

MICHAEL, D.N.



# THE ROCKEFELLER UNIVERSITY

1230 YORK AVENUE · NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10021

THE PRESIDENT

September 26, 1978

Dr. Donald N. Michael  
Professor of Planning and  
Public Policy  
The University of Michigan  
Samuel Trask Dana Building  
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104

Dear Dr. Michael:

Thank you for sending me the reprint and the additional good words. I do share your Malthusian view about the growth of organizations. And of course I certainly understand the imperatives of responsiveness that you articulated. I did not see very much, however, about leadership -- either individual or collective -- and I wonder if you have given much attention to the kind of world we would have if all organizations were totally "responsive" to the immediate claims of the total environment. Would there be any room left for creativity and innovation? Of course I understand that you are reacting to a situation that is often dismally at the other extreme.

I also found your formulation of the need for organizations to "unlearn" their stereotyped behavior quite helpful. Paradoxically, that process might be facilitated if organizations had a better organized institutional memory so that the premises and historical development of their doctrines were better understood. That would allow more explicit recognition of the changes in circumstances that will often alter whatever justification there may have been for previous lines of policy. I had been preoccupied with trying to improve the precision of organizational memory when I found that the records of Stanford University and particularly of the Medical School had been systematically eradicated -- to the point that it was very difficult to reconstruct how we had arrived at a number of contemporary positions. (It just occurs to me that

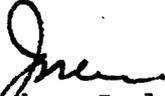
Dr. Donald N. Michael  
September 26, 1978

- 2 -

this advocacy of bringing unconscious memory to the surface, as a therapeutic measure, has some obvious parallels in psychodynamic doctrine).

At any rate, thank you again for your courtesy; and I always enjoy hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

  
Joshua Lederberg