

July 31
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"THE STATE OF OUR UNION"

AN ADDRESS BY ALBERT SHANKER,
~~PRESIDENT~~
~~PRESIDENT OF THE AMERICAN FEDERATION,~~
OF TEACHERS, AFL-CIO,
BEFORE THE SIXTY-THIRD ANNUAL
CONVENTION, IN SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA
ON TUESDAY, JULY 3, 1979

~~At this point~~ I am privileged to speak to you, the delegates to this convention of the American Federation of Teachers, on the problems that face us and our programs for the future. I can think of no better point in the program for me to make those remarks than after the presentation which was just made. There is no question that we are going into a period that is very different and very new.

Where did we come from? For many years, a period of teacher dormancy and inactivity; and then in the sixties we had the great union growth, militancy, a commitment on the part of the Federal Government to the elimination of poverty and to providing equal educational opportunity, a period of hope and of optimism.

1 And then the seventies, when that optimism
2 and growth came to a very rapid halt and when we all came
3 to realize, as we never had before, that what happens to
4 us as educational employees at schools is very related to
5 what happens in the rest of our economy; and as we faced
6 recession and unemployment and people not paying taxes, but
7 instead being supported by them, we began to feel that
8 squeeze on the schools and we began to see and feel a
9 different attitude in negotiations.

10 And now we enter a period which adds to the
11 problems of the last one because if in the seventies we had
12 a kind of leveling off of the growth that we previously
13 enjoyed, we will now begin, or have begun, a period of
14 decline as it was defined in the presentation that you just
15 saw.

16 There are fewer students and those who will
17 be entering school in the next five years have already been
18 born and can be counted and we know that there will be, at
19 least for that period, few^{er} students.

20 We also have with us the problem of energy
21 which, unfortunately, most people think is merely a problem
22 of whether we are going to have to line up for gasoline and
23 how long we will have to be on line and we may have to

1 suffer the discomfort of smaller cars and slightly cooler
2 homes and offices.

3 That is not the problem at all. There is
4 nothing that we consume that does not use energy -- food,
5 clothing, buildings, and everything. As the price of energy
6 goes up and as OPEC sits there and raises the price, ~~what~~
7 ~~we are doing is saying that~~ everything that we buy is going
8 to be higher and higher and higher and more of that money
9 of ours, real money, is going to leave the country or is
10 going to go into more ~~important~~ ^{expensive} forms of energy production
11 in this country. What that means is that for the first
12 time in 200-plus years in the United States of America we
13 ~~we~~ ^{will} experience a number of problems related to energy.

14 I do not yet know for how many years we will
15 be faced with this. However, we will experience a number
16 of years in which, each year, the American people will have
17 a lower standard of living than they did the year before.
18 No more every year better and better, more and more. No
19 more of the optimistic psychology where¹ you buy a house
20 knowing that, in a few years, the payments will seem very
21 small, or ^{of} the credit-card mentality. And as people have to
22 start living on less, they are going to have to start making
23 choices. *What do we give up? And there is going to be
a long list.*

What do we give up? And there is going to
be a long list.

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1 I don't mean anyone is going to sit down and make a list of
 2 what do I give up, but with or without a list in front of
 3 them, when you've got less you've got to decide what it is
 4 you are not going to have next year. And on that list, of
 5 course, will be automobiles, homes and vacations, clothes
 6 and food; on that list will also be education and parks and
 7 public services. When people start living on less and less,
 8 one of the things that ~~we~~^{they} are going to turn to more and more
 9 is to say that ~~we~~^{they} can maintain a good part of our standard
 10 of living if ~~we~~^{they} just reduce taxes and get rid of some of
 11 these educational frills. They say why do these people need
 12 so much college education anyway? Why pay for kindergarten?
 13 There is no proof, they will say, that small size classes
 14 do anything. You know it all. We have had those arguments
 15 before as ~~we were all~~^{our society was} getting richer and richer each year.
 16 Just imagine how these arguments will intensify as we are
 17 faced with the problem of doing with less.

18 Now, if the '70's was a period when we realized
 19 that we as teachers, workers in schools, had to be concerned
 20 with inflation, with unemployment, with interest rates, this
 21 is a period of time when we will more and more realize that
 22 what happens to us is not just solvable ~~within~~ within the
 23 borders of our own country. What happens elsewhere affects
 us. Look at the effect of Iran. What happens elsewhere
 will have more and more of an impact on what happens to us
 in this country and, of course, in education as well. There

1 is no doubt that there will be more international involvement
2 as a result of this crisis, and there is also no doubt that
3 during this period when millions and millions of American
4 people are saying how could this happen to us -- Iran,
5 Afghanistan, and Mozambique -- when is this going to stop?
6 There is no doubt, ~~that this will also be a period in which~~
7 in spite of the fact that we have less and we have got to
8 give up many things, ^{that this will also} ~~it is going to~~ be a period of some
9 increases in military expenditures, ^{and} the big argument in
10 SALT, if you ^{notice} it, is that the group that favors SALT
11 says: Pass it. Adopt ^{it} and we will spend lots of money
12 developing other types of weapons. The group that says
13 defeat it says: Defeat it so we can continue building more
14 of these. But that is the mood of the country at the present
15 time.

16 Now, that is the setting and so we have already
17 experienced the general attack on collective bargaining.
18 More and more articles and books are coming out that say
19 collective bargaining is an undemocratic thing because it
20 means that elected public officials, the Board of Education,
21 sits down with a union, usually behind closed doors, and makes
22 decisions on how the money is spent, decisions on management,
23 decisions on educational policy, decisions which should not
be made in a room in which the public is not present. These
attacks are leading more and more to proposals to either
halt the movement in legislation for collective bargaining

1 of proposals to amend the legislation that now exists to
2 include many other parties in the collective bargaining
3 process in a way that would make ^{what} ~~a~~ process which is already
4 extremely difficult, totally impossible.

5 Then we have the big fight coming up on
6 tuition tax credits. ~~The~~ ^{Tuition} tuition tax credits, of course,
7 is not a ~~federal~~ ^{dead} issue. It is not a live issue this year
8 in the Congress, but next year it will be a major issue.
9 Those who came very close to passing tuition tax credits
10 through the Congress of the United States will be present
11 as delegates at both the Republican and Democratic
12 conventions next year. They will seek in those conventions
13 to get party platforms favoring tuition tax credits and,
14 furthermore, they will meet with every presidential candidate
15 to threaten a loss of votes in the primaries unless there
16 is a commitment on the part of the candidates to say that
17 they will support tuition tax credits.
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Had we not had the support of the Carter
 Administration and ~~his~~ ^{the President's} strong statement that he would veto
 any such bill, had there been a president in the White
 House last year who was either neutral or in favor of
 tuition tax credits, the legislation would have passed.
 ← The coalition that we had would not have
 been able to do it alone. And so, one of the issues that
 we will have to follow very carefully next year is the
 conventions and the position of every single member of
 Congress who is running on this issue, because the other
 side is going to be asking questions of every single
 candidate.

And now, of course, we are faced with a
 voucher question.

I would like to spend a few minutes on ^{the}
 voucher question because it is going to be with us for a ^{while,}
~~while,~~ and there is no doubt ^{that} ~~that~~ should vouchers become
 the accepted method of financing public education in
 America, that there will be no public education in America.
 And I would go a step further: If we end up with schools
 that ~~are~~ ^{are} schools that teach in other languages, that do not
 have certified ^{teachers} ~~languages~~ and can teach any ideology that
 anybody wants, and where their only purpose is to make

1 money because they are advertising on the radio and tele-
2 vision and giving away goodies in order to get student
3 customers, it is the end of more than public education in
4 America, it is the end of America itself because if we don't
5 have an educated population, we don't have a country.

6 ~~(Applause)~~

7 Now, the people who talk about vouchers make
8 it sound very, very nice. What a nice way of packaging it is
9 to call it "family choice."

10 Who is against family?

11 And who is against choice?!

12 It is something like the slogan, "the right
13 to work." You know, which does not give anyone a job,
14 which gives you the right to work without the protection of
15 a union, under substandard conditions.

16 And this of course gives you family choice.

17 What does it mean?

18 The kind of image which the supporters of
19 vouchers try to conjure up in the minds of the public is to
20 say: "Don't worry. There will always be a public school
21 system, and there will be the public school teachers. What
22 this does is just to give you a choice. You can take this
23 voucher, and whenever you are unhappy, just go across the

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1 street or down the block or down the road and go to some
2 other school, and then if you don't like that one and it
3 turns out that you really did like the public school and
4 it was better, well, that is simple. Next year, just take
5 your voucher and go right back to the public school."

6 It is, they ~~could~~ say, an experiment.)

7 What do ^{you} ~~you~~ have to lose? Try it out. After
8 all, if these private schools are better, we will find out
9 soon enough and everybody will love them and they will stay
10 there.

11 On the other hand, if all the terrible things
12 that you tell us about these schools are true, they won't
13 last very long.

14 Well, the trouble with that image and the
15 trouble with that analogy is that there are several types
16 of experiments. There are some experiments that are
17 reversible and there are others that are not reversible.

18 ← You experiment, you try a new type of food.
19 You don't like it; you don't try that food again. You
20 have lost nothing except that you didn't enjoy that meal.

21 But if you experiment with drugs, it is not
22 so easy to change your mind. You may very well be on a
23 road where experiment has very well determined your

1 future. And similarly with vouchers. This is an experi-
2 ment which is both destructive and irreversible.

3 Let's take a look at how vouchers would
4 work. Let's take any big city or state. Take New York
5 or Chicago, or take the state of California. Let's suppose
6 that vouchers are enacted so every single parent gets a
7 check, a voucher, not for \$500, as under tuition tax
8 credits, but for \$2000 or \$2500 for the full amount that
9 is spent for public education in that particular community
10 or that particular state.

11 And let us say -- and I will use New York
12 City as an example -- let us say that only ten percent of
13 the parents decide to take their students out of public
14 schools: Well, with 900,000 students, that means that
15 almost 100,000 students would be taken out of public
16 schools.

17 Now, 100,000 students would be taken out a
18 time when a city, not just that city but all cities, are in
19 great financial need.

20 Can we expect that the taxpayers of New York
21 City would keep 950 schools open with fewer students in those
22 schools?

23 I doubt it very much.

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1 ← And so, we could expect that ninety-five
 2 schools would be closed, even though the presentation we
 3 have just seen shows that that is not an easy thing to do.

4 *H* As we close those ninety-five schools, can
 5 we expect that the public would say that those schools
 6 should sit there and wait for the children to return? Or
 7 would there be an effort to say: "Look, these buildings
 8 are worth millions of dollars, let's sell them."

9 I don't think there is any doubt as to what
 10 would happen. Ninety-five buildings, worth between two
 11 and four or five or six million dollars each or more, ~~for~~
 12 ~~the city~~ to be sitting there waiting for students to return.
 13 No, they would be sold.)

14 And because they would be sold, there would
 15 be no such schools for those students to return to in the
 16 future if they should ever make that decision.)

17 And that would happen a second year if
 18 another five or ten percent left, and a third year if another
 19 group left.

20 This is not one of those experiments where
 21 you can justify it and change your mind. This is a decision
 22 ~~that produces~~ *that produces* which leads to a line of inevitable actions which ultimately
 23 lead to the closing of the public schools.

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Now, who would buy those buildings?

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1 ← Well the^{re} certainly would be easy customers
2 after all, if 90,000 to 100,000 students leave the public
3 schools, I don't know of any existing private or religious
4 schools who could handle them. So the customers to buy
5 those schools would be the brand new private voucher schools
6 that are about to open.

7 They would undoubtedly also be customers for
8 some of the textbooks and supplies which would now be in
9 surplus. So what the voucher scheme really is ~~is~~^{is} a
10 wholesale selling of public schools to the private sector.
11 And there would be no opportunity for return.

12 Well that is what that is about.

13 Now I have talked about choice. And what
14 I think I have just said is the choice will be gone very
15 soon because the public schools will be closed. They will
16 be sold. By the way the students are going to end up in
17 the same schools. You know something, they are going to
18 end up with the same teachers, because as teachers are
19 dismissed in the public schools and start looking for jobs,
20 ~~if and large you are not going to~~ -- there are some teachers
21 out there, but you don't have a million or two or three
22 million people out there waiting to become teachers -- by
23 and large you will have the same schools with the same
children with the same teachers with the same textbooks
that will have been sold ~~to~~^{to} the private sector. The only

1 thing that you will not have is the control, the democratic
2 control by the democratically elected representatives of
3 the people within our country. The whole thing will be
4 run by the same characters who ran nursing homes and things
5 like that.

6 That is what we are really doing. So the
7 choice will not be there.

8 Now the other word is "family." I suggest
9 to you that the purpose of public education in this country
10 is not to provide some little form of goodies for the
11 family. It is not a private good that we are doing to say
12 to Mr. and Mrs. Jones we are going to give you an education
13 for your child, now you go out and buy it in a supermarket.
14 Why do we spend public dollars to educate children in our
15 society? Because what happens to those children when they
16 grow up will not merely affect how much that child makes,
17 it is going to affect each and every one of us. How many
18 criminals will there be? How many drug addicts? How
19 many people who are capable of participating, of thinking,
20 of sharing decisions within a democracy?

21 We pay for it because the education of every
22 citizen is not a "good" for that one person alone. It is
23 a value to every single one of us within our society. If
we educate someone, we all reap the benefit. If someone
is not educated, we all pay the price over a period of time.

1 To turn this function over and say it is
2 up to the parent, society will not determine what
3 qualifications of a teacher are or what the curriculum is,
4 It is all right for the public to pay
5 \$2,500 a year for that segment of the population that wants
6 a facist^g education, let us say, or perhaps an education
7 in terro^rism, since there must be some very tiny part of
8 the population that accepts that as a way of life. ~~Well~~ ^{But}
9 it is a very attractive proposal to some people, because
10 as long as we have public schools and the public schools
11 exhibit some shortcomings and some failures, then there
12 will always be critics saying, look, we have to improve
13 the schools, we have to improve what students are doing.
14 And there is always pressure to get more for Title I, more
15 for state aid to education, more for educating their
16 children in one school system. They don't have a choice.
17 They have to be there. And the only choice that we have
18 as teachers and the citizens of our society have is that ^{if}
19 we have a school system not doing well, ~~We~~ have to put
20 more resources into it. And we have to improve that school
21 system.

22 But now with vouchers that is not so.

23 Because when mother X or father Y complains
that this school is no good, and my child didn't learn
anything, the officials say: Well, you are the one who
chose that school. Take your voucher to another one next

1 year.

2 There is absolutely no pressure at all for
3 the improvement of public education because the responsibility
4 is now taken away from society as a whole, and the mother
5 and father are told: You made the mistake. You don't like
6 that brand. [?] Go off and buy another and another and another.
7 The responsibility is yours.

8 Well I want to say here, and I am sure I
9 express the view of every person in this room, that as far
10 as the American Federation of Teachers is concerned, this
11 is a fight that we will take on, we will use every resource,
12 and this is going to be the fight of the century.

~~(Applause.)~~

1 Now, as we enter into this fight, you have
2 seen some of the problems that we face. Decline in
3 students also means there are fewer parents of the students.
4 We are going from a situation where ⁱⁿ many communities, ~~at~~
5 ~~one time~~ sixty or seventy or eighty percent of the voters
6 in a community had children in school, ^{so} so they turned out
7 and they voted. It was not easy even in those days.)

8 But now with fewer and fewer parents who
9 feel a direct stake in the schools, the proportion of the
10 population that is directly concerned is declining very
11 rapidly ~~because~~ ^{At} at the same time that we have the decline
12 in the number of students, we have the population living
13 longer, and so the proportions are rapidly changing. ^{And}
14 the forces of education within the country are suffering
15 a very rapid ^{decline} in political power at the very time when we
16 need more power because we are facing the greatest problems
17 that we have ever faced.

18 Now what will this mean?

19 It means that unless we in education --
20 unless we can find others whom we can help because they
21 need us and who in turn will help us, we will, in terms of
22 numbers and in relative size, become smaller and weaker,
23 and the problems will become more difficult and eventually

1 perhaps impossible to deal with.

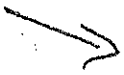
2 So that leads me to an issue which I am
3 sure many of you have been discussing at this convention
4 and elsewhere: the organization of health care workers.
5 Some of our members are still puzzled, ~~they~~ some are still
6 opposed to it: Why take an organization of teachers and
7 other school workers and bring in this other group that is
8 in a somewhat separate field?

9 Well, there are several reasons. One is that
10 the people in health care fields look at us and what we have
11 done for people in schools, and they look at their own
12 organizations, which have not been particularly effective,
13 and they are coming to us and saying: "Look, we'd like
14 your help. You too are professionals, you know how to
15 organize, you have done something within a relatively short
16 period of time, you are a professional, success model as
17 a union. That is what we want. We don't think anybody
18 else will be able to organize us very well. We are coming
19 to you because you have something that you have done for
20 yourselves that you can do for us.)

21 Please help.

22 But there is another reason., And that is,
23 when we go out there to fight vouchers and tuition tax

1 credits and try to get support for public schools, people
2 are going to ask: Well, how big? How many votes do you
3 have?

4  They are not going to ask: Are the people
5 in your organization teachers or school secretaries or
6 guidance counsellors or college professors or
7 paraprofessionals? They are going to ask: How many votes
8 do you have? And if they don't ask it, that is what they
9 are going to be thinking, because I never knew a man who
10 ran for public office who cared whether it was a teacher
11 who voted for him, or a brick-layer or a plumber or anybody
12 else.

13 *(Applause)*

14 Now, we have been criticized by the
15 National Education Association for taking in other groups
16 of members. Well, I hope that the NEA continues with its
17 present policy because, with a decline in student
18 enrollment and a decline in the number of teachers, if the
19 NEA continues its policy of teachers only, and if the AFT
20 opens up its doors to other professionals that need our
21 help, they will go down and down, and we will go up and
22 up.

23 *(Applause)*

1 Well it is unfortunate that in this discussion
2 I have to address myself to some problems of teacher rivalry
3 with the NEA. It is unfortunate because what the AFT said
4 many years ago, we can say today with more impact and more
5 strength, that at a time when public education is under
6 serious attack, it is a moral crime and sin for teachers
7 not to be united in one organization within the labor
8 movement to conduct all of these struggles.

8 ~~(Applause.)~~

9 But let's take a look at what the big struggle
10 is right now. At a time when education is declining in
11 terms of numbers, the National Education Association has
12 made it its top priority to separate education out from
13 what is the biggest department in the government and to
14 put it out all by itself so that in the years to come, each
15 year it will have a smaller and smaller constituency.
16 Instead of being in a large agency, which has a large
17 constituency and will continue to have one ~~because~~ in
18 addition to administering education, it also administers
19 Social Security and health care and welfare ~~and so instead~~ ^{instead}
20 of choosing to be large and powerful and have the broadest
21 powerful constituency, it has decided that the best thing
22 is to go out there and stand alone in this period of
23 decline.

I fail to understand the reasons for it. I

1 don't understand how they could have contributed money last
2 year to two dozen members of Congress who voted to destroy
3 public education in America by voting for tuition tax credits
4 because they ^{got NEA} got their commitment to vote for a separate
5 Education Department. I can't understand ^{why} ~~how~~ all of this
6 effort for a separate Education Department, ~~which~~ ^{wasn't} wasn't
7 used earlier to have these million and a half teachers lobby
8 for labor law reform, ~~and~~ ^{If} If we had gotten that, we would
9 have had a law which would have allowed workers in states
10 where the machinery isn't working -- North Carolina, South
11 Carolina, Texas, Mississippi, Alabama -- where instead of
12 having to go only to northern industrial states to get some
13 decent social programs and aid for education, the union
14 movement would have been able to go down to those states
15 and get elections and organize workers, and we would have
16 had senators and congressmen in those states that we could
17 have worked with which would have stood us in good stead
18 for the next 50 or 100 years. And instead of putting an
19 effort into that, the one single effort has been a separate
20 Education Department.

Why?)

20 Because it will add to the ^{the} prestige ^{of} of teachers.
21 You know what this is? This is really carrying on that old
22 business of being a professional association and being
23 perfectly willing to give up real power for a flower in your
lapel on teacher recognition day.

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~~(Applause.)~~

Well it has been a good year. It has been. Many of our cities that were on the verge of bankruptcy have moved one inch away from the verge of bankruptcy.)

~~(Laughter.)~~

And that is good news.

Many of our locals that have had to conduct long and painful strikes -- solid and militant and against the worst of odds -- were successful. And we won numerous collective bargaining elections this year. ~~and~~ I urge all of you to look at the Officers Report, which shows ^{that} in a period when every school system is losing teachers, either by laying them off or by not replacing those who leave, for the organization to have grown somewhat around 20,000 at a time when people are leaving is really remarkable growth. ^{the O}
I refer you, by the way, to that entire issue of Officers Reports which is a magnificent work that was done by Linda Chavez and her staff, and it is something I am sure all of you will be able to use all year.

1 We have had particular success in higher
2 education. Not only did we stave off the raid against UUP
3 in New York State, but we are very happy to welcome ASCUF
4 the entire state college system which left the NEA and has
5 come into the AFE in the State of Pennsylvania.)

6 ~~And~~ Anyone who says that education doesn't
7 really make you brighter, you can see that they are wrong,
8 because we have more college people organized than the
9 two rival organizations combined. That shows education
10 does do something for you.

11 ~~(Applause)~~

12 We had a successful year in legislation.
13 You heard the Vice President. Yes, we had the cooperation
14 of the Administration, but they would not have done it
15 without us. ^{aid to} The biggest increase in education since
16 federal education came into being, and a magnificent
17 opening in higher education, the largest increase in higher
18 education since the enactment of the G.I. Bill of Rights,
19 ~~And~~ we have had successful COPE operations throughout the
20 country, which I am sure will continue because more and
21 more we realize that what is bothering people is that
22 there are, of course, things wrong in the schools. We
23 are not doing things perfectly. We don't have the

1 resources.

2 Well, we have to come up with some new
3 answer, and our professional programs and QuESTs have
4 been outstanding, and of course our organizing. These
5 buttons, "a million or more in '84" -- one delegate came
6 up to me and he said: You know, I tried to figure out
7 what that button means, "a million or more in '84." I
8 spent a number of hours on it, *"he said."*

9 ~~He said:~~ "Last night it just came to me.
10 ~~He said:~~ That is the finest and best salary program you
11 have ever come up with."

12 ~~(Laughter and applause)~~

13 I think that all of us at this convention ,
14 in our committees, in our caucuses, in the way in which we
15 deliberated this morning, with a good deal of lack of
16 debate on many issues -- some would descry that, and
17 certainly there was the opportunity for debate ~~but~~ but I
18 think we all have a very good feeling. We are afraid of
19 what is happening to the schools, ^{to} ~~the~~ education, to our
20 jobs, to the union, and we also know that we have something
21 very good: we know that we are building an organization.
22 We know that we are growing, and we know that we have
23 great quality in our leadership throughout the country.

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And so, we come here without some of the old need to fight each other and to engage in bitter controversy.

We come here more to share our thoughts and problems and to develop a renewed solidarity for the years to come.

I mentioned before that one of the areas of problem and interest and concern was the international area.

We have with us, sitting in this section, the largest group of teacher union delegates from around the world that we have ever had. First, I want to say, and we will be introducing them later in the convention, I want to extend to all of them and to the members of the executive committee of the International Federation of Free Teacher Unions our welcome and to tell you how happy we are that you could be with us.

(Applause)

1 First, of course, because of the feelings
2 of camaraderie that we share, because we have the same
3 problems. But also because there is a practical need for
4 us to get together.

5 You may have read the summit results the
6 other day that the major industrial nations of the world
7 agreed that they would cut down the ~~production~~ the consumption
8 by ~~the~~ ^{a certain} date. They would go back to 1977 in terms of
9 consumption of energy.

10 What does that mean in terms of jobs? What
11 does that mean in terms of unemployment? What does that
12 mean in terms of the availability ^{of} of money for schools
13 and for early childhood education and for lifelong learning?

14 What does it mean for the provision of decent
15 health care?

16 That decision at that summit, if carried out,
17 will have major impact on all of these.

18 And so we meet regularly with our colleagues
19 from England and France and Germany and Belgium and The
20 Netherlands ~~and~~ I am sure I am going to leave ^{a country} something out,
21 but the developed countries within the OECD, the Organization
22 of Economic Cooperation Development ~~because~~ because they have got
23 the same problems. And when we start talking about vouchers,
the people from California have already been to England to
try to sell it there. So we have been meeting to develop
common strategies in these areas of concern.

1 Then, of course, there are many of our friends
2 here from countries that are not yet industrial and not yet
3 developed. And for them we provide assistance. Sometimes
4 when an unfriendly government comes to power, we provide them
5 with whatever protection we can ~~and~~ and one of them here was
6 in jail for awhile ~~and~~ and we ^{do} ~~did~~ what we can do to get them
7 out. I think it helped ~~it~~. He did get out of jail. Later
8 you will meet him and he later was elected to the Congress
9 of his country, but we provided ~~it~~ whatever assistance we can.

10 Why should we do this? Is it merely an act
11 of friendship?

12 Well just think, if there had been a teachers
13 union in Iran a few years ago that we could have had a
14 relationship with in terms of bringing them here and discussing
15 what a real teachers union can do, and if our government
16 had been able to pressure the Shah to not just develop the
17 country, but to allow free trade unions, just think of the
18 difference it would make in the world today if those teachers
19 in Teheran had not marched down those streets as communist
20 totalitarianism on one hand and Moselm fanatics on the other,
21 the world today would be changed, ~~and~~ and we expect to commit
22 resources of the American Federation of Teachers to helping
23 free teacher^y unions around the world so that eventually they
can enjoy the same benefits that many of us do in the more
developed countries.

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~~(Applause.)~~

And then when we can still be proud that in spite of the problems that we face, economically and politically, we can be proud that at a moment like this in history, when hundreds of thousands of refugees are being expelled on the basis ^{of} race and ethnicity, that the United States of America, that our labor movement, that the American Federation of Teachers, that we still stand for something, that we are not turning and saying we hardly have enough for ourselves, let them drown and let them die because they are not of us, and that we are opening our doors and that hundreds of thousands will be saved.

~~(Applause.)~~

The problems that we face will be solved in our favor in one way only. We must increase our power. We increase our power by building our membership.

We will do everything we can to assist you and your locals and state federations. We hope that you will seek out every health care worker, every teacher, every person working in another professional field who is not already organized.

We hope that what we will be thinking of is not are those people teachers or non-teachers? You know if this union, the teachers of New York and California can help the teachers in Illinois who don't want to be put under

1 Social Security, if we can help each other from different
2 places, if big locals can help small locals, and small
3 locals can help big locals, I don't see that it is impossible
4 for teachers to come to the assistance of health care workers
5 and for health care workers to come to the assistance of
6 teachers.

6 ~~(Applause.)~~

7 That is the job we have. It will be won or
8 lost by the numbers we organize and by our ability to have
9 them act with solidarity, not only on the picket line, but
10 also at the ballot box.

11 I want to thank you for the magnificent support
12 which you have given me, not just last year but over the
13 years and to pledge to you the continuation of my efforts
14 to build this union.

14 Thank you.

15 ~~(The delegates arose and applauded.)~~