How did I make a bridge between my work as an historian and the tough job of being Planning Director in a city like Detroit? It was part of the Puritan creed in which I was raised that life was lived in community and that I had a responsibility to participate in the affairs of the community. For reasons explained in Chapter 1, the word "community" for me included every part of the world but especially my own country. Detroit was a very important part of my country. Moreover, it was splendidly suited as a case study to explore the kinds of questions outlined in Parts 2 and 3 of this book. Because I had been interested in the city from the time I first arrived there, I was invited to give a speech on November 2, 1978 at a symposium celebrating the inauguration of the university's new president, an historian. That speech follows.

CHAPTER 21

The Urban University in Its Community

Although there can be do doubt that urban universities are now the institutions of higher education having need for special assistance, just as the agricultural colleges were such places 100 years ago, the analogy should not be stretched too far. After all, at the time the agricultural land grant colleges were established, farmers were over half of the American work force. We would not want urban universities to accomplish the same results for urban workers.

In my opinion, jobs are the central concern of the majority of the students who come to urban universities, and indeed they are of central concern to this whole generation of students wherever they go to college. College-educated students are finding it difficult to find jobs commensurate with their education. The state of Michigan, I am told, has a brain drain, as many of the students we educate with Michigan tax dollars go to other parts of the country to look for work.

Some people might say, if there are not enough jobs for college-educated students then why not save tax dollars by cutting back on the numbers we send to college? We academicians could reply simply by saying that higher education is valuable for its own sake, whether the focus be on physics, poetry, or Swahili. I believe that is true—that education is its own reward and needs no other justification but its own excellence. But I happen to have a 23-year old daughter with a brand new master's degree, slugging it out in New York City right now trying to find a job in her chosen field. And I know how difficult and sometimes even heart-breaking the job search can be. For the sake of our students, as well as for ourselves and for the city, the university needs to help the city create jobs. And this concern of ours is in turn an important asset to the city.

If Detroit is to grow and prosper in the future, it needs to attract or spawn the kind of new industry that grows quickly, employs large numbers, and produces export products. That kind of industry today is high-technology industry. As my colleague, Wilbur Thompson, has frequently pointed out, to develop new industry based on high technology, the city needs a critical mass of the kind of brainpower that helped attract new industry to Boston or to Stanford in the last few decades. It makes no sense to export our students to other states, or to fail to produce the students in the first place, when that kind of brainpower is needed

here at home. It is better that we give more thought to the question of how to put our college graduates immediately into service.

Most economists agree that future growth of urban jobs will be not so much in industry as in white-collar goods and services. Forty years ago, almost half of Detroit's labor force was in manufacturing; in 1970 that figure had dropped to 37.4 percent. Forty years ago, only 4.4 percent of Detroit's labor force was college-educated; in 1970 that figure was 9.5 percent, more than double. And the city's economy has already embarked on an accelerated white-collar and services emphasis: look at the state and federal government buildings downtown, the Renaissance Center attracting tourism, the greatly enlarged Medical Center, and indeed Wayne State University itself, the ninth largest employer in Wayne County. The city needs a great university in its midst to help accelerate the process of creating a new kind of economic base. Otherwise, after exporting our college-educated young people, we will find ourselves having to pay a premium to import others from other parts of the country.

American urban history is full of success stories comprising equal parts natural advantage and brash enterprise. Chicago built itself from a few wooden shacks on a marsh to a great metropolis in just a few decades, while St. Louis, older, prouder, and more cultured, sat still and let itself be surpassed. Crude at first, Chicago then attracted some of the greatest American poets and philosophers. Galveston was much more important than Houston in the 19th century, but it sat still while Houston moved ahead through greater enterprise. While having some of the crudity of a boom town, Houston is now also becoming a center of art and science. Economic prosperity and high culture go together. Florence at the time of the Renaissance was a thriving industrial city. Shakespeare's London was in the process of becoming a great port. Cities rise and fall, and frequently enterprise or the lack of it helps determine that rise or fall.

We are the inheritors of such acts of enterprise, for surely the fortunes of Detroit have been tied to the fortunes of the auto industry. But we are at a watershed when a new surge of effort in new directions is called for. Detroit has many natural advantages: its port location, its abundance of water, its good supply of various kinds of energy, the affluence of its metropolitan region, its concentration of know-how and technology, its sturdy people. We also, of course, have our share of special problems, but many of them stem simply from insufficient hope and opportunity for disadvantaged people. We cannot turn our back on people with problems, for to do so would not only be lacking in compassion, but would also be a lapse of responsibility and a symptom of the failure of our system. In today's center cities, we are learning to cherish and refurbish old houses. Surely we can do as much for people. In our throwaway culture, in the past we have treated people the way we treat old pop bottles or

worn-out autos. But people are a resource, and we cannot afford to treat any of our resources as if they were expendable.

Detroit's kinds of problems can be found in many other parts of the world, and if we can solve them here, the multiplier effects will be enormous. Detroit is a world city, whether it realizes it or not, and to whatever degree we succeed, the message of our success will be heard with gratitude everywhere.

The university must assist the city to turn itself around, for as Wayne's new president, Thomas N. Bonner, has said, "If the city fails, we all fail." But there is a spiritual as well as practical aspect to our utility. Sunday's *Free Press* had a story about the Detroit Council of Arts that quoted Deputy Mayor Richard Simmons: "The city must have a soul and that soul is through the arts." Soul also expresses itself through the mind, and as Bonner has also said, "There is no such thing as a great metropolis without a great university." Soul, of course, is important for its own sake, but to be characteristically American about it, we can also note that soul assists economic prosperity. As a U. S. Department of Commerce report has noted, "Cultural resources are 'people magnets' introducing a vitality which attracts other businesses, tourists, and other consumers . . . Cultural resources are labor intensive. They have a capacity to absorb the full range of skill levels." And they are environmentally benign—they neither pollute nor loot the environment. They can be translated into dollar values, as the four-week theatre strike in New York showed in 1975. The strike cost Broadway theatres $3,420,000 in lost revenues, and it also cost taxi drivers, parking lots, and restaurants an additional $2,708,000 in lost revenues. In other words, the Broadway theatres normally generate over $1,500,000 a week in economic activity.

The fact that Wayne State University is in the heart of the cultural center gives it a certain centrality not only in relation to the inner city, and the metropolitan region, but also the whole state, since Detroit is Michigan's largest city. Therefore, the quality of what we do here speaks for and reflects upon not only the inner city, but also the metropolitan region and the state; and it speaks to the world condition, the human condition.

When we say cities are the new frontiers, we have to elaborate upon what we mean by the cliché. Urban places have been around for over 5,000 years, but until very recently they were small islands in a great non-urban sea. Now, all at once the whole world is becoming urban. Our suburbanization has been, in a sense, an attempt to avoid confronting the new and essential urbanism of mankind. Those of us who take our stand in central cities are pioneers in an historic act of confronting mankind's new condition. A frontier is a place where change is taking place, but it can have a conservative effect, too. The daring and change that America's western frontier required and fostered were often used to preserve,

conserve, and if necessary restore traditional American values, while making them workable under new conditions.

Cities are places where we roll up our sleeves, look our problems squarely in the face, and work to solve them, deriving our reward from the pride that comes from doing a difficult but important job. Cities should be places where we recognize that the problems of today are not the same as those of yesterday, and where we debate and hopefully resolve the great value issues of our time: what it means to have an aging population, what it means to have women become half of the work force, what it means to be on the edge of a cyberneticized society run by computers, what it may mean if our solar energy comes from space-platform relay stations, what it means if most of the world is socialist or state capitalist. We must not only recognize the problems of today but also anticipate tomorrow's problems, because solving problems takes a long lead time, as Wilbur Thompson has reminded me. It is not too soon to be thinking about 1990 or even the year 2000. The year 2000, I must remind you, is only 21 years away.

The university's role is not to resolve all the questions and tell people what to think, but to bring in information, call attention to new facts, bring long-range and wide-space perspective to bear, analyze questions, help define issues, focus on salient factors, point out value choices, help anticipate consequences. In playing that role, we should not equate "urban" solely with problems. "Urban" means excitement and adventure, beauty and power, grace and joy, opportunity and civilization, and human collaboration.

The main component is the spirit we bring to bear, and here I would like to quote from a resolution adopted by the UAW Constitutional convention in 1966: "There is an overwhelming need for men to reassert their predominance over events and things and impersonal bureaucracies. There is a need not so much for beautification as for beauty, for while beautification may be a superficial prettying up and a sweeping under the rug, beauty is an integral part of the life we want to lead."

In analyzing society, academics are fond of using what we call models. For example, we talk about the differences between the consensus, the pluralist, and the conflict models of society, and the same models might be applied to universities. Those who apply the consensus model think our society is unified and that the university should be an elite institution training people of special wisdom to speak for and guide the rest of society. Those who think society is comprised of pluralist components believe the university is what Clark Kerr called the multiversity, training people to be technical experts, to serve various groups, to be on tap but not on top. Those who use the conflict model to analyze society think that social change must come about through class struggle, and think of the university as an arm of the class struggle. We must recognize

that our professional schools are shaped in the pluralist model, whether we like it or not, but I accept neither the consensus nor the conflict model.

In analyzing urban political systems in the Midwest, Daniel Elazar distinguished between three types: **1**) the system fostered by former Southerners who thought of the city or county as a place where established families could perpetuate their power and position; **2**) what might be called the Mayor Daley model, where the city government and politics were run by professional politicians and the purpose of politics was to distribute loaves and fishes; or **3**) the old town meeting idea of a community in which all citizens had a share and a responsibility. Personally, I prefer the community model best, both for the city and for the university. Community does not mean consensus administered by and for an elite, nor succumbing to technologies and bureaucracies, nor class struggle. It means sharing and contributing in an atmosphere of mutual trust. It means responsibility and commitment. This concept does not imply that universities should neglect the sciences and arts, omit Greek and Latin and courses in Chinese and African civilization and make everything immediately practical. But it also does not imply that we should behave as if we were colonial expatriates somehow detached from the "natives" around us. The word "community" contains all the heights, and all the nuances; it embraces all the excellences, including the excellences of immediacy. It also has room for compassion and neighborliness and kindness, for humor, love, and simplicity, as well as profundity.

The central issue seems to be analogous to the classic psychological question of identity. Each person's identity is unique and determines how we answer the question: who am I? Identity flows from an awareness of and acceptance of roots and leads in the existential sense to a simple and joyful "being here and now." Since we are here, Detroit is part of our roots. An urban university gains its identity from being proud of its heritage and its uniqueness, and from accepting the responsibility of its situation. Generosity of spirit and self-interest are not at odds, but reinforce one another. If we have a sure sense of our own identity, we can give of ourselves to our city. And bread cast upon the urban waters will come back to us multifold.