

Address to COOP Seminar, UVIC, March 5, 1980.

Ladies and Gentlemen: WELCOME.

My colleagues have emphasized to me what they call the first law of public speaking, namely, "Nice guys finish fast". Of course, I knew of this bit of wisdom from an earlier version (much more elegant, but longer) namely that "I should stand up, so you could all see me, speak up, so you could all hear me, and shut up, so you would all approve of me".

With all of that formidable pressure, I searched hard for the brief essential message that would offer maximum economy of words, efficiency of delivery, and effectiveness of impact. The essential pith and vinegar, as it were.

Unfortunately, as you all know, performance indicators in the social sciences are often contradictory--despite the optimism expressed in Mr. Wolfe's letter on program evaluation to his Ministerial colleagues last fall. I found one authoritative statement called Zussman's law which says that the effectiveness of a gathering like this is to be measured by an indicator based on the inverse of the ratio of meeting to eating. But I found another--which I call Carin's law--which says that the value of the information ^{provided} in a gathering like this is inversely proportional to the elegance of the meal offered. We've laid on a rather spartan meal, so I hope you find the intellectual offering unusually stimulating.

In any case, after all that brooding about what to say, I would like to look very briefly at two questions. The first is why are we here at all?, and the second is why are we here this morning?

I have often been asked why I left one of the ten best--and most interesting--jobs in Ottawa, and why I left Paris with one of the half-dozen or so top jobs in the international civil service to come to this University. One possible answer, I suppose, is that if you want to live in Victoria, you have to worry about getting in before the drawbridge goes up definitively. But more seriously, I came back because I thought there was an opportunity to create an institution here of national significance, important for ~~my~~ home

province. The chance to create a centre for the study of public policy and the teaching of public administration that would be important for my own country and my own local community seemed worth all the hassle--and the salary cut.

You know the observation which is sometimes called McCarthy's Law of Intelligence: Being in public admin. is like being a football coach--you have to be smart enough to understand the game, and dumb enough to think its important.

Anyway, those of us from the School of Public Administration are here because we believe that a University is an important resource for the community, and this School of Public Administration should be an important resource, particularly for the public service as well as the rest of the community.

We've been working away over the last couple of years to increase the direct contact of the School with the public administrators at all three (or four) levels of government. We've been trying to increase the relevance of the MPA program at the same time we deepen its theoretical foundations. We're in the process of tightening the curriculum, particularly for mid-career people, but increasing the tutorial backup. We're attempting to develop a workshop structure with students clustered around a few main research areas.

A lot of effort has gone into the development of a strong Diploma program for in-service people outside the regular University structure. Through that, we're building ties with all the rest of B.C. With your support we could build that into a full degree completion program offering a ramp into the MPA program itself.

We are working on proposals for a package of executive programs-- short two or three or six or thirteen weeks of special purpose workshops or

institutes directed at topics of interest to senior management. We're also working on more general packages of credit-free courses tailored to particular needs.

All of this increases the "outreach" capability of the School, and hence its value as a resource for the community. But obviously the key responsibility is not to prepare people for the current jobs or make them wise in the current ways and practices. A University's role is not to be satisfied with current procedures. The way things are done now is not good enough, and the job of the student is to look to how things might be done better. The University must encourage fundamental reform, structural change, dramatically, foolishly, sensationally different ways of looking at old problems. Our job is to force you and your colleagues to engage from time to time in that sort of searching re-examination.

One specific activity ⁱⁿ which the School has taken on new responsibilities is the COOP program, which brings me to the question of why we are here this morning. The School has gone over to a three-term operation in order to accommodate a four-month-on, four-month-off, Coop program in which M.P.A. students alternate work terms with study terms to complete a degree in a little over two years. This activity offers direct contact for faculty with employers, students with employers, ^{and} faculty with students, in a work situation of practical significance.

As I see it, therefore, we are here to outline how the Coop program looks from the point of view of the faculty and the students, and to hear your views as to how it looks to the employer. Our goal is to learn how the program can be more responsive to your interests and the community's interests, without losing touch ^{with} of the long-run, fundamental goals for change and growth and progress.

In sum, I guess we are all here because we are dumb enough to think the work is important. We'd like to strengthen the links which make the University a living resource for the whole community.

A.R.D.