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ABSTRACT

In the United States, decision-making in education is becoming laterally dispersed, involving the interaction of many more variables and many more people, groups, and agencies. It is also rising to higher levels of government, including the federal government. This is correlated with relatively new sources of financial support and with accountability requirements. The traditional concept of institutional governance is endangered. The single most important factor accelerating this trend is the rapid rise of educational costs and the need for higher outlays of public funds. State budget and planning officers are beginning to play the critical role played by the Office of Management and Budget and the General Accounting Office at the national level. Legislators are also better educated than in the past. Combined with a profound mistrust of established authority, the scene is set for administrators and coordinating boards involving an ambience of hostility, distrust, ambiguity, discontent, and criticism. The decade ahead will require strong leadership in five functions: planning, evaluation, accountability, certification, and licensing; informed state and regional advisory councils; and the self-initiated correction of institutional weaknesses. In the absence of the latter and strong coordinating board leadership, authority will either flow into the hands of agencies with conflicting goals or centralized in the state budget director. A clear distinction is to be made between institutional governance and statewide coordination, which serve very different functions in higher education. (MSE)

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Paper Presented at a Seminar for State Leaders in Postsecondary Education

SHIFTING POWER RELATIONS BETWEEN
HIGHER EDUCATION AND STATE GOVERNMENT

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of New York and Commissioner of Education

Big Sky, Montana
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SHEEO

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SHIFTING POWER RELATIONS BETWEEN HIGHER EDUCATION AND STATE GOVERNMENT

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I was prepared this evening, precisely because I was forewarned that Ted Hollander, my former colleague, would use this singular occasion to seek revenge and to publicly relieve himself of long-contained, pent up frustrations, resentments, baffléments, and disappointments for which I was responsible while he served as my Deputy Commissioner for Higher Education.

I was prepared for brilliant invective, unprecedented billingsgate, not so jolly jeremiads, and cutting contumelies, in which case I had fully intended to counter his denigration of me with one of him as a person who often lived verbally beyond his intellectual means, who could meet every issue with an open mouth, and who took pleasure in his grand delusions of adequacy. But I won't.

Probably the civilities required in holding office as your president-elect, in which capacity he cannot really be himself, has softened his predispositions. Instead, and charitably, his introduction reminds me of the clergyman who was given a generous introduction before he began a speech. Said the clergyman as he got to the podium, "May the Lord forgive this man for his excesses, and me for enjoying them so much."

And I shall not miss this rare opportunity to let this pretigious audience know of my high regard for Ted Hollander. You will forgive me, I know, if I say that I regard him as the most outstanding man in planning and coordination in the entire United States -- in his age group -- whatever age group that is.

Seriously, Ted Hollander is one of the finest human beings I know: Compassionate, loyal, humane, possessed of complete integrity, unusually perceptive about and finely attuned to political nuances of consequence, richly endowed with informative insights into the human condition, egalitarian, and a pure passion for the twin objectives of education, namely, equality of access to as many options

as can be afforded, and the attainment of the highest quality possible, all to be achieved, of course, within a coordinated system that also cares about efficiency and economy.

Few people possess his very loving and discerning sense of humor which permits him to see more sides of a thing than can be soberly and systematically stated. In terms of professional competence, he has few peers and absolutely no equals. He has invariably set high standards of accomplishment to which all others may repair. The reputation of any leader depends upon the virtues and competence of those working for him. I owe much to Ted Hollander for which I now thank him.

Louis Rabineau, in his letter of invitation, gave me no instructions on what I should say. But he did suggest that I should keep in mind, in preparing my remarks, what happened to the U.S. Senator who once visited an Indian reservation where he made a fine speech full of promises of better things to come. The Senator began in rich rhetoric and mellifluous tones by guaranteeing a new era of Indian opportunity, to which the Indians gave a ringing cry of "Hoya, hoya." Encouraged, the Senator went on to promise one more thing after another -- better schools, better jobs, better health, and so on. You know how politicians are. And, with each promise, the Indians again shook the air with mighty cries of "Hoya, hoya." Well, as you can imagine, the Senator was so pleased by his reception that he asked to tour the reservation. At one point during the tour, he said to the chief: "I see you have many fine breeds of cattle. May I inspect them?" "Certainly, come this way," answered the chief. "But be careful not to step in the 'hoya'."

At any rate, I welcome the opportunity to get an edge in wordwise on the topic Louis Rabineau suggested that I discuss, namely, the shifting sands of

power relationships in higher education, with particular reference to what is happening at the state level.

I shall only speak of state government in relation to higher education, not the changes taking place as a result of changing governance board membership and behavior, the decline in the quality of board members, their new activism, and narrow advocacies, as well as their increasing polarization and mistrust of administrative authority and leadership (although I think I am qualified to make an informed comment or two on those subjects).

I have spoken in the recent past at an increasingly frequent rate on the subject of governance at all levels of education and the changes which have taken place over the past twenty-five years, including the increasing interventions, interferences, encroachments, extirpations, expropriations, and dispossessions made by state and federal governments. As I do so once again this evening, I am reminded of the story of the unfortunate man who had undergone surgery and lengthy hospitalization. One day as he lay bedridden, a nurse came in on routine business, laid a mid-morning glass of apple juice on his bedside table and left. A moment later another nurse came in and left an empty bottle for the usual mandatory urine sample. Having otherwise recently relieved himself, the man poured the apple juice into the urine sample bottle, thus, at one stroke fulfilling both physiological functions professionally expected of him. Shortly thereafter the second nurse returned, held the full bottle up for inspection and remarked: "Well, Mr. Livingston, it looks a little cloudy today."

"Okay," said the man, "give it back to me, and I'll run it through again."

So I'll run through once again some revealed truths and received wisdoms about governance.

Some of these observations will undoubtedly offend some people, I hope none of you. Even so, and in any case, I am reminded of the story of an English pharmaceutical firm, specializing in suppositories, that had for decades been remarkably successful. Eventually, it fell on hard times, its sales plummeted, and it was near bankruptcy when the president of the company decided to avail himself of the imported services of American Madison Avenue advertising consultants. The usual study was made, recommendations offered, and final decisions made to adopt a new slogan and to engage in blatant advertising. Soon, all over the country, on billboards, in buses, in the subways, over the radio, and in the newspapers appeared a new persuasive slogan. Sales soared beyond the company's fondest expectations and sent the company into a new era of unprecedented affluence. The slogan? "If you don't like our suppositories, you know what you can do with them."

My own curtailed experience as Commissioner of Education in New York, combined with what I know about the situation in other parts of the country, have convinced me that increasingly interventionist governors and state legislators are fast putting government and the academy on a collision course.

Some supporting statements are in order.

Consider the way in which Ronald Reagen, when he was Governor of California, furthered his political ambitions by keeping up a running attack on that state's University system, and especially the Berkeley campus. Conservatives from one end of the country to the other delighted in Mr. Reagan's hard-line policy against student dissidents like Mario Savio, his much-publicized cuts in the University budget, and, of course, the Reagan-engineered ouster of President Clark Kerr, who displeased the conservatives by saying it made more sense to respond to campus demonstrations with "compassion and reason" -- Mr. Kerr's words -- than with mace.

I think it is well worth repeating an observation Clark Kerr made about the Governor in a 1971 interview. Mr. Reagan, he said, "has used the regents meetings as a forum for politics much as the radical kids used Sproul Hall Plaza."

The "Reaganization" of the University of California, as one writer aptly called it, may be an extreme case of how higher education can become politicized. But I take little comfort, either, in some other things that have occurred in recent years which, though less blatant, merit mention.

Don McNeil's resignation as Director of the California Postsecondary Education Commission suggests that a political tug-of-war is still going on there. I don't profess to know all the details. From what I understand, however, the Chairman of the Assembly Higher Education Committee wants to see that the Legislature continues to call the shots concerning which parts of the Master Plan are implemented, and that one way to do this is to make the Commission an instrument of the Legislature. Where does this leave the Governor? And what are the implications for the University system, the state colleges, the community colleges, and the independent institutions?

I would also point out what happened in Colorado last year. In this case, the Legislature halved the staff of the Commission on Higher Education, which was regarded as one of the strongest state coordinating agencies for higher education. This action had the effect of removing the Commission from the budget review process; eliminating personnel who had maintained the information base; and jeopardizing the Commission's ability to carry out reviews of programs, institutional master planning and facility program planning, not to mention statewide planning and program development.

As a personal observation, the only good thing about that legislative action was that it enabled me to hire the Executive Director of the Colorado Commission on Higher Education, Frank Abbott, who became Assistant Commissioner for the

Professions in the New York State Education Department and has done in a few months a truly remarkable job. Colorado's severe loss was New York's substantial gain. Thank God for some states like Colorado.

Parenthetically, to show you how tolerant we are in New York, or at least I am, Frank Abbott wrote a book in 1958, an outgrowth of his doctoral dissertation, on the Board of Regents in New York, and what a narrow, short-sighted bunch they were. Because I agreed with him, at least to the extent of 8/15th's of what he said, I hired him to reinforce my convictions.

In another sign of the times, I was interested to read how Chancellor R. T. York, Jr., assessed the educational climate in Florida a year ago. "The past year in the State University of Florida," he reported, "has been highlighted by an intense struggle with the 1976 legislature for adequate funding, the initiation of collective bargaining negotiations with a faculty union, expanded efforts to improve management efficiency and authorization for enrollment limitations." He went on to describe a "hostile Senate leadership" that was bent on making sharp budget cuts while "education forces" worked to push through a tax increase aimed at increasing funding for all levels of education. The university system eventually received somewhat more funding than in the previous year.

Let me round out this quick tick list with a few representative examples of what we have been confronted with in New York State under a Governor whose educational proposals, or the lack of them, kept making me feel the way my favorite humorist, James Thurber, did after an unfortunate thing happened to him one time. Said Thurber: "I was thunder and struck."

Our Governor is Hugh Carey, whom I got to know to some degree when he was a member of the House of Representatives. In that capacity, he was really quite supportive of education. But he sure changed when he became the State's chief

executive. In his entire 1977 State of the State message, the subject of education was not even mentioned nor the very word used. His Administration has turned education into a slipping priority. It is now in New York severely depressed in the hierarchy of values associated with the good life, as it is throughout the nation. Someone has remarked that we are in an "age of educational oblivion" characterized by the "mugging of the schools." For many reasons we are all engaged in the management of decline. Education is no longer a money-splendored thing. On the other hand, and simultaneously, Patrick Henry thought taxation without representation was bad. He ought to be around today to see how bad it is in New York with representation.

I recently asked one legislator what he thought was worse about present attitudes towards education, ignorance or apathy. Do you know what he said? "I don't know and I don't care."

In terms of financing, State support for higher institutions has declined sharply relative to other budgetary areas. As a result, the State University budget has been held to a level that has forced its institutions to absorb inflationary increases. Aid to independent colleges and universities has been capped. And the State Budget Director recommended earlier this year against higher financing to cover previously planned increases in our Tuition Assistance Program (TAP), which I regard as a national model for student aid.

On top of this, I have now come to believe -- although I did not think so originally -- that Mr. Carey was the prime instigator last fall of a series of attacks on education generally, and on me personally, which, it just so happens, preceded, and undoubtedly triggered, a certain action by the Regents, their decision, by a vote of eight to seven, to create the obligatory opportunity for me to terminate, involuntarily, my services as of June 30 last. The reason I say this is that the Governor's acerb and prickly Commissioner of Commerce

missed another in a long series of opportunities he has had to keep his mouth shut, when he attended a public meeting in Albany in May of this year and said, quoting a newspaper account: "We need to shake up the educational establishment from the top on down. Fortunately, we've already taken care of the top part."

The "top part" was the Commissioner, of course, and I note the collective "we." That was unquestionably a reference to the Governor and his administration. Until that comment was made, the only public statement issued by the Governor's Office concerning my dismissal was that Mr. Carey had not "orchestrated" it.

Mr. Dyson, the Commissioner of Commerce, could never open his mouth without subtracting from the sum total of human knowledge.

I assume that you are also aware of the recent proposals related to governance made by a special Commission on the Future of Postsecondary Education, the so-called Wessell Commission, established by the Legislature and its membership named by the Governor. I will not take the time to describe the whole range of proposals. But you should know that I am strongly opposed to two key recommendations, one of which would establish two public university systems, each with pyramidal governance arrangements and each under its own board, and the other calling for the Governor to appoint members of the State Board of Regents, with the consent of the Senate.

With respect to the first recommendation, the Wessell Commission would create a "University of New York" made up of the public graduate and professionally oriented institutions, most notably the four present State University centers and the senior colleges within the existing City University system, plus CUNY's Graduate Center. Each of these institutions would have its own governing board, subject to a central governing (coordinating?) board. In addition, there would be "Empire State University," comprising all other public

colleges in a network of regional systems. Each regional system would have its own governing board, and the system as a whole would have an overall governing (coordinating?) board. The weakness of the Wessell Commission plan is that it replicates the disadvantages of the SUNY system. The roles of the central and regional boards would be similar, and the central boards would also have the same responsibilities that the Regents have for statewide coordination. In short, the whole scheme is "board heavy."

Turning to the manner in which Regents are chosen, it is a cardinal tenet with me that New York's present arrangement of having a Board of Regents elected by the Legislature, as they have been ever since 1784, which Board, in turn, employs a Commissioner of Education who is the chief executive officer of the State Education Department, is one that ought to be continued. The all-embracing structure the State has now and which has the protective autonomy of constitutional status, provides a sound method for determining what education's priorities ought to be, how priorities can most effectively be attained, and whether educational programs, once implemented, are meeting stated objectives. No less important, and this goes to the heart of the matter in view of what I have said previously, the present system has <u>the best potential</u> of protecting against narrow political and economic partisanship, while uniting common interests at all levels of education and bridging the differences in the diversity of education. (I underscore the term, "the best potential" because the human condition being what it is, no matter how insulated, any system can become politicized. New York's Board of Regents is no exception. The disposition of some current members combined with legislative election procedures have made a difference.)

My principal objections to the appointment of Regents by the Governor stem from two considerations -- the fact that educational policy-making is a matter

which should not be related to the time a particular person holds office of Governor and, secondly, that the independent voice of the Regents would be muted. With respect to the first, the decisions the Regents make have an impact stretching well into the future, affecting tomorrow's students no less than today's students. So there must be a Board stable enough and far-sighted enough to bridge the gap from one State Administration to the next. With respect to the second, bodies now appointed by the Governor do not seem to speak out independently or seek to make major pronouncements without gubernatorial clearance.

It is also essential for an educational governing board like the Regents to be free from political interference so that decisions will be made on the basis of what is in the best interests of education, not the vested interests of any Governor, or anyone else for that matter. It would be poor public policy indeed to permit education to be captured by one contestant or another for governmental authority when our system of government is rooted in the very assumption, as stated by Thomas Jefferson and others, that education is one of the fundamental checks upon government itself.

And yet, I am not entirely satisfied with the present way in which the Legislature chooses Regents. The selection process has become highly politicized, hurried and unsystematic, and on one recent occasion, utterly and shamefully chaotic. Moreover, too many legislators view the election of Board members from a very narrow perspective and, therefore, screen candidates in -- or out -- depending upon where the candidates stand on one or two emotionally-charged issues. Something is radically wrong when, as happened in New York in recent years, a person had to be strongly against so-called forced busing, and for reducing the quasi-judicial powers of the Commissioner of Education, in order to have any chance of being elected as a Regent.

I am not being sourgrapish when I say the present arrangement does not encourage a thoughtful, open and fair-minded search for the best qualified educational statesmen who can be found to serve on the Board. This was also pointed out a decade or so ago by the Commission on Educational Leadership headed by Jim Perkins, former President of Cornell University, and a friend, in a fine analysis of the situation that existed then. The situation has worsened, and I believe the remedy proposed by that Commission not only makes sense, but is long past due.

I believe the remedy is to create a prestigious, nonpartisan screening panel which would diligently seek out and recommend nominees to the Legislature, taking into account considerations clearly related to educational policy-making at all levels of education, not to transient, peripheral concerns. Only in this way, I believe, can the selection process be made credible to the public and to the educational community which looks to the Regents and to the Commissioner of Education to interpret education's needs to the Legislature and the Governor with perceptiveness and conviction.

I have some other examples of growing intervention of government into higher education. A couple of years ago, the legislature, for purely self-serving political reasons, took away from the Board of Regents and the State Education Department many of its administrative functions (but not its policy-making authority) related to overseeing financial assistance programs for post-secondary students, involving about two hundred twenty million dollars annually, and transferred these functions to a Higher Education Services Corporation. The Department had effectively and efficiently administered these scholarship and award programs, one of them going back to the last century. The old independent Corporation I mentioned had effectively administered only a loan program, headed by a board of directors appointed by legislative leaders and the Governor, the

the board appointing the director of the corporation. The legislation abolished the existing board, the Governor appointed the new board and the executive director. Finally, the board's previous authorities were emasculated. The result? A disgracefully administered and highly politicized financial assistance program causing chaos in the educational community plus unleavened outrage among institutions, students and parents, which still continues in great measure.

To go on, Governor Carey has made one egregious attempt to share decision-making power with respect to judgments of quality in academic programs, an accrediting power which has resided in the Board of Regents for almost two hundred years. The academic community, with our substantial help, aborted that attempt.

To mention another episode: We recently recommended that certain institutions in The City University be abolished or consolidated with others since they were no longer viable or efficient. Legislative parochial and partisan interest saw to it that they continued to exist, although, ironically and simultaneously, legislators and the Governor were deeply concerned with efficiency and economy in all of state government, including other areas of education.

To close out these examples, let me mention a couple for which Governor Rockefeller was responsible. Rockefeller was considered a liberal, but, undoubtedly attributable to his political ambitions, he underwent a character change in the opposite direction which was probably cosmetic (though some regarded it as a reversion to a true basic disposition). Parts of his overall political program became draconian in nature.

In any case, he created, with legislative assent, an inspector-general for education, responsible to himself. At another point, because he wanted to gain control over higher education, he formulated a study commission for that purpose, made his views clear about what he wanted, and was openly delighted that the

proposed 1202 commission legislation would serve his purposes. Fortunately, the for once happy bureaucratic delays and confusions in Washington, plus compelling instincts for more national prominence, prevented the 1202 commission from becoming a reality independent of the Board of Regents. The Board and the 1202 Commission are now one and the same.

Let me now make some general observations which will get into thoughts I have about how state boards of higher education might serve as an effective force for reducing the polarization I described and for helping political authorities and educators to work together in more skilled and elegant harmony, or concinnity, to use one of my favorite words. As Casey Stengel used to say, you could look it up.

There is, of course, a calculated interdependence between our governmental institutions and our educational institutions that was built into the American democratic polity by those wise Founding Fathers, men like Thomas Jefferson, who knew so well that only an educated people could remain a free people. But there must also be a clearly defined boundary beyond which government must not go. Too much governmental involvement in education could well result in unwarranted intrusions into the internal management of institutions, stifle creativity, and, yes, too, impede the critical assessment of government that is a proper and important function of education in a free and open society like ours. It is therefore essential to maintain honorable "spaces in our togetherness," to quote a lovely phrase from Kahlil Gibran.

Along that vein, as we used to say at the blood bank, you might appreciate a story told by Harlan Cleveland about a meeting of Asian and American educators he attended when he was President of the University of Hawaii. The Asians, Mr. Cleveland pointed out, were quick to agree that their main problem was how to get from their respective governments the money to buy academic talent and

to build campuses without getting political leaders into the educational decision-making process as a quid pro quo for their largesse. At one point in the discussion, an Oxford-educated Asian scholar was arguing, in effect, that the academic community should relax and enjoy its role as an object of politics and government. "The marriage with Caesar must be consummated," he declared. "There's no alternative." "Agreed," interjected another Asian university administrator. "But the question is, 'How many times a week?'"

What is happening in this country, of course, is that decision-making in education is becoming laterally dispersed, involving the interaction of many more variables and many more people, groups and agencies. It is, just as strikingly, also rising vertically to higher levels of government, including very much the Federal government. The trend today is clearly toward an "upward drift of decision-making in the polity," as one observer has noted, correlated with the relatively new sources of financial support and with accountability requirements. Indeed, the traditional concept of governance of educational institutions, by the institutions, for the institutions, may soon perish. It is certainly in decline. Local control, that minor branch of theology, is becoming increasingly mythical.

The single most important factor accelerating this trend is the rapid rise of educational costs and the need for higher outlays of public funds to meet those costs. Money, you know, is a singular thing. As someone has said, it ranks with love as man's greatest source of joy, and it ranks with death as his greatest source of anxiety. It used to be that elected officials put their money where their educational mouths were. The reverse is now happening. They are putting their mouths where the educational money is. The new Golden Rule is this: He who has the gold makes the rule.

State budget and planning offices are beginning to play the critic role played by OMB and GAO (Congressional General Accounting Office) at the national

level. Elected officials are availing themselves of alternative sources of advice, forcing, as a wise observer has remarked, educational agencies, boards, and their staffs to respond, often defensively, and to expect criticism from new directions (as if there were not enough already in this Age of the Querulous). Legislators are better educated than they used to be. They, as well as governors, also have bigger and more expert staffs. Twenty years ago, the chairman of the education committee in one house of our Legislature was a gentle rural funeral director. Today it is a voluble, highly verbal, bright, politically ambitious, and pompous Ph.D. who is an adjunct professor in The City University. Even so, I would gladly trade the Ph.D. for the funeral director, if I could dig him up.

At any rate, couple all of these things, with a profound mistrust of established authority, and one has a splendid scenario for administrators and coordinating boards involving an ambience of hostility, distrust, ambiguity, discontent, and criticism.

In New York, there is marked tendency for the Governor, the legislators, and the State Director of the Budget to assert administrative control over educational agencies, often affecting very specific and frequently trivial items, as well as reflecting their own countering educational judgments.

My own conviction is that the decade ahead will require strong leadership, the exercise of strong statewide authority over higher education, informed by state and regional advisory councils, and the self-initiated correction of our own institutional weaknesses. In the absence of the latter and strong leadership through a coordinating board, authority will either flow into the hands of agencies with conflicting goals or it will be centralized in that abominable No-Man, the State Director of the Budget. While I remain optimistic on the outcome, I have no hope. It may simply be a pious expectation.

To use another example, the State University of New York at Albany decided a little more than a year ago to drop several academic programs in order to stretch shrinking resources. One of the programs the institution chose to terminate was Italian studies. The decision was not reached lightly, I assure you. A lot of discussion went into it. Anyway, the people on the campus who were affected by this action were terribly upset by it, as you can imagine, and they took their case directly to the Italian-American State legislators, of whom New York has many, reflecting our population. There was apparently a round of wining and dining as the legislative session neared adjournment. The emotions and irrationalities of intensified ethnicity won out. The upshot was that the lawmakers put into the State supplemental budget the funds that were needed to keep Italian studies in the curriculum. It was the only such program to receive such favorable treatment.

I don't believe -- and I am sure you don't either -- that decisions of this sort ought to be made that way. All of education is bound to pay the consequences when the path to academic survival leads straight into the political arena.

This leads me to a key point I want to highlight. It has to do with the very important -- and much misunderstood -- distinction that ought to exist between governance and coordination.

John Millett, in an article published in 1975, had something to say along these lines which provides a useful point of departure. His comment should not lie outside your orbit of interest, or fall within your zone of indifference. Quoting him directly:

> There is a fundamental difference between a state coordinating board of higher education and a statewide governing board for institutions of higher education. The difference is essentially one of orientation: the state coordinating board of higher education is

necessarily oriented toward state government. The statewide governing board is necessarily oriented toward state institutions of higher education.

I define governance as a function of the trustees of institutions, subject to overall policies adopted through the planning process and implemented through the budgeting process. Governing boards should determine an institution's policies, monitor institutional administration, and assure institutional accountability with respect to internal operations. This is the case whether the institutions are under public or private auspices. My rule of thumb in this regard is that every tub ought to stand on its own bottom.

At the same time, however, statewide coordinating boards must exercise responsible leadership related to five functions. These functions are planning, evaluation, accountability, certification, and licensing. (This is the way we do things in New York, where the Regents are charged with all five, although I recognize that other states locate some of these functions in other agencies.) It is the obligation of the boards -- and if they don't do it someone else will -- to organize and coordinate an effective and efficient postsecondary system, one which will serve the greatest possible number of students in the best possible ways. The boards' reason for being is to establish a sound foundation of financial support and to see that funds are distributed in an even-handed manner; to effect appropriate quality controls (no institution has the right to be as bad as it wants to be); to lead in long-range planning, which includes developing a solid information base upon which to make evaluative judgments and to peek around corners looking for trouble which is not yet here; and, above all, to stimulate responsible reform, either by creating the requisite conditions for change or by directly effecting change. Keep in mind, on this last point, that reform is a planned disruptive experience.

It should be obvious, by this time, that I am strongly supportive of statewide coordinating boards, whether these boards happen to be designated as boards of regents, boards of higher education, 1202 Commissions, or whatever, provided, of course, that those who serve on them can relate to the political process without permitting undue partisan purposes to warp soundly conceived educational ends.

I recognize, however, that present attitudes on the part of many members of government and people in the educational community as well, make it extremely difficult for these boards to function as well as they ought to function. I suspect many people who serve on statewide boards must feel a certain kinship with the Irish, as was suggested in a cute story about Brendan Behan. Behan was once asked why the rest of the world seemed to like the English, the French and the Germans better than the Irish, to which he replied: "We are very popular amongst ourselves."

My coign of vantage tells me, too, that there is a pecking order among the various kinds of educational boards at the state level. Usually, state university boards rank first in prestige; the state boards for colleges second; boards for the community colleges next; and state boards of education for elementary and secondary education either last or just below those for state colleges. State coordinating boards are somewhere in that ranking, most of them probably not either at the top nor at the bottom.

No wonder a university official, who has pondered this point at length, recently suggested that one could make an excellent case for the lack of viability of state coordinating boards. How can they become viable, he asked, when they are dependent upon a fickle power base, the legislatures or governors, who tend to politicize higher education? And he answered his own question in this

dispiriting way:

> The political process is power against power, but coordinating mechanisms have none, so they are not viable contenders in the process where decisions are made . . . I honestly expect most of our coordinating agencies to be abandoned -- not sliced in half as in Colorado -- but totally abolished by most states during the next couple of decades.

I hope he is wrong. Or, to put it more strongly, he had better be wrong because, in my judgment, such boards could very well constitute the most promising possibility now on the horizon for fostering understanding and cooperation between the political community and the educational community, interpreting one to the other and smoothing the points of abrasion between them. In this sense, they are not unlike the mediating bodies envisioned by Edmund Burke, what he called "little platoons" standing as buffers between the otherwise defenseless citizen and all-powerful ruler. What Burke had in mind might be exemplified today by such citizen-oriented groups as Common Cause and the Sierra Club. Could not coordinating boards become postsecondary education's little platoons?

Whether or not this is precisely how you see your role, I want, with your permission which I shall not stop to solicit, to propose a few principles which might guide you in your endeavors. These happen to be the same Principles of Presidential Preservation that I tell to new college presidents in New York State.

The first is a modification of Parkinson's First Law. It stipulates that the work of a chief executive will expand until it is 25 percent greater than the time available for its accomplishment. Every executive officer may as well get used to this idea -- and decide what it is he will leave undone.

The second is the principle of bases and fences. It takes less time to touch bases than to mend fences.

The third is the principle of necessary evil. In order to maintain a degree of humility and to see himself as his various constituencies see him, every executive officer should look at himself in the mirror each morning and say, "I am an evil, but am I a necessary one?" The answer had better be "yes."

The fourth is the principle of equal and opposite unpopularity. If an executive officer is equally unpopular, but for different reasons, with all parties to a dispute, he has probably found an appropriate resolution of the problem. However, if everyone is unhappy with him for the same reason, or if everyone is happy with him for the same reason, he has probably done the wrong thing.

The fifth is the principle of the impossibility of solution. Many problems, if not most, are impossible to solve. All one can do is to resolve the issues. But when it is possible to ponder the alternatives in any rational way, one must ask what course of action will do most for the development of the students, which is, after all, what education is all about. Probably the best advice is simply this: when in doubt, do the right thing. Harry Truman kept a motto on his desk, a quotation from Mark Twain. "Always do the right thing. It will please some and astonish the rest."

The sixth is the principle of controlled boldness. Gamble, be bold; nothing ventured, nothing gained. However, take a look around occasionally. It's like the three rules for courting a woman. The first rule is, be bold. The second rule is, be bold. The third rule is, don't be too bold.

In closing, and looking to the future, I can't help but wonder whether it may not one day also be said of state coordinating boards as was once said of a coal business in Edinburgh, which had this sign in the window:

We've been continuously in business since 1700, and during this over 275 years we've been

Held up, shot up, stood up,

Burned out, flooded out, bombed out,

Robbed, sacked and beaten,

Stoned, picketed, and discriminated against,

Cheated, defrauded, swindled,

Suffered corruption, insolvency, and bankruptcy,

We've seen good times, hard times, and worse times.

We made money and lost money, but mostly we have operated at no profit.

And the only reason we stay in business is to see what will happen next.

What will happen next, and who will be in charge?