This conference is about the implications of mass higher education; and I have to give a world-view in 45 minutes! If my theme is to be clear a few of these minutes must be spent on a semantic distinction. The semantic distinction is best introduced by an analogy: everyone ought to have as much food as he needs, but not everyone needs or wants to be fed on caviare. Which, transposed into the key of this address, is that everyone in a society which can afford mass education is entitled to as much education (primary, secondary, post-secondary) as he needs, but not everyone needs or wants what we in Britain call higher – as contrasted with further – education. But this Conference has pre-empted the term higher education, and you are an international audience; so it cannot be restricted in the way commonly understood in Britain. I have assumed that higher education, as pre-empted in the title of this conference, includes all post-secondary education, and I am going to draw a distinction between vocational higher education on the one hand and non-vocational higher education on the other hand. Notice that this distinction cuts across some familiar boundaries. It puts into the same category the education provided by the faculty of medicine at Cambridge and by the department of catering at Colchester technical college, and it puts into the same category Oxford Greats and WEA courses on archaeology. Of course the boundaries between vocational and non-vocational higher education are blurred, but by and large vocational higher education qualifies a person to pursue a specific vocation or profession; non-vocational higher education does not. It may seem a perverse distinction, but I hope to show that it does make sense.

Higher education, defined in this way, is certain to become more than a minority interest. It has already, in two generations, increased by an order of magnitude, and it will do so again before the end of this century. That is why this conference has been called. That is why several countries have carried out sophisticated exercises such as the Robbins Report, the reports of the Wissenschaftsrat in Germany, and the colossal...
encyclopedia, already in some thirty volumes, of the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education in the United States. Yet in all these thousands of pages there is something missing. They go into great detail about increase in size of the system, about how the enlarged system shall be financed, about the way to make the system easier of access to all who need to enter it, about the cost-effectiveness of the system and its efficiency. But they have comparatively little to say about whether the system should change and what is to be its function in the society of tomorrow.

To me it is clear that the system will have to change in all countries which undertake mass higher education. "More" does not mean "worse", but undoubtedly "more" means "different." Already our plans for expansion may fail to meet the needs of the majority for whom the expansion is planned. So I hope one of the Working Parties will concentrate upon this question: in mass-higher education what are the educational implications of "more means different?"

In the time that remains to me let me offer a conceptual framework into which facts and arguments can be conveniently fitted. In a different context I have used it before and found it helpful. This is the framework.

It is characteristic of higher education systems that they are strongly influenced by tradition. They display what a biologist calls phylogenetic inertia. This is not surprising, for one of their functions is to conserve and transmit the cultural inheritance. It is characteristic of them, too, that from time to time they adjust themselves - sometimes painfully - to the social environment which surrounds them. There is an analogy, therefore, between these systems and biological systems: they are the resultant of hereditary and environmental forces, of nature and nurture. So universities, for instance, have everywhere a generic similarity and yet they differ greatly from one nation to another.

There are, therefore, internal and external forces acting on higher education systems and when all is well there is an unstable equilibrium between these forces. At present there is a worldwide instability and higher education systems are shifting, one hopes toward fresh equilibria, which will be different, of course, for different societies. But while the movement is going on there are strains and anxieties; we none of us know where the new equilibrium will lie. That is why it is disappointing that so much emphasis, by governments, by the press, and indeed within the systems themselves, is on how to get bigger, how to pay for getting bigger, and not on how to change.

Let me illustrate this conceptual framework by a few words about the forces acting on systems of higher education. There are three main environmental forces. One is customer demand: the pressure of students to get into colleges and universities and the curricula which they want