

Statement by Fred R. Sheheen
March 5, 1981

Members of the Commission:

As Chairman of the Academic Affairs Committee, which originated the program recommendations recently overturned by the Committee on Education and Public Works of the House of Representatives, I feel that it is proper to address that subject today, for the consideration of the Commission and the taxpayers in South Carolina.

I am sure you are wondering, as are the taxpayers, whether there shall continue to be effective coordination of the state system of higher education in South Carolina, and whether we shall be able to assure the taxpayers that their dollars are being utilized in a sound and economical fashion.

I would be less than candid if I did not admit that the Commission's efforts, undertaken in the case of the two-year occupational programs at the University, at the direction of the General Assembly, have received a serious setback.

But I do not construe the events of Tuesday to mean that we should relax our efforts, or that we should abandon our public service from a sense of frustration, however understandable that may be.

We can, and we should, vigorously pursue the goals contained in the legislation which created the Commission, and the goals which are contained in the Master Plan, which was, I remind you, adopted by the entire membership of the General Assembly less than a year ago without recorded objection.

The Commission retains the basic powers granted to it by the General Assembly.

It still has and can use its authority to recommend budgets and to review financial proposals.

It still has and can use its authority to recommend to executive agencies priorities for facilities.

It still has and can use its power to approve new programs, decisions about which are not appealable.

It still has and can use its power to recommend termination of programs, subject to the appeals procedure which we have recently experienced.

I must say that I find the current politically-charged appeals process, ultimately centering on a very few people in the General Assembly -- a majority numbering 10 persons on one committee representing 6 per cent of the legislature -- to be unsatisfactory.

In effect, in April of 1980 we received quite explicit instructions governing review of two-year occupational programs from the entire membership of both bodies of the legislature, acting in concert and acting unanimously.

Yet, we find that in implementing the directions of the full General Assembly, we have been thwarted by only eleven people out of a membership of 170 elected representatives who previously put their stamp of approval on the policies which we were implementing.

I find that to be inequitable.

While our elected and appointed officials consider various legislative revisions in the current appeals process, I believe that this Commission must utilize additional legal and effective means to meet the mandate which has been handed to us by the legislature.

Specifically, I will ask the Academic Affairs Committee to study these alternatives, among others which may be submitted by Commission members:

- (1) In recommending program terminations of a serious nature, perhaps such revisions should be formulated as changes in the Master Plan and submitted to the entire General Assembly for debate and approval or disapproval. This would draw into the decision-making process those men and women who initially laid down the policy, rather than only those members who happen to sit on a particular committee. The Commission, of course, would have to determine whether to use such a route for its recommendations, or use the normal termination process in a given case.
- (2) We should consider the use of other powers of the Commission, exercised in concert, to achieve the objectives which we feel have been mandated by the General Assembly, and I have listed those powers above.

In summary, I am saying that we should seek to utilize the full and complete authority of the Commission, while we seek a perfection of the appeals process now defined for termination of programs.

I will ask the Academic Affairs Committee to submit a timely report to you for action during the fall of 1981.