

**NOTES ON INTERVIEW WITH CHARLES FOSTER
SUNY CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION**

November 24, 1986

- Charles Foster indicates the best source for information concerning SUNY Trustees are the minutes of the meetings. He also suggests that Jim Froed, assistant for Harry Porter would be knowledgeable about certain actions having become head of the higher education program for Connecticut. Another important person was Harold (Sy) Syrette.
- After Rockefeller had become Governor he spoke at a session along with Hamilton. Having suffered from dyslexia, Rockefeller couldn't read his speech very well. At that occasion Hamilton spoke and gave "a masterful talk, and at that point Rockefeller gave a terrible talk One of those things, so his relationships were never good with Hamilton, and that was why, I think, one of the reasons why Hamilton ultimately left."
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- The original Board of Trustees and Governor Dewey were anti expansion of State University in terms of University Centers or of the large colleges, they felt that this was something that would be too competitive with the private colleges in the State. Dewey recognized, particularly because he was running for President in 1948, that you couldn't be on a national basis against public higher education.”
- “So, as he did on many other occasions, said, well, I can't oppose a State University, I've got to support the State University and support their having professional schools, particularly in medicine and dentistry, but he was very much opposed to having them get a unit to a University in Albany on a liberal arts and graduate work, etc. So, he appointed a number of people on the original Board of Trustees who were like minded, one of whom at that time was Gordon Myerman, who was publisher of the *Troy Record*, Frank Moore who was State Controller , he had two terms as State Controller, then he became Lieutenant Governor.”
- “The Blegen Report did make a recommendation that the State University should have at least a major University Center, at least one if not more. Now there had been in the original legislation in relation to the State University a provision in that statute that said the University could establish a major University Center, but that was never implemented, and as a matter of fact was seriously objected to by Governor Dewey. And when the Associated Colleges, which had been, Champlain College had been taken over by the University, when the Associated Colleges was abandoned, their corporation realized that there was a reverter clause in the title of the property back to the federal government, and they wanted to build a bomber base here in Kirkston and quickly ceded or gave the, had the property go back to the federal government and

Champlain College closed up. He did go along with the conversion of triple cities colleges in Binghamton, Vestal, Endicott to become a small liberal arts college and that was the first one that was approved called Harpur College; but he didn't see that as a major development in the University."

- The Young Commission "was appointed because there was so much furor politically in the Legislature in relation to the discrimination against minorities, primarily Jewish and Italian actually at that time, not blacks, in terms of getting into professional schools, particularly medical schools and dental schools; and the Regents actually in some of the papers like Chancellor Wallin had strongly supported legislation that had been introduced in the State Legislature which clearly indicated that private colleges had the right to discriminate on admissions and this became a real battleground in terms of the need for doing something about higher education outside the Regents who were really just planting their feet and trying to do as little as possible, but with the tremendous demand for additional higher education after the war, which made it evident that something more permanent than the temporary arrangements that had been made immediately or a few years after the war. He felt that this was something, and he wanted to get it out from under the Regents because he didn't feel anything would happen unless it was."
- "Alger Henderson (Associate Commissioner for Higher Education) left because when he realized that we, what the Regents had hoped for what they had lobbied for until they lost, they had lobbied for legislation that would clearly make the development of higher education under the control of the Board of Regents and the Commissioner of Education, and Alger Henderson was supposed to be the one that was going to head up that end of development for whatever was supposed to be developed in public higher education within the Education Department."
- "The Blegen Report was not implemented. Carlson had been told by the Board of Trustees that he was not to move to implement the Blegen Report, but he went ahead and did it. He had Dan Button, his public relations person, leaked it around, got it out to the press, and Carlson had been warned if he did this, they had other differences with him, but they said if he did this, he would have to go. And so he was forced to resign as a result of that because he had violated the directive of the Board of Trustees. Of course, the papers on the whole, and particularly *The New York Times*, this didn't make it any better for Carlson and they had indicated that they felt that this was a good report and this was something that the University ought to do, but the tide was not an end to that. What happened really after that was, of course, there were very limited funds available, capital funds available, so that was another reason why the Trustees were somewhat opposed to this because the development of the State University was going to have to be more or less on a cash, you know, going to have to

be financed out of the current budget. So that the University recognized at that point, well, there was a resolution passed in the Legislature for \$150 million bond issue for development of a State University, and it did relate to a Master Plan which had finally been approved by the University.”

- “The Trustees were pushing to have a study made because they realized that the University was kind of frustrated, they couldn’t really get the kind of a President for the University that they needed with the great uncertainty as to what the development was going to be for the University; and they needed some outside support so they got the Heald Commission established to make that. And he did get support for development of a University which was going to be more than a collection of just professional schools and community colleges and teachers colleges.”
- “They had to have a better staff in Central Administration with people with, more people with higher levels of ability than could be attracted at the way the situation was at that time, so they had this management group come in and make a study of the Central Staff and what was needed in terms of the Central Staff it was McKinney and Associates they were a well-known management group at that time, and they made a very strong report to the Board of Trustees, which went to the Governor indicated that first of all they were going to have to pay the President of the University more, and they were going to have to have higher salaries and more staff.”
- “when Harriman was Governor, because Harriman was like Dewey, he was very much opposed to public universities, and he did even less, he was even less cooperative with State University, he did everything he could to quash the development of State University, even though he came from New York City he was not a person who believed in public higher education. He was a private higher education person, and he had as his Budget Director and his Assistant two people from Syracuse University, who were very like minded so far as their attitude toward higher education was concerned.”
- “Wilson he had been Lieutenant Governor when Dewey came in he was like Dewey, he was not a strong State University person at that point; and so Hurd followed that.”
- “First of all I have to go back to say Frank Moore resigned as Lieutenant Governor, and he took over the job as President of the Government Affairs Foundation, which was a Rockefeller created organization, which he was going to use as a basis for getting the nomination for Governor, in addition to the Constitutional Convention Committee Chairmanship of which he was in charge of, there was to be a Constitutional Convention, and he was Chairman of that, and his Director of Research

for that was Ronan, who was the Dean of the School of Public Administration of NYU. So those two instruments were used by Rockefeller to get the nomination for Governor. And when the bond issue passed overwhelmingly by the biggest positive vote that any bond issue ever had in New York State Frank Moore realized this is a great thing for Rockefeller to use as a way, Rockefeller took it on wholeheartedly as a great platform for himself as Governor. And so Frank Moore, in the Government Affairs Foundation, was advising Rockefeller to this and knew that he was going to back it. Well, at that point then also Hurd was involved again when after Rockefeller got elected, then he became his Budget Director Frank Moore became Chairman of the Board of Trustees; and Larry Murray, who had been with him in the Government Affairs Foundation as his Assistant there, then came over as Secretary on the Board of Trustees so then things really boomed in terms of the development of the Master Plan, and then they developed the financing mechanism, which permitted, which was developed by Hurd in cooperation with the Governor's Office with, they determined that since \$150 million wasn't going to be anywhere near enough to do what the long range plans were, they had to find another mechanism where they wouldn't have to go back to the people to get additional bond funds approved and get Legislative resolutions so they had then the housing, New York State Housing Finance Agency was in existence, and so then they decided, well, okay, what we will do is we will finance the expansion and capital construction program of State University through the Housing Finance Agency, and they will issue the bonds and the University will pledge its income to pay for the amortization and interest on the bonds and then they set up the State University Construction Fund with three Trustees appointed by Governor Dewey."

- "John Mitchell He was Counsel to the Housing Finance Agency he had been a very prominent bonding attorney in terms of which the big financing outfits like Lehman Brothers, Salomon, Morgan and the rest, he had an excellent reputation as a bond attorney, and as to whether the bonds were legal or constitutional, constitutional and legal is the same thing, but I mean, first of all, statutorially they were legal and also constitutionally they were legal so that really was a major factor in making this thing work so they worked out this financing mechanism and this construction mechanism because it was necessary for the University to be freed from the constrictions of a State Department of Public Works and the State Architect's Office because it was just more, too big a program."
- "They picked that (Planting Fields) because they were able to get it as a gift And they felt this was a good location, and they needed to get something started there."
- "Well, one of the things that became apparent in the fight between the Regents back in '48, in the fight between the Regents and the Governor and the State University Board

of Trustees ultimately, but in that fight there one of the major reasons why the Regents lost was that the politicians on Long Island felt that they were never going to get anywhere, and there was a need for public higher education on Long Island, and up to that time it had all been private. There wasn't so much of that demand in the Republican upstate New York, although there was some and, of course, there was some very forceful leadership in Feinberg from Plattsburgh who was head of the State Finance Committee and ultimately became majority leader in the Senate, but, and Mahoney, however, who had been majority leader in the Senate and was opposed to State University and had even proposed certain cuts in their budget, but the Long Island legislators”

- “I think there was a Senator Quinn, I think, from Long Island, they would not back the Regents, and that was a very, and so they just didn't have, that was one of the strong, of course, the Democrats would not, the Democrats, in a sense, were out to embarrass Dewey, but they never, or because there was so much sentiment and so much of the support for a State University had come from the Jews and the Italians in New York City particularly, they didn't dare, and they knew what the attitude of the Regents had been and when they realized what Wallin had indicated this got them very, they just wouldn't back the Regents; but from the Republicans side, there was Democratic support also, and I think that as a matter of fact this Quinn was a Democrat from Long Island, but also the Republicans, the Republican, you know how the fight goes in Nassau and Suffolk Counties there between the Democrats and the Republicans, but there was some very strong Republican support and one of the predominant Republican leaders in the State was the then political leader from Nassau County (Joe Carlino).”