VJD

Interviewee: Clark Kerr | Session #2 (video)

Interviewer: Sharon Zane | New York, New York

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[BEGIN TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE]

Q: Dr. Kerr, I thought we could start by talking a little bit about some of the early influences on you that led to what you did in your work career. So maybe you'll just want to talk a little bit about your background, and we can come to them that way.

Kerr: Well, I was raised on a little hillside farm, in a little hamlet, or village, called Stony Creek, or Stony Crick, as we would say it, near Reading, Pennsylvania, which is in the southeastern part of Pennsylvania. My father was a combination of schoolteacher and farmer, which was somewhat customary, or at least possible in those days. My mother had

been a milliner, never had much of an education at all. I think she only ever went through the sixth grade, but she had shown -- She came out of, also, a tiny little village near Scranton, Pennsylvania, up in the anthracite country there, a little place called Beaumont. Her family had kind of a country store and a farm at the same time, so they both had a farm background, on a hillside. I once went to see it. It was a place where they had one horse and one cow, a vegetable garden, some fruit trees, and so forth. Anyway, somehow, and I never knew because she died when I was fairly young, and I never had a chance to get her life in mind, she had become a milliner, back in the days when women wore all those fancy hats and was apparently quite good at it and got to traveling around the country. I know she went as far west as Milwaukee, which was kind of far west in those days. She'd go to stores and they would hire her to sit in a front window in the store, and make these hats. A little crowd of women would gather outside, I guess somebody would get inspired, and they would come in and be the next customer. She would make hats of roses or daisies, whatever the people wanted, and somehow -- it's been a puzzle to me all my adult life -- she got the idea that somehow she had missed having an education, and she wanted her children to be sure to have an education. When my father wanted to marry her, she kept refusing him for a period of, oh, something like eight or ten years until she could make enough money as a milliner, because her husband, obviously, as a schoolteacher and part-time farmer, wasn't going to have very much money, so her children would be sure to be able to have an education.

She retired and put the money in a safe account, and there was enough to take three of my sisters to Oberlin, and take me to Swarthmore. Also, money was left over to give each of us a year of post-graduate education if we wanted to. What gave her that determination I don't really know, but obviously our getting an education meant a lot to her. It also meant

a lot to me that she was able, or willing, to sacrifice that way for us getting an education, so I obviously took it seriously.

My education started in one of the traditional, American one-room schoolhouses, where there were five grades in the school. Looking back on it, our teacher was not a very well-educated person, she was a local person, but she was a wonderful lady. Her name was Miss Elba. We always called her Miss Elba, and she made us all feel at home in this little school. I might say, being in the same room for five grades, if you're bright at all, by the end of the third grade you're going to know everything that's possible in that school, because you hear the same recitations -- first grade, second grade, third grade, fourth grade, fifth grade -- as you go through. So I got well started in education, not from an educational point of view but just from the personal point of view that here was a lady who cared for us. In fact, she almost became a substitute mother for me when my mother died. For many years, as long as she lived thereafter, I would always go to see her in the nearby, little town. But she made us feel at home and that we were worthwhile, and she gave us love as well as an education.

So I got started off about as well as anybody can. I might say, she was still teaching the McGuffey readers, which had been the standard textbook for, I guess by that time, a hundred years or something like that. I bought a copy, incidentally, recently from some place I saw it advertised. They actually introduced you to education in a way that, as I go back and look at it now, you hardly knew you were being educated. From one page to the next page, on each page you'd learn a certain amount, and then they'd keep repeating it as you went on. So you were introduced, not to tough grammar or anything like that, but before long we were reading Tennyson and Shakespeare and things like that, in the McGuffey readers. So that's how I got started on my way to education.

When I was about ten we moved to a general farm in a nearby valley, the Oley Valley, the local people called it Oley Vey, and this was a farm where we were pretty much self-sufficient on the farm. We ran the farm with four horses. We had sheep and cows and pigs and ducks and geese and chickens, guinea hens. So I was raised as a farm boy. In fact, I had my own team of horses when I was fourteen, and the members of that team, Maude and Kate, as their names were, really became my best friends. I spent more time working with them than I spent with any human beings.

Then came time to go to college, and very few people in that area did go to college, but it was always assumed that us children would go there because our mother set the money aside and had that aspiration. My father, who was a schoolteacher, gave me a choice of four colleges, one of which was Swarthmore, which I chose. Another one was Oberlin but I didn't want to go there because my two older sisters had gone, and I wanted to be free and on my own. The third was Antioch College in Ohio, which was at that time fairly well known. Arthur Morgan had been its president, later head of the Tennessee Valley Authority. It was a campus where you worked for six weeks and then you studied for six weeks. I later taught there for a year and found the student body really quite fascinating, because they were much older than students were generally, because you had half-time working and half-time studying. The fourth one was Rollins College, which was an experimental college then, in Florida. I don't know whether it exists now or not. But I chose Swarthmore. It was the closest by, it wasn't Oberlin, and it had a good reputation.

So I got to Swarthmore really unprepared for the place. Swarthmore is a Quaker College, and a lot of the students there, I guess, in my class, oh, a third or a half of them, had gone to good Quaker schools, preparatory schools like Friends Select in Washington, D.C. and

Germantown Friends, West Town, the George School, etc. I had come from a very lousy high school. So these were kids who came from well-to-do Quaker families, quite a lot of them, and had gone to excellent schools. I, all of a sudden, out of my farm background, really, at that point, I had never been outside eastern Pennsylvania, met up with these kids who had spent their summers in Europe, with a very, very good faculty, a very well-educated faculty. I was just thrown into a very, very strange and competitive world. The first year or two I had a really rough time of it, although I kept on improving and became eligible for what was called the Honors Program there, that had been set up by Frank Aydelotte, based upon the Oxford system, where he had gone. In fact, he was then head of the American Rhodes Trust. By the time I graduated I had high honors, so I met the competition but I had to really struggle for the first year or two.

But it was not only a good education for me in the classroom. In high school I had never had a chance to participate in any sports or any activities because I had to really run from the school to catch the streetcar that went down our little valley, to get home to feed the animals. Then, of course, I worked weekends on the farm, the summer and the rest of that. So I had never been in any sports, but being a small college, you didn't have to be very good to be on sports teams, and I ended up on inter-collegiate teams in soccer, basketball and track. I also had time to go out for debate, and became head of the debate team. I got involved at that point with the American Friends Service Committee, the Quaker service group, in a somewhat strange way. My mother was, I guess, an agnostic; she never went to church, at least that I knew of, but my father was a member of the Reformed Church, and on this farm we went to when I was ten, on the corner of the farm, what was part of our farm there, was a church there which was one of these churches which one Sunday was Reformed, and the next Sunday was Lutheran. Then the ministers had a second congregation someplace else. But being on the corner of our farm, I went both

Sundays, so I became kind of half Lutheran and half Reformed, but really unhappy with both of them because they were competitive for the congregation. The Lutherans would try to recruit the Reformeds, and the Reformed people would recruit the Lutherans, and they got into all these arguments about what was the best way to get to heaven -- did you go through the Reformed Church or through the Lutheran Church? I got really sort of unhappy with that competitive approach to religion, and I did know something about the Quakers because about a mile from our farm there was a little Quaker meeting that still existed, which had been the Quaker meeting that the Boone family -- Daniel Boone came from a farm near where we were, but long before us, of course, and Abraham Lincoln's family had both been members of that Quaker meeting. So I knew the Quakers and about them. I hit Swarthmore and began going to the Friends meeting there. I liked their approach. Do you forgive your debtors or your trespassers? Little arguments like that. But about all you needed to believe in, since this was Hicksite, which is the liberal Quaker branch, was really the minimum, from a religious point of view, of the Quaker faith; that is, you had to believe in -- you were taught and tried to live within the commandments, the beatitudes, et cetera, as a kind of Tolstoyan view of the Christian religion, as Christ having been a moral teacher. It wasn't expected that you were to believe in anything which was supernatural at all. That was really quite out of line.

I became a member of the Society of Friends and I spent three summers while I was there as a peace caravaner for the Friends Service Committee. In those days the United States was going through a very isolationist time, and we were refusing to join the World Court and the League of Nations that had come out of World War I. So we were out talking about joining the League of Nations and the World Court, and we went out in teams, two at a time, talking to Rotary Clubs and Kiwanis Clubs and church groups of all different faiths.

So I became kind of a -- what was called a "Convinced Friend," not a birthright friend, out of that experience.

Also, the local Friends meeting had a project of feeding deprived children in the ghetto of North Philadelphia, north Broad Street, and I went in once a week to a school where the Quakers got day-old bread or week-old bread, old apple butter and things like that and stale milk, and I would go in early and set up the places for these kids, who would come in and they would really be famished, our job was to set the places up, I went along with another person, and then to keep a little bit of order so they didn't steal food from each other, and so forth. So I came in contact, through the Friends' meeting, not just with this peace message. We also talked, I might say, against the Smoot-Hawley Tariff, which was the terrible isolationist tariff for those days.

But it brought me into contact with a completely different world. I had grown up in a little valley where everybody was of European background, and to see the poverty and desperation of the people in North Philadelphia had a really big impact on my life. Also, I had another opportunity to see something of the black community, being engaged in three sports. I got to know well a man by the name of Ruff. That's what we called him, anyway. It turned out he was kind of a lay preacher who went around to different black churches to give sermons on Sundays. He learned I had been a peace caravaner, so he took me along with him to these black churches, which, of course, were completely different from the silent meetings of the Quakers. I saw there, at these black churches that Ruff took me to to speak, sort of the same sense of goodness, I might say, in the people as I saw in the Quaker meeting. I got that sense of a completely different world.

So, anyway, that's how I got my education.

Q: And this story about going out for graduate school, and starting at Stanford and changing to Berkeley, I believe, in some way connects to what you just --

Kerr: Well, when I graduated from Swarthmore it was 1932, of course the depths of the Depression, and I had an automobile in a strange way because at Swarthmore, nobody was allowed to have an automobile except the president of the student government. So I had this possibility of having an automobile, which, I might say, was just a terrible burden. I took it because it was supposed to be a perquisite that you could have your own automobile and nobody else could, so I had this one automobile on campus, and every one of my friends in the student body wanted to borrow it in order to go out on dates, etc. I had gotten it for something like fifty dollars in 1923 or something like that, a Cadillac touring car. It was very popular every weekend, for my friends to use it for whatever their purposes were.

Anyway, that was the year of the Olympics in Los Angeles. I graduated, and I was going to go to Columbia in the fall but I had the summer free. They wanted my Cadillac to drive them to California, so I went along with them. We drove out to California, so I became a peace caravaner in the Los Angeles area. I think that was the first activity the American Friends' Service Committee had on the Pacific coast. I got through with my peace caravanning work and had a couple weeks left before I had to go to Columbia. So I thought, "Well, gee, I'd like to see northern California and I'd like to see Stanford." Having gone to a private school, Stanford was more appealing than a state school, because back in Pennsylvania in those days, state schools were looked down upon a bit. So I decided to see what the Stanford campus was like, and happened to get there on a day when they were registering for classes. I started to walk around the campus and I came to people lined up for something. I didn't know what it was for, to begin with, so I thought I would join the

line to give me a chance to talk with somebody. So I got in this line, and it happened that I was stationed next to a young fellow by the name of Dean [E.] McHenry, who later became, on my appointment, the first chancellor of the Santa Cruz campus of the University of California. We started talking. He had been president of the student body at UCLA and I had been president of the student body at Swarthmore, so we had something in common. Why was he going to Stanford?, and so forth, and why was I going to Columbia? I didn't really like the idea of Columbia anyway, New York City. I'd been to New York by that time once or twice, and I just hated the place. It was so noisy and, to me, dirty, almost an immoral place, and here I was going to go to the law school there.

So as we talked, going through the line, he kept saying, "Well, why don't you go to Stanford instead, if you're hesitant? Just take a year and go to Stanford." So we finally got to the head of the line, and I hadn't applied or anything. I went to the head of the line and they said, "What are you here for?" I said, "Well, I thought I might register." They said, "Where are your papers?" I said, "I don't have any." The gal at the head of the line said, "See that man under that oak tree over there? Go over and talk with him, he's the registrar." So I go over, I talk with him, and I happened to have received just that morning, from Swarthmore, my final transcript from college. I handed that to him, he took one look at it -- Swarthmore, of course, carried a lot of prestige and I had done quite well there -- and he said, "You're admitted."

So being admitted to Swarthmore [sic; Stanford], I decided to stay there. I stayed for a year and then transferred to Berkeley. Stanford, in those days, was called "the Farm," and it was kind of a rural atmosphere, which I liked, but it was also a school for pretty wealthy kids, by and large, and sort of removed -- that was the period of the Great Depression, and I had seen a little aspect of it in Philadelphia. I was interested in doing

some studying of the unemployed, what was going on. I might say, at that time twenty-five percent of the total labor force was unemployed, and twenty-five percent was only partially employed. It was a fantastically deep depression. At Stanford the faculty, it was customary in those days, in economics, was raised in the neoclassical faith: that depressions all cured themselves, there was no such thing as unemployment. The faculty members I was dealing with were all nice, decent people but for somebody to study the unemployed, to go out in the field to study the unemployed, when that was a passing phenomenon that took care of itself, just seemed crazy to them. I heard there was a professor at Berkeley who was out in the field, also studying the unemployed, and I went over to see him. He persuaded me to be his research assistant the next year, which I did become, and I wrote a Ph.D. dissertation under him on what were called the self-help cooperatives of the unemployed. These were unemployed people who had formed cooperatives, and one of the great things of those days was poverty in the midst of plenty, which was really true. There were people completely unemployed, with no incomes, yet there was plenty around. There was day-old bread. There were a lot of things that you could gather up, and they formed these cooperatives to go to out in the fields of the citrus orchards in southern California and collect the fruit that wasn't being picked. They then traded among themselves. Somebody else would pick up old bread, and they'd have these co-ops where they'd then trade what they had sort of scavenged from society.

So I was out in the field, looking at reality at a time when most faculty members -- all faculty members at Stanford and most at Berkeley -- were sitting in their offices, you know, and reading their textbooks, and so forth, and living in what I thought was an unreal world.

Then Paul Taylor, whose second wife was Dorothea Lange, the great photographer, and I

got to know her quite well -- Paul Taylor and Dorothea, Paul with his writing and Dorothea with her photographs, I think had put together the best description of what was happening in the United States with unemployment and the dust storms, and all the people coming in from Oklahoma and Texas: the *Grapes of Wrath* period. Then I got thrown into the *Grapes of Wrath* situation more directly than seeing these unemployed groups. In the fall of 1933 there was a great cottonpickers strike in the San Joaquin Valley. It was the longest, biggest, and bloodiest agricultural strike in American history. There were vigilante massacres at little towns like Pixley and Arvin, and Paul Taylor was interested in what was going on so he sent me down there, out in the field in a real situation of class warfare. This was another experience like the one on North Broad Street in Philadelphia, and a totally different world than the one I'd been raised in. It had a big impact on me. It was a very fascinating situation. You had these big factories in the field, which were quite different from our self-sufficing farms, and you had two, quite contrasting, different types of workers. You had these Okies coming in from the drought area, and under the natural leadership of their ministers, from the Seventh Day Adventists and the Assembly of God, and so forth and so on, on strike -- which, I would say, for them was a totally new thing. They had been self-standing farmers, you know, living their own lives. Then by that time the Mexicans were also coming in, as we then called them, we didn't call them Hispanics, and they turned out quickly to be under the leadership of the Communists, who were then working in agricultural labor. So it was kind of a fight, partly between the workers and the farmers, these big factories, but also this battle between the Okies versus Mexicans, the Okies being kind of God-fearing, law-and-order type people who didn't want to engage in violence. The Mexicans were more willing to, wedded to the Communist leadership, and then some of the farmers -- there were real battles there, too, between the big farmers who were really very ruthless people, and then there were still a few small farmers left, with maybe forty or sixty acres of cotton. They worked in the fields, and they had a quite

different attitude toward the situation than the big farmer, so it was -- you talk about capital versus labor, this was labor versus labor, capital versus capital, and capital versus labor. It was a great experience for a twenty-two or twenty-three or twenty-four-year-old young kid.

[END TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE; BEGIN TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO]

Q: You were saying that this quite an experience for a young person in his mid-twenties to have, and I presume that this was really the beginning of your real interest in the field of industrial relations.

Kerr: I sort of really never planned my life, it kind of unfolded for me. And with this experience in the San Joaquin Valley I became much more interested in labor relations, and that was a period in the United States when the unions were beginning to build up. The New Deal, of course, had come along, so I majored in industrial relations, or labor economics, and after I got my PhD at Berkeley I taught here at Stanford for a year, then went to the University of Washington. Up there I got involved in arbitration, in kind of a backhanded way. Not that I knew anybody when I first went there, but people would try to find out who is there at the University of Washington as a professor, who knows something about labor relations? Well, I was teaching labor economics and industrial relations so I got employed as an arbitrator. One of my early cases involved the Teamsters' Union, which was then under Dave Beck, who was the most powerful man in the Pacific Northwest in those days. He not only ran the trade union movement, he ran the employers' associations. He controlled both sides, and set up certain monopolies that the employers benefited from by keeping competitors out, as well as getting more money for the members of the union.

And then Boeing was beginning to build up, as World War II came along, and I was asked to be the impartial chairman under their contract between the Boeing Aircraft Company and the machinists' union. Now that became a very tough assignment because about that time -- Well, let's back up for just a second to say that at that time in the Pacific Northwest the Communists were rather strong in some unions that weren't run by Dave Beck. The machinists' union up there was under Communist leadership, and with the war coming along the United States government, I guess, intervened with the machinists' union and said, "Well, we don't want to have the Boeing workers organized by a Communist-led union." The machinists' union in Washington sent in a couple of outside people, who were not local people at all, to run that union. The Communists, of course, wanted to win the war at that point, so they didn't want any strikes but they still wanted to keep a presence on the floor, on the shop floor, so they ran a lot of grievances. To keep up their contacts they had local union people who were still influential, the top leadership had changed, so I got thrown into kind of a guerilla warfare within the trade union, with the leadership sent in from Washington being anti-Communist and a certain number of Communists in the local leadership. It was a tough situation.

I say this partly because people tend to think about capital versus labor, and in so many of the situations I got involved in the battles were really within labor and within capital. I used to say to myself if I can't solve a problem it's not going to be because of the troubles between capital and labor, it's going to be because of disagreements within labor, or also within capital, that make it impossible to work out a solution.

For example, on the side of capital you'd have the difference between the vice-president for industrial relations who wanted to settle things, or the vice-president in charge of

production who wanted to keep production flowing, and the vice-president of finance, who wanted to save money. So you'd have this fight going on within the capital side, the fight going on within the labor side. It looked to the outside public like it was capital versus labor, when there were three battles going on: the battle within labor, the battle within capital, and then the battle between the two of them.

So I got thrown into some interesting situations. Then when the war, when the United States finally became involved in the war I was asked to be vice-chairman of the War Labor Board in the Pacific Northwest, which for a young person turned out to be quite an experience, too, because we had some industries up there which were very important to the war effort. Like Boeing was absolutely essential. The lumber industry was essential, too. The fishing industry, particularly. The salmon from Bristol Bay in Alaska, which was one of the things which we then canned and sold to our troops abroad. So there were essential industries that were there. Also, the chairman of the board, who was a professor from Reed College, now deceased so I can say this, did not have the personality of an arbitrator at all. He was a guy who couldn't make up his mind about anything. His first name was George, his middle name was Bernard; some people called him George, and some people Bernard. When I first met him I said, "Do you like to be called George or Bernard?" and he said, "I could never make up my mind about that. You decide." So here he was, the chairman of the War Labor Board with these tough disputes going on, and as a consequence, as vice-chairman, I had to become, in effect, the person who made all the tough decisions.

I continued after the war, I was asked to go down to the University of California to be the first head of the Institute of Industrial Relations, which was then being established. I continued some arbitration on the side and became the impartial chairman on the West

Coast from Mexico to Canada, between the [International] Longshoremen's [and Warehousemen's] Union of Harry Bridges and the Waterfront Employees' Association, which was real, real class warfare. That gave me some additional experience.

I might say one thing -- Out of that I got to know a young Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania who worked with me in the War Labor Board, then later became the research director for the Longshoreman's Union of Harry Bridges. When I became head of the Institute of Industrial Relations at Berkeley, and the University of California had never had contact with trade unions. They were kind of, you know, not part of the establishment and acceptable. I asked him -- he was a brilliant chap -- to be my associate director of the Institute. Here was a guy who had worked for Harry Bridges, and [many people] assumed that he was a Communist. I was sure he wasn't. I'm still positive he wasn't, but he did become Harry Bridges' education director and negotiator for him. Here I take him and bring him into the University of California, which caused me many, many painful hours before the FBI and all other kinds of investigating groups, statewide and local, for that particular contact.

So anyway, I end up after the war as head of the Institute of Industrial Relations at Berkeley. Then there came along the loyalty oath controversy at Berkeley, which was the biggest dispute, really, I guess, ever in American history, between a faculty and a Board of Regents. The Board of Regents of the University of California fired thirty-one people because they wouldn't sign an oath saying they were not Communists. Now I might say, this wasn't because they were Communists; they were just very independent people and they weren't going to be pushed around. There were actual Communists, three of whom I later fired for being Communists, who signed the oath automatically. There was a big battle, and as a young faculty member I ended up on the side of these non-signers, thirty-

one of whom were then fired by the University of California. There was a study made recently of how many faculty members across the nation were dismissed for political reasons, by all American colleges and universities -- about 3,000 of them. The total number is somewhere in the sixties, so almost half the people in the whole country who were dismissed during the Joe McCarthy period were at Berkeley. So it was a very, very intense battle and I ended up, as a young faculty member, defending these people, who were unwilling to be pushed around and forced to sign a loyalty oath. They said, "Well, we're good American citizens; we shouldn't have to be forced to sign a loyalty oath."

So I came to the attention of the Berkeley faculty and, I might say, I stepped in -- a lot of faculty members were very hesitant to get involved in any controversy. Well, I had been through all kinds of controversy. To me, controversy was natural and the normal sort of thing. It didn't scare me, I had seen it. So I stepped in, and about that time the regents decided to appoint a chancellor at Berkeley, and here I was, a very young faculty member -- I was by then in my early thirties -- with this famous faculty at Berkeley, with people who had been deans for years, and department chairmen for years, and Nobel prize winners and that sort of thing -- and all of a sudden the Berkeley faculty nominates me to the Board of Regents, to be the first chancellor in the history of the Berkeley campus.

I never quite new why the regents accepted the nomination, because, after all, I had appeared before them and my first words before the Board of Regents, ever, were to oppose Regent Neylan, who was the attorney for the Hearst family, and, of course, the Hearst family was powerful, with the *San Francisco Examiner* and the rest around here, and he was pushing the firing. My first words before the Board of Regents were, "Regent Neylan, I do not understand how anyone, in good faith, could possibly vote for your proposal." That was my first introduction to the Board of Regents, and the only reason I think the regents

accepted my nomination was that by that time they wanted to make up to the faculty a bit, after this big controversy, and here I was, nominated by the faculty. So all of a sudden, with this background in industrial relations, having worked with trade unions as well as with the employers, and trade unions were then looked upon with alarm and antagonism by the establishment, all of a sudden I become the first chancellor at Berkeley.

Q: And you were chancellor for six years.

Kerr: I was chancellor for six years, and by that time I had faced some pretty tough issues before the Board of Regents. Many of the things I had done they didn't agree [with], but I think they came to realize I would always tell them what I really believed, tell them the truth as I saw it. The person who had already been hired to be their new president was the chancellor at UCLA, a man by the name of Ray [Raymond B.] Allen, who had been president at the University of Washington. At the regents' meeting, where I was chosen president, he went there, rode on the airplane from Los Angeles with a friend of mine, who told me about it later, and fully expected to be named president that day, because he had been president at the University of Washington. He had fired, publicly, three Communists; I fired three Communists, quietly, at Berkeley. He had fired three Communists publicly, at the University of Washington, so he was all set with the right wing of the regents. He went up there expecting to be the next president. I expected it, too, but all of a sudden the Board of Regents, faced with getting somebody to run this big university, chose the person who had stood up and opposed them on a number of issues. But I think they had come to trust my word, that I would give them my best advice, and Ray Allen, this other chap, had always tried to give them answers he thought they would like. The only way I can explain it is, faced with running a big university, would they take somebody who was trying to please them and tell them what he thought they wanted to hear, rather than tell them

what he thought was the truth and what ought to be done? Anyway, they ended up choosing me, and there I was, the president of the university, at a period when we had the tidal wave of students coming. We had this enormous burden of federal research dollars pouring in, millions and millions of dollars, three new campuses to start, a big battle over the Master Plan for Higher Education in California as to do what, because the state colleges wanted to become university campuses. I had to work out the master plan for higher education in California, which still exists to this day, by the way, basically unchanged. There was a tremendous effort in bringing the community colleges, the state colleges and the university together in a single master plan, which I then got passed by the state legislature -- 120 members in the senate and the assembly put together -- and there was only one dissenting vote out of 120, which is kind of phenomenal. So they chose me to step in at a period of time of the new campuses, the tidal wave, the research burden and all the rest of it, and handle those things. Then something came along that I hadn't been hired to handle, that was the student movement of all of 1964.

Q: Maybe before we get to the student movement, if we could just back up a little and just briefly talk about what the state of higher education was in the country, in the late '50s, early '60s, I mean who was being educated and how that was working.

Kerr: Well, really, the greatest transformation in American higher education, ever, and that became important in connection with the Carnegie Commission that I headed up, was at that particular time. We had already moved from elite higher education -- the Harvards and the Yales that had been through the time of the Civil War, when the land grant plan came along under Abraham Lincoln -- that moved us from elite higher education into mass higher education, because the land-grant universities, of which the University of California was one, brought in the children of farmers, and so forth, and opened it up. But after the

end of World War II we moved toward universal access, and that came about basically through the GIs. We had this GI bill of rights after World War II that Roosevelt had put through, giving anybody who had been a GI the right, the money to go to college. Half the GIs who went to college had never had a member of their family ever go to college before. All of a sudden all these young men were brought into higher education, from non-higher education families, so we moved to universal access to higher education.

One of the movements and part of it was this Master Plan for Higher Education, which I negotiated, which said that in the California, counting the community colleges, state colleges and universities -- that everybody who was a high-school graduate would have a place within higher education, but also anybody who was equally qualified, which meant you could take certain examinations and get high school credit. California was the first state in the nation, and the first governmental entity around the world, that made mass universal access a matter of a right to every young person. So we were then facing this transition into universal access.

Q: This reflected your own beliefs and attitudes, I presume?

Kerr: Yes, yes. I believed in that. I had seen a lot of people who had been condemned to pretty poor lives in Philadelphia and the San Joaquin Valley, for lack of education. I became all in favor of universal access. I negotiated the first plan that provided universal access as a matter of right, anyplace in the world.

So anyway, we were moving to universal access, and also this enormous amount of federal research money which came pouring in and affecting everybody in the sciences and many people in the social sciences, as well. Then coming along, and this we didn't realize at the

time -- I didn't realize how big a movement it was, but what I now look upon as an enormous movement for human liberation, after World War II all these countries around the world broke away from imperial control. Like the British Empire disappeared, the French Empire, the German Empire, about a hundred new countries came on. That kind of started a spirit of people getting more control, nation by nation, over their lives. As I now try to understand it, I think that movement to end the colonial system all around the world, and nation after nation moving toward self-control, the spirit of human liberation kind of began expanding. It affected women; women's liberation came along. It affected the minorities in the United States; black liberation came along. It also hit the campuses.

Now I might say, there's another aspect of it than just liberation, in the sense of the imperial power of the man over the woman, the imperial power of one country over another. It also had an aspect which I first saw as it hit the campuses in [California], San Francisco, which was liberation from middle-class morality. Now I have no problem in my mind at all, in fact, I'm all in favor of liberation from imperial control and liberation of women from men and minorities from majorities. I might say, there were aspects of this other part, which hit the campus first, and I saw first, and was not sympathetic with -- a liberation from middle-class morality, which involved moving toward drugs, which I was totally opposed to; for a great deal more liberty in sexual relationships, which has impact for the family and for a sense of trust in people, and so forth and so on. So what I now look back upon as being a huge movement for human liberation around the world hit the Berkeley campus, as I saw it then, as a movement toward drugs and toward what I considered to be sexual excess. I was not sympathetic with that.

Anyway, this movement hit campuses really hard, and I might say, it hit San Francisco hard. Haight-Ashbury came along, the North Beach, Ginsberg and his poems, and so forth

and so on. So I am much more now sympathetic with the total movement, even than I was then. The part of it I saw initially, in the students at Berkeley, was the one aspect of this movement toward human liberation with which I was not in sympathy, so I got kind of caught not understanding that. Well, I know that's a pretty long story, but the University of California, out of particularly the Depression, had the most rigid rules of any university in the nation against political participation on campus. When I was chancellor, our rules were so tough that I had to tell Adlai Stevenson, who was then running for President of the United States, that he could not speak on campus. I hated to do that but I had to do it. Then I became chancellor, and I began easing up the rules. In fact, I eased up the rules so much that for the first time in history we allowed Communists to speak openly on campus, which, of course, half of the Board of Regents wanted to fire me right then. They did fire me later for that movement.

But I did favor opening up the campus to political controversy, and earned the enmity of the [California State] Senate Committee on Un-American Activities -- the so-called Burns Committee -- which bedeviled me all during my presidency. I put in voluntary ROTC [Reserve Officer Training Corps] instead of compulsory. It was only the second big American university to do that, the other had been Minnesota, and that got the American Legion down on my neck. I put in “Hyde Park” corners on all the campuses in the university. The students, I might say, overwhelmed us at the start. They came in, in 1964, a number of them, including Mario Savio, having been in the "long, hot summer” in the South -- there they had some real fascists to confront, “Bull” Connor and all the rest of it -- and they hit campus thinking all the administration and the whole establishment was fascist. They hit campus, and our chancellor at Berkeley at that time -- I was by then president of the university -- tried to call in the police on two occasions and was successful in one. I stopped it twice. That got the students all upset because when you use police

against students, you really are treating them as common criminals, and that's how they felt they were being treated. Anyway, that caused the problems in the fall of 1964. It was in September that the chancellor first tried to call the police against the students. I was supported then by the governor, in not using them. By December, the third time he called the police, the governor switched -- that's "Pat" Brown -- and did use the police, which created a lot of trouble. But by the December meeting of the Board of Regents I had gotten the regents, on the political side, I'm now not talking about drugs and sex, on the political side, to go along with what the Free Speech movement had been asking for, which was free advocacy. They had full free speech: Communists could speak, anybody could speak, but they did not have full advocacy in the sense of recruiting people to undertake illegal activities off-campus, or to raise money for these illegal activities. I got the regents to agree that they could do that, which was an enormous change over the course of three months, to make that concession. The Free Speech movement just died at that particular point.

But during the fall of '64, with these rampaging students with a lot of faculty support, and with a very conservative Board of Regents to work out a solution with, was just an enormous task. Anyway, the Free Speech movement really was not a free speech movement. They had total free speech, but they didn't have free advocacy, these actions which were part of illegal activity. I got the Board of Regents to agree to that.

Anyway, these are some of the backgrounds of how I got the reputation, in conservative circles, of being inadequate as the president of the university. When Reagan came along, in his campaign, in the fall of 1966, he chose three groups to attack. His campaign, as I saw it, was directed at three groups, none of whom could defend themselves. He was attacking welfare queens, all this talk about people cheating on welfare; he was attacking

mental health malingerers, he said people who were in the insane asylum and so forth were malingerers, they got driven out on the streets, and some of them still live on the streets there in Berkeley and San Francisco. And the University of California; it couldn't fight back, either. The charge against me was that I was against law and order, which I was not. I favored law and order, but I thought that the first resort should not be to the use of police. I thought that was morally wrong; that you ought to talk, particularly with your students, before you used the police against them. I also had seen enough use of police in the industrial relations field to see how the police are an element. That you can't -- once you let them go in these tight situations, then they get things thrown at them and yelled at, and so forth, somebody can shoot off a gun or put a bayonet up to somebody's back or what not, and then it's out of control. So it wasn't just because I thought it was immoral to use police -- and particularly against students, your students -- but also I thought it was extremely unwise; that I'd try to settle things first if I possibly could, by negotiation and by persuasion.

Anyway, I got this reputation in right-wing circles of being against law and order, and when Reagan became governor, was elected governor overwhelmingly, at the first meeting -- the Governor is also the president of the Board of Regents in California, not the chairman of the board but the president of the Board -- he had organized a majority of the regents to dismiss me, effective immediately, as though I had been engaged in some high crime or misdemeanor. Actually, I had built three new campuses, I had negotiated the master plan and various other things, but the majority of the regents went along. Actually, at the meeting where I was fired, when they announced it, I had agreed I might say to the procedure -- I had absented myself from the meeting, and so forth, it was all set up. But it was announced that I was fired immediately. I wasn't even allowed to finish my agenda that day. So very brashly, I said to the board that I was the only person prepared to

present the rest of the agenda relating to -- defined immediately as at the end of the meeting, rather than my walking right out in the middle of the meeting. So I completed the agenda, everything was passed unanimously, and I walked out without a job.

That evening I got, oh, hundreds of phone calls came in and my wife selected out which ones I would talk to. I got four phone calls that pleased me the most: the president of Harvard, Nate Pusey, saying, "What would you like to do at Harvard? Just tell me." The president of Stanford, the same thing. The president of Swarthmore -- the three places I revered the most -- the same thing. Then Alan Pifer called me and said, "How would you like to be director and chairman of the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education?" -- which was the one I accepted.

[END TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO; BEGIN TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE]

Q: What was the real beginning of your relationship with Carnegie?

Kerr: Well, I had been a member for several years, I don't know how long, of the Board of Trustees of The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. So I knew the Carnegie people. I knew John Gardner, I knew Alan Pifer, I knew Jim Perkins, who was the vice-president. We [Jim and I] had been students together at Swarthmore. Carnegie was then one of the two big foundations in the United States, along with Rockefeller, and one might say perhaps the biggest of the domestic foundations, because Rockefeller worked mostly around the world, in agriculture and medicine and fields like that. I was also on the board, I might say, of the Rockefeller Foundation. But I knew the people and I knew a fair amount of what Carnegie had done, and had tremendous respect for Carnegie. So

when Alan called me it was a call from a friend, and speaking on behalf of an organization for which I had tremendous respect.

Q: And the genesis of the Commission?

Kerr: Well, they had been talking about a commission for some time, to talk about financing higher education. Because with all these millions of students coming, how to finance them? I had been asked if I would be chairman of this new Commission, already, but not director. In fact, I was trying to negotiate that point; to get a director. The chairman of the board was just to preside at meetings; the director would actually write the studies and negotiate them. Also, the director carried a salary, and I was unemployed at that particular point. So moving from being the chairman of the Commission, I became chairman and director, and all of a sudden I had a job, which I enjoyed doing. So on the very same day on which I became unemployed for the first time in my life, I got the best job I could have thought of.

Q: The Commission really was charged with looking at --

Kerr: Well, it was originally charged with looking at financing, as I started to say. When I became involved I said, "Well, financing what? Do we want to limit ourselves to financing, or do we also want to talk about what we're going to finance, and what are the priorities among the things which need to be financed. Alan and the other people in New York agreed with that, so it became, rather than a Carnegie commission on the financing of higher education, it became a more general commission on higher education.

Q: Tell me a little bit about the members of the Commission.

Kerr: Well, the first Commission, we followed it with a council, which was established somewhat differently. But we had, really, a power group there. Most of the members were nationally known, at least in higher education: the president of Harvard, Nate Pusey; the president of Notre Dame, Ted Hesburgh, who was probably the most prominent university president in the United States at that time; the president of Cornell, Jim Perkins; Pat [Patricia A.] Harris, who later became Secretary of Health, Education & Welfare; Bill Scranton, president [sic, governor] of the State of Pennsylvania, and a possible Republican presidential candidate in 1966, I guess it was; and a group of really powerful people: Kathy [Katharine E.] McBride, the president of Bryn Mawr. Bryn Mawr was kind of the one and only women's college in the United States that had the top prestige, Dave Henry, president of the University of Illinois, and president of every association that higher education had, like the American Council on Education, the Land Grant Association, and so forth. He was kind of Mr. Organized Higher Education; Bill Friday, head of North Carolina, who was the leading university president in the South, and all the way through it, along with other people, was a real power group. I found this very helpful when I would go before state legislatures and before House and Senate groups in Washington, D.C. The people were known, so it was a known commodity. Of course, the Carnegie name carried a lot of weight, too, so we began with a high level of prestige.

It was a real congenial group. Not that we didn't disagree. We disagreed about everything, but we were all friends and became even friendlier during the working of the Commission. It was just a great pleasure to be involved in it.

Q: So tell me something about how you went about the work that you had to do.

Kerr: Well, we started up for the first several months talking about what topics we were going to address to get an agenda together. Then when the meetings took place, I chaired them and called upon people and I saw to it that everybody had a chance to speak. If they didn't speak up on their own I'd always call upon them to do so, so that every single report was discussed by every single member of the Commission; they participated in some fashion or another, and I would sit there. I had been involved in a lot of industrial relations negotiations and arbitrations. Somehow -- I don't know how -- I developed a kind of -- kind of a sense of what people were really saying: things they would make no concessions on, things they might make concessions on, things they would go along with rather easily. Then toward the end of the discussion I would start saying, "Well, suppose we did this, suppose we did that, suppose we did something else." We'd kind of come to what the Quakers would call a sense of the meeting, and not always did we have full consensus but at least we had full consent, which is a somewhat different thing. In a Quaker meeting consensus is where everybody agrees. Other people may say, "Well, I don't agree but I consent," which means, "The thing has been thoroughly discussed, my point of view has been heard, and I respect the judgment of the other people." So I would work either for consensus first, or failing that, at least consent by all the members. That's about how it worked out. And I might say, all of our reports ended up being unanimous.

Q: What did you find to be the main issues emerging from -- ?

Kerr: Well, the biggest issue at that moment was how to finance higher education, which was expanding enormously. I guess in 1950 or, say, '55, there were about three million people, on their way to fifteen million, which is growing enormously in a very short period of time, and everybody was concerned how it was going to be financed. What had happened was that higher education had gotten together and said -- all the associations --

the associations of presidents. They're not faculty members; they're not students, presidents only. They're called Associations of Higher Education; they should be called Associations of Presidents.

Well, the presidents had all got together, every little group there was -- the Christian Association, the Catholic Association and all the rest of them -- and decided they wanted the federal government to give them, to the presidents of the colleges, a lump sum, for the presidents to spend as they wanted. Our first big battle was -- we came up with another proposal. Surprisingly, all our members went along with it because some of them, like David Henry, had been president of all these associations that were fighting us. They wanted the money to be given in lump sum to the presidents, to spend as they wished. Now we objected to that. How would the different presidents spend it? There would have to be some kind of audit of what they had done, and maybe Congress wouldn't like it. To what extent would they spend it all by, frankly, the president saying, "I want to be popular with my faculty; I'm going to give it all to faculty salaries." Or his wife would say, "Well, we need some more money to live on; raise your salary." Or -- what would they do with it? Also, if you say to all associations, that meant giving to some which were under church control. Could you constitutionally break down the border between public and private, church and state, by giving it to a Catholic association, a Catholic institution? So we said we didn't think that Congress would go for giving it to presidents. And suppose there was a depression in the future, and they started to cut back money. How could 3,000 presidents go to Washington to protect their lump sums? Wouldn't you have to have more support than that? Don't you have to build a constituency? Which, of course, led us to think, well, give it to students. There you don't have to raise the question of Catholic or Protestant or Jewish or whatever it is. You're just giving it to students, as we gave the GIs their money, and let them choose where they want to go.

So you won't get the question of giving money to presidents, or to institutions. You gave it to young people who were American citizens and whose families were American citizens, to take wherever they would wish. That became a very tough battle. Alan told me once that the well-known head of one of America's largest universities actually got him in the corner and he thought he was going to be physically assaulted, the feeling was so strong. There were times there were a lot of people who wouldn't talk with me at all. All the members of our Commission got bedeviled that way. But when we got to Congress, Congress, obviously, wasn't going to take their proposal, there was going to be nothing, or our proposal, which had attractions to them because they were doing something for their families, you know, and their young people in their communities. So we were winning overwhelmingly. In the end, all of higher education backed out on what they had said they would die for, signed in blood what they said they would die for, and had to adopt our proposal, which was really tough on them and led to a lot of enmity. First of all, we had a better program. After all, it's lasted to this day, giving the money to the students and not to the institutions. It's been popular, it's been successful, the money keeps on being increased. Organized higher education, however, the presidential associations, were really defeated. We established, then, the reputation of being independent. Here we were, out of higher education, but we were not representing the wishes of higher education. We were not business agents for higher education. We were a group of people familiar with higher education, acting in the name of national welfare. So that reputation carried us a long way through the life of the Commission; we were an independent group that could be trusted.

Now Jimmy Carter, in those days, was variously head of the Southern Governors' Association, the Southern Educational Association, etc. He used to introduce me at meetings as, "Here is the one person in the United States whose word we can believe about

higher education." People would applaud; I had that reputation. I also had the impact in this very vicious battle that had bound us all together, you know. We had come to a conclusion, we had stood together and we had come up with a better program that everybody finally had acknowledged. So we got to be an independent organization respected for our integrity, and we got to be bonded together as friends out of our first report.

Q: And that first report was called -- ?

Kerr: "Quality and Equality."

Q: And that was published originally in 1968?

Kerr: About 1968, early '68.

Q: And then, I think, revised again in 1970?

Kerr: That's correct, yes. That's right, yes. So anyway, the first thing that was up at the moment -- the big issue at that moment was how to finance higher education, the big issue in Congress and, of course, the big issue for higher education for the presidents, how to get the money. I might say, incidentally, I thought that these institutions of the presidents of higher education were just stupid in the way they went about it. They were going to be charged with being self-serving, not interested in the public welfare, and some of them were bound to use the money in rather peculiar ways. It was going to redound to their discredit ever after. I just thought they were stupid in what they were trying to do. They thought we were engaged in treason to higher education, to stand up against all of them.

Who were we, a group appointed by a foundation? We didn't represent anybody. So we were underway.

That led to lots of other topics. Another early one -- there was then a big question about what to do about the increasing health needs of the nation, which had several backgrounds. The population was getting older all the time and needing more health care. Health care treatment was being improved upon so doctors could do more good. One of the phrases I picked up in the Rockefeller Foundation, where they specialized in medicine, was that in the year 1900 the chances that a visit to the doctor would do you more good than harm was about one to one, and that by the year 2000 was going to be 100 to one. So people were getting more confidence about health care. And we needed more doctors, or we thought -- we overdid it, I might say, somewhat. We got too many doctors, or, at least, too many specialists and not enough general practitioners. There had been all kinds of reports before Congress, by the American Medical Association and the American College of Surgeons, and many, many other groups about what to do to get health care personnel. We came in from the outside. None of us was a medical doctor. I went around and talked with these various associations and their programs, and we came up with what became, almost word for word, the Health Manpower Act of 1974, I think it was, where the federal government put in millions of dollars to expand health care training. There again we were up against the whole medical profession, one that was committed to other solutions than ours. We came up with a solution which went I think unanimously through Congress, and became the Health Manpower Act of 1974, against the strongest American profession, the medical profession, the strongest -- in fact it's the strongest trade union in the United States, far beyond whatever the Teamsters' Union ever was. So there again, a second time, we had not spoken on behalf of the profession, which we trained, but on behalf of what we

thought was the national welfare, and we had come out on top. So again, we strengthened our reputation for independence.

Q: In each of these two instances, how did the press help or hinder you?

Kerr: Well, the press was really quite good to us. *The New York Times*, in particular, which is universally read in Congress -- Fred [M.] Hechinger was their educational reporter at the time, and he became, I guess, one of our greatest supporters. We were heavily covered in the press, front pages, front-page stories about what the Carnegie Commission said on this, that, or the other thing. After we had a few victories under our belt we were taken even more seriously, including by higher education. This doesn't mean that everybody was always happy with us. We carried on some of the grievances from our first report all the way through. I guess there's some grievance around the country against me even to this day. I wouldn't be surprised.

Q: On the part of whom?

Kerr: On the part of some of the old hands who had gone along, you know, with this idea that they were going to get millions and billions of dollars in their own hands to spend, and here we stole it away from them. That's how I look upon it. They look upon it as saying, "We're doing it for the sake of autonomy. We don't want the federal government to tell us how to run our institutions; we want to run them ourselves. So give us the money and let us do what we want to do with it. We're the people who are the experts and who know what to do." That's their point of view.

Q: You know, the idea, the whole concept of giving the money to the students -- how did that surface, and what was it based on?

Kerr: Well, it was based, really, on the GI bill of rights. That's what the GI bill did. It didn't give the money to the institutions; it gave it to the GIs. Now the GIs are a separate situation, where they had earned it, you know. So here we were saying we would give it to everybody, whether they had earned it or not. So we were in a little different situation. But there was this precedent for giving money to students, giving it to the GIs. We then expanded that from giving it to the GIs to giving it to any student who qualified.

Q: Maybe we could just -- anything that occurs to you -- run through the rest of the major reports that came out of the commission. We did "Quality and Equality", higher education and the nation's health. Then there was "Who pays?"

Q: What?

Kerr: "Who pays?" In 1973.

Q: "Who pays?" Yes. That was another very controversial one, because we came out to favor tuition in all the states, including land-grant institutions which had usually been tuition-free. We made a study, which was not technically very sophisticated, but it went like this: Who benefits from higher education? Well, there's a benefit to the student, whose income goes up. We calculated about two-thirds of the benefit from higher education went to the student in lifetime income, and one-third went back to government, states and federal government because of higher taxes. The more money you make -- and about a third goes to taxes -- increases public revenue. So we said it would only be fair, then, for

the students to pay about two-thirds of the total cost and the government to pay one-third, because that's where the benefits are. The students, of course, pay their living costs. They also have a foregone income, which we didn't take into account although economists would, and we said that worked out so that in the typical land-grant institution, tuition would go to one-third of education general costs. Now a man by the name of [Russell] Thackrey, who had been a long-time head of the Land-Grant Association, I don't think he ever spoke to me again until he died, because that was against their belief in a completely tuition-free higher education -- of course, that was popular with the private institutions, that the public would be choosing tuition, too, but that was another one that was controversial. Then I think we had one, didn't we, on the Negro colleges? The black colleges? About that time? That called for mainstream, from isolation to mainstream. There was a big issue about the future. Now they were moving toward getting rid of discrimination. A lot of people were saying, "We don't need the black colleges any longer, and they're not very good colleges, by and large, anyway." So the word was going around that -- many corporations gave money to the black colleges, to encourage them to take the black students and then become their employees. The word was sort of going around, "Well, we don't need to do that any longer because they now can go to white colleges. So why keep the black colleges, which aren't the best colleges, anyway?" We came out in favor of maintaining the black colleges across the country. In fact, we even proposed giving them special help from the federal government, on several grounds. One of their leaders said our report was the Magna Carta for the black colleges. On the grounds, first of all, that the two institutions that the black community had established on its own and believed in were its churches and its colleges. To let their colleges -- which they had created out of poverty and kept going for all these years -- It would be a tragedy for the United States. Also that there were a lot of blacks, not many of their parents would have gone to college, who would feel more welcome going to a black college to start their higher education at least -- not their graduate school, but at least to

start their four years -- that they were a mechanism, kind of a vestibule through which more black students would move than if that vestibule didn't exist, when only white-only vestibules existed. So we came out in favor of maintaining black colleges, and I think almost all of them, incidentally, one way or another, are maintained, to this very day. It was a question, at that point, would they all disappear? Which I think would have been a tragedy.

Q: I think the other issue that you tried to deal with was the more effective use of resources.

Kerr: You're right. We tried to deal with the effective use of resources, in a not very effective way. We thought that getting all this money from the states and the federal government, we had the obligation to make the best possible use of it, that if we didn't make the best possible use of it, we weren't going to get it in the long run, so we came out with various proposals as to how we could make better use of resources. We had a couple reports on this. One was to have the colleges work with the high schools to encourage the high schools to give more advanced placement courses, which were already given but in small numbers. The last year of high school is pretty much a wasted year for kids who go on to college, because they usually make their applications and are thinking in college terms anyway. They're going to get admitted, really, on what happened their first year, their grades in their first year of high school, because nobody would know, when admission date comes along, what they did in their fourth year. So why knock ourselves out in the fourth year, when they've got the grades to make it in their three years already? So the fourth year became kind of a goof-off year for a lot of kids, which was a lost year but also, in some ways a bad year for them because they kind of deteriorated in their motivation and their self-discipline, and so forth. So we wanted to start a big, nationwide enterprise for

the colleges and universities that worked with high schools to get more advanced placement courses, on the grounds that a lot of freshmen work could be moved out of the universities and colleges into the high schools, making better use of that year for the students, and saving money for higher education, since you would have -- a good student ought to be able to go in with at least one year's advancement placement, or at least half a year, even not very good students. So that was one of the things we wanted to push.

The second thing we were pushing was year-round operations, so you wouldn't have to build all these new buildings, you would just use them year-round. So the average college/university is only open for business thirty-two weeks of the year, and you have all these residence halls, which are really hotels, and it's hard to make them pay for themselves, you know, on thirty-two weeks occupancy in the year. So we went heavily for year-round operation. We had other things which we thought would lead to better use. We made a study, which never got published, showing that some institutions made much better use of their money than others by doing away, for example, with very small classes, say, a seminar with two students in it. Why not say a seminar should have ten students, or you don't give it? Devices of that sort. We thought we could save quite a little bit.

Well, it came along about the time people were starting to fear the demographic depression. We had had this tidal wave of students, which were the children of the GIs. There would be another tidal wave, right now it's beginning to hit us, which was the grandchildren of the GIs, but in between there was going to be this great, demographic depression. People were estimating, at a minimum, that the higher education enrollment would go down with the size of the college-going age group, which was going to go down by one quarter, incidentally. Now there was a chap at Yale who came up with an estimate that the higher education rolls were going to go down forty percent, for two reasons. First

of all, there were going to be fewer young people, but second, the rate of return on a college education over a high school education was at that moment going down. He said, "Put the two together," and you had a forty percent decrease.

So here higher education was saying, "We're going to go down twenty-five to forty percent," and the Carnegie Commission is saying, "Make better use of resources." "What we're going to need is a lot more money to keep ourselves open. Don't say we can save money at a time when we don't want to save money, we want to keep in operation." So we just had an absolutely blank wall with higher education. That was something they could stop, and they stopped it. Nothing's happened, really, to this day. Higher education is an enterprise where the majority of the participants who are faculty members have no special interest in saving resources. They want more resources, more resources. They want smaller classes, lower teaching loads, and so forth and so on. They're not oriented toward efficient use of resources. Adam Smith, in his *Wealth of Nations*, has a section in which he talks about Oxford and Cambridge, in his day, being run for "the ease of the masters," he said, his exact phrase. That's what you could say about higher education today. It's run for the ease of the masters: to get them lower teaching loads, smaller classes, more time for research, more time for paid service activity, and so forth.

So when we were dealing with the federal government and with the states, we were generally successful with them, in what we were asking for on behalf of higher education. When we asked higher education to do something on its own to make better use of resources, we just hit an absolutely blank wall. That was one of the few places we didn't have any solution whatsoever. Successful solution.

[END TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE; BEGIN TAPE TWO, SIDE TWO]

Q: From the initial report, "Quality and Equality," came a government action and then, going from need to --

Kerr: Yes. What happened was this. We established the principle that the federal government would subsidize students on the basis of -- well, we started out being concerned that those who needed full need -- that's how the grant came out. The Pell grants were our proposal, and that was with -- we were concerned with the most low-income people. Well, in the course of the political process, when the low-income people were getting full aid, middle-class people said, "Well, we're in need, too. We may not need 100 percent support but we need some support, so our kids can go too." And there was all this talk about this program is biased in favor of the neediest, which was what we did intend. "We're paying the taxes, so why shouldn't we get something out of it."

So in the 1970s, while the grant programs were maintained, the big emphasis came, then, for subsidized loans to middle-income students who would then repay them, although with some subsidy from the federal government. And that's what we have now -- is a mixed program of grants for the neediest, and loans for those who need some help but are not totally needy.

Q: Just very briefly, if you could talk about the evolution of the Commission into the Council, and what the Council really directed itself towards, and how effective you felt it was.

Kerr: Well, first of all, the Commission's term was up -- I think it was actually supposed to be five years, it turned out to be six, and the people had served and done their duty. This was then replaced by the Council. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of

Teaching decided to get a new group of people, and by that time the theme was not so much a power group as it was to get a diverse group. This was going on all over the country, and it had an impact on how Carnegie set up the Council membership. So instead of having two people from -- I guess one person from the black community originally -- we ended up with two. Instead of having a couple of women we ended up with five. Anyway, the numbers of minorities and women went up. This was desirable, let me say, the way the nation was going, toward diversity and representation. It did have, which I felt quite a bit, the impact of -- the members were not, by and large, as well known as the council members had been and, consequently, had to give more explanation of who you were, what you were doing and why you were important. The membership of the first group just stood for importance all by itself, and the second group didn't carry quite the same weight. But I still think it was necessary to do it, given the temper of the time and the way the nation was evolving.

Now we maintained our interest in supporting low-income students and greater equality of opportunity. We moved into more emphasis on affirmative action, from financial support for lower-income people. How do they get in? If the money's available, how can they become eligible? We did favor affirmative action, both at the level of admission of students on the grounds that some students with real ability never had to show it, because they came out of very deprived backgrounds. We also got into affirmative action at the level of faculty, on which we supported more women and more minorities, and we developed two arguments in particular, that black faculty members or women faculty members became models for students. They could see that here was somebody who had gone through the education, had been successful, and was now in a higher status position. This would encourage them to go on and get their education completed, but also that women could be better mentors for women students than men could be, and, say, a black faculty member

could be a better mentor, giving advice to a black student, than could an Anglo. So we moved into and supported affirmative action. You might say that when the Supreme Court came out with its Bakke decision -- which is still the Supreme Court's law of the land at least, if it's not the law of California -- they referred to one of our reports in the course of the Bakke decision. I think we had some impact in moving along affirmative action, in the sense we gave some good reasons which were acceptable as to why these people existed and were demanding it. It does serve a purpose, a real purpose in getting some more mentors and more models for people to follow.

We were very concerned, I might say, as we moved along, with getting good leadership from among women, and for the nation getting good leadership from among women and from minorities in a democracy. You can't have all the leaders forever being white males, and we were very conscious of the long-run interests of the nation in developing women leaders and minority leaders, for political reasons as well as moral reasons.

We also began taking more interest in the quality side of "Quality and Equality" in improving the curriculum. Now here, again, is the other place where we didn't have much success. The fact is, we had failure only. Particularly the way research universities were going, there was more and more emphasis on specialization, on experts, tinier and tinier subject matter, and for the undergraduate student who wanted to have a broad education in history and literature, and so forth, there wasn't anything -- at the University of California you could choose among, say, five or ten thousand courses, all on tiny, little subjects, but you couldn't get any big course on any big subject that they might be interested in. So we concluded that the old liberal arts college was almost impossible to reinstate, because faculty members had to know too much in this world of specialization. So we came up with an emphasis, say, on great books, or great epochs of history, or great

ideas, which had been at Chicago and Columbia, and so forth. We came up with this idea that you can't any longer say, "This is an educated person, what an educated person should know, and we're going to teach it," but that individuals in the modern world need to have an experience not only in thinking vertically -- moving up in a subject like chemistry or mathematics -- but they had to think horizontally, across different fields. That's what was being lost, because all the emphasis was on the majors and not upon interdisciplinary studies. So we came up with the idea, in one of our reports on the curriculum, of doing something which faculty would accept. And that was that you would develop a series of courses around a common theme, but all taught by people who were specialists in some aspect of it. For example, you could have a broad learning course on the city, where a political scientist would talk about the politics of the city, a sociologist about the sociology of the city. An engineer would talk about how you keep the city running, and people then have this chance, as they have to as citizens, you have to think across lines, disciplinary lines. Also, as you get higher up in business or in engineering, you've got to start thinking in broader terms. So why shouldn't students get a broad learning experience, thinking across disciplinary lines and not just vertically, up a single line?

So we came along with what we thought was a pretty good idea for a modern, liberal education. But here again, we were appealing to faculty, and they didn't want to do it and they didn't do it. We tried it, among other places, at the new campus of the University of California, which I have been responsible for, Santa Cruz, and we just couldn't get faculty to teach these courses.

I might say, when I started with Carnegie I had gone to see Jim Conant, who had done the series on the high school for Carnegie, over a ten-year period, and asked him for advice. One of his words of advice was to be precise in what you recommend. Don't just say, "Do

more or do less," "Do this." People can argue a little more or a little less, but there's something in there that they can talk about and not a "what is more and what is less" type of thing. So he said, "Only make recommendations to groups which are able and willing to follow your advice." He said, "Don't waste your time making recommendations that require an affirmative faculty vote to make it possible," and he said, "Don't waste your time making any advice to schools of education."

But anyway, we did find out what Conant had said to begin with. "Don't bother making recommendations to faculty. They're not going to change, anyway. Really spend your time on government actions that can have some impact."

Q: How much influence did having the Carnegie name behind what you were doing have, do you think?

Kerr: Well, having the Carnegie name behind what we did carried an awful lot of weight because they were a known organization. They had been in business, by the time we started up, for over half a century. They made the Flexner Report, which had an impact on medical education, in 1910. They had done a lot of other things, and they had a list of accomplishments. So we built up on what they had done. I think we somewhat continued that reputation, too, with the work that we did. For a while there was, as I said before, there was a voice, an informed voice about higher education but not an informed voice acting as a business agent for higher education, but being concerned with the national welfare. I think we kept that going during the period that we operated in.

Q: That's what you became, essentially.

Kerr: Yes. Now I might say that the successor group, under Ernie Boyer, turned more in the direction of making some very good recommendations about high schools and things of that sort, and left somewhat open the field which we had filled, which was public policy in connection with higher education. Now it's moved, with Lee Shulman being the new director, to be concerned with teaching, which is a somewhat different subject. There's currently being established a new organization nationwide, which is going to attempt to do what we did, and that is concentrate on public policy for higher education. It already has raised a ten-million dollar, five-year subsidy to keep it going.

Q: Do you think public policy makers and private philanthropy are good --

Kerr: I think that's a good combination, yes. Right. Because if you look back at the record of both Rockefeller and Carnegie, they came along and had enormous influence in the first half of this century. They could speak on behalf of the general public in a way, which is strange to say in a democracy, that elected officials couldn't. Elected officials have their constituencies, this, that, and the other thing, and they have their own particular ideologies. Rockefeller and Carnegie, however, could speak -- Rockefeller about agricultural policy or health policy, Carnegie about higher education and education generally. It's a little like a white paper in England, which isn't done -- it's done by a government commission established with government money, but it isn't part of the government itself. In Britain they've used these white papers for a very long period of time, with great success, and in the United States Carnegie and Rockefeller were the ones who wrote the white papers, not coming from government, but about what government should do. I think it's necessary to keep that going, incidentally, and maybe this new organization, which is to be headed up by Governor [James B.] Hunt [Jr.] of North Carolina, I'm a member of it, will perhaps do.

Q: Maybe this would be a good time to ask you, from the vantage point of now, to talk a little bit about what you see as the issues in higher education today, and where you think we, as a nation, are going.

Kerr: Well, I think there are a number of issues that need to be studied by somebody, as we did, in our series of issues. Two of them are ones where we failed. One is effective use of resources. That's still a big problem, and somebody needs to kind of raise that issue again and see if they can do something with it. A second one is a broad learning curriculum for undergraduates. You need a nation not only of experts, but also of educated people, to make a democracy work. I think, too, this issue of admissions isn't going to go away, that we just have to get a better policy than the state of California has, or the state of Texas, now. And others are moving in that direction. With the changing demography of the nation we just have to get a lot more people prepared for leadership positions from the minorities. We've done pretty well, incidentally, with women, I think. You may not agree with that, but women have moved up just enormously, really, and I think women are pretty well on their way. But we still have a very real problem bringing more minorities into positions of leadership, in the professions and in politics, etc. So I think the admissions issue is going to be a very, very great one. Another big issue that needs to be studied very carefully is the new electronics. There are ways in which it's sort of taking over some parts of higher education, through the computer and video. I think there are very good reasons for the use of electronics but I don't think you should give up on a lot of the old forms of education. I like to look upon the new electronics as an add-on, not a replacement. Some people are talking about, as a replacement, it's just going to sweep all of higher education. I don't think that would work.

If one looks at history, the original education was always oral, in a personal way, before there were books. There's still an oral aspect of education. Then the book came along, which expanded education enormously, because the book was easier than [hand]writing. Now we're moving to the next level of technological change, which is the new electronics, and I think it should also be looked upon as an add-on, not as a replacement for our standard ways. One of the new campuses I started, at Irvine in the 1960s, tried to go too fast into the new electronics. The hardware was there but the software wasn't. But aside from that, we thought you could just put in a room with some computers in it and the students would educate themselves. We found that didn't work, that as soon as students got through with whatever the lesson was in the computer, they wanted to talk with somebody about it. This was very important because it helped them learn how to express themselves and analyze their situation. It improved their motivation that they could talk with somebody, and also was a method by which they began making judgment. Just learning facts doesn't give you judgment. You've got to talk about them. So if I were doing it over again, besides each of the computer rooms I'd have a discussion room with the discussion leader sitting in there, ready to let the students develop the oral side of building judgment, as well as the mental side of collecting facts.

There's a new university in Scotland called the University of the Highlands and Islands, or U-HI, which is their common name for it, which is doing just exactly that. They've got nine campuses the last time I checked, in little towns like Oban and Stornoway, Inverness and places like that. They don't have any lecturers; they use the computer and the video to take the place of the lecturer, and what they do is they have these little campuses, mostly residential, and there the students come in and they have trained discussion leaders who will then discuss the material which they have learned from the computer or the video, and

it keeps students, since they associate with each other, they build bonds, and it keeps motivating them along. They learn how to express themselves and develop judgments and argumentation, etc. I think we need to make a real study of this new technology: where it is useful and where it isn't. It does worry me some. Instead of having 600,000 or 800,000 professors, each developing their own ideas and points of view, you start getting one great big commercial firm, which all of a sudden starts to indoctrinate everybody the same way, across the United States, as compared with this pluralistic system of many, many points of view, going to many, many students.

Another thing I think needs to be studied is this whole development of what Lionel Trilling called the adversary culture. He wrote in the 1960s or 1970s about how the faculties were coming to be increasingly adversary cultures made up of critics, who were concentrating on the criticism of society rather than on a solution of problems. I think you need both, incidentally. But I get worried about this new movement of post-modernism which, first of all, is a very, very fuzzy movement, but the whole essence of it is criticism. Instead of thinking about the future you're thinking about all your grievances from the past, all the grievances that women have accumulated, or the native Americans have accumulated, or the blacks have accumulated, and it tends to pull people apart from each other into these grievance groups, concentrating on their past grievances, rather than thinking about their common future for the country. There's a new book out by a man by the name of Richard Rorty called *Achieving Our Country*, which is on this very theme. He's moving, now, to Stanford and will be a professor here, but he is making that thing very strongly that this whole post-modernism, which faculties, particularly the humanities and parts of the social sciences, are going toward all over the United States, we're becoming an adversary culture, concentrating on criticism rather than on solutions, concentrating on the past rather than

the future. And this changing mentality of the professoriate is something which I think needs to be studied and talked about.

So there are lots and lots of issues around that I think something like our Carnegie Commission or some equivalent of it could take a look at, beyond what the government is going to do and which policies, and beyond what higher education, on its own selfish basis, will come up with. So I think the commission approach, or the Rockefeller-Carnegie approach, or the British approach of the white paper, is one that ought to be maintained. Knowledgeable people making recommendations on behalf of the future and on behalf of the national welfare, and not just representing a selfish interest, or not neglecting the problems entirely.

[END OF INTERVIEW]