INTERVIEW I

DATE: May 1, 1985

INTERVIEWEE: LEWIS B. MAYHEW

INTERVIEWER: Janet Kerr-Tener

PLACE:

Tape 1 of 1, Side 1

K: This is an oral history interview with Lewis B. Mayhew, professor of Higher Education at Stanford University. I am Janet Kerr, and today's date is May 1, 1985.

Professor Mayhew, I would like to start with a brief biographical review, and I think I'd let you do the talking on this.

M: Well, I'm a native of Illinois. I was born in the central part of Illinois but reared in Chicago on the campus of a private military school. I attended that private military school, the University of Illinois for a bachelor's degree and part of the master's degree, then allowed the war to intervene. I served in the United States Army from second lieutenant to major where I got my overseas experience in the European theater of operations. When I returned from military service, I finished off the master's degree at Illinois but elected to go to Michigan State for the very intellectual reason that at Michigan State I could get a brand-new apartment and a job as an instructor, so I left Illinois, and we moved to Michigan State in 1947.

K: Yes.

M: I served that institution from 1947 to 1959. During all this time, my professional interests moved capriciously around. I was originally trained as an historian with my master's and doctoral theses in military history. When I got to Michigan State, I taught world history and was a member of what was called the Board of Examiners, and that was an agency designed to build comprehensive examinations for the program of General Education. I happened to get along very well with the department head, Paul L. Dressel, and Glen--the--when George Zucht, about whom I think you know a good bit, wanted to spend some of the funds which were generated by the creation of the ETS [Educational Testing Service?]--yes, Dressel and I were asked to conduct the cooperative studied evaluation in General Education, and as I got into that, I became more and more involved in psychometrics, and--but at the same time, I became involved in institutional appraisal, and so over time, I drifted away from the professional study of history to psychometrics and then into what was then an emerging field of institutional research. When I finally did leave Michigan State, it was to go to the University of South Florida to help in the creation of that place as--with two titles: Director of Evaluation of Services, my psychometric, and Director of Institutional Research and Long Range Planning.

K: But you actually got your Ph.D. in history at Michigan State--

M: --in history at Michigan State--

K: --and then through a combination of events and people got involved in the educational research--?

M: Yes. To quickly end this, I was part of the central administration at the University of South Florida and had taken some time off to do some consulting at various places around the country, and we came out as far as the West Coast to UCLA and at Berkeley, and while out

here, somebody heard me give a speech and asked if I minded if they recommended me to Stanford University. I said no, it was free country. This was in late July. Stanford got interested in me filling a position they'd been unable to fill, and I was appointed at the October board meeting and came out here February 1.

K: Of 1962?

M: Yes.

K: Yes, and--

M: And have been here ever since.

K: And now along the way between your departure from Michigan State and your arrival at Stanford, and then after you came to Stanford you served as a consultant to other organizations and--

M: Yes. This is a--this sort of thing that at given times are bad for us--a kind of mushroom effect. You give a speech one place, and three other places want you to come to their place. Or you write a paper and people read it, and they want you to come and consult with them. Or you offer a seminar for college presidents, and other college presidents want you to do something for their faculties. So--

K: Yes. Now you were a member of the College Entrance Examination Board, is that right, from 1962 to 1970?

M: I was consultant to the College Board. It seems my whole career is these accidents, but it also shows you how the system operates. I had been invited to give a speech on institutional research to one of the College Board seminars some summer. So I went and gave that speech, and after the session, we went in to lunch, and two of the senior officers in College Board insisted they wanted to sit with me. So they sat down, and they told me what

they had in mind, that the College Board was establishing regional offices, and they had established a regional office out here. But the person they had selected to be director of it had no research experience, no scholarship experience, and they wondered if I would become consultant to sort of backstop this individual.

K: Okay, I see. And then you also were a member of a United States Office of Education Commission on Graduate Studies. When was that? Do you recall?

M: Probably about 1967-1968. Wayne Rice, whom I had known when he was president of the University of Florida, had left the presidency and headed up a section on Graduate Education in the United States Office of Education, and he put together this commission to advise the United States office, and he had known me first of all. Secondly, he had known that I had completed a study of graduate work and professional education for the United States Office of Education, the National Science Foundation, and the National Institutes of Health.

K: So you were--the logical choice for that

M: So in this way--the things work out.

K: And then--also, you've done that--you were active--you were president of the American Association for Higher Education in 1967 to--

M: Some [inaudible].

K: --and you've been active in the AAUP, American Association of University Professors for many years.

M: Until I quit.

K: Until you quit. And why did you quit?

M: Unionization.

K: Oh.

M: I objected to the AAUP moving in the direction of collective bargaining, so I quit and never participated since.

K: Yes. Now could you--would you briefly describe your areas of research, the things that you've published on?

M: Oh, let's see. I've published a fair amount on curricula matters. I've published very few undergraduate-graduate professional. I've published a fair amount on innovation, experimentation and the like. I've published a reasonable amount in psychometrics. I've published a good bit about administration.

K: And this was more toward the ends of--

M: Yes.

K: --in the latter years of your career.

M: And I've--like everybody else in the racket, I wrote my one book about the radical students of the 1960's.

K: Yes.

M: That was called *Arrogance on Campus*. Everybody who was doing anything had to write a book about students. And then I've written a good bit of [inaudible] stuff.

K: Yes. And one of your books on graduate and professional education was for the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education--

M: Yes. Yes.

K: --and that was published in 1973, and then you also have done some--I'm not sure how to describe them--reflective commentary pieces on higher education change taking place and

the differences between the institutions and institutional environments in the 1970s and in the 1980s, and--

M: Yes. There's a--one little cluster of writings, some of which I know are available because somebody did a full bibliography on me.

K: Yes.

M: I don't know whether you've seen that.

K: I haven't seen that. I saw it in the card index in the library.

M: But for, I guess, maybe about five years--no, about three years--I was director of something they called the "North Central Study on Liberal Arts Education". And this was really a psychiatric service for about eighty-five struggling liberal arts colleges. In that capacity, three years director and then a couple of more years continuing to edit what was called the *North Central Bulletin*, each issue, which came out nine times a year, I would try to write an editorial reflecting on the way I saw education going, so I did that, and there's quite a bunch of stuff for five years. Yet I was also early involved with the American Association for Higher Education and through it the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, column called "So They Say" about higher education--and then I also was invited to do an annual review of the literature of higher education, and then *Change* magazine came along, and I was invited to run a column in that. There was supposed to be--there were supposed to be two of us. One was Harold Taylor, former president of Sarah Lawrence, and me, but Taylor never got around to much, so I ended up writing most of those columns for about three or four years.

K: Yes, and I think we should add for the record that you did quite a bit of work for the Southern Regional Educational Board, as well during the 1960s. Okay.

Well, I'd like to begin our questions on the subject of the White House Conference on Education, which was held July twentieth to the twenty-first, over twenty years ago in 1965. You were a consultant to that White House Conference on Education. Is that right, and what did that involve?

M: [Laughter] I still don't know. At that time I was a very visible, aggressive, reasonably young scholar, who was traveling a hell of a lot, and I was on a trip. I think I was on a trip to Washington, D.C. I didn't even know that they were going to have a presidential commission, and I got a call from Lyle Nelson, who had been at the University of Michigan the same time I was at Michigan State and who came out here as Director of the University Relations for Stanford, and Lyle had been invited by Gardner to be the leg man for the conference.

Gardner was the titular head, but Nelson became the leg man. And one of the jobs of the leg man was to flush out a roster of consultant writers and then panelists, and so Lyle called me and asked me if I would serve as the consultant and do a paper on innovation. He said that Ralph Tyler had recommended me.

And now I guess I come to a point that always intrigues me. I had known Tyler when Tyler was a member of the advisory committee for the cooperative study of evaluation in education. It's through those kinds of contacts that careers in this business develop. So Tyler, knowing my work at Michigan State--he had been a member of the advisory committee and had known of my work with Stevens College, which was another little dealie, and he suggested that I write the consultant paper. And what it consisted of was to write a consultant's paper, give an oral statement, and then serve as a member of a panel. Well, as I told you the other day, I didn't have much time. I think this was only

about three weeks, three or four weeks, from the invitation to they want a paper, so I went back to a little monograph I had written earlier, and that seemed to deal with the subject, so I had a copy made and sent to Tyler, "Was this what he had in mind?" "Oh, it was perfect!" So that was it.

K: Okay. Was Tyler in charge--I mean, Lyle Nelson in charge of devising topics for the conference as well, do you think, or did that sort of evolve with the different persons that he had in mind?

M: My guess is that the overall framework was John Gardner's notion, and he, then, with Lyle began to determine how can these things be staffed.

K: Yes, and as far as you know, most of the people who were selected to give papers or act as questioners or panel discussion leaders were selected by Lyle Nelson through his contacts with other people in the field of education.

M: Yes.

K: And I suppose that most of them were probably screened or at least approved by the conference chairman?

M: I have no way of knowing. If I were conference chairman, I would want to do that, and I--I think Gardner has always been a very effective staff person, and I would guess he did.

K: Yes. Okay. Well, there--I guess there were a total of nine White House conference vice-chairmen who headed up panels or topic areas, and they reported to John Gardner, who was, as you pointed out, the chairman of the conference, and then there were eighteen consultants such as yourself, and then on top of the consultants who prepared and presented the essence of the discussions were people who were invited to serve as questioners--

M: Yes.

K: --for the panels. Now taken together, as you review the White House Conference on Education Proceedings, there was a pretty impressive list of people from higher education and from lower education, and some of the names that popped to mind are Christopher Jencks, who was probably just about at the--rising to the top of his career at that point as a sociologist, and also sociologist Thomas Pettigrew from Harvard, who was interested in reconstruction and education; Harold Howe, who was at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and was soon to replace Frank Kepple as United States Commissioner of Education, and there was also William Friday, president of the University of North Carolina--

M: Yes.

K: --Fred Herrington, who was president of the University of Wisconsin; Theodore Hesburgh, president of Notre Dame and also a personal friend of yours, I believe;--Is that right?--

M: Yes.

K: --political scientist Steven Bailey; and Samuel Brownell, who was Eisenhower's Commissioner of Education. Now most, if not all, of these people served on subsequent Great Society task forces, and most of the people I have named in particular served on education task forces. Would you say that the participation of these people represented any particular philosophical or social orientation and, if so, did that influence the kind of discussions that went on at the White House conference?

M: I can only speak about the higher educational part, but yes, in several different ways. First, if I recall back, and this is just a wild guess, but if I recall back, out of that group thirteen of consultants, panelists, and the like, thirteen or fourteen came from Stanford, and thirteen or fourteen came from Harvard. Okay, there's a "divide-us" already. Secondly, I would guess

they all were clearly identified with the higher educational infrastructure: American Council on Education, Association of American Colleges, Association for Higher Education, National Commission on Accreditation, and the like.

K: Yes.

M: They were all associated with that, and I would guess that most of them would have been associated with what at that time was the reforming wing in higher education. Thus the first time I ever met Ted Hesburgh was at a conference at a palace on the Hudson discussing general education, and so all those people came out of what I would call the reforming but not the radically reforming--

K: Okay.

M: --wing.

K: I think in an article maybe a year or two back Chester Finn, who was professor of education at Vanderbilt, was looking back at the twenty-year period beginning with the Johnson administration and the education policies that were initiated during that time and was talking--described the activist in education, and I think he was lumping together elementary, secondary, and higher education in his description as the--as education's liberal consensus.

M: Yes.

K: You would agree with that?

M: Oh, yes. That's what this group stood for.

K: Would you say that as a whole these people were disposed favorably toward the notion or the idea of federal support of higher education?

M: Oh, hell, yes. There's no question. There might have been a few in that group who either had had in the past some reservations about some things; thus in that group I can visualize a

few people who ten years before had not wanted federal involvement in higher education because it might hasten integration, and then there were in that group--of this little consensus--of people who a few years earlier had not wanted too large a presence because of the possibility of breaking down the church-state separation.

K: Yes.

M: And so there were those, but by 1967, most of those things had disappeared, and this was a liberal consensus whether you're talking about Paul Reinert, who was a Jesuit president of St. Louis or Ted Hesburgh, who was the president of Notre Dame, or Sister Ann Ida [Gannon], who was the president of Mundelein [College], or--

K: So that there really wasn't--at this point in time in 1965, there was an agreement emerging that hadn't existed necessarily in the past that federal support of higher education either for students or institutions was not a bad prospect.

M: Yes, I think you could--I think you could illustrate the point. I think--you probably don't want an eye on this one--but my guess is that leadership in the White House conference was composed of many individuals who had been involved with Truman's commission, which would represent one point of view, and John Mallett's commission, which represented a different point of view, in the early 1950s, but by the 1960s, those differences had coalesced in time. John Mallett, where in 1952, saying, "We've got enough federal money. We don't need money!" where by 1967 Mallett was saying, "Give us more!"

K: Yes. Why was the White House conference so successful in recruiting such top people to participate?

M: I don't really think that it was any more successful than Zucht's commission. I think that it probably would have had more individuals, but I blame that on the times. These were

expansionist times, and there were a lot of people moving into positions of leadership where those positions hadn't been available ten years before.

K: Yes. So that a new wave or new generation coming into power?

M: Yes. A new and bigger wave of leadership, and here was a natural gathering ground for them.

K: Yes. Do you think that had it been sponsored by the Office of Education as opposed to the White House that it would have drawn the same kind of crowd?

M: No, I don't think so.

K: So the patina of the White House--

M: Yes. At that time, the United States Office of Education was just beginning to gain some kind of respectability in the higher education community. [Inaudible], but the United States Office of Education was the child of the NEA [National Education Association].

K: Yes. Prior to that?

M: Yes. People of--well, if you are looking through a roster of NEA staff, which was pulled backwards and forwards of the United States Office of Education--

K: I wasn't aware of that.

M: Lyle Lanier was NEA but before that had been in the United States Office of Education. G. Cary Smith, who headed up the NEA's Association for Higher Education, was United States Office of Education.

K: So the United States Office of Education didn't have the kind of respectability that it would have taken to have attracted--

M: Yes.

K: --people of this caliber. Was John Gardner's chairmanship a drawing card?

M: Was it what?

K: A drawing card. Did the fact that Gardner was heading up the conference--

M: I don't really--

K: --attract people?

M: I don't really think so. Gardner did have some visibility in the higher education community. He was a very aggressive president of the Carnegie Foundation. He had written his book on excellence [*Excellence: Can We Be Equal and Excellent Too?*], and he was clearly linked to an elitist notion of education through his coming out of the Stanford background, but Gardner, I don't think, was any really charismatic leader. Lot of people knew him, but I suspect that you could have--well, I would guess that Steve Bailey, at that time, would have drawn--to what extent any individual could draw--I would guess Steve Bailey could have drawn as well as John Gardner.

K: Yes. That's interesting. From a higher education point of view, would you say that invitations to participate in a conference were sought after?

M: It was all cooked up in such a hurry, I don't think anybody knew about it. I had pretty good contacts, and--no, my recollection, and maybe some of your stuff you did on your thesis may show this--but my recollection is that it was put together very hastily, that Gardner got the go, and he sort of dragooned Nelson, and they put together the thing, and--

K: In a matter of weeks.

M: In a matter of weeks, asking people to prepare major papers in a matter of several weeks.

K: You think the impetus for the conference came from the--perhaps from the passage of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act? That passed in April of 1965, or--

M: Who's the president of Salem? Cater?

K: Oh, Douglass Cater?

M: Yes. Wasn't he--

K: Yes. He was the White House aid in charge of education or handling a lot of it.

M: My guess is that this idea originated with Cater suggesting it to the President and it taking off.

K: Yes. He was very active in putting the conference together.

M: I know that [inaudible] keep this time the education community was sort of making lots of suggestions for various kinds of presidential or White House conferences. For example, I was chairman of some damned committee on college teaching, and at one of our meetings, we came up with--I made a suggestion--we came up with the suggestion that we ought to suggest to the White House that there be a White House conference on college teaching.

K: So there was a lot of sort--a revival of interest perhaps?

M: Yes. And revivalism!

K: Yes, revivalism, which leads to my next question. I notice in reviewing the White House Conference on Education Proceedings that John Gardner told the conferees when they were assembled for their opening session that quote, "No specific recommendations or legislative proposals are expected to be adopted by the conference of the body." End quote. Do you think Gardner made this statement on orders from the White House?

M: No. I think that's John Gardner. Let me illustrate with an important point in Gardner's background. He believed that the boards of trustees of such things as the Carnegie Corporation represented beautiful seminar settings where major educational issues could be debated, and so during his presidency of the Carnegie Foundation, he organized his board of trustees into a seminar, and each year for four or five years they would have a seminar on

"Duties of College Presidents" or other things and publish the reports. Some of them are beautiful things. I think Gardner was like that, that you get a bunch of knowledgeable people and let them examine the issues and do not put them in as constraint. I think that's Gardner's general style.

K: Okay. Well, I ask because the 1955 White House Conference on Education, sponsored by the Eisenhower administration, did make a fairly specific set of recommendations for federal action, for state action, and local action in education, and I was wondering why, especially given the difference between the Eisenhower and Johnson administrations, the difference level of interest in the subject of education, why the White House conference under Johnson wasn't encouraged to make recommendations.

M: Well I--I have no knowledge, but my hunch is this was just John Gardner's style, and the White House, I suspect, gave him a good bit of freedom to put together this thing the way he wanted.

K: If Gardner didn't have in mind for the conference to make specific recommendations to the President, what did he see as the purpose of the conference, or what would you say the purpose of the conference was?

M: I think it was simply one additional step in this building of this liberal educational consensus. That's--I think that what it accomplished was to have been another step, and I think it probably was worthwhile bringing that particular group of people together for a few days to talk about things that were important to them. It certainly wasn't--I don't think it was intended to be, nor indeed was it, a potent action activity, but it was simply one additional step in this building of the consensus of the 1960s, which really was a real thing.

K: So the White House would have perhaps viewed it as an opportunity to reinforce consent for the direction it was going in education, or--?

M: I don't know. I really never visualized the presidency in the Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, or Johnson years as having embraced a whole bunch of educational ideas as part of a political platform. Rather I think that within those administrations there were individuals who were interested in education, and education was becoming important in the lives of a hell of a lot more people than it had been, and this--these various conferences provided an opportunity for the White House to go along with the ride for a thoughtful consideration of education.

K: Okay. Can you comment on John Gardner's leadership of the conference?

M: I think Lyle Nelson made the thing run, and Gardner--in things like that, the leadership comes in who you select, and once that's done, why Gardner was just around.

K: He--his--did he make any attempt to influence the tone of the conference through--his own remarks or contacts?

M: Yes. He tried to. In a secondary conference, he said he was a little bit disappointed that the participants seemed to be nibbling around the issues where he felt they should attack the issues like a barracuda.

K: So he was encouraging open and frank debate?

M: Yes.

K: Okay. We mentioned before that the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act had been passed three months before the conference, in April of 1965. Did this--of course, this legislation was important for the--in a symbolic sense because it represented the breaking

up of a log jam in bringing federal aid to the public schools that had been twenty years in the making, and did this passage of this act affect the tone of the conference at all?

M: If it was, if it did, I wasn't conscious of it. You see, I was preoccupied with the higher educational part, and what in that part my recollection is, we found the higher educational representatives urging that things had been on the agenda of the various associations for six years, such things as more college housing, greater assistance with library construction, the construction of academic facilities. Those are the things that--and these were all part of the consensus that the Feds ought to get into this.

K: Yes.

M: And, you know, Edith Green was fairly active after this conference.

K: Oh, she was? So the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act wasn't felt perhaps as acutely in the higher education circles as it might have been, perhaps, among the representatives from elementary and secondary education. Your paper was on the subject of innovation in higher education, and there was a companion piece which was presented after your paper on innovation in elementary and secondary education.

I notice that the theme of innovation seems to have been present in a number of the discussions that took place at the conference. Why was this theme or topic of such interest in 1965 and, perhaps contrasting that to the interest now in excellence in education? Why was innovation such an important phase?

M: I think the 1960s represented as part of this liberal consensus a belief in the perfectibility of man. There was a belief that people could take charge of their own destiny and much of--and this innovation. This is a period where general education was not yet dead. There was

much experimentation with new forms of governance. There were lots of interest in the technology--

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K: What would you say the major outcome or effect of the conference was?

M: Not much except to add one additional cubit to this growing belief that this is a progressive enterprise which is doing good.

K: Do you think that the conference reflected well on the White House, on the Johnson White House?

M: I really don't--I don't think it made all that much difference. This was--see, at the time, Janet, the mid-1960s, all professional organizations had gone from small central staffs to big staffs. Their budgets had gone from marginal budgets to reasonably plush budgets. Foundations had given lots of money for conferences of all sorts, and so the 1960s was really a decade of conferences, and, in aggregate, I think, they did contribute to an intellectual engagement of some educational thought, but any one--and I don't know whether you know the Blowland's works on the changes that took place once the period of austerity came and how the associations now began to shrink again--?

K: Yes, and so there isn't the same kind of intellectual engagement now that there was then?

M: No, I can't say that, but it's not as all pervasive.

K: Okay. I have another question. President Johnson announced his selection of John Gardner as HEW [Health Education and Welfare] secretary immediately following the conference. Did you or others at the conference have any inkling that Gardner was going to get this post?

M: I didn't know what he was going to get, but I knew he was going to get something because it just happened that I was off to the side in the White House, in the garden out in the, and talking with Gardner, and Johnson came [inaudible] out and took him away, and I turned to somebody and, "Wonder what the hell he's got up his sleeve?" because it was very deliberate. Johnson peeled off from talking--shaking hands with people, came over and got Gardner, and whisked him right off to the corner, and there the two of them sat, and it was at that point that he asked Gardner to become his secretary of HEW.

K: Yes. Were you aware that Gardner was under consideration for the post along with Clark Kerr and William Friday, some of these other people.

M: On things like that, Janet--

K: There wasn't any talk?

M: --you can almost--you could ask anybody, "Who are on the short list for any such position?", and there'd be ninety-five per cent agreeing.

K: Yes. If the Reagan administration were to call a conference on education today, could it attract the same level of interest and quality of participants as Johnson's?

M: No, because the beliefs of that--members of that liberal consensus, those individuals still hold them, and these are antithetical to things that the Reagan people believe in. Bell would--

K: John [Terrel?] Bell.

M: --would never have been deep--

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M: Bell would never have been deeply involved in the leadership of this liberal consensus as he--in this jackass that's secretary of education now.

K: William Bennett?

M: Yes. His academic credentials are not all that great, but you would not find a person such as Clark Kerr would be at all interested, Clark Kerr especially, but folks of that sort.

K: There just isn't the kind of--enough agreement within higher education on the direction of the present federal higher education policies to attend a conference like this--

M: No, I think the--

K: --other than for the purpose to criticize perhaps?

M: I think--well, the higher education establishment is floundering. Nonetheless there's still some underlying beliefs that are generally held, and I--people I know just feel that the Reagan administration is unsympathetic to everything that we have stood for for thirty years.

K: Well, I want to switch gears for a few minutes and ask you a little bit about the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, whose works you in a truly Herculean undertaking reviewed and critiqued in your 1973 book, *The Carnegie Commission on Higher Education*. In addition to your having this distinction, you authored one of the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education studies on "Graduate and Professional Education", and I think we also mentioned early on that you enjoyed a relationship with Clark Kerr that was professional and personal in nature. Why was the Carnegie Commission created? What was the purpose of the Commission?

M: You could give a glib answer: to give Clark Kerr a job. See, Kerr had just been fired as president of [inaudible]. There are a number of people, including Gardner himself, who had sought to stimulate a serious discourse about higher education, and I view the commission as being a direct continuation of John Gardner's policies, but the kind of foundation you

don't forget has always been interested in not only formulating but then carrying out policy. Much of [James Bryant] Conant's work was stimulated and supported by the Carnegie Foundation.

K: Yes, when he was president of Harvard. Yes.

M: And then subsequently, his study of--I think this is true--his study of secondary education, I think, was partly underwritten by the educational commissions of the states and was partly underwritten by Carnegie.

K: I didn't know that.

M: And, as a matter of fact, the education of the states, the Educational Commission of the States--I think this is right--was an idea proposed by Conant, supported by Gardner, and given effect by the president of Duke, Terry, Terry Sanford.

K: Oh. So these individuals of this ilk were interested in--there had been interest in creating some kind of a super--a non-political super board or super association or super council? How would--

M: Well, it was interested in exploring these policy issues, and I think it's instructive to know where the money came from.

K: Where did it come from?

M: The money came from money that was left over when most of the last first-retired professors died. The Carnegie thought that it would be important to have professors to be able to retire with some comforts, so they created a retirement fund and let this be managed by the Carnegie Foundation for the Improvement of Instruction, and out of that came the TIAA [Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association],--

K: Oh, I didn't know that.

M: --but the original--initial grant--Carnegie gave money so the professors could retire. Now this is by the late 1960's. Most of those early retirees were dead, and there was still some money left, and so the foundation decided, "Let's take that money and do something big."

K: Yes. Did the Carnegie Commission have as a conscious purpose influencing federal higher education policies?

M: No, the purpose was to explore policy questions that concerned higher education. Once you've put a Clark Kerr as head of that and let him select the members that were going to work with him, then you've got a clear shot at something to try to influence federal policy, state policies.

K: Okay. How would you describe the commission's philosophy of high--aids, federal aid to higher education?

M: Important. It should be somewhat more important, but there should be safeguards against its becoming omnipotent, and most of the members of the commission were not at all afraid of federal involvement, but there were a number of people who wanted to treat it gingerly, and so I think most of the utterances were very thoughtful efforts to utilize federal involvement for the good of the educational enterprise and ultimately the good of the people.

K: Yes. One of the major federal aid questions during the last years of the Johnson administration was whether to adopt a program of streamless grants that would go directly to collegiate institutions to help underwrite their operating expenses, and this ideas was a--had bounced around, as I understand, probably since the late 1950's, and the 1967 Outside Task Force on Education, which was headed by William Friday, who was also a member of the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, endorsed this idea very strongly, and

Joseph Califano and James Gaither at the White House both liked the idea very much and presented it to Lyndon Johnson, and--with the idea of proposing it as part of their 1968 legislative package. When HEW, which, of course, reviewed all the task force reports, started examining the proposal for its institutional aid, it consulted informally with the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education with Clark Kerr directly, and the Carnegie Commission, as represented through Kerr, opposed the proposal, and HEW itself also opposed the proposal. John Gardner did. And when it was debated in the fall of 1967 at the White House during the annual review of proposals that come up through the agencies, it was defeated despite strong efforts on Califano's and Gaither's parts against Gardner and Harold Howe, who was the Commissioner of Education, to approve it. Now why would the Carnegie Commission and Kerr personally have opposed this kind of federal aid to higher education? It represented a potential gold mine. Why would they have opposed it?

M: I've thought about it many, many times, and it may be just something in the composition of the commission, that there were virtually no people on the commission who served the so-called "threatened institutions." So there may have been that, and at a more metaphysical level, you can at least speculate that no matter how enlightened, there is a strong vein of "know-nothingism" in the American character and that the real fear of institutional aid is fear that this is going to give Mother Church some support that she should not have.

K: Hmm.

M: I don't know. No evidence of that except I do know that a lot of people on that issue take what would seem to be an inconsistent posture. I have never talked with Hesburgh about it, but I have talked with people like Paul Reinhart or Joe Lybein [?], Zip Creighton [?], and

they thought that this was a grievous mistake, that their institutions really could use this help, but I don't--

K: Yes. William Friday still thinks it is, and I had a chance to interview him and ask him, and he thought that it was a grave mistake.

M: Whereas you can never prove it, but my notion is that no matter how you fight it, you get a strong vein of "know-nothingism" in a lot of our thoughts.

K: This is the end of the interview with Lewis B. Mayhew concerning the 1965 White House Conference on Education and the role of the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education in the question of streamless institutional grants to higher education.

End of Interview

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Lewis B Mayhew — 12-7-09

Donor — Date

Susan Tweit — 12-31-2009

Assistant Archivist for Presidential Libraries — Date

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Madeline Mayhew — Donor — 10/18/09 — Date

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