The success of an educational institution is best measured by its outputs. The most important of these are its students and its research. Students are inspired by their lecturers and research is stimulated by the positive and creative environment in which it is located. Freedom of thought and communication reside within that environment. A university is not a teaching environment it is a learning opportunity provided by academic achievers.

The leadership of these institutions will have its own individuality but it should have two objectives in common, the education of its students to realise the value of knowledge and the desire to push the boundaries of that knowledge out into the hitherto unknown.

I have had the privilege in my life to work in two great industries, energy and the railways and finally in the world of finance. In all three regulation was necessary to protect the public interest and to contain the activities within the boundaries defined by democratic governance. The boundary is an elusive objective and constantly runs the risk of becoming a static infertile containment.

For a university the elimination of the boundary must be an ultimate objective and with that will come the graduation of young people with unclosed minds pushing new ideas and solutions. When the parliament considers legislation on Higher Education it should therefore concentrate on creating the environment which will attract creative and exciting leadership and which will take the Institution and its students forward. If the end point is an institution bound by compliance in an apparatchik type world or a world in which the David Humes and the Maxwells will prosper the game will be either won or lost. This will be the most important piece of legislation to come before the House whether it unleashes or binds these great institutions will be the test. History has shown the success of our people has been founded on their education. To prepare for such an important debate I would suggest, Parliament would be wise as a first step to establish a committee or commission to examine the future of our universities to which the intellectual achievers in our community and beyond and those from commerce and industry who receive and develop the output from the universities and who in their own situations have seen the positive and negative impacts of regulation. With the benefit of their output the government can then begin to review its current policy. Time must be made to think deeply and well on this vitally important sector of our society. To take time and counsel is a sign of strength not weakness.

Sir Bob Reid