

STATEMENT OF
ALBERT SHANKER, PRESIDENT
OF THE
AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS, AFL-CIO
FOR THE
SPECIAL SUB-COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION:
HIRING POLICIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

SEPTEMBER 25, 1974

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee:

I am Albert Shanker, President of the American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO, a union of 440,000 teachers and other educational workers. We represent over 40,000 persons employed in the field of Higher Education.

I am pleased to make my first appearance representing the AFT before this committee on the subject of employment policies in institutions of higher education. The health of our institutions providing post-secondary education is very important to the AFT, and I hope to be here on other occasions to discuss other problems in higher education with you.

These hearings are a hopeful sign. We hope it is the intention of this committee to provide some guidance to the government officials currently enforcing guidelines in relation to racial, ethnic and gender representation on university staffs. In the past, we used to ask whether or not an institution was practicing discrimination. It is a sign of progress that today the question is what are we doing that will help offset the effects of discrimination.

The AFT has always been a vigorous advocate of any program which would abolish discriminatory employment practices. Our collective bargaining agreements, now covering faculties at more than 140 higher education institutions, reflect that advocacy. The AFT concern for equal employment opportunities for all is also reflected in its support and endorsement of meaningful and effective affirmative action policies.

We believe that affirmative action is necessary to ameliorate the effects of racial bias, and to achieve the goal of Racial Equality.

Page 2
Unfortunately, there is presently some confusion as to what constitutes an effective affirmative action program. Some have argued that affirmative action must mean a system of quotas and/or preferential hiring practices. We in the AFT reject that concept on the grounds that such programs are neither meaningful nor effective. In fact such a narrow definition not only subverts the very objectives which affirmative action intends to reach, but dooms such goals to inevitable failure.

For an affirmative action program to meet AFT requirements that it be both meaningful and effective, it must not deal only with the numbers of new minority hirings and promotions, nor merely the question of salary inequities. It must consider the root problem of increasing the available pool of qualified job aspirants. To do less, that is to equate affirmative action with quotas, is to flirt with forms of discrimination no less repugnant than Jim Crow laws were.

The result of this practice for many highly qualified individuals seeking teaching positions will be the understanding that their academic qualifications are really secondary to their purely biological classifications and that when they draw up their resumes, ability and scholastic achievement should be placed after their status as a preferred group under this year's affirmative action goals. Programs that foster this sort of frustration have serious consequences. It is not an overstatement to say that policies that restrict employment opportunities and in the process affect an individual's opportunity to make a living and support his or her family will lead to the most basic sort of conflict and could result in a reaction that will set us all back many years.

Our view as to what an affirmative action program should contain starts with open admission, free tuition, interest-free loans and grant money which will not only open the doors of educational opportunity to minorities, but encourage their pursuit of professional careers. Any significant increase in minority hirings on college staffs must begin by significantly increasing the pool of available personnel. In 1970, approximately 10.6% of all undergraduate admissions were black, American Indian, Spanish surnamed, and Oriental American. These groups constituted 16.8% of the U.S. population as a whole. (While this figure represented a tripling of these groups' participation from 1960, still more should be done.) Of bachelor degrees awarded in 1970, 5.2% were awarded to blacks, 1.2% were awarded to those of Spanish surname, and 1.0% to Orientals.

With this pool to draw upon, the number of minority group members entering advanced study is roughly comparable to the percentages receiving bachelor degrees. According to a survey taken by the American Council on Education of 156 Ph.D.-granting information, 7.2% of all students enrolled in Ph.D. programs were from minority groups. These minority group students were concentrated in education, sociology, and the health professions. Fields with an unusually low percentage of minority group students were engineering, physics, biochemistry and other like sciences.

What these enrollment figures show is that in selecting faculty one is not drawing candidates from the population at large, but from a significantly smaller pool of qualified candidates. The only way to increase minority employment opportunity in higher education is to increase the number of qualified applicants and at the same time increase the available positions.

If more minority students are to be accepted into graduate school, many who come from underprivileged backgrounds will certainly require academic and financial compensatory help at both the undergraduate and graduate level to allow them to compete with students who enter college better prepared for academic pursuits. This would be a useful method of achieving the two goals most crucial to increased minority participation. It is folly to believe that significant numbers of minority job applicants will be hired while colleges and universities are cutting back on teaching positions. Furnishing this extra help under an open admissions program would require the hirings of additional personnel to provide the compensatory assistance to make the open admission program work. We would have an increase in both minority hirings and completion of degree programs.

We advocate the provision of this help--academic, financial and in other ways--to allow minority students to compete successfully. Open admission does not mean that everyone who enrolls will automatically do well. What is important and must be guaranteed is that everyone admitted has the opportunity and is encouraged to do well. It is a strongly-held American belief that this is the land of opportunity where each citizen has the right to succeed on his or her own abilities. The kind of program that we advocate would enhance opportunity without the lowering of standards for we believe that standards must be maintained or the degrees awarded will become meaningless.

There are things that can be done and have proven successful. While this hearing applies only to higher education, I would like to

take the time to talk about a couple of affirmative action programs that work without the imposition of quotas and goals and timetables. The United Federation of Teachers, Local 2 of the American Federation of Teachers, represents almost 10,000 paraprofessional employees of the New York City school board. Paraprofessionals are largely black and Puerto Rican women for the most part, former welfare recipients, who work in the classroom, assisting teachers. Most did not have high school diplomas when they started, and almost none had bachelors degrees. Through the provisions of their collective bargaining agreement, there are approximately 6,000 paras currently upgrading their formal education. Thousands of them have now received bachelors degrees under the program. Many of these are now teaching in the New York City schools, and many more are awaiting employment because of the very tight job market. All this was done without displacement and the lowering of standards. These union members who had in the past been denied the chance to pursue a higher education made the most of this opportunity provided by the union contract.

There is a similar story to be found in non-educational employment fields. The Recruitment and Training program, which is a plan to increase minority job holders in the construction trades, has had great success in securing apprenticeships in the construction skills and in providing minority recruits with the knowledge to successfully complete their training. There are more than 10,000 people currently working in the building trades who were recruited through the RTP. Contrast this with the so-called "Philadelphia Plan" which concerned itself only with the numbers on any particular job site and led to the formation of motorcycle squads of minority construction workers

shuttling from job-site to job-site in order to show the labor department inspectors that each federally-funded project provided minority job opportunities. To our knowledge, the Philadelphia Plan produced almost no new hirings, and certainly provided no avenue for unskilled workers to secure the skills needed to hold a construction industry job. It only resulted in the shifting of minorities from one job to the other.

The premise behind both the paraprofessional and Recruitment and Training Program is the same: any program that wants to make a dent in the low participation figures and to promote minority hirings must begin by providing qualified personnel. Affirmative action can be useful in other ways, for example, in evaluating institutions, to see that they make it their policy to expand the hiring pool to include all qualified individuals. Programs for the evaluation of promotion and pay policies to assure non-discrimination would be useful for achieving the objectives of equal employment opportunities. Further, compilation of available personnel seeking employment and positions that are open would aid in minority hiring.

If all of these things are done, the degree of minority participation in higher education will increase; and it will increase without resorting to numbers, timetables and other polarizing, and discriminatory factors. Quotas or numerical goals and timetables are based upon the assumption that when all artificial barriers that impeded minorities are removed, minority groups still need preferential treatment to achieve their employment goals. This is not only a false assumption, but it indicates a patronizing attitude toward

the abilities of our minority citizens.

One final observation that occurs to me from a life spent as both an educator and trade unionist. In the long run, no group can succeed at the expense of another group, and those programs that intensify the conflict that comes from a shrinking job market and increased aspirations for those jobs, under the guise of improving minority hiring do none of us a service. In our society, either we all succeed together or we all bear the consequences of failure. In the current situation, only an expanding job market with affirmative action programs can begin to solve the problems. Our current employment situation is grim. The observation was made at the HEW Summit last week by Virginia Trotter that education is not a growth industry. This is a national tragedy. Our efforts should be aimed at correcting this situation. If this employment situation remains stagnant, the hopes for a real inclusion of previously unrepresented groups in higher education teaching positions may be illusory, because job openings simply do not exist in sufficient numbers to meet expectations. There is great danger in the frustration produced by too many applicants for too few jobs. Higher education as a national priority in a democratic society should be made available to more students for many important reasons unrelated to the numbers on any particular university staff.

In conclusion, the goal in any hiring program must be equal opportunity for all our citizens. Equal opportunity does not guarantee that university or any other teaching staffs will reflect numerically the population as a whole. It does provide assurances that individual ability, scholastic achievement and individual merit are the best

methods for success in higher education or any other vocation. Equal opportunity is the goal, practices and programs that frustrate this goal are not useful in a democratic society. Undemocratic and discriminatory methods for whatever purpose are not viable solutions to any problem that we have.