

Statement* of R. Cathcart Smith,
Chairman, South Carolina Commission on Higher Education

Before getting into the agenda this morning, I will take this opportunity to welcome two new members who have been appointed to the Commission by Governor Edwards since our last meeting: Mrs. Wanda Forbes of Clover and Mr. Calhoun Colvin of Holly Hill. These two members replace Stan Smith and Fred Sheheen, whose terms expired in July.

Stanley Smith was well known to us on the Commission, first as the Chairman of the Technical Education Committee and then as Executive Director of TEC, and following that as a member of this Commission. Stan served this State extremely well in those capacities, and will be long remembered by thousands of people who have benefited and will continue to benefit as the result of his "driving" ability accompanied by his astute knack of keeping his eye focused on those things of importance. His contributions to the progress of this State, industry, and education have been superb.

Fred Sheheen served with our group for a longer period of time and became more intimately known to us because of this than Stan. Fred has one of the keenest minds that it has been my privilege to be associated with. He gave unstintingly of his intellect and time to his position on this Commission and was always a very strong pillar of support to me and the Commission in our efforts to see clearly, and do forthrightly, what we deemed necessary to advance higher education, not merely in quantity but more importantly in quality. He was never hesitant to speak out on issues which could be considered controversial, and at times I know he made many of us squirm as he ferreted out untenable positions which we might have taken, but he always did it with clarity, charm, and wit. If he was overruled he was not one to carry a grudge, but graciously took his defeats with the same good humor that he took his victories.

I know that I am personally going to miss these two former members, and I sincerely trust that as time goes on our two new members, Mrs. Forbes and Mr. Colvin, will fill these big shoes of two big men. I feel certain that they must have the ability and dedication to help us solve the many problems of higher education here in South Carolina. If they did not have these qualities, I am certain that Governor Edwards would not have appointed them to this Commission.

*Read by Dr. Smith at meeting of the Commission on Higher Education on September 4, 1975.

I think that this is also an appropriate time to take a brief look at where we have been, where we are, and where we may be going in the future. In the past couple of years or more this Commission has been the recipient of both praise and criticism. The praise, I think, we all appreciate, and are grateful for it.

The criticism has been noted and I trust that we have the intelligence and forbearance to examine it, and, if valid, to correct it. We have been publicly criticized from the Piedmont to the Lowcountry by those who, perhaps rightly, were primarily interested in their own institutions or regions. When one reads or hears news reports of such criticism, it takes a little patience and understanding not to reply in a like manner, but such would not contribute very much to the orderly solution of critical issues.

We also hear of the desire of some of the leaders in the Executive and Legislative branches of this State's Government to reduce the proportion of State revenues assigned to higher education and add to that proportion earmarked for elementary and secondary education. We are all too aware of the apprehension of the private colleges as their costs mount and the tentacles of the public sector grow at what the private sector perceives to be its detriment. Medical education continues to be the subject of controversy, and there is concern about the growing role of TEC in its involvement in college parallel work, and TEC's concern about the integration of their students into the schools of higher learning beyond the second year. I could continue with this recitation of problems that face the people of the State in the field of education, but I think the illustrations I have spoken about are sufficient to remind all of you that we have monumental tasks before and ahead of us.

I will remind you that at the first meeting I chaired over three years ago I called for increased cooperation between all segments of education in South Carolina. I requested that the senior representatives of the State Department of Education, the Technical Education Commission, the private colleges, and the Governor's Office be extended invitations to join with us at our meetings, to be prepared to assist us in our deliberations, and to keep their organizations fully informed as to what we were doing. Generally they have responded well and I hope that this has been and will continue to be helpful.

We must all think clearly and without parochialism of the problems of the people of this State. We are, like it or not, the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education. We must continue to be concerned about the State as a whole and make decisions accordingly. We have a superb staff to help us in

this enormous undertaking. We are now engaged in the preliminary task of setting up long-range plans for the better coordination of postsecondary education under the so-called 1202 Commission, which will set the pattern for years to come, and this alone is a very sobering job that will require our best efforts.

So, once again, I say thanks to Stan Smith and Fred Sheheen and all other former members of this Commission who have left us, and I again remind you all that we have much to do, so let us get on with the job at hand in a spirit of intelligent and cooperative endeavor to try and solve our problems.

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