

REMARKS BY GOVERNOR JOHN C. WEST
TO
SOUTH CAROLINA COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION
AND
THE COUNCIL OF PRESIDENTS

March 4, 1971

It's good to be with you again. I can't help but think about my last appearance here and only comment that sometimes being Governor is easier than running for the job. It's the feeling I have right now.

I asked for the privilege of coming to this meeting because it is the first that I will have had the opportunity of attending since I became Governor. First of all I want to express to all of you my appreciation for your efforts in behalf of higher education in South Carolina. In the field of higher education we have made tremendous strides in the last ten years. I am very proud for our state, the progress that has been made. The progress has been due to most of the people sitting here. Some of you are rather recent additions, but most of you have seen the transition from a state that placed little emphasis, and certainly not sufficient interest, on higher education, to a state that has really assumed the rather dynamic leadership role in the last ten years. It is a tribute to the leadership not only of the college and university presidents and chairmen of the respective boards of trustees but also to the fact that we have been able to get such an excellent involvement of the private sector, and I refer primarily to those persons not college connected who have served, and who are serving, on the Higher Education Commission, and I think we have an excellent team here, an excellent vehicle to continue this progress, and I primarily want to pledge to you my support and ask for your continued

cooperation and efforts.

We have some right interesting problems. I call them interesting because I think that with our combined efforts they can not only be solved but turn into a real advantage in our state. I don't mean to make the first meeting entirely a problem meeting, but I do want to throw out to you certain thoughts that I had on which I would like the benefit of your advice and consideration. I have read as a layman with considerable interest, as a layman concerned with higher education, the Carnegie Foundation report. I noticed Doctor Jones brought his copy. I told somebody this was my bible. I say that not in a sacrilegious sense. I was tremendously impressed with the observations in that report and I would certainly like to have this group consider those recommendations and consider which ones of them might be of particular benefit to South Carolina. The Carnegie Foundation also has a study on medical education. I had the opportunity of discussing that with Doctor McCord in some length. I likewise was quite impressed with the recommendations there, and in conjunction with Doctor McCord, we have made some progress. I say we. Primarily, Doctor McCord. I've been sort of in the situation of doing a little needling, a little pushing, but I didn't have to needle Doctor McCord very much to get started on some of the programs. At the Governor's Conference last week I had the opportunity of sitting next to Doctor Egeberg at lunch. He is the man primarily concerned in the national administration of HEW as Undersecretary, I believe, and he was quite interested in the approach that we are taking in medical education and will probably visit the state within the next two weeks.

I am concerned about education generally in South Carolina and one problem that I want you to share with me has to do with secondary education,

or education in the public school system. Frankly, I have a feeling that we have come further in developing our higher education facilities and opportunities in South Carolina than we have in our public school system. I say this not just because we are currently engaged in a teacher pay controversy, but that is an indication by many criteria, including that of teacher compensation, that our public school system is relatively low. Whereas, fortunately, in our institutions of higher learning that deficiency does not exist. We compare very favorably with the Southeastern and national averages, I am told, in matters of teacher compensation, and in one sense this is probably the best tangible argument that the public school teachers have. The fact that in our colleges we have made a concerted effort in the last ten years to bring our faculty salaries up, to improve our facilities generally, has resulted in a general up-grading of college level education. I think it is a very persuasive argument that the public teachers, perhaps, have not taken as much advantage of, and I'm just as happy they haven't because I certainly don't want to see any lessening of the support of our higher education institutions. But the fact is that raising the compensation of those who are charged with the learning process, teachers, is an initial important step in up-grading the whole process, and higher education in South Carolina is living proof of the effectiveness of it. The fact is that in our public school system there does not now exist the public confidence and the public acceptance that seems to characterize, fortunately, our higher education institutions. There are many reasons for it. For one thing, the public school system has had the trauma of the conversion to the unitary school system this year which has been a traumatic experience for parents, teachers, children alike in some areas, and in many instances the more affluent parents have gone by the route of the private school system and, therefore, their interest and support of the public

institutions has lessened. I simply mention this to ask for the sympathetic help of the institutions of higher learning in strengthening our public school systems.

I have one or two specific examples that I think will be most helpful to our public school system from a renewing of the public confidence and a renewing of the public's evaluation of their contribution. One has to do with the program that I have mentioned before. That is of expediting the granting of college credit to high school graduates who qualify, even to the extent of certifying certain high schools to give the first year of college credit. This is being done in effect through examination and certification now. I think that it could be done on a broader basis and a more publicized basis. I think the average parent realizing that their child could get up to a full year of college credit, certified through the high school curriculum, and thereby saving the rather tremendous cost of higher education, would result in a better feeling, or perhaps I should say would result in being more easily reconciled to tax increases or tax payments that are necessary for support of the public schools. I would ask your sympathetic consideration of a program which will simplify and expedite the granting of college credits to high school seniors who within their last year or two years of high school work take and satisfactorily complete college level courses that are eligible for credit. Incidentally, at the same National Governor's Conference last week, I haven't told Doctor McCord this, but I sat at the table with Governor Wallace. He is likewise concerned with the lack of doctors and so on and said, "We're starting pre-medical education at the junior high school level. We're starting to train our doctors there so we can speed them through." I don't know that this is practical, but the point is that if we can implement an effective

program of granting college credit wherever possible it will do a great deal to strengthen our public school system. It will tend to relieve some of the pressures perhaps on our state colleges and universities.

In that conjunction, I would also hope that you would consider facilitating, or making possible, the transfer of credits that might be obtained at our post high school educational institutions, and I refer primarily to our technical training programs. I know that there are some barriers, and there may be some technical objections as well as academic objections, but we are attempting and are offering what I am sure by almost any criteria to be college level work in our technical education institutions, and for the student who does effective work there I would hope that we could persuade the accrediting agencies that if a transfer is in order, if a student wishes to transfer, then he should get credit for any college level work completed in our technical education institutions.

The Carnegie report deals at some length with the necessity of flexibility in the field of higher education and I wholeheartedly concur, from my experience in politics and life. The concept that when a child finishes high school he has got to go through the four year period of college in order to be equipped for life is a little bit fallacious, I think. Maybe the in and out of college ought to be expedited. For some persons maybe a couple years of work would be in order, and then they should go to college. Some, perhaps, ought to stay two years and go out and work awhile, and when they mature in their thinking they ought to be encouraged to come back. I think that any flexibility that we can write into our educational offerings would certainly be in accordance with what I like to think is the wave of the future in education.

In that connection I read with interest, had duplicated for those of you who may not have seen it, a rather interesting article in U. S. News and World Report which has to do with the offering of college credit, or college courses, on a mail order basis on a rather wide scale program in England. It is being tried on an experimental basis this year by New York State University under, incidentally, grants from Carnegie Foundation and Ford Foundation. Of course the basic idea is approved in the Carnegie Foundation report. We have some experience of course in -- I don't like to call it "mail order" college level learning -- utilizing facilities of our educational TV system to offer a Master of Business Administration and I believe, Doctor Jones, the professional groups, doctors especially and the Law Enforcement people, are using ETV for additional training. I would like very much to see this Commission, since we do have supposedly the best ETV system in the United States, consider programs whereby we can make higher education available to persons at home with a minimum of class attendance. In other words, they can learn by ETV and pass the necessary qualifying examinations, or whatever reasonable tests are devised, give them college credit, even to the point of degrees. I would like to see this Commission encourage and seek grants from Carnegie, Ford or whatever foundation might be available, to see what can be done. I have been concerned for many years over the fact that our ETV system has not been accepted in our public education to the extent that I think its merit and validity would entitle. There are many reasons for it without going into those. I feel that we have a vital use that will meet with a minimum of resistance and a maximum of public acceptance if we utilize ETV to expedite college level education.

Basically, those are the general areas that I would hope that you would think about. As many of you know, I am an early convert and longtime advocate of the system of junior colleges. I have modified my position somewhat in view of the realities that now exist in our state and I do not want to disrupt any existing facilities that are serving adequately the needs of the existing area and have the support that is so necessary for a local facility to succeed. However, I do think that where the communities recognize that community colleges can serve a need, and where conditions otherwise are favorable, I would hope that this Commission would encourage their establishment and operation. I am thinking of several specific cases in which we virtually have the community college operation, or could have one with a minimum degree of effort. I don't think the name community college raises any strong objections ipso facto, and at the same time I recognize it is not a panacea for all of our higher education needs or requirements. I would hope that where local communities ask that, for example, technical education centers be allowed to give the first two years of college parallel work that such would be looked on with favor and encouraged by this Commission.

I have talked longer than I intended and I've always found that when you talk you're not learning anything. My wife always tells me that, but then when you listen, sometimes you are learning. Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the opportunity of being here. I'd be happy to answer any questions or to hear any comments anyone may have, and again I thank you for coming and look forward to the very pleasant and I'm sure profitable four years for me, and hopefully for you too, and above all for the cause of education.