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The First Real Crisis

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If any term has been overused, it is "crisis in education." Every year it is dragged out to describe the failure of a school board to adopt an adequate budget or the voters' rejection of it. "Crisis" is also applied to the annual state legislative fight over state aid to education. But these are the "normal" crises in education. The outcome of each struggle in 16,000 separate school districts and 50 state legislatures will make school life somewhat better--or worse--for the next year or two. This is, of course, no small matter, but it is clearly of a different magnitude from the crisis which public education faces in our country today--a crisis unprecedented in our history as a nation and which will determine whether public education as we have known it will continue to exist. Let's examine some of the key elements in this crisis.

Rapid Loss of Power

For many years public education enjoyed great political power simply by virtue of numbers. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s close to one-third of the American voting age population had school-age children. By 1980, the proportion of the voting age population with school-age children had declined to almost one-quarter. With continued depressed birth rates, that figure may well slip below one-quarter before the end of the decade. Between 1970 and 1979, 30 states experienced a decline in elementary school enrollment. In 12 states elementary and secondary school enrollment declined by more than 15 percent between 1970 and 1979.

When the majority of the voting population had children in school, no politician dared oppose more financial support for the schools. It was a motherhood issue. Those who wanted to be less generous in support of schools did not oppose support in and of itself but opposed money for "unnecessary frills."

But now the numbers have changed. Not only is the birth rate down (something which could change), but people are living longer (a trend likely to continue), so that the school-age population is a smaller percentage of the total.

Ideally, this shouldn't make any difference in school support. After all, we do not provide education for children in order to satisfy them or their parents. All taxpayers support schools because the contributions which educated citizens and workers will make benefit all of society--and the failure to educate some will cost all of us in the future payments of welfare benefits, food stamps, medical care for the indigent. There are, as well, the costs of combating crime, drugs and other problems associated with the uneducated.

While we should support education whether we have our own children in school or not, the fact is that we don't. Parents with children in school, teachers and others who work in the schools and school board members comprise a group which provides active support for schools. Some other citizens do, but not in great numbers, and most who have no children in school are either neutral on the issue or, in some cases, actively hostile to spending money for a service which they see as of no direct benefit to themselves.

This loss of political power is even worse than the percentage declines would indicate, because different age groups in the

population have different voting habits. Older citizens who are unlikely to have children in school are not only growing more numerous--but they have higher voting rates.

The loss of relative power need not result in dramatic losses of support. After all, in the 1960s many relatively powerless groups made major gains. But this was a period of great economic growth. Everyone was doing well, and the development of new programs for minority groups, for example, was not accomplished by taking away some benefit someone else already had. Instead, the new programs were paid for out of the increasing profits of growth. But we're in a very different economic period now.

Major Economic Problems: Energy Costs

There is no need to repeat the story of our energy problems, but we do have to see how the increasing cost of energy has affected and will continue to affect what is available for education. By 1980, the U.S. was paying about $100 billion per year to OPEC for imported oil, a price 10 times higher than it was five years earlier. Over a 10-year period, this amounts to $1,000 billion--a trillion dollars, a huge number but one which doesn't mean much unless it's translated in some way. Investment banker Felix Rohatyn has pointed out that the value of all the companies listed on the New York Stock Exchange is less than $1,000 billion! So, another way of looking at what we're paying for imported energy is that in 10 years we will be sending enough money to OPEC to purchase the entire productive capacity which it took us over 200 years to build!

Obviously, these increasing dollars sent to OPEC are dollars which would have been in the pockets of American citizens. Had

they been able to keep them, they would have been much more generous in their willingness to finance schools and other public services than they are now.

There are and will be efforts to reduce the amount of imported oil--by developing American sources and other energy alternatives. These are important in terms of keeping money and jobs here--and energy independence is needed to prevent economic and military blackmail. But the costs of independence over the next decade or two are likely to be higher than or equal to the cost of imported oil.

Economic Woes: Productivity and Reindustrialization

In the 1960s we financed major education and social programs out of our increased productivity. Everyone enjoyed a higher standard of living--and there was still enough left over for big social programs. But now our productivity is down, and major industries--automobiles, steel--are in trouble.

The productivity question is complex. There are numerous studies of the American worker and of management. There is no agreement on simple answers. But there is general agreement that a major part of the problem is that, as a nation, we have behaved very much like a car owner--or homeowner--who spends every last cent of his salary on all kinds of goodies but fails to spend anything on the usual care, maintenance and repair of the car and the house. Eventually they are beyond repair--or the repair bill is huge. That's the way we have been behaving as a society. Our plants are old and outmoded. We don't have much of a railroad system. Half of our bridges need replacement. We are losing out to Japan and West Germany because over the years they have invested much more in

research and development than we have. According to sociologist Amitai Etzioni, the United States reinvests only 10 percent of its GNP in private capital formation, while West Germany and Japan reinvest 15 percent and 21 percent of theirs, respectively.

According to Etzioni, the backlog is so great (we would need over $40 billion to restore our railroads to their condition in the 1940s) that we can't do everything we want. We can't restore our productive capacity and maintain decent environmental and quality of life standards and enjoy an increasingly higher material standard of living. We must choose. And we will choose to live on less in order to rebuild a system which, in the future, will again bring better living standards. For if we don't, we will face ever-declining standards.

Economic Woes: Military Costs

A third major increase in expenditures during the next decade or more will be in military defense costs. Both Carter and Reagan pledged this, and there is a rough national consenses on the question. Even in the midst of deep and painful budget cuts, polls show the overwhelming majority of the American people still support increased defense expenditures.

The reason may well lie in some statistics provided by Alan Baron in The Baron Report of August 2, 1981. "The share of the federal budget going to defense has fallen from 68 percent in 1954 to 59 percent in 1959 to 54 percent in 1964 to 51 percent in 1969 to 35 percent in 1974 to 30 percent in 1979. The share of the Gross National Product going to defense fell from 12.9 percent in 1954 to 10.1 percent in 1964 to 7.5 percent in 1974 to 6.5 percent in 1979. By 1980," says Baron, "there was simply no room for any significant

further reductions in defense, even in the eyes of most liberal Democrats. The debate shifted to how much of an increase should be made."

During this period Americans may enjoy very slight increases in their living standards, or they may stand still, or they may have lower standards each year. If their living standards go down, they will have to make tough choices. They will be forced to do without some things which they once were able to afford. They will be reluctant to give up house, car, clothing, vacations, cameras and hi fi sets. They will still want the police to protect them and the firemen to save their lives and homes, but they may not feel so strongly about the education of the child who lives down the street. Schools will face fierce competition for scarce dollars.

Decline in Public Image

As if the declining political power of the schools and the scarcity of dollars were not enough, there is a third serious problem the schools face. Through much of our national history, schools and teachers were held in high regard. Most people had little education. I grew up in a working class neighborhood in New York in the 1930s. No one who lived on my block or on those nearby had ever gone to college. The few who were high school graduates were considered very well educated people--as were those who had completed elementary school. Many of my neighbors asked those with elementary school education to write letters to relatives for them--since they couldn't. In those days teachers were part of a very small educated elite--they had gone beyond high school. There was a great educational distance between the teacher and most of the members of the community and parents of children he or she taught.

That educational distance is gone forever--and with it the automatic respect which teachers were accorded. Ironically, it is the very success of our schools which has brought about this change. Teachers are no longer looked up to as having more education than those around them. More and more they live in communities in which they are surrounded by other college graduates, many with more education than the teachers. Unlike the "good old days" when parents frequently viewed the school and the teacher as the salvation of their children--the only way out of poverty or the working class--many parents now believe they could do a better job of educating their children than the teacher at school--and they would if they weren't so busy making more money at their own jobs. At any rate, an educated public, whether relatively satisfied or dissatisfied with local public schools, will be more critical and somewhat less supportive.

Since the school and teachers now lack the unquestioned support that came from a relatively uneducated public, schools must now earn support. Some of our school problems stem from the fact that many school people--school board members, administrators, teachers--do not realize that there has been a change. They act as if authority and respect automatically adhere to their positions. Or they realize they've lost it and merely bemoan the fact.

Toward Privatization of Schools: Tax Credits and Vouchers

Any one of the problems I've outlined poses a major threat to the future of public education and could easily require a decade of painful struggle and adjustment. But, at the same time, the public schools must face the possibility of tuition tax credits and/or vouchers. The most widely debated proposal has been the Packwood-

Moynihan Bill, which over a two-year period would pay for half the costs of private school tuition through tax credits, with a maximum payment of $500 for each child who pays $1,000 or more in tuition. This is obviously only one of an infinite number of possible schemes. Recently the National Taxpayers Union sponsored a Washington, D.C. referendum on a D.C. tax credit of $1,200. Each and every taxpayer would take the tax credit by paying for tuition and/or expenses for any child--not necessarily his or her own--at private or public school. There was also a provision for business to get similar tax credits. While the title summary of the proposal limited the amount each student could receive to $1,200, there was no such limitation in the actual proposal.

Clearly, if tuition tax credits are adopted in some form, each of the problems outlined here could be further exacerbated. That is, there could be an even greater decline in the number and percentage of parents who have children in public school; the cost of tax credits could mean even more brutal competition for financial support, and if nonpublic schools, by creaming off the more achieving students, could show a better record of performance than public schools, public confidence could be further eroded.

Supporters of the Packwood-Moynihan Bill have argued that this is not their purpose, and that their tax credit proposal will not have the effect of shifting large numbers of students from public to private schools. A mere $500 tax credit, with the requirement that the family pay at least another $500, is not, they say, much of an incentive.

There is no way of telling in advance whether they are right. We do know that in everyday business small incentives can make a

big difference. For some years savings banks have been offering gifts to new depositors in huge newspaper ads. The continued use of these incentives must show that they pay off.

Furthermore, it is not necessary that a huge number of students be lured out of the public schools immediately in order to forecast a dire effect. Suppose we assume that some parents, a relatively small number, will take advantage of the tax credit. Let's say that of the 90 percent who now send their children to public school, 2 percent or 3 percent would use the tax credit. (This would provide a 20-30 percent increase in nonpublic school enrollment.) Which parents would be likely to make the choice? Certainly not those from the worst conditions of poverty who could not afford the additional money. It would be those parents who could (a) afford to pay the difference between the full tuition and the tax credit and (b) get their children accepted into a private school. These are likely to be children from more affluent families who are above average in achievement.

This will not represent a mere 2 percent or 3 percent loss to the public schools; the loss would be much greater. These are the parents who are active in the PTA, who campaign for adoption of the school budget and who lobby for state and federal aid. Two or three percent of the most affluent parents provide a disproportionately large share of the parental participation and political support for public schools.

Also, the removal of those children who are achieving above average will not only lower the achievement level of the entire school; it will make the school a less attractive place for the remaining parents to keep their children. The loss of some of the

"best" children the first year or two will be followed by more in each succeeding year, leaving in the public schools those who can't afford to leave, those who can't get admitted into private schools or those who have been expelled from the nonpublic sector.

Further, the argument that $500 is not much of an incentive misses the point. What is the justification for keeping the tax credit at $500? Once the government accepts some responsibility for paying the costs of private school, and once tuition at private schools rises as a result of this largesse, why not pay more and more of the costs? Once the door is opened, each year there will be an outcry that $500, $700, $1,000, $1,500 is not enough. Each year there will be more and more political pressure. At the present time, the private schools have only 10 percent of the students, yet the political influence of this single-issue constituency was strong enough to win passage of tax credits in the House and fail only narrowly in the Senate in 1978. In 1980 it succeeded in getting the Republican Party to adopt a platform plank in favor of tax credits--and it won the support of Ronald Reagan. If the 10 percent now in private schools have so much political power, what can we expect if the public school/private school balance shifts modestly from 90/10 to 80/20--doubling the private school constituency?

The Packwood-Moynihan argument that this $500 tax credit will not bring about a major shift in the schools misses still another point--that tax credits, once adopted by the federal government, will not stop there but will be emulated by state and local governments. Indeed, the state and local governments may actually jump the gun on Washington. In discussing whether tuition tax credits represent a threat to American public education, we should not

dwell on the specifics of the Packwood-Moynihan proposal but contemplate a future in which tax credits are offered by the states and localities as well as the federal government--and the amount of the tax credit is determined each year through the same political process which now determines the amount of state aid to education and the local school board budget. It is not hard to envision the demand by nonpublic school parents that their children be funded through tax credits from all three sources--federal, state and local--in precisely the same dollar amount as are public school children. Those who support school vouchers have in fact already proposed this. So the argument that the "meagerness" of the $500 tax credit will serve to protect the integrity of public schools simply won't hold water.

There is something disingenuous about those who argue for tax credits. If they believe that credits will have no effect, or almost none, on shifting students from public to private schools, then they are not providing parents with greater opportunities for choice. They would merely be giving billions of dollars to parents who have already made the choice and can afford it. On the other hand, if it does give many more parents the ability to choose, it will bring about a major shift away from the public schools. The argument that tuition tax credits are needed to provide choice contradicts the contention that no major threat is posed to public education.

Another frequently advanced argument for tuition tax credits is that providing parents with a choice will result in the improvement of both public and private schools through the competition that evolves. According to this view, the public schools are

bureaucratic, insensitive and ineffective because they are a government monopoly. Parents have no choice--unless they can afford to pay. Force public schools to compete for students and they will be much better--and if they can't compete, why shouldn't they disappear?

This competitive model ignores the obvious--that public schools are governed by public policy, by a body of law--and that, for the most part, private schools are not. If public schools are required to adhere to public policy and private schools are not, and if these policies are unpopular, i.e., make public schools less attractive to parents, then the competition is both unfair and unreal.

In recent years, a number of obligations have been imposed on public schools. Public schools are required to integrate students and staff. They must provide bilingual education. They must educate the handicapped, provide individualized education programs for them and integrate them into regular classrooms. Students who are disruptive or even violent cannot be suspended without due process. Even if it is determined that a given student was guilty of a crime, the student is usually returned to some public school on the ground that it's a better place than any of the alternatives. Many states, under the school finance reform movement, have ruled it unconstitutional for wealthy school districts to spend more to educate their children than districts of average wealth. Public schools must hire properly certified personnel, engage in collective bargaining, issue public reports on absenteeism, vandalism, reading and math achievement. The list of the public schools' obligations is long indeed...and longer still when compared with the obligations and responsibilities of the private sector.

What meaning can competition have when the government compels schools to live with policies which are largely unpopular, exempts private schools from these same policies--and then offers tax credits to help parents take their children from schools which comply to those which do not?

If tax credits are passed, it may be that the courts will eventually decide that private schools which accept the dollars must comply with the same rules and regulations as public schools, but so far none of the tax credit supporters who argue for a system of competition has urged that this be written into the proposed laws.

Teaching: An Imperiled Profession?

None of this means that teaching is an imperiled profession. The public schools are in jeopardy. They may cease to exist as we know them. (With tax credits or vouchers, we will still have some public schools--for there will always be those students who are too difficult or too expensive to educate. Public schools could become schools for those not accepted--or those expelled--by private schools.) But whether most children are in public or in private schools, they will still need teachers. And, wherever they teach, teachers will want decent salaries, adequate working conditions, job security and dignity--so there will be unions. What is at stake in our crisis is not jobs for teachers or the existence of their unions but whether public education which has served the country so well for 200 years will be dismantled.

Think of it: for most of our history as a nation, one institution has taken the diverse people who have come to our shores, educated them and turned them into American citizens, with a common

language, a shared system of political values and, with it all, a respect for the differences among us. Within a very short time as the history of nations is measured, American public schools have brought us from a country of handcrafts and vast wilderness to the most powerful, productive, scientifically advanced nation on earth, capable of exploring space. Is this uniquely American institution, with its commitment to educating all of our people, to be sacked because it has problems--or because someone has a costly political brainstorm like tuition tax credits? What will replace it? A multitude of publicly-funded private schools, answerable to no one, providing no common core curriculum, teaching in a multitude of languages, accepting and rejecting students on the basis of class, of race, of religion, of ethnic background, of political ideology, dividing the people of our country instead of uniting them? Public schools provide the cement that holds nearly a quarter of a billion people together. Teachers and all other Americans have an enormous stake in seeing to it that we don't come unglued.

The odds against public education are great but not insuperable. Some of the elements of a successful struggle are clear.

1. In a period in which the numbers involved in public education are smaller, the only way to be effective is to have better political organization than in the past. Effective organization by small groups can be even more successful than merely having large numbers. But effective organization means, among other things, reducing the internal conflict within the public education community. Teachers ought to be spending all their time fighting together in behalf of public education--not fighting each other in collective bargaining battles. A merger between the National Education

Association and the American Federation of Teachers would be a big plus. But a reduction of conflict among teachers, school boards, parents and administrators is a must. The external dangers are too great--and we are in no shape to be fighting a two-front war.

Conflicts within the school community are bad for a number of reasons. First of all, they tend to turn the public off. Let's say there are protracted negotiations between a school board and the teachers' union. To win points for its side, each party puts the blame for every school problem on the other. Management says the teachers are lazy and inept, concerned only with salaries and benefits. The union says management doesn't know how to run the schools, is only interested in giving patronage jobs to its friends or in posturing before TV cameras so it can get elected next time, perhaps to a higher office. By the time it's all over--even if the negotiations are concluded without a strike--the public may well believe both sides. It may conclude that the product of this school district, education, is really bad because of the shortcomings of <u>both</u> management and labor--and it may wish a plague on both their houses. Disagreements are inevitable from time to time; sharp conflict that results in pitched battles with accusations flying back and forth has only one end: a disillusioned and disgusted public ready to turn its back on public education.

Conflicts within the school community also divert energies that are needed to win friends for public schools. Gallup polls have consistently shown that the closer a person gets to the schools, the more positively he or she regards them. People with children in the schools think most highly of them, with even those who have some physical contact with the school, such as attending a forum or

concert in them at some time during the year, holding a better impression than those who have never been in a school. The message is evident: get people into the schools, reach out, don't wait for children to register--the prospective parent or grandparent is a target audience, too.

School people must also put some time into a public relations effort for the schools. With fewer people having direct contact with the schools, most get their information from newspapers and television--and news coverage of education is dreadful, focusing only on the problems, almost never dealing with the successes. Teachers, parents, school board members, administrators have the obligation to tell their communities what their schools are doing, to get across the succcess of our students when measured against students in almost any industrialized country in the world. How many Americans know, for example, that our 14-year-olds read better than the same age group in Sweden, the Netherlands and Great Britain? That our kids are doing better in science than students in Britain, Holland and Italy? Who is going to tell them if not those most intimately involved in our schools?

2. Government policies and regulations must be reconsidered. The question of tax support for private schools will not go away, even if the proposed legislation is defeated once or twice again. It is not enough to ask whether a government regulation is "good" or "right" in and of itself--we must start asking with respect to each policy: Will it strengthen or reduce support for public schools and increase demand for tax-supported private schools? Will busing bring about integration in this district--or drive middle-class parents, black and white alike, away and into the

arms of the private schools? If precise regulations to aid handicapped youngsters are so costly (and so underfunded by the federal government) that they force school districts to take money away from regular programs--will this not spur some parents of non-handicapped children to seek other schools, thus defeating the very purpose of the legislation? Government regulation is not an evil; government regulation that is poorly conceived and has the potential for making matters worse should be subject to a lot closer scrutiny. Neither minority children nor handicapped children will benefit from public schools forced to become dumping grounds for private school rejects.

3. Parents want choice? Why not give them a choice within the public schools? Why should every child have to attend just one school for which he or she has been "zoned" as a result of living at a specific address? Why not provide a choice of a "progressive" or a "traditional" school? A school in which foreign language education is stressed? A school offering a broad science education? Music? Art? All of these schools, of course, would have to provide a mandated basic skills curriculum--and all would be teaching democratic values--but why should they be the same? An if a parent is dissatisfied with his child's school, why shouldn't that parent have the right to transfer the child to another <u>public</u> school? Why do we force public school parents out of the public schools if they want something different? In most instances, after all, it is a very specific public school a parent is unhappy with--not the concept of public schools as such. Public education needs to be more flexible.

4. For many parents who have taken their children out of public schools--and for many who want to--the key issue is safety and order.

Parents don't want their children threatened with physical violence--and they don't want their children's learning impeded by the chronically disruptive few who perforce monopolize the teacher's time and attention. Jackson Toby, professor of sociology and director of the Institute for Criminological Research at Rutgers University, has made a number of useful suggestions to deal with the problem. Among them are (a) more parental involvement to bring informal pressure on students, including the routine presence of parents in junior and senior high schools, perhaps with adult education courses scheduled during the day; (b) the expulsion of chronically violent and/or disruptive students from regular schools and the expansion of alternative facilities to help and educate them; (c) the devising of lesser punishments before expulsion is used, such as "working 14 hours every weekend at the school--painting, scrubbing, polishing--for three months," and (d) the sharing among school systems of information about remedies that work. However it is done, change is needed so that in areas where discipline is a problem, the schools regain the upper hand.

5. Next to discipline, parents are worried most about standards. It is time for the public schools to confront this question head on. First on the must-do list is to establish and maintain a quality curriculum, one with tough courses and fewer chances for students to substitute easy ones. We must see to it that more students take geometry, trignometry, calculus, chemistry, physics, foreign language--and that Shakespeare and Dickens are not replaced by courses in "modern media." Public schools must also see to it that students really spend time on their subjects. This means improving attendance --and it also means more homework. A modicum of pressure is also

crucial. Not all learning is fun--some is sheer drudgery, but it lays the foundation for more learning. Pressure comes in the form of tests and grades. The failure to apply this kind of pressure represents a loss of nerve on the part of adults--and it does our students no good at all. We should be telling parents with some frequency how their children are doing in school--perhaps with report cards more often. Students who consistently fail the tests used to measure their progress ought not to be promoted. And perhaps we ought to organize more schools on a semi-annual promotion basis, so that failing students don't have to lose a full year when they're held back.

6. We have to begin to re-establish the prestige of teachers and schools. We ought to stop trying to defend ourselves by saying that "we don't really know what makes for effective learning," or "it's all a matter of opinion," or "it's all subjective." There's much that we still don't know, as is true in many fields. But there's also much that we know. We ought to be selecting highly qualified teachers who themselves have gone through a toughened curriculum in schools of education. Testing ought to be part of the selection process. It's true that a test won't tell you who'll make a good or great teacher and who's going to be a failure in front of the class, but a test will tell you who knows how to read and write the English language, which math teachers really know math and which don't, whether the French teacher is fluent in that language. If the test isn't passed, there's no sense in proceeding further. For those who do pass, there ought to be a strong internship period, an opportunity to learn, practice and sharpen classroom skills under the watchful eye of a veteran teacher. We don't expect doctors to deal with

patients on their own right out of medical school--why should we entrust the developing minds of our children to the sole capabilities of a very green novice? And, finally, we ought to continue the mini-revolution that teacher centers have brought about in the inservice training and retraining of teachers. Instead of facing imminent demise as a result of federal defunding, teacher centers ought to exist in every school system in the United States as places which combine the expertise of the university with the on-site, practical wisdom of classroom teachers to offer every teacher a chance to solve problems, get new ideas, explore a different approach in a non-threatening, non-evaluative setting. Tens of thousands of teachers in New York City have used teacher centers over the last few years to improve classroom management, learn how to deal with handicapped youngsters who are mainstreamed into their classrooms and become proficient in the technique of mastery learning, which is making a huge difference in the education of children in a number of districts and schools. These are by no means the only programs that the New York City Teacher Centers have offered, but they address real problems the system faces with real solutions, teacher-tested solutions.

The problems are great and the crisis deep, but whether Americans realize it or not, our country has never been more in need of solid education. If we are to revitalize our economy, to compete successfully with Japan, West Germany and other industrialized countries, our people have to have more skills, not fewer.

In the March 1981 issue of Scientific American, former Columbia professor Eli Ginzberg and George Vojta, executive vice president of Citicorp/Citibank, argued strongly that it was a mistake to focus

exclusively on reindustrialization while disinvesting in the development of human skills: "We contend that the competence of management and the skills of the work force, particularly of those engaged in producer services [accounting, legal counsel, marketing, banking, architecture, engineering, management consulting, among others], determine the ability of enterprises to obtain and utilize effectively the other essential resources, such as physical capital, materials and technology." They noted that of the huge growth in the economy from 1948 to 1973, only 15.4 percent could be traced to "more capital," while about two-thirds of the new growth could be attributed to "the increase in the number and education of the work force and the greater pool of knowledge available to the workers. Simply put," they wrote, " it is the expansion of the knowledge, skills, imagination, ideas and insights of working people that creates the margins from which the physical capital is accumulated, leading through productive investment to the further accumulation of capital." People count--and they count more when they are educated.

If more people who are well educated are crucial to the expansion of our economy in this highly technological society, the same is true of our military needs. It is and will be fruitless to have a lot of very expensive, very sophisticated hardware around that very few know how to operate, maintain and repair. There are already warnings from the military that recruits are not able to read weapons manuals and other materials conveying information to military personnel. In a recent speech to an armed services conference, Dr. Stephen Joel Trachtenberg, president of the University of Hartford, called education "the ultimate weapon," warning that cutting funds

for education while increasing the defense budget "sets a short-term agenda at the expense of unleashing problems which are contrary to long-term defense needs and which will come to haunt us in the future." Trachtenberg said:

"It is imperative that we avoid the illusion that our national security can be preserved only by hardware. There are many lessons to be had from our involvement in Vietnam. One has to do with the continuing central role of the soldier. Buttons don't fight wars. Buttons don't make peace. People do. People matter. We see further evidence of this in third world and developing countries. The Shah of Iran, with literally billions of dollars in state of the art armaments, could not retain his Peacock Throne. And when he was gone, and his technological infrastructure departed, the Iranians could not maintain and properly utilize the gear that had cost them so dearly. People matter."

School people and other philosophers have long argued for support of education because education is a good in its own right, making for fuller and more productive lives and the kind of citizenry upon which freedom and democracy depend. That continues to be true. But just as education was relied upon to meet urgent national priorities after the Russians launched Sputnik and when President Kennedy committed the nation to landing a man on the moon within a decade, those who care about education must make the argument today that new priorities--revitalizing our economy, bolstering our defense--also require widespread support of education from pre-school through college. They will need allies in this fight--allies beyond the traditional supporters of public education, the civil rights community, organized labor and others who have helped us fight many

battles. The military is well aware of its educational needs--and the business community knows, too, that its future health depends upon a highly educated work force. School people should be making the effort to reach out to both; I think they will be pleasantly surprised.

Not only must we make the arguments and win new friends, but we had better be successful. For I truly believe that the survival and prosperity of our country depend on a well-supported public education system committed to excellence.