

Queries and Enigmas to be Addressed:

What were the circumstances and conditions that led to the early and rapid growth of new universities after World War II? (It should be noted that this is true as well around the world: make reference to international conference in early '70's at University of Hawaii co-sponsored by East West Institute in Hawaii and UNESCO, and in various countries the emergence of new universities had some of the same liberating and progressive features as those in the American universities.)

- Centrality of the GI Bill: avoids massive unemployment and invests in the future of persons and the nation itself. The Bill was perhaps one of the four greatest pieces of legislation in the twentieth century along with women's right to vote, civil rights legislation, and social security. The Bill enabled the emergence of new populations to education and the expansion of opportunities in education and the creation of new fields, jobs and opportunities for vast numbers of people.
 - Whole range of traditional and new disciplines were offered throughout the country.
- Close linkages to universities were encouraged with the belief that these institutions could now help solve problems emerging from the newly discovered complex world; problem solving and basic research into scientific and social issues encouraged with strong support from the federal government.

- Was this a kind of new Moral Act? For the nineteenth century the Moral Act was dedicated to enabling the United States to develop leadership in the agricultural revolution and then subsequently in the industrial revolution. In post World War II United States opportunities and expectations to deal with publics of a new age represented awakening to a larger world especially with respect to the impact of ideologies and the course of economic and political conflict leading to the threats and the realities of war. The post 1940's were unlike the '20's. There was less naiveté and innocence about people and war and their costs. Also, we were confronted with the horrors of human nature let loose in Hobbesian terms -- incredible number of deaths, displacements, concentration camps, labor campus, new weaponry and threats of social annihilation exhibiting man's capacity for inhumanity to fellow man. In this atmosphere education began to take on different states and goals than had been expected from curricular programs before World War II.
- New universities were welcomed representing new blood in getting out of the ruts emerging as a result of the established universities. These institutions relied of selectivity of students and education seen as a special privilege for the privileged. New opportunities for students going to college as the only persons and families to do so. In addition, new faculties began to emerge that cut across

racial, religious and ethnic lines. We can demonstrate the enrichment and strengthening of America as a result.

- Yet there were many naysayers and resistances to change even among the best informed. We will see in the study how figures like Hutchins and Conant truly represented an era that had passed and yet exhibiting a desperate desire to hang on to elitism whether through reflecting the medieval university as an appropriate paradigm for the twentieth century (Hutchins); or seeing a need to have *a priori* conditions prevail as to how far persons could or should advance upward in the search of education (Conant).
- Yet the bold 1947 Presidential Commission on Higher Education created by Truman set a blueprint for the mutual and interactive forces between educational opportunity and the strengthening of democracy.
- We must remember that in America from the end of the eighteenth century there runs a persistent theme of the necessary connection between education and democracy and the connection of these to America's strength economically and spiritually. This can be seen in the Northwest Ordinance of the eighteenth century through the Moral Act of the 1860's and 1890's confirming this vital linkage.

- This will become an important and critical element in the emergence and development ultimately of public supported system of higher education in New York State and the eventual creation of Stony Brook.

Forces and Counterforces

The movement to public higher education statewide in New York has been confronted by historical necessities -- social, economic, political.

- New York State, along with northeastern United States, established private colleges and universities except for teacher training institutions to help the public schools. In New York State this is particularly important.
- The Board of Regents, the most powerful body in United States dealing with education and the approval of professional licenses emerged after the Revolutionary War to deal with King's College (Columbia) having earlier been established in New York by royal charter. The Regents were to oversee this institution. What did the Regents early on believe was involved in such overseeing? As other colleges developed, they too were absorbed under Regents authority. What was the role of the Regents administratively, financially and the basis of planning in dealing with these colleges and universities eventually aside from their required approval of programs leading to degrees and to rationale for such degrees?

- Actually, was it not the case that the Regents came to represent a *laissez faire* approach to colleges in New York? So, when Wallin on the Regents in the '30's defends discrimination practices by colleges and professional schools "as a constitutional right," education was not seen as a force in liberating human talents and opportunities for individuals but still seen as a special privilege to be enjoyed by some who are able to afford such opportunities for their personal enhancement and position.
- Public higher education is a practical exercise in affirmative action. Hence this has ultimately not been accented but tied as the testing ground in the United States with respect to development of the civil rights movement. Not only voting rights but perhaps even more important the admission to colleges and universities began the battleground requiring the use of federal power and the physical authority of the federal government.
- In the United States the traditions of the Moral Act and legislative authority to expand educational opportunity have a firm pragmatic foundation for their emergence. In the United States the overwhelming demand and necessity for education has met with built-in resistance based on privilege, class, race, religion and on theoretical notions that *a priori* limits have to be set: anticipating without proof and experience who can and who cannot and who should and who should not move forward. The American experience separates

itself by Horace Mann and Allan Nevins from the European tradition with respect to those who will and those who should be educated.

- Given this, what were the pragmatic conditions and circumstances that warranted the creation of a system of public higher education in New York State itself. Remember, no public universities were created as a result of the Moral Act in New York State. Cornell, a private university, came to represent the Moral Act objectives.
- It may have been logical to expect the creation of private colleges and universities in the northeast and New York in terms of their coming early into existence in pre-Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary America. (An exception and has to be explained is the creation of City University in the nineteenth century.) At the same time, however, this development of private education acted either to hurt or inhibit the creation of public higher education as a drain upon the economy. It also created the image of second class citizens belonging to the public sector -- and why spend money on such persons? It interesting to note that there has always been eagerness to support two-year and community colleges: this once again is an expression of setting of *a priori* limits for the population.
- Tied to this has been a deep suspicion of political influence being exerted upon public supported institutions. These concerns became important in the

legislative bills in confrontations with the Regents surrounding the creation of SUNY in 1948. Their basic assumption of corruption as equivalent to political power represented a lack of trust in those institutions publicly based and funded. The result was to demand micro-management in setting up of controls based on the assumption that everyone potentially or actually working in the public sector is corrupt and one needs to create specific controls to discourage such corruption. However much healthier attitudes have prevailed in other parts of the country *vis á vis* the creation and growth of public institutions. To this date no New York State actions have been taken to grant State University its proper respect and autonomy. In fact, it has continued to be regarded as another state agency and to be treated as such -- along with the Departments of Motor Vehicles and the prison system.

- Because of the lack of real interest and support for public systems there appears to have been an absence of compelling pragmatic resources for the development of SUNY. When SUNY was created there was no base of experience, no basic understanding of what kinds of knowledge, expertise, support services, flexibilities required etc. in the creation of educational public institution. Even those who came to represent the staffs or the work forces to run the state system did not learn from other universities elsewhere since other institutions are viewed suspiciously and therefore procedures are established from which very

little deviation is possible in the State of New York. We will observe that this insularity in New York had almost totally devastating effects on the future possibilities for Stony Brook -- especially during its early formative years at Oyster Bay from 1957 onwards.

- The ultimate irony was that a university such as Stony Brook was not created by any thoughtful plan developed by SUNY Central, the Trustees or any of the state agencies, although they believe and do so to this day that by their states of negative prohibitions, regulations and micro-management techniques they have created the basis for a planned university development. The truth is that Stony Brook could emerge not because of these conditions and negative implications but in spite of it: that was perhaps the major interaction of common interest of both faculty and administration, in spite of whatever other issues they might have expressed differences. It was Stony Brook's stubborn persistence and gall in effect creating its own sense of its mission and plan for the University.
- In fact, report after report over the years in reviewing SUNY has noted that its the most overmanaged system anywhere or that it represents a rigidity unparalleled in American public higher education. In 1985 with the introduction of the so-called flexibility legislation for the campuses in SUNY, in reality much of it has the status of a mirage: micro-management continues to this day. In fact, one is forced to return to the issue of why is a SUNY

administration with its continuing functions necessary at all? this work will elaborate on the circumstances and conditions that need to be dealt with to allow institutions such as Stony Brook to achieve its promise of greatness.

- There are myriad of circumstances and conditions as we will note that entail far more human energy and sheer persistence than should have been necessary. Everything from purchasing procedures of important library collections or the emergence of logical systems of practice plans to help finance a modern, sophisticated University hospital and its staffing by its most able persons to the basis of calculated funding for campus in realistic terms and not on the doctrine of “apparent fairness.” For example, the refusal to take into account different circumstances of a given campus *vis á vis* other campuses in terms of the number of graduate and professional students, more expensive disciplines, etc. San Diego’s history speaks of itself as “an improbable venture.” But that is California with over 100 years of experience in higher education and possessing enviable practices of flexibility and autonomy. In this light we would rightly have to declare that Stony Brook’s creation represents an impossible miracle.

Queries to be Addressed

- What were the circumstances that led Dewey to create the Temporary Commission on the Future of State University for New York?
- In its early days the Commission appeared to be relatively quiet and slow moving. At the end of 1947 or the beginning of 1948 Dewey appears to have acted vigorously to quickly get resolutions developed and formalized for approval. What were the reasons for this sudden sense of urgency?
- To what extent was Dewey acting on a conviction that the creation of SUNY was justified as a matter of principle? What role did the pressure from large enrollments of returning veterans play in his thinking? What was the pressure from his anticipated campaign against Truman for the presidency? With considerably public response and publicity associated with the issue of discrimination in higher education raised by Italians, Jews, Catholics and Blacks, what was its impact on Dewey?
- What impact did Truman's Presidential Commission Report in 1947 have on Dewey and his views on public support for higher education? Since the Truman Commission's Report was rather radical and forceful, do we have any evidence of Dewey's own reactions to it? A typical criticism from all conservative figures at the time was the threat of "big government" intruding upon the lives of states and institutions. These were also some of same

arguments posed by the Regents which Dewey had to contend with. It is important to note that Dewey himself did not refrain from using the same rhetoric about big government in his races against Roosevelt and Truman.

- After Dewey's defeat by Truman, did he exhibit any change in position towards the creation of State University which the Legislature had approved prior to the November election in 1948 along with a provision against discrimination in higher education. Did the Regents counterattack against this legislation in 1949 (Condon-Barrett Bill)? What change, if any, did Dewey exhibit? However, after a long continuous battle the Regents did not prevail. Yet, in spite of it, Dewey compromised on certain crucial matters (three) demonstrating that he was not essentially antagonistic to the Regents. With the election loss and Dewey indicating no desire to run for Governor again, why did he make these compromises?
- How far did Dewey intend to go in creating SUNY? There were already various teachers colleges -- about a dozen throughout the State under state support. It should be noted on a later occasion in 1950 Dewey refers to this situation as illustrative of the fact that in reality in 1948 the State had already public support of higher education without it representing a "system" or "coordination." Would Dewey have settled for this simple reorganization of

these colleges as sufficient for a State University system? As matters turned out, he did not. Why?

- Was the issue of discrimination the basis for Dewey's early approval of bringing an upstate medical school (Syracuse) and a downstate one (Brooklyn) under the aegis of SUNY? Was the "upstate" "downstate" balance a typical New York State political maneuver? Was this ultimately at the heart of the larger plan that was to emerge for multiple institutions representing SUNY from community colleges to contract colleges and universities, etc.? Was this the result, ultimately, that the Blegen Report in 1957 was rejected outright?
- As part of the agreement with the Regents, the Trustees of SUNY were to confine their basic activities for five years (from 1948 to 1953) to planning. We know that they developed successful bond issues funding SUNY and with strong appeal from the voters. During this time is there any evidence that the future SUNY structure was emerging? At some point they would envisage five university centers (including Oswego). Did any of this begin to emerge during the five year planning period?
- One of the major arguments of the Regents against the creation of a Board of Trustees for SUNY was its assuming administrative and management authority over SUNY. In doing so, and the fact that the Trustees would be chosen by the Governor, this could impact upon the academic and intellectual functions of the

institutions within SUNY. To what extent is this perhaps not a serious and sound argument, particularly with respect to the creation of SUNY Central as the administrative arm of the Trustees? Was this not ultimately the rationale for the micro-management of the campuses?

- Why were not imaginative models formulated and explored seriously? Where did the pressure come from for a SUNY Board as an administrative model for SUNY?
- SUNY's campuses have, as a result of the plan adopted by the Trustees, less autonomy and flexibility than any of the private institutions in higher education in New York State and less than most public institutions throughout the United States. Given the current fiscal crises, why cannot a major change be introduced simplifying the entire system, with a small central office to assure that campuses live within the guidelines established by the Trustees and prepared to make adjustments for specially justified situations.
- At might be ironic that perhaps the best Board of Trustees for SUNY may have been the one chosen by Dewey which consisted of excellent members of brilliant and distinguished academically qualified persons together with a few influential and artistic members of the business and professional communities.
- If the Trustees did begin to create a major master plan for SUNY's development between 1948 to 1953, then why did they appear to have waited at least another

five years (1953 to 1958) before any such master plan developed? In effect, this represents a ten year hiatus, a most critical period of time which later events were to demonstrate.

- Is there indication, because what appears to be Harriman's lack of interest, that planning appears to have receded into the background?
- The public record appears to make only slight reference to Harriman's public positions on any matters relevant to SUNY and its development. In fact, it appears as mostly negative. Harriman at first opposed the legislative proposal to advance an collegiate institution on Long Island. After legislative and public criticism, he supports this measure the following year. It is interesting to note that Harriman's reason to reject the proposal the first time is his stated desire not to act against the views of the Regents: reminiscent of Dewey.
- What kind of Chancellor (or President) was Alvin Eurich? To this date he represents one of the most experienced and distinguished academically prepared Chancellors in SUNY's history. One record he is articulate and persuasive (as is Frank Moore) in supporting the Trustees' power and authority versus the Regents position. Yet, what academic plans or long range intellectual objectives does Eurich represent?
- It would appear that the SUNY conference in Buffalo in 1950 was run and organized by Eurich. It covers "the waterfront" with respect to distinguished

personages in American life -- from Herbert Hoover to Robert Moses, etc. Yet what really emerges that can prove of help to SUNY -- its leaders and Trustees?

- Why did Eurich plan the important opening session of the conference to have two distinguished keynote speakers -- Conant and Hutchins -- addressing the issue of the future of SUNY? Eurich should surely have anticipated what they would say and their views are essentially negative and discouraging with respect to SUNY's ambitions for a major university system. In fact, Dewey is put in the difficult defensive position as he closes the opening session and his talk is more meaningful and sensible than the puerile Hutchins chose and the pointless Conant contribution. With respect to Conant and Hutchins, it is interesting to observe that some of the public opposition to the Truman Commission came from Father Gannon representing the Catholic Church and parochial schools; Conant (Harvard); Seymour (Yale); and Hutchins (Chicago). The concerns of Conant and Hutchins was expressed in terms of encouraging increased numbers into higher education would imperil "standards." It is interesting to note that those supporting the Truman Commission were Harry Carman of Columbia and Harry Heald of NYU.
- Did Eurich have his own agenda? Was he really a wolf in sheep's clothing? Did he ultimately have the same convictions as did the two ex-gurus?

- It is interesting to note that the real response -- and its most aggressive -- is made at the end of the conference by President Morrill of Minnesota with a true commitment to the land grant tradition and the need to extend educational opportunity in a democracy with a strong sense of the connection between education and a vital democratic society. It is ironic to note that some seven to eight years later the Graduate Dean of Minnesota -- Dean Blegen -- will present some of the same views in his recommendation to the Trustees that they concentrate first on building, as in Minnesota, a central campus of intellectual distinction with satellite campuses throughout the state. His proposals are repudiated and attacked by the Trustees and the Chancellor who had hired Blegen to prepare the report (Carlson) is fired for allowing the Blegen Report to be distributed.