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Address? Rep. Gerald R. Ford
Dedication: East Grand Rapids High School
September 8, 1963

THE SEARCH FOR EXCELLENCE

The brochure for this Dedication and Open House, carries this heading, IN SEARCH OF EXCELLENCE. In thumbing through the pamphlet I was ^{in Washington} greatly impressed with the superb facilities to be available to those attending this outstanding school. An on-site inspection is even more impressive in that one can see the wide range of the plant and equipment which is available for the development of the "whole, complete or total citizen" to the maximum of his or her abilities.

Obviously, what we see here today is not the handy work of one person nor even the product of a handful. This magnificent structure, the superb equipment are now ready for use "in the search of excellence" because of the combined, dedicated and constructive efforts of the Board of Education and the Citizens Advisory Council. However, a project of this magnitude will not materialize without widespread public support. This does not happen unless the faculty and school administration have done their job of educating our youth effectively over the years. So on such an occasion ^{as this} one doesn't know who deserves ^{to put it another way - who comes first?} the maximum glory--the chicken or the egg--perhaps it's best to congratulate ^{everyone} all and to spread the praise to all for a truly successful combined effort.

This school is dedicated to the "search for excellence." The question arises: what are our standards of excellence? Is our criteria of excellence too limited in scope, ^{unjust} unfair in application, distorted as to recognition? It is fair to ask: ^{in recent years} have our standards of excellence changed and if so, for good or evil?



In the mad rush of our free society to compete with the materialistic philosophy of the Soviet Union have we as a nation lost our grip on universal standards involving morality, and concentrated too heavily on technical excellence? Are

technical and moral criteria opposed to one another?

2 will answer this last question properly. An individual can be a top scientist by the most rigid standards & at the same time be a person of the highest ethics & deepest spiritual convictions.

As we strive for excellence, and we must seek and hopefully achieve it for ourselves and our country, are we using the proper incentives? Is there an imbalance between the hero worship for athletes, the ecstasy over television and movie stars, ^{or the other} and the lack of widespread recognition of academic achievement, or perhaps more importantly, is there a tendency to depreciate virtue, manners, courtesy, and a score of other desirable character traits?

In raising such questions one appears to be donning the robe of the "devil's advocate," but may I say most emphatically lip service to a word such as "excellence" and to standards related thereto will not provide the individual nor the nation with what is so badly needed. ^{in the challenging decades ahead.} To go one step further, we cannot solve the problem by simply making available the finest brick and mortar, the most plush material environment for the accomplishment of the task. ^{To illustrate} Many of our most eminent forefathers attained a high standard of excellence by the difficult path of the "one room school house," or from the environment of less well off families or with handicap of physical disabilities. Such examples, to me fortify the statement, ^{or to paraphrase (excellence)} "aristocracy is of the soul and not of the cloth."

But one of the points I want to make is that we as a nation in the competitive world we face ^{today} cannot rely exclusively on isolated instances of excellence or on traditional methods of recognition for success. Somehow we must raise and broaden our criteria for technical achievement and also expand and equalize the



methods of recognition. On the other hand it does not follow we must abandon or permit the erosion of moral criteria. For example a purist discussing technical excellence can sound like a Karl Marx, the father of Communism, whose theory begins with materialism and ends with the homogeneity of mankind, the destruction of individuality and the elimination of spiritual and moral values.

Let us think for a moment about the 12 million youth who will be attending the 30,000 high schools in America. *Most unbiased judges would agree* The environment in every secondary school would be better if those in attendance thought of themselves as students rather than teenagers. And I strongly emphasize "student" in its widest connotation.

1) We need maximum participation in academic and intellectual areas to prepare for a society which is more and more technically oriented where change rather than status quo will be commonplace. Since recognition is important I would *for example* hope that winners of the National Merit scholarships and the Science Fair contests would make the newspapers and other news media equally with others.

2) We need more than basic contact with music and the arts so that all potential talent is exposed for development. An equally important *from such exposure* benefit as more leisure becomes available, is the opportunity to satisfy the demands of both time and mind.

3) We need physical education for all to be in shape to meet the bruising day-to-day challenges during the next sixty years of one's expected life. You would expect me because of my long experience in competitive team sports to wholeheartedly endorse such a program, and I do, providing the emphasis is directed at the team concept with a proper balancing of the individual's physical development and leadership training. *Red Waterman would epitomize these standards.*



4)

We need an active student government with a high degree of student control and responsibility. Participation at this level in establishing rules for society and the execution of them for the benefit of the majority and the protection of the minority is equally important for young people in a community whether they are preparing for careers in higher mathematics or in garage mechanics.

We can program academics, arts, and music, physical education and student government, but in such zeal for an all encompassing curriculum let us not funnel our divergent students into convergent mass. Intelligent divergent thinking needs understanding and recognition. Our American Way of life is predicated on the right of the individual to have divergent views. This basic right is one of the pillars of strength of our government in contrast to that of Communism, so in our schools we should not condemn as rebellious a constructive divergence of view.

We should reject dull conformity or mass recognition at the lowest common denominator. In our search for excellence we should at the minimum expect that each should do his very best. Furthermore, each should appreciate the noblest efforts of others.

Here today we have a prime example of excellent facilities, excellent equipment, an excellent variety of courses and activities, and excellent faculty and excellent community support. The challenge for those who will enter and leave this school is full utilization of their own talents and an appreciation of the capacities of others so that all will have achieved maximum personal development and be prepared to contribute totally for a better world for all mankind.

*I might say parenthetically
it is just as important
to be able to disagree
without being
disagreeable*



Our Standards of Excellence

Is a nation's progress directly related to the standards of excellence of mind and spirit which are recognized by its people?

Is emphasis on excellence consistent with democracy?

What causes decay of such standards, or, alternatively how can greater public recognition of excellence be established?

What is the public attitude toward excellence and its recognition in the United States?

These are some of the questions to be explored in the 1963 Aspen East Fall Seminar. The subject is timely as well as important because of the present widespread interest in the attempts, through such means as the National Merit Scholarship Awards, to stimulate a taste for excellence in our schools and because many other institutional arrangements to reward superior accomplishment or to provide incentives for excellent performance are being tested or considered.

Adam Yarmolinsky, editor of the book "Recognition of Excellence", will be moderator, and Marya Mannes, author of the Saturday Evening Post Article "Let's Stop Exalting Jerks", has agreed to serve as co-moderator. In this third Aspen East Seminar we hope to increase our understanding of one of the most important parts of the general topic "What are we For?" which has been an underlying theme for the preceding two seminars.



RENEWAL IN SOCIETIES AND MEN

Reprinted from the 1962 Annual Report

CARNEGIE CORPORATION OF NEW YORK

589 Fifth Avenue, New York 17



Renewal in Societies and Men

Education looks to the future, and is inevitably an attempt to shape the future. Today the road ahead is clouded by the danger of nuclear war, and the enormity of the threat blocks our vision. We have the difficult task of facing the threat and at the same time looking beyond it. If we fail to look beyond it, if the long-term future loses all reality for us, then educational strategies degenerate into spasmodic responses to the alarms of the moment—as they have today.

If we free ourselves for a moment from preoccupation with the nuclear problem, we encounter another specter that haunts the modern mind. A generation of critics has dismantled the idea of Progress, and every few years the archaeologists unearth another ancient civilization that flourished for a time and then died. The modern mind, acutely conscious of the sweep of history and chronically apprehensive, is quick to ask, "Is it our turn now?"

Rather than debate that overworked topic, I am going to ask another kind of question: Suppose one tried to imagine a society that would be relatively immune to decay—an ever-renewing society. What would it be like? What would be the ingredients that provided the immunity?

The skeptic may ask whether any society should last forever, even ours. It is not a crucial question. If longevity were the only virtue of the continuously renewing society, the whole exercise might turn out to be numbingly dull. But a society that has learned the secret of continuous renewal will be a more interesting and a more vital society—not in some distant future but in the present. Since continuous renewal depends on conditions that permit the growth and fulfillment of individuals, it will also be a society fit for free men.



To accomplish renewal, we need to understand what prevents it.

When we talk about revitalizing a society, we tend to put exclusive emphasis on finding new ideas. But there is usually no shortage of new ideas; the problem is to get a hearing for them. And that means breaking through the crusty rigidity and stubborn complacency of the *status quo*. The aging society develops elaborate defenses against new ideas—"mind-forged manacles," in William Blake's vivid phrase.

The development of resistance to new ideas is a familiar process in the individual. The infant is a model of openness to new experience—receptive, curious, eager, unafraid, willing to try anything. As the years pass these priceless qualities fade. He becomes more cautious, less eager, and accumulates deeply rooted habits and fixed attitudes.

The same process may be observed in organizations. The young organization is willing to experiment with a variety of ways to solve its problems. It is not bowed by the weight of tradition. It rushes in where angels fear to tread. As it matures it develops settled policies and habitual modes of solving problems. In doing so it becomes more efficient, but also less flexible, less willing to look freshly at each day's experience. Its increasingly fixed routines and practices are congealed in an elaborate body of written rules. In the final stage of organizational senility there is a rule or precedent for everything. Someone has said that the last act of a dying organization is to get out a new and enlarged edition of the rule book.

And written rules are the least of the problem. In mature societies and organizations there grows a choking underbrush of customs and precedents. There comes to be an accepted way to do everything. Eccentric experimentation and radical departures from past practice are ruled out. The more pervasive this conventionality, the less likely is the innovator to flourish. The inventor of the Bessemer process for steel-making, Sir Henry Bessemer, wrote:

"I had an immense advantage over many others dealing with the problem inasmuch as I had no fixed ideas derived from long-established practice to control and bias my mind, and did not suffer from the general belief that whatever is, is right."

As a society becomes more concerned with precedent and custom, it comes to care more about *how* things are done and less about *whether* they are done. The man who wins acclaim is not the one who "gets things done" but the one who has an ingrained knowledge of the rules and accepted practices. Whether he accomplishes anything is less important than whether he conducts himself in an "appropriate" manner. Thus do men become the prisoners of their procedures.

The body of custom, convention, and "reputable" standards exercises such an oppressive effect on creative minds that new developments in a field often originate outside the area of respectable practice. The break with traditional art was not fostered within the Academy. Jazz did not spring from the bosom of the respectable music world. The land-grant colleges, possibly the most impressive innovation in the history of American higher education, did not spring from the inner circle of higher education as it then existed. Motels, the most significant development of this generation in innkeeping, were at first regarded with scorn by reputable hotel people.

Vested interests constitute another problem for the aging society. The phrase "vested interests" has been associated with individuals or organizations of wealth and power, but the vested interests of workers may be as strong as those of the top executives. In any society many established ways of doing things are held in place, not by logic nor even by habit, but by the enormous restraining force of vested interests. In an organization certain things remain unchanged for the simple reason that changing them would jeopardize the rights, privileges, and advantages of specific individuals—perhaps the president, perhaps the maintenance men.

The more democratic an organization—or a society—the more clearly it will reflect the interests of its members. So a democratic group may be particularly susceptible to the rigidifying force of vested interest.

Still another reason for the loss of vitality and momentum in a society is a lowered level of motivation. It is not always easy to say why motivation deteriorates. Perhaps people stop believing in the



things they once believed in—the things that gave meaning to their efforts. Perhaps they grow soft from easy living. Perhaps they fall into the decadent habit of imagining that intense effort is somehow unsophisticated, that dedication is naive, that ambition is a bit crude. Or perhaps a rule-ridden society has bottled up their energy, or channeled it into all the tiny rivulets of conformity.

One may argue, as Toynbee does, that a society needs challenge. It is true. But societies differ notably in their capacity to see the challenge that exists. No society has ever so mastered the environment and itself that no challenge remained; but a good many have gone to sleep because they failed to understand the challenge that was undeniably there.

Whatever the reason for loss of motivation, the consequences are apt to be devastating. Nothing—neither wealth nor technology, neither talent nor wisdom—will save a society in which motivation continues to deteriorate.

So much for the factors that contribute to loss of vitality in a society. What can be done about them?

Many of the qualities crucial to a society's continued vitality are qualities of youth: vigor, flexibility, enthusiasm, readiness to learn. This could lead us to imagine that the critical question is how to stay young. But youth implies immaturity. And though everyone wants to be young, no one wants to be immature.

Every society must mature, but much depends on how this process takes place. A society whose maturing consists simply of acquiring more firmly established ways of doing things is headed for the graveyard—even if it learns to do those things with greater and greater skill. *In the ever-renewing society what matures is a system or framework within which continuous innovation, renewal, and rebirth can occur.*

Concern with decay and renewal in societies must give due emphasis to both continuity and change. Peter Drucker has wisely said that in a world buffeted by change the only way to conserve is by innovating. We can turn the saying around and assert that innovation would be impossible without certain kinds of conserving. The scientist in his

laboratory may seem to be the personification of innovation and change, yet he functions effectively because of certain deeply established continuities in his life. As a scientist he is living out a tradition several centuries old in its modern incarnation, thousands of years old in its deeper roots. Every move that he makes reflects skills, attitudes, and habits of mind that were years in the making. He is part of an enduring tradition and a firmly established intellectual system; but it is *a tradition and a system designed to accomplish its own continuous renewal.*

The free society is not the only kind that can accomplish change. Far from it. A totalitarian regime coming to power on the heels of a revolution may be well fitted to accomplish one great burst of change. But in the long run its spurt of energy is not only in danger of dying out but of being replaced by deadly rigidity. Compared to the free society, it is not well fitted for continuous renewal, generation after generation.

One crucial respect in which the ever-renewing society parts company with all totalitarianism is that it is pluralistic. There is a willingness to entertain diverse views. There are many sources of initiative rather than one. Power is widely dispersed rather than tightly held. There are multiple channels through which the individual may gain information and express his views.

It would be hard to overemphasize the importance of pluralism in helping a society to escape the cycle of growth and decay. The ever-renewing society is not convinced that it enjoys eternal youth. It knows that it is forever growing old and must do something about it. It knows that it is always producing deadwood and must, for that reason, look to its seed beds. If a society is dominated by one official point of view, the tentative beginnings of a new point of view may be a matter of devastating strain and conflict. In a pluralistic society, where there are already various points of view, the emergence of another is hardly noticed. In an open society, freedom of communication ensures that the new ideas will be brought into confrontation with the old.

Perhaps the most important characteristic of an ever-renewing system is that it has built-in provisions for vigorous criticism. It protects the dissenter and the nonconformist. It knows that from the ranks of the critics come not only cranks and troublemakers but saviors and innovators. And since the spirit that welcomes nonconformity is a fragile thing, the ever-renewing society does not depend on that spirit alone. It devises explicit legal and constitutional arrangements to protect the critic.

And that brings us to another requirement for the continuously renewing society. It must have some capacity to resolve conflicts, both internal and external. Without such capacity, it either will be destroyed or will dissipate its energies in the maintenance of fiercely entrenched feuds. The peace that it seeks is not a state of passivity and uneventfulness. It knows that without the ebb and flow of conflict and tension progress will not be made in eradicating old evils or opening new frontiers; but it is committed to the orderly "management of tensions." Thus in its internal affairs it deliberately makes possible certain kinds of conflict, e.g., by protecting dissenters and assuring them a hearing; but it creates a framework of rules which will assure that the conflict is resolved in an orderly fashion. It devises institutional arrangements that provide a harmless outlet for minor tensions and resolve some of the worst tensions before they reach the point of explosion.

In the last analysis, no society will be capable of continuous renewal unless it produces the kind of men who can further that process. It will need innovative men and men with the capacity for self-renewal.

Faced as we are with problems that put a constant strain on our adaptive powers, it is hardly surprising that the word *creativity* has achieved a dizzying popularity. It is more than a word today, it is an incantation. It is a kind of psychic wonder drug, powerful and presumably painless; and everyone wants a prescription. But the fact that the word has become a slogan should not make us antagonistic to the thing itself. What is implied in the word *creativity*, rightly conceived, is something that the continuously renewing society needs very much.

Only a handful of men and women in any population will achieve the highest levels of creativity and innovation. But a good many can be moderately creative, and even more can show some spark of creativity at some time in their lives. The number of men and women who exhibit some measure of creativity, and the extent to which they exhibit it, may depend very much on the climate in which they find themselves.

From all that we know of the creative individual—and we now know a good deal—he thrives on freedom. Recent research shows that he is not the capricious and disorderly spirit some romantics have imagined him to be. He may be quite conventional with respect to all the trivial customs and niceties of life. But in the area of his creative work he must be free to believe or doubt, agree or disagree. He must be free to ask the unsettling questions, and free to come up with disturbing answers.

When Alexander the Great visited Diogenes and asked whether he could do anything for the famed teacher, Diogenes replied, "Only stand out of my light." Perhaps some day we shall know how to heighten creativity. Until then, one of the best things we can do for creative men and women is to stand out of their light.

No one knows why some individuals seem capable of self-renewal while others do not. The people interested in adult education have struggled heroically to increase the *opportunities* for self-development, and they have succeeded remarkably. Now they had better turn to the thing that is really blocking self-development—the individual's own intricately designed, self-constructed prison; or to put it another way, the individual's incapacity for self-renewal.

It is not unusual to find that the major changes in life—marriage, a move to a new city, a new job, or a national emergency—reveal to us quite suddenly how much we had been imprisoned by the comfortable web we had woven around ourselves. Unlike the jailbird, we don't know that we have been imprisoned until after we have broken out. It was a common experience during World War II that men and women who had been forced to break the pattern of their lives often

discovered within themselves resources and abilities they had not known to exist. How ironic that it should take war and disaster to bring about self-renewal on a large scale.

When we have learned to accomplish such self-renewal without wars and other disasters, we shall have discovered one of the most important secrets a society can learn, a secret that will unlock new resources of vitality throughout the society. And we shall have done something to avert the hardening of the arteries that attacks so many societies. Men who have lost their adaptiveness naturally resist change. The most stubborn protector of his own vested interest is the man who has lost the capacity for self-renewal.

What are the characteristics of the self-renewing man, and what might we do to foster those characteristics? Though we are far from understanding these matters, we have a few pieces of the puzzle.

1. *The self-renewing man is versatile and adaptive.* He is not trapped in the techniques, procedures, or routines of the moment. He is not the victim of fixed habits and attitudes. He is not imprisoned by extreme specialization. This last point is so important (and so easily misunderstood) that we must deal with it cautiously. Specialization is a universal feature of biological functioning, dramatically observable in insect societies and in the structure and functioning of the cells that make up a living organism. In humans, it is not peculiar to the modern age. Division of labor is older than recorded history. So specialization as such is no cause for alarm. But specialization today has extended far beyond anything we knew in the past, and this presents two difficulties. First, there are tasks that cannot be performed by men and women who have lost the capacity to function as generalists—tasks of leadership and management, certain kinds of innovation, communication, teaching, and many of the responsibilities of child rearing and citizenship. Second, the highly specialized person often loses the adaptability so essential today. He may not be able to reorient himself when technological change makes his specialty obsolete.

In a rapidly changing world versatility is a priceless asset, and the self-renewing man has not lost that vitally important attribute. He

may be a specialist but he has also retained the capacity to function as a generalist. Within limits he has even retained the capacity to change specialties.

We are beginning to understand how to educate for versatility and renewal, but we must deepen that understanding. If we indoctrinate the young person in an elaborate set of fixed beliefs, we are ensuring his early obsolescence. The alternative is to develop skills, attitudes, habits of mind, and the kinds of knowledge and understanding that will be the instruments of continuous change and growth on the part of the young person. Then we shall have fashioned *a system that provides for its own continuous renewal.*

This suggests a standard for judging the effectiveness of all education—and so judged, much education today is monumentally ineffective. All too often we are giving young people cut flowers when we should be teaching them to grow their own plants. We are stuffing their heads with the products of earlier innovation rather than teaching them how to innovate. We think of the mind as a storehouse to be filled rather than as an instrument to be used.

2. *The self-renewing man is highly motivated and respects the sources of his own energy and motivation.* He knows how important it is to believe in what he is doing. He knows how important it is to pursue the things about which he has deep conviction. Enthusiasm for the task to be accomplished lifts him out of the ruts of habit and customary procedure. Drive and conviction give him the courage to risk failure. (One of the reasons mature people stop learning is that they become less and less willing to risk failure.) And not only does he respond to challenge, but he also sees challenge where others fail to see it.

But the society does not always find these attributes easy to live with. Drive and conviction can be nuisances. The enthusiast annoys people by pushing ideas a little too hard. He makes mistakes because he is too eager. He lacks the cool, detached urbanity that some people consider essential to the ideal organization man. But the ever-renewing society sees high motivation as a precious asset and allows wide latitude to the enthusiast. It does more than that—much more. It



puts a strong emphasis on standards, on excellence, on high performance. It fosters a climate in which dedication, enthusiasm, and drive are not only welcomed but expected. It does not accept the "sophisticated" view that zeal is somehow unworthy of cultivated people.

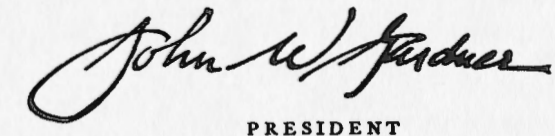
3. *For the self-renewing man the development of his own potentialities and the process of self-discovery never end.* It is a sad but unarguable fact that most human beings go through life only partially aware of the full range of their abilities. In our own society we could do much more than we now do to encourage self-development. We could, for example, drop the increasingly silly fiction that education is for youngsters, and devise many more arrangements for lifelong learning. An even more important task is to remove the obstacles to individual fulfillment. This means doing away with the gross inequalities of opportunity imposed on some of our citizens by race prejudice and economic hardship. It means a continuous and effective operation of "talent salvage" to assist young people to achieve the promise that is in them.

But the development of one's talent is only part, perhaps the easiest part, of self-development. Another part is self-knowledge. The maxim "Know thyself"—so ancient, so deceptively simple, so difficult to follow—has gained in richness of meaning as we learn more about man's nature. Modern research in psychology and psychiatry has shown the extent to which mental health is bound up in a reasonably objective view of the self, in accessibility of the self to consciousness, and in acceptance of the self. And we have learned how crucial is the young person's search for identity.

As Josh Billings said, "It is not only the most difficult thing to know one's self but the most inconvenient." It is a lifelong process, and formal education is only a part of the process—but an important part. Some people today seem to imagine that the chief function of education is to provide the student with a bag of tricks. The chief complaint of such people is that the schools are not teaching the tricks well enough—or are teaching mossy nineteenth-century tricks when they should be teaching slick twentieth-century tricks. As a

beacon to guide one away from such shallows, consider the comment of Learned Hand in his discussion of liberty: "By enlightenment men gain insight into their own being, and that is what frees them."

That brings us again to the recognition that the ever-renewing society will be a free society. It will understand that the only stability possible today is stability in motion. It will foster a climate in which the seedlings of new ideas can survive and the deadwood of obsolete ideas be hacked out. Above all, it will recognize that its capacity for renewal depends on the individuals who make it up. It will foster innovative, versatile, and self-renewing men and women and give them room to breathe. Having room to breathe, they will contribute, as only they can, to the continued vitality of the society.


PRESIDENT





the
recognition
of

EXCELLENCE



THE TWENTY-ONE PERSONS LISTED BELOW met at Princeton, New Jersey, over the week-end of February 20-22, 1959, and during five sessions, chaired by as many different individuals, considered how to secure greater recognition of excellence in the United States. Geographically, their institutional connections range from New York to California, Massachusetts to Alabama; their fields of interest include art, education, law, management, medicine, philanthropy, publicity, religion, the social and the natural sciences. Present as observers were four members of the Board of the Edgar Stern Family Fund of New Orleans, which had invited the participants to serve as consultants, and its executive secretary.

The main points brought out in this group's analysis of the current need for greater recognition of excellence in this country, and the main proposals advanced toward meeting that need, are summarized in the pages that follow.

Participants in the Princeton Meeting on the Recognition of Excellence

Alfred H. Barr, *Museum of Modern Art, New York*
Germaine Brée, *New York University*
J. Douglas Brown, *Princeton University*
Luther Hilton Foster, *Tuskegee Institute*
Frank Fremont-Smith, *Josiah Macy, Jr., Foundation*
John Gardner, *Carnegie Corporation*
Paul Gross, *Duke University*
James D. Hart, *University of California*
Caryl Haskins, *Carnegie Institution of Washington*
Pendleton Herring, *Social Science Research Council*
Frederick G. Hochwalt, *National Catholic Educational Association*
Franklin A. Lindsay, *McKinsey and Company, Inc.*
Francis P. Miller, *Charlottesville, Va.*
James Mitchell, *National Science Foundation*
Theodore S. Repplier, *The Advertising Council, Inc.*
John M. Stalnaker, *National Merit Scholarship Corporation*
M. H. Trytten, *National Academy of Sciences-National Research Council*
W. Homer Turner, *United States Steel Foundation, Inc.*
Ralph W. Tyler, *Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences*
Charles E. Wyzanski, Jr., *Cambridge, Mass.*
* Alfred Kazin, *New York*
Mr. and Mrs. Edgar B. Stern, Sr.
Mr. and Mrs. Thomas B. Hess
Helen Hill Miller

Copies of this summary may be obtained from
The Edgar Stern Family Fund,
1299 National Press Building, Washington 4, D. C.

the recognition of EXCELLENCE



BACKGROUND ASSUMPTIONS

HAZARDING INITIAL SUGGESTIONS why greater recognition of excellence should currently be given very serious consideration in this country, members of the group stressed:

* The frontier of yesterday, and the types of performance that it encouraged, were very different from the frontiers of today, which increasingly are frontiers of the mind. There are many types of excellence now in American life as an outgrowth of the country's economic production and free political institutions, and it is reasonable to expect continued achievement in these sectors, but there is grave doubt that sufficient creativity in art, science, human relations and higher learning will follow as a natural sequence of the institutions of the American past.

* Contemporary American life leads individuals into the expertise of specialization; this cuts them off from a broader tradition, and in any case they are often unsure what their tradition is.

* The distractions arising from the very affluence which has provided more Americans with more money, more goods, and more choices than previous societies have had can militate against excellence—in the best of all possible worlds, what more is there to strive for? In such circumstances, satisfaction with the good may make of the good the enemy of the best; happiness and fulfillment become a social goal, and so do risklessness and security. The individuals composing such a society may crave for distinction, but be content with a social imitation of excellence.

* And if American economic output tends to dull a taste for adventurousness beyond the suburban pattern, a mistaken interpretation of political democracy may diffuse egalitarianism through all of society and induce suspicion of the above-average individual. For instance, an elementary school may give a wide range of prizes for performance, say, in specialties like student traffic control, but hesitate to reward scholarship lest such a prize damage the egos of non-recipients.

In the American culture, striving for excellence in the intellectual fields is not recognized as a high virtue at all levels of society. Yet this is an age with need for many more people of a higher degree of excellence in many fields—some of them fields whose actual importance is not accurately assessed by society as a whole. There are few societies in which excellence in some degree has not arisen, but occasionally excellence has flowered in profusion. Why? The group was largely unanimous in belief that the values of American society need revision in the circumstances of 1959 if operation of a Gresham's law of quality is not to drive out the excellent with the less-than-excellent.

Pressed to define or identify the excellence of which they spoke—was it excellence of mind, spirit, intellect; of taste, manners, form—members of the group diverged over a considerable range.

One made the etymological point that the word derives from *ex cellere*—something from Heaven; the excellent person is a *deus ex machina* come from on high to solve all problems—hence the word denotes the highest degree of competence in a given area.

Others repudiated a relationship between competence and excellence. A competent student, one member remarked, is not necessarily excellent; agreeing, another declared that excellence is not performance at a more competent level, but at a more original level; the excellent individual is a creative moral personality who enlarges the understanding of mankind, a person with deeper insight that enables him to grasp what his predecessors looked for but didn't find; a man who provides the efflorescence that represents new goals of society. Einstein, Robert Frost, Justice Holmes and Henry Stimson were cited as examples in widely different fields. A third participant said that, for example, in the natural sciences excellence is not simply competence in a given field but requires a high aesthetic sense, exercised by individuals concerned with the moral and social impact of what they do rather than with themselves or with their area of investigation in isolation.

But a discussion of excellence solely in these terms, a member countered, ignores the setting in which excellence can be recognized. This must be a setting of competence. Excellence is a very pluralistic concept, with overlapping frameworks, representing men who are doing their best, no matter what they do. Only in such

a society is there basis for recognition of the highest forms of excellence. A society of slobs cannot recognize excellence in its members (particularly, another participant injected, when the slobs are slobs who think they know it all!). It is self-defeating to try to treat persons of top excellence without reference to others—in a school, for instance, if excellence is thought of only in terms of the top youngsters, with the rest regarded as oafs, a backlash of egalitarianism in the community will stigmatize the best. Only where there is a sense that no matter what job an individual is doing, he can do it well, will there be a good climate for top excellence; people who do whatever they do well can appreciate and encourage individuals of originality.

Another member similarly identified excellence as the maximum fulfilment of the individual but warned that in a pool of water one cannot draw a line between droplets—there is an interrelation between them.

Supporting this general position, a participant noted that the word excellence is highly abstract; one must ask, excellent with regard to what, and perhaps establish priorities, ranking in importance an excellent watch-maker, an excellent seeing-eye dog-trainer, a man who excels in realizing spiritual values. But such an establishment of priorities was challenged by the advocates of pluralism, who warned that if priorities are carried to the point where one set of values is recognized throughout society, the result is either conformity or dictatorship.

How Is Excellence Stimulated?

A similar range of views reappeared as the group turned to discuss means of stimulating the attainment of excellence.

Several members stressed the importance of the influence on a young person of some one he admires—a boy may watch his father fly-casting, have a go at it himself, get a pat on the shoulder for his first good result, resolve to become an expert; or a college student may be told by his biology professor that the frog's pineal gland can be removed, find excitement in the dissection, and emerge with a resolve to be as good as or better than his teacher.

Approval by peers rather than by elders was suggested as a more prevalent adolescent influence—in college, for instance, it may result in preference for a gentleman's C rather than the A of which a professor may believe the gentleman capable. Tests have shown that without differences among their members in scholastic aptitude, college communities vary—one will emphasize basketball or making money, another academic excellence, and the annual selection process brings in support for expectations that are already there. The member bringing forward these findings thought it important that goals not seem too far ahead of attainment, lest students give up without trying.

Another participant extended this view much further down in the educational process, stressing that if elementary-school youngsters are not reached and given an image of individual fulfilment, they will serve below their capacities. Provision of opportunities at an early age for an individual to meet a challenge, however small, to do something at his highest level, requiring of him efforts and abilities out of the ordinary, may frequently convince him that he does have abilities, and give him the incentive to fulfill them.

Others doubted that real excellence is induced by imitation: the thrust to create, said one, is greater than any the father-image ever gave. (Group members murmured, take Shakespeare or Melville.) It is right for the very good, he said, to be patted on the back—the excellent don't need it. The kid who is called a square by his companions, another member remarked, may be excellent even if

he does not appear so to those doing the calling. Aspiration induced by example, a third member commented, can make the good become very good; but it will not necessarily make the very good excellent. A colleague recalled T. S. Eliot's distinction between the man who works and the man who suffers. Clarifying his earlier position, a member said that what he meant was summed up in the Japanese proverb: don't follow in the footsteps of the men of old, but seek what they sought.

A person who is truly excellent, a participant insisted, has something in mind that he wants to do in a certain way, and will persist. A member reminded the group of Pasternak's position as one of the tragic contemporary paradoxes, an example of the creative spirit bursting into expression in a society where the leaders try to repress it. Most of the group were in agreement that the greatest geniuses would always persist, as they have in the past, with or without recognition—Rembrandt, a member noted, did so, and paid the price. For some geniuses, it was felt, the judgment of the future is the only justification; these types of excellence fall outside the range of reward by their contemporary generation.

But while accepting the view that the loneliness of the men who explore beyond the limits of their time may be beyond either influence or aid, the group thought there is great social value in recognition of the attained excellence of the lonely genius; honor and visibility may mean less than nothing to him, but can mean a great deal to the community. A member affirmed the duty of men living in a pluralistic society to make known the values in which they believe: lack of affirmation creates a vacuum which is promptly preempted by promoters of such honorees as beauty queens.

Another member reaffirmed the importance of recognizing high excellence in a society where the things that are important have rather suddenly begun to be located in the intellectual realm and where the need is great for a broadened base from which to draw

more people. Knowing about—best of all having an opportunity to work with—some one who is a prototype of what he comes to admire can cause an individual to identify himself with areas of spirit and intellect of which he may otherwise remain unaware, and in which he may become himself creative.

The range of heroes available to young Americans in their formative years should be a broad one—a member commented that there is nothing wrong with the cowboy as a hero for Americans aged twelve; the trouble is that not enough twelve year olds move on to other heroes as they move out of adolescence. Agreeing, a colleague proposed Prometheus—he who reaches for that not yet seen.

The Risks of Designating Excellence

The group recognized many problems in designating excellence:

* The enormous proliferation of awards over recent years has not infrequently put selection committees in the despairing position of saying, Look, we have to name somebody!—and signing a ballot which later turns into an albatross. In such circumstances, one participant remarked, up goes the price of shoddy!

There were words of appreciation for those who have spurned the ordinary forms of recognition. Their independence was thought a refreshing contrast to the mood of the creative artists who down the ages have regularly appeared, hat in hand and laurel on head, at the doors of contemporary donors—Haydn was cited as the perfect prototype of today's foundation man.

* While enough is probably not known about the effects of award-giving, some industrial firms have discontinued the practice within the company on the grounds that the net effect was destructive of morale; one participant described a "suggestion box" award given by a major corporation this year as causing envy and subsequent trouble in the shop that proved more costly than the company's savings through application of the suggestion; another referred to nominations for recognition within government bodies which bore such obvious signs of a finagle as to destroy the value of the award throughout the agency. A third commentator suggested that the unfavorable criticism of some organizational awards stems from the view that the award-giving management is pursuing its own ends.

* If an award is to influence excellence in others, the criteria on which it is based must be clear alike to the award-givers and to the public: the former should distinguish excellence from likeableness, good reputation, non-controversialness, and should get independent ratings that constitute real evidence rather than judgments of reputation; the latter should have enough information to avoid mistaking the award for a designation either of popularity or of partisan identification.

But the major difficulty discussed was the difficulty of maintaining a risk-taking attitude on the part of selection committees of all kinds. The honoring of excellence already attained is safe enough, and has the merits already discussed. But the recognition of excellence that is potential rather than realized—and for broadening and deepening the excellence that a society will exhibit this is the more essential—is highly speculative. Selecting bodies backing long shots must, it was affirmed, be willing to take losses, losses in terms of ridicule in the academic world, financial losses in the world of affairs. The excellent but eccentric individual—and a large per cent of the excellent will deviate in some way from accepted normalcy—can easily attract to his sponsoring

body public criticism, an unfavorable press, perhaps Congressional inquiry. Selection committees may start out bravely, saying they expect nine failures for every success, but when failures show up, caution sets in, and subsequent awards serve only to freeze current patterns, emphasizing performance within recognized canons. (This tendency, one member interjected, is particularly costly in the nuclear science and mathematics field, where excellence tends to appear very young.)

Among causes for such corrosive caution, the group listed:

* The effect of bigness on selecting bodies. Major grant-giving institutions tend to behave like public utilities. They take over from the political process and incorporate in their own decisions the concepts of balance, due process, fairness, representation of all interests—at the expense of excellence.

* Unprepared boards of directors. The largest-growing source of funds which might be used for support of excellence, the foundations set up as part of the structure of corporations in recent years and now dispensing some \$1.1 billion annually, is developing for the most part without any particular philosophy, on the basis of decisions made by boards of industrialists who have little experience in judging excellence and little understanding that in this, as well as in more familiar fields, long-run security comes from taking current risk.

* The supplanting of individual choices by committee choices. The traditional sponsors of creative arts, from kings to merchant princes, ranged in taste from good to bad, but the private patron had the courage of his convictions. In the past generation, President Eliot of Harvard, President M. Carey Thomas of Bryn Mawr, had exceptional perceptiveness in selecting excellent young professors, often over the objections of their faculties; most present college presidents are in this respect amiable men. Selection by

faculty committee is often accompanied by a fear psychosis of doing something that will be criticized—and the fear grows with the size of the committee.

The Discoverers of Excellence

Through the course of the meeting, the group returned repeatedly to the little-recognized importance of the individuals in schools, colleges, corporations, government service, the art world, who discover and evoke excellence in others. A contrast was drawn between the teacher or professor who produces books and papers and thereby advances his own career, and his colleague Mr. Chips who at the end may have little to show on his own account but who is remembered by the best of generations of students as the man who sparked the beginning of their work. Even where selection is by the committee process, the guidance of one individual may be the actual reason for the taking of intelligent risks. While instances were cited of individuals whose sparkmanship has become known—Abraham Flexner in medical education, Felix Frankfurter with his law students—it was agreed that more often than not the person responsible for touching others remains quite far down in the corporate or university structure, quite obscure in the government bureaucracy.

As the talk proceeded, members repeatedly suggested that the raising of the level of excellence in American society might achieve more leverage through recognition of these locaters of excellence than by direct awards to those located.

How to Change a Climate

In a variety of contexts, the current condition of the American climate in respect to excellence was examined with concern.

One participant, noting that a large part of the basic ideas for the development of nuclear physics in the United States was contributed by people who had been educated in Europe, queried what in other educational systems had led these men to drive forward with true power.

Another noted the contrast between current preferences in political leadership and preferences at various earlier periods in American history—the racist demagogue in contrast to the Virginia dynasty, for instance.

A third deplored the early inroads of triviality, of the frittering away of time that stunts the mind. Too late, too many people make touching but pathetic subsequent efforts to catch up to what they might have been. Recent studies of the heroes of secondary school pupils were reported with misgiving.

At the same time, the group felt that genuine curiosity and yearning for achievement exist among children and in society generally, and that much competence and some excellence could well be evoked by a raising of sights. (One participant acidly remarked that where “driver education” is a compulsory course, where a class in English engages in a literary treasure hunt to the library whose specious booty is the batting average of Yogi Berra, the attitudes of both teacher and pupil toward education are apt to be downgraded.) The failure of some thousands of the best high school students to go on to college was cited as evidence of current absence of incentive.

The extent of latent but available interest was thought to be measurable by the response to the recent TV program, Continental Classroom, a course in nuclear and advanced physics for which some 300,000 people have been willing to be before their sets from 6:30-7:00 a.m. five days a week. Credit for this course, taught by Harvey White of the University of California and others, including Nobel prize winners, is currently being given by 278 colleges and universities in 47 states.

The member outlining this development thought similar courses, in other sciences, the humanities and the social sciences, should be made available; Title 9 of the Defense Education Act authorizes the Department of Health, Education and Welfare to interest itself in the development and evaluation of new media of communication; given the present demonstration of public interest, the networks may quite possibly become willing to put such programs on at more convenient times.

Another member differed sharply, calling the passivity of the TV spectator dangerous as giving the impression that learning is transmissible without effort on the part of the recipient; a colleague agreed, saying that education is the most intensive of the arts, and can't be mass provided—only where there is a close interaction between an able student and an able teacher is a genuine education possible. (The story was cited of Professor Agassiz giving a student a stone and telling him to go away and come back when he had found out about it; when the student returned a week later, he told him to go away again, he hadn't had time to find out enough about it.)

But, retorted another member, who had a devotee of Continental Classroom in his family, such a program can give a first look at a laboratory and the kind of teaching that goes with it; it can effect a significant broadening of vistas for people with no previous exposure whatever.

Consider the quality of instruction in most current science classrooms, additional participants urged: only a fraction of those now teaching science could pass the Science Service tests; since 1950, there has been a 53 per cent decrease in the number of qualified teachers of high school science; in 1957, only 224 persons completed preparation for the teaching of high school physics, and only around 40 per cent of those qualified each year actually take teaching positions. Use of films for the teaching of science is increasing in schools, and many students getting their knowledge of science this way have done better in college than those from conventional courses. Opportunity for teachers to watch a master at work is likewise important; and it is inaccurate to say that the use of films induces solely a spectatorial attitude; some 600 of the groups watching Continental Classroom have bought textbooks and carried on work supplementary to that presented through the TV medium. Also, persons inhibited by special taboos from exhibiting interest in science—high school girls, for instance—may get a chance to find they like it.

Many of those present thought that such programs have great utility in raising mass levels, in demonstrating excellence, with all its rigors, as a contrast to the sordid banality of much of the TV that is otherwise available. The increase in knowledgeable taste in good music among many people, following the ready availability of hi-fi, was cited as a parallel development. The psychological effect, if large numbers of people enroll for TV classes, was suggested as having a general carry-over into changing social values; as such programs raise the right problems, more people will be induced to seek answers.

But while admitting some degree of relationship between mass levels of competence and appreciation, and the attainment of excellence, some members thought that the macroclimate was less important to persons of excellence than smaller surrounding microclimates which feed them ideas. It was suggested that even in the

great days of Athens, the boxer was the popular hero; that Shakespeare was not a response to the whole Elizabethan era but to smaller circles of quality. Those supporting this position reiterated their concern lest in an effort to spread-it-wide, society ignore the importance of nuclei and foci whose quality is materially higher than that of the mass.

Illustrating, a member noted that in the field of medicine, American attainment—as measured, for instance in Nobel prize awards—compares favorably with that of Europe. The medical schools of this country have remained small; their selectiveness may not have been good for general US public health, but it has produced a considerable amount of excellence at the frontiers of medical knowledge. The person making the comment expressed concern lest the advantages of a very broad approach divert interest and funds from intensive education. He thought that if the Federal government concerns itself with broad programs, the private foundations should support intensive ventures.

Current financial realities for both institutions and professors were cited by a member from the academic community who noted the small number of students who go into teaching. It is an unglamorous vocation, and institutions increasingly assess professors in terms of the kind of activity that can be put on an IBM punch card; such procedure leaves small place for the Nobel prize winner with two students. Another such member thought a promising device might be for a university, when awarding a prize to a distinguished alumnus, to give it to him for award, in turn, to the teacher or teachers who helped him most.

WHAT HONORS WOULD ENHANCE EXCELLENCE IN AMERICA?

A GAINST THIS GENERAL BACKGROUND, the last two sessions of the conference reviewed specific institutions in terms of their enhancement of excellence—both institutions now in existence, and others whose establishment might merit consideration.

The Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, the Society of Fellows at Harvard, the Woods Hole Laboratory, the Center for Advanced Studies in the Behavioral Sciences were cited as offering opportunities for advanced work by mature people—uncomplicated, it was remarked, by parallel opportunities in the humanities. Several members proposed that if half a dozen universities, particularly the large ones, had societies of fellows, linked in an overall organization, and with exchanges of personnel, a number of values might accrue. The participating bodies could provide association of the young scholar with the mature one, without academic requirements and in an atmosphere affording the free play of minds. The nation-wide character of these interchanged opportunities would compensate for the space and dispersion which penalize communication across a continent. The movement toward post-doctoral fellowships is gaining ground; its value would be enhanced by rotations among universities on a one-year basis, giving a man the advantage of the judgment of his peers at the receiving university.

What about rewarding teachers at the high-school level? Mention was made of the San Francisco high school teachers award, whose emphasis is on the students not the teacher, and the nation-wide Science Talent Search, in which the teacher is recognized along with the student. The use made by some

accredited colleges of funds given by an industrial foundation for disposition at the discretion of the president was cited: about 75 of them make awards to the best teacher, and 50 provide funds for publication of significant research; grants to teachers are increasingly awarded with student judgment included in the basis for the award.

The role of the press in giving notice to academic achievement, and in treating other forms of the attainment of excellence as newsworthy was canvassed: one member pointed out that very little attention had been given to recent awards of \$10,000 each to 10 scholars and 10 painters.

Another suggested that there is little trouble getting coverage when the release of news is handled with professional understanding; the success of the Science Talent Search, which is directed by a former newsman, and which spends a considerable sum on its publicity in comparison to its expenditure on awards, shows that the press is receptive if given adequate guidance. (While the group was meeting, Princeton got good coverage of the award of its freshman prize to Fritz Kreisler's nephew, with the superintendent of his preparatory school featured and with the school getting part of the prize as well as the boy.) A third member, saying that the question is broader than the placement of specific news stories, noted how in the many one-paper communities across the country the local climate is to a considerable extent responsive to the paper's attitude; he stressed the importance of convincing more editors and publishers of the pertinence of excellence in the national life to their overall news policy.

The group was told of a proposal which the Advertising Council has prepared after consultation with Dr. James R. Killian, Jr., special assistant to the President for Science and Technology, and Dr. Alan T. Waterman, director of the National Science

Foundation, recommending a campaign, conducted by the Council on the same basis as its other public service campaigns in the fields of safety, the Red Cross, Treasury bonds, etc., with four parallel approaches:

to opinion leaders through advertisements in magazines and newspapers, presenting the necessity for excellence, the importance of respect for learning, the need for more basic research—this would be an effort to influence the influencers;

to parents and students through a popular campaign appealing to self-interest, pointing out that employers go to the top-ranking segment for personnel, and emphasizing the satisfactions and prestige of accomplishment;

to business men and stockholders through the business press, appealing for more basic research and more backing of decisions by management to conduct it;

to the general public, through stimulation of articles and other non-advertising presentations such as cartoons and comic strips which would bring the merits of achievement before readers.

The group noted that the United States is alone among major nations in not having a national academy. The considerable number of recent suggestions for the formation of academies for various special purposes was noted:

- * Dean Rusk's proposal for a prestige organization of elder statesmen, with ex-Presidents Hoover and Truman as charter members, to bring forward long-range policy proposals;
- * Senator Henry M. Jackson's proposal for an Academy of National Policy, advisory to the government on policy problems;

* Agnes E. Meyer's proposal for an Academy of the Social Sciences.

In addition, there has been talk of an over-all academy, comparable to those of the countries of Western Europe, which might be related to such existing institutions as the American Philosophic Society; the American Academy of Arts and Letters; the American Council of Learned Societies; or the National Academy of Sciences, which has a Federal charter and also serves as the Federal government's science adviser.

Members commented on the strengths and weaknesses of various foreign academies. While a great deal of fun is made in France of the Academy and its Institutes, and while a considerable fraction of its members, one participant thought, are to be classed as pompiers, the institution was felt to have contemporary value—though not necessarily the one that Richelieu had in mind in establishing it. To what extent could such a pattern be acclimatized in the spread-out, pluralistic society of the United States?

The record of excellence in the selections by the Swedish Academy of its Nobel award winners was attributed in part to the fact that since Sweden is a small country, domestic pressures for nomination are reduced, and the prestige of making good choices based solely on merit becomes a national asset.

The Royal Society, and the selections under the British honours system were thought to benefit on the one hand from a long tradition of excellence, and on the other from the relative freedom from political pressures provided by the device of consultation, at selection time, between the government and the crown.

An American national honors system might provide medals, comparable to those now awarded for military valor; it was

suggested that a Woodrow Wilson World Fellowship, authorized by Congress, presented by the President, carrying a suitable honorarium, might become a US counterpart of the Nobel awards.

In closing, members of the group were asked to indicate areas touched on in the discussion or newly come to mind—"No matter how wild they may appear", the chairman said—which they regarded as most promising for further consideration. The replies clustered around the following main themes:

Recognition of the locators and developers of excellence, institutional and individual. Emphasis on what people do through others, in research, business, military and civil service, diplomatic, political areas as well as in the teaching profession. In the teaching profession, honor to be accorded both the institutions and the teachers of those who have achieved excellence; with such recognition ranging from the most elementary schooling to post-doctoral studies. Organization of occasions for the presentation of such honors, to achieve more recognition at grass roots levels and to emphasize step-by-step goals.

Organization of conferences with news and feature writers, editors, publishers, media executives on the recognition of excellence; also with corporations and labor groups; establishment of committees by the professional societies, the arts, etc., to work with news representatives, and of rosters of speakers on whom community groups could call for their programs.

Presentation on educational TV and radio of programs conveying at least initial insight into the subject matter of today's body of knowledge.

Provision of a variety of opportunities for both independent and group study to encourage academic advance and refreshment: through advanced study centers, including the humanities

along with other fields of learning; through faculty senior fellowships; through junior fellowships related to the senior group.

Emphasis on the early identification of excellence, perhaps through a nationwide system of high-school papers on questions posed by people of recognized excellence; use of risk money to see what happens when excellence is judged by the peer group within the high school.

Examination of possible systems of national honors, including establishment of a national academy; adaptation of the Order of Merit to this country; designation of awards in which the individual would have the honor but the award go to his institution; provision of local awards to communities—say for a race relations project—and to colleges—say for an exceptional choir; emphasis on tying the younger group into societies of distinction, such as the Engineers' Student Day, or through a junior parallel to any academy that might be set up.

Analysis of awards that are currently given, their pluses and minuses, and the effect that the giving of awards has on others than their recipients, with a view to building on what is available now.

At this final session, a participant made a proposal that a major high-level operations analysis be undertaken comprising excellence in the social and the natural sciences, the humanities and the creative and fine arts, and including most of the areas that members of the group had previously indicated should be explored. It would be carried out in four phases:

1) Review historical or factual studies of prior or existing attempts to identify excellence, nurture its development, recognize its existence and award its attainment. Against this background, attempt to develop a concept of excellence, its qualities, characteristics and manifestations. (Allowance should be made for the possibility that this concept may differentiate types of excellence, perhaps by specialties—creative arts, science, public service; by age or maturity; by identification of the individual with micro- or macro-groups of varying size and complexion.)

2) Assemble available knowledge in the social and behavioral sciences which may bear on the broad concept of excellence, including currently scattered and fragmentary pieces of investigation in psychology, sociology, and other areas of the behavioral sciences. Include studies of early identification of exceptional talent; intellectual leadership; group motivation and stimulation; the impact of reward mechanisms on the recipients of awards and on the groups to which recipients belong; the psychological bases of high motivation; analyses of tests for unusual competence or talent, especially in the intellectual area; analyses of group dynamics and factors in the development of climates of opinion in various groups.

3) Synthesize and interpret this assembled research material, using a group of high-level advisors drawn primarily from the behavioral sciences, but including representatives from the natural sciences, the social sciences, the humanities and the creative and fine arts. Present a progress report, based on this review; it should supply a better identification of the concept of excellence.

4) Propose definite lines of action and solicit foundation or other support to further them. In some cases, direct action programs might be recommended for immediate launching; in others, experimental pilot projects might be indicated.

The member making this suggestion stressed his premise that such an operation might have no more than five-to-ten percent impact on the promotion of excellence in American society. But it might initiate an improvement of intellectual tone, and inject into contemporary life a goal of high and excellent performance. For its financing, a budget running from half a million to a million dollars was suggested, and a time span of perhaps two years. Participation by a considerable number of foundations, including private business foundations, was thought desirable, in order to broaden as far as possible not only the source of funds but the basis for early attention to the purposes of the operation; it was suggested that the Edgar Stern Family Fund, alone or in collaboration with other groups such as the National Science Foundation, might be the catalyst of such an undertaking.

TOWARDS THE CLOSE OF THE CONFERENCE, an off-the-cuff poll was taken, with each of those present invited to propose from one to three names of persons he regarded as exemplifying the kind of excellence that should be more widely recognized. Some of the names were suggested as notable for the discovery and stimulation of high talent. Some have already received broad acclaim for excellence in their own right. Some are not widely known but are intensively appreciated by fellow specialists. Distribution among age groups ranged from the '20's to the '80's. Distribution among professions included literature, research, music, administration, journalism, education, medicine, industry, law, the military, the church, politics. Only three individuals received more than one vote.

While not all participants made nominations, and those who did had no opportunity to give prolonged consideration to their nominees, the list is reproduced below; since it is doubtful if any one present was familiar with all the names, they at least exemplify the range with which the conference was dealing.

Jacques Barzun (*author, critic in the arts field*)
 Alex Bavelis (*scientist, Stanford*)
 Leonard Bernstein (*conductor, New York Philharmonic*)
 George B. Berry (*Dean, Harvard Medical School*)
 Detlev Bronk (*president, National Academy of Sciences*)
 Hodding Carter (*Mississippi newspaper editor*)
 Margaret Clapp (*president, Wellesley*)
 James Conant (*educator*) (three votes)
 Peter Delye
 Erik Erikson (*Austen Riggs Center and M.I.T.*)
 C. H. Greenewalt (*president, E. I. du Pont de Nemours & Co.*)
 Learned Hand (*jurist*)
 Ernest Hemingway (*author*)
 George Marshall (*military leader*)
 Katherine McBride (*president, Bryn Mawr College*)
 Larimer Mellon (*director, Albert Schweitzer Hospital, Haiti*)
 Lars Onsager (*chemist, Yale University*)
 Gerald Peal (*editor, Scientific American*)
 I. I. Rabi (*physicist, Columbia University*)
 Frank Rosenblatt (*developer of perception*)
 John M. Russell (*executive director, Markle Foundation*)
 Jonas Salk (*specialist in medical research*) (two votes)
 Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. (*historian, Harvard*)
 Henry Knox Sherrill (*presiding bishop, Episcopal Church*)
 Herbert Simon (*specialist in industrial management, Carnegie Institute of Technology*)
 Wallace Sterling (*president, Stanford*)
 Dewitt Stettin, Jr. (*associate director, National Institute for Arthritis and Metabolic Diseases, Bethesda*)
 Adlai E. Stevenson (*politician*) (five votes)

