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Olympia, Washington 98505

To: Ernest Boyer

From: Daniel J. Evans 12/7/81

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THE EVERGREEN STATE COLLEGE

ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION CONFERENCE

September 8 - 10, 1981

Ernest Boyer's Address

Thanks, Dan. I noticed you began your introduction by giving instructions to those who wish to fly out of here, and then you went on to talk about the pendulum swing, and reminded the audience things will get worse. But I am delighted to be here because it brings me to a place that I attended ten years ago.

In fact it was about eleven years ago that I was invited to travel to Olympia, Washington to work intensively in a motel room with Charles McCann to help plan a new institution called The Evergreen State College. At that time Evergreen was just a dream, a dream committed to excellence and innovation. In coming back tonight, I am enormously impressed. An exciting innovative program has taken shape, and more to the point, it has been nurtured and kept vital during the past ten years. And needless to say, a beautiful campus has been built and Dan Evans, a distinguished president, brings to this institution the rare combination of vision, intelligence and common sense. As Byron Youtz says in his splendid paper on Evergreen State, this institution is a magnificent survivor; well, he said "survivor," I've added the word "magnificent." I'm convinced that Evergreen has survived, and more than that, it has flourished because of two ingredients. It has had the good fortune of having outstanding leadership and clear vision; and no institution that chooses to innovate can long endure vitality without those two essential and enduring ingredients.

I am also delighted that this conference overlaps with the 50th-year reunion of the Alexander Meiklejohn Foundation. Meiklejohn is a giant in American education. His intelligence, his integrity and brilliant innovations remain an inspiration to us all and to the members of the Meiklejohn Foundation who have helped support this conference. We are enormously in your debt for keeping the vision of Meiklejohn burning brightly in our midst.

The theme of this conference is alternative education. When Dan called me some months ago, I reflected that my own introduction to so-called experimental

education goes back to 1957, when I participated in a conference at Goddard College in Vermont. On that occasion I met a remarkable man named Tim Pitkin, a college president, who argued with great vigor that college was not a place it was a process, and students were at the center of it all. I found Tim Pitkin and his arguments enormously compelling, and I also liked the way he would shake up his fellow presidents by saying our biggest problem is not the lack of money, it's lack of deep convictions about what we are doing. He was not popular in those days. "Pitkin's Law," I called it -- that is, the law that says we need ideas more than money -- has stuck with me to this day, and I wish to say for the record that President Pitkin has shaped my professional life more than any other person, and I am deeply in his debt. It was because of Tim that I mucked around a bit with the 4-1-4 calendar at a funny little college called Empire State. It was because of Tim that I tried to start a college for prisoners at Bedford Hills in New York (it was shot down by the legislature because of Attica), and I can say in reflection that all the troubles I have had over the years go directly to Tim Pitkin and Goddard College, and some day I will return the favor.

You know, though, as I reflected on those days, it's curious that back in the 1950's we had a cluster of institutions that clearly could be identified as experimental: Reed College, Antioch, Monteith, Goddard, Bennington, New College of Hofstra, Sarah Lawrence, and Shimer. There was, as Art Chickering says in his splendid paper, a "beleaguered band of adventurous administrators" (What a mouthful! You usually write more simply than that, Art Chickering), who were inspired by Meiklejohn and were led by Ralph Tyler, their intellectual mentor -- presidents who were not interested in change for the sake of change but wanted change for the sake of students. But curiously during those ambivalent days of the 1950's, these were voices in the wilderness because higher learning was living in the happy buoyancy of the G.I. Bill and they were, and colleges were, riding the crest very smugly at the baby boom. And experimenters were looked upon as odd irritations in the corner of the vinyard; and yet, this is what has intrigued me as I reflected on our history. If you were to stop any college president in the hallowed corridors of ACE or AAC as it assembled in the nation's capital, and said "Name some experimental colleges," the same list would have been repeated time and time again. In spite of their offbeat

nature and in spite of the fact that they were not members of the inner club, everyone knew that something was going on even though their messages were quite frequently ignored.

And what also intrigued me as I reflected on this conference is the fact that there are no such vivid convictions in our midst today. Most educators would be hard pressed to name a dozen or more experimental institutions, save perhaps for the host institution here tonight and a few others attending as participants; but something fascinating has happened in the last twenty or thirty years, and I think that is what is the root behind this conference. Curious, I said, that these experimental colleges didn't have much impact on their colleagues; but what I find enormously ironic is the fact that the probing questions Tim Pitkin asked twenty or thirty years ago, that students be at the center of the enterprise. This call for action was not answered in the classroom, but in the barricades across the campus.

In the 1960's, this smugness of the 50's was dramatically shattered. The free speech movement exploded on the campus. New slogans were blowing in the wind. The Beatles replaced the Kingston Trio and placards appeared announcing "I Am A Human Being; do not fold, spindle or mutilate," the thing Pitkin kept screaming about at Goddard fifteen years before. I, too, shared with Dan Evans the agony of those days. I had been shouted down, locked out and sneered at more, I suppose, than any other human being; and the four-letter words were often jarring, but there was no denying the fact that beneath the screaming there was an authentic core; and the agony of my own leadership was the fact, more often I supported the students than I did the institution. The truth was that finally, in an agonizingly clear and frustrating way, students were at the center of the campus. The messages of the innovators had been ignored and now the students shouted their frustration for all to hear. At the same time, another revolution swept across the campus, which was a kind of coup de grais. An historic 1954 Supreme Court decision struck down deep at school desegregation, where college students marched off to Jackson, Mississippi, to Selma, Alabama, and when they returned to campus they were impatient with what they considered to be the "academic games." Then came the long shadow of Vietnam, the revolution that had demanded free speech, and open dorms, and more academic options; and then Civil Rights now challenged the power of the Pentagon.

What arrogance in our midst! During these unhappy days a darker, more destructive move was born. Angry, self-destructive students formed a so-called "counter culture:" they turned to LSD and violence, they dropped out and they declared war on everyone over thirty.

Now, tonight I recognize this all sounds like ancient history except to those of you who lived through it. And I have recounted it here because I am convinced we cannot know where we are today or where we should go tomorrow unless we understand clearly where we have been. And while the radicalism of the 1960's stands in stark contrast to campus mentality today, I agree, as Dan Evans has just reminded us, that the influence lingers on. We only need to look as far as the haircut of David Stockman. Where we've come, you see, has been through a period of arrogant indifference with only a few individuals who understood that no institution can be smugly unrelated to those it serves, to a period of traumatic engagement. And now it seems quite clear to me that the agenda of this conference is where this will lead tomorrow.

I am convinced that the legacy of the past cannot be undermined. In addition to David Stockman's haircut, I point you towards any college catalog. Pick it off the shelf yourself. Just for fun, several weeks ago I pulled down a Kent State catalog -- not only because it is symbolic of the trauma of the 1960's and 1970's, but because Kent State is solidly placed in Ohio, where I was born: mid-west America, safe, secure, bland, unimaginative, predictable. Well, you will be pleased to know that at Kent State, students there can have credit by examination. And I quote to you from the catalog: They have pass/fail options at Kent State University; they have something called "forgiveness" policies, individualized, which has a kind of clerical ring which my grandfather would enjoy; they have individualized majors; they have off-campus study; they have weekend and evening college at Kent State; they have cross-disciplinary majors. And if I wouldn't have known better, I thought, Tim, I wondered if I had stumbled on Goddard's campus!

And then I picked another campus, Manhattanville College: conservative Catholic women's college, Westchester County, New York, where they have off-campus study. Get this: Credit for life experience and degree programs for adults. I could go on. I laid a wager that randomly you could select the college catalog from almost any campus, discover programs and proposals that would have been unheard

of twenty years ago, and if they would have offered these in 1950 they would be traveling to Goddard College to participate in one of your experimental colleges, Tim Pitkin.

This leads me to my central point: I said at the outset that I was a bit perplexed that there are no experimental college giants in our midst. It occurred to me at first that we may have lost our nerve, and then an alternative proposal leaped to mind, and I lay it to you to decide your choice: Is it possible that, in fact, during the past twenty or thirty years the message of the experimentalists -- driven home with vivid accuracy by the protesting students -- has now become a way of life? Experimentation is, in fact, the norm. Today's students in American colleges are offered choices unheard of thirty years ago. Today we have endless academic options, we have non-campus education, and we finally have accepted the fact that learning never ends. Tim, viewed from this perspective, tonight should be a victory celebration. All the stuff you preached twenty years ago can now be found in college catalogs from coast to coast. I am constrained to say that today, when it comes to innovation, almost everyone has been "born again."

But then I had a second thought, and here, midway in my remarks, I lay to you a warning: Today as I look at the innovations and the motivation behind this proposed change, I am increasingly impressed that most colleges are not driven by conviction. Rather, they have become academic "supermarkets" without a sense of mission. Many of the so-called innovations reflect more form than substance. They are not deeply rooted in an educational philosophy in which students are at the core. Rather, they are driven by the conviction that the institution must survive, and "We will do whatever it takes to keep us in the academic supermarket business." Therefore, I think we cannot be beguiled. Change for the sake of change, in order for survival, does not represent the kind of authentic innovation of which this conference speaks and to which the experimental colleges of the 1950's were fully wedded. And so it seems to me that, as Dan Evans said, looking to the 1980's and beyond, we urgently need a new innovative agenda -- one in which the challenges of the future and not the battles of the past will be clearly faced. And in the remaining moments I should like to give you three examples that I think represent the challenge of experimentation in the decade just ahead.

First, I'm convinced that in the 1980's those of us who care about education must find ways to better educate traditionally bypassed students. Now, for a decade or more we have heard lots of talk about the demographic shift. We've been told that we are moving from a baby boom to a baby bust. And that's true, of course. The youth generation in America will drop by 1990 23%, and clearly schools and colleges in most sections of the country will confront the struggles of retrenchment. But the real demographic story is not the overall decline, but what is going on just below the surface.

In the United States today, 28% of all white Americans are 18 years of age and under; 37% of all blacks are in that age group, and 42% of all Hispanics -- nearly 1 in 2 -- are 18 years of age and under. Today, America is the fourth largest Spanish-speaking nation in the world; and in Los Angeles county this fall, 50% of all kindergarten children are Hispanic, and in the state of Texas, 50% of all children enrolled in public schools are of Hispanic origin. Now put that up against another cluster of statistics that are equally significant. In 1979, 80% of all white young people age 19 had graduated from high school; 63% of all blacks had graduated, and only 60% of all Hispanic 19-year-olds were high school graduates. 40% of Hispanics had not completed high school. Consider also that for the population as a whole, only 17% of Hispanic adults here attended college. For the blacks, the rate is 20%, while 32% of whites have gone to college. Here is the point I wish to make: The face of young America is changing and the new students who increasingly will dominate the schools and later on the colleges are comprised precisely of those who have been least well served by the nation's colleges and schools.

And this changing demography affects us in another way as well. Consider the number of households with school-age children. In 1960, 50% of all American households had children of school age. Today among the white population, only 39% -- a little over 1/3 of all white households -- have school-age children. Consider, however, at the same time, that almost 50% of all blacks have school-age children and 61% of all Hispanic households have children of school age. As I look at America, we are developing what I think will be a terrible tension in which we are divided not only by age but by culture too. As white America is aging -- white America that traditionally has had the power, the influence to control the schools -- it demonstrates less interest in the schools because it has less children in the schools.

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On the other hand, the youth population of America, increasingly comprised of black and Hispanic children, will have less power, but yet these are precisely the children who have been least served by our formal institutions. And it seems quite clear to me that serving a changing student body is an urgent agenda for the 1980's. And those of us who care about educational reform and innovation must find ways to stop the human waste; and yet, what I find enormously depressing is the fact that rather than act constructively to the new immigrants in our midst -- which, in fact can enormously enrich the nation -- we have become frightened and defensive. And at the very time we need a strong public education institution, we hear talk of "forsaking" the public schools, as if somehow the poor people in our midst will find their way into a network of privately funded institutions.

More disturbingly is the fact that we have begun to politicize the Spanish language and view it as a threat to our survival. Simply as a matter of record, let me say that I found no issue during my term in Washington that was more political and less rational than bilingual education, which became a code word for hostility and fear. And instead of understanding the importance of bringing a new generation into the mainstream of American life, we turned our backs on language; we made it the whipping boy of a political debate; and very quickly, I'm afraid, the public schools could be a battleground in which America divides itself not only on the basis of age but on the basis of culture, too. I'm suggesting that the agenda for the innovators goes far beyond our insular theories of individual development and requires us to engage the individual in the social context. And as I look ahead to America in the 1980's and beyond, the transcendent educational question we all face is the simple issue of whether we will be able to educate responsibly a new generation of Americans -- not for the sake of the nation alone, but because they are human beings who need to be well served. This to me is the essential obligation of experimental education.

Second illustration, on quite another front: As I look to the social context, I believe those who care about innovation must confront the enormous impact of non-classroom education. And here I'll sound terribly old fashioned. But when I marched off to school about 100 years ago, I came from a home where we had no radio, we had no television. I first saw television when our high

school class took the senior trip to New York City and my girlfriend and I went to the RCA Building in Rockefeller Center and we saw a marvellous demonstration on a 10 inch screen in which they told us that the snowy figure (we) were listening to was actually three floors below. I was an inherent born skeptic, and I said under my breath, "Nothing will ever come of this," and my girlfriend thought I meant a romance, and walked off in a huff. Love lost but technology won.

And the story is now well told. I mention that to say that-- And we had a Model "A" Ford which, with a bit of luck, would get us a hundred miles from home. When I marched off to school, I was in awe of Mrs. Rice, my first grade teacher. She was, to me, the inspiration, and the classroom was my window to the world. She was the unfailing, unquestioned source of knowledge. In fact, I fell in love with Mrs. Rice and asked my mother if I could flunk first grade so I could have her another year. And Mrs. Rice almost obliged -- but for quite different reasons, I might add. Today, I don't have to tell you that all of this is ancient history. When I discuss this with my children, their eyes glaze over. They have seen the Brontosaurus and he lives and breathes!

Today, children are introduced to television four-and-a-half-hours a day before they ever go to school, have watched television 6000 hours, and by the time they graduate have watched television 16,000 hours; and they have listened to classroom teachers only 11,000 hours. These statistics are so familiar that they numb us, and yet the point is clear to me that we are entering an era in which the classroom teacher is no longer the central figure and the school is not seen as the window to the world.

Christopher Evans, in his new book, The Micro Millenium, talks about the impact of another form of language. He says during the 1980's, the "book" will begin a slow and steady slide into oblivion. He says computers will take over because they store more information, and because their information can be more readily retrieved. He goes on to paint this picture: He says that in the future, books will be tiny silicone chips which can be slipped into small projectors and then be read from viewing screens against the wall in the home, and can even be read on the ceiling if you like to read in bed. Going to bed with a computer is our future. My point clearly is not to worship technology, quite

opposite. Rather, I present quite seriously to this audience, who cares about the future of education, that we confront a communication revolution that I believe will change dramatically our notion of how people teach and how they learn. And what is still more distressing is that I believe the so-called "non-traditional" teachers in our culture will have an impact on students and our classrooms in ways we hardly understand.

Several weeks ago a survey came to me, and I was intrigued that 20 years ago, when American teenagers were asked, "What influences you the most?", number one was parents; number two was teachers; number three was peers. Today -- 1980 -- the question is repeated, "What influences you the most?" This time parents have been replaced by peers as number one; next comes parents; third comes television (which jumped from 8 to 3 in just 20 years); and finally, classroom teachers. If you look at those shifts, there is a powerful message to be drawn. It seems clear to me that in the last decade or two, the influential teachers in our culture have shifted from the predictable transmitters of tradition to the more ambiguous, more immediate, more transient senders of messages through peers and mass communications.

In my view, the strengths of the traditional and the non-traditional teachers in our culture must somehow be combined. It is foolish to flail away at what have become the most dramatic possibilities of communication. After all, television can take students to the moon. Through television we can go to the bottom of the sea. Several years ago, how many of you sat in your homes and watched the president of Egypt embrace the prime minister of Israel on a Tel Aviv airstrip? and I suggest that somehow all of you must have felt a fleeting moment of inspiration and great hope. It's true, also, calculators can solve problems faster than the human brain; computers can retrieve instantly millions of information bits. But I'm old fashioned enough to suggest that calculators and computers cannot and will not make discriminating judgements. They cannot and will not teach students wisdom. And the challenge of the future is not to fight technology nor to ignore it, but rather to teach about the new instruments of communication and to build a partnership between traditional and non-traditional education, letting each do what it can do best.

I find it so tantalizing, and yet at the next breath so frustrating, that I genuinely believe we have at our fingertips the capacity to have the best

educated citizenry on earth in human history. We have the tools of knowledge, we have the sources of information, and yet, somehow we fritter it away, failing to harness it to educate the coming generation about the power and inspiration of the human race. I say, and perhaps I paint too bold and broad a picture, but those of us involved in innovation cannot talk about education in the days ahead without finding ways better to relate traditional and non-traditional education. And I truly believe that if that nexus is not joined, those of us engaged in the traditional structures and transmission of knowledge may be the losers.

Thus far I've spoken about education in the context of the changing student and in the context of the changing teacher. I should like to close by doing a bold and careless thing, passingly asking questions about the "substance." The harsh truth is that we confront a world where all actions are inextricably interlocked, and yet many of our students do not see those fundamental connections. Several years ago, when I was in the Office of Education, Joan Gance Cooley of Children's Television Workshop came and asked if we would help support a new TV series for junior high students, focusing on science. I said, "Joan, we'll support you with two requirements: one, I don't want a course on science alone. I'd like a course that deals with the application of science to technology and its social implications. I also think we need a television course that is linked into curriculum for the classroom and the teacher." She concurred. We now have a course on public broadcasting called "3-2-1 Contact," but in doing background research for that little children's program, television researchers went to New York City and asked junior high school students some simple questions. In response to the question, "Where does water come from?", about 20% said the faucet. And when asked, "Where does light come from," they said the switch. "And where does garbage go?" Down the chute, which, in New York City is better than down the window, but not the right answer. I mention those responses, which at first amuse and then disturb. Is it true, perhaps, that we are educating children to their ignorance of their immediate surroundings and (we are) so preoccupied with the wants and needs of individuals that we fail to understand that individuals are, in fact, connections, and there is no way to separate the individuals from the interconnectedness and interdependency of our world? Simply stated, here is my problem: I believe there is a growing gap between public issues

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and public understanding. And somehow those of us in education must concern ourselves not only with the process, but with the substance, too.

In 1979, and you must recall it with me, millions of Americans sat in front of TV sets and watched the Three Mile Island crisis unfold and listened to strange talk about rehms and cold shutdowns. And I must tell you that as I listened to all that talk, I felt as if I was hearing a foreign language. The truth is, it was a foreign language because most of the viewers had no reference points to give meaning to the terms that suddenly were of grave concern. The point is this: I believe as a nation and perhaps as a human race, we are becoming civically illiterate; and unless we find better ways to educate ourselves as citizens, I believe we run the grave risk of drifting unwittingly into a new kind of dark age, a time when a small band of specialists will control knowledge and tell the rest of us what we should and should not believe and how we should and should not act. Simply stated, then, I believe that in the 1980's, innovators must tackle the toughest of all assignments. We must somehow find a way to bridge -- to preserve individual differences and acknowledge the uniqueness of each student while also building a greater social understanding which gives meaning to individual lives. Putting it another way, and perhaps in "headline" fashion, we must help students to confront their separateness and recognize their togetherness as well.

All of this "heavy, heavy stuff" leads me to one final observation, something I suspect that undergirds everything I've said and has almost become a passion with me in the past few years: I am convinced that these now challenges cannot be achieved without close cooperation between the nation's colleges and schools. If you reflect back on all that I've said, they remind us that education is a seamless web. Whether we say the coming generation is a problem for the colleges and schools, whether we find a way to teach beyond the classroom authentically is a problem for the colleges and schools, and whether we develop greater civic understanding must begin in the early grades as well. The truth is, that a century ago educators understood far better than we do today that we cannot have excellence in education unless we have excellence in the schools. It's such a simple point -- the need for close collaboration -- and yet in recent years, the school/college relationship has been essentially ignored. Higher education institutions have pretended that quality

education could be achieved without working with the schools, which are, in fact, the foundation of everything we do. I believe the time has come to end this isolation. The nation's colleges and universities have a responsibility to help solve the crisis in the schools, which is, in fact, a problem they have helped create.

I must say, there are signs that are reassuring. Just one month ago I was pleased to help to host a meeting in Colorado Springs, where all 50 chief school superintendents met at their own request with 50 colleges and university presidents, one from every state. And they spent the week talking not

about governance and politics, but about the central questions I have just discussed: Who are the students? Who are the teachers? What are we teaching and how can we serve the individuals in our midst? There are no panaceas, to be sure; but if a new generation of young Americans is to be educationally well prepared, the primary obligation for excellence rests with the colleges who work closely with the schools. And rebuilding quality is important not because it is a school crisis, but because it is a "people" crisis: young men and women whose lives will be forever diminished or enriched by the programs we provide. James Agee wrote on one occasion that in every child who is born, under no matter what circumstances, the potentiality of the human race is born again; and in him, too, once more is born a terrible responsibility towards human life and toward the utmost idea of goodness, of horror of error, and of God.

Well, what does all of this have to do with this conference? Let me recite the ways: There was a moment of high drama 20 or 30 years ago when "experimentation" had the central message. Few listened, except the students, and centrality of that message burst into fury in the Berkeley campus and spread across the nation. I genuinely believe we stand at the threshold of such a trenchant moment. I do not believe that the experimentation agenda of the 1980's is the same one articulated in the 1950's, save for one essential issue: the centrality of the education is the student. In the 1980's, I believe that agenda must be put in social context, and the social context that I see is the changing demography in this country---the changing impact of technology and the important possibilities of educating towards civil responsibilities. And I believe that there are many educators in this nation, and certainly a host of educators in this room, who will be responsible to that challenge. Thank you very much.