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'Cities and Education'

My contribution to this panel centres on cities and education, and I will concentrate on universities, or higher education, although to me the whole domain is important, and universities are not the apex of it all. It is by no means an original suggestion that cities have earned much of their importance, perhaps from the beginning, in being centres of education. At the beginning of the 21st century, nonetheless, the link between these two entities is being established in a new way. Glasgow, like my own city of Canberra, is well poised to take advantage of the connection.

Humanity is moving, as this audience will know very well, into a predominantly urban existence. By 2020, it is estimated, two in every three human beings will live in cities. The powerful movement from the countryside into towns and cities is not a new phenomenon in Europe, of course, where it began in the 18th century. In the New World it was a 19th century event, and for much of Asia, one of the 20th century. Yet in China, India, Central America and Africa there will be massive shifts of this kind for at least the next quarter century and more.

In the developed world, because of an existing transport and communications infrastructure that is continually being improved, it is often hard to say where cities begin and end, and there can be an extraordinary amount of commuting. Cities have grown into one another: Japan's Osaka, for example, includes Kobe and Nara, once distinct cities in themselves, and contains more than 22 million people.

My interest today is not in mega-cities, though my former responsibility, the University of Canberra, educated people in the intricacies of managing such behemoths. It is in the capacity of cities to provide the best environment for a community's education. That capacity is great, and is increasing. But it comes at some cost, and the cost poses a dilemma for those who govern nations.

I can summarise the dilemma like this: the city provides a range of possibilities and options and supporting facilities that is quite beyond that which can be provided by a town or village. In the same way, some countries provide such options in a fashion completely beyond that provided in other countries. Increasingly, all children are completing high school. The old pyramidal shape of secondary education, in which the numbers attending decline throughout the senior years, is being replaced by a tendency towards universal secondary education, and increasingly, universal post-secondary education. It is happening throughout the world: in the 1990s there was at least a doubling of

higher education enrolments right across the world. On the whole, the higher quality of facilities and opportunities in the city leads to a movement of young people towards it. The better educated they are, the less likely it is that they will find jobs back in their village or town. The consequences for the villages and towns are a loss of 'community', a loss of skills, a noticeable 'ageing' of the communities outside the cities as young people leave and are not replaced, and a sense of frustration and depression. The same kinds of consequences occur as a result of student movement across countries.

These changes are occurring in company with several others. The 'globalisation' of our world has had a profound effect upon patterns of trade and manufacture. Glasgow has known several major shifts of this kind in the past three hundred years. More are in prospect. Human knowledge has increased by about fifty times in the past half-century, and that increase has been one of the dynamos producing globalisation. In developed societies there are now few truly 'unskilled' jobs, and they are poorly paid. 'Real' jobs require extensive education and training. Fortunately, it turns out that all of us are intelligent enough to profit from extensive education and training, and I would like to spend a moment or two talking about that most important change.

When I was an undergraduate, almost fifty years ago, it was understood that only a few human beings were 'really intelligent', an attribute defined technically as the possession of an IQ (intelligence quotient) of 140 or more. Only about 2 per cent of 18 year olds went to university at that time, and only 2 per cent seemed to have an IQ of 140+. My working life since then has in one sense been a huge demonstration that this view of intelligence was simply wrong. In many developed countries today somewhere between 40 and 50 per cent of the 18-year-old cohort attend university, and another large proportion attends technical colleges and institutes. In my own country something like three 18 year olds out of four are in post-secondary education or training of some kind. The outlook for future generations is straightforward: fifteen to twenty years of education and training before they can expect to have the kind of job that can in time provide financial independence.

I should say at once that I do not believe that this is simply credential inflation or that standards have slipped. Rather, I believe that we used to have a cripplingly inadequate understanding of human intelligence, and that it is being replaced by something saner and more real. The work of Howard Gardner, a neurophysiologist and educator of Harvard University, points towards all human beings being equipped with the same range of 'intelligences' (he suggests that there are 8 1/2 of them). One of them, what Gardner terms the 'logico-mathematical', is the principal basis for the old IQ test. The others cover musical, spatial, linguistic, inter-personal, intra-personal, physical, naturalist and spiritual capacities. The point is, we all have them; the problem is, we only have one life, and it takes time to develop any of these capacities very well. Without going much further into this domain I ought to say, for the sake of those for whom Gardner's work is not familiar, that children tend to present at an early age with one of them, and that tends to be developed quickly because parents and teachers encourage it. But they have the other capacities too; we all have them.

Gardner's work helps us to understand another of the powerful changes of the last fifty years. Our modern civilisation depends enormously on an interconnected web of 'professions', associations of skilled practitioners whose work is based on a body of knowledge that is continually being updated. My guess is that the world of the mid to late 21st century will consist of an interacting community of highly educated people who provide that community with the skilled services that such a society will need. There will be even fewer unskilled people than there are now, and their existence will point to social problems that require solution, not dismissal with the remark that 'Oh well, some people aren't as bright as others'.

It will be clear, I think, that the world I am pointing to is a largely urban world. Of course, what is to count as 'urban' will change, and there may be a faster move from 'urban' areas to 'rural' ones if communications make that possible. If you will allow me to say so, that trend seems much more possible in Scotland than it does in Australia, where the distances between settlements can be very large. Nonetheless, it seems to me that these processes contain social and political tensions, and in my concluding remarks I will point to some of these and suggest some remedies.

First, the movement into and around cities involving young people who are seeking education and training seems quite unlikely to stop. It is an important form of migration, both from within one's country and from outside it. Education is one of society's principal recurrent activities (in Australia higher education has been defined for industrial relations as an 'industry') and it is a very useful one for a city. It is non-polluting, stimulates other education-related industries, improves the cultural life of the city, and tends to lead to sporting prowess as well. In my own city of Canberra, which happens to be Australia's national capital, around ten per cent of the whole population in some sense work at a university, and the city contains seven universities or parts of universities and a large technical institute as well. Glasgow has been noted as an education centre for a long time, so I probably don't have to dwell on this virtue.

Second, cities need to welcome and encourage these young people. They have special needs and suffer some disadvantages. They often are relatively poor, lack relatives or other contacts, need cheap housing and transport, and see the city environment, at least to begin with, as simply instrumental to their new lives. Some will not be familiar with the ordinary life of a Western city, some will be speaking a new language, and some will be miserably homesick. There is a major international movement in university students, despite the events of September 11th last year. The University of Canberra had few foreign students in the 1980s. Today around 12 per cent of its enrolment comes from foreign students, and they come from around one hundred countries. I am sure that Glasgow has a comparable story, although I know that the influx started much earlier here.

Third, these students will be global citizens. I have come to the view that the 21st century will know three kinds of people, 'local', 'regional' and 'global', who will

be defined this way in terms of their career and recreation movements. The world's universities will be the principal source of 'global' people, and foreign students have already started on that path. Look after them! You will want them, when they have achieved fame and eminence elsewhere, to remember your city with affection and respect, to encourage their family members to come here, to support trade links, and so on.

Fourth, and finally, make it easy for them to experience Scottish life in all its richness. There are too many foreign students who never really come to understand what life in Australia is like for Australians. Part of the reason is that they are too busy. But part also is our own reluctance to find out about them. We Australians are a tolerant lot, all things considered, but not greatly given to welcoming the stranger into our own homes. Perhaps we have a good deal to learn from you.

In short, I propose to you that the city is likely to become an even more important educational focus than it has been in the past, that its students will come from a wider range of countries and a wider range of sources within the country concerned, and that the educational endeavour is one which every city should cherish. If we manage their experience well, we can look forward to those students being ambassadors for our city wherever they go. That will be good for the city, and if it occurs in every city, good for the world too.