Excerpts from the Trustees' Statement...

This analysis of the academic scene at The Cooper Union and the policy statement which results therefrom is not the work of one man or one group. It results from many hours of thought and deliberation by many groups and individuals spread over several years. Among those groups were the two most recent accreditation inspection teams of the Middle States Association, the last two accreditation inspections of our engineering programs by teams of the Engineers' Council for Professional Development, the most recent inspections of our programs in art and architecture by representatives of the National Architectural Accrediting Board and the National Association of Schools of Art. Faculty and administrative groups have pondered the difficult questions many times, but particularly in the past 12 months we have had the benefit of concentrated thinking by our own faculties through the Engineering and Science Faculty Advisory Committee and the Administrative Committee of the School of Art and Architecture.

All of us are grateful for the long hours and earnest efforts expended during the past 12 months by the Faculty Advisory Committee. We have given consideration to all of their recommendations and found many of them helpful as we examined our options.

At the same time, we have had the advisory services of Heald, Hobson and Associates and a distinguished group of educators whom they brought to The Cooper Union to assist in this assessment.

Beyond this the president has also spent many hours with individual faculty, alumni, students, trustees, and friends of The Cooper Union in a search for viable, effective, and sound solutions to the problems and opportunities facing this institution as it enters the seventies and eighties.

This is not a statement which results from choices between easy alternatives. Rather it does result from a difficult and many times frustrating search for the answer to a simple question—how can this institution survive into the future while still rendering an educational service of excellence for the students and community it serves.

Every individual and group which has, over the years, deliberated this college's future has agreed on two basic premises: (a) *it must remain basically, if not entirely, undergraduate and professionally-oriented* and, (b) *it must remain small.* Both its charter and its limited resources support that conclusion. It should, however, be stated that while smallness holds many important advantages for us, it also brings some disadvantages that are just as important, as one seeks to chart a meaningful future.

In this statement, we shall treat the School of Engineering and Science as separate and distinct from the School of Art and Architecture. We are well aware of the advice from the Middle States Association when it said in its 1968 report that, "The possibilities in terms of personnel, program, and educational power are at The Cooper Union highly favorable. It seems likely that these possibilities can best become future prospects if the various elements in the Union continue to move or continue to be moved towards a cooperative, coherent all-Union commitment." We are also aware that there are among our colleagues those who believe that the two-school concept should be destroyed and that a single school, single faculty, single student body, single class schedule, single administrative structure should replace it. The president wholeheartedly shared those feelings when he arrived here almost two years ago. He is now convinced that while better coordination, better cooperation, greater flexibility, and greater intellectual opportunities for students can and must be developed between the two schools, it still remains a fact that they are and must remain two schools with different objectives, different types of students, different admissions standards, and, in fact, different standards for faculty.

Financial Problems a Vital Factor

Further background for this policy statement should also be provided. It would be a sham and delusion if we did not state unequivocally that financial viability underlies this assessment of our future. Any other course would only be idle dreaming, and irresponsible.

Our present serious financial situation, resulting from some inadequate planning and a depressed economy, has, in fact, only hastened the inevitable timetable and forces us now to promptly seek long-term realistic solutions. It is perhaps unfortunate that steps were not taken earlier, for one discovers that even in 1968 the Middle States Association expressed such concern for our financial future. Every consultant we brought to the campus shared those concerns, and one said quite frankly that "Cooper's basic options in reducing costs—both short term and long term—include reducing quality of program, reducing enrollment, various minor cost-cutting, reduction in scope of program, and enlarging the base of the institution through various inter-institutional programs. There are pros and cons to each option." Another engineering educator said, "One must consider the alternatives. Among these is one which while probably very unpalatable should not be dismissed out of hand. This is the possibility of phasing out the




activity of the Engineering and Science School entirely. Certainly this would be better than permitting a gradual deterioration or endeavoring to maintain a minimal operation of no consequence. In fact, unless there can be a reorientation which will permit the institution to develop acceptable strength and position, this alternative should be given the most serious consideration." We have done just that and are not ready yet to accept it as our best alternative.

It is perfectly true that our problem is made more difficult because of our "all-scholarship" operation. We do not enjoy the luxury of being able to raise tuition every other year, and are forced to "cut our cloth to fit our pattern" of limited income from investments. Still, Cooper Union *has* made substantial budget increases in recent years. The over-all Cooper Union budgets were increased 31% in the period from 1960 to 1965, and an additional 55% between 1965 and the current year—an increase of 109% in a decade. Within those budgets, expenditures for instruction (over 88% of which is faculty salaries) were increased by 36% in the 1960-65 period, and 82% in the 1965-70 period —an increase of 147%. Our problem *now* is that expenditures are outrunning real or expected income.

Thus we must realistically face up to the following facts:

1. It is unlikely that either substantial added endowment or ongoing annual gifts large enough to break or even bend the back of our operating problems can be expected in the foreseeable future. In addition, we must face the fact that a large campaign for funds to improve and preserve our physical plant is a critical essential.

2. Careful study has been given to the advisability of converting The Cooper Union from a full-scholarship to a tuition-charging institution. That raises many questions. The picture is bleak, and one recognized educator said, "Its reputation would not appear to be such as to draw excellent students in engineering, for example, if the tuition advantage should be removed." Others have pointed to The Cooper Union avoidance of the "open market" as a primary factor in the attraction of our excellently-qualified student body. Charging tuition and, in effect, going into that "open market" would very likely, if not certainly, lower the quality of our engineering and science student body. In that case, one must answer the question—does New York want or need, can we justify, another small engineering and science school when in fact there are TEN similar institutions within 25 miles of this campus. We have given much study to the question of charging tuition, and after careful deliberation reject it.

3. Substantial changes, cuts, and re-orientation of programs and activities must be undertaken. In one of these, or in a combination of these three options, seems to lie our future. No other conclusion short of surgery or demise seems reasonable at this time.

Cooper Union does not occupy this platform alone. The New York Times, in its editions of December 4, devoted more than a full page to the financial plight of American universities and colleges. Reporting on a new study by the Carnegie Commission on higher education, it describes a "new depression" which has struck American higher education and says, "Either the schools must find more new money, or make cuts, or do both."

Student Body Called 'Strongest Element'

The one single fact that impresses every individual who lives here or visits here is the exceptionally high quality of our student body. It is the strongest single element in the Cooper Union picture. Yet, one must ponder several questions, including whether we are presently serving our students well and whether that quality level can be maintained.

Against this background one must examine our present programs in engineering and science. Cooper Union began offering engineering degrees at night in 1864, and on a full-time day-basis in 1901, when Andrew Carnegie provided funds for that purpose. We then made no substantial changes in curricula offered until 1964 when we added a degree in physics, followed by masters and doctoral degrees in 1967.

It may also prove helpful to record here what others have felt. In examining the 1964 report of the ECPD, one notes that it differs in some respects, but not significantly, from the later 1968 evaluation. The 1964 report cautioned against "permitting graduate work to drain strength from the undergraduate program because of the unusual demands on the few members of the staff qualified to work with graduate students." Its description of one department seemed to fit generally what was said about all: ". . . the curriculum is satisfactory but not outstanding."

Again in 1970, what the ECPD said about one was frequently applicable to all departments.

In their general remarks the ECPD accrediting team said: "The Committee notes that in general the curricula are rather inflexible and that where electives in the curricula do appear, the choice is rather narrowly limited." They went on to say, "Students and staff alike expressed a feel-