

3/1-2/78

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1 DR. GRAHAM: Let me thank for all of us here  
2 Secretary Califano for speaking to us so cogently.

3 I'd also like to indicate the level of commitment  
4 and concern in this Administration by others in the  
5 Education Division, particularly Commissioner Ernest Boyer  
6 of the U.S. Office of Education, who has just arrived. His  
7 commitment is such, he has been testifying all day at the  
8 Appropriations Committee, and he has the flu, and he still  
9 managed to get here. So, Ernie, we are very pleased to have  
10 you.

11 (Applause.)

12 DR. GRAHAM: The Education Division is well  
13 represented because Mary Berry, the Assistant Secretary of  
14 Education, has just arrived also from testimony at the  
15 Appropriations Committee and we appreciate, Mary, very much  
16 your ability to be here today. Thank you.

17 (Applause.)

18 DR. GRAHAM: I know that Secretary Califano has an  
19 extremely busy schedule, and that the time that he will be  
20 able to be with us today is limited. But I would like to go  
21 ahead to introduce the next speakers on the program.

22 I cannot think of two individuals who are better  
23 prepared to speak on issues of teachers and testing than  
24 John Ryor, who is the President of the National Education  
25 Association, and Albert Shanker, President of the American

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17 1 Federation of Teachers. We have asked each of them today to  
2 speak briefly up to about 30 minutes on the view of teachers  
3 and testing. And I would like to ask first Albert Shanker to  
4 begin. Mr. Shanker.

5 (Applause.)

6 MR. SHANKER: I'd like to begin by thanking  
7 Joe Califano and Pat Graham for developing this conference  
8 because I can think of no better way to begin a dialogue  
9 and to develop national policy in this area.

10 I do have to differ with Joe Califano in terms of  
11 his earlier remarks before in saying that the fact that  
12 John Ryor and I differ on questions on testing.  
13 Joe Califano believes that that shows how complex the issue  
14 is.

15 (Laughter.)

16 MR. SHANKER: I think that there are other possible  
17 conclusions.

18 (Laughter.)

19 MR. SHANKER: One could conclude that on every  
20 issue there are two views: one that's right and one that's  
21 wrong.

22 (Laughter.)

23 MR. SHANKER: Or one could even conclude with  
24 William James that there are two kinds of people: those who  
25 divide people into two kinds and those who don't.

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1 (Laughter.)

2 MR. SHANKER: Now I think that the reason this  
3 panel was set up was not for amusement or entertainment, but  
4 since neither John Ryor or I are professionals in the field  
5 of testing, we are, however, supposed to be somewhat expert  
6 in what teachers feel about, believe about, testing.

7 And I want to begin by saying that I don't think  
8 that anyone on this platform or anywhere else can deliver the  
9 view of America's teachers on this question.

10 I remember that in the early days of teacher  
11 unionism and collective bargaining that there was a good deal  
12 of hysteria among school administrators and school board  
13 members and many editorial writers across the country. Many  
14 of them believed that in addition to teachers negotiating  
15 salaries and holidays and vacations and welfare benefits that  
16 teachers would, through their unions and through their new  
17 found power, also begin to negotiate matters of basic  
18 educational policy, that they would sit at the bargaining  
19 tables and would demand that there be either automatic  
20 promotion or standards for leaving children back, that they  
21 would demand either homogenous or heterogeneous grouping,  
22 that they would demand that driver education be put in or  
23 taken out, and that the process of collective bargaining would  
24 ultimately destroy the power of Democratically elected  
25 school boards within a community and would erode the

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1 managerial function of administrators. Now that turned out  
2 not to be so. And the reason it turned out not to be so is  
3 that on questions of salaries and class size and welfare  
4 benefits, there is near unanimous agreement among teachers,  
5 and so leaders can easily lead a unanimous group to a  
6 bargaining table on these issues. But when it comes to  
7 questions of which textbooks or how to group students or  
8 whether they should be promoted or left back or what the  
9 style of teaching should be, on these issues teachers dis-  
10 agree among themselves as much as the general public does,  
11 and you will find the same range of disagreements in a  
12 teacher organization as there are within a community or on  
13 a school board. And so teachers have not in all these years  
14 anywhere in this country really negotiated these issues.  
15 They may have talked about being consulted about it and  
16 having a committee to discuss these issues, and in many cases  
17 they do.

18           And I think that on the question of views toward  
19 testing that the same kind of conclusion can easily be  
20 reached. There is no teacher view. There are many  
21 disagreements. There are many fears many ways in which tests  
22 are used and abused, but no one can stand here and say this  
23 is what the teachers of this country or what the majority of  
24 them think.

25           And so I think the issue here this afternoon is not

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1 what is it that teachers think or believe or what their  
2 views are today on this question, or really series of  
3 questions relating to testing, but the issue that we ought  
4 to deal with is what position should teachers take on these  
5 issues if they thought about them long and hard, if they  
6 dealt with the consequences of one position or another. I  
7 don't think it would be difficult for a teacher leader to  
8 stand at any meeting of teachers and be loudly cheered if he  
9 made a speech saying that these tests take an awful lot of  
10 our time away from teaching. They involve almost clerical  
11 types of chores in marking. They are rarely used by the  
12 teacher in terms of what the teacher does the next day or  
13 week or year. First, they get marked, and then they get  
14 entered on a pupil record card, and they get averaged and  
15 they get moved somewhere else. But what happens to them in  
16 terms of the light of what the teacher does as a teacher?  
17 Very rarely is there any effect at all.

18 Furthermore, there was no demonstrated effect on  
19 what happens in the life of a school or a school system. So  
20 each year the tests are given and the newspapers have their  
21 headlines. But does anyone really develop educational  
22 programs in a school? Does anyone really retain some and  
23 change others and bring other programs in because of test  
24 results? Very rarely.

25 And the, of course, there is the fear, and not an

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1 unground fear, on the part of teachers that the test  
2 results will be used as a form of simplistic accountability,  
3 that if the scores are poor or if they show something  
4 negative, that the newspapers and the editorial writers and  
5 that group within a community and within the nation and  
6 within the legislature and within the Congress will begin to  
7 demand that teachers be dismissed because students did not  
8 make a year's progress within a year or that their salaries  
9 be based on the scores or that funds not be granted because  
10 the schools aren't doing well.

11 I started by saying that it would not be difficult  
12 for any teacher leader to be applauded and indeed perhaps  
13 wildly applauded if he put together these remarks and  
14 perhaps a few others. But I don't think that the main  
15 objective of teacher leaders should be to gain immediate  
16 applause and approval at one meeting to the neglect of where  
17 we are going and what will be the support for teachers and  
18 for public education over a period of time.

19 And so I would like to spend a few minutes shifting  
20 these remarks a bit to talk about why I think we are here.  
21 I think we are here not really because testing in and of  
22 itself presents any more complex problems or issues than it  
23 did some years ago. One can look in the literature and  
24 find many of the discussions that have been taking place  
25 today; they took place decades ago. But the context is very

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1 different. I think it is fair to say that in the last 20  
2 years or so there has been a dramatic--yes, indeed a radical  
3 change--in the way the public views our schools and our  
4 teachers. And in a democratic society one must pay  
5 attention to such a change in views on the part of the public.

6 If I could summarize and perhaps oversimplify the  
7 view that prevails throughout most of our 200 years, I think  
8 that the average man or woman in the street picked out at  
9 random would probably have said that this nation started by  
10 immigrants, many of whom were not particularly well  
11 educated, and over the years many more immigrants, many  
12 illiterates through speaking our language, and historically  
13 speaking, in a very short period of time we have become one  
14 of the wealthiest nations, most powerful nations, and have  
15 maintained a democratic system longer than any other nation.  
16 And they would, to a large degree, have said that the reason  
17 for all of these good things was at least in part due to the  
18 opportunity afforded to American public schools. And they  
19 would have given our schools and our school system and  
20 teachers an A or an A minus or an A plus. But we certainly  
21 would have ranked very, very high.

22 Now I don't believe that that is the view of most  
23 American citizens today, and I don't think it has been the  
24 view for a number of years. We can have essays and books  
25 analyzing why this has occurred. I would like to touch on a

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23 1 few of these which relate to our theme today.

2 I think that perhaps the most important reason why  
3 teachers have fallen many notches and are no longer on a  
4 pedestal and why the view of the schools are somewhat  
5 different is that ironically we have been very, very  
6 successful.

7 If you want to go to a place in the world today  
8 where teachers and schools are held in the same high esteem  
9 that they were once held in this country, go to the third  
10 world. And there you will find those same attitudes, and  
11 you will find those attitudes because of the vast gaps that  
12 exist between the illiteracy and ignorance and lack of  
13 education among the masses, and the fact that education is  
14 something which a very tiny number of intellectual elite holds  
15 within that country. And up until very recently that was  
16 what prevailed here.

17 When I grew up in the 30s in New York City I didn't  
18 meet anyone in my neighborhood who had gone to college. I  
19 went to some other neighborhood when I went to a doctor or  
20 a dentist. They were the people who had gone to college and  
21 the only people who had any education beyond high school were  
22 teachers. And, sure, there was that pedestal because in  
23 that rather large neighborhood, to have a high school  
24 diploma was to have been a very well educated person, and to  
25 have graduated elementary school was also a mark of

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24 1 distinction because perhaps half of the people, and maybe  
2 more than half, in that neighborhood in the 1930s had only  
3 had a smattering of elementary school if any at all.

4           And so look what we did. Our public schools  
5 educated everybody. They all went to elementary school,  
6 and middle school, and high school, and so many go to  
7 college. And now we are no longer surrounded by people who  
8 look up at us because we are part of one or one and a half  
9 or one-half percent of the people of the country who have  
10 received some education now. We have lowered ourselves  
11 and we have subjected our institution to greater criticism  
12 because we have a society where everyone has been educated  
13 and they no longer look up at us. They look down at us. And  
14 many of the people in our country who graduated college feel  
15 that they could do a much better job educating their own  
16 children than the teachers could but they're too busy making  
17 too much money, so they can't afford to take the time off.

18           And we will therefore never really return to the  
19 good old days when the teacher is back up and the school is  
20 back up on that pedestal.

21           Now a second thing that we ought to take note of  
22 is that we have gone through a 20-year period when, whatever  
23 you want to call it, counter-culture or new left critics  
24 have had a very significant impact on the thought of people  
25 within this country. If you go to any book store or

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1 library and look at what's been published in the last 15  
2 years or so on education, you will see all of these  
3 schooling books, all of the works written by people who were  
4 teachers for four weeks or six weeks before they were fired.  
5 And then after they were fired they wrote a book saying that  
6 the reason they were fired is that they were the only real  
7 teachers who loved children; that everyone else in the  
8 school was destroying the children.

9 (Laughter.)

10 MR. SHANKER: And that when they opened up their  
11 mouths there to criticize, they were dismissed. And, of  
12 course, each of them went off either to teach in a  
13 university or they opened up their own little --

14 (Laughter.)

15 MR. SHANKER: They opened up their own little  
16 schools in a garage with 10 or 15 children and said that if  
17 only we would give tuition tax credits, everyone could have  
18 a school in a garage.

19 (Laughter and applause.)

20 MR. SHANKER: Now, fortunately, not so many people  
21 read those books, but they nevertheless have had a great  
22 influence.

23 If you were to make a list of all the people in  
24 education interviewed, let's say, on the Today Show over the  
25 last 20 years, you would get a list of all these characters.

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26 1 You'd get very few people who had anything positive to say  
2 about education or about teachers or public schools. They  
3 have had quite an influence, and I would say a very negative  
4 one because by and large they, the new left and counter-  
5 culture, were not really criticizing what we're doing. They  
6 reject the values of our society. They really want the  
7 public schools to educate students in our society for a kind  
8 of -- not in a society that we live in today and will be  
9 living in for many years, but for Hippy communes. And it is  
10 not something that was -- it was something which wealthier  
11 people sort of were attracted to, but the working class  
12 people have always rejected this because they still see the  
13 schools as a way in which they want their children to learn  
14 and to work within our society and to achieve within it.

15 Now there is a third factor and that has to do  
16 with the defensiveness of the educational establishment. And  
17 I certainly include teachers in that group. We are under  
18 constant attack--why aren't you doing this and that--and one  
19 of the traditional attacks is very simple, it's: well these  
20 things aren't scientific. We really don't know anything  
21 about what makes teachers tick, we don't know anything about  
22 what makes children learn. And, therefore, you shouldn't  
23 attack us because nobody really knows anything, and tests  
24 don't tell us anything. They're subject to misinterpretation  
25 and there are a lot of errors. And, therefore, you shouldn't

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1 criticize us because really this whole thing is subjective--  
2 that's your opinion, and that's your opinion, and there's a  
3 third opinion out there. And that sounds like a wonderful  
4 defense. After all, how can anyone criticize you for not  
5 doing something if you don't know what you're doing?

6 (Laughter.)

7 MR. SHANKER: Well that conclusion is very soon  
8 reached by people when you use that sort of a defense, that  
9 if you don't know what you're doing, why should you be  
10 certified, why should you have a right to a job, why should  
11 the taxpayer pay any money?

12 You can't defend yourself on the basis of -- that  
13 things are so complex and so subjective and so incapable  
14 of any rational strategy and of any scientific determination  
15 and at the same time turn around and ask for some sort of  
16 support and some kind of public confidence.

17 Then, of course, we have the traditional mode of  
18 school systems and operating that the big thing you have to  
19 do is to innovate, bring in new ideas every year and throw  
20 out the old ideas every year. And very rarely does any  
21 educator stand up in a community and say, look, we're not  
22 going to get rid of most of the things we've been doing  
23 because they're pretty good. And we know what we're doing.  
24 And they work pretty well. I don't know what you'd think  
25 of a doctor if you went to him and he said, now look, I know

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1 exactly what you're suffering from. And you see those pills  
2 over there? Those are the pills that every other doctor in  
3 the country would give you, and they will cure you within  
4 24 hours. But I'm not that kind of a doctor. I'm an  
5 innovator.

6 (Laughter.)

7 MR. SHANKER: Take this one. I don't know what  
8 will happen.

9 (Laughter.)

10 MR. SHANKER: Well think about how our schools  
11 operate. Program after program with the old expression that  
12 every educational experiment is doomed to succeed.

13 (Laughter.)

14 MR. SHANKER: That's the other one. We never admit  
15 failure. A doctor can take 10 patients who have some  
16 incurable disease and he, after having read what others have  
17 done, he can try a new cure. And if the patients die anyway,  
18 he will write an article saying here's what I tried, and no  
19 other patients ever need die of that cure again.

20 (Laughter.)

21 MR. SHANKER: But we can't say that because no  
22 superintendent of schools, no school board member, no  
23 teacher will ever be considered a great educator by admitting  
24 that they had done something which did not work. And so all  
25 the public relations goes out. And, of course, there's the

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1 greatest innovation of law that every few years we get rid  
2 of the superintendent of schools.

3 (Laughter.)

4 MR. SHANKER: And we hire the one who is being  
5 fired from some other school district.

6 (Laughter.)

7 MR. SHANKER: Then, of course, we also have  
8 analogous to the testing question, we have more openness.  
9 Test results today are not the private domain of the  
10 teachers' records or the schools' records. And we have a  
11 good deal of ignorance as to what test results mean. And  
12 I'm sure that all of you have seen from time to time the  
13 crazy headline which announces that the school system of the  
14 country is failing because half of the children have scored  
15 below average in reading or some other field.

16 (Laughter.)

17 MR. SHANKER: And so we have some education to do  
18 as to what averages mean and what tests are about.

19 Now I could go on with that list but I would like  
20 now to turn and say that I believe that those of us here and  
21 those who are not here but who are interested in this subject  
22 need to develop a certain perspective, a certain direction,  
23 and a certain basic commitment. And I believe that if we  
24 start from that perspective and commitment that many other  
25 things will follow. There will still be room for

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1 disagreement on particular items. But it seems to me that  
2 at least one thing ought to be settled, and that is that  
3 teaching, while like medicine and other fields, is a rather  
4 complicated art which involves science and also involves many  
5 techniques which are not quite subject to the same  
6 measurements that we're accustomed to in strictly  
7 mathematical sciences. It seems that we have to start with  
8 the notion that it is possible to develop a body of  
9 knowledge. It is possible to develop a model of competent  
10 teaching practice over a period of time; that we ought to  
11 admit that we haven't done it up to now. We ought to admit  
12 that we have not done it because people have been afraid.  
13 Yes, teachers have been afraid that they would lose their  
14 jobs, and school board members have been afraid that they  
15 would be turned out in the next election, and superintendents  
16 have been afraid that they would be involved in a game of  
17 musical chairs, moving over to some other school district.  
18 And everyone has been afraid. But it is about time, and with  
19 an educated and sophisticated public, without that education  
20 gap which we had throughout most of our history, it's about  
21 time that we said that we have faith that we can do in  
22 education the same kind of job that has been done in other  
23 artistic professional fields which have partly a scientific  
24 base, partly an experiential and and experimental base, and  
25 that we will admit failures, and that we will keep those

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31 1 things for years and years and years which seem to work. We  
2 will not place an emphasis on throwing out good things for  
3 the sake of innovation. And that without taking such a view,  
4 we are involved in pure subjectivism which is both  
5 anti-intellectual and anti-professional and anti-  
6 institutional.

7           Once we take this view we then can have an  
8 agenda for teachers and for school board members and  
9 administrators and for others.

10           Now having said that, I'm not going into, at least  
11 at this point--perhaps there will be time during the question  
12 period--the various specifics. You will be able to raise  
13 those questions. But I do want to raise a number of points  
14 which are relevant with respect to testing and which we can  
15 engage in further discussion on.

16           One of the issues which has not been discussed at  
17 all in the question of testing is that whatever we decide,  
18 if we were to decide to abolish standardized tests and not  
19 to use tests for this purpose and that, if we were to move  
20 the pendulum on the side of anti-testing, this will over a  
21 period of years have a profound effect on the kinds of  
22 people who enter the teaching profession.

23           There are different kinds of people. Some are more  
24 achievement-oriented and others are not. And if you  
25 announce that your school system is going to be of one

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1 nature, the kind of people that you will attract to it will  
2 be one kind, and if you announce that you are interested in  
3 standards and achievements in testing and experimentation  
4 in building a body of knowledge, you will attract a totally  
5 different group of people. And with these groups of people  
6 you will also accomplish rather different purposes and the  
7 schools will ultimately teach different values to children  
8 as you attract different types of people to the institution.

9 Now is a type of footnote on the question of  
10 whether a teacher should be tested before they commence  
11 teaching.

12 I just come back from Florida. They've got a lot of  
13 talk about students being tested and teachers being tested.  
14 And you get a lot of teachers getting up and saying well  
15 I went to college and I have a degree. Why should I have to  
16 take a test to become a teacher?

17 Unfortunately, during the 1960s, as a result of  
18 student and other rebellions; many colleges and universities  
19 capitulated through various forces--I believe that they  
20 should not have either negotiated or capitulated with or  
21 capitulated to--and the result of that is that you no longer  
22 are very sure of what that piece of paper means.

23 Now we have in many states doctors who have to  
24 take examinations after they've gone to medical school and  
25 you've got lawyers who have got to take bar exams after

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1 they've gone to law school. And people in various states  
2 have to take examinations to become hairdressers, to be  
3 insurance agents, and all sorts of things. And I think it  
4 is ridiculous. It doesn't do anything for the profession  
5 and it undermines the feeling of the public toward teachers  
6 when we say that there is something terrible and demeaning  
7 about having a person who is to enter this field to take a  
8 test. And I want to say that I don't think that there is any  
9 test that will tell us whether the person is going to be a good  
10 teacher. That we will find out later. But there is something  
11 that will tell you whether a math teacher knows enough math  
12 and whether an English teacher knows enough English and  
13 whether a Social Studies teacher knows enough Social Studies.  
14 And anyone who takes the position that teachers upon entry  
15 should not be asked to demonstrate that, given the state of  
16 what college certificates mean today, and given the fact  
17 that this is generally required in other fields, is lowering  
18 the status of the schools in this country and of teachers  
19 and of their professionalism and the commitment of the  
20 general public to support our schools.

21 I would urge all of you to try to bring about a  
22 reversal on this. And I certainly, in saying this here--  
23 have been saying this to teachers as well -- and I could  
24 tell you that down in Florida where teachers are a little  
25 bit frightened of what's going to happen on this, they did

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34 1 not reject this notion.

2 Now they don't like the idea that a teacher who  
3 was hired 15 years ago, and who's been given a satisfactory  
4 rating every year for 15 years, that now someone is going  
5 to come in and give them a test to find out whether or not  
6 they should have hired him 15 years ago. That's a different  
7 question. Or even five years ago. But there is a way of  
8 changing this by starting with those who enter.

9 I have a few more minutes. And I want to say  
10 that in addition to the commitment that there can be a  
11 science of education, I think that we have to view the  
12 schools as a bridge, a bridge between the family and the  
13 world that we live in and the country that we live in and  
14 the society that we live in. And we ought to start --  
15 schools in the early grades ought to resemble the family as  
16 much as possible and children should not be dumped into a  
17 cold classroom with 30 or 35 having to sit still and be  
18 quiet. But the purpose of the school is to get children to  
19 be able to eventually work on their own; it is to acquaint  
20 them with the fact that they will meet competition; that  
21 they will be living in a world where they will not be  
22 accepted or rejected or advanced because they're Johnny or  
23 Mary or because someone likes them or doesn't, but because  
24 of many abstract qualities and abilities which they have been  
25 able to get on the part of the school is to bring about some

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1 of the competitiveness and the need for achievement that  
2 exist within our society. And it's necessary for schools to  
3 move toward those values.

4 We need, in addition to an emphasis on a continued  
5 use of testing, a program of truth in testing. We should  
6 try to do something about the misunderstandings that exist;  
7 some of those among teachers. I think we need a national  
8 program and I think here is a place where the federal  
9 government can do something. We need programs for teachers  
10 to acquaint them with what tests are about, and how they  
11 can be used, and how they can be used to modify their own  
12 instruction or to get information about what they're doing.

13 I think we need programs for the education of the  
14 press and the media across this country. I think we should  
15 not stop with the notion that the press understands anything  
16 about education. We ought to go out there and we ought to  
17 have the view that even the press is educable.

18 (Laughter and applause.)

19 MR. SHANKER: And certainly, well if teachers are  
20 I think the press is.

21 (Laughter.)

22 MR. SHANKER: And I think parents, of course, and  
23 the general community also need education about what tests  
24 are and what their limits are.

25 Yes, we ought to strive to develop new tests and

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1 to improve tests. But we should not say that because we do  
2 not have a perfect instrument that we're going to abandon  
3 those that we have at the present time. The ones we have  
4 now tell us something. They don't tell us everything. And  
5 no one in the world throws out an imperfect instrument  
6 because he doesn't have a perfect one. It's like saying that  
7 you can get rid of the unemployment problem by firing the  
8 Bureau of Labor Statistics, you know. It's kind of silly.

9 (Laughter.)

10 MR. SHANKER: Any organization that says let's  
11 get rid of these tests until we have perfect ones, I think  
12 the general public is going to feel that you've been a  
13 terrible failure. What you're doing is just trying to bury  
14 the evidence. And I don't think that any of us should be in  
15 that position.

16 I do think that as we move ahead with testing  
17 programs and with research and with building a science of  
18 education that you have to provide some security for the  
19 people who are in those positions, and that includes teachers  
20 and somehow board members and others. They have to feel that  
21 by admitting failure and by moving ahead that they're not  
22 going to be punished for doing the right thing.

23 Now, finally, I want to say that I do not accept  
24 the doom and gloom views about how horrible our schools are  
25 and how everybody is failing.

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1           Here were are. We are still a very rich country.  
2           It's still a very powerful country. It's still a  
3           democratic society. We have our problems and we have our  
4           shortcomings, but we're no longer a manufacturing country.  
5           We import everything from everywhere else. We're a farming  
6           nation, but that's all done by machines. What is it that's  
7           the basis of our prosperity? What is it that we sell to the  
8           world? We sell knowhow, we sell technology, we sell the  
9           most advanced military and computer equipment.

10           It's very hard to sit and say that we're illiterate  
11           and we're going down and we're failing, and yet everybody  
12           else in the world is working to provide us with goods in  
13           exchange for our knowhow. And this doom and gloom attitude  
14           very much reminds me of an analysis a couple of years ago  
15           of the Peter principle, where one writer said, well everyone  
16           has read about the Peter principle and we all know that  
17           everywhere we look--here, there, everywhere--we see all the  
18           people who have risen to the level of their incompetence.  
19           So everyone is in a job that he can't do. And we know that;  
20           we see it every day of the week.

21           The only problem is that if that's true, how come  
22           things aren't worst than they are?

23           (Laughter.)

24           MR. SHANKER: Well that particular writer had an  
25           answer. He said that there must be certain people in

1 society who do not rise to the level of their incompetence.  
2 And he looked around and he found that those were  
3 secretaries.

4 (Laughter.)

5 MR. SHANKER: And he then turned around and said  
6 that the new women's movements obviously meant that women,  
7 too, would rise to the level of their incompetence. And,  
8 therefore, we have to find some new social structures to  
9 prevent our society from going down.

10 Now I am sure that there are problems with  
11 achievement, and there have been and they're very real.  
12 It's important that we look at them, it's important that we  
13 take them seriously and it's important that we do something  
14 about them. But it's also important that we look at the  
15 whole picture and realize that if things were as bad as they  
16 say they are, we wouldn't be where we are now. We're in  
17 pretty good shape and we will be in even better shape as we  
18 admit our mistakes and make the improvements that are  
19 necessary.

20 Thank you.

21 (Applause.)

22 DR. GRAHAM: Thank you very much, Al. I was  
23 heartened to hear that the press is educable and teachers  
24 are educable. I would have been even more heartened if you  
25 thought federal bureaucrats were educable.

1 (Laughter.)

2 DR. GRAHAM: It is now a very great pleasure for  
3 me to be able to present John Ryor, the President of the  
4 National Education Association to speak to us on the subject  
5 of teachers and testing.

6 Mr. Ryor?

7 (Applause.)

8 MR. RYOR: Thank you very much, Pat. Al, Mike and  
9 friends, I'm not quite sure why Secretary Califano was  
10 disturbed that the AMA had nominated him for the new  
11 education position. We were thinking of doing that, but  
12 we thought he might be suspicious viewing the difference  
13 of opinion we've had on the Cabinet. So instead we  
14 encouraged the AMA to do it and they said they'd be more  
15 than happy to have Califano as the new Education Secretary.  
16 And it's true that Al and I have disagreed on a number of  
17 items, but I don't see disagreement as unhealthy. As a  
18 matter of fact, my father used to say "When two people  
19 agree on everything all the time, one of them isn't  
20 necessary."

21 (Laughter.)

22 MR. RYOR: Though I'm not sure what that means.

23 (Laughter.)

24 MR. RYOR: Schools, and what we want from them,  
25 and how we evaluate the students has always been a difficult

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1 matter in this free society of ours and it's probably a more  
2 difficult question today than it's ever been before, because  
3 today we're witnessing what I believe to be a disturbing  
4 trend in the schools for an increasing number of students.  
5 Schools are the only institutions trying to provide an  
6 orderly process for socialization and maturation. And most  
7 of society's problems as they're reflected in the children  
8 find their way to the schools. As a result, teachers and  
9 schools are at the center of the student's life, not by  
10 choice and not by decision, but most often by default.

11 In many places the public schools have become  
12 society's last alternative to abandoning its children to the  
13 streets. If a family is unable or is somehow incapable of  
14 dealing with their own children, then those problems come to  
15 school. If a teacher cannot deal with those successfully  
16 then more often than not the teacher is held to blame. The  
17 situation is increasingly difficult for the teacher and is  
18 potentially dangerous for our society as a whole.

19 We're placed in a situation similar to that of a  
20 student who's asked to come for an appointment with his  
21 counselor. If he's early for the meeting, he's considered  
22 anxious; if he's late, he's said to be resistant; if he's  
23 on time, then he finds himself labeled compulsive.

24 Teachers all over this country are finding the  
25 phenomenon of a personally direct criticism increasing

1 frustrating. If you want smaller classes, you're accused of  
2 goldbricking. If you develop an innovative program, you  
3 squander school funds. If you repeat lessons yearly, you're  
4 archaic and and have gone to seed. If you're tightened by  
5 control, you're hostile. If you run a relaxed class, you're  
6 permissive. If you use a deductive demonstration method of  
7 teaching, you're the center of learning and not the student.  
8 If you use the inductive discovery method, and the student  
9 is doing all the work, then you're lazy. And if you don't  
10 like standardized tests, it's only because you're afraid of  
11 being evaluated.

12 Well societal ambivalence over national standards  
13 versus national standardized testing is an example I think  
14 of confusion which leads to much of that frustration.

15 Parents are almost universally rejecting the  
16 notion of a national curriculum. At the same time they seem  
17 to embrace the need for some national standardized tests  
18 without ever understanding the relationship between the two.

19 It's been said that there's no point in national  
20 standards which aren't pursued. And if they are to be  
21 pursued then they're really goals and not standards. It's a  
22 valid point. It certainly gives rise to more serious  
23 questions about the potential for a national curriculum. And  
24 if there's going to be a national mandate, who ought to set  
25 those goals? Now it seems to me those questions ought to

1 be answered before we ever start devising means of  
2 evaluating.

3 In my view, standardized evaluations of  
4 education in the United States make no more sense than  
5 insisting that education in Point Barrow, Alaska ought to  
6 be identical to education in White Plains, New York. And if  
7 norm reference test results in Point Barrows do not match up  
8 with the results in White Plains, then by concluding that  
9 there must be something terribly deficient about one school  
10 district or the other.

11 Many of our frustrations--certainly the  
12 frustration of students--emanate from our efforts to make  
13 senseless of that which is essentially and inherently  
14 different children in the way they learn. Trying to  
15 reconcile the difference between what we see we want to  
16 teach children and what we really teach children, and  
17 evaluating all that as inexpensively as possible I believe  
18 has led us to our ambivalence.

19 It's been no secret that since 1971 NEA has asked  
20 for a moratorium on standardized testing, and the reason for  
21 requesting that national hiatus and the use of those  
22 particular tests from my view has always been relatively  
23 straightforward. One is they don't do what they purport to  
24 do. Two, they tend to be culturally biased. They're norm  
25 referenced and cannot help but label half the students losers.

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1 They seldom correspond to any significant degree to local  
2 learning objectives. And related to that, arithmetical  
3 reliability is always more important in constructing the  
4 test in content validity. They're useless in measuring  
5 growth over a short period of time, a week, a month. And  
6 there's a tendency on the part of some schools to misuse  
7 those tests and the results to jump to unwarranted  
8 conclusions about curriculum. And, finally, a tendency on  
9 the part of some school systems to use the results to  
10 justify plans for tracking students into career and  
11 educational decisions. It might better be labeled railroading.  
12 Other than that we have no objections.

13 (Laughter.)

14 MR. RYOR: Now it seems to me that those are very  
15 important observations. But the fact is those questions  
16 aren't being dealt with. And even more disturbing is the  
17 fact that, as teachers, we seem to be criticized every time  
18 we try to improve the schools and that every corner were  
19 accused of self-serving motives.

20 When we raise very important and fundamental  
21 objections to such things as standardized tests, the  
22 objections are not answered, but rather our motives are  
23 challenged. We're accused of wanting at least that which we  
24 really want most and that's the support and the involvement  
25 of the public and public schools.

1           We've all heard the charge that the teacher  
2 opposition to standardized testing is self-serving because  
3 teachers don't want to be evaluated. Well that's an  
4 outrageous argument from my point of view, particularly when  
5 one understands that maintaining an evaluation model based  
6 on nationally norm-referenced tests would be the easiest  
7 of all words for the teacher. After all, there's great  
8 comfort in anonymity. And that's precisely what those  
9 standardized tests provide, anonymity. Inasmuch as the  
10 nature of the test presumes that our 16,000 school districts  
11 have the same curriculum, that's a fallacy. Therefore, the  
12 results of such tests are, always in an all ways questionable.

13           And it's all the argument to the contrary, to my  
14 belief, that there's much more safety to the teacher and to  
15 the educational system in norm-referenced standardized  
16 testing if we don't want people to know what we're doing  
17 than in criterion-referenced testing or in parent-teacher-  
18 student conferences. The truth is the teacher concern for  
19 student learning is the basis for permeating demands for  
20 more meaningful ways to evaluate students.

21           Our task force on testing, after three years of  
22 intensive study, concluded that the major use of tests should  
23 be to improve instruction, to diagnose learning difficulties,  
24 and to plan activities in response to those learning needs.  
25 Tests must not be used in any way to label and classify

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1 students, to track students into homogenous groups, to  
2 determine educational programs, to perpetuate an eliteism  
3 or to maintain some groups and individuals in their place  
4 near the bottom of the social economic order.

5 In short, tests must not be used in ways that will  
6 deny any student full access to equal educational  
7 opportunity.

8 The real question is what do we do is interested  
9 and involves citizens and leaders. When opinion makers  
10 seem to suggest that teachers aren't what they used to be,  
11 and when they suggest that the real problem confronting our  
12 society might be cured by returning to the basics, basics  
13 has become the buzz word of the 70s. It's like the Ivory  
14 Soap ad where the young lady says that her commitments to  
15 the basics--Ivory Soap in this case--is the thing which  
16 maintains her usefulness, and by implication causes her  
17 love life to soar, conjuring up for the viewing audience  
18 visions of extasy if we'd only wash our grubby faces with  
19 Ivory.

20 Where do we go when we're caught in a world  
21 dominated by opinion makers who, contrary to the evidence,  
22 would have us believe that scrubbing our children's minds  
23 with the basics will cause society to be 99 44/100 percent  
24 pure of what ails it? Of course, basics are important. But  
25 the resolution rests with all of us and with our ability to

1 consolidate and responsibly use teacher, parent and  
2 society strength in the resolution of the question.

3           There's a dynamic of human life which holds a very  
4 simple lesson for all of us, I think, as leaders, and that  
5 is we either shape circumstances affecting our lives or  
6 we spend our time reacting to others who jerk the  
7 circumstances around to fit their own particular case. Now  
8 I don't think you need to be an economist to see that  
9 teacher salaries take a smaller percentage of the school  
10 dollars than they did 10 years ago, or to see that in that  
11 same period of time educational consultant positions and  
12 teacher aide positions have grown by 180 percent, or that  
13 teachers are increasingly being put upon to solve social  
14 problems which were traditionally the problems of other  
15 institutions in our society.

16           Furthermore, you don't need to be an expert in  
17 testing to view with a line of proliferation of assessment  
18 instruments which are incapable of measuring a school's  
19 progress, much less the progress of students. And that's  
20 why this conference is important.

21           Arthur Burrels, the editor of Mental Measurement  
22 Yearbook, expressed his concerns about testing in a lecture  
23 presented at the University of Iowa in March of 1977. He  
24 said "I consider that most standardized tests are poorly  
25 constructed, of questionable or unknown validity, pretentious

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1 in their claims and likely to be misused more often than not.

2 "We've allowed norm scores to serve as effective  
3 barriers between the test users and the achievement of  
4 students. Norms enable us to make certain interpretations,"  
5 he said, "of test results. Unfortunately, they also make  
6 it difficult or impossible to interpret raw scores."

7 Burrels continued by saying "I would now like to  
8 repeat a statement which I made 42 years ago, forty-two  
9 years ago," he said, "Today it is practically impossible for  
10 a competent test technician or test consumer to make a  
11 thorough appraisal of the construction, elevation and use  
12 of most standardized tests being published because of the  
13 limited amount of trustworthy information supplied by the  
14 test publishers and authors.

15 "If testing is to be of maximum value to schools,  
16 test authors and publishers must give more adequate  
17 information. It would be advantageous if test publishers  
18 would construct only one-fourth, doing half as many tests,  
19 and use the time saved for presenting the detailed  
20 information needed by test consumers."

21 He goes on, "Unfortunately, although some  
22 progress has been made, my 1935 complaint is equally  
23 applicable today to the majority of existing tests and  
24 especially so for secure tests," which is the F.A.T., the  
25 A.T.T. and the L.S.A.T.



1           And still in another part of Burrels' speech in  
2 Iowa he said "Sixty years ago there was great excitement  
3 about the potentialities of standardized testing in the  
4 evaluation of students, teachers and schools.

5           "In 1917, Covary praised the testing movement."  
6 And to paraphrase some of his remarks, he said, "To the  
7 teacher it can mean concise and definite statements as to  
8 what she is expected to do in the different subjects of the  
9 course of study. For the superintendent it means the  
10 changing of school supervision from guess work to scientific  
11 accuracy. And the establishment of standards of work by  
12 which he may defend what he is doing within the next 10  
13 years disillusionment set in."

14           Burrels continues that "Now today, despite the  
15 increasing criticism of testing by some others are moving in  
16 the direction of similar, unwarrantedly high expectations  
17 of 60 years ago."

18           "I refer to such movements as accountability,  
19 contract testing, and program evaluation."

20           Let me pick up on the base of these of  
21 accountability for just a moment. Education is a serious  
22 enterprise and it has been very successful and is  
23 successful. Its essence lies in what happens between  
24 children and their parents and teachers and classmates.  
25 These relationships are delicate and susceptible to strong

1 outside influences. And an accountability system must take  
2 care not to damage those. And above all the system must be  
3 liveable to those who are expected to abide by it.

4 . In a pluralistic society, an accountability system  
5 should promote diversity, not conformity. Opportunities for  
6 diversity must exist from the child to the parent to the  
7 teacher, the school and the community. Each entity has a  
8 right to be itself.

9 A modelistic system which imposes a single set of  
10 values strikes at the very heart of individualism and the  
11 democratic process. And, in short, an accountability system  
12 should be responsive to individual differences.

13 Now I know that teachers believe in high standards  
14 for the students. They also understand that for teachers  
15 to teach and for learning to take place, students have to be  
16 evaluated. And we believe strongly that learning must be  
17 evaluated in a variety of ways. Among some of the ways is  
18 a plan whereby a teacher can develop a composite picture of  
19 a student in his academic and personal growth by behavior  
20 such as interaction with others and motivational patterns,  
21 independent work habits, oral presentations by students, and  
22 parent-teacher conferences.

23 The development of individual diagnostic tests,  
24 the development of teacher-made tests, and certainly school  
25 letter grades themselves, and, most importantly, we believe

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1 the development of criterion referenced tests.

2           What's the role of the federal government? There  
3 is no role for the federal government in the testing  
4 industry' except to provide the financial resources to change  
5 the state of the art.

6           Burrels had been encouraging that and encouraging  
7 his fellow workers to do that for over 42 years without a  
8 great deal of success.

9           I suggest that his proposal and one similar to what  
10 he advocates should be supported and encouraged by the  
11 federal government. His proposal provides two types of  
12 tests, a test for assessing performance of groups and for  
13 assessing performance of individuals. And a group test  
14 should be designed to measure the achievement of schools  
15 having common objectives in learning environments. Each  
16 test could be quite short, requiring very little time to  
17 administer.

18           The time now required to administer an achievement  
19 battery--sometimes as much as seven hours--could be reduced  
20 to 30 minutes. The use of short group tests, each taken by  
21 only a fraction of the students, say one-fifth of them, will  
22 greatly reduce the cost in time and money as it relates to  
23 testing. It would also allow a much wider range of  
24 objectives and curricula analyses to be covered.

25           To use a different test for measuring groups and

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1 individuals would permit school systems to abandon national  
2 norms for individuals and to advance commercially purchased  
3 tests and processing services to better meet local needs.  
4 Purchased tests could be supplemented by locally prepared  
5 examinations and integrated through the testing program.

6 In addition to this, we recommend another role to  
7 the federal government, and I'd recommend that the national  
8 assessment of educational progress continue to be funded to  
9 insure that there is data for assessing program growth. It  
10 should not be hampered by lack of funds. And, of course,  
11 as I said earlier, basics are important. Reading, writing  
12 and arithmetizing are critical to the success of any  
13 academic experience. But by and large, commune learning  
14 is a byproduct of training, and training is only one  
15 technique in the arsenal of teaching methods, not the only  
16 method.

17 There's a very disturbing incident regarding  
18 standardized tests reported in the January 28 Washington Post  
19 that I'd like to share with you.

20 A principal in the Pocomoke, Maryland school  
21 district had given all his third graders copies of the  
22 previous year's Iowa Basic Skills Test, and because the same  
23 test is used each year, the Pocomoke third graders, according  
24 to the Post, had an unfair advantage and scored significantly  
25 higher, and the principal had cheated the system. I believe

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1 he did. But I also believe that standardized tests,  
2 nationally norm-referenced standardized tests, a large group  
3 test of that nature cannot help but lead to that same  
4 mentality.

5 The school district superintendent inadvertently  
6 put the whole thing in its proper perspective. He said  
7 "You ought to be able to guess what the scores will be by  
8 looking at the IQ scores and the education and income of the  
9 parents. In other words, we know where those kids are going  
10 to end up before we ever give the test. And the next question  
11 ought to be why do we give them, and, even worst, why we  
12 publish the results. I suspect it's because our system  
13 demands winners and losers. And the winners have to know who  
14 the losers are so that they can feel good about winning, so  
15 that they will know that they're inherently better than  
16 someone else.

17 I think King put that all in its proper perspective  
18 when he said that "Discrimination does damage to both the  
19 discriminator and the one being discriminated against. It  
20 leaves one into believing he's superior and the other to  
21 believe he's inferior, and both of those notions are wrong."

22 The superintendent went on to tell us in the  
23 article that there was no pressure placed on his building  
24 administrators to excel. That is such pure unmitigated  
25 nonsense that it angered -- that's tantamount to saying that

1 because newspapers print NFL football scores, and because  
2 Denver's record was 12 wins and three losses on the year and  
3 Dallas was 13 and two, and Miami Dolphins 10 and four, that  
4 that doesn't create any pressure on Hank Stram of the  
5 New Orleans Saints who had a record of three and 11.

6 I suppose we're to believe that Hank was fired a  
7 month ago because his uniform inventory didn't check.

8 (Laughter.)

9 MR. RYOR: What we're really telling students  
10 and teachers and parents is, look, folks, you'll always be  
11 losers, and the test of your worthiness is whether or not you  
12 and your kids finish above the median.

13 Now it's my personal conviction that the whole  
14 notion of norm referenced standardized tests makes a lie out  
15 of the often stated concern for individual differences. It's  
16 the very thing which leads children to believe that they only  
17 have worth as measured against something else. And the most  
18 tragic aspect of our preoccupation with training as it  
19 relates to those tests is that most children are trained to  
20 try to do better than somebody else, which more often  
21 cripples them than helps them.

22 In my view, the only competition worth the name is  
23 the competition with oneself. And that teaching at its  
24 best is a helping function, and that good teachers are indeed  
25 good helpers. We must evaluate children. We must help

1 them overcome deficiencies, and help them do that by  
2 measuring them against the curriculum objectives of our  
3 schools and not from predetermined tests based on a cycle  
4 matrician's commitment to making a perfect curve at the  
5 expense of one-half of all the children who take it.

6 One could successfully argue that it was not the  
7 intention of the test makers to have national standardized  
8 tests measure or shave school curriculum. I think the  
9 intention of the writer is meaningless. In fact,  
10 legislators and school boards start rewriting curriculum  
11 to conform to the content of the F.A.T. or any other  
12 nationally standardized test.

13 A free society needs, above all things, a free  
14 and learned citizenry. And the first task of education is to  
15 stimulate curiosity, to teach children how to learn and how  
16 to remain open. If we can't do that then we really can't  
17 truly educate. We can only train. And the difference  
18 between training and educating is monumental. Educated  
19 people remain curious a life time, but one who is trained  
20 only performs rituals. Educated people change things;  
21 trained people accept them.

22 Trained people are not creative, they're  
23 predictable. They're predictable because they can be  
24 counted on to repeat the responses they've been trained to  
25 repeat, no matter what the circumstances. And that's why

1 a narrow education response predicated on the good old days  
2 holds the greatest single threat to our Republic because a  
3 nation of trained people could not possibly be learned and  
4 flexible enough to meet all of the complex challenges that  
5 lie ahead of all of us.

6 I thank you very much.

7 (Applause.)

8 DR. GRAHAM: Thank you, John, very much.

9 Twenty-three years ago I started teaching in a  
10 rural school in Virginia and my colleagues and I at  
11 Deep Creek High School were all members of the Virginia  
12 Education Association, the state affiliate of the  
13 John Ryor's NEA. Ten years after that I was running in  
14 New York City a seminar for beginning teachers in  
15 New York City public schools, and as part of those seminars  
16 I got to have Al Shanker, who was then with the UMT, come  
17 to speak to them. I have benefitted enormously from both of  
18 those associations and I think all of us today have  
19 benefitted from hearing both John Ryor and Al Shanker on  
20 these subjects.

21 We have some time for questions. If those of you  
22 who would like to address a query would care to move to one of  
23 the microphones I would be happy to recognize you in the  
24 time that we have.

25 MR. O'NEAL. I'm John O'Neal. Mr. Shanker, you



1 said that if you eliminate testing you will get a different  
2 kind of teacher. I would like to know what kind of teacher  
3 you'd have if you eliminate testing and what kind of teacher  
4 you'd have if you'd adopt testing.

5 MR. SHANKER: I think you've heard this afternoon  
6 a pretty clear exposition of two very contrasting and  
7 different views or philosophies. And I think if you'll just  
8 listen to the views of John Ryor and my own that in one  
9 case you have -- I think the key to it is whether the  
10 purpose of schools is in part to abridge the gap and bring  
11 youngsters into the world that we have. And the world that  
12 we have does not deal with individuals as individuals, it  
13 deals with them, and there is a good deal of competitiveness  
14 in the world. And I do not believe that if you get rid of  
15 testing or achievement testing or comparisons that we're  
16 going to fool these youngsters at all. They compare each  
17 other every single minute of the time. They know who runs  
18 faster and who's taller and who fights better and who  
19 reads better and who counts better. And we aren't going to  
20 kid them at all by doing this. It's part of the child's  
21 world, it's part of the adult's world, it is part of what  
22 makes society tick. And as far as I know, every effort to  
23 try to change society so radically that people will not  
24 place values on achievement in various areas has failed.

25 I remember -- I was camp counselor before I was a

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1 teacher. And at this particular camp it was totally not.  
2 They allowed no competitive sports at all. They did not want  
3 one child, they didn't give points for making beds, they  
4 didn't do anything. It was an extreme of what was once the  
5 progressive movement and it was run by people who were rather  
6 prominent in that movement. And there were three or four  
7 children to each counselor. And I remember one experience  
8 very well, and that is after five days of absolute  
9 noncompetitiveness, a night I sat in the middle of the room  
10 with the four children in their beds and the lights were out,  
11 and I had a flashlight, and I read a story to them so that  
12 they wouldn't feel too anxious about being away from home.  
13 And then after I finished reading the story, I went and sat  
14 at the edge of each child's bed for about a minute and asked  
15 whether he heard from home and what he did that day and what  
16 he expected to do the next day. And it took only about  
17 three minutes for one of the children to ask me would I  
18 lean over a little bit closer because he wanted to whisper  
19 something to me. And I leaned over. And he said to me, "Tell  
20 me the truth. Which one of us do you like the best?"

21 (Laughter.)

22 MR. WEBER: I have a question for Mr. Ryor. My  
23 name is George Weber. I'm with the Council for Basic  
24 Education.

25 I tried to listen carefully to what you said, and

1 you talked about a moratorium on testing that NEA has  
2 supported since 1971. And yet you seem to attack only  
3 norm referenced standardized tests.

4           Would you clarify whether you oppose standardized  
5 criterion referenced tests?

6           MR. RYOR: Well that would depend on the base use.  
7 I think we'd generally oppose any national norm referenced  
8 test, whether it's criterion or norm referenced. I think  
9 our position is not to evaluation. We believe that's  
10 critical. It's critical to knowing what you are teaching in  
11 relation to the objectives of the school district. But at  
12 the same time we think we ought to have evaluation  
13 instruments that really tell us something, and really tell  
14 the students something, and really tell the parents  
15 something, about the nature of the progress the student is  
16 making as measured against those objectives.

17           Now it may be very useful to have regional  
18 objectives, where there are common regional objectives,  
19 common school district objectives. I think norming them  
20 on that particular school basis might be very useful,  
21 particularly in measuring the school against their own  
22 objectives. But I don't think you need to test all  
23 children in the school district to accomplish that, as many  
24 districts do now. If you're just trying to give to the  
25 school district some indication of how well it's achieving

1 its objectives, it does no useful purpose, if that is the  
2 objective, to test all fourth graders or all seventh graders  
3 and all eleventh graders. We do that much less expensively  
4 than we do it now.

5 ~~By Mrs. Hoffman~~  
6 VOICE: I was asked to make this remark by one of  
7 the officials of the conference with whom I discussed the  
8 matter. And this whole group has been meeting on the matter  
9 concerning testing. And it seems to me that there's one  
10 type of testing that seems not to have been discussed at all  
11 and it seems to be the most important aspect. I refer to the  
12 fact that today's brightest and most propound students tend  
13 to be penalized by the multiple choice format, and this is  
14 because they see more in the possibilities of the choices  
15 than the mostly deficient students do, and they are therefore  
16 slowed down.

17 Now this puts a sort of damper on the whole  
18 atmosphere called the education process. And I wonder if  
19 either one of the speakers would care to comment on this,  
20 which I think is an extremely important aspect of multiple  
21 choice testing.

22 MR. SHANKER: Well I thin the conclusion is simple,  
23 and on this one I'm sure that we would all agree. It just  
24 means that you take testing and you take it as one bit of  
25 evidence. That's all. Not as all of the evidence. There  
is obviously other evidence. There's what a student does,

1 there's what he says, there's what he produces, there's what  
2 he writes, what he creates, all sorts of things. And  
3 obviously you can have pieces that don't fit into place.  
4 We've all had experience with students who are excellent and  
5 who always do poorly on tests, but who perform in all other  
6 aspects very well. Most cases attach some not to the tests.  
7 And there I think, you know, there can be reforms here; where  
8 it's terrible that the only thing that appears on a report  
9 card or a record is the result of the test. There ought to  
10 be more there. But the test, too, should be there. And if  
11 all the other evidence runs against it, I would look into  
12 why that happened to see what we could do later on to change  
13 those tests so that they reflect all the other aspects of  
14 the reality of that person.

15 DR. GRAHAM: John, do you want to add to that?

16 MR. RYOR: Just to reinforce what you said, we  
17 criticize those tests on that basis. As a matter of fact,  
18 it is crippling I think in the sense that the very bright  
19 students who can distinguish and differentiate more often  
20 than not gets by the real answer.

21 I'm reminded of the story told about the young  
22 horse trader who was taking one of those tests in  
23 California. And the question was which beast of burden is  
24 used in the desert? a) horse, b) camel, c) mule. And she  
25 was having difficulty with it. And her teacher came by and

1 said, Janie, what's the problem? She said, well I can't get  
2 the answer to this question. And he said, well it seems  
3 very simple and straightforward to me. She said, not to me  
4 because I know they use mules in the Mojave Desert, and  
5 horses in the Gobi Desert, and camels in the Sahara Desert,  
6 and I don't know what desert you're talking about. And she  
7 lived closest to Mojave; she picked the mule and got the  
8 wrong answer. The right answer was "camel."

9 And I think that, too, creates a real problem in  
10 terms of making tests that relate specifically to goals and  
11 objectives of the district. But it's the kind of thing that  
12 one must do when you're trying to construct a test to fit  
13 the norm curve, the kind of things you get in order to  
14 score quickly and to get some indication.

15 DR. BIASCO: Frank Biasco. I'm probably one of  
16 the only students to come, and I'm very proud to be among  
17 this distinguished group of people. I also note that I'm  
18 a union member and administrator for our organization so I  
19 can identify with a lot of things that I see here. I'm also  
20 a certified teacher in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

21 I would like to say that I think it's very  
22 important in all of us who are here that we're interested  
23 in education generally and students in particular. And I  
24 think it's our obligation in some way to involve our students  
25 in processes like these where there is a main subject or

1 conversation in many ways. And I ask the question not only  
2 to the panel but to all of you here to feel free to  
3 approach me and give me your opinion on how you would like  
4 to involve your students in topics that are very basic to  
5 our society.

6 We have students who are trustees at colleges and  
7 many universities around the country. The Congress of the  
8 United States has endorsed, using decision making processes,  
9 you know, of all student decision making. I'd like to hear  
10 the panel's opinion of involving students more as a resource  
11 in terms of getting their views and dialogue and experience.

12 Thank you.

13 MR. RYOR: I personally believe that it's  
14 important to have the use of students in the development on  
15 curriculum, but particularly in the development of policy.  
16 But I think there's a big difference in involvement and  
17 getting what you want out of the system. I think one of the  
18 things that frustrates the students who participate is they  
19 have confused those two things. And the participation isn't  
20 really as important to them in the long haul many times as  
21 achieving the goal. And if you don't achieve the goal then  
22 the participation is meaningless.

23 But I certainly believe that the views of students  
24 are critical both for the teacher's interest in development  
25 of the curriculum. But I don't think they ought to be the

1 primary concern of the teacher in steering the development  
2 of the subject matter.

3 MR. SHANKER: Well I won't be very popular on  
4 this answer, but I don't think that -- I think that the  
5 doctor has to listen to the patient than try to figure out  
6 what's wrong with him. But I don't think that he very often  
7 asks the patient what cure he should prescribe for him.  
8 And, yes, I believe that we should listen to students and  
9 listen very carefully and find out what troubles bother them.  
10 But a good deal of what goes on in formal education and  
11 schooling is unpleasant. It's something that the student  
12 does not like at the time. The chances are that the things  
13 that the student feels he or she needs at the time are not as  
14 important to things that are unpleasant but have to be done  
15 and become the bases of future study and future learning and  
16 future abilities and potentialities are unpleasant and not  
17 something that most students would choose. And the more  
18 that we involve students in a decision making process where  
19 they have the right to determine policy or curriculum on the  
20 basis of what they happen to like at that particular time  
21 rather than what will be demanded of them later by society,  
22 the more we corrupt the basic purposes of education and do  
23 not fulfill the needs of students.

24 DR. GRAHAM: I think we have time for one more  
25 question, please.



1 VOICE: I'm one of those decision makers who has  
2 to make a decision. You can continue talking forever.  
3 Dr. Tanglos, on the one end, has told us that this is the  
4 best of all possible rule. Our other speaker has told us  
5 that nothing is right and we should put a moratorium  
6 forever. Those are not politically possible answers.

7 And what I'm interested in is hearing one of you  
8 at least discuss what you think we ought to do. Because it  
9 seems to me that things like student learning objectives  
10 with participation from the community is something that  
11 teachers organizations up to this point have opposed or have  
12 not been openly supportive of and participated in. And  
13 I would like to hear what you think is a positive response  
14 instead of telling us everything's perfect or nothing is  
15 right.

16 DR. GRAHAM: We'll start with John Ryor.

17 MR. RYOR: Well I think you misunderstood what I  
18 said. I don't believe I said anywhere that nothing is right,  
19 nor did I say that we should not be testing or doing any  
20 kind of testing.

21 I say, and I repeat again, that I think evaluation  
22 is important for the student, for the teacher, certainly for  
23 the community and parents. But the evaluation only takes on  
24 meaning if it relates in fact to the objectives of the school  
25 district itself. To that end, we think a more meaningful

1 way of developing tests would be by developing criterion  
2 objective referenced tests as they relate to the objectives  
3 of that particular school district.

4 We think that obviously school grades, diagnostic  
5 tests are equally important.

6 VOICE: With the parents' participation?

7 MR. RYOR: I think parents' participation have  
8 to go on in terms of the development of general school  
9 policy.

10 If you're talking about the development of a test,  
11 I don't think parents' participation in that is probably  
12 going to be very productive.

13 DR. GRAHAM: Al, would you add to that?

14 MR. SHANKER: I think the position that we should  
15 not deprive ourselves of any knowledge, and that certainly  
16 standardized norm referenced national tests do give us  
17 knowledge; they don't give us the only knowledge. There are  
18 limits to that knowledge. It could be approved. I think  
19 that that is a position. As far as moving ahead practically,  
20 I think that a number of the points that were made by  
21 Secretary Califano at the beginning are very important. I  
22 certainly think that the stress on basics in the early  
23 grades and on very frequent testing and a movement of  
24 resources, including parents working with their own  
25 children and through teachers training them to do that, is a

1 very, very important step.

2 I think that a good deal of the way our school system  
3 operates is like a story that I once heard about an  
4 automobile plant where the automobiles would go down the  
5 assembly line, and each person would put a designated part  
6 on the line, and then the unfinished automobile would walk  
7 into a part called "inspection," where the inspectors ran  
8 around putting heavy paint or chalk marks on the missing  
9 parts. And then the unfinished automobile would go into a  
10 section known as "salvage," where people were able to put on  
11 any missing parts.

12 And on one very strongly snowy day there were a lot  
13 of people missing on the assembly line, and so there were  
14 many missing parts. And the inspectors were running around  
15 painting up the different parts, and then it went into  
16 salvage, and they got all piled up. They had all the cars  
17 there because they couldn't get the parts on fast enough.

18 And so the brilliant foreman of the plant said,  
19 well we've got all these cars down here with missing parts.  
20 We'd better take every fifth person off the assembly line  
21 and have them go down there to put on the missing parts.

22 (Laughter.)

23 MR. SHANKER: Well that's what we're doing in our  
24 schools. We don't put the parts on early enough. And  
25 then we've got all this remediation and all things that where

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1 we're trying to undo the damage that we did in the first  
2 place.

3 And I think that the program announced by Joe  
4 Califano this afternoon is an excellent beginning to take  
5 care of that basic fault or flaw in our schools up to now.

6 DR. GRAHAM: I promised both John Ryor and  
7 Al Shanker a minute for a closing remark if either of them  
8 wishes to make it. John?

9 MR. RYOR: Again I would summarize by stating to  
10 Secretary Califano and to Pat Graham our particular thanks  
11 for this opportunity to deal with something that's so  
12 critical to the nature of public education.

13 Thomas Jefferson said this some 180 years ago,  
14 that "A free society and an educated citizenry or an  
15 ignorant citizenry is something that never was and never  
16 will be."

17 I think education has done a magnificent --  
18 public education particularly has done a magnificent job  
19 in helping our free society be a shining light in this  
20 world of ours. But there is truth to the fact that we can  
21 always do better; that there are problems in schools, and  
22 that we have to jointly work out those problems. And even  
23 though I have great respect for differences, it is  
24 necessary for those in the education community and those in  
25 the testing community and those of the legislative bodies

1 of this country come to some degree of concensus about what  
2 our expectations are and what we expect the teachers and  
3 children in terms of reaching the goals for public education  
4 in the United States of America.

5 I thank you again, Pat, for this opportunity.

6 DR. GRAHAM: Thank you. Al?

7 MR. SHANKER: Well in a previous life of mine I was  
8 a philosophy student, and one of the philosophers that I  
9 spent a good deal of time studying was John Dooley. And I  
10 think that John Dooley was absolutely shocked and outraged  
11 at the kind of dualistic diacotomy which has been created  
12 as a result of this debate. In the polarization and  
13 difference between, on the one hand, the concerns of the  
14 individual student and his respect for himself, and his own  
15 dignity, and on the other hand, that if you use some system  
16 of national standard norm referenced test that this will  
17 somehow obliterate the individuality and prevent children  
18 from growing up with a sense of their own dignity and  
19 worth because they will be comparing themselves with others.

20 If ever there was a full diacotomy, that is one.  
21 In our society I do not know of anyone who can grow up and  
22 have that feeling of dignity and self-respect unless they  
23 can read and write and count and reason and understand  
24 things in the world about us. And I am convinced that more  
25 students will grow up that way and be able to achieve, and

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1 therefore have more respect for themselves. If we  
2 constantly prod them to do so, if we tell them that that is  
3 one of our values, if we tell them that it's tough and it's  
4 hard and unpleasant, but others have done so before, and  
5 they can do it, and if we tell them that to some extent  
6 just as they will later value themselves highly or not so  
7 highly on the basis of those achievements, we will give them  
8 information on that progress as they go along.

9 DR. GRAHAM: For my colleague, Mike Timpane, on  
10 my right, and for all of us here, we thank both John Ryor  
11 and Al Shanker very much for taking this time to be with us.  
12 And to all of you, we have half an hour before we need to be  
13 back here again. Thank you very much.

14 (Applause.)

15 (Whereupon, at 2:50 p.m. the conference was  
16 recessed.)