angry counter-culture took solace in LSD and turned to bombings and violent assaults upon the establishment.
- o It was a time when dropping out and denouncing everyone over 30 were the fashion.

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Today all of this sounds like ancient history--but I recount it here tonight because we cannot know where we are unless we understand where we've been.

- o And while the radicalism of the 1960's stands in shocking contrast to the button down "me-first" mentality of today the influences of the Revolution lingers on. We need look no further than David Stockman's haircut.

II

Looking at today's college catalogues also tells a dramatic story about the impact of the 1960's.

- o When most of us first read college catalogues we encountered rigid requirements and a cooky cutter education.
- o Goddard College's independent study and Antioch's off-campus program were the exceptions--not the rule.

Today all this was changed. Recently I looked at the catalogue of Kent State University. At that rather traditional, mid America institution, the following choices are listed:

- Credit by Examination
- Pass/Fail Grading
- Grades other than A to F,

including AV, INC, IP, R, S. U, and Z.

There were

- "Forgiveness Policies"
- Individualized Majors
- Off-Campus Study
- Non-Degree Programs
- Cross Disciplinary Majors
- Weekend and Evening Colleges
- Interdisciplinary Certificate Programs
- Combined Baccalaureate and Masters Program
- Institutes and Centers

- o Manhattanville College, once a traditional, Catholic women's college, the catalogue promises these options:
 - Six or Seven Semester Plans
 - Cooperative Programs in medicine, law, science, and business administration.
 - Off-campus study, including overseas
 - A study Skills Center
 - Credit for "Life Experience"
 - Programs for Older Adults.

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This leads me to my central point.

- o Today, virtually every university and college in this country offers choices to the student that were unheard of 30 years ago.

There is still a lot of academic nonsense but--

- o Today we have more options for the students.
- o Today we have defined more broadly the content of education.
- o Today we have non-campus education
- o And today we have come to accept the reality that learning never ends.

Here then is my conclusion:

I conclude that the changes in higher learning in America have gone beyond Tim Pitkin's wildest dreams.

And that what was considered wildly experimental 30 years ago has now become a way of life.