

October 16, 1978

Mr. Haggerty, Mr. Rockefeller, colleagues, neighbors, and friends. First of all my welcome to you to this exhilarating occasion and especially my thanks to those of you who have come a long way from all parts of the world. Some of you have traversed the even greater distance across 68th Street or York Avenue in response to a new mood of fellowship and cooperation that binds our prospective institutions. There are good reasons to ask why so many people will go to such trouble to arrange an event of this kind. ~~as I am sure that~~ no one who has ever been involved in arrangements for more than a dozen people will underestimate all of the complexities, troubles and hard decisions that have to be made in order to bring it about. I am by no means the only one who should attempt to answer that question, but from my own perspective ~~I can see its one~~ *of a ceremonial like this is* value [^] in giving pause, both to a new incumbent, and ~~to a~~ venerable institution to a necessary process of self-examination.

Now I am reminded ^{what} ~~how~~ James B. Conant wrote in his autobiography, describing the beginning of his long service as the President of Harvard University - having turned there from a distinguished career as a laboratory organic chemist. How grateful he was, in retrospect, that he ^{was inadvertently thwarted in his plan} ~~failed~~ to publish his initial thoughts on entering, ~~into that role~~ "that would have hung around my neck during the next 20 years like the albatross of the ancient mariner".

But I am going to disregard his implicit advice / as indeed I have tried to exhibit ^{other dis-} ~~my lack of~~ qualifications for an administrative role ~~in other respects~~ by trying to ~~continue to behave as a laboratory scientist. In the latter role, it is important to~~ bring ~~my~~ speculative ideas to the surface, where others as well as myself can have a better opportunity to criticize, ~~and~~ ^{even} sometimes discard them. My remarks are then in no respect settled truths, but reflect my own quandries and dilemmas in trying to understand the larger aspects of the responsibilities which have just been laid upon my

shoulders. (And let me hasten to reassure you that an inconvenient and small accident rather than those responsibilities accounts for the momentary lameness of my right extremity at this particular time.)

The fact is that institutions can hardly evade the most critical examination in the present climate of skepticism and inquiry about our entire social fabric.

If we do not examine, and sometimes reform ourselves, others will do so with even less information and insight. This is then an apt moment to ask, as we should be prepared to ask at any moment, "just what would be lost if we disappeared from the face of the earth?"

Perhaps there is even some special advantage in tackling these issues before the incumbent is encumbered by his day to day obligations, and before he is captured by his affiliation with the traditions and setting of an institution of such manifest beauty as to prejudice that essential self-examination. Still before proceeding there

are two elements of our setting worth commenting about.

First, this is the season of the equinox with its unpredictable alterations of climate and mood. In the traditions of my co-religionists, the harvest tabernacle has long been a symbolic reminder of the frailty of our human constructions of our reliance on a benign providence for the recurrence of the nourishing ^{rains} ~~reigns~~ indispensable for the cycle of our daily business. However carefully we ^{make our academic} ~~plans,~~ we must still rely on faith, on community support for the value of our work. The most meticulous academic planning will fall into dust if ^{those rains} ~~the reigns~~ fail. In the currency of modern industrial society, a one percent fluctuation in the rate of inflation over the period of time is the margin between fiscal stability and disciplined growth on the one hand and ^{an} ~~an~~ inexorable slide into insolvency on the other. We may congratulate ourselves in being far closer to equilibrium today than most other private academic insti-

tutions. With hard work and just moderate good luck we have a planning framework for vigorous survival, with the most painful and demoralizing adjustments already behind us, the painful task of my predecessor Dr. Fred Seitz. But it would take a *egregious hybris* to be complacent about the possibility of still other unforeseeable storms, and it is important that we remind ourselves ^{*unremittingly*} ~~possibly~~ of how vulnerable we are to the smallest fluctuation in public understanding of the integrity and necessity of our mission. The task we face is both a material one of matching our plans and operations to a realistic model of the resources available, and the spiritual one of sustaining our own confidence in the importance of our work and in ~~shaping and~~ communicating ^{*and shaping*} it to the best interests of the human purposes we ultimately serve.

Another setting of my remarks is framed by the fact that most of what I would want to say has already been

captured by the 75th Anniversary celebration of the Rockefeller University held just two years ago. Those accounts of the transition from the Rockefeller Institute of Medical Research to The Rockefeller University precisely describe just what brought me to this place: not to invoke radical changes, but to conserve the most vital traditions of biomedical research to be found anywhere today.

It has become almost tedious to use this indicator but of course we do take some pride that still another of our research alumni, Dr. Daniel Nathans was honored with the Nobel Prize Award announced just last week. Dr. Nathans graduated from his clinical residency into laboratory research here under the tutelage of Professor Fritz Lipmann from 1959 to 1962 and I am sure that we all join in collegial congratulations to him. We cannot be doing everything wrong, with a consistent record of recognition represented by the placement of Rockefeller University graduates in leadership roles in medical research and education throughout the country.

The fundamental agenda of the Rockefeller University is indeed basic biomedical research of substantial breadth in the tradition of the Institute.

Medical research today ~~then~~ must have a much broader perspective than that of the biochemical laboratory. We are fortunate in a faculty of world-recognized excellence in the behavioral sciences as well as experimental biology and pathology. And we can be informed by the still different insights of physics and mathematics.

Now, scientific research is one of the most enthralling games that can occupy the human mind, and those of us who can dedicate our lifework to it are privileged indeed. But the private excitement of the chase for new discovery should not obscure the ^{enormous} public stakes of the enterprise.

What we learn today about the structure of DNA and of cells and how these are knit together in a functioning organism is indispensable tomorrow for what is indeed a war against pain, disease and death. There is no fundamental reason

why we cannot learn to prevent all of the major destroyers of long and happy lives that loom over every one of us today: heart disease, cancer, mental illness, birth defects, even untimely ageing. These tragic events are not fundamental laws of matter and energy -- they are side effects of a natural evolutionary process that is less incomplete than it is indifferent to the anguish of the human consciousness as we face our own mortality.

Advances against these threats will not come cheaply. The careers of thousands of investigators are committed to them, and they in turn require a level of material support that must be justified in competition with many short-run social needs. The ground rules for the ethical involvement of human subjects in medical research are under constant scrutiny and revision. Above all, the lay citizen needs adequate information to be able to confront his own soul about the choices ahead -- whether to be a passive victim of natural disease and disability, or to seize the chance

to use new knowledge for a rational frame of healthy life. There has been much, sometimes hysterical, concern about the risks of medical research, and the need for public involvement. In my view, the most cogent risk is the very success of the basic programs of research, and the social consequences of drastic reductions, in death and illness from our major afflictions, which I have no doubt will be surmounted. No one will cast a vote against 'living'; but we have certainly not begun to face up to the social problems of the prolongation of life, even those that have already been achieved in this century.

The primary responsibility that I face in my new office is to help sustain the traditions of excellence in science for which the Rockefeller University has been justly famous for many decades. The creative intellect of its carefully selected and gifted individual members is the bedrock of accomplishment of any institution, and

they must be furnished an environment and resources with which to exercise their gifts. The substantial scope but simple structure and coherent goals of this University offer a unique challenge to scientific leadership. Let me say at once that this is precisely what has drawn me ^{perhaps with some naivete and} here, ~~with some~~ trusting reliance on the judgements of my electors that I might learn enough to be able to meet that challenge. Beyond the list of ^{our 60 independent} ~~60~~ laboratories is an overarching opportunity to bring different specialties of knowledge and styles of critical thinking together, both to enhance scientific excellence, and to confront all of these with the practical challenges of human disease. The remarkable aspects of The Rockefeller University: its appropriate size, traditions, setting, and range of studies on one campus -- encompassing molecular biology, the behavioral science and the clinic -- all offer an unparalleled opportunity for intellectual adventure and human service.

This conception of collegial effort is deeply embedded in the motivations both of our original founder and of the many individuals, corporations, and foundations that have continued to support the programs of The Rockefeller University. At its inception the federal support of biomedical research mediated primarily through the National Institutes of Health was implemented according to similar ideals. Such support is absolutely indispensable and in fact government grants account for slightly more than 50% of the annual operating budget of this University at the present time.

It is predictable but lamentable that this level of federal involvement inevitably comes to be associated with an

egregious degree of centralized management. Most of this funding is directed to the "purchase" of specified research results, packaged in projects, as if major discovery could be marketed according such specifications. The project grant system, as admirably as it has supported major innovations and discoveries in the past, is now administered in ways that

threaten to disintegrate institutions, to discourage the confluence of creative ideas, and even to introduce serious obstacles into the opportunistic collaboration of basic scientists with a variety of clinical applications. One of the most important functions of a privately endowed institution of this kind is to render an effective counter-example to the services-rendered approach to the support of research in favor of ^{venture capital, towards} the identification of creative individuals and of collegial frameworks for reaching the same social ends.

The need for collegiality and ^{the alleviation of in-} ~~external~~ obstacles to its realization also extend to the relationship between institutions.

Happily situated at the center of an extraordinary complex of medical institutions -- being literally now in the shadow of New York and Memorial Hospitals, and immediate neighbors to Cornell Medical College and the Sloan-Kettering Research Institute -- we have a remarkable opportunity to

match our own intellectual style and skills and dedication to the most basic science, with the diverse problems and resources of our neighbors. They are deeply preoccupied with medical education and the care of patients on a large scale . These are social values of undeniable worth, but distinct from what we can offer in tracing the underlying causes of disease. We are correspondingly under an obligation to focus on preventive applications ; but I fear it will be quite a while before the hospitals are out of business. We must work together to meet our categorical social responsibilities and I am delighted that even in the few weeks of my tenure a number of measures for realistic partnership have been started with the equally enthusiastic concurrence of our neighbors.

In closing, permit me to recall having been educated myself in New York, having had the privilege of access to Stuyvesant High School and Columbia University and Medical

School, as well as to the City's Public Library System and many other institutions that foster intellectual development. Having been away for many years, and now returned, I may feel especially keenly how rich are these network of sources. We are really all students in a metropolitan super-university, unequalled in opportunity anywhere in the world. I will certainly be doing all I can to enjoy this fare for myself and my colleagues, and to seek ways in which our own specialized institution can most efficiently cooperate with others truly "pro bono humani generis", for the benefit of mankind. I am indeed grateful to the Board of Trustees, to my colleagues, and to the community of our supporters and well wishers for having created such an opportunity.