

NEW YORK STATE UNITED
TEACHERS CONVENTION

Saturday, April 27, 1985

SPEECH BY:

(UNEDITED)

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Federation of Teachers



DENALL, VITRANO AND ASSOCIATES

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1 MR. SHANKER: Thank you, Tom, fellow Delegates.

2 There are speeches that -- and articles that
3 end with footnotes, and I want to begin mine
4 with a footnote. It's not part of -- part of
5 the main body of my statement, but it's important
6 that the one point made by the Governor, and by
7 our Commissioner of Education be underlined
8 because of the importance. Before the Congress
9 of the United States there will soon be legisla-
10 tion which will propose reform of our tax
11 structure. We are not necessarily opposed to
12 reforming the tax structure. As a matter of
13 fact, for the most part, we support the provisions
14 that are being talked about. But one of those
15 would be very devastating, and that is that
16 under the proposal taxpayers could no longer take
17 the taxes that they pay for their school
18 districts, their local communities, or the State
19 of New York and deduct them on their Federal
20 income tax. So, each taxpayer would now take
21 a look at the end of the year and notice that
22 instead of paying sixty percent or fifty percent
23 of what they're actually paying here, they would

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be paying one hundred percent.

The loss to New York State is especially great. The loss to education, elementary, secondary, and higher education, would be two point one billion dollars a year. The loss to elementary and secondary education alone would be one point six billion dollars a year, which amounts to a loss of five hundred and eighty-eight dollars for every child.

The loss to the State altogether would be six point five billion dollars. So the impact would not be on education alone, but on health services, on all public services and public employees.

It is very important that this be a major campaign on our part with the members of Congress in this State. Tax reform is popular. And we can be sure that anybody who opposes one provision or another will be immediately labeled as being part of a special interest and opposing overall reform. We're going to make it clear that we do not oppose overall reform, but that this particular item would be devastating not

1 only to our State, but to education and public
2 services all across the country.

3 That's the end of the footnote.

4 I want to devote my time here this morning
5 in a discussion of what I believe ought to be
6 a major turning point in education in this country
7 and the role that this Union, both at the local,
8 State, and the National level, ought to play in
9 that major change. And essentially, I'm going to
10 be expanding on and dealing with the concept of
11 professionalism. And over the years I should
12 say that along with many of you, whenever I heard
13 the word, professional, it sort of made me sick
14 to my stomach because when I was in high school
15 and I was in college, the word professional always
16 brought with it feelings of occupations with
17 great respect and dignity, usually well
18 compensated.

19 When I started teaching I had somewhat
20 different experiences with that word. I can
21 remember the first time I started teaching in
22 an elementary school on the Upper West Side of
23 Manhattan. I was not prepared for teaching.

1 I was one of the many who came in as a regular
2 substitute. I wasn't prepared for the problems
3 I faced. I used to think back what school was
4 back when I was in classes and it was nothing
5 like that. And I waited a few days and a few
6 weeks, hoping that the Principal would come in
7 or an Assistant Principal would come in to give
8 me some pointers to help me out. And finally
9 the door did open and there was the Assistant
10 Principal. And I don't know whether I physically
11 welcomed him into the classroom, asked him to
12 come in, or whether that was in my mind, but he
13 didn't come in. He just stood there with the
14 door open and his arm was outstretched and his
15 finger was pointing into the room. And it
16 seemed like twenty minutes, but it was probably
17 just twenty seconds, and finally he said to me:
18 Mr. Shanker, there are several pieces of paper
19 on the floor there in the third aisle; that's
20 very unprofessional. If the Superintendent
21 should come by, he wouldn't like that.

22 So, that was the first definition of the
23 word professional that I got. A few days later

1 I went to my first faculty conference and they
2 handed out the organization sheet, the list of
3 teachers with room numbers and various assign-
4 ments. This was an elementary school, and there
5 weren't many men teaching in the elementary
6 school in those days, and I was the second male
7 in the school. And as I looked over at the duty
8 chart, I noticed that the two males were listed
9 for snow patrol. And the tradition in this
10 school was that the male teachers, whenever it
11 snowed, gave up their lunch hour and walked
12 around the school and asked the children to stop
13 throwing snowballs at each other. The other
14 male teacher raised his hand and was called
15 upon; he asked the principal, and he said:
16 Look, now that there are two of us in the school,
17 couldn't we rotate the snow patrol; you know,
18 he goes Monday, I go Tuesday, et cetera. And
19 the principal looked at him and said: That is
20 a very unprofessional question.

21 Well, I was sitting there trying to think
22 about what was unprofessional about the question.
23 And first the principal said: Now, in the

1 first place, the duty schedule has already
2 been rectographed. And secondly, this shows
3 that you clearly are not interested in the health
4 and safety of our children because one child
5 might hit another child in the eye with a
6 snowball and he could be blinded for life.

7 So, that was the second definition. Then
8 there was a third a few years later when a teacher
9 in Mt. Kisco, New York, James Warley, who had
10 an excellent reputation in the school, came to
11 school, as all the teachers did, a few days
12 before the students and went to a faculty
13 conference. And the new Principal of the school
14 ordered Mr. Warley to submit -- and all the
15 teachers in the school -- to be real professionals
16 to show how dedicated they were; to show they
17 were willing to sacrifice for the students.
18 He ordered all the teachers to prepare lesson
19 plans one year in advance. All the teachers,
20 with the exception of Mr. Warley, obeyed orders
21 and did it. So, they were viewed as being
22 professional. That's -- you know, that sense
23 of the word professional is about the closest

1 thing to a propped up dead person as you can
2 possibly imagine. It just means, you know,
3 don't use your head, follow orders, do what
4 you're told. But James Warley refused. He
5 said: Look, I'm an outstanding teacher, look
6 in my file. I've been here with five or six
7 different Principals and they've all rated me
8 as being one of the best teachers in the
9 district. And I'm willing to submit all kinds
10 of essays and plans and records -- I'm not
11 lazy -- I work hard, but I'm not going to do
12 something which everybody knows is unprofessional
13 and that is to tell you right now what I'm
14 going to be doing seven or eight months from
15 now at ten o'clock in the morning.

16 So, James Warley was fired. And his firing
17 was upheld by the State Commissioner at that
18 time and by the Courts, and James Warley lost
19 his job.

20 Now, of course, he was the real professional.
21 He was not incompetent; the Principal was the
22 real incompetent. But the issue at stake was
23 not really one of professionalism. The

1 issue was insubordination.

2 And we still have a situation throughout
3 the country today where written in the laws the
4 insubordination overrides is more important than
5 the issue of professionalism. It is not a
6 question of what is the right thing or the
7 wrong thing to do; it's a question of who has
8 the power to tell us what to do. And so, clearly,
9 we're not at this point professionals.

10 Now, we need a new revolution in education.
11 We made one some years ago; teachers were very
12 disorganized. They had very little power, and
13 through collective bargaining and through
14 organization we have accomplished a great deal.
15 But let's take a look and we'll see that not
16 all is right.

17 Public education is still in great trouble.
18 At this very moment there is a tuition tax
19 credit and deduction bill on the floor of the
20 Senate of the State of New York and the star
21 which is on it could be removed at any moment.
22 And it could move, and it could pass, and it
23 could become law in this State. And as in the

1 State of Minnesota, it would just be the beginning;
2 next year the issue would be that the tax credit
3 isn't large enough, and that would be the annual
4 fight before the Legislature.

5 We're still in trouble because public
6 opinion polls continue to show that a large
7 segment of the American public, which would be
8 a majority, gives the schools a poor mark. The
9 reasons for that are not always good reasons.
10 The interesting thing is that the one thing
11 that divides those people who give the schools
12 a good mark from those that give it a bad mark
13 is that anybody who has actually physically set
14 foot in a school within one year of being asked
15 the question says the schools are pretty good
16 because they've actually seen them. Whereas
17 those who have not set foot in the schools say
18 the schools are pretty bad because all they hear
19 about schools are what they read in the news-
20 papers or watch on television, and generally
21 bad news makes news a lot more than good news
22 does.

23 But, nevertheless, we have public opinion to

1 contend with, and in a Democratic society that's
2 very important because political figures listen
3 to what people think.

4 The scores on all sorts of tests, while
5 they've bottomed out and gone up slightly, are
6 still quite low and the public is quite unhappy
7 with them. And the various reforms that have
8 been put into place to improve education; I
9 believe many of them will improve education,
10 but we know that scores don't go up in one or
11 two or three or four years. Students who are
12 now sixteen and seventeen years old are unlikely
13 to move -- change their school habits and change
14 their learning habits and have their scores go
15 up. Most of the improvements will take place
16 years from now as we start with kindergarten and
17 pre-kindergarten and first and second graders;
18 the results will be seen years from now. But
19 the political adgenda doesn't coincide with the
20 educational adgenda. If the politician doesn't
21 get results in two years or four years, then
22 programs are generally deemed to be failures.

23 In addition to the -- and I could cite

1 other instances -- one of the most important
2 reasons for citing the fact that we're in great
3 trouble is the very great dissatisfaction
4 across the country among teachers. The number
5 of teachers who say that if they had to do it
6 again, they would not. The number of teachers
7 who say that they would not advise their own
8 children to go into teaching.

9 Now, we have a mechanism, a good one,
10 collective bargaining. And we have to ask
11 ourselves whether collective bargaining, which
12 I am certainly not proposing that we abandon;
13 I'm proposing that we continue it -- but we have
14 to ask whether collective bargaining will get
15 us where we want to go. Certainly through
16 collective bargaining we have increased
17 teachers' salaries; we have limited class size;
18 we have taken away some of the non-teaching
19 chores; we have given teachers power politically
20 to be a voice in their communities and in the
21 country. But if you go back to the time when
22 we started getting into collective bargaining,
23 and if you did what I did at that time -- and

1 I'm sure that you did -- you listened to
2 teachers very carefully. You went around to a
3 lot of lunchtime meetings and after-school
4 meetings, and you made lists of all the things
5 that teachers wanted. And I know that in New
6 York City we had initially compiled a list of
7 about eight hundred items. And some of these
8 were salary increases and class sizes, but many
9 of those things had to do with professional
10 issues, things that different groups of teachers
11 -- math teachers or English teachers or teachers
12 in physical education and others wanted in order
13 to make their professional lives more satisfying.

14 And as we got to the bargaining table we
15 found some -- we found that Boards of Education
16 took a very interesting position. We thought
17 that they would resist the salary demands and
18 that they would be very open to discussion of
19 ways of restructuring and reorganizing the schools
20 so teachers would be happier and children would
21 be better. But quite the opposite was the case.
22 The School Board said: You're a union; anything
23 that's good for teachers, we'll be happy to talk

1 about that, if it has to do with salaries or
2 working conditions; but we will not talk to
3 you about anything that's good for children
4 because you're not elected to represent the
5 children; you're not their collective bargaining
6 agents, and professional issues are not subject
7 to negotiations. And there we were.

8 Many of the things that we wanted to deal
9 with, we could not deal with at the bargaining
10 table. So, we have moved from being a group of
11 weak, disorganized and unorganized employees to
12 being a group of strong unionized employees with
13 substantial power. We've made substantial
14 improvements, but still fall short of the
15 professionalism that our members wanted then
16 and still want today.

17 And so, if we were to achieve that profes-
18 sionalism, we have to take a step beyond
19 collective bargaining; not to abandon it, but
20 to build on it; to develop new processes, new
21 institutions, and new procedures which will
22 provide us with the things that our members
23 want: Namely, in addition to the things we

1 get from collective bargaining, status, dignity,
2 a voice in professional matters. And by
3 professional, I don't mean the word as used
4 when I was teaching in school and the way in
5 which it's used frequently today. A professional
6 is not a person who just follows orders. A
7 professional is not a person who is really a
8 propped up dead person. A professional is a
9 person who is an expert, and by virtue of his or
10 her expertise is permitted to operate pretty
11 independently; is permitted to make decisions;
12 is given a good deal of discretion; is generally
13 not supervised by somebody else. Nobody stands
14 over a surgeon at the operating table telling
15 him to cut a little to the left or to the right.
16 The surgeon is trusted. And, of course,
17 because of that trust and because of the high
18 degree of expertise, they are generally well
19 compensated.

20 Well, what is it? How can we get this?
21 What are those things? I'd like to talk a
22 little more about that because there has been
23 a very basic change, not just in teachers in

1 this country, but in most people who work for a
2 living.

3 I had the privilege of serving on the AFL
4 CIO's Committee on Future Work. If you've
5 not seen the report or read it, please do,
6 because it is a revolutionary document. And
7 essentially what the report tells us and what
8 many polls in recent years tell us is that some-
9 thing has happened over the last thirty, forty,
10 fifty years. If I had asked my parents: Why
11 are you working? They would have looked at me
12 as though I were crazy because there was only
13 one reason that they were working and that was
14 to feed themselves and to feed us and to provide
15 shelter and clothing. It never dawned on them
16 that they should be working because they had a
17 job that they were proud of or that they enjoyed
18 or derived satisfaction from.

19 Now, of course, people still have to make
20 a living and want to. But if a pollster goes out
21 and asks people on the street: Why are you
22 working? The interesting thing is that in
23 recent years the first answer is not because, I

1 want food and shelter; the first answer that most
2 people on the street give is: Because I'm able
3 to express various interests that I have through
4 my job; because I get satisfaction; because I
5 am respected on the job; because I do it and
6 I'm allowed to do it the way I think is best
7 and I know how to do it very well, and I like
8 that. And when these pollsters went out and
9 asked the question: Well, what do you think of
10 the boss? We expected, of course, that we would
11 get answers that were rather hostile in terms of
12 the relationship, but about seventy percent of
13 all employees who work for a living in the
14 United States say that their boss is a good guy,
15 that when they go to the boss with problems that
16 he or she is generally helpful. They like
17 working there. They think unions are very good
18 things for the guy working down the block who
19 has a lousy boss, but they don't want any -- a
20 union in their own place because they say -- I
21 can do the job the way I want, and if you have
22 a union, you'll develop an adversarial
23 relationship, and when you have an adversarial

1 relationship, you have union rules and you have
2 the employer's rules. Before you know it, I won't
3 be able to exercise all the judgment that I
4 now exercise; it would infringe on my ability
5 to do my job well and I couldn't get the
6 satisfaction that I now get.

7 And so, we have the problem that whereas
8 out there in the industrial world more and more
9 workers who are now educated workers are being
10 given -- treated with dignity and respect, but
11 how about teachers. Along comes school reform
12 in the State of California and passes a piece
13 of legislation, which is one hundred and fifty
14 pages long, telling the teachers what textbooks
15 to use, how many hours students should be
16 instructed on this subject and that subject,
17 just about everything you can think of.

18 There is no doubt that no other occupation
19 is regulated in this way by State legislatures.
20 Bright people in college who are thinking of
21 going into teaching will think twice because
22 they will say that when a legislature tells the
23 people what to do, everything that they have to

1 do, doesn't trust them, doesn't respect their
2 judgment, they must think that these people
3 are incompetent or a bunch of fools. That's not
4 the kind of field I want to go into when the
5 legislature tells you what to do. Of course,
6 in many places where people are hired at low
7 salaries, you have to watch carefully and tell
8 them what to do. If I hired people at some of
9 the salaries we pay across the country, I'd
10 watch them very carefully and wouldn't trust
11 them; that's part of the overall process.

12 So, also more and more employees out there
13 in the private sector don't want rules that say
14 that they are only supposed to do this or that.
15 They feel that they want their business to
16 succeed. If their business succeeds, they will
17 do better; they will have a more secure job;
18 they will make more. And if it doesn't succeed,
19 they will be in trouble, perhaps they will lose
20 a job. Now, that exists more and more in the
21 private sector. And more and more in the
22 private sector workers are not being treated as
23 traditional workers were. There's an interesting

1 story which came out within the last couple of
2 years which deals with that change. And
3 essentially it says that the reason that the
4 Japanese are out-manuevering us and are producing
5 better products is that they treat their workers
6 in a different way than the way that we treat
7 our workers. We put our people out there on the
8 assembly line and for every ten workers we have
9 a supervisor watching them. And we fire the bad
10 workers and we give merit pay to the good
11 workers. And we keep producing, and then we wait
12 until the thing is produced at the other end.
13 And then we sell it and then we wait for the
14 customer to find out it's a lemon. And then we
15 bring back three hundred thousand of them and
16 we do them all over again. Now that's a very
17 expensive process of production. And the
18 Japanese have worked out a way of getting it
19 right in the first place. It's always cheaper
20 to do it right in the first place because
21 there's nothing more expensive than having to
22 re-do a product.

23 And so, this story is a true story of an

1 American automobile plant, a Ford plant, that
2 was the worst in the whole country and it was
3 about to go out of business. And before closing
4 it down the Ford Motor Company decided that
5 they would introduce a program in which they
6 would listen to the workers; they'd go around
7 and ask the workers: What's wrong here? How
8 can we improve the product? But they wouldn't
9 ask them in general; they went up to each
10 worker. For instance, they went up to one
11 fellow who was working -- this was the place
12 that they produce small trucks. And this
13 worker was working in a pit. He had some sort
14 of a tool which he lifted up every, oh, I
15 don't know, ten seconds or fifteen seconds or
16 twenty seconds as a new truck came by just
17 above him on the assembly line. And he would
18 pull the trigger on his tool and that would
19 tighten a bolt. And then that car would go
20 off and the next truck would come along. And
21 one of the managers came up to him and said:
22 Look, this place is going to close down soon
23 unless we improve. So, you've got nothing to

1 lose, and I'm asking all the workers here about
2 things that go wrong. And I want to ask you,
3 Jack, when you try to tighten those bolts, do
4 you ever miss? And Jack said: Yes, I do. He
5 said: Well, how often do you miss? Well, about
6 every six minutes or so I don't tighten one of
7 the bolts. He said: Well, why is that? And
8 Jack said: Well, it's a very hard job. You have
9 to keep looking up all day and holding the tool,
10 and I get a crick in my neck. And every once
11 in a while I go like that (indicating), and
12 when I go like that and I miss, as soon as I
13 look up that truck is gone and I can't tighten
14 it. I feel bad about it, but there's nothing
15 I can do.

16 So, the manager said: Well, do you have
17 any ideas about what we can do? He says: Yes,
18 I do. I've been thinking about this for a
19 long time. He said: There are really two things
20 you can do. One is to put a little pedal under
21 my foot so that every time I feel a crick I
22 press the pedal and the assembly line will stop
23 for a second and as soon as I take care of the

1 crick, I would tighten it. He said: Of course,
2 it would mean that every six minutes or so the
3 assembly line would stop for a second, but you
4 would get all the bolts tightened.

5 And the second thing he said, you know, he
6 said: Could you have me standing on top of
7 the car holding this tool down because looking
8 down holding it down is a lot easier and a lot
9 more natural than looking up and holding the
10 tool up.

11 Well, that's what management did. They
12 went around to all the workers in the place and
13 asked: Do you know when you make a mistake?
14 And the workers said: Yes. Why did you make a
15 mistake and what can we do about it to change it.
16 And they went to them and they redid that entire
17 plant in accordance with the wishes of the
18 employees. And the result was that now they have
19 the best plant in the entire Ford Company
20 anywhere in the country. It's a classic case.

21 Now, how much of that happens in schools?
22 When any decision is made to change anything
23 about the organization of a school, materials,

1 cirriculum, anything else, all those things come
2 from legislatures, they come from school boards,
3 they come from principals, they come from
4 superintendents. And as long as they keep
5 making those same mistakes, that all they've got
6 to do is have supervisors up there watching the
7 teachers to see who is a good teacher and who
8 is a bad teacher; reward some and punish others.
9 They're doing the wrong thing, because the only
10 thing that's going to turn the schools right
11 and get the production process going so that
12 we don't have these failures and these lemons
13 and these problems at the other end is the
14 same way industry is going and that is that
15 they have to start turning over the decision
16 making process as to what works and what doesn't
17 work to the people who are actually doing the
18 work and know what's happening here.

19 Now, the major problem we have in the
20 next period is how we are going to attract and
21 keep teachers. Just a few years ago I was
22 standing here talking about all the teachers
23 who were out of work. Well, no more. If we

1 do not attract and keep good teachers, public
2 support will erode further and there will be
3 further pressures for tuition tax credits.

4 We will not, even if we were to get better
5 salaries, and even if we could get some improve-
6 ments in working conditions -- intelligent,
7 well-educated people today will not work in a
8 traditional type of factory, and that's what
9 the public schools of this country are. They
10 will not work in a place where they are not
11 trusted, where they are time clocked, where
12 they're supervised, where they're observed,
13 where they are treated as people to be pushed
14 around and instructed and regulated. And the
15 relationship essentially between professionalism
16 and the future of education is that we are not
17 going to attract good people and bright people
18 unless the nature of the job changes and
19 unless the way teachers are treated will change.

20 Now, what does it mean to be a professional?
21 I'm not going to give a dictionary definition
22 here, but I'm going to say first that you cannot
23 have a professional without having high standards.

1 What happens now in colleges across the country?
2 Johnny goes up to his professor and his
3 professor says: Johnny, what are you going to
4 be when you leave here? And Johnny says: Well,
5 I'm thinking about going into teaching. And
6 the professor says: Oh, you, you're so smart.
7 So, we have a problem. And when Chester Finn
8 was talking yesterday about the irony of the
9 tightening up on standards at the very time when
10 there is a teacher shortage looming -- and the
11 interesting thing that happened in California
12 was that as soon as they announced that there
13 would be a fairly tough examination to become
14 a teacher, more people lined up to become
15 teachers and they were people of better
16 quality than they were getting before because
17 people don't want to have a reputation of going
18 into a profession that anybody can get into.
19 They don't want the reputation of going into
20 a field where their brothers and sisters and
21 mothers and fathers and everyone else is going
22 to say: Why did he choose that, because it's
23 easy, because it's not demanding, because he or

1 she couldn't get into something else. And if
 2 you have no standards or low standards so that
 3 people who can come in can come in very easily,
 4 easy come easy go.

5 If I were President of the American
 6 Federation of Ex-Teachers, I would be president
 7 of a much larger organization than I'm president
 8 of now. There are more ex-teachers. Everybody's
 9 an ex-teacher out there, just follow me when
 10 I walk down the street. Everyone comes up --
 11 why? How many ex-surgeons are there out there?
 12 How many people go through the trouble of
 13 becoming an actuary and decide to do something
 14 else? That's one issue.

15 Secondly, there is no profession without
 16 a well established collegueal set of
 17 relationships. It's not a set of supervisory
 18 relationships. It's a set of relationships of
 19 equality, peer relationships. Doctors do not
 20 have the right to do anything they want to do.
 21 You don't go to a doctor and he says to you:
 22 Well, any other doctor would give you the
 23 following pills and that would take care of it,

1 but I don't like that, that's kind of boring;
2 I'm going to give you something different than
3 that and see what happens. They can't do that.
4 Doctors are expected to act in accordance with
5 a knowledge base and in accordance with what
6 they're -- the way they're expected to by all
7 of their peers on the basis of that knowledge.

8 Part of what we need to attract people into
9 teaching is the development of this collegial
10 set of relationships because most people do not
11 want a job where they are to be locked in a
12 room with twenty-five to thirty-five kids for
13 their entire lives. There's a certain amount
14 of satisfaction in that, but unless it is
15 supplemented by the satisfaction that you get
16 from a relationship with colleagues and adults
17 and other professionals, this relationship --
18 the relationship with children alone, that
19 extreme isolation that teachers suffer, drives
20 many away from the profession and out of the
21 classroom.

22 Third, there is no profession, unless it
23 is -- unless the practitioner is seen as acting

1 on behalf of their -- in the interests of their
2 clients. And here we have a problem. Collective
3 bargaining is an adversarial proceeding and at
4 one time we were viewed as being very powerless
5 people. We get the flowers in our lapels every
6 year for teacher recognition day. I used to say
7 that it sort of resembled; "Be Kind To the
8 Handicapped Week," and people looked at us. Well,
9 the pendulum has swung, and they don't look at
10 us that way any more. However, they do look
11 at us now more and more as though we are
12 interested only in our own self interest.
13 Teachers want more salaries, they want the more
14 smaller class size so their lives will be
15 easier. They never translate that into what's
16 good for the students. But that's a problem
17 that's standing in the way of professionalism,
18 and we're going to have to deal with that. We
19 must act on behalf of our clients and have to
20 be seen to be acting that way.

21 Fourth, I have touched on already; there is
22 no profession without a knowledge base. You
23 don't do things just because you want to do

1 them. I'm not saying that we should take the
2 power away from the school boards and super-
3 intendents and principals and give the power
4 to teachers because we're teachers and because
5 we want more power; that isn't it at all. We
6 ought to have it if and only if we know more
7 about it: Teaching students, selecting textbooks,
8 and all sorts of other questions and issues in
9 education. And some of those things we do know
10 and some we don't yet and ought to develop.

11 So, we have a decision to make. We can
12 continue working away only at collective
13 bargaining. And I predict that if that happens,
14 we will find ourselves ten or fifteen years from
15 now back at a Representative Assembly and that
16 we will find that we have largely been on a
17 treadmill.

18 Collective bargaining brought us from a
19 low point to a point substantially higher. We
20 must continue to engage in collective bargaining
21 because if we don't, there is absolutely no
22 doubt that we will fall behind. But I know
23 that many of you have experienced in the last

1 five, ten, fifteen, twenty years, whatever your
2 experience is, you get a good year and you move
3 up a point and then that's followed by a bad
4 period and you move down a little bit. And
5 then you work very hard and you move up again.
6 And then, when you look back after ten or
7 fifteen years, for a long period of time you
8 could work very very hard and stand still. Of
9 course, we have to work hard, or otherwise we
10 wouldn't stand still; we would fall behind.
11 But there is a combination of things. There
12 is low pay, linked to low standards, linked
13 to no trust because you can't trust people
14 who have been brought in on those standards
15 and worked for low pay. And those people do
16 have to be supervised and those people generally
17 have low prestige. And on a national basis,
18 that's where teachers are right now. That
19 has to be changed, with teachers viewed as
20 professionals and viewed as experts whose
21 judgement can be counted on, who act on behalf
22 of their clients, are not supervised and rated
23 and evaluated constantly, who have a peer

1 relationship with other teachers.

2 Now, I'd like to -- I can't spell out all
3 the things that need to be done, but I'd like to
4 give a few outlines. One or two are familiar,
5 and some will not be familiar, of what the
6 next steps ought to be.

7 First, I proposed several months ago that
8 there be a national teachers examination.
9 There are such examinations for The Bar and
10 for medicine. There are not -- I did not call
11 for a Federal Government examination. I think
12 that ultimately the determination ought to be
13 controlled by teachers, just as lawyers control
14 The Bar exams and doctors control the medical
15 examinations. The examination should have three
16 parts: First, a tough examination of subject
17 matter, not the cheap type of examination, the
18 twenty dollar kind that you score on machines,
19 something that requires the people who are
20 taking it to think and to write and to organize
21 their thoughts and be able to persuade. Perhaps
22 a second day, which is knowledge of pedagogy,
23 educational issues, the application of

1 educational principals to particular problems
2 that are presented. And the third part would
3 be an internship program, from one to three
4 years in which teachers would actually be
5 evaluated on the basis of how they work with
6 students and how they work with their colleagues
7 and not just whether they are good at taking
8 a pencil and paper test.

9 Now, the response to that speech that I
10 gave, with the exception of the Nation at Risk
11 Report, nothing in the last five or six years
12 has gotten the same amount of editorial support
13 and attention all across the country. Within
14 a few months I believe you will see such a
15 commission launched. But the interesting
16 question to ask is: Why did this make headlines
17 all across the country? Why did it receive
18 such favorable support? Because I threw into
19 that speech one idea, and that was that within
20 three years after the establishment of such an
21 examination that the AFT would refuse to accept
22 in their membership any new teachers, newly
23 hired, who were unable to pass the examination.

1 In other words, what I was saying to the general
2 public is that we the teachers care about the
3 quality of teachers, that we care about what
4 happens in schools, and that we are even
5 willing to make an organizational sacrifice in
6 terms of not recruiting into membership or
7 collecting dues of people who do not meet the
8 standards. That's what got the headlines,
9 and that's what made people believe that we
10 were serious in that business.

11 The day after I gave that speech at the
12 National Press Club, I went out to Utah where
13 we were organizing teachers. And the morning
14 I arrived in Utah the headlines were: Union
15 Boss Supports Teachers Tests. And I poked
16 around a couple of places in Salt Lake City and
17 the next day they had a headline that said:
18 Speaker Reiterates Support For National Test.
19 And the third day they had a headline that
20 said: Educator Supports Teacher Testing.

21 Well, you see what happened, within three
22 days I went from being a union boss to being
23 an educator. That's what this is all about.

1 It is about what our role is going to be and how
2 the public is going to see us. So, let me then
3 go to the second place beyond the teacher test.

4 I believe that we in the teacher union
5 movement ought to support the greatest possible
6 choice in terms of schools by parents, students,
7 and teachers. The current system is one that
8 was designed a long time ago when most people
9 who sent their children to school were not
10 educated. Most of the people in communities
11 looked up at the teachers and principals and
12 they were much less educated and they just
13 accepted the authority of the government.
14 People aren't like that now. Students are
15 dropping out in large numbers or not attending
16 in many high schools which essentially shows
17 that they're telling us something about -- they
18 haven't decided that they want to do it, and
19 if they don't want to do it, they won't. The
20 greater the choice that we have in public
21 schools, the more we can argue against tuition
22 tax credits or vouchers.

23 If students can move from one school to

1 another, and we ought to consider the possibility
2 of having students have the choice in some ways
3 of moving from one district to another within
4 the public system, it very substantially
5 reduces the argument for giving money to parents
6 to send their children to private schools.

7 If we could turn to a parent and say: You've
8 got a huge number of choices here in the public
9 sector, why not take them.

10 The problem that we have that other
11 professions don't have is that in most other
12 cases the clients of that profession are not
13 captives. You choose the doctor you go to; you
14 choose the lawyer you go to. You pick an
15 accountant that you need, an actuary, or a
16 dentist. We are different because children are
17 assigned to your school or to you as a teacher.
18 We ought to think about the question of why,
19 if there is a personality dispute between the
20 student and the teacher, why they have to be
21 stuck with each other all year long. Why can't
22 we have the flexibility of reducing the
23 resentment, getting rid of the notion that people

1 are captives. And in talking about this
2 question of choice, I would like to point out
3 one thing with respect to teaching. There is
4 a lot of talk about career ladders.

5 Many people don't work in places -- many
6 people throughout this country in other fields
7 do not work in places where there is a career
8 ladder. The typical career person has started
9 working for one company and he gets some
10 experience and a good reputation and then he
11 is stolen by some other company. They offer him
12 a raise. And he works there for a while and
13 establishes a reputation and moves on. And each
14 place where he goes, he generally gets an
15 increase in salary and perhaps a change in
16 title and perhaps greater responsibilities.
17 Now, if you think about it, teaching is probably
18 the only occupation in this country where if you
19 move from one place to another you have to suffer
20 for it. In most places, if you taught for
21 fifteen years, there are no other -- no other
22 school districts that will even give you credit
23 for your fifteen years in service. Or they'll

1 give you half credit or part credit or maximum
2 credit of three years or six years. One of the
3 elements of freedom in choice ought to be for
4 teachers as well so that they can move around.
5 And we ought to point out this very negative
6 thing that school boards do, point it out to
7 the business community. I don't know of any
8 business that operates without trying to get
9 talent from other places by offering them more.

10 If we did that in public education, some
11 of our worst school districts would soon be
12 empty of teachers. Many teachers are captives
13 in their districts because they will lose all
14 the credit they have, and we've got to remove
15 that.

16 Third, I was thinking over the last few
17 weeks about what is it that we can do that
18 might bring about a revolution which would not
19 require State legislation and national
20 legislation and local legislation. And I would
21 like now to propose that we as an organization
22 create a professional teacher board. That
23 board would be made up of outstanding teachers

1 through some process which we would develop.
2 They wouldn't be the only -- outstanding teachers,
3 there would be a number of outstanding teachers.
4 The board would be independent -- even though
5 initially it would be appointed by the union --
6 in the same sense that the Supreme Court of the
7 United States is independent, even though it's
8 appointed by various presidents and most
9 presidents have been surprised. The purpose of
10 this professional board -- the purposes would
11 be many, but here are some. There are a good
12 many complaints from parents across the country.
13 Some of those complaints might be that the
14 teachers -- the teacher is -- we get a lot of
15 it across the country that the teachers are
16 teaching their own political views in the
17 classroom and are engaging in propaganda instead
18 of objective teaching. Or there might be a
19 question about whether teachers should teach
20 out of license. After all, we're saying that
21 teachers ought to go through a rigorous examina-
22 tion and they ought to be very qualified in
23 the subject matter. Well, what implication does

1 that have for a social studies teacher who is
2 teaching mathematics in the future or at the
3 present. So, this professional board would be
4 a place -- would be an independent body which
5 would develop standards and either members of
6 the profession or members of the public. For
7 instance, parents complaining about the way a
8 specific teacher is teaching could complain to
9 this board which would have procedures for
10 investigation. It could set up an evaluation
11 system for textbooks. The textbook situation
12 now is an absolute national disgrace and scandal.
13 Textbooks are selected by school boards who
14 have no knowledge whatsoever of what a good
15 textbook is. You get these trends about text-
16 books should have words that are shorter so
17 that the kids can read them; and the words get
8 so short and the sentences get so short that
you can't have a story that makes any sense or
that has any interest. Then they decide that
these books are too dumb, so they decide to
make all the words long. Then they decide that
this book is no good because it does--

1 pictures of this or that or something else.
2 Well, who is there asking the question: Is it
3 a good textbook? Can a student read it? Can a
4 student understand it? If a student didn't
5 understand the work in class, can he take his
6 book home and get to understand it? What is he
7 supposed to learn there. Are the pictures clear?
8 Do they really illustrate the point that is
9 supposed to be made? Are the questions concise
10 and in the right form? Is it a good textbook?

11 Now, nobody is in a better position to
12 answer that than those teachers who have
13 studied what is good textbook. And we ought
14 to be out there standing before school boards
15 and Principals and Superintendents. And we
16 ought to be looking at the books that are used
17 in the State, not from a point of view of
18 political content or long words or short words
19 or the politics of different groups being
20 represented; all that could be accomplished,
21 but we as professional educators ought to take
22 on the responsibility of saying that we ought
23 to make those decisions because we have looked

1 at every one of these books and we are outstand-
2 ing people. We ought to say: Look how terrible
3 this book is. On page two there is a picture
4 with a caption underneath that has nothing to
5 do with the picture. Here's a concept they're
6 trying to explain and nobody can understand it
7 because it doesn't explain anything. Here are
8 things that are written where it assumes that
9 you learn something but what they assume you
10 learned doesn't come until thirty pages later.
11 We ought to be the experts who are able to stand
12 up and say that we decide those issues because
13 we studied them. Such a commission could set up
14 such procedures.

15 Now, I would like to go beyond that to
16 what will be very controversial, I'm sure.
17 I believe that in order to become a professional,
18 in order to gain the respect of the public,
19 in order to do what really, I believe, most of
20 our members want us to do anyway; in order to
21 show we have the interest of our clients at
22 heart, I believe that such a professional
23 teacher board should have a function in addition

1 to the ones that I've just talked about.

2 If a teacher in a given school district is
3 brought up on charges for incompetence by a
4 Principal or a Superintendent, I believe that
5 this board ought to select three outstanding
6 teachers from somewhere in the state who do
7 not know either the teacher or the supervisors
8 involved. And that group of three should visit
9 the teacher who is accused of being incompetent
10 and should issue an independent report
11 essentially having a group of peers evaluate
12 the decision of the Principal or the Supervisor.

13 There is no other profession where the
14 professionals themselves do not play a part
15 when the question of incompetence is raised.

16 Now, I know that the issue of due process
17 will be raised. Well, due process just means
18 that the decision is not going to be made by
19 the Principal or Superintendent or the School
20 Board. It won't be here. The teacher still
21 has the right to panels and to courts. But
22 we, as the profession, ought to say: We have
23 an interest in whether we believe that the

1 charges are accurate or not accurate. By the
2 way, any Principal or Superintendent who would
3 not allow a committee of three teachers to take
4 a look, that would be evidence right away that
5 that Principal or Superintendent was inventing
6 a lot of charges and doesn't want anybody to
7 see a very good teacher at work.

8 This is not peer review of teachers; it
9 is essentially a peer review of the decision of
10 a Principal or a Superintendent. It would have
11 to -- the only way it could work would be if
12 those teachers who were involved in this process
13 are absolutely independent. The only instructions
14 they would ever be given by the union is that
15 they're on jury duty as professional jurors,
16 and they are to call it as they see it as teachers
17 and as professionals.

18 The fourth point I want to make is one
19 dealing with career ladders. I don't like most
20 career ladders that I've seen because I think
21 most of them are phony. Most of them are just
22 devices to try to figure out how to give a
23 handful of people more money than others. Most

1 of them are sort of a cover up for merit pay.
2 We don't like merit pay, so somebody will call
3 it a career ladder and we'll create a bunch of
4 categories.

5 I'm not opposed to career ladders in
6 principal, if someone could come up with the
7 notion, but I want to propose one possible
8 career ladder that would make some sense. We
9 have said for a good many years that we favor
10 internships for new teachers, that no new person
11 should be just dumped into a classroom without
12 that kind of special help. In Toledo and in
13 other places those internships consist of
14 experienced and outstanding teachers who served
15 for three years, who actually provide the
16 internships help for the new teachers and for
17 the probationary teachers.

18 Now, I would propose that one model of
19 the career ladder might be that a substantial
20 number of teachers would be involved in the
21 training of new teachers and that because of
22 the training of new teachers, and because the
23 training of new teachers is really an obligation

1 of colleges and universities and schools of
2 education, that those teachers who are selected
3 to be teacher trainers of the probationary
4 teachers and the interns should, in addition
5 to having some program of teaching within their
6 own schools, should probably have some employment
7 status and rank with the local college or
8 university because they are performing part of
9 the job that that college and university
10 performs in terms of actually training teachers.
11 There would be a continuity between teaching in
12 elementary and secondary schools and some of
13 the teaching in colleges. Some of the salaries
14 of those teachers would be paid for by the
15 college or university. There would be, I think,
16 a change in status for elementary and secondary
17 schools and there would be a change in status
18 for teachers. And I think that you would have
19 one of the most important criticisms of colleges
20 of education, and they are under great attack
21 and great threat today -- one of the greatest
22 criticisms is that people who teach in colleges
23 of education frequently never taught in

1 elementary or secondary schools. So, you have a
2 rank of people who have the theory, but who
3 have not done this work.

4 Now, we need to continue to have people
5 who have the theory and to do the research.
6 But in addition, on the ranks within those
7 college faculties there ought to be a substantial
8 number of outstanding classroom teachers who
9 are devoting a part of their time to teacher
10 training.

11 Fifth, I ask that we consider a restructur-
12 ing of the entire way in which educational
13 services are delivered. And without such a
14 consideration, we will not achieve professional
15 status. Now I'm saying this for at least two
16 reasons. There are two million public school
17 teachers in this country. There is no way in
18 which in the next five, ten, fifteen, or twenty
19 years, with the demographics, the declining
20 enrollment in higher education, the greater
21 demands of more educated people by more other
22 industries and by other government agencies;
23 there is no way in which public education is

1 going to get two million people in the future
2 of the caliber that we need in terms of the
3 standards that we have set up. Also, if you
4 considered the finances of it -- if you give
5 two million teachers a one thousand dollar salary
6 increase, that's two billion dollars. Now,
7 a one thousand dollar salary increase doesn't
8 do very much. Suppose we gave all the teachers
9 a fifty percent increase in pay. That still
10 would not make us a very well paid profession,
11 not at all; but the cost of that would be about
12 thirty billion dollars. Title I is about three
13 and a half billion dollars.

14 Now, I know that it's nice to sit back
15 and think about a day when two million teachers
16 will all be earning seventy-five or eighty or
17 ninety thousand dollars a year. It's unlikely
18 to happen. The minute we raise salaries, let's
19 say, for math teachers, IBM will raise salaries
20 even more because they're not about to close
21 down IBM plants because the local school needs
22 a teacher. And the same is true in other fields,
23 including writing, sciences, all kinds of fields.

1 If you look at it scientifically and objectively,
2 with a work force that's the size of two million,
3 we're not likely to get the talent that we need
4 and we're not likely to get the money. You have
5 to consider doing something a little differently,
6 because if we don't consider doing it differently,
7 somebody will anyway.

8 Let me -- I'm not digressing, I want to
9 add one other factor to this, which is important
10 in terms of where I'm going. There were three
11 national reports which dealt with what actually
12 goes on in schools and classrooms. All three
13 of them indicated that teachers across the
14 country spend about eighty-five percent of their
15 time lecturing students. Now, they didn't put
16 it so kindly, they said: Lecturing students
17 who were falling asleep a good part of the time;
18 but that's what they said, eighty-five percent
19 of the time lecturing. There are some things
20 that teachers lecture about that can now be
21 handled technologically better than through a
22 teacher lecture. Video cassettes can probably
23 do a better job in a half hour of showing a

1 student how Eskimos live in Alaska, or something
2 about the Middle East, or something about the
3 debates that took place when the Declaration of
4 Independence was written, than a lecture can
5 by an individual teacher. These machines can
6 never replace what teachers really need to
7 do, which is to stimulate creative thinking,
8 the marking of papers, the coaching of individual
9 students to rewrite their papers, helping
10 students to develop argument, persuasion,
11 argument, lining up reasoning; these machines
12 are not going to do away with the need for
13 teachers. But if we think of the fact that they
14 are there now, and it's only a matter of a
15 short amount of time that somebody is going to
16 say that there are some things that some
17 machines can do better than human beings can
18 do; that's not to replace human beings, but to
19 have the teachers that we have do what it is
20 they can do uniquely.

21 Now, I would suggest that we think about
22 different models of restructuring. If we can't
23 get two million teachers of the caliber that we

1 need, either in terms of the number of people
2 available or the money, to think of something
3 along the following lines: That a small --
4 that American public education would not have
5 two million career teachers, but would have a
6 number smaller than that, substantially smaller.
7 That career teachers would be paid seventy-five
8 or eighty-five thousand dollars a year; that
9 it would be a very difficult profession to get
10 into; that the only people who would get in
11 would be people who were tested and evaluated
12 in accordance with the procedures that I talked
13 about before. And these teachers would have
14 the responsibility, not only for coaching
15 students and selecting materials and evaluating
16 textbooks and training young teachers, they would
17 essentially have a series of these professional
18 responsibilities, but a good deal of the classroom
19 work, normal classroom work, would go on with
20 what Chester Finn yesterday called the people
21 who are not going to stay for a long time.
22 Outstanding college graduates who decide, like
23 going into the Peace Corps, that they would

1 like to wipe out their college loans and that
2 they would like to get some money to go on to
3 whatever other profession they're going onto,
4 but who would agree to teach for five years.
5 They would, in advance, say what many people
6 already say when they go into teaching, that they
7 would not be career teachers.

8 Now, if we had a structure like that, we
9 could have the career teachers, not two million
10 of them, but a large number, having the power
11 that other professions have, earning the
12 salary which is not just doubled, but perhaps
13 tripled or more what salaries are today, and
14 we could have delivered a system in which the public
15 would have a substantial amount of confidence
16 and because, not only with the career teachers,
17 but teachers, for a short time, would be
18 selected from only the best of the college
19 graduates.

20 I'm not going to go any further on the list;
21 I'm sure there are many of you who believe I've
22 already gone too far. You will have an opportunity
23 in the future, I'm sure, to debate many of these

1 ideas. But I'm convinced that if we just fight
2 to slightly improve things as they now are,
3 maybe we will reduce class size by one or two
4 students, maybe we will get teacher salaries up
5 another few points, maybe we will do a few
6 other things like that. But I am convinced that
7 we will not get people into teaching or among
8 the best and the brightest who are graduating
9 today if teachers continue to be treated as they
10 are today. If they continue to be treated
11 as workers in a factory who are not to exercise
12 their own discretion and judgment, who are to
13 be supervised and directed by everybody from the
14 State legislature down to the school level
15 Principal. In order to change that around, we
16 have to take a number of serious steps, such
17 as the ones that I have talked about here.

18 I would like to conclude by referring to
19 a speech that I heard about a month and a half
20 ago by a writer, Terrence Beal, who deals in
21 organizational cultures. It was a fascinating
22 speech, and when he came to the end of it he
23 talked about some of the differences between

1 teachers and other employees. And he talked
2 about walking into a concern that made cosmetics;
3 it was one of the nationally-recognized outfits.
4 He walked up to somebody. He walked up to
5 somebody who was a secretary and he said to her:
6 What do you do here? And she didn't say: I'm
7 a secretary; she started talking about what a
8 wonderful company it was and what new ideas they
9 had and how they were increasing sales and how
10 within two years they were moving into the
11 European market and how they opened up a big
12 Latin American branch. And you could see that
13 she was not only filled with enthusiasm, but that
14 she felt that she was playing a very very
15 important part in that company. And he walked
16 a few blocks down, and he walked into an IBM
17 plant and bumped into somebody there who was
18 obviously involved in cleaning the place. And
19 he asked this fellow: What do you do? And the
20 man started talking about IBM and how it's the
21 greatest company in the world and how they are
22 going to be first with this new chip and what
23 sort of a computer they were working on. And

1 again, he had a tremendous sense of pride and
2 a sense of very great importance in terms of
3 what he was doing. And then Mr. Beal said that
4 he walked a few blocks down and walked into a
5 school. And he walked up to somebody, and he
6 said: What do you do here? And the person
7 answered and said: Oh, I'm only a teacher.
8 Now, that set of words: I'm only a teacher --
9 and I've heard that many times, and I think
10 you have too.

11 I think the next step that we have to take
12 is a step that will turn teaching into a true
13 profession so that when somebody walks into a
14 school and asks somebody, what are you doing,
15 nobody would ever again say: I'm only a teacher.

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