

The theme of the current issue is Education and Technology. Originally we intended this issue simply to carry a number of articles describing activities and programs illustrating imaginative uses of technology in metropolitan universities. I am grateful to John Strange, long time friend and colleague, for having convinced me that such articles, however useful they may be, are not sufficient. I came to agree with him that it is appropriate to raise a number of fundamental questions as to whether the new technology constitutes merely more effective means to reach traditional ends in traditional settings, or whether we are into a much more fundamental change with potentially drastic implications for higher education.

In his own article on the Cultural Revolution, and in other contributions he has brought together in this issue, John confronts the reader with these questions — and I am convinced that because he does so, this issue of the journal is of unusual importance to our readers and to our eponymous institutions. My trouble — and it is a personal one reflecting on me and not on the content of the articles — is that being of the wrong generation, I acknowledge the questions but find myself unable even to attempt a response. I have given up my goose quill and am word processing these notes. I have even learned to use e-mail, but do so clumsily, easily stymied by unexpected problems. Beyond that lies unknown and unexplored territory where I lack both sense of direction and sense of proportion needed to exercise proper judgment. I am on the wrong side of a generational gap that I will not be able to cross.

I make a point of this not in order to emphasize personal failings, or to offer any excuses. Rather, I do so because I suspect that many of our readers share my ignorance and bewilderment, equally unable to assess whether we are facing fundamental change, and, if so, whether it is toward a utopian vision or a dreaded nightmare. I hope that the articles on Education and Technology in this issue will, at least, convince them that there are very weighty issues to be examined, and that, in doing so, they need to call on the fresher perspective of the younger generation to whom the concepts in question are familiar and susceptible to sober examination. We cannot, as our generation is prone to do — and indeed as I found myself muttering when first reading some of the manuscripts — dismiss futuristic projections of the impact of technology as wildly exaggerated and not worthy of serious consideration.

That is particularly important because of the message contained in another contribution to this issue of Metropolitan Universities: the Forum piece based on the address delivered by Governor Tucker of Arkansas at the recent National Conference on Metropolitan and Urban Universities held in Little Rock. It is a sobering text which once again underscores the need for us in higher education to reexamine our most basic purposes and processes. If in response we take a defensive posture, entering into a mode of denial, then we may be forced by external pressures into quite unacceptable changes — or else we may become marginal and irrelevant, our place taken by other mechanisms and organizations. Instead, we ought to take the initiative if we wish to adapt in ways consistent with our own values. And part of the reexamination that we should undertake is to explore the kinds of questions John Strange and other authors in this issue pose for us.

This issue contains, once again, a contribution from abroad. Dr. Wilson describes the extent to which educational policy in England is influenced indirectly but effectively by government funding methods. The details are specific to this coun-

try, but the overall message is of interest to anyone likely to be affected by the intended or unintended consequences of state and national fiscal actions. The article is part of our ongoing interest in making this journal truly an international forum for discussion of issues and interests that cut across national boundaries. The meeting in Little Rock featured a panel discussion with participants from Canada and the United Kingdom that indicated how much we have in common in spite of certain basic differences. Because of that, a program committee consisting of Presidents Leon Boothe from Northern Kentucky State University and Don Gerth from California State University at Sacramento, Provost Blaine Brownell from the University of North Texas, and I are working with individuals in Great Britain to plan an international conference on metropolitan universities in 1996 or 1997. Stay tuned: we will keep you posted.