

Interview with John E. Anderson
President, CNC
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Jane C. Webb

Q. As I understand it, you were a candidate for the president of your institution in Georgia and you felt uncomfortable with the way things were going . . .

A. That's about right. So I started looking for a job and there seemed to be a good deal of potential for growth and development here and a good bedrock, I thought, for quality. As the community itself would grow and develop, the institution itself would thrive. And I have seen nothing in the data that has demonstrated that is not correct. This institution has developed as had the community.

Q. Then you don't think we have headed on a downhill slope?

A. I see no evidence of a downhill course under any circumstances. You need to look at the data. Our SATs are up--in 1980, the freshman men averaged 943 and the women 905. In 1985, freshmen men averaged 954 and the women 949. And our enrollments are doing all right too. We did suffer a little decline last year, but we have increased enrollments in the traditional aged students and their presence has transformed the institution in a traditional direction.

When I came here, we had no foundation and no assets. The foundation started in 1980 with 0 assets and we now have over \$600,000. The direct benefit to the instruction area is obvious, in the Brauer professorship, in the Falk professorship, in the () professorship, in the Patrick Scholarships, in the Green Scholarships, and so forth. And there are two new buildings here, the science building and the student center, and they weren't even in the Governor's budget in 1980. We have established a rapport with the Legislature--even including Hunter Andrews--at least he is not in opposition to certain things.

Q. Aren't you sick of this place?

A. If I were sick of this place, I would be sick of Academe. The turnover rate for college presidents is about five years, which tells you something about the system. There is something in the system that is wrong, something that drags itself down until it is . . . what is the word . . . imploding.

No, I believe the place still has potential, it God damn well does. It could be the center for educational good for this growing area. And its potential is probably greater because of the dynamojam (?) effect, the self

reinforcing of growth on growth. But in spite of its problems, it's still here and maybe someone else can give it that kind of leadership.

The truth is that we are in an area of a declining industry. Undergraduate education is declining. You look around and you see it (the College) in the middle of a growing area. What should it do? It should serve the market. It should offer whatever is needed. A Master's degree. Maybe a Doctorate. Whatever is necessary. It should serve the area and it should have priority in that area.

Q. Was the choice of CNC a good one for you?

I have taken time in my career to look at other educational institutions and in that respect it really has been worthwhile. It has broadened me and given me a perspective on how other areas of education operate. That is especially true since Georgia has a centralized system in which the institutions were only separate units--because the money went to the system itself. Coming from that background in which you do not ask the legislature for money, coming into the diametrically opposite setting where each institution was autonomous was quite useful.

Q. How is that useful?

A. Now I know how other states operate and I have been, in a way, at the antipodes, so, depending on opportunity and circumstances. . . but each system has its own strengths and weaknesses.

Q. Surely one of them is better than the other.

A. If I were a taxpayer and a layman and I had the choice, I would recommend that you go with the system. There is the greatest likelihood that the taxpayer would have access to a more even educational experience. It is not necessarily that the high spots would be ground down. But the taxpayer would have mobility within the state that would be of great advantage. If he wanted to move, he would find uniform floor standards everywhere.

Georgia has the finest system of governance of higher education in the U. S. because it is constitutionally protected. The university system of Georgia--not the University of Georgia system!--is part of the constitution of the State and is therefore not a creation of the legislature, and so funds go to the system. And then academics who have risen through the system spread the money around and they have been fairly even-handed--although of course some hands are bigger than others--in the distribution.

Now if I were in a growing and powerful area, where I had powerful alumni and legislators who would support me--like Northern Virginia--I would

opt for the Virginia approach. Because what is done is done through the legislature and the governor and so the power politics that a president is able to play and muster redounds on his school.

Q. In granting the honorary degrees, one perhaps observes a bias toward people who do not represent the gentry . . .

A. No, what you see is a sort of spectrum--a balance. Political leaders, fine, gifted people like Alec Brown and Mr. Crabtree, captains of industry like Ed Joseph and Ed Campbell, and the Board has recognized that Ed Joseph, for instance, has contributed greatly to the growth and development of this area. If you look at the whole spectrum, I think you'll see what I mean - a balance.

Q. Are there people you particularly admire here?

A. Many faculty have contributed and worked hard in the vineyard, but I think of a person--Keith McLoughland--as critical person in the continued service and success of this institution as anyone. I think he is terribly bright, and he undertands how to sift the trivia from the critical, although he still responds to the smaller concerns. He works well with people. And he absorbs punishment as well as any human I have ever seen. His stamina is superb. He has done miracles.

Eagle is in the same ballpark. Without his grasp of the total operational side of this institution, we'd be back in the Cal Hones area, with a paper bag. Jesus!

By and large, I think the management team is really good. That's one reason the faculty can only take potshots. There is no real target.

Q. If you had one wish, what would it be?

A. That we could focus on what we have all been striving for and what we can do, rather than dissipate our energy in destructive factions. On what we share, not on strife.