

MARSHALL DAMGAARD

Closing Time

A Twenty-five-Year Retrospective on the Life and Death of the University of South Dakota at Springfield

Twenty-five years ago, South Dakota Governor William J. Janklow and the state legislature closed the University of South Dakota at Springfield and converted it into a minimum-security prison. The closing—contested bitterly in the capitol, the courts, and public meeting halls—climaxed almost a century of continuing debates over the existence of the school.¹ The community of Springfield had built much of its identity and economy around the school, and residents mourned the loss. Today, the former campus is the site of Mike Durfee State Prison, but memories of the University of South Dakota at Springfield and the fight to keep it alive remain vivid.

To visitors, Springfield seems an unlikely place for controversy. The little town is tucked between the softly undulating tallgrass prairie and the slowly rolling Missouri River. Until the mid-nineteenth century, the area was the domain of the Yankton Sioux Indians, who, under their legendary leader Strike-the-Ree, ceded about 14 million acres between the Missouri and Big Sioux rivers with the Treaty of 1858. That treaty, followed closely by the Homestead Act of 1862, triggered a torrent of European immigrants—Czechs, Dutch, English, Germans, Germans from Russia (including Hutterites and Mennonites), Russians, Swedes, Norwegians, Poles, Irish, and Austrians—who settled in what became Bon Homme County, Dakota Territory. The newcomers also included many cold-hardy settlers from Canada, plus empire-building Yankees from New England, who leapfrogged through Ohio, Indiana,

1. According to Bill Dougherty, who served as lieutenant governor of South Dakota from 1971 to 1975 and as a legislative lobbyist from 1975 to 2009, “The Springfield fight was the bitterest, bloodiest controversy I ever saw during all my years as a lobbyist” (interview with Dougherty, Sioux Falls, S.Dak., 5 May 2009).

Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Nebraska, Iowa, and Minnesota. The settlers initially called their new community Wanari but later renamed it Springfield for the many fresh-water springs in the area. They laid out the town in 1860 and incorporated it in 1872.²

Bon Homme County was the site of the first public school established in the future state of South Dakota—a log hut with a dirt floor and hay-covered roof, built in 1860.³ The first permanent structure erected in Springfield was built in 1870 to house the United States Land Office. It also hosted the first worship service in the town, conducted by the Reverend Joseph Ward from nearby Yankton, then the bustling capital of Dakota Territory and soon to be the nexus of riverboat and railroad.⁴ Steamboat traffic passed Springfield on a regular basis, and one of the old stagecoach lines between Yankton, about thirty miles to the east, and the ever-alluring Black Hills ran through Springfield. The tracks of the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railroad reached the community in 1879. The *Springfield Times*, started in July 1871, is, as its masthead still proclaims, the oldest weekly newspaper in South Dakota.⁵

Springfield-area settlers battled prairie fires, scorching summer winds, droughts, blizzards, hailstorms, and floods,⁶ conditions that chased many away but polished those who stayed.⁷ The Great Depression of the 1930s, with its black blizzards of choking dust and thick swarms of voracious grasshoppers, further tested the mettle of twentieth-century

2. Robert F. Karolevitz, *Challenge: The South Dakota Story* (Sioux Falls, S.Dak.: Brevet Press, 1975), pp. 43–49; [Gary D. Olson], “Yankee and European Settlement,” in *A New South Dakota History*, ed. Harry F. Thompson (Sioux Falls, S.Dak.: Center for Western Studies, Augustana College, 2005), pp. 117–42; *Springfield, South Dakota, Centennial, 1870–1970* (Springfield, S.Dak.: n.p., [1970]), pp. 6–7.

3. John McNeill, *The Normal School at Springfield, South Dakota: A History of the School* ([Springfield, S.Dak.]: USDS Alumni Association, 1986), p. 1.

4. *Springfield, South Dakota, Centennial*, pp. 7–8. Clark Thomas, who is active in the Springfield Historical Society, says that the land office building was torn down about two years ago. Interview with Thomas, Springfield, S.Dak., 14 June 2009.

5. *A History of Bon Homme County, South Dakota: Dakota Territory Centennial, 1861–1961* (N.p.: [Bon Homme County Historical Committee, 1961]), p. 91.

6. *Springfield, South Dakota, Centennial*, pp. 6–8.

7. Interview with Ted Muenster, Sioux Falls, S.Dak., 14 June 1989. Muenster, former vice-president of the University of South Dakota (USD) and president of the USD Foundation, made this comment in reference to South Dakotans in general.

eth-century residents. In 1955, the Army Corps of Engineers completed the massive Gavins Point Dam on the Missouri River near Yankton, and Springfield became the only town on the new reservoir called Lewis and Clark Lake. Never a large community, Springfield saw its population change from 525 in 1900 to 881 in 1930; 1,566 in 1970; and 1,377 in 1980, 444 of whom were students living in college dormitories. In 1981, the high school in Springfield closed, and its forty-eight students started attending Bon Homme High School in Tyndall.⁸

Long before South Dakota became a state in 1889, the territorial legislature had started dispensing various sought-after plums—including public educational institutions—that could help to boost a community's economy and ensure its viability. The first territorial legislative assembly in 1862 authorized the establishment of the University of the Territory of Dakota at Vermillion. The 1881 territorial legislature placed an agricultural college in Brookings.⁹ It also authorized the building of “normal schools” in Alexandria, Watertown, Spearfish, Madison, and Springfield, where teachers would be trained in the science and art of teaching the “normal” subjects of reading, writing, and arithmetic in common, or public elementary, schools.¹⁰ The 1899 legislature permit-

8. *Springfield, South Dakota, Centennial*, p. 9; *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, 28 Nov. 1982, 30 Aug. 1990; U.S., Department of the Interior, Census Office, *Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, Population*, vol. 1, pt. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1901), p. 356; Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, *Fifteenth Census, 1930, Population*, vol. 3, pt. 2 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1931), p. 852, *1970 Census of Population, Characteristics of the Population*, vol. 1, pt. 43 (Washington, D.C., Jan. 1973), p. 12, *1980 Census of Population, Characteristics of the Population*, vol. 1, pt. 43 (Washington, D.C., Aug. 1982), p. 57.

9. Dakota Territory, *General Laws and Memorials and Resolutions of the Territory of Dakota, Passed at the First Session of the Legislative Assembly* (1862); Cedric Cummins, *The University of South Dakota: 1862–1966* (Vermillion, S.Dak.: Dakota Press, 1975), pp. 3–5; Amy Dunkle with V. J. Smith, *The College on the Hill: A Sense of South Dakota State University History* (Brookings: South Dakota State University Alumni Association, 2003), pp. 1–3.

10. Dakota Territory, *Laws Passed at the Fourteenth Session of the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Dakota* (1881), chaps. 3, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102. The 1883 territorial legislature reaffirmed the 1881 legislature's acts for Spearfish, Madison, and Springfield, but it and subsequent legislatures have neglected Alexandria and Watertown. For the Springfield legislation, see *Laws Passed at the Fifteenth Session of the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Dakota* (1883), chap. 22.

ted the establishment of the Industrial Institute of South Dakota in Aberdeen. In 1901, the legislature added a teacher-preparation program to that school and changed its name to the Northern Normal and Industrial School. The South Dakota School of Mines and Technology in Rapid City traces its history to an act of the 1885 territorial legislature. Thus, even before the nineteenth century ended, South Dakota was to have seven state-supported institutions of higher education, none of which was more than about forty miles from any of the borders of the 77,116-square-mile state and two of which were on the river that formed part of the state's southern boundary.¹¹

Although the 1881 territorial legislature had authorized the normal school at Springfield, it did not provide any appropriation for its construction or operation. Undaunted, the community responded by gathering donations and starting classes in the autumn of 1881 in the upper floor of the Springfield Public School. In 1883, the legislature passed two funding bills for Springfield Normal, but Governor Nehemiah G. Ordway vetoed both of them. The normal-school classes in Springfield soon came to an end. Still, Springfield persevered in its quest for a school.¹²

Two developments aided the town's efforts. In 1883, former territorial governor John A. Burbank deeded twenty acres of land to the territory for the normal school at Springfield.¹³ On 22 February 1889, the United States Congress passed the Enabling Act, jump-starting Dakota Territory on the road to statehood. Section 17 of the act set aside 330,000 acres for the support of various state institutions: the school of mines, the reform school, the deaf and dumb asylum, the agricultural college, the university, the state normal schools, and public buildings at the capital. The act provided another 170,000 acres for "such other

11. Thomas O. Flickema and Arthur R. Buntin, "Tradition and Change," in *From Idea to Institution: Higher Education in South Dakota*, ed. Herbert T. Hoover et al. (Vermillion: University of South Dakota Press, 1989), p. 97; Larry L. Dirksen, "Gold, Silver, and the Black Hills," *ibid.*, p. 81; J. Howard Kramer, "Highlights of the History of Public Higher Education in South Dakota," unpublished manuscript, 1970, Office of the South Dakota Board of Regents, Pierre, p. 1.

12. McNeill, *Normal School at Springfield*, pp. 6–11, 18–21; *Laws Passed at the Fifteenth Session of the Legislative Assembly* (1883), chap. 22.

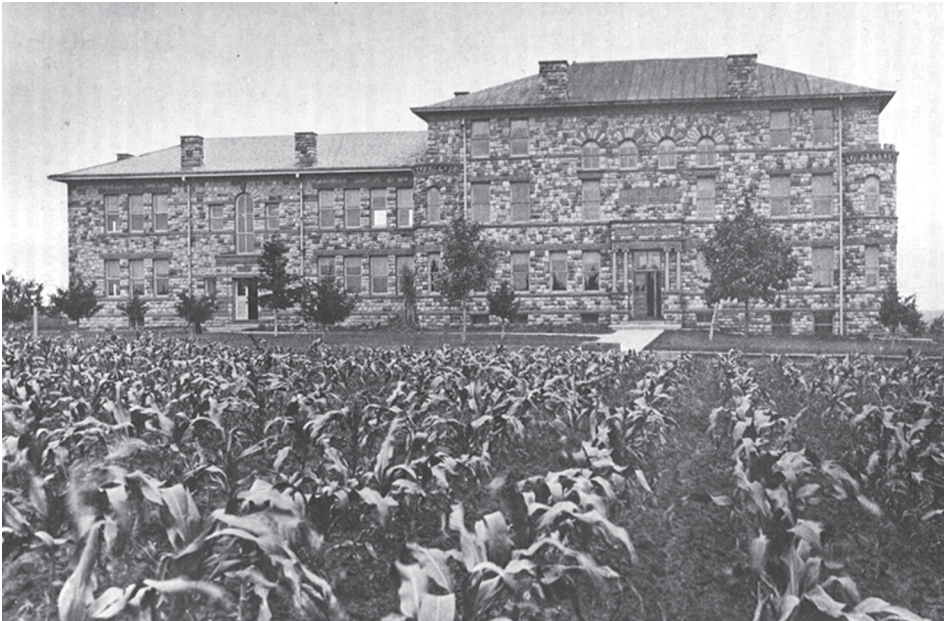
13. South Dakota, Regents of Education, *Twelfth Biennial Report* (1912), p. 247.

educational and charitable purposes as the legislature of said State may determine.”¹⁴

Empowered by that federal legislation, the new state, in 1895, selected and dedicated forty thousand acres of land (with the proceeds of its disposition going into a permanent trust fund) for the normal school at Springfield. The state still did not, however, provide any financial operating support. In 1896 and 1897, local citizens built what would become the west wing of Main Hall and presented it to the state. When Springfield State Normal School officially opened in the new building on 11 October 1897, the ever-optimistic local residents were contributing the operating expenses.¹⁵

14. *Act of February 22, 1889, U.S. Statutes at Large* 25 (1889): 676.

15. *Springfield, South Dakota, Centennial*, p. 8; Kramer, “Highlights of the History of Higher Education,” pp. 17, 33. The eleventh of October thus became “Founders Day” for the school.



Repeatedly frustrated by legislative disinterest, Springfield residents nevertheless managed to make a school sprout from a cornfield. They financed the original wing of Main Hall, seen here at left.

The 1899 legislature appropriated six thousand dollars for the operation of the institution, but Governor Andrew E. Lee vetoed the measure. The community continued to support the school.¹⁶ The *Springfield Times* commented: "Gov. Lee, stooping far beneath the high tenor of his office, forgetful of the favors of his friends, heedless of the educational interests of his people, and imbued with motives of unmanly spite, has stood in the way of every effort of the state to give aid to the Springfield Normal School. This is about what was expected and the state at large now has the exact calibre of the man. . . . His only motive has been spite, pure and simple, and he will go down in history as a man altogether too small to honor the position given him. Despite the efforts of the pygmy-souled governor, the Springfield Normal School will go on, however."¹⁷ In 1901, after Lee had been succeeded by Charles N. Herreid (whose lieutenant governor was the widely respected George W. Snow from Springfield), the state finally started providing financial support to the school.¹⁸

Attempts to close, consolidate, or convert the institution started almost with the establishment of the institution itself. Possibly figuring that he could not lose any more votes in Bon Homme County, Governor Lee concocted a plan to move the normal school in Springfield to Aberdeen. The Brown County legislative delegation introduced a bill to that effect. The bill did not move, however, and neither did the school. In 1905, P. T. Unruh of Tyndall embarked upon a crusade to close all normal schools in the state. Some people suggested that his scorched-earth campaign resulted from his defeated bid to become Bon Homme County treasurer. Unruh failed to kill the normal schools statewide, but he almost succeeded in getting the legislature to eliminate all appropriations for Springfield State Normal.¹⁹

In the first formal study of South Dakota higher education, the United States Bureau of Education recommended in 1918 that the state consolidate all of its degree-granting institutions by abandoning the

16. South Dakota, *Enabling Act and Constitution and the Laws Passed at the Sixth Session of the Legislature of the State of South Dakota* (1899), chap. 3.

17. Quoted in McNeill, *Normal School at Springfield*, p. 44.

18. *Springfield, South Dakota, Centennial*, pp. 7–8.

19. McNeill, *Normal School at Springfield*, pp. 45, 70–74.

present plants and establishing “a new State university centrally located and accessible from all parts of the State.”²⁰ The legislature generally ignored the study. Four years later, the New York Bureau of Municipal Research conducted an efficiency survey of South Dakota state government, including higher education. Citing “the bad location of the Springfield and Spearfish Normal Schools,” the report declared that “the institutional history of South Dakota is full of illustrations of the results of institutional management by the legislative log rolling method.”²¹ In the 1922 general election, Vermillion, a beneficiary of that “log rolling,” successfully fought off an attempt to move the University of South Dakota to Sioux Falls.²²

During the 1920s, the South Dakota Board of Regents ran hot and cold on the concept of the state’s normal schools granting four-year college degrees. The 1925 legislature changed the names of all the normal schools to teachers colleges but made no changes to their functions. Governor Carl Gunderson vetoed the bill as unnecessary. That same session saw the introduction of “An Act Closing the State Normal School at Springfield and Providing for the Disposition of its Property.” The legislature talked the proposed measure to death.²³

In 1927, the Board of Regents authorized the normal schools to grant four-year degrees. That action lit the fuse of Edward Prchal, a lawyer and former legislator from Burke, who launched an all-out legal, political, and public-relations war against the normal schools in Madison, Spearfish, and Springfield. Prchal wrote, “Can South Dakota, with less than 700,000 people afford SEVEN full degree granting colleges?”²⁴ On 3 January 1931, the South Dakota Supreme Court, in an appeal of a lawsuit brought by Prchal, prohibited the normal schools from teach-

20. U.S., Department of the Interior, Bureau of Education, *The Educational System of South Dakota*, Bulletin 1918, no. 31 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1918).

21. New York Bureau of Municipal Research, *General Report on the Administrative Organization and Management of the Government of the State of South Dakota*, 1922, pt. 1, p. 104.

22. South Dakota, *Legislative Manual* (1923), p. 352.

23. South Dakota, *Proceedings of the Senate, Nineteenth Legislative Session* (1925), pp. 83, 142, 873.

24. McNeill, *Normal School at Springfield*, pp. 145–47.

ing college-level courses. The court concluded, “These normal schools being established for the exclusive purpose of training grade school teachers cannot be used in whole or in part to train high school and other teachers without legislative authority. Such authority we do not find.” The court deferred its entry of judgment until 1 July 1931, anticipating that the 1931 legislature would move on the issue.²⁵ Acting upon that cue, the legislature promoted the normal schools in Madison, Spearfish, and Springfield to teachers colleges. Prchal then led a successful effort to refer the law to the voters, who, in November 1932, with the depression deepening, trounced the law 147,303 to 86,253.²⁶

Meanwhile, Springfield continued to fight off attempts to close its school. In the 1929 legislature, Representative W. J. Eggert from Rockham introduced a bill that would have required the Board of Regents to discontinue the operations of the Springfield Normal School, which had come to be known as Southern State Normal School.²⁷ One politician observed, “It’s the same old story—over and over again. It’s been this way since the nineties. Someone will bring up the same old arguments, the school will muster its forces, survive, and operate for another two years without being covered by a cloud of uncertainty as to its continued existence. Frankly, I’m tired of it!”²⁸

In his 1933 inaugural address, Governor Tom Berry stated, “Thus we have two public institutions of higher learning in the area of South Dakota west of the Missouri river, and east of the Missouri river we have fifteen institutions of higher learning, five public and ten private. In view of that picture and in the very definite need for retrenchment in public expenses, I recommend that steps be taken by this legislature, by resolution, to direct the Board of Regents to suspend, for a period of two years, two of our existing Normal schools.”²⁹ Ultimately, Berry had

25. *State ex rel. Prchal v. Dailey et al.*, 234 N.W. 45 (1931).

26. South Dakota, *Laws Passed at the Twenty-second Session of the Legislature of the State of South Dakota* (1931), chap. 137; Kramer, “Highlights of the History of Public Education,” p. 171.

27. South Dakota, *Proceedings of the House, Twenty-first Legislative Session* (1929), pp. 399, 419, 629.

28. McNeill, *Normal School at Springfield*, pp. 140–42.

29. South Dakota, *Proceedings of the House, Twenty-third Legislative Session* (1933), pp. 36–37.

bigger fish to fry, and the school at Springfield escaped his creel,³⁰ but during the 1933 legislative session, Representative Rennie R. Buikema from Ipswich introduced a bill to abolish the institution. On the house floor, Representative Buikema amended his bill to suspend operations at Southern for two years. The house rejected that bill, with fifty-five representatives voting against the measure, forty-three voting for it, and five absent. In 1939, Senator L. A. Johnson of De Smet introduced a bill to abolish Southern. It failed in committee.³¹

Carl G. Lawrence, who served as Southern's president from 1919 to 1933, later wrote in his biography, "During all the years of my service at Springfield I was compelled to worry about keeping the school alive. At nearly every legislative session a bill was introduced to abolish the school."³² Lawrence's path later led to Aberdeen, where he became president of Northern Normal and Industrial School.³³ Another former president of Southern, J. Howard Kramer, wrote in his unpublished study of higher education in South Dakota, "While the normal schools at Madison and Springfield seem to have been free from internal strife of any moment they were almost constantly being attacked from the outside by those who either sincerely believed that the schools were ill-conceived and ought to be closed or change or by those who wanted to stir up trouble or who thought closing those schools would benefit their own school, public or private. Sometimes these attacks were directed at Madison, sometimes at Spearfish, but always at Springfield."³⁴

30. Matthew Cecil writes in "Democratic Party Politics and the South Dakota Income Tax, 1933-1942" that "when push came to shove, Berry allowed the colleges to stay open, thus assuring nearly a dozen votes in favor of his gross income tax" (*South Dakota History* 26 [Summer/Fall 1996]: 151).

31. *Proceedings of the House, Twenty-third Legislative Session* (1933), pp. 467, 484, 868, 897, 958, 959, 1007, 1008, 1010; South Dakota, *Proceedings of the Senate, Twenty-sixth Legislative Session* (1939), pp. 320, 444, 493.

32. McNeill, *Normal School at Springfield*, p. 131.

33. Flickema and Buntin, "Tradition and Change," pp. 100-101. The path of Lawrence's son, Ernest O. Lawrence, led from Canton High School to the University of South Dakota to Berkeley, where he won the 1939 Nobel Prize in physics for inventing the atom-smashing cyclotron. Nobel Foundation, "Ernest Lawrence: The Nobel Prize in Physics, 1939," http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/physics/laureates/1939/lawrence-bio.html, accessed 1 June 2009.

34. Kramer, "Highlights of the History of Higher Education," pp. 65-66.

Soon after the United States entered World War II in 1941, college enrollments plunged as young people left the campuses and joined the war effort at home and abroad. In September 1943, Southern's student newspaper, the *Pulse*, noted: "Southern Normal's male population has increased by only one recently. The new student is Harold Smith of Gregory. We now have six boys in attendance. Due to the shortage of football players our boys here have taken up playing kittenball with the girls. At least they are doing their best to show sportsmanship. Another young woman enrolled last week, too. This now brings our total enrollment to 59 students."³⁵ During the fall quarter of 1945, Southern's faculty numbered twenty-three. The enrollment consisted of one man and seven women.³⁶ During the war years, Southern Normal offered popular six-week summer school sessions. High school graduates who passed summer school and an examination by the Department of Public Instruction could teach in a rural school that autumn. These newly minted teachers were commonly known as "six-week wonders."³⁷

When the war ended, college enrollments soared. In 1946, bolstered

35. McNeill, *Normal School at Springfield*, p. 166.

36. Kramer, "Highlights of the History of Higher Education," p. 169.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 166.



The young women enrolled in this Commercial Department course acquired skill with the calculators of 1957.

by legislative authorization, Southern once again started offering four-year degrees. The 1947 legislature formally changed the name of Southern State Normal School to Southern State Teachers College. The 1947 and 1949 legislatures appropriated money for an industrial arts building, the first state-funded building erected on the Springfield campus since 1911. The state added a formal vocational education curriculum to Southern in 1948, but the core mission of the institution remained the training of teachers.³⁸ Southern's president at the time, J. Howard Kramer, explained that the trade and vocational program would "fill an existing need in South Dakota and bring to the campus many students not fitted for or desirous of a more academic education but anxious to prepare themselves for a specific trade."³⁹ The 1951 legislature appropriated money for the construction of an automobile mechanics building at Southern. By the 1950s, Southern offered classes in automobile mechanics, body and fender work, electronics (radio and television), carpentry, upholstery, and cabinet making.⁴⁰

With all the good news came the usual bad news. Lawmakers introduced bills into the 1951 legislative session to submit to voters the question of terminating all educational functions of the teachers colleges at Madison, Spearfish, and Springfield. One of the bills, introduced by Senator Carman H. Sutley from Fort Pierre and Senator Richard M. Pease from Huron, was part of a maneuver to secure an appropriation to purchase Huron College and turn it into a state vocational-technical school. All three bills died in committee.⁴¹

During the Korean conflict, Southern's enrollment dropped below 150, prompting yet another call to close the school.⁴² During the 1953

38. South Dakota, Regents of Education, *Biennial Report* (1946), pt. 1, pp. 90, 96; South Dakota, *Laws Passed at the Thirtieth Session of the Legislature of the State of South Dakota* (1947), chaps. 59, 360; South Dakota, *Laws Passed at the Thirty-first Session of the Legislature of the State of South Dakota* (1949), chap. 312; Kramer, "Highlights of the History of Higher Education," pp. 194–95.

39. Kramer, "Highlights of the History of Higher Education," pp. 246–47.

40. Ibid.; South Dakota, *Laws Passed at the Thirty-second Session of the Legislature of the State of South Dakota* (1951), chap. 394.

41. South Dakota, *Proceedings of the Senate, Thirty-second Legislative Session* (1951), p. 80.

42. McNeill, *Normal School at Springfield*, p. 178.



Three Springfield students restore a damaged car in the late 1950s. Automotive technology continued to be a focus even after the school became a prison.

legislative session, Representative Harry C. Whitney from Wessington Springs introduced a bill “terminating the existence of Southern State Teachers College”⁴³ as part of his multi-measure plan to convert the school into a state sanitarium “for aged people whose minds have deteriorated by reason of senility.” After Southern’s supporters waged a strenuous campaign, the bill failed on the floor of the house, with thirty-seven votes for it and thirty-eight against it. Speaker of the House Hobart Gates of Custer cast the deciding vote.⁴⁴ In October 1953, a study by Griffenhagen & Associates entitled *Report on Certain Aspects*

43. South Dakota, *Proceedings of the House, Thirty-third Legislative Session* (1953), p. 535.

44. Ibid., p. 281. See also McNeill, *Normal School at Springfield*, pp. 178–80; Kramer, “Highlights of the History of Public Education,” p. 172.

of *Public Higher Education in South Dakota* recommended that the state consider closing Southern and General Beadle State Teachers College in Madison and converting the buildings to other uses, specifically, junior colleges, trade schools, a training school for girl juveniles, or a home for the senile. Another option was to sell them to the highest bidder.⁴⁵

The 1955 legislature debated a bill to consolidate General Beadle Teachers College and Southern State Teachers College with the University of South Dakota. Lawmakers banished that bill to the back burner, but the theme was still cooking. In 1964, a report by curriculum expert Harvey H. Davis, commissioned by the Board of Regents, recommended that Southern, General Beadle, and the University of South Dakota be combined into a single university with three campuses. The 1964 legislature did not combine the three institutions, but it did drop the word “Teachers” from the titles of Northern, Southern, Black Hills, and General Beadle state teachers colleges. (General Beadle State College was subsequently renamed Dakota State College.)⁴⁶ The 1967 legislature approved a resolution “expressing the appreciation and gratitude of the Forty-second Legislature of the State of South Dakota to the University of South Dakota, Vermillion, and Southern State College, Springfield, for the efforts being given to discussions concerning the feasibility and practicality of merging the two campuses into one multi-campus institution of higher learning and encouraging other institutions to consider implementing similar studies.”⁴⁷

In December 1970, South Dakota’s new commissioner of higher education, Richard D. Gibb, introduced *A Master Plan for Public Higher Education in South Dakota*. “The primary problem in public higher education in South Dakota,” Gibb wrote, “is that of too many colleges and

45. Griffenhagen & Associates, *Report on Certain Aspects of Public Higher Education in South Dakota*, 15 Oct. 1953, pp. 55–59.

46. South Dakota, *Proceedings of the Senate, Thirty-fourth Legislative Session* (1955), p. 139; Kramer, “Highlights of the History of Public Education,” pp. 390–92; South Dakota, *Laws Passed at the Thirty-ninth Session of the Legislature of the State of South Dakota* (1964), chap. 36.

47. South Dakota, *Proceedings of the House, Forty-second Legislative Session* (1967), p. 432. For legislative action on this measure, see *ibid.*, pp. 433, 594, 637, 954.

universities.”⁴⁸ He went on to recommend that Dakota State College and Southern State College be closed and the campuses sold or put to other uses.”⁴⁹

The following year, the legislature merged Southern State College administratively with the University of South Dakota at Vermillion, located about sixty driving miles to the east. Known as the University of South Dakota/Springfield (USD/S), the school became a vocational-technical college with primarily two-year programs (leading to an associate degree), augmented by a four-year vocational teacher training curriculum and the state’s only junior college program.⁵⁰ The merger and shift in focus failed to quell calls for change in the state’s higher education system. In 1973, while Governor Richard F. Kneip was proposing to close the State Training School for juvenile delinquents at Plankinton and move it to the USD/S campus, a consultant hired by the State Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education presented the Board of Regents with ten alternatives for the futures of Dakota State College and USD/S. Among the options were transferring all USD/S programs to Dakota State; creating a statewide community college based at Dakota State and USD/S; and closing USD/S. The regents held a special meeting on 26 February 1974 to hear the consultant’s presentation, but they took no action.⁵¹

In 1977, the Board of Regents passed Resolution No. 20, directing the institutions’ presidents to prepare a three-year plan for making “moderate changes in the roles and missions” of the schools.⁵² Ross Howe, USD/S registrar, described the result as “chaos,” with students and faculty bolting for other institutions.⁵³ In the same year, Represen-

48. Richard D. Gibb, *A Master Plan for Public Higher Education in South Dakota* (South Dakota Regents of Education, Dec. 1970). Gibb gave his recommendation for Southern in the “Summary of Findings and Recommendations” at the beginning of this lengthy document.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 29.

50. South Dakota, *Laws Passed at the Forty-sixth Session of the Legislature of the State of South Dakota* (1971), chap. 135.

51. McNeill, *Normal School at Springfield*, p. 192; Minutes, South Dakota Board of Regents, 26 Feb. 1974; *Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan*, 7 Dec. 1973.

52. Minutes, South Dakota Board of Regents, 27–28 Apr. 1977.

53. *Pulse*, 16 Dec. 1980.

tative O. L. (“Larry”) Anderson from Hudson proposed to an interim legislative committee that all programs at USD/S be transferred to Dakota State College in Madison and to Southeast Area Vocational Technical School in Sioux Falls. Anderson, cochair of the powerful Joint Appropriations Committee, further proposed that the State Training School in Plankinton be moved to the USD/S campus. On 7 December 1977, the committee voted four to two to recommend the proposals to the full legislature. Within days, the Board of Regents voted five to zero to endorse the concept of moving USD/S to Madison and Sioux Falls.⁵⁴ Attending that regents meeting was USD/S Provost Carroll Kraus, who said, “There is no way the Springfield campus can survive a yearly barrage of suggestions for what should be done with it. Our people just can’t stand any more uncertainty.”⁵⁵ The proposals did not make it through the legislature, but the underlying issues would not go away.⁵⁶

During its 29 October 1979 meeting, the statewide Student Federation Board of Directors voted five to zero (with the presidents of Dakota State College and USD/S abstaining) to recommend that the Board of Regents, when considering adjustments in the higher education system, first consider the “closure of institutions.” The student association presidents specifically named the schools to be closed: Dakota State, USD/S, and “possibly” Black Hills State.⁵⁷

In late 1980, Richard Bowen gave a series of lectures at the University of South Dakota that were published in 1981 as *Higher Education in South Dakota*. Bowen had served as president of USD, USD/S, and Dakota State College—all concurrently—as well as commissioner of higher education for South Dakota. Among his “possible configurations for a South Dakota system of public higher education” was one plan that would close Springfield and “leave vocational/technical training to the vocational schools.” Another plan would transfer the Springfield tech-

54. *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, 7, 8, 11, 18 Dec. 1977.

55. Quoted in *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, 18 Dec. 1977.

56. South Dakota, *Proceedings of the House, Fifty-third Legislative Session* (1978), pp. 1533–34.

57. *Volante*, 13 Nov. 1979. The *Volante* is the University of South Dakota student newspaper.

nical program to Sioux Falls but not as a full campus configuration. No dormitories, student union, or expensive organized student activities such as intercollegiate sports would be included, and any construction would consist of metal buildings. “Place this activity under the same, unexpanded administrative organization now controlling Madison,” Bowen advised, “then convert facilities at Springfield into the minimum security penitentiary the state needs.”⁵⁸

58. Richard L. Bowen, *Higher Education in South Dakota* (Vermillion: University of South Dakota Press, 1981), pp. 69–70. Bowen preceded these remarks noting, “We reviewed in the second lecture some of the reasons why South Dakotans established and now maintain their public higher education system. Some prizing of scholarship itself is there. We add the training of personnel in skills necessary for society to function. There is also preparing the young to earn their own livings. And we recognize that population surplus to the state’s economic capacity should be prepared to compete successfully for employment opportunities elsewhere. Those reasons persist. But later another factor was added, possibly now the dominant factor—the support of local college town economies. A person witnessing the debate of the past decade or so over the future of



The annual Sweetheart Ball formed a highlight of campus social life during the 1950s and beyond.

In January 1981, Representative Verne E. Thorstenson of Rapid City announced that he was drafting a resolution to place onto the 1982 general election ballot the closing of three of the state's colleges, including USD/S. Senator Wendell H. Hanson of Sioux Falls stated that he was drawing up a joint resolution calling for voters to determine the future of USD/S.⁵⁹ Neither maneuver made it through the legislative gauntlet. Senator George H. Shanard of Mitchell voted against Hanson's measure, saying, "It's somewhat irresponsible for the Legislature to attempt to close an institution unless we provide a better alternative for that institution than already exists."⁶⁰

Enrollment at USD/S had climbed past one thousand during the late 1960s, but by the mid-1970s, it had started to drop again. Certainly, the winding down of the Vietnam War, a time when young men had enrolled in college to avoid the draft, contributed to the downward trend. In addition, the reverberations of the 1970 Master Plan and the relentless barrage of other attempts to close USD/S or substantially modify its mission exacerbated the conditions that higher education critics decried. Doomsday predictions became self-fulfilling prophecy, as greater numbers of parents and prospective students searched for colleges that offered the assurance of stability rather than the turmoil of politics. As had been the case for decades, USD/S administrators, staff, teachers, and students continued to contribute much of their time to trying to save the college they were also trying to operate and attend.⁶¹

John McNeill, in his poignant *The Normal School at Springfield, South Dakota*, summarized the tenuous existence of the school: "For so many years the school at Springfield, under its many names, under the direction of its many fine presidents and deans, under its many mandates

public higher education in South Dakota and evaluating objectively the compelling force behind the several arguments advanced must conclude that argument for the local economies consistently takes precedence over arguments for improved economy and efficiency" (ibid., p. 68).

59. *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, 10 Jan. 1981.

60. Quoted ibid., 24 Jan. 1981.

61. McNeill, *Normal School at Springfield*, pp. 192–93; *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, 17 Nov. 1983. Lisa Beckel, writing in the 16 December 1980 issue of the *Pulse*, lamented, "The future of USD/S, after almost 100 years, is still undecided."

and missions, and always under immense political pressures, struggled for its existence. There was rarely a year of freedom from the threat of closure. Even when there was a period of strong growth and endorsement from high places, there were always those who were preparing yet another assault on the school. It could be said that the school never had the opportunity to direct all its energies and resources to the business of education, because it was so constantly faced with tasks relating to its existence.”⁶²

At a budget hearing in Mitchell in October 1980, Governor Janklow said that he did not favor closing any public colleges if no alternate uses could be found for their buildings. In regard to USD/S, he mentioned the possibility of a minimum-security prison that would serve both South Dakota and Nebraska. At that same meeting, he also brought up the prospect of turning Dakota State College into a regional computer education center. Neither suggestion drew much attention from either the press or the public.⁶³ The ideas surfaced again in March 1983, when, in an appearance on South Dakota Public Television’s *Conference Call* program, Janklow said, “I don’t think that South Dakota can continue for the future to have seven baccalaureate-granting institutions, the same structure which we have now.” He added that proposals to turn USD/S into a minimum-security prison and Dakota State into a computer school deserved to be studied.⁶⁴

In August 1983, Janklow met with several legislative leaders at the governor’s residence, informing them that he had created a task force to study prison-related issues. The task force included staff from the Board of Regents, the Board of Charities and Corrections, and the governor’s office. Representative Jerome B. Lammers from Madison summarized Janklow’s proposal to involve USD/S in meeting some of the challenges facing the state’s prison system: “As I understand it, what he wants to do is turn it into a minimum-security prison, using much of the existing facilities for training. . . . It would be strictly minimum security, trusty-types that would go down there to learn a trade.” Re-

62. McNeill, *Normal School at Springfield*, p. 197.

63. *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, 24 Nov. 1980.

64. Quoted *ibid.*, 30 Mar. 1983.

gent William Srstka of Pierre added, “The governor’s idea is to have a unique institution to provide education to minimum-security type people.”⁶⁵

On 16 November 1983, an interim legislative committee studying overcrowding in the state penitentiary met in Sioux Falls. Governor Janklow appeared before the committee, presenting a three-part plan that called for moving the state’s women’s prison from Yankton to a building on the USD/S campus; moving mentally ill inmates (then numbering about thirty-five) from the penitentiary in Sioux Falls to a remodeled women’s prison in Yankton, where they would be treated by local staff from the state’s Human Services Center for the mentally ill; and moving low-risk male inmates from the penitentiary to the USD/S campus, where they would study vocational programs.⁶⁶

According to Janklow, felons had three strikes against them: their status as convicts, their records as losers, and poor academic achievement. He argued that low-risk inmates working part time and attending classes part time at USD/S could improve their own lots in life while helping the entire state of South Dakota. “We’re going to do something that’s never been done in corrections anywhere else in the world,” he predicted. “We’re going to take people who are educationally deficient and make them educationally efficient.”⁶⁷ Janklow warned that if the legislature did not take what he called the “Springfield option,” it faced the multimillion-dollar expense of building new prison facilities, an expense that would leave “nothing for rehabilitation.”⁶⁸ Finally, perhaps anticipating a negative reaction to his proposal from faculty at USD/S, Janklow admonished teachers who worried about working with inmates to “remember that only a small percentage of criminals end up behind bars. . . . It’s likely that teachers already have worked with lawbreakers who haven’t been caught.”⁶⁹ While Janklow was revealing his plan to the legislative committee, USD President Joseph McFadden

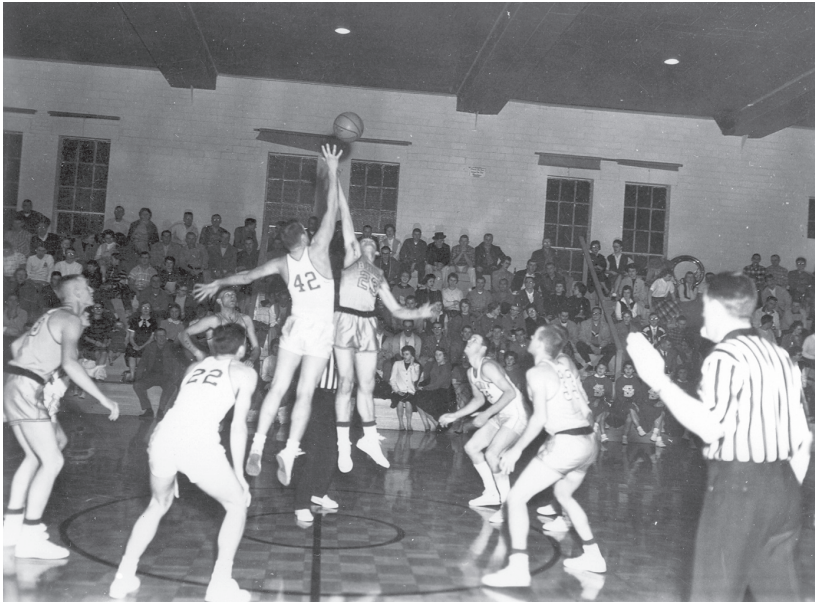
65. Quoted *ibid.*, 16 Nov. 1983.

66. *Ibid.*, 17 Nov. 1983.

67. Quoted *ibid.*, 17 Nov. 1983. *See also* *ibid.*, 5 Dec. 1983.

68. Quoted *ibid.*, 5 Dec. 1983.

69. Quoted *ibid.*, 26 Nov. 1983.



Southern fans watch from the school gymnasium bleachers as the action begins in a 1959 basketball game against Black Hills State.

was organizing a campus committee to examine continuing funding problems at USD/S. He had already eliminated five faculty positions and was considering cutting sociology or political science offerings.⁷⁰

Where state officials and legislators initially stood on the governor's proposals generally depended upon where they sat. Carole Hillard, who would later serve as a state representative from Rapid City and as lieutenant governor with Janklow, chaired the South Dakota Board of Charities and Corrections. She believed that the plan would solve the state's three most pressing correctional problems: overcrowding in the penitentiary, overcrowding in the women's prison, and the lack of facilities to treat mentally ill prisoners.⁷¹ Representative Tarrell R. ("Terry") Miller of Freeman, whose district included the Springfield area, opposed any plan to convert the school into a prison, contending

70. Ibid., 30 Apr. 1989.

71. Ibid., 17 Nov. 1983.

that it would kill the town, as well as the school.⁷² Loren D. Anderson, a state representative from Yankton and an instructor at Yankton College, said, “For too long the faculty, administration, and students, as well as the community, have had to live with uncertainty about their future. That’s unfair. . . . I think we ought to get the cards on the table and decide something, then leave them alone.”⁷³

Some support for Janklow’s plan came from inside the walls of the state penitentiary, where inmate Robert Thomle penned a letter to the editor of the *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*. “Most of the inmates at this institution will return to society within five years,” Thomle wrote. “It would seem that an informed public would want these people to return with the ability to support themselves and their families if that responsibility has remained intact. To accomplish this the inmate must be taught a way to live without resorting to crime. In most cases this entails a better education coupled with a marketable vocational skill.” The inmate went on to describe the limited options that existed for expanding vocational training facilities at the penitentiary, particularly the shop area, which greatly restricted the number of prisoners who could take part. “It is an elementary fact that vocational training without the hands-on experience the shop provides becomes abstract,” Thomle concluded. “With this in mind the relevancy of the move to Springfield becomes clearer. The only way crime can effectively be curtailed in our modern society is through the most complete rehabilitation program possible.”⁷⁴

In Springfield, reactions to the governor’s proposals ranged from hilarity to scorn to outright disgust. Some students suggested that the new prison-school should be named “Pen State.”⁷⁵ Mark Hudson, a junior at USD/S, quipped, “I told my friends I’m going to write a few

72. Ibid., 16 Nov. 1983.

73. Quoted in *Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan*, 17 Nov. 1983.

74. *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, 31 Dec. 1983.

75. *Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan*, 22 Nov. 1983. Jim Soyer, press secretary to Governor Janklow during the Springfield controversy, recalled that Ken Jones and Don Peterson gave the governor a black-and-white-striped jacket with “Pen State” printed on the back. He also remembers seeing a stuffed, life-sized doll dressed like a USD/S cheerleader and dubbed “Miss Pen State” (interview with Soyer, Pierre, S.Dak., 19 May 2006).

bad checks so I can go to school here.”⁷⁶ Doug Kanaly, president of the USD/S faculty association, said, “The bottom line on this proposal, if it’s passed, is a successful college with a 100-year history will be closed so that prisoners can be rewarded with a college education.”⁷⁷ In the view of Jim Hastings, USD/S grants coordinator, “It makes no sense to use a \$20 million campus to educate about 200 felons, rather than continue spending about \$2 million a year in state tax money to educate more than 800 law-abiding students.” Hastings later suggested that there were other ways to educate inmates, including spreading low-risk inmates throughout the state’s colleges.⁷⁸

Some newspaper editors quickly weighed in. “Gov. William Janklow’s plan to convert the University of South Dakota at Springfield (USD/S) into a college for convicts is unfair, unfortunate and should be scrapped even before the legislature convenes,” wrote the editor of the *Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan*.⁷⁹ The *Mitchell Daily Republic* editorialized: “Early indications suggest that it will be easier to find a living dinosaur in Springfield right now than a person who likes the governor’s idea. This is, of course, no surprise. Springfield residents who care about their hometown and who think the governor’s idea is supposed to be a last-ditch alternative to closing the school altogether aren’t likely to regard this as much of a choice at all. They might see it as something akin to choosing between suicide and death by execution.” In the opinion of the *Daily Republic* editor, however, “The fact remains that this state has more college and university campuses functioning than it can support, too many teachers and administrators to pay, if they are to be paid adequately, and too many operating expenses to cover, while still maintaining some long-term semblance of quality in the overall system.”⁸⁰

On 22 November 1983, the governor traveled to Springfield to explain his proposal. At the armory on the campus, he encountered about two thousand alumni, students, staff, and friends of USD/S—all con-

76. Quoted in *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, 17 Nov. 1983.

77. Quoted *ibid.*, 6 Dec. 1983.

78. Quoted *ibid.* See also *ibid.*, 7 Jan. 1984.

79. *Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan*, 25 Nov. 1983.

80. *Mitchell Daily Republic*, 18 Nov. 1983.



The college band plays outside the recently built Student Union in 1958. Today the building serves as a prison chapel.

cerned, many angry, and some hostile. Janklow told those assembled that his three-part corrections plan would save the taxpayers money. He also stressed the economics of rehabilitating prisoners. After speaking, he spent three hours fielding questions, many of them variations on one theme: Why pick on Springfield?⁸¹

In response, Janklow pointed out that overall college enrollment numbers were declining in South Dakota. “We’re going to see an evaporation of available students,” the governor predicted, “and vocational courses will gravitate to area vocational-technical schools.” Left with an ever-smaller pool of students to draw from, Springfield would eventually be forced to close.⁸² Janklow went on to say that jumping onto the Springfield bandwagon and offering assurances that the school would stay open forever would be the popular thing to do, but, he noted, “I

81. *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, 22 Nov. 1983.

82. Quoted in *Springfield Times*, 23 Nov. 1983. See also *Gayville Missouri Valley Observer*, 25 Nov. 1983.

wouldn't be telling you the truth." In regard to the prison plan, he said, "I have no choice as governor but to look at the big picture. . . . I have a responsibility to look out for the whole state."⁸³

Mike Durfee, a co-owner of the local Ford-Mercury dealership, came to the meeting to represent the Springfield Chamber of Commerce. He drew a standing ovation when he said that USD/S was like a member of the family to many people in Springfield. "We feel USD/S is a South Dakota college educating South Dakota kids who stay in the state. We feel it's a bargain. Let's keep it that way." The governor stated that most USD/S students came from just four counties in southeastern South Dakota and related that he had recently talked to nine people in Rapid City, only one of whom knew the location of the school.⁸⁴

Under the headline "Janklow grilled in Springfield," the *Mitchell Daily Republic* reported that the audience cheered questions and hissed and booed answers.⁸⁵ According to the *Gayville Missouri Valley Observer*, however, "Most were polite to the governor."⁸⁶ The *Springfield Times* concluded, "Both the governor and the citizenry appeared to hold steadfast to their views, and the deadlock probably won't be broken until the legislature addresses the issue early next year."⁸⁷ In regard to the upcoming legislative session, Senator Carrol ("Red") Allen from Lake Andes predicted, "It's going to be a big fight."⁸⁸ Former governor Harvey Wollman anticipated that Janklow's plan would "fall flat" in the legislature. Drawing upon his eight years of experience as a legislator, lieutenant governor, and governor, Wollman said, "The realities of the Legislature tell me that it's just going to be a tough row to hoe."⁸⁹

During December 1983 and early January 1984, opposition to the governor's plan mounted. Mark Sternhagen of Scotland fired off an open letter to Janklow, which appeared in the *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*. "Is South Dakota a dictatorship with you as our leader telling the rest

83. Quoted in *Mitchell Daily Republic*, 23 Nov. 1983.

84. *Watertown Public Opinion*, 22 Nov. 1983.

85. *Mitchell Daily Republic*, 23 Nov. 1983.

86. *Gayville Missouri Valley Observer*, 25 Nov. 1983.

87. *Springfield Times*, 23 Nov. 1983.

88. Quoted *ibid.*, 22 Nov. 1983.

89. Quoted *ibid.*, 27 Nov. 1983.

of the figureheads to jump and they're asking how high?" wrote Sternhagen. "The decisions about education should be made by the people who educate and then voted on by the Legislature, not dictated by one man at the top. We do not live in the U.S.S.R!"⁹⁰ The *Argus Leader* also carried an open letter to the governor from Eloise Thompson, a former USD/S professor living in Yankton. She wrote: "You insist that your plan assures USD/S of a stable future. How do you know? You have admitted that your concept has never been tried elsewhere. Suppose it fails miserably in five years? Your term as governor will be over, and the next governor and legislature may term it 'Janklow's Folly' and shut it down. Will the state be stuck with a costly white elephant, and the prison system be worse off than ever? You have come up with some good ideas during your term as governor, but this is not one of them. I urge you to abandon it and look for a sensible solution to the prison problem."⁹¹

In December 1983, the Yankton Area Chamber of Commerce endorsed the continued operation of USD/S. Area residents also organized a committee to support the school. Called South Dakotans for Technical Education, the group elected as cochairs Yankton pharmacist and former Republican state senator Kenneth B. Jones and Tyndall attorney James Zieser.⁹² As the start of the annual legislative session in January 1984 drew near, USD/S supporters were cautiously optimistic. Milt Holtz, who taught history and social science at USD/S, said, "We think that if we can defeat this proposal, our future is pretty well guaranteed for a few more years at least."⁹³

On 6 January 1984, the Interim Joint Appropriations Committee endorsed a plan to build a new medium-security prison next to the existing state penitentiary building in Sioux Falls. A few days later, the Associated Press announced the results of its annual survey of legislators. Of the seventy-nine out of 105 lawmakers who responded, only eight offered outright support for the governor's plan. Twenty-eight opposed it, and thirty-five were undecided.⁹⁴

90. *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, 3 Dec. 1983.

91. *Ibid.*, 16 Dec. 1983.

92. *Ibid.*, 9, 10 Dec. 1983.

93. Quoted *ibid.*, 24 Nov. 1983.

94. *Ibid.*, 7, 9 Jan. 1984.

In his 1984 state of the state address on 10 January, the governor mentioned USD/S only briefly but requested that the legislature allow him to address a joint session of the house and senate the following day. During the two-hour speech to the joint session, the governor laid out his recommendations for the state's corrections system and USD/S. By late autumn 1983, Janklow told lawmakers, the state's prison problems had turned from bad to worse. Inmate populations in both the men's and women's prisons had reached record highs. The number of male inmates had increased from about 250 in the mid-1960s to about 320 in the mid-1970s to 800 by 1983. The penitentiary, designed to hold about 440 inmates, regularly housed more than 560. Additionally, over 200 male inmates were sometimes housed in the "cottage" facility next to the main penitentiary in Sioux Falls, the West Farm outside Sioux Falls, the Human Services Center in Yankton, Custer State Park in the Black Hills, and various other work-release facilities throughout the state. More than 120 cells at the main penitentiary were regularly used for double-occupancy; each of those cells was six feet wide and ten feet long.⁹⁵ At one point in the debate over where and how to house the prisoners, an exasperated Janklow said, "One thing you haven't heard in this whole discussion is a huge public outcry to turn them loose."⁹⁶

Between 1975 and 1983, the governor continued, the number of female inmates had risen from three to fifty-one. The women's prison at the Human Services Center, built in 1972, had been designed to hold only twenty-six inmates. Short of expanding that facility, workable but expensive options included paying other states to house South Dakota's women prisoners and holding women in local jail facilities around the state until room became available for them in the women's prison.⁹⁷

By 1983, South Dakota had, by actual survey, 132 penitentiary inmates who were in need of some form of mental-health therapy. Of that total, 106 could stay in Sioux Falls while receiving counseling or medical attention, but another 26 were "criminally insane." As the gov-

95. South Dakota, *Journal of the Senate, Fifty-ninth Legislative Session* (1984), pp. 76–77.

96. Interview with Jim Soyer, Pierre, S.Dak., 13 June 2009.

97. South Dakota, *Journal of the House, Fifty-ninth Legislative Session* (1984), p. 76; *Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan*, 17 Nov. 1983.



Governor Janklow describes the state's options to a joint session of the legislature on 11 January 1984. His presentation included thirty-eight charts.

error described them, “These people are dangerous. They are dangerous to themselves. They’re dangerous to society. They’re dangerous to the other inmates they live with.” The state lacked the psychological, medical, and physical resources to deal with those people in Sioux Falls.⁹⁸

Ignoring South Dakota’s prison problems was not an option, Janklow emphasized. In almost forty other states, the courts had ordered state governments to make changes in their prisons ranging from capping inmate populations to closing prisons. The 1983 legislature had appropriated \$50,000 to draw up plans for a new medium-security building adjacent to the state penitentiary in Sioux Falls, a structure that was estimated to cost between \$2.5 million and \$3.5 million.⁹⁹

Some progress had been made in rehabilitating prisoners, Janklow reported, but more remained to be done. By 1983, the state employed thirteen people in educational programs at the state penitentiary. In-

98. *Journal of the House, Fifty-ninth Legislative Session* (1984), pp. 166–67.

99. *Ibid.*, p. 181.

mates could take remedial classes in basic subjects, study modules leading to a General Education Development (GED) high-school equivalency test, and also get a diploma from the accredited prison school, called Coolidge High. The demand for vocational programs—ranging from an eleven-month automobile mechanics course to a six-month farm safety course—was high, but the capacity of those programs was limited to only about seventy people. That limitation was unfortunate, because, according to Warden Herman Solem, while South Dakota's overall penitentiary inmate recidivism rate was 18 percent, only 9 percent of inmates who completed a vocational course in the prison had ever gone back to the penitentiary.¹⁰⁰

After discussing the manifold prison problems facing South Dakota, the governor continued his address to the joint legislative session by stating that he had modified his earlier plan for Springfield. "It would be converted to a minimum-security prison, and I emphasize prison," he explained. "When I originally discussed this a couple of months ago, we were thinking of it in terms of an educational institution to take advantage of, really, all the educational facilities that are available on that campus. And, over the last couple of months, after having heard, really, from a lot of people in South Dakota, listening to what their attitude is on it, I have determined for better or worse that there's not a great deal of public support for just taking a bunch of prisoners and sending them to college."¹⁰¹

On one of his thirty-eight charts, the governor summarized four options for dealing with the challenges facing the state in this arena. The first option called for constructing an expensive new prison building in Sioux Falls, upgrading educational programs for inmates, doing nothing about the overcrowding of women prisoners, doing nothing about USD/S, and moving the criminally insane to the Ordway Building at the Human Services Center. Under the second option, a new building would be constructed in Sioux Falls and nothing would be done about educational programs, the overcrowding of women prisoners, or

100. *Journal of the House, Fifty-ninth Legislative Session* (1984), pp. 166, 182–83; *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, 17 Nov. 1983.

101. *Journal of the House, Fifty-ninth Legislative Session* (1984), p. 177.

USD/S. The third option entailed erecting a new building in Sioux Falls, upgrading the educational component at the penitentiary, and closing USD/S and abandoning the campus. Option four, the “Springfield option,” would close USD/S and turn it into a minimum-security prison, relocate the women inmates to Springfield, and move the criminally insane to the Human Services Center. Janklow concluded that given the “meteoric rise” in the state’s prison population, the proposed new building “would be full before it’s done.” The Springfield option, he insisted, was the only course that “solves all four of our problems at one time.”¹⁰² Although he had abandoned his initial “prison-college” idea, the governor promised to “create a rigorous work program at Springfield” that would enable inmates to be productive, learn job skills, and leave prison “with some type of vocational or academic training that would equip them to become one of those 9 percenters or less that we’ve talked about.”¹⁰³

On 24 January, Springfield supporters took their turn before the legislators. Speaking in the house chamber, Ken Jones said, “We don’t take issue with the governor highlighting the problem that exists in our penal system. . . . The diagnosis is not wrong, but his prescribed solutions are more heroic than warranted.”¹⁰⁴ Jones also underscored that the matter involved more than the “survival of a faculty and workers at Springfield, of the business people or even of the townspeople there. . . . It is also a matter of opportunity for a certain type of student. We are asking you to preserve and to protect the right of an educational minority to survive.” Janklow’s plan, he contended, would “destroy a 100-year-old institution,” sacrificing \$20 million in buildings and equipment by turning the Springfield campus into “a warehouse for society’s rejects.”¹⁰⁵ In effect, Jones said, “What you are asked to destroy is an institution that provides training to the very people whose skills and trades are necessary for the future of South Dakota.”¹⁰⁶

102. *Ibid.*, pp. 183–89.

103. *Ibid.*, p. 179.

104. Quoted in *Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan*, 24 Jan. 1984.

105. Quoted in *Rapid City Journal*, 24 Jan. 1984.

106. Quoted in *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, 25 Jan. 1984.



Janklow (right) and opponent Ken Jones debate the future of USD/S in a committee hearing.

By the time both the governor and the college supporters had concluded their presentations to the legislature, the battle lines had been drawn and the arguments scripted. In defense of the governor's plan were:

Argument One: A rural state with fewer than seven hundred thousand residents simply could not afford seven public colleges. Additionally, South Dakota had state-supported technical institutes in Watertown, Sioux Falls, Mitchell, and Rapid City/Sturgis; five tribal colleges; and sixteen private post-secondary institutions in eight different locations. For the state colleges, per-capita general-fund spending—based upon student head count—ranged from \$1,200 at Black Hills State to \$2,362 at USD/S. The total for USD/S was more than \$1,000 higher than for Black Hills State and more than \$500 higher than for the next-highest school.¹⁰⁷

107. *Journal of the House, Fifty-ninth Legislative Session* (1984), pp. 191–92. The five tribal colleges were Sinte Gleska College, Oglala Lakota College, Standing Rock Community College, Sisseton-Wahpeton Community College, and Cheyenne River Community College. The sixteen private schools included Yankton College and Mount

Argument Two: Total enrollment at the state's seven campuses in the fall of 1983 was 22,956. The state's taxpayers should not have to support a seventeen-building, sixty-three-acre campus for only 837 students in a town that did not even have a high school. The University of South Dakota/Springfield was never a large school, and it never would be. Since 1970, its enrollment had fluctuated from a high of fewer than 1,100 students to a low of 740. In the spring of 1983, the school had only 55 graduates with four-year degrees, 242 with associate degrees, and 12 with diplomas.¹⁰⁸

In his presentation to the legislature, the governor observed that after he had stated publicly that only 55 USD/S students had recently graduated with baccalaureate degrees, the school reported that enrollment in the program had grown to 287 students. Tongue-in-cheek, he concluded, "So I've had a phenomenal contribution to baccalaureate education in South Dakota by precipitating this kind of discussion within the state."¹⁰⁹

Enrollment for the 1983–1984 school year included about 120 students in the two-year junior college program who planned to transfer to other colleges and thus were not attending USD/S for any academic reason unique to that school. More than 20 percent of the student body (182 students) were not even residents of South Dakota, and more than a third of those came from foreign countries.¹¹⁰

Argument Three: Nearly half of the 650 resident South Dakota students on the Springfield campus in the fall of 1983 were from four area

Marty in Yankton; Augustana College, Nettleton College, Sioux Falls College, the Stenotype Institute of South Dakota, and North American Baptist Seminary in Sioux Falls; Freeman Junior College in Freeman; Dakota Wesleyan University in Mitchell; Huron College in Huron; Central Indian Bible College in Mobridge; Presentation College in Aberdeen; National College, Black Hills Beauty College, and Headlines Academy of Cosmetology in Rapid City; and the Stewart School of Hairstyling in both Aberdeen and Sioux Falls. As evidence of duplication within the state's system, teaching degrees were offered at DSC, NSC, USD/S, BHSC, SDSU, and USD. Marshall Damgaard, "Viewpoints on the Mission Change and Recent History: Governor Janklow," in *Keeping the Edge for 125 Years!: Celebrating the History of Dakota State University* (Madison, S.Dak.: Dakota State University, 2006), p. 6.

108. *Journal of the House, Fifty-ninth Legislative Session* (1984), pp. 176–77, 191.

109. *Ibid.*, p. 177.

110. *Ibid.*, p. 171.

counties: Bon Homme, Charles Mix, Hutchinson, and Yankton. Half of all the counties in South Dakota sent four students or fewer to USD/S, while a significant number sent one or none. In effect, taxpayers across South Dakota were spending \$2 million a year to help operate a community college.¹¹¹ In the view of Board of Regents President William Srstka, “I don’t think USDS has met its charge to be a statewide institution. . . . It is primarily a local junior college.”¹¹²

Argument Four: Janklow said that in the years since he had written a 1978 letter supporting USD/S, a chilling demographic trend had made him change his mind. For some time, South Dakota’s pool of college-age people had been expanding, but over the previous twelve months, the state had lost 5 percent of all students in kindergarten through the twelfth grade. Enrollments at public colleges in South Dakota had been increasing since 1974 but were projected to fall from about twenty-three thousand in the autumn of 1984 to fewer than nineteen thousand over the next several years. Given its already low enrollment and proximity to the main campus of the University of South Dakota, USD/S faced an uphill battle to exist.¹¹³

Decreasing enrollment was to contribute to the closing of Yankton College at the end of 1984 and Freeman Junior College at the end of 1985. Yankton College had been the first college established in Dakota Territory. In 1988, it was sold to the federal Bureau of Prisons and converted into a minimum-security prison. Freeman Junior College, dedicated in 1903, had been started by German Mennonites who first came to Dakota Territory in the 1870s.¹¹⁴

Argument Five: Most of the programs offered at USD/S were offered elsewhere in South Dakota, while others were obscure enough to raise questions about the marketplace demand for graduates and whether such programs were justified. Observed the governor, “What you have

111. *Ibid.*, p. 170.

112. Quoted in *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, 23 Nov. 1983.

113. *Journal of the House, Fifty-ninth Legislative Session* (1984), p. 168.

114. *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, 18 Dec. 1984, 5 Dec. 1985, 26 Jan., 21 Apr. 1988; *The Swiss-Germans in South Dakota: From Volhynia to Dakota Territory, 1874–1974* (Freeman, S.Dak.: Swiss-German Centennial Committee, 1974), pp. 83–92.

here is a school trying to find its identity.”¹¹⁵ According to Watertown school superintendent Robert Cockle, who also headed the Lake Area Vocational-Technical Institute, about 90 percent of the classes offered at USD/S were available at the state’s four technical schools.¹¹⁶ The Board of Regents and the Board of Technical Education stood ready to work out articulation agreements, so that USD/S students seeking to complete programs could transfer to other public schools in South Dakota. When USD/S first received its vocational mandate, the state’s vocational schools were in their infancy but had become, in the governor’s words, “growing, thriving institutions” located in cities large enough to attract and sustain economic development.¹¹⁷

Argument Six: Legislative approval of the Springfield option would spare taxpayers substantial costs associated with major, court-mandated improvements to the state’s aged, crowded prison. Specifically, the state could avoid the estimated \$3-million price tag of a new minimum-security prison in Sioux Falls. “If we don’t do Springfield,” the governor said, “we must add a building at Sioux Falls whether we like it or not.”¹¹⁸ Furthermore, it was estimated that the \$2-million annual cost to taxpayers of operating USD/S would approximately equal the cost of operating a prison in the town.¹¹⁹

Argument Seven: New jobs would be created in Springfield to offset the loss of jobs at USD/S. The college had 164 employees, including 52 faculty members. As a minimum-security prison, it would employ about 88 people, the majority of them in security jobs. College employees would be given “first consideration” in filling jobs associated with the new prison. “I can’t tell you there won’t be an impact on the community,” said Janklow. “There will. But, I guarantee you, it is better than closing the place.”¹²⁰ On the other hand, Janklow pointed out that during the time since he became governor in 1979, more than four

115. Quoted in *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, 27 Nov. 1983.

116. *Ibid.*, 17 Jan. 1984.

117. *Journal of the House, Fifty-ninth Legislative Session* (1984), p. 190.

118. Quoted in *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, 5 Dec. 1983.

119. *Journal of the House, Fifty-ninth Legislative Session* (1984), pp. 187–89.

120. *Ibid.*, pp. 194–95.

hundred jobs in state government had been eliminated. “We do not run state government as a jobs program,” he stated.¹²¹

Argument Eight: Although the governor’s revised concept as presented in his special address to the legislature was far more prison than prison-school, it still provided for far more rehabilitation opportunities—like learning job-related trades—than simply building a new “prison-warehouse” alongside the old penitentiary in Sioux Falls. Over the previous ten years, the recidivism rate for South Dakota penitentiary inmates had been 18 percent, the lowest in the nation. Among those convicts who completed vocational courses while serving time, only 9 percent went back to prison. That figure constituted a 50-percent improvement in the best recidivism rate in America, demonstrating that rehabilitation programs were a good investment for both prisoners and taxpayers.¹²²

Argument Nine: Attempts to close the school had been going on for most of the century and would ultimately succeed. “It’s not fair to the school, not fair to students, and not fair to the community to live under that kind of cloud. You have to find some kind of certainty,” Janklow said.¹²³ “Is the public served when we wait and we wait and we don’t address issues? . . .”¹²⁴

Argument Ten: If the state built new prison facilities at Sioux Falls and the school closed several years later, the Springfield community might have nothing to replace it. “Then,” concluded the governor, “there will be no winners.”¹²⁵

Opponents of the governor’s plan countered with their own set of points:

Argument One: South Dakota had an average number of colleges and universities, compared to surrounding states. While South Dakota had seven public institutions of higher learning, Wyoming had eight and Montana had nine. Wyoming had one public college per 60,000 resi-

121. Quoted in *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, 26 Jan. 1984.

122. *Ibid.*, 26 Nov. 1983.

123. Quoted *ibid.*, 27 Nov. 1983.

124. *Journal of the House, Fifty-ninth Legislative Session* (1984), p. 196.

125. Quoted in *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, 27 Nov. 1983.

dents. Montana's ratio was one to 87,000. South Dakota's ratio was one to 99,000.¹²⁶ "In my view, we don't have too many schools, we have too few students going on for post-high school education," then-Attorney General Janklow had written to the Joint Appropriations Committee early in 1978, the year he ran for governor. "I think it is time we make a commitment in higher education to build rather than tear down," he stated in the same letter. "The loss of the campus at Springfield would be disastrous."¹²⁷

The *Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan* editorialized on 9 December 1983, "USD/S today spends only \$2 million of the state's \$56.1 million in taxes allocated for higher education. Not a very economic strong case for closing down a school, particularly when the school generates more tax dollars than it uses."¹²⁸ Eric Priest, coordinator of student services at USD/S, wrote in a letter to the *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*: "The situation of Springfield is similar to that of a poor family who had seven children. A difficult decision was made to put the smallest child up for adoption so the others might eat and dress a little nicer. Is this the logic used in eliminating Springfield? Could the state not afford to support USD/S? Will the day come when the family laments its decision?"¹²⁹

Argument Two: When the school's mission was changed in the early 1970s, enrollment did drop for a few years. Whenever politicians quit tinkering with the college or threatening its existence, however, enrollment bounced back. In the fall of 1983, enrollment at USD/S was 837, up 53 students, or 7 percent, from the previous autumn. Doug Kanaly of the USD/S faculty association pointed out that "full-time equivalent enrollment, the figure the Board of Regents uses for budgeting purposes, was up 12 percent at USD/S this fall, more than any other institution in the state. What's more, the college's current enrollment of 837 is 200 more than a 1978 Board of Regents study projected it would be."¹³⁰

126. Press release, South Dakotans for Technical Education (SDTE), 30 Dec. 1983, University of South Dakota (USD) Archives, I. D. Weeks Library, USD, Vermillion.

127. Janklow to Joint Appropriations Committee, 27 Jan. 1978, *ibid*.

128. *Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan*, 9 Dec. 1983.

129. *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, 16 May 1984.

130. *Ibid.*, 8 Dec. 1983.

When measured by full-time equivalents, USD/S had 3.9 percent of the students yet received only 3.6 percent of the state general funds budget for higher education.¹³¹

Argument Three: If about half of the South Dakota resident students at USD/S were from a four-county area, then about half were not, so the school could not be called a “community college.”¹³² The geographical profile of USD/S students mirrored that of other colleges in South Dakota. About 70 percent of the resident students at Black Hills State in Spearfish were from a four-county area, and about 62 percent of the resident students at the School of Mines in Rapid City came from a four-county area.¹³³ “In fact,” USD/S teacher Milt Holtz added, “50 percent of the state’s population is within 120 miles of USD/S.”¹³⁴

Argument Four: Kanaly pointed out that an average of 95 percent of USD/S graduates found jobs within three months of graduating. Of those, more than 80 percent remained in South Dakota. By contrast, about 80 percent of engineering graduates from the School of Mines and Technology left the state. USD/S was a solid, long-term investment for the taxpayers of South Dakota.¹³⁵

Argument Five: “The programs at USD/S are still unique,” argued Kanaly. “Two-thirds of the majors are not duplicated at any other institution in South Dakota. Some are not available in this region of the United States.”¹³⁶

Argument Six: The availability of well-trained graduates from USD/S helped to bring new industries into South Dakota and expand existing industries. Extension courses offered by the school helped to keep businesses competitive and profitable. Robert Werts, manager of CR (Chicago Rawhide) Industries in Springfield, a producer of automotive seals, said that his company moved to Springfield during the early 1970s in part because of USD/S. Herb Bowden of Sencore in Sioux Falls,

131. Ibid., 15 Jan. 1984.

132. Ibid., 16 Dec. 1983.

133. Legislative Information Packet on the University of South Dakota at Springfield, SDTE, 1984, pt. 6, USD Archives.

134. *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, 12 Dec. 1983.

135. Ibid., 8 Dec. 1983, 25 Jan. 1984.

136. Ibid., 8 Dec. 1983.

a manufacturer of electronic test equipment, stated that his company regularly hired USD/S graduates. Hastings Manufacturing planned to relocate from Michigan to Yankton, in part because of the curriculum at USD/S.¹³⁷

Argument Seven: The University of South Dakota at Springfield offered a friendly and helpful atmosphere for students who were not comfortable or welcome at the bigger state schools.¹³⁸ Holtz wrote, “USD-Springfield serves the second and third quartile of our high school graduates—many of whom come from moderate income-families and are first-generation college students.”¹³⁹ He added, “The elitism practiced by our larger state colleges is also a factor in our growth. Those in the lower parts of the college-student spectrum need to be educated, too.”¹⁴⁰ The college at Springfield had the highest percentage of students from families with modest incomes (under fifteen thousand dollars). Those students comprised 60 percent of the student body at USD/S, compared with 43 percent at the next closest schools—Black Hills State and Northern State.¹⁴¹ As the governor himself had written back in 1978, “Finally, the best reason for keeping USD/S open is the students. Many are first-generation college students whose opportunities in life are a little better because of an institution of this nature.”¹⁴²

137. Ibid., 6 Dec. 1983, 26 Jan. 1984; *Rapid City Journal*, 6 Dec. 1983.

138. *Springfield Times*, 29 Feb. 1984. Richard Bowen wrote, “To potential students uncertain about college or their own aspirations, the intimacy of the tiny community of Springfield is beneficial; they receive help. And to everyone uncomfortable in larger institutional settings (some South Dakotans consider their universities large), the tiny community is reassuring” (*Higher Education in South Dakota*, p. 60). Roger Turnquist, who met his wife Helen on the first day of college at Southern in 1968, noted, “It was a place for a lot of kids who wouldn’t or couldn’t go to college elsewhere” (interview with Roger and Helen Turnquist, Winner, S.Dak., 5–7 June 2009).

139. *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, 7 May 1984.

140. Ibid., 12 Dec. 1983.

141. Legislative Information Packet on the University of South Dakota at Springfield, SDTE, 1984, pt. 4, USD Archives.

142. Janklow to Joint Appropriations Committee, 17 Jan. 1978. Jon Westling, the school’s football coach from 1968 to 1974 and the sixth leading scorer in the history of its men’s basketball teams, recalls the “informal” atmosphere of the school, “where faculty and students knew each other and respected each other” (interview with Westling, Springfield, S.Dak., 10 June 2009).

Argument Eight: Total college enrollment might be going down, but enrollment at USD/S would likely increase. As South Dakota's economy continued to diversify, more workers with vocational and technical skills would be needed, making the mid-1980s the worst possible time to close a school that was successfully fulfilling its mission of providing those workers.¹⁴³ Keeping a wary eye on the state's four vocational-technical institutes, Ken Jones noted, "They're hovering [over] the Springfield campus like vultures."¹⁴⁴ Further, the economy desperately needed technology-savvy graduates who fell between the level of engineers and the level of vocationally trained workers—people who could be the crucial link between "theorists" and "mechanics." Such was exactly the kind of graduate being produced by USD/S.¹⁴⁵

Argument Nine: It was unfair to close a school to solve overcrowding in the state's prison system—a problem that had nothing whatsoever to do with the higher-education system. Education and corrections were distinct and separate issues. Prison problems had to be dealt with on their own.¹⁴⁶ Harold Settje of Springfield argued: "When there was a proposal to send 30 prison trustees to work on a state tree nursery at Watertown there were many protests from the Watertown community. This [Watertown] is a community of 13,388 people who do not want 30 trustees placed in their area. Can you blame the community of Springfield for not wanting 200 prison trustees placed in a community of 1,300 people?"¹⁴⁷

Argument Ten: Converting the college into a prison would mean the death of Springfield. "What is the value of destroying a town—destroying citizens of a small community?" asked state senator Don Peterson of Yankton.¹⁴⁸ "It will be the death of Springfield. I'm certain of that," representative Tarrell Miller said. "Somehow, the idea of trading a school for a prison is ridiculous."¹⁴⁹ The *Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan*

143. Wayne S. Knutson to the author, 14 June 2006. Knutson directed the merger of Southern and USD in 1971.

144. Quoted in *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, 26 Jan. 1984.

145. McNeill, *Normal School at Springfield*, p. 177.

146. *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, 22 Jan. 1984.

147. *Ibid.*, 25 Jan. 1984.

148. Quoted in *Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan*, 21 Jan. 1984.

149. Quoted *ibid.*, 12 Jan. 1984.

reported that college-related business accounted for 54 percent of the total local business volume in Springfield and that of the 566 jobs in the community, 72 percent were connected with the college.¹⁵⁰ Ken Jones protested, “We’ve never destroyed a town and made them live in concern and anxiety before.”¹⁵¹ Mike Durfee argued that the government should not artificially prop up the economy of a town, but “by the same token, it should never be used as a vehicle to completely devastate a community.”¹⁵² Senator Elmer Bietz of Tripp voiced Springfield residents’ worries about becoming “a ghetto for inmates’ spouses and friends.”¹⁵³ J. Howard Kramer wrote in his history of higher education, “Without detracting from the efforts made by other communities in support of the colleges located within their border, it must be said that no people did more to establish and support ‘their college’ over the years than the people of Springfield.”¹⁵⁴ In light of the community’s

150. Ibid., 17 Jan. 1984.

151. Quoted in *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, 15 Jan. 1984.

152. Quoted in *Springfield Times*, 25 Jan. 1984.

153. Quoted in *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, 27 Jan. 1984.

154. Kramer, “Highlights of the History of Public Higher Education,” p. 16.



State Representative Tarrell Miller of Freeman, known as an orator and an ardent USD/S proponent, holds the house floor during a debate.

dedication to the college, the move to close USD/S seemed all the more unfair.

The eighteenth of January 1984 marked the introduction of Senate Bill (S.B.) 104, an act “to convert the University of South Dakota at Springfield into a minimum-security prison.”¹⁵⁵ On 25 January, the Senate State Affairs Committee voted seven to two to send the governor’s plan to the full senate, where its merits could be debated.¹⁵⁶ The next day, after a two-hour debate, the senate rejected the bill by a vote of twenty to fifteen. Seven Democrats and thirteen Republicans voted against Janklow’s plan, while Senator Curt Jones, a Democrat from Britton, joined fourteen Republicans in voting for it.¹⁵⁷ About two hundred school supporters packed the senate gallery during the emotional debate and vote. Student services coordinator Eric Priest admitted feeling “like a rabbit that just got shot at. We were missed, but we’re still a little nervous.”¹⁵⁸ Senator Red Allen cautioned, “We’re not out of the woods by a long ways.”¹⁵⁹

The “Battle of Springfield” made good copy for the media, both nationally and locally. On 18 January, the *NBC Nightly News*, anchored by Tom Brokaw (a graduate of Yankton High School and the University of South Dakota) broadcast a story about Springfield, painting a picture of the small town valiantly fighting a forceful, powerful governor. Calls of support for the school soon flooded in from across the country. Janklow shrugged off the storyline and the spin, saying, “These are state buildings, this is a state institution, and we have to do what is in the best interest of the people of South Dakota now.”¹⁶⁰

The 27 January edition of the *Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan* carried the results of its own straw poll on the Springfield issue, which counted 17 votes in favor of the governor’s plan and 794 votes against. One reader commented, “Talk about a local college—how about Spearfish, a Lawrence Co. college, or Dakota State, Madison, which is only 40 miles

155. *Journal of the Senate, Fifty-ninth Legislative Session* (1984), p. 199.

156. *Ibid.*, p. 269.

157. *Ibid.*, p. 296.

158. Quoted in *Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan*, 27 Jan. 1984.

159. Quoted in *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, 27 Jan. 1984.

160. *Springfield Times*, 25 Jan. 1984.

from the largest school in the state.” Another reader said, “Find another scapegoat, we’re tired of this every year or two.” Yet another suggested, “Let’s trade governors with Minnesota.” One Springfield supporter, alluding to the governor’s Marine Corps service and his wounding during the Quemoy-Matsu confrontation between Taiwan and mainland China, wrote, “Too bad the Chinese didn’t get him!”¹⁶¹

Two members of South Dakota’s congressional delegation announced their opposition to closing USD/S and turning it into a prison. Senator Larry Pressler stated that if he had to vote on the issue, he would vote against the governor’s proposal. He went on to caution, however, “I want to emphasize that it is a state legislative problem, and I haven’t had access to all the studies and all the hearings and all the debate.” Congressman Tom Daschle was “reluctant to say, without having looked into it at all, what I would do. But from what I know now, I would say that it appears that a new facility in Sioux Falls . . . makes somewhat more sense.”¹⁶²

On 27 January, state senators voted against reviving the bill for further consideration; the tally was eighteen no, fifteen yes, with two excused.¹⁶³ Springfield supporters were jubilant. Most legislators and lobbyists consigned the proposal to the dustbin of history. “We think the prison aspect of it is completely dead, never to be introduced again,” said Ken Jones. Senator Henry Poppen of De Smet, cochair of the Appropriations Committee, observed, “Nothing’s ever dead here, but it would take a lot of rejuvenating.”¹⁶⁴

In early February, the state senate twice voted down a plan (S.B. 105) advocated by Senator Walt Bones of Parker to appropriate \$2.5 million for the construction of a minimum-security prison next to the state penitentiary in Sioux Falls. As an appropriations measure, the bill needed two-thirds majority support, which it failed to attract. The initial vote on 3 February was twenty-two yes, ten no, with three excused,¹⁶⁵ and the vote to reconsider on 7 February was twenty-three

161. *Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan*, 27 Jan. 1984.

162. *Ibid.*

163. *Journal of the Senate, Fifty-ninth Legislative Session* (1984), p. 309.

164. Quoted in *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, 28 Jan. 1984.

165. *Journal of the Senate, Fifty-ninth Legislative Session* (1984), p. 411.

yes to twelve no. Later on 7 February, the senate voted twenty-five to ten to pass S.B. 105, after “hoghousing” it into a compromise measure directing the Board of Charities and Corrections to “submit estimates of construction costs and operating expenses” for a new prison in Sioux Falls, improved housing for the criminally insane, and better facilities for women prisoners to the 1985 legislature.¹⁶⁶

The final day of the thirty-four-day main run of the 1984 legislative session would be Saturday, 25 February. The senate’s compromise plan—the hoghoused version of S.B. 105—arrived at the House State Affairs Committee on Friday, 17 February.¹⁶⁷ Many representatives were chagrined at the prospect of continued paralysis by analysis. Ron Volesky from Huron wryly remarked, “If we’d used all the money we’ve spent on studies, we’d have half the prison built.”¹⁶⁸

On Tuesday, 21 February, caravans of USD/S supporters from around South Dakota converged upon Pierre. Over four hundred of the faithful, hoisting colorful banners and placards, rallied outside the main entrance to the capitol. Music by a fifteen-piece USD/S pep band and fiery oratory from a battalion of speakers filled the unusually balmy winter air. Senator Don Peterson thanked the crowd, saying, “We have won because of your sincerity . . . honesty . . . and will continue to win because we are doing what is right.” Ken Jones ignited the crowd’s passion with a stirring speech: “We have come from the length and breadth of the great state of South Dakota that our voices might be heard in Pierre. . . . We have come from our jobs, our kitchens, our farms and our businesses to remind the Legislature that we are South Dakota taxpayers, too. There are those persons who say we have too many colleges in South Dakota. They may be the same people who say there are too many family farms. Those same persons say bigger is better. We are here to say it is the small farm, the small town, the small colleges that

166. Ibid., p. 466. “Hoghousing” is a procedure whereby legislators, in committee or on the floor, delete everything in a bill but its number and then substitute new content. During the 1984 session, legislators hoghoused thirty-seven bills. They hoghoused S.B. 105 twice. South Dakota, *Joint Journal Index and Journal Corrections for the Senate and House of Representatives, Fifty-ninth Legislative Session* (1984), pp. 368–73.

167. *Journal of the Senate, Fifty-ninth Session* (1984), p. 38.

168. Quoted in *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, 16 Feb. 1984.



On 21 February 1984, crowds bent on showing statewide grassroots support for USD/S converged on the front steps of the state capitol.

still serve us best.” He concluded, “We have come to ask the legislators not to pardon felons and sentence a community to death!”¹⁶⁹

The *Gayville Missouri Valley Observer* reported on the fire-and-brimstone oratory of Representative Tarrell Miller, a Mennonite minister and former missionary in the West Indies and Africa, who compared USD/S and the governor to David and Goliath. He exhorted the crowd, “We’ll admit Governor Janklow has done many good things for the state, make no mistake about that. But no man is perfect, everybody makes a mistake once in a while . . . and Governor Janklow, you are wrong this time!”¹⁷⁰

Inside the capitol, before the rally started, the governor had addressed the House State Affairs Committee, telling representatives

169. *Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan*, 22 Feb. 1984.

170. *Gayville Missouri Valley Observer*, 24 Feb. 1984.

that the state could not afford to pass the senate's bill calling for what would be the fourth study proposal in a half-dozen years. "The situation has been studied to death," Janklow said. He encouraged the committee to send the bill to the house floor so that all seventy representatives could debate the overall issue, including his proposal and that of Senator Bones.¹⁷¹ The committee then voted ten to two to send S.B. 105 to the full house.¹⁷²

On 22 February, on the floor of the house, legislators again hog-housed S.B. 105. House Majority Leader Joseph Barnett from Aberdeen transformed the bill into the governor's original plan to convert USD/S into a minimum-security prison. Barnett's legislative maneuver touched off more than three hours of emotionally charged debate. The *Springfield Times* reported:

Rep. Scott Heidepriem, R-Miller, told the body that he supported Janklow's amendments with reluctance, but because "the facts, figures and history tell us this is a problem that won't go away." He told of many instances in the school's past in which the institution barely missed being closed. "The recommendations weren't made lightly or with intentions to hurt the people of Springfield. It's not Janklow, it's not any individual, it's the history of South Dakota that's making us address this issue." He added that he wished he could turn his back on the facts that were presented, "but we have a solemn obligation to allocate our resources in the best manner possible."¹⁷³

The *Springfield Times* also covered the other side of the debate:

Rep. Terry Miller, R-Freeman, who represents the Springfield area told the House they were jeopardizing the livelihood of many of his constituents with this legislation. "We're talking about a college of 800 students, an entire area made up of thousands of God-fearing, hard-working South Dakotans whose livelihood is in jeopardy. We believe in our college, we believe technical education is the wave of the future." Miller added that he's not sure talk of declining enrollment in the state is correct. During the past 5

171. Quoted in *Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan*, 22 Feb. 1984.

172. *Journal of the Senate, Fifty-ninth Legislative Session* (1984), p. 901.

173. *Springfield Times*, 29 Feb. 1984. Heidepriem says that the night before his floor remarks, he read Kramer's "Highlights of the History of Public Education." Interview with Scott Heidepriem, Sioux Falls, S.Dak., 19 July 2006.

years, South Dakota has ranked fifth in the nation in enrollment in public colleges, with a 14.6[%] gain since 1978. He also asked the House to consider the economic and social impact the prison would have on Springfield. “I’m afraid we’ll become prisoners in our own homes,” he said.¹⁷⁴

When the debating finally ended, the house elected to reject S.B. 105. While thirty-one representatives favored the measure, thirty-five voted against it, with four excused. That night, however, representatives voted thirty-nine to twenty-four, with four excused and three absent and not voting, to reconsider the bill, thus keeping the governor’s plan alive. The following day, in a dramatic turnaround, the house passed S.B. 105. Approval of the governor’s plan required thirty-six votes, and the final tally was thirty-six yes, thirty-three no, with one excused.¹⁷⁵

Representative Kay Jorgensen from Spearfish, who was suffering from viral pneumonia, had been bedridden for four days when the governor called to request her vote on the revived Springfield bill. A friend with whom she was staying in Pierre drove her to the capitol, where she was assisted by Doug Loen and Pam Roberts (Jorgensen’s cousin) from the governor’s staff. “I hadn’t been up for days, so I was awfully weak and kind of dizzy,” Jorgensen told a newspaper reporter. “I could hardly walk.” She did, however, take a short but momentous walk into the house chamber, where, standing just inside the door, she signaled her historic vote. After waiting briefly to hear the outcome, she immediately went back to bed.¹⁷⁶

Some Springfield loyalists later accused the governor of engaging in dirty politics in regard to this dramatic scenario, but Representative Jorgensen refuted the allegation, saying, “He’s very strong on his issues. . . . But he plays it straight. He’s never said to me, ‘Kay, you do something, and I’ll do something else,’ and he didn’t on this bill. He knew where I was—he knew that I had a lot of questions but that basically I thought it was worth the gamble to go along with his Springfield option.”¹⁷⁷

174. *Springfield Times*, 29 Feb. 1984.

175. *Journal of the House, Fifty-ninth Legislative Session* (1984), pp. 1001, 1012, 1112.

176. Quoted in *Spearfish Queen City Mail*, 1 Mar. 1984.

177. Quoted *ibid.*

Writing in the *Rapid City Journal*, capital bureau reporter Randy Bradbury captured the tension of the moment: “When the House’s electronic voting machine first flashed the total, Springfield supporters standing in the back of the chambers clapped loudly at the result: Yes, 35; no, 33; absent, 1. That’s one short of the 36 votes required for passage in the 70-member chamber. Then House Republican leader Joe Barnett of Aberdeen asked whether Jorgensen’s vote had been counted. Until that time, most people in the chamber were unaware she was even present. Rep. Donald Ham, R-Rapid City, presiding officer during the vote, said a glitsch [*sic*] in the voting machine prevented her vote from registering the first time. A recount showed that, with her vote, the measure passed.”¹⁷⁸

178. *Rapid City Journal*, 24 Feb. 1984.



This photograph captures one of the critical moments on the house floor on the night of 23 February 1984, when the fate of USD/S hung in the balance. Among those waiting for Kay Jorgenson’s vote to appear on the house voting display are House Majority Leader Joseph Barnett (left-center, light shirt), Assistant House Majority Leader Walter Dale Miller (center), and Assistant Senate Majority Leader George Shanard (right-center rear, light shirt).

Springfield supporters were shocked and outraged at the abrupt and dramatic reversal of fortune. “As a viewer of horror pictures will tell you, it takes special measures to kill a supernatural beast,” the *Springfield Times* wrote. “Supporters of the University of South Dakota at Springfield were probably wondering at times last week just what a monster Governor William Janklow had created.”¹⁷⁹ Ken Jones said, “I haven’t seen such a raw flaunting of political power in my lifetime.”¹⁸⁰ Representative Miller criticized the pressure from the governor and his staff, saying, “They play dirty, real dirty, dragging people out of their sickbeds to vote. . . . They’re constantly talking to us about playing fair and this is dirty politics at its worst.”¹⁸¹

To such criticism Majority Leader Barnett replied, “The pressure on individual legislators has been far greater from those who oppose the governor’s plan than from the governor.” Barnett contended that Jorgensen felt strongly about Janklow’s plan and had a right to cast her vote. “The tragedy would have been if she couldn’t have come,” he stated.¹⁸² Representative Mary Wagner from Brookings was among those who had voted against the bill the first time but then decided to support it. She explained that her Wednesday vote “was from her heart,” while her Thursday vote “was from the head.” Wagner maintained that the only pressure she experienced was “internal.”¹⁸³

Between the first and second house votes, there were eight vote changes. Besides Representative Jorgensen, two other legislators missed the earlier vote because of medical conditions—one had the flu and another a head injury. One voted yes; the other voted no. Four legislators switched their votes from no to yes; one changed from yes to no.¹⁸⁴

On Friday, 24 February, S.B. 105, now cloaked in the language of the governor’s original plan, returned to the senate floor. During an acrimonious two-hour debate, the lawmakers imposed a rule restricting members from leaving the chamber without permission from Lieuten-

179. *Springfield Times*, 29 Feb. 1984.

180. Quoted in *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, 24 Feb. 1984.

181. Quoted in *Rapid City Journal*, 24 Feb. 1984.

182. Quoted *ibid.*

183. *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, 24 Feb. 1984.

184. *Ibid.*

ant Governor Lowell C. Hansen II, who presided over the senate. The solons rejected the plan, with eighteen voting no and seventeen voting yes, but Senator George Shanard announced his intent to seek a reconsideration, meaning that the future of USD/S would come down to one final vote on the floor of the senate the next day, the final day of the main run of the session.¹⁸⁵

In a letter later published in the *Wakonda Times Observer*, state senator (later United States congressman and United States senator) Tim Johnson of Vermillion wrote, “On the evening before the final day of the regular session, the governor prevailed on one of the Black Hills Senators to change his vote to ‘Yes,’ thus putting the Governor in the position to win the next day on what then [would] be an 18–17 vote. With the immediate closing of USD/S imminent, supporters of USD/S including various Springfield citizens, and others prevailed on the Governor to provide a private purchase option as a ‘compromise.’”¹⁸⁶

That compromise might have been triggered by what Janklow later called a “chance remark.” On Friday, 24 February, the governor had asked Representative Frank Thieman of Yankton if Springfield would be willing to take over the school. The idea fired imaginations, and school supporters met with Janklow that night at the governor’s residence in Pierre. On Saturday, Janklow, accompanied by Sioux Falls lawyer and lobbyist Jeremiah Murphy, shuttled among intense meetings in the capitol, gatherings that involved leaders of both political parties and supporters of the school from Springfield and Yankton.¹⁸⁷

A compromise evolved and was embodied in a new bill, S.B. 221, which was introduced once the senate suspended its rules. Senator Bitetz successfully amended the bill, allowing for the option of the state leasing the school to an outside party. Thus amended, S.B. 221 “grew wings,” as veteran lobbyists say, and sailed through the senate thirty to two, with three excused, and the house fifty to nineteen, with one excused, on Saturday evening, easily capturing the two-thirds majority required for passage. Two components of the bill made the two-

185. Lowell Hansen II to author, 8 May 2006; *Journal of the Senate, Fifty-ninth Legislative Session* (1984), p. 1023.

186. *Wakonda Times-Observer*, 25 May 1984.

187. *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, 2 Mar. 1984.

thirds support necessary: its appropriation of money and its “emergency clause,” which made the measure effective as soon as the governor signed it, which he did on 9 March 1984.¹⁸⁸

The final version of the bill, as signed by Janklow, changed the mission of USD/S from that of a college to one of a minimum-security prison. It authorized current USD/S students to complete their spring semester and the Board of Regents to confer degrees upon those qualifying for graduation. It further required the regents and the State Board of Vocational Education to ensure that USD/S students could complete their course of study at other public vocational schools or higher education institutions within the state. The Board of Regents was also required to offer a baccalaureate program of vocational education through at least one of its institutions.¹⁸⁹

188. *Journal of the Senate, Fifty-ninth Legislative Session* (1984), pp. 1076, 1080; *Journal of the House, Fifty-ninth Legislative Session* (1984), p. 1221; South Dakota, *Session Laws of the State of South Dakota* (1984), chap. 138.

189. *Session Laws of the State of South Dakota* (1984), chap. 138.



State senator Elmer Bietz of Tripp defends USD/S on the senate floor while concerned supporters watch from the gallery.

The legislation went on to authorize the Board of Charities and Corrections and the governor to

sell, grant and convey or lease the land, buildings and equipment, formerly called the university of South Dakota at Springfield, on such terms and conditions as they deem prudent to any person, partnership or corporation. The financial consideration passing to the state on any sale as provided above shall not exceed an assumption of the existing indebtedness, including any portion of the indebtedness of the South Dakota building authority, attributable to the facility formerly known as the university of South Dakota at Springfield and an adequate indemnification to the state and the South Dakota building authority against pecuniary loss. . . . Such assumptions and indemnifications shall be backed by assets, letters of credit or other guarantees as reasonable and prudent business people demand in the conduct of their business affairs. Such power of sale or lease shall expire on the first day of May, 1984.¹⁹⁰

The sale or lease of USD/S would trigger another provision in the bill—the appropriation of \$3.1 million in state funds and the authorization of over \$800,000 in federal funds and over \$2 million in other funds for the operation of a minimum-security prison. In addition, it would expend funds authorized by the 1983 legislature to secure estimates and plans for the construction and operation of a minimum-security prison and vocational building, as well as separate facilities for the care and custody of the female prisoners and criminally insane.¹⁹¹

The bill also contained a section that few paid much attention to at the time. It instituted a portentous restructuring of the rehabilitations aspect of South Dakota's corrections system by creating the South Dakota State Prison Industries. The new entity would operate all of the industries then in place at the state penitentiary, including the twine and cordage plant, the license plate and stamping factory, and the rug and shoe factories. It would also oversee "all such new industries as may from time to time be established by the board of charities and corrections at the state penitentiary or other facilities for the employment of inmate labor."¹⁹²

190. Ibid.

191. Ibid.

192. Ibid.

Before the tumultuous 1984 legislative session ended, lawmakers also passed and the governor signed House Bill (H.B.) 1357, which shifted the primary purpose of Dakota State College to one of providing “instruction in computer management, computer information systems, electronic data processing and other related undergraduate and graduate programs.” The school was also mandated to offer “two-year, one-year and short courses” in the same areas as well as “preparation of elementary and secondary teachers with emphasis in computer and information processing.”¹⁹³ Today, Dakota State University’s student population is over twenty-five hundred. The overall career placement for its class of 2007 was 98 percent.¹⁹⁴

The passage of S.B. 221 precipitated the inevitable post-compromise process of taking stock, during which participants and observers attempted to explicate what had happened, why it had happened, and what it really meant. Some were angry. The *Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan* lamented: “USD/S was sold out because, ultimately, it did not have the political clout to defend itself. Other colleges cost more, offer programs fully duplicated around the state, and produce graduates who are committed to move out of state before the ink is dry on their certificates. But they retain state funding because they have a broader political base of support. And while that is the way the system works, there are times when the system stinks, when it is shortsighted and indefensible. This is one of those times.”¹⁹⁵ Joel Hanson, director of the USD/S library, posted a sign in the library lobby proclaiming, “We have snatched defeat from the jaws of victory.”¹⁹⁶

Some were pragmatic. Robert Werts observed, “Basically, it’s not exactly what we wanted, but it does give us new life. It gives us 60 days to come up with something for our school.”¹⁹⁷ Ken Jones believed the plan would be well received by USD/S supporters, concluding that in the long run, the school was likely doomed without the commitment of

193. Ibid., chap. 142.

194. Dakota State University, “DSU QuickFacts,” <http://www.dsu.edu/about/quick-facts.aspx>, accessed 5 June 2009.

195. *Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan*, 27 Feb. 1984.

196. Quoted *ibid.*, 28 Feb. 1984.

197. Quoted in *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, 26 Feb. 1984.

Janklow, the regents, and the legislature.¹⁹⁸ “We probably got as good a deal as we could have gotten in the closing minutes,” Senator Bietz acknowledged. “We know even if we would have won the fight and killed the governor’s plan, we would have been doomed in the future. . . . I believe the people of Springfield knew we had come to about the end of the line.”¹⁹⁹ Glen Uken, owner of a downtown drugstore, supported the option to sell the school because he perceived that the governor would never support keeping it open. “If we win this year,” he said, “we’d probably lose next year.”²⁰⁰

Some were chagrined. “Also disappointing,” wrote the *Daily Press & Dakotan*, “was the absence of a statement one way or another from the state Board of Regents, which should be the advocate for higher education in the state.”²⁰¹ Writing two years later, former USD/S humanities teacher John McNeill echoed that sentiment:

198. Ibid.

199. Quoted *ibid.*, 2 Mar. 1984.

200. Quoted *Ibid.*, 27 Feb. 1984.

201. *Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan*, 26 Apr. 1984.



Three key players in the USD/S controversy listen at a legislative hearing. From left to right are Eric Priest, who oversaw academics and student life at USD/S; Bob Werts, manager of the CR Industries plant in Springfield; and Yankton pharmacist Ken Jones, one of the most vocal advocates for USD/S during the 1983–1984 crisis.

One of the most shameful aspects of the entire Springfield closing is the lack of help it received from its sister schools in its time of agony. One would have thought when one school was attacked, all were attacked, at least to the degree where there would be some rallying together. Could not education be counted-on to rise to the defense of education, regardless of name or location? Apparently not. The other schools in the state were too worried about themselves to come to Springfield's aid. Some knew they, too, could be called to the dock. Others, though large enough not to be closed entirely, feared for various of their departments. All hoped that the sacrifice of Springfield would satisfy the lust of the hunters. Also, because the school at Springfield owned equipment which the other schools desired, there was a sense of eagerness to divide-up the spoils. This same sense of cannibalism carried into a grab for Springfield's students, too, though many found reason to continue their education out of state.²⁰²

Some were melancholy. They were left wondering about what might have been. Many years after the vote, Thomas Stone, the former dean of instruction at USD/S, observed that the clock ran out before the school had a chance to implement the changes that would have saved it. He said:

The "formula budget" funded the campuses based on the percentage of the student credit hours each campus generated of the total student credit generated by all of the campuses. This was implemented just as the USD/S was phasing out the teacher education programs and developing new technical programs. The concept accepted with the new role and mission was to phase out the teacher education programs, and, as they were phased out, to redirect the funds saved from the phased out programs into new technical programs. The problem was that as the teacher education programs were phased out, the formula budget process took away the funds before new programs could be implemented and student credit hours generated. Thus, the campus was forced internally to take funds away from the programs being retained under the new role and mission to fund start up cost of new programs. This was a slow, difficult, and painful process. Thus, the campus was never given a fair chance to develop the 1971 assigned role and mission and experience its enrollment potential.²⁰³

202. McNeill, *Normal School at Springfield*, p. 207.

203. Thomas Stone to author, 15 June 2006. In 1974, the Board of Regents named Stone, a native of Wagner, South Dakota, dean of instruction at USD/S. That made him

Some were complimentary. The *Rapid City Journal* praised Janklow for having “taken the lead in advancing innovative, and often controversial, solutions to issues that he easily could have ducked. He’s not inclined to give up in the face of strong opposition on the part of the public or the Legislature. . . . Resolution of the USD/S issue is another example of Janklow’s leadership and persuasiveness which, so far, have served the interests of the state well.”²⁰⁴ The *Mitchell Daily Republic* expressed confidence that “if the governor has good reason to believe that a buyer or leasor of integrity has been found for the campus, he will approve the deal, as the workings of the compromise require. There are not many who, so to speak, play the game harder when the legislature is in session, but Bill Janklow also has a reputation for playing fair.”²⁰⁵

Some were upbeat. Senator Shanard concluded, “What a heck of a deal for Springfield and the people who are trying to put together a college under the free enterprise system.”²⁰⁶ Springfield barber Wilbert Renner said, “We’ve been going through turmoil waiting for this to get over. Everyone’s owly. Selling the school could be wonderful. It would protect our real estate.”²⁰⁷ On the morning after the passage of S.B. 221, Springfield café owner Marion Brink assessed the mood of his customers, whom he found to be “in a better frame of mind today than they have been for a while. They feel like there’s new life.”²⁰⁸ Janklow, the man at the center of the storm, said, “I think it’s a good compromise.”²⁰⁹

In early March, Larry Grimme, a balladeer/farmer from Tyndall, composed a song about the confrontation between the governor and the town. While Grimme was penning “Janklow’s One-man Band,” Janklow, the metaphorical conductor in the song, was telling Lions and Rotary club members just across the Iowa border in Sioux City that South Dakota needed a prison more than it needed a school in

the chief administrative officer of the school, a position he held until the state closed the institution. Stone Hall, which houses the Springfield College Museum, is named for Thomas and Elaine Stone.

204. *Rapid City Journal*, 28 Feb. 1984.

205. *Mitchell Daily Republic*, 28 Feb. 1984.

206. Quoted in *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, 26 Feb. 1984.

207. Quoted *ibid.*, 27 Feb. 1984.

208. Quoted *ibid.*

209. Quoted *ibid.*, 26 Feb. 1984.

Springfield. "I would have to be some kind of nut," claimed Janklow, "to recommend we go and build two new buildings in South Dakota when we don't even take care of our existing buildings."²¹⁰

Even before the house and senate had approved the compromise on the evening of 25 February, a potential buyer for the school had surfaced. John Hauer, chairman of the governing board of National College, announced that his organization would consider purchasing USD/S or operating it for another buyer. A Rapid City-based private business school, National College operated a total of eight schools in five states. Hauer toured the USD/S campus in early March, and then he and other National College officials joined representatives of USD/S in an initial meeting with the governor. At a press conference in the capitol on Tuesday morning, 13 March (which was also the thirty-fifth and final day of the 1984 legislative session), Janklow, Jones, Hauer, and Al Terranova, the principal stockholder in National College, announced that they had reached a tentative deal. The announcement capped a night of negotiations that finally concluded at two o'clock that morning.²¹¹

Under the tentative verbal deal, National College would assume ownership of USD/S and would also assume liability for about \$1.8 million in bond payments for student dormitories on the campus. The state would make the 1984 and 1985 bond payments, totaling about \$330,000. Janklow cautioned that the South Dakota constitution required state officials to conduct an appraisal of the value of USD/S before concluding the agreement, which the Board of Charities and Corrections would then need to approve.²¹² The press conference in Pierre touched off celebrations in Springfield. "Happy days here again," headlined the *Springfield Times* on 14 March.²¹³

A few days later, Lyle Poyzer and Jim Poyzer from Iowa announced that they were interested in buying the school, and Mike Medaris from Nebraska City, Nebraska, toured the campus, indicating that he was also interested. Both parties said that they would operate USD/S as a

210. Quoted *ibid.*, 7 Mar. 1984.

211. *Ibid.*, 27 Feb., 4, 14 Mar. 1984.

212. *Ibid.*, 14 Mar. 1984.

213. *Springfield Times*, 14 Mar. 1984.

private college.²¹⁴ On 22 March, David L. Volk, state commissioner of school and public lands, stated that the state constitution required the campus to be sold to the highest bidder. The process, said Volk, would be just like that for any other state property. Volk ran newspaper advertisements for the auction, including one in the *Wall Street Journal*. He also sent information packets about the school to some fifteen potential buyers across the country.²¹⁵

On 2 April, officials from National College announced that they were no longer interested in buying USD/S, saying that operating the campus as a private school would take substantially more resources than they had initially believed. Hauer expressed concern that taking over USD/S might detract from his firm's main mission of providing classes in Rapid City, Sioux Falls, and other existing locations. He had contacted five other potential buyers and found one that might be interested—ITT Educational Services of Indianapolis, Indiana, which owned twenty-five vocational schools across the United States. The following day, however, both ITT and the group led by Mike Medaris announced that they would not bid on the school. That evening, the Springfield City Council began studying a home-rule charter as a possible means of assisting a buyer for the school.²¹⁶

On 4 April, Volk announced that the real property at USD/S—approximately sixty-three acres of land and seventeen buildings—would be sold at public auction on the afternoon of Monday, 16 April, in the Main Hall Auditorium on campus. He also revealed that its value had been appraised at \$1.7 million, which, according to the state constitution, would be the lowest acceptable sale price. A considerable amount of personal property, such as office machines and furniture, represented an original purchase price of \$3.1 million. Additionally, the school had about \$572,000 in liquid assets representing money in various school accounts. According to the governor, the ultimate disposition of the personal property and liquid assets would be negotiated with the successful bidder.²¹⁷

214. *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, 17 Mar. 1984.

215. *Ibid.*, 29 Mar., 10 Apr. 1984; David Volk to author, 16 Feb. 2006.

216. *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, 3, 4 Apr. 1984.

217. *Ibid.*, 5 Apr. 1984.

As the clock ticked down, the governor's office sent telegrams inviting about ten parties to meet privately with Janklow on Sunday, 15 April.²¹⁸ That afternoon, the governor spent two hours meeting with representatives of two groups interested in buying the school. Lyle Poyzer was there, as was James McGaha of Forest Health Systems, a company that specialized in developing alternatives to incarcerating inmates. McGaha decided that his firm would not be submitting a bid. After the meeting, reporters asked Janklow whether the state would offer any other bidders the deal that he had struck with National College—the state's assumption of \$330,000 in bond payments for 1984 and 1985. That would depend upon the bidder, replied Janklow, who went on to say, "I don't have any desire to make Rev. Moon's payments for two years," a reference to Sun Myung Moon, founder of the Unification Church, whose followers considered him to be the Messiah and who was well-known for establishing "training centers" on properties throughout the country.²¹⁹

In his book, *The Normal School at Springfield*, John McNeill described "what has to be the most bizarre event ever to have taken place on the stage of Main Hall Auditorium, . . . an opening of bids for the school, as though it were an old chair in a backyard rummage sale."²²⁰ At that 16 April auction, which Volk conducted, the Poyzers submitted the only bid—for \$1.7 million plus one dollar. Never people to seek attention or notoriety, the Poyzers suddenly found themselves at center stage. Lyle Poyzer, age sixty-eight, was a World War II veteran and semiretired farmer who lived in Spirit Lake, Iowa. For thirty-five years he had been a teacher and school administrator. His son Jim worked for a computer company in Des Moines. The younger Poyzer reassured about two hundred spectators in the auditorium that he and his father wanted the same future for the college as did the community, saying, "Our intent is to run it as close to what you've got here today as possible."²²¹

Lyle Poyzer traveled to Pierre on 19 April and met with the governor for almost three hours. Following that meeting, Janklow placed

218. Ibid., 14 Apr. 1984.

219. Ibid., 16 Apr. 1984.

220. McNeill, *Normal School at Springfield*, p. 203.

221. *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, 17 Apr. 1984. See also *ibid.*, 18, 26 Apr. 1984.

a conference call to the Board of Regents, who were in a closed-door meeting at the School for the Deaf in Sioux Falls. Both parties intended the conference call to be private, but several reporters, huddled just outside the closed door in Sioux Falls, eavesdropped on the conversation. Whether the eavesdropping was intentional or, as the reporters claimed, they “could not help overhearing Janklow,” the *Sioux Falls Argus Leader* stated that the governor had told the regents that he did not think the Poyzers had enough assets to buy the school.²²²

Lyle Poyzer soon met in Springfield with the USD/S support group South Dakotans for Technical Education and a group of Yankton-area bankers. He told the forty people assembled, “I have to admit, the governor was right. We didn’t have enough resources to see this thing through.” He then assigned his bid to a new corporation formed by Springfield supporters called University Educational Enterprises, Inc.²²³ On the evening of 26 April, school backers met for over five hours with the governor in Pierre. The negotiators included Jones, Werts, Representative Thieman, Senator Bietz, Larry Ness of First National Bank in Yankton, John Lillibridge of First Fidelity Bank in Burke, and Bryan Hisel of Yankton, who was the District III Regional Planning Association director.²²⁴

Several USD/S supporters met for most of 30 April with two lawyers at Davenport, Evans, Hurwitz and Smith in Sioux Falls. They hammered out a bid and faxed it to Janklow by late afternoon. Then, at 9:00 p.m., Ness, Werts, Thieman, and Bietz took a charter flight to Pierre for the final negotiations, which continued past the midnight deadline imposed by the legislation. The governor noted that although it was midnight in Pierre, it was one hour earlier in western South Dakota, and he would abide by whatever time zone was favorable to the negotiations.²²⁵

The Springfield supporters proposed that University Educational Enterprises purchase the school for \$1.7 million plus one dollar, with the dollar down and the balance from the sale of shares and a promis-

222. Ibid., 20, 21 Apr. 1984.

223. Ibid., 25, 26 Apr. 1984.

224. Ibid., 27 Apr. 1984.

225. Ibid., 1 May 1984.

sory note from a teachers' union fund in the East. Janklow rejected that offer because it violated the state constitution, which prohibited the state from turning property over to a buyer before receiving payment in full. Ness recounted, "The stumbling block to the whole thing was that the constitution says that until the final payment was made, the state can't transfer the title. Until we raised \$500,000 and got the loan, we had nothing to give the lenders as collateral." By contrast, Bietz believed that Janklow was the stumbling block. The state senator later told the press, "I am beginning to wonder if he ever really seriously wanted to sell that school. When it's something that he really wants, he can wiggle his way around the Constitution."²²⁶

The governor then made two counteroffers, one allowing the corporation to buy the college for \$1.7 million by assuming the state's bonding debt on the buildings, and another allowing the corporation to lease the school for two years at one dollar a year, with an option to purchase the school after that. Under both of Janklow's proposals, the corporation would have received \$3 million in equipment at USD/S and the balances of all state accounts at the school on 30 June, the end of the current state fiscal year.²²⁷

The corporation's representatives rejected the governor's offers, concluding that they did not provide enough security if the bonds were called for early payment. "We could not afford to pay off those bonds immediately and then put another million and a half into operating that school for two years," explained Ness.²²⁸ "It was \$1.7 million that he was talking about and an irrevocable letter of credit for that amount, so you have to either pay cash for the school or have the money available to pay cash if the bonds are called," Thieman added.²²⁹ Money, summarized Werts, was "the straw that broke the camel's back."²³⁰

Ness considered it unfair to blame Janklow for the group's inability to buy the school and stated that if the group had had the financial resources, the governor would have gone along with the proposal. Ness

226. *Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan*, 1 May 1984.

227. *Ibid.*; *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, 2 May 1984.

228. Quoted in *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, 3 May 1984.

229. Quoted in *Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan*, 1 May 1984.

230. Quoted in *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, 2 May 1984.



When the time finally came to move out of their USD/S offices, Cindy Ludens and Ross Howe pretended to refuse to budge.

recalled Janklow saying, “‘Look, boys, I’ll sign that thing. If you want to go through with this thing, I’ll sign it and you’re going to own a college.’” The banker continued, “He would have, but due to the things that we would have had to have done, it was obvious to the four of us that we could not, in good conscience, do it because we didn’t feel we could make it.” In the end, Ness related, “We would have had real problems with that college because we didn’t have enough money to run it the way it should be run.”²³¹ Thieman supplied the epitaph: “We went the last mile; we couldn’t go any further. We could have signed the counter offer but it would have just prolonged the agony.” By 1:05 a.m. in Pierre, the discussion—and the fate of the school—had reached the end of the long and winding road.²³²

On 1 May, as news of the failed negotiations reverberated across South Dakota, the state’s media also announced that United States

231. Quoted *ibid.*, 3 May 1984.

232. Quoted in *Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan*, 1 May 1984.

District Judge Donald Porter had ruled that prison conditions at the state penitentiary in Sioux Falls violated the Eighth Amendment to the United States Constitution prohibiting cruel and unusual punishment. Porter's 30 April ruling gave the state 120 days to file a plan with the court to mitigate prison conditions relating to overcrowding, the lack of a mental-health unit, fire safety, wiring, ventilation systems, medical and dental care, food-storage areas, and rehabilitation programs. The ruling said that overcrowding contributed substantially to substandard living conditions. It further stated that inadequate mental-health care "constitutes an especially grave concern."²³³

On 22 May, Judge Porter expanded upon his earlier ruling, holding that the state violated inmates' rights by not providing them proper legal help and not giving new prisoners adequate examinations and psychological screening. Two inmates, William Cody and Roger Flittie, had filed the class-action lawsuit in 1981; the trial had ended in December 1983. Flittie summarized the verdict, saying, "The facilities just can't handle the population."²³⁴ Attorney General Mark V. Meierhenry called the decision "momentous," adding, "It has as big of an impact as any decision in the last five years. . . . We have to totally revamp the prison or lock the door and turn people out."²³⁵

A few days after the last-minute negotiations over USD/S failed, Springfield Mayor Marvin Schamber told the Associated Press that he had been hearing from his constituents. Schamber, who had worked for USD/S as an instructor or administrator for twenty-seven years, said, "The vast majority are violently against a prison because the phone calls I've gotten last night and this morning indicate that [fact]. . . . I wouldn't be stretching it if I say I got 75 to 100 calls. They just don't want any part of it."²³⁶

The *Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan* framed the issue confronting its neighboring community, writing in its 2 May edition, "Springfield now faces the most difficult question of its existence: Should it reverse itself and accept the governor's offer of a prison, assuming that the offer re-

233. *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, 2 May 1984.

234. Quoted *ibid.*, 4 May 1984.

235. Quoted *ibid.*, 23 May 1984.

236. Quoted *ibid.*, 5 May 1984.

mains, or should it stick by its guns and tell the governor where he can put the prison?"²³⁷ A week later, the newspaper editorialized: "What lies ahead? It's hard to say. There are mixed signals coming from Pierre. Where once it was said that USD/S would have a prison if the school was closed, now we hear from the attorney general that a prison there would be inappropriate. Attorney General Mark Meierhenry now publicly joins Warden Herman Solem and others who say the prison should be in Sioux Falls—which is probably fine with a vast majority of Springfield residents, who would prefer nothing at all to a prison."²³⁸

Letter writers joined the editors at the ink well. Myrna Hempel of Springfield wrote in a letter to the editor of the *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, "How touching that our governor toured the tiny town of Henry where seven homes were demolished by a tornado. He declared it a disaster area. How about coming to Springfield Mr. Governor and seeing 1,500 misplaced people, unemployment, and hundreds of worthless homes? Now that's a disaster. The difference lies in the fact that the disaster in Henry was caused by God and the one in Springfield was caused by one who thinks he's God."²³⁹

Offering a contrary opinion, Bruce Shumate wrote to the *Argus Leader* from his cell at the state penitentiary: "What about our opinions on the matter? After all, it's our lives you're talking about, right? Our getting the school in Springfield could give us the chance that we need, not only to better our education, which most of us need, but also to give us a better chance when we're released from here. You people out there continue to think that all of us in here are murderers, rapists, or whatever, but we're not. A great percentage of us are more of a fool than criminal. With a better education, we could possibly find a half-decent job when we get out and stop breaking the law and costing you thousands of dollars in taxes a year." Shumate concluded, "We are locked up, supposedly for rehabilitation. But I can tell you this place doesn't know the meaning of the word. We're not getting rehabilitated, we're being exiled for only a short time."²⁴⁰

237. *Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan*, 2 May 1984.

238. *Ibid.*, 9 May 1984.

239. *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, 26 May 1984.

240. *Ibid.*, 22 May 1984.

On 6 May, the eighty-seventh and final commencement ceremony for UDS/S took place on a rainy afternoon in Springfield. Roads and streets leading to campus sprouted home-made signs. One read, "S.D. deserves better. Impeach Janklow." Inside the crowded armory, more than nine hundred USD/S supporters signed petitions toward that very end, and the documents, carrying more emotional than legal weight, were nonetheless mailed to the secretary of state in Pierre. "Seldom has a state ever damaged so many people for so little reason," the petitions read. "Because of crimes committed against the students, employees, and alumni of USD-Springfield and the citizens of Springfield, we the undersigned do hereby request that William Janklow be immediately terminated as the governor of South Dakota."²⁴¹

At the graduation ceremony, a box was placed in the armory lobby to collect donations for a lawsuit against the Board of Regents. Various parties eventually filed six lawsuits over the closure of the school, and more than four years would pass before the last of the litigation was finally resolved. At one hearing held in connection with one of the lawsuits, sixteen lawyers appeared before Circuit Court Judge (and later Supreme Court Chief Justice) Robert A. Miller in the Stanley County Courthouse in Fort Pierre.²⁴²

On their gowns, faculty members wore "On the Move" buttons, which had been made several years earlier to promote the school's change in mission. On graduation day 1984, the once-ebullient motto had become gallows humor, signifying the faculty's new mission—moving on to new jobs.²⁴³ During the ceremony, the alumni association honored Ken Jones for his valiant leadership role in trying to save the

241. *Ibid.*, 7 May 1984. Lieutenant Governor Hansen had, for some time prior to the 1984 legislative battle, agreed to give the 1984 commencement address at USD/S. He recalls, "I was very well treated all during the formal events that day" (Lowell C. Hansen II to author, 8 May 2006).

242. *Kanaly v. State By And Through Janklow* (368 N.W. 2d 819; 401 N.W. 2d 551; 403 N.W. 2d 33); *Hagen v. State of South Dakota* (CIV. 84-246); *Aase v. State of South Dakota, South Dakota Board of Regents* (400 N.W. 2d 269); *Merkwan v. State By And Through Janklow* (375 N.W. 2d 624); *Bonine, et al. v. South Dakota Board of Regents* (Civ. No. 85-3022); *Bonine, et al. v. John Meyer* (Civ. No. 86-4067); *Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan*, 16 June 1984.

243. *Springfield Times*, 9 May 1984.



“On the Move” was the slogan USD/S adopted to signify its new emphasis on technical education in the 1970s. Some faculty members wore these buttons again on the day of the final graduation in 1984.

college. A few days later, upon officially disbanding South Dakotans for Technical Education, Jones looked beyond the animosity churning around him. “I think we went through a very trying and emotional process,” he stated. “I don’t think we’re going to become cynical because of this. We have to work with the system through good times and bad. . . . I don’t take any pride in bitterness toward individuals.”²⁴⁴

By mid-May, Janklow announced publicly that he had given up on putting a prison in Springfield because of local opposition. “I don’t think you should force people to take medicine they don’t need,” he said, adding that other potential sites included Yankton, Redfield, Gary, Stephan, and Igloo. Janklow insisted that regardless of location, the state should solve its prison problems by using existing buildings.²⁴⁵ “I have to disagree with those people who think they’re going to have to spend millions and millions and millions of dollars building a new facility,” he emphasized. “I’m not building one. Period. Paragraph. They’re going to have to find another governor, or have a two-thirds vote of the Legislature, to waste that kind of money of the taxpayer.”²⁴⁶

244. Quoted in *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, 8 May 1984.

245. Quoted *ibid.*, 17 May 1984.

246. Quoted in *Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan*, 17 May 1984.

In mid-July, the governor made clear that his second choice in dealing with the state's prison problem was moving minimum-security prisoners to empty buildings at the Human Services Center in Yankton. Not everyone in the legislature shared his opinion. "It is our responsibility to do what is in the best interest of the whole state of South Dakota, not the best interest of one community," said Representative Volesky of Huron. "I simply don't subscribe to the theory that if the people don't want it there, we can't put it there. It's our property; we own it."²⁴⁷

In July, as well, Lieutenant Governor Hansen released the results of his fourth annual state-issues survey, which reflected the opinions of 893 professional and community leaders across South Dakota. In response to questions about USD/S, 80 percent of those answering the survey considered the legislature to have been correct in accepting the compromise that would have allowed the sale of the college to private business. Sixteen percent disagreed, and 3 percent had no opinion. Forty-eight percent of respondents said USD/S should be converted into a prison, while 45 percent opposed the idea, and 7 percent had no opinion. Seventy percent of those answering the lieutenant governor's survey believed that South Dakota should not continue to fund seven state-supported colleges. Another 26 percent said the state should continue to fund all seven, and 4 percent had no opinion. The *Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan* was quick to editorialize about the results, writing, "It would be a safe wager that far fewer than 70 percent of the survey respondents would have said seven state-supported institutions are too many if the next question had read: Is the college or university in your community the one that should be eliminated to make the number six?"²⁴⁸

As weeks and then months passed, the irrepressible pragmatism of South Dakotans began to surface. In mid-summer, Senator Bietz announced that he favored locating the prison in Springfield because he feared that no other opportunities would come along and the school would sit empty.²⁴⁹ The *Huron Daily Plainsman* offered some advice:

247. Quoted in *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, 14 July 1984.

248. *Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan*, 18 July 1984.

249. *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, 14 July 1984.

“For a community as small as Springfield, it would seem to us that it would make good sense to put the buildings to some use—for the sake, and survival, of its residents.”²⁵⁰ Following Janklow’s selection of the Human Services Center as an alternative to the USD/S campus, the Associated Press discovered some Springfield residents who admitted to having a change of heart. “Without the prison, this town will be a ghost town and there won’t be anything left on Main Street,” said Randy Fender. “We feel we have to have something up at the college. If we don’t, we’re not going to be anything,” said Dorothy Kibble.²⁵¹

On 26 July, fifty-seven members of the Springfield community took a fact-finding trip to Sandstone, Minnesota, the site of a medium-security federal penitentiary.²⁵² The next week, the *Press & Dakotan* editorialized: “From what we can gather, many older persons and those in rural areas who plan someday to move to [Springfield] to retire would rather not have a prison. They see a prison as a distasteful intrusion into the pastoral setting now existing. It would change the whole complexion of the community—and significantly lower the quality of living there. But at least a few businessmen feel otherwise. They need the town to survive so their businesses can survive. Even with the prison, the business community will be reduced; without it, only a very few will survive. Without the prison, Springfield will shrivel up and become another South Dakota prairie town of 300 people.”²⁵³

At the request of local organizations and residents, Janklow attended a Springfield town meeting on the night of 6 August. During a two-hour discussion, he told 450 people gathered in the sweltering armory that he still believed that a prison on the former campus was the best solution for Springfield and for the state’s prison problems. “Are we foolish enough to walk away and use these buildings for nothing?” the governor asked. “That’s the question we really have to answer.”²⁵⁴ Covering the event, the *Springfield Times* reported, “There was no applause during the evening and the crowd remained polite, restraining hos-

250. *Huron Daily Plainsman*, 19 July 1984.

251. *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, 21 July 1984.

252. *Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan*, 26 July 1984.

253. *Ibid.*, 31 July 1984.

254. Quoted *ibid.*, 7 Aug. 1984.

tile feelings caused by the tension of the past months.”²⁵⁵ In fact, noted the *Press & Dakotan*, “much of the emotion displayed at the meeting came from Janklow himself.” The governor explained that although the new prison would not be the vocational school he had originally intended, it would still be a place where inmates could learn job skills. He stressed the importance of teaching inmates those marketable job skills, pointing out that “ninety-nine point nine percent” of all those convicted of crimes eventually leave prison. “They can come out worse than when they went in. . . they can come out the same as when they went in. . . they can come out in a better setting than when they went in,” Janklow concluded.²⁵⁶

After the town meeting, events moved rapidly. On 10 August, 534 Springfield residents took part in a nonbinding straw ballot in which 296 (55 percent) voted against the prison and 203 (38 percent) voted for it. The rest (7 percent) were undecided.²⁵⁷ Rod Heusinkveld opposed the prison plan, contending, “The former UDS/S buildings can be used to a better benefit than that.”²⁵⁸ Harold Wynia, a proponent, commented, “A ghost town isn’t any good either.” Wynia admitted that the prison was not his first choice, but urged others to be realistic. “We have no other alternative. It’s hard to make the switch, but we can’t be selfish and say ‘we don’t care about anyone else.’ . . . We need to get the community back together.”²⁵⁹

On the day of the straw ballot, Dean Vik, managing editor of the *Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan*, wrote in his “From the Inside Out” column: “There is a wartime saying held to be a truth by the foot soldier: Being in a bomber crew is easy living. You never have to see what bombs can do—close up. Being a foot soldier is hell. You always are seeing what bullets can do—close up. It would seem that for most members of the South Dakota Legislature, life is like being in a bomber crew. They dropped their load on Springfield and, afterwards, did not have to walk through the town and see what they had done—close up.

255. *Springfield Times*, 8 Aug. 1984.

256. *Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan*, 7 Aug. 1984.

257. *Springfield Times*, 15 Aug. 1984.

258. Quoted in *Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan*, 11 Aug. 1984.

259. Quoted in *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, 11 Aug. 1984.

... Gov. William Janklow returned to Springfield this week. He was the pilot of the bomber that dropped its load on the town. Unlike most of the rest of the crew, he went back to look the damage he had done straight in the face.”²⁶⁰ The *Press & Dakotan* reported, “When asked if townspeople will get back together now, Mike Durfee at Springfield Motors said, ‘I think so. Whether there is a correctional facility here or not, we have to live and work here and the sooner we pick up the pieces the better.’”²⁶¹

As the 28 August deadline for Judge Porter’s 120-day timeline loomed, the government found another gear. On 13 August, the legislature’s Interim Penitentiary Study Committee voted seven to one to recommend that a minimum-security prison be placed on the vacant USD/S campus.²⁶² The next day, the Board of Charities and Corrections voted unanimously to renovate the campus into a prison. “I don’t think it’s being forced down their throats,” stated board chairman Frank Brost. “Forty percent approval is positive in view of the bitter animosity that existed five or six months ago.” The state quickly began implementing the plan that Janklow had introduced to the interim legislative committee back in the autumn of 1983: that of moving female inmates from the women’s prison in Yankton to Springfield, moving mentally ill prisoners to a remodeled women’s prison, and moving minimum-security prisoners from the state penitentiary to Springfield.²⁶³ By mid-October, bids were opened for the fence that would soon surround the new prison, and men and women prisoners from the Human Services Center in Yankton started cleaning the campus buildings.²⁶⁴

In late October 1984, state government’s USD/S transition team released the results of its survey of the former students, staff, and faculty at the school. The data showed that of the 787 students attending USD/S during the 1983–1984 academic year, 350 had graduated at the end of that year. At least three-fourths of the students who did not complete their academic work at USD/S that year were attending

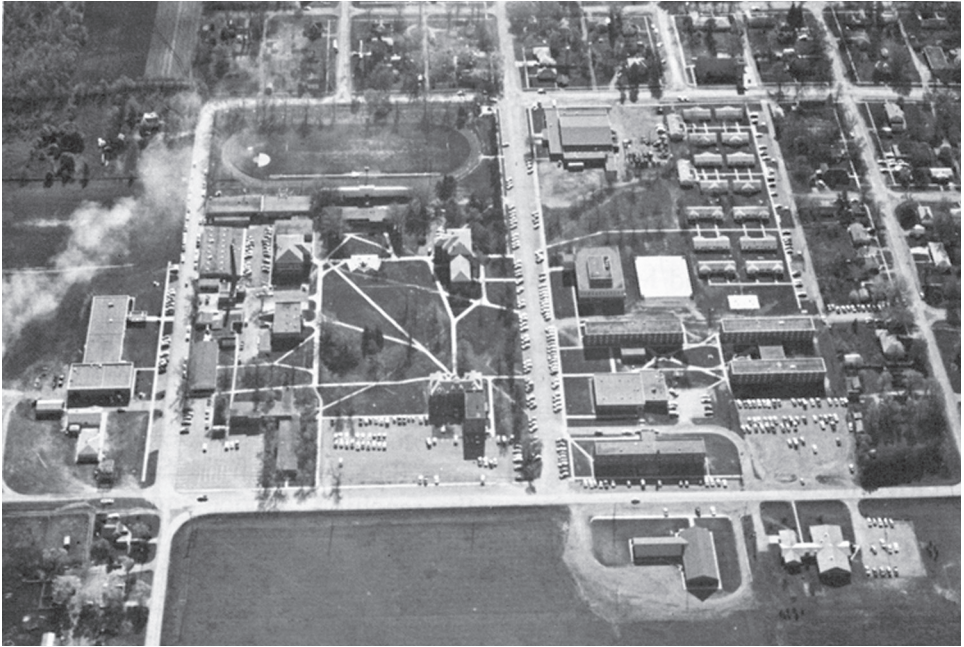
260. *Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan*, 10 Aug. 1984.

261. Quoted *ibid.*, 15 Aug. 1984.

262. *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, 14 Aug. 1984.

263. *Ibid.*, 15 Aug. 1984.

264. *Ibid.*, 18 Oct. 1984.



This aerial view shows the USD/S campus in its final configuration before it was converted into the state's minimum-security prison.

other colleges, most of them in South Dakota. Some students were attending Southwest State University in Marshall, Minnesota, and the North Dakota State School of Science in Wahpeton. In many instances, former USD/S students followed their particular programs to other South Dakota schools. An electronics program went to South Dakota State University; a biotechnology program went to the University of South Dakota; a vocational-technical teacher education program went to Dakota State. The survey also showed that about 80 percent of the 112 USD/S staff and about 89 percent of the 63 teachers had found new jobs.²⁶⁵

In late December 1984, the state transferred thirty-three women inmates from Yankton to Springfield. The state would continue to house women prisoners in Springfield until September 1997, when the South

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 23 Oct. 1984.

Dakota Women's Prison opened within the Herman Solem Public Safety Center in Pierre.²⁶⁶ In January 1985, the state moved the first male trustees to Springfield from Sioux Falls. The first vocational-technical classes at the prison started on 4 February.²⁶⁷

The 1985 legislature officially renamed the institution the Springfield Correctional Facility. In 1989, the Board of Charities and Corrections became the state Department of Corrections. A decade later, in September 1999, the Springfield facility became Mike Durfee State Prison, honoring the former USD/S honor student, outstanding athlete, and successful coach, who in 1992 had become deputy secretary of the state Department of Corrections.²⁶⁸ In 2005, a \$3.6-million expansion—including a new dining hall, laundry facility, and forty-bed barracks—increased the prison's inmate capacity to 1,313. By the summer of 2009, the prison had approximately 1,200 inmates, about 180 Department of Corrections employees, and about 60 other employees. As for the community of Springfield itself, the population decreased from 933 (not including students in dormitories) in 1980 to an estimated 754 (not including prison inmates) in 2009.²⁶⁹

With USD/S gone, the battleground moved from the school to the legacy of the school's demise. Mary McMillan Gettinger, a former USD/S student and former Springfield resident, wrote a letter to the editor of the *Sioux Falls Argus Leader* to express her displeasure over the "propaganda" she had read about the new state prison. Gettinger found it "particularly offensive . . . when former USD-Springfield stu-

266. Ibid., 27 Dec. 1984; interview with Michael Winder, Pierre, S.Dak., 4 June 2009. Winder is communications and information manager for the Department of Corrections.

267. *Springfield Times*, 2 Jan. 1984; *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, 16 Feb. 1985.

268. South Dakota, *Session Laws of the State of South Dakota* (1985), chap. 202; interview with Winder. Durfee's death in 2000, well as those of Joe Barnett in 1985, Marvin Schamber in 2003, and Carole Hillard in 2007, illustrates the salient dilemma of writing the history of relatively recent events. If one writes too soon, perspective will be lacking. If one waits too long, the principal players will be gone.

269. Interview with Winder; 1980 *Census of Population, Characteristics of the Population*, vol. 1, pt. 43, *South Dakota*, p. 57. The 2000 census count for Springfield appears at <http://factfinder.census.gov> (accessed 14 June 2009). Trevor Brooks and Jacob Cummings at the Rural Life and Census Data Center in the Rural Sociology Department at South Dakota State University provided the 2009 estimate (calculated 25 June 2009).

dents are compared to the current prisoners at the Springfield Correctional Facility. Some people, it seems, have a difficult time telling the difference. I have read articles in which the prisoners are referred to as students. I can think of several differences between the two. Students at USD-Springfield were law-abiding citizens who chose to expand their knowledge and learn job skills. Students paid for their education. Whereas a student was known to drop out from time to time, there was not, to my knowledge, ever a student ‘escape.’” She went on to acknowledge that “the prisoners may have better attendance records, but students at USD-Springfield did not have a guard escorting them to and from class. Let’s keep our perspective.” Gettinger concluded: “The prisoners are not at Springfield because they are ‘nice’ people. They are there because a judge decided that they were unfit to be free in our society. They are there because they broke laws. They are there at the taxpayers’ expense. I have been told that a murderer incarcerated at Springfield is really quite nice. Certainly. Try telling that to the family of the person she killed.”²⁷⁰

From a far different viewpoint, Barbara Muller, a teacher at Coolidge High School at the state penitentiary, wrote about the graduation ceremony she attended at the Springfield Correctional Facility on 3 March 1986, the third one held since the establishment of the vocational school at the prison. “As I walked around the campus, I could certainly understand the sadness that former students feel,” Muller wrote. “However, I do wish that more South Dakotans could have observed this graduation service. Thirty men and two women completed a variety of vocational courses. Proud relatives and friends took pictures and applauded. The graduates beamed. I am convinced that many of these men and women will walk out of prison, get jobs and support themselves and their families rather than continue to be supported by our tax dollars—a huge expense! One teacher told me that his two top students are the best students he has had in 15 years of teaching at Springfield. So there are many there with really outstanding potential.” In sum, Muller stated: “What do some people think we should do: Lock up all lawbreakers and throw away the key? Impossible! Every-

270. *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, 26 Feb. 1986.

one knows we already have problems with overcrowding at the state penitentiary. We need to help these people become productive citizens and stay out of prison. I think the opportunity at Springfield is one of the most positive steps to be taken in the field of corrections in the history of the state of South Dakota.”²⁷¹

Nearly twenty years later, Jeff Bloomberg, secretary of the Department of Corrections during Janklow’s third and fourth terms, assessed the impact of the governor’s plan. “The conversion of the university into the prison solved the inmate problem for the taxpayers of South Dakota,” he observed. “It also laid the foundation for unorthodox but ingenious programs that taught prisoners work ethic and job skills, reduced recidivism, and generated millions of hours of community service work for the state. The governor had a maddening but beguiling habit of reducing complex issues into short sentences. He always told me: ‘Everybody else in America gets up in the morning and goes to work. Prisoners can, too.’”²⁷²

John McNeill, who spent many years educating both traditional students and prison inmates, contributed mightily toward those accomplishments. Yet, he cannot shake the feeling that they came at a high cost. “I love education and schools,” McNeill said. “You should never close a school. No ways and means can ever justify that end.”²⁷³

The end of USD/S proved to be the beginning of many work projects and educational opportunities for prison inmates in South Dakota. In keeping with Janklow’s vision for the prison, the inmates have, since 1984, constructed over 1,750 of the small, energy-efficient “Governor’s Houses”; wired the state’s schools with fiber optics; renovated state buildings; refurbished fire trucks and handicapped-accessible vans; rebuilt bicycles for needy children; repaired cars; grown bedding plants; built camping cabins, visitor-center kiosks, and picnic tables; constructed body lifts; assembled portable emergency lighting units; battled floods, fires, and blizzards all across the state; and earned more

271. *Ibid.*, 12 Mar. 1986.

272. Interview with Jeff Bloomberg, Pierre, S.Dak., 28 Oct. 2005.

273. Interview with John McNeill, Springfield, S.Dak., 5 June 2009.

than 1,850 GED certificates.²⁷⁴ The story of the prison in Springfield is, however, another story for another day.

Weighed against the gains of the corrections system are the losses felt by those whose lives were intertwined with the school. Never again would students and professors sit together at gathering places like Ye Olde Tap Club, sharing pizzas and hamburgers and solving all of the world's problems and some of their own. Never again would the red-and-white-clad Pointers rush onto Jack Martin Field under a cobalt blue autumn sky. Never again would the choruses of *Hello, Dolly* and other rousing theatrical productions ring through the old Main Hall Auditorium. Never again would the floats and bands of the Founders Day parade, honoring the indelible optimism of pioneers who refused to give up on their dream, thrill excited children lining the streets of Springfield. Never again would eager young students in that little

274. Michael Winder to author, 5 June 2009; interview with John McNeill, Springfield, S.Dak., 10 June 2009. McNeill started the GED program at the prison in 1985.



Coffee and cigarettes once fueled long hours of conversation in the Kennel, a popular gathering place for students and others.

community engage in the endeavor that lies at the heart of all college life—making memories.²⁷⁵

Why did the school at Springfield close in 1984? At the time, many local people believed that after dodging bullets for almost a century, the school had finally run out of luck.²⁷⁶ In retrospect, however, there are four major reasons why the closure happened when it did, each one reinforcing the impact of the others.

The first reason was economic. During the early 1980s, two national recessions rolled through South Dakota. During one eighteen-month stretch, one out of every ten automobile dealers in the state went out of business. The state's unemployment rate climbed to 6.6 percent in December 1982—the highest since such recordkeeping had begun back in 1960. President Jimmy Carter's 1980 embargo on shipments of grain and soybeans to Russia (in retaliation for Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan) staggered the state's farm economy. Devastating droughts, increasing energy costs, skyrocketing interest rates, and burgeoning bankruptcies pummeled farmers and ranchers. By January 1983, the Farm and Home Administration (FmHA), generally considered to be the agricultural lender of last resort, reported that its loans were at record high levels in South Dakota. A strike at the Homestake Mine in Lead further rocked the state's economy.²⁷⁷

In the autumn of 1980, Governor Janklow, in response to slumping tax collections, had ordered all executive-branch state agencies under his control to reduce spending immediately by at least 5 percent. The

275. Helen Turnquist commented that the process of being interviewed for this article brought back "great (and sad) memories of Southern. . . . As young 1970 graduates/protestors of everything and anything—we surely signed the petitions, also. I have mixed feelings on the closing politically—unfortunate to close the school but a good facility that is helping society was created also. We can't go back, so make the current facility the best there is. I do often wonder, however, if as much positive influence and financial support would have been concentrated into keeping the school open (especially the vocational degrees) as there was effort to close it several times over the 100 years—what would have the school been like today when the costs of a four-year degree are skyrocketing and the vocational degree is more appealing?" (interview with Roger and Helen Turnquist).

276. McNeill, *Normal School at Springfield*, p. 206.

277. Herbert S. Schell, *History of South Dakota*, 4th ed., rev. John E. Miller (Pierre: South Dakota State Historical Society Press, 2004), pp. 350–56.

only exceptions were state aid to local schools and personal property tax replacement funds for local governments.²⁷⁸ Throughout South Dakota, the misery of the early 1980s did not match the despair of the Great Depression, but times were tough, and many citizens and political leaders alike saw public-policy issues through a glass darkly colored by the dismal science of economics. In such a harsh climate, the state's annual spending of "only" about \$2 million on USD/S was not seen as petty cash. There certainly had been many attempts to close USD/S during economic good times, but economic bad times conferred more authority and urgency upon the too-many-schools argument. The widely voiced conclusion that the state just could not afford seven public colleges leaned like a domino against the obvious next question: Which of the seven schools should close?

The number of state schools, their overlapping purposes, and the proximity of USD/S to one of South Dakota's major universities combined to form the second reason for the school's closure. In January 1984, the *Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan* informed its readers that South Dakota did not have seven state-supported schools; it actually had eleven. The story disclosed that during 1983, the state appropriated nearly \$4 million in state tax dollars for the vocational schools in Mitchell, Watertown, Sioux Falls, and Rapid City-Sturgis. An accompanying editorial found it ironic that the state would consider closing a successful, growing school that was providing quality vocational education while funding four "community vocational schools."²⁷⁹

Supporters of USD/S may have taken some solace at that irony, but the facts cut both ways. With South Dakota taxpayers funding eleven post-secondary schools, increasing numbers of public policymakers saw USD/S as the small caboose of a long train. In 1983, USD/S had fewer than one thousand students.²⁸⁰ It was situated in a town of fewer than one thousand residents. The town was barely within the state of South Dakota—only half the width of the Missouri River lay between it and Nebraska. The school was less than an hour's drive from the University of South Dakota.

278. Interview with Jim Soyer, Pierre, S.Dak., 8 June 2009.

279. *Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan*, 6 Jan. 1984.

280. *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, 6 Dec. 1983.

The statewide demographic time bomb militated against those numbers getting better. To the extent that colleges have political clout in South Dakota, 837 students out of the 22,956 students in the statewide system did not carry much weight in a state with seven hundred thousand residents.²⁸¹ During a period of especially difficult economic times, USD/S did not look like a good investment to all too many people. In the 1980s, as they had done on many previous occasions, Springfield supporters valiantly tried to educate their fellow citizens about the value of the school, but perhaps hard times made people hard of hearing. If a struggling business—or government—has what appears to be a marginal investment, the obvious question arises: Are there more practical uses for this asset?

The third factor playing a role in the decision to end operations at USD/S was the state's prison problem. Much as the fertility of South Dakota's virgin prairie led to its destruction by the pioneers' plows, so, too, did the potential of USD/S lead to its demise by the political process. Trapped between the rock of the federal courts and the hard reality of an increasingly fractured society that spawned more criminals and then demanded their incarceration, the state was forced to expand and modify its prison system. A key component of that modification was rehabilitation. Janklow's initial concept—portrayed by opponents as "rewarding criminals with college degrees"—proved ripe, low-hanging fruit for political demagoguery, and a "prison college" also struck many taxpayers as the tail wagging the dog.²⁸²

Yet, at least a solid majority of ever-pragmatic, ever-frugal South Dakotans probably believed that implicit within the functions of "corrections" was an obligation to try to correct and prevent inappropriate behavior. Many people in the state probably agreed with an observation once made by United States Supreme Court Chief Justice Warren Burger: "To put people behind walls and bars and do little or nothing to change them is to win a battle but lose the war. It is wrong. It is expensive. It is stupid."²⁸³

281. Ibid.

282. Interview with Soyer, 8 June 2009.

283. Interview with Bill Garnos, Gladstone, Mo., 21 Feb. 2006.



Though it has been surrounded by barbed wire since 1984, Science Hall still serves as an instructional building as it approaches its 2012 centennial.

The USD/S campus—because of both its overall capacity and the nature of its facilities—held the promise of helping the state escape from its corrections quandary. The campus was big enough to house hundreds of prisoners. Even more importantly, because of the curriculum change in 1948 and especially the mission change of 1971, the school had acquired the buildings and equipment that could be used to provide quality, meaningful vocational training to large numbers of inmates. When motive met opportunity, mission became destiny.²⁸⁴

These three ingredients for action were joined in the crucible by an agent of change: William Janklow. In January 1984, Janklow was a powerful, popular governor at the height of his power and popularity. During his four years as attorney general, he had cracked down on welfare fraud, drug abuse, and white-collar crime and stopped the atmosphere of violence that began with the 1973 Custer riot by members of

284. Interview with Soyer, 8 June 2009.

the American Indian Movement (AIM). He had argued and won landmark decisions before the United States Supreme Court, and he had the best criminal conviction record of any attorney general in South Dakota history.²⁸⁵

During his first five years as governor, Janklow saved the state's farm-to-market railroad system, developed and funded the state's first comprehensive water-development plan, brought hundreds of new businesses (including Citibank, the world's largest bank) to the state, and helped to create tens of thousands of new jobs through economic development efforts that put South Dakota onto the pages of *Time*, *Forbes*, *Fortune*, *U. S. News & World Report*, and major newspapers across the country. Because of those accomplishments, large numbers of South Dakotans came to respect Janklow as a problem-solver who could get things done by the force of his personality. Janklow had won reelection in 1982 with 71 percent of the vote—the highest margin of victory in a governor's race in the history of South Dakota.²⁸⁶ He was a relentless researcher and a gifted orator. Although he was, in many ways, both apolitical and nonpolitical, he was also capable of being a master politician.²⁸⁷

Further, by any current or historical standards, the legislative leaders who carried Janklow's agenda were skilled veterans at the art of politics: Lieutenant Governor and Senate President Lowell Hansen II of Sioux Falls, Senate President *Pro tempore* Mary McClure of Redfield, Senate Majority Leader Homer Harding of Pierre, Senate Assistant Majority Leader George Shanard of Mitchell, Speaker of the House Jerome Lammers of Madison, Speaker *Pro tempore* Don Ham of Rapid City, Assistant House Majority Leader (and future governor) Walter

285. Interview with Joel Rosenthal, Sioux Falls, S.Dak., 14 June 2009. Because Rosenthal lived in nearby Wagner, South Dakota, from 1973 to 1984, he experienced grassroots attitudes toward the Springfield controversy. As chairman of the South Dakota Republican Party from 1985 to 1989 and 1995 to 2003, he also saw politics from the "grasstops."

286. Ibid. Almost 75 percent of Bon Homme County voters supported Janklow in the 1982 election. South Dakota, *Legislative Manual* (1983), p. 252.

287. Interview with Rosenthal. Looking back over the past twenty-five years, former state senator Elmer Bietz said, "I don't think anybody but Janklow could have done it" (*Rapid City Journal*, 18 Apr. 2009).

Dale Miller of New Underwood, and, last and foremost, House Majority Leader Joseph Barnett of Aberdeen.²⁸⁸

Any one or two or perhaps even three of these factors would not have doomed USD/S in 1984. All four, however, acting in concert, proved an irresistible force against which even the weight of a century of service could not stand.

Why was the battle over USD/S so bitter? There are several reasons. First, it was a struggle for existence, and when defeat means annihilation, the battle is usually fought to the last ditch. Further, the issue involved a school, and few things in American society galvanize emotions more than do our schools. Long after most people have forgotten the particulars of any lecture they ever heard in a classroom, the colors of that school still run in their blood.²⁸⁹

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, both sides—Springfield and Janklow—truly believed that they were acting in the best interests of the entire state of South Dakota. Both sides certainly had some pecuniary interests, although few can fault a community for wanting to provide a quality life for its residents or a governor for wanting to save money for the taxpayers. Yet, financial interests aside, the real issue was the public interest. Thus, the school and the governor engaged in a tenacious turf battle for the high moral ground, and the controversy took on quasi-spiritual overtones. Springfield and Janklow had equally fervent faith in vastly dissimilar visions, and although the shadows of the past were much discussed, the battle was really all about the firmament of the future.

288. Interview with Dana Nelson, Sioux Falls, S.Dak., 4 June 2009. Nelson, the great-grandson of historian Doane Robinson and grandson of historian Will Robinson, led Governor Janklow's legislative task force during the 1984 session. Overall, he served in that capacity from 1981 to 1986 and 1997 to 2002.

289. McNeill, *Normal School at Springfield*, p. 206.

Copyright of South Dakota History is the property of South Dakota State Historical Society and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.

All illustrations in this issue are property of the South Dakota State Historical Society, State Archives Collection, except for those on the following pages: covers and pp. 193, 198, 200, 204, 208, 211, 248, 252, 261, from Springfield College Museum, Springfield, S.Dak.; pp. 215, 218, 227, 231, 234, 237, 240, from Jeanne Kilen Ode, Pierre, S.Dak.; p. 257, from South Dakota, South Dakota Legislative Manual 1983; p. 265, from Rodger Hartley, Pierre, S.Dak.