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REMARKS BY

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BEFORE

THE CHRISTIAN CONGRESS ON PUBLIC EDUCATION

MR. SHANKER: Thank you very much. It's good to be here and I thank you for inviting me and giving me this opportunity to share some thoughts with you.

First, I would like to spend a few minutes telling you who we are, what the American Federation of Teachers is about, and why, over all these years, from just toward the end of World War I, to the present time, we have been, why we organize teachers and what it is that we try to do for them.

I guess the best way to describe that is perhaps share a few experiences that I had when I began teaching.

I was in graduate school at Columbia University and I guess I ran out of patience in writing and I ran out of money, and I decided I would teach for awhile.

I went into a school, I started teaching in an elementary school in 1952. My take home pay was \$37 a week, difficult to live on even in those days. There were over 40 children in the class. There was no such thing as a lunch period. During lunch period, most of the teachers had to spend their time supervising the youngsters in the cafeteria, or some of us had to walk around the outside of the building to prevent children from fighting during the lunch hour. I spent many lunch hours assigned to a supermarket across the

street. The supermarket complained that some of the children were going into the supermarket during lunch hour and taking candy bars without paying for them, and so the school felt the obligation to assign several teachers to stand over the candy bars as a public service in the community.

Well, if you think about that, I could describe many other problems of the schools in those days. But that is not a very good way to keep talented teachers. If you don't pay them well, and they don't even get to eat their lunch, and a large number of children in the class.

Recently, Ted Sizer wrote a really outstanding book called "Horace's Compromise," and he said -- he talked about what it means when you have so many children in the class, and he talked about secondary schools where, for the most part, a teacher will have five separate classes during the day. And if there were 30 or 35 children in the class, well, that's 150 students you see during the day, or 175. And he raised the question, he said, "Well, how do you get students to be able to think?"

Well, if you engage a student and that student says something and you take issue with it, frequently the student will say, well, that's not what I meant. So the best way to

engage a student is to ask him to write, to organize his thoughts and on paper. And if you have got 150 students, you take hom 150 papers if you have assigned that as homework. And let's say that you only spend three or four minutes on each of those papers, that is a long time. And then when you come back to school, the only way to really help each child is to perhaps spend five minutes with each of them, asking questions, well, was this the best way to start it? Is this really what you mean? Sort of coaching, the same way that you would coach somebody to play in a ball game. You can't do it all by just writing something down.

And if you get a student to think about what he has written and to rewrite it and think some more, then eventually you do get students who can express themselves and to persuade and to think and speak and write. After all, that's what we are trying to do in schools. We're not just trying to get students to answer multiple choice examination. We are trying to get them to reach the level where they they can think for themselves and write and express themselves.

But a teacher cannot handle that if there's so many children in the class. So these are the things we have been working at. We have been working at trying to improve the

status of teachers and their salaries and their working conditions and, of course, we are a union. And I think another important thing to consider is that we have always felt that teachers belong in a union, that unions are a very important part of democratic societies.

If you look around the world and you ask yourselves where do unions exist and where don't they exist, well, they exist in the United States and they exist in England and they exist in France and Italy and Germany and Japan. And they don't exist in the Soviet Union. They don't exist in China. They didn't exist in Argentina when that was a dictatorship. They existed for a little while in Poland, and then they were crushed. And unions are a way in which people who work for a living organize within a democratic society to protect their own interests. And that's exactly the way we organize teachers, and that's the purpose of it.

Now, in a little while, I'll talk about some of the other issues that we are involved in which deal with the improvement of public education.

Now, I would like to come to not who we are or what we are about, but why I am here. I am here, of course, because you invited me. But I want you to know that a few years ago,

I addressed a convention of about 2,500 delegates from our organization. The convention took place in Los Angeles. And I gave the opening address. Later on, President Reagan addressed the convention, Mario Cuomo addressed the convention. There were quite a few other speakers.

But, in my opening speech, I said that I had spent the last two years meeting with many business people, and we had always had a suspicion of businessmen. We felt that businessmen did not want to support the schools; that what they were mostly interested in was lower taxes; that if they came into schools, they would want to tell us what to teach. But, over the last few years, we have had very close relations with the business community because they want good schools because, first, they want them because they are concerned for the future of the country, but also they are concerned with our ability as a nation to be able to compete with other countries, to maintain our standard of living.

And I found through these contacts that they were not interested in coming into schools and telling us exactly what to do or anything like that. They just wanted us to do a good job. And in the last few years we have had many commissions in States across the country where leading members

of the business community have worked closely with us to improve public education.

And in that speech I said, you know, I never would have thought that I would be working closely with the business community, and there are other communities in this country with whom we have had practically no contact, but who have an interest in public education.

And it was at that meeting that I was asked at the end, at a press conference, well, what are some of these groups, and one of the groups I mentioned by name at that time was the Evangelical Christian Community within this country, because I had read some literature about your activities in education at that time.

So I am here because you invited me, but I am also here because a few years ago I became aware of the fact that we as an organization had not been reaching out to enough groups in this country, other groups, groups that we had not usually met with or had any relations with and who are concerned with public education.

And I want to congratulate you for having this Congress and for your concern with public education. I think nothing can be more important, and I think that this is a

very significant and important beginning.

I am not here to day that people shouldn't send children to private schools. It is a free country, it is a democratic country, and those parents who believe that their children will get a different or better education have every right to send their children to private schools. And those who can provide a good education for their children at home have a right to do that also.

But, for the foreseeable future, the overwhelming majority of children in our country will go to public schools. And as I will indicate a little while later, I hope that that continues to be true because I think that it's a very important thing for the future of our country.

But, in recent years, our public schools have been in considerable trouble. They are not quite out of trouble yet. There are signs of some very great improvement, and we are trying to press along the lines of these improvements, but I would like to share with you what are the basic problems that the schools have faced, especially since the mid to late sixties and up until perhaps two years ago when some of these national reports started bringing about some major reforms.

Fortunately, we have some evidence here as to what

it is that the American people think is wrong with our schools because there has been a Gallup Poll taken every year for the last 14 years, a very representative poll. And the Gallup Poll, however, is not the only one. The Public Agenda Foundation has taken polls, Harris has taken polls. Every major pollster in the country. The Gallup Poll has the advantage of being taken every year with some of the same questions being asked year after year so that you get a feeling as to whether people think the schools are getting better or they are getting a little worse; whereas, in the other polls, they ask different questions and it's little harder to tell.

But, basically, over the last 12 to 14 years, the American public has moved from giving the public schools As and Bs down to giving them Cs and Ds. Very fantastic shift from holding the public schools in very high esteem to getting very close to abandoning public schools.

And there are three major issues that come up over and over again in these polls, and they are pretty much in the same position. They are all very close to each other, these three issues. And then after that, there are a lot of other issues but they are not as important as these three.

The issue that has been No. 1 on the public's hit parade when it comes to school is the issue of discipline and violence. The very least that people expect in public schools is that their children will be safe and that a teacher is going to have an atmosphere in the class where he or she is able to teach the children, and where you will not allow one or two or three children within a classroom to dominate that room, to throw things, to hit other children, to threaten the teacher, to threaten others, to so dominate the time and the life of the classroom that the teacher finds that he or she is really a jailer or a policeman or a psychiatrist and not a teacher.

The failure to deal with this problem has been a number one reason for dissatisfaction. Following very close after that number one issue, the second one is the whole question of academic standards. And we know what happened in the late 1960s. A whole bunch of people wrote books. If you went into an educational bookstore, you probably would have found a whole batch of books, maybe five feet of books, or more than that. And all these books essentially criticized the traditional curriculum of the schools. Why do children have to learn these things? Why should they

memorize things when you can always look them up in a book? Why don't you have a curriculum that's relevant? Why should adults tell children what to learn? Children know what they are interested in. Let the children decide what they want to learn. Why have examinations that will make children feel terrible? After all, some of them will fail the examinations and that will destroy their self-image and so forth.

Ad nauseam, we had this barrage of supposed adults who did quite a job in destroying a good part of public education in this country because, essentially, they capitulated. And what we ended up with in the 1970s were many schools where students were automatically promoted. We had some teachers hired who were not themselves literate; that is, there were no standards for teachers to come to school systems. You no longer had to take -- if you didn't want to take mathematics or science, you didn't have to take it. Well, how many students like to take difficult courses? There are a few, but not many. You give a student the choice between reading Shakespeare or reading comic books or taking a course in television, and you can predict where quite a few students will go. And that is exactly what happened during that period of time.

If you will look at the transcripts of high school students who received diplomas during that period, it's hard not to be shocked at the lack of substance. Now, that's what you actually see. I mean some of these transcripts will say English 1, it doesn't tell you what actually happened in class, but just what you see on the transcripts is shocking in and of itself.

It is a whole issue of standards, very important. And then, third, very, very close, these are all very close to each other, is the question of the teaching of values. The American people expect that children, students in school, will, as part of their education, get to know something about the difference between right and wrong. And they do not expect schools to be value free, and they do not expect schools to be value undermining; they expect schools to be part of the moral and value education of youngsters.

This is not to say that they expect the schools to be religious schools, but they do expect values and I should say traditional values, to be taught. And they feel that that is, as they felt in all these polls over 14 years, that one of the major shortcomings of schools was precisely that failure.

Now, I will come back to these in terms of what our position is and what our proposals and attitudes and what some of our differences are with another teacher organization on some of these issues.

And I would like to move to that now, to the question of where we, the American Federation of Teachers, have taken positions on these issues and just what they are and what differentiates us from some of the other groups in the education community.

Now, first, on the question of discipline, we have felt for a long time that there are some children who are in public school who are so violent or so disruptive that they really cannot be educated in a normal public school setting. And that it's very destructive to say that you are going to allow a single child who is violent and perhaps very sick to destroy the education of another 25 or 30 or 35 children, and to drive one, two, three, five teachers out of teaching.

Many teachers leave. If you were to take a poll of teachers who have left the classroom, many people say, look, I love algebra or I love geometry or I love Shakespeare and Dickens, love the study of history, but I never had a chance to do those things. I spent all of my time with one

or two violent youngsters trying to maintain discipline.

Now, I am not saying the child who is destructive and violent and disruptive doesn't need help. Of course, that child needs help. That child needs a lot of help, and if we don't provide help for that child, that child is going to be living amongst us for the rest of his or her life. If that child doesn't get an education, we will be supporting that child one way or another, or we will be chasing the child with police forces and others. Sure, we have got to do something for that child. But there are some children who cannot be educated along with others. If they are there, they will just destroy the education of others, and until public schools reach that very simple conclusion, that the public schools are there for those who are able and want to learn, and that if there are some children who are so violent and so disruptive, not just for one week when they are upset, not just with one teacher, whether it's a personality conflict, but constantly on an ongoing basis, that some special provisions have to be made for those children.

And it is not a popular thing to say. It almost implies as though you are giving up faith and that that child can learn. I am not giving up faith, that we should do

something for that child and the child can ultimately be helped, but not at the expense of all the other children in that place and at that time.

We have very clearly taken that position over a period of time. I am sorry to say that our rival organization has not taken that view. As a matter of fact, it has taken the exact opposite.

Now, let me talk about standards and achievement within the schools.

The American Federation of Teachers for a long time has taken the position that no one should teach in a classroom unless they have at least been given a rigorous examination in the subject matter that they are supposed to teach. Now, I don't know why this is such a controversial subject. Lawyers go to law school, they take a bar exam. Doctors go to medical school, and it's very rigorous training, but they take an examination. Accountants, if they are to become certified public accountants, take the examinations. Just about everybody within our society.

Now, I know that passing a pencil and paper test will not tell you whether a person is a good teacher, but it will tell you if the person is illiterate.

(Laughter)

And that's a very important piece of information. So, if a person passes the test, it does not necessarily mean they should be a teacher. You still have to see whether they have got the right personality and the motivation, whether they can work with other adults, whether they can work with children. I know an awful lot of brilliant people who can't work with children. They are very good at other things but this is not what they are good for. But I don't know of anybody who can't read, write or count, no matter how well motivated, how much they love children, who would be a good teacher.

So the examination doesn't tell you who should be a teacher; it tells you who shouldn't be. And that's very helpful. We favor that, and I am glad to see that there's more and more support for that all across the country, although I must say that many States are giving examinations at a shamefully low cutoff point.

Don't be fooled when the State says we are not requiring all our teachers to take or pass an examination, you know. In Florida, they instituted an examination five years ago, and the passing mark for an elementary school

teacher in Florida is 65 percent on a sixth grade arithmetic test. Well, I'm old-fashioned. I think the teacher ought to know more than the children who are about to be taught by that teacher, and not just a little bit more, but a lot more. And that Florida examination, by the way, about 40 percent of the prospective teachers failed the examination. And just think of it, when teachers found out that they were going to have to take an exam, the teachers who really thought that they couldn't leave and they got jobs in other States. So the percentage who failed there represented a certain amount of creaming.

(Laughter)

Well, it's very sad. It's very sad. And I think our children need that protection. And I think that it is very important that we ask our Governors and our State Legislators not just are you testing teachers, but what is the nature of the examination and what is the cutoff point?

And the other thing we have got to ask them is if you have got a shortage when schools open in August or September, are you going to issue emergency substitute temporary certificates to anybody who passes the temperature examination, you know, if you've got 98.6, and you're

breathing, you pass.

Did you ever hear of a temporary emergency surgeon?

(Laughter)

Or a lawyer, or a dentist? We don't do that in any other field. But we do it in education. Well, don't we care enough about our children? These are things that we ought to take very, very seriously.

Now, we also favor required courses. Now, that doesn't mean that students couldn't have a choice as to whether they read one set of classic books or another set of equally worthwhile and equally difficult books. There are many choices that are good choices. But there should be no choice between something which is both demanding and culturally important than something which is trivial or trash, and represents no standard of difficulty whatsoever. Those choices should not be there.

The people of the United States are very generous. They support public education with billions of dollars. And they have a right to get their money's worth, not just because they want their money's worth but it's not even the parents who are paying for this, it is the citizens and taxpayers because we are really paying for the next generation.

We are building our nation. This is not just a private good. It is a public investment that we are making in the future of our country. And it is extremely important that we do it and that we do it right.

Now, we cannot allow the philosophy to creep in that the only thing that can be in a curriculum is something that children are interested in. I don't know many children who love to memorize the multiplication tables. It is not that fascinating. But you have got to know it, and it is very useful later. And eventually most students who are forced to do a lot of things that they didn't like to do appreciate it because, later on, you do develop a power of mind and are able to do things that you could never do before.

So we know more about these things than children do. We were children once, and we didn't like to do these things either. And we appreciate having been forced to do it and sometimes we feel sorry that we weren't forced to do a lot more. I certainly do. I wish I had been compelled to learn some foreign languages and hadn't been given some choices. And I think most of us feel that way.

So that is a responsibility that we have and a very important one. And that is all a question of promoting

students. We have a philosophy over all these years that at the end of the year you automatically moved the student on to the next grade. And the reason was if you left the student back, he would feel terrible and it would shatter his personality. Well, what does it do to a person's personality if, after doing nothing, he is automatically rewarded? What does that do for character, and what does that do for the character of the person right next to that one who did work very hard and sees that the reward that he is getting is exactly the same as the reward of the person who didn't work at all?

So we are very much in favor of making grades mean something and of making promotion mean something and making graduation mean something. That is part of the moral and value education of a student. When you teach students that they can get something for nothing all through their education will expect that later on in life. It's very, very bad, very corrosive, very corrupting.

And there has been another issue over the years which we have been very much involved in, and that's the whole question of bilingual education.

Now, I entered school as -- I was born in this

country but my parents were immigrants and workers, and in my household I grew up, I did not learn how to speak English at home, and I entered school not speaking English. I can tell you it is hard enough for a little child to go in a school, you see those children going to kindergarten or first grade, many of them crying because they are leaving their parents for the first time. And if you go into a school where you can't as a child even speak the language that anyone else speaks, you are pretty terrified. So I have no problem with the idea that if you have children in the school who speak different languages, there ought to be somebody there who speaks the language and who makes them feel at home.

But I do not believe, and we in the AFT do not believe that it is the function of the school to continue teaching the child in the original language. It is the function of the schools in the United States of America to get the child to learn English as quickly as possible. And the longer a child is able to continue speaking his own language, the longer he will continue speaking his own language. Learning another language is very difficult. People don't do it unless they have to. And children don't do it unless they have to.

And so we have had a major difference with the other organization and with many other groups within our society because we think that one of the main functions of our schools is to do precisely that, and that is still a live issue and still before the Congress of the United States.

Then there is still another one. That's the issue of can children learn enough during school hours, and we think not. We think homework is a very important part of an education, and we went through almost a generation where the whole philosophy was that homework was not a good thing to give. Why not? Because some children won't do it. So, therefore, you let the kid who is not going to do it dictate to everybody else and destroy everyone's education. I would say homework is essential for at least two reasons. One is that there isn't enough time in the day to really cover everything. I would say more than two reasons. The second is that the time you spend figuring out answers as to how to do it yourself is, in many ways, much more valuable than just having somebody stand in front of you to tell you how to do it.

The only way you are ever going to know if you learned something is to do it yourself.

And a third is that it is character building. The

notion that a child has of responsibility, not in front of the teacher who is standing over him, but if there's a rule, if there's a regulation, if that's your obligation, and that's the nature of your work as a student, to develop the idea that you go home, and when nobody is following you or looking at you, that you develop that sense of obligation, that that is part of your job and do something. That is a part of value building and character building that a school is supposed to -- it's the beginning of it, it's not the end of it, but it is a very, very important part of it. So that is extremely important.

Now, we have some other differences with other groups. We believe very strongly in teaching values and, as a matter of fact, we prepared some materials in our magazine, The American Educator, a number of years ago, and some of you may want to receive those materials. We would be happy to send them to you, make them available. But these essentially were lesson plans that teachers could use, and they were plans, not setting aside 10 minutes or 20 minutes a day to teach values, but they were ways in which teachers who are teaching English or teaching American History, teaching their normal subjects, when the students read a story and you ask

them who do you think is the hero of this story and why? Well, he was courageous. Well, why not talk about courage as a virtue, or honesty or loyalty or whole bunch of other things. I mean these values present themselves every day. You don't have to have a special 17 minutes for it. There are opportunities throughout the day.

But not only that, teachers are constantly teaching values when you say to a student that, you know, keep your eyes on your own paper, don't cheat.

We have, over a period of time, come to a -- so many schools to a sorry state. I will relate a story to you which I heard a few years ago in an educational meeting in Washington, D. C.,

A very prominent sociologist, Dr. Esteone (phonetic), who had worked in the Carter White House for a year or two as, you know, there is always a White House intellectual, and I guess he was the White House intellectual for a year or two. And after his service at the White House was over, he came and spoke to a group of educational leaders.

And the two very interesting things that he told us. One, he said, you know, there are a lot of children who are growing up and they don't know how to count, they don't know

how to multiply, they don't know how to read, some of them don't know the alphabet. He said, you know, it's not really a matter of intelligence. These students are all intelligent enough to learn these things. He said it's a question of character that these children were never taught early enough that you don't always instantly get pleasure that sometimes you have to sit down and do something that's hard work and it's not pleasant. You know, you have to -- you can't be instantly gratified, and that the process of learning is hard work; that many of the problems that we have in education are not intellectual problems, they are character problems, the unwillingness to devote time and energy or to delay and postpone gratification.

But then he told a second story, and it was one that dealt with his son. He said that his son attended an outstanding school in the Washington suburbs. He said I can't think of a place where I could pay for an education that would be a better education than he is getting or have a better school. But he said a number of weeks ago, when I was still at the White House, I was called and I was told that my son had some accident, not serious, not to worry, but to come right away. And I did come to the hospital. And it turned

out that the child sitting next to my son had taken a pencil and poked it through my son's cheek. Very messy, very traumatic, not deadly, but very, very bad.

And he said a few days later he went to visit the principal of the school, and the principal asked him to sit down and then the principal said, "Dr. Esteone, before you say anything, I want you to know how terrible this whole thing was and how sorry we are that it happened. But I would like you to know two things." He said, "First, I want you to know that it was a very, very hot muggy day, the kind of day when all the kids are fidgeting around, and the kind of day when this sort of thing is likely to happen. The second thing I want you to know is that the child who did this is having a lot of troubles because his parents are being divorced so you can understand."

And Dr. Esteone said that he turned to the principal and he said, "Look, I'm a sociologist and I know the effect that weather has an effect on things, and I know that if people are having problems at home, it has an effect on things. I just want to know one thing," he said, "did anybody call that boy down here and say to him what you did was wrong and it will not be tolerated, and you will be punished

for it, and if it happens again, the punishment will be more serious?"

And the principal sat there, and the answer was obviously no, no one had bothered to say to that child that what he did was wrong.

Now, that is a kind of attitude, it's an attitude almost of helplessness that, you know, that the child did things because of the weather, and that there's nothing we can do to educate the child, even to talk to him. And it is dead wrong.

Now, while we favor the teaching of values very strongly, I want to repeat that we do not think that the public schools are the place for teaching of religion, for obvious reasons. Which religion, which versions, values, and these values, as I have indicated, are traditional values. They are values that the American people accept and they are values that are consistent with all of the major religions within our country so that if these values are taught, as they should be, any child coming home, no one is going to have to worry the child is coming home with a set of values which undermine the religious values, the additional values and the additional perspective given by parents in the home.

Now, I want to distinguish the teaching of values from something else which we think is very serious, and we have publicly distinguished ourselves again from the other organization, and that is this difference between teaching about honesty and loyalty and courage, there's difference between that and using the classroom to propagandize students and to try to inculcate in students a particular either philosophic or political point of view. That is not the job of the teacher. That is not why parents send children to school. They do not send children to school to take a particular position on the nuclear freeze or which political candidate should win an election, or things like that. Our job in the school is not in these areas to teach children what to think but to teach them how to think, let them figure out, give them unimportant issues, the arguments on all sides, and give them an ability to think and to sort out arguments and to come to their conclusions of their own.

The teachers or the teacher organizations' positions on these are no better than the parents, or anyone else within the community. And it is an abrogation of the responsibility and the trust if schools are used in such ways. And, unfortunately, at times they have been. And whenever they are, you

can be sure that we will be there to protest that, and I am sure that you will be too.

Now, we also have an interest in textbooks, and our interest in textbooks is perhaps from a little different perspective than the usual one. You know, there has been a long history of debates over textbooks, a lot of it over the content. For awhile, they said the words in textbooks are too big, make them shorter. They dumbed the textbooks down, they dumbed them down to a point where the stories were boring and where you couldn't express any interesting ideas. Now there's the opposite tendency, make the words bigger. And then, of course, there have been conflicts over should textbooks be more representative of various ethnic groups, more pictures of women. And there have been, of course, conflicts on the evolution creation questions, and in the aftermath of World War II, there were conflicts over the depiction of the United States or the Soviet Union or the Cold War.

But, you know, what is fascinating in this whole thing is that almost nobody has asked the question what is a good textbook? Is this the kind of thing that explains anything to a student? If the student wasn't in school that day, could he take this textbook home and open it up and look at

it and understand and learn what he would have learned had he been in school that day? If he understood part of it, will that book do any good? Or does the book contain all sorts of fuzzy language, does it contain pictures that don't really illustrate -- may be colorful but don't illustrate any points or don't have educational value? Are the headings on the top of a paragraph confusing because they have nothing to do with what is in the paragraph?

Well, our interest in textbooks is largely from the point of view of seeing to it that they're good educational tools. And I know that many people have argued that teachers should not be involved in the selection of textbooks. Our position is that textbooks to us are what the instruments that a doctor uses are to a doctor. They are the tools of the trade, and not from the point of view of determining the content of the books. That will be decided otherwise. But from the point of view of deciding how good these books are as textbooks, it is extremely important that teachers be involved.

Now, I would like to touch on one other key issue in the current ferment about education. There are a lot of good things happening. Legislatures have been involved,

Governors have been involved. Legislation has been passed bringing back a traditional curriculum. As I pointed out a few minutes ago, providing for entry tests for teachers. The business community is involved. Many very excellent worthwhile things are happening.

But just as we see signs of improvement, there is also the great potential for a tremendous crisis in public education. There are two million public school teachers in this country and we are going to lose about one million of them in the next eight years, about one-half of them. We have had an aging force. Many of these people came in years ago. We didn't hire many new teachers during the seventies because of the decline in the birth rate. So about one-half of our teachers, some will die, some will retire, some will quit, the normal attrition in terms of leaving for other jobs. We have got to find one million additional teachers.

And at the same time we are going to be looking for one million additional teachers, right now the number of students graduating high school and going to college is very, very small because this is no longer the "baby boom generation", this is the generation after that that followed the smaller birth rate.

So there are fewer people graduating college, and there is this tremendous demand for talents in the outside world. And there are very great responsibilities that with all the demands from all the private companies and from the rest of the government sector, that unless teaching becomes a more attractive profession, we are going to give these examinations but we are not going to get anybody who takes them, who passes them, or very, very people who will take them or pass them. Because we still have many places where teachers have to start working for \$12,000 a year. The average salary of all teachers in the United States last year was \$22,000 a year.

But, aside from the money importance, but not the only thing, many people go into teaching knowing that they are going to make sacrifices.

Aside from the working conditions, where a teacher is not going to stay year after year with 150 or 175 students with all those papers to mark, not if the person is a good teacher, because they just know that they are not going to get satisfaction from the job.

Even if you are able to remove some of the most violent and disruptive students and take care of that, there

is another issue which is very important, and that is more and more people who work for a living in this country want to be treated with some respect. Years ago, if I asked my parents why do you work, they would have said don't you want eat? Don't you want a roof over your head? They didn't enjoy the work they were doing; they did very, very hard, not particularly clean work, but they did it because that was the only way to make ends meet.

But there are still people who have got jobs like that in our society, but about 70 percent of the people who work for a living in our country say that they enjoy their jobs and the job gives them dignity and they are not told exactly what to do, and they are given a certain amount of freedom, they can exercise judgment, and because they can exercise judgment, they may do it their way, they are able to do it better, and they are able to get satisfaction from the job.

So there are a whole range of issues of how we treat teachers. And I think it's very important in the debates around public education in this country to remember that we are about to face a tremendous teacher shortage. We are still not paying teachers very well. The conditions are

still very poor. And if out there bright and talented youngsters who are in college today are thinking of becoming teachers and they see large numbers of members of the public attacking them or criticizing them, if we view teachers as being the enemy, what is going to happen is that a lot of these bright and talented people are going to say no, no. I mean this is just too much. It doesn't pay well, conditions are poor. In addition to that, we are constantly getting all these attacks from newspapers, every television show is blaming teachers and community groups are blaming us, and others are blaming us. It is just not going to be the place where people are going to go because everybody who is a teacher, every time there is criticism, every time there is an attack, they feel that they are being singled out, and the entire community views them with a good deal of suspicion.

So we are going through a period where we will need your help and everyone's help to provide -- to encourage young people with talent to come into teaching and to give them moral support to show them that we appreciate what they are doing, show them that we realize they are making a sacrifice.

If we don't do that, we are not going to have them and the consequences will be very serious.

Now, I would like to spend the last few minutes saying that the reason that we are spending so much time and energy and money running across the country, supporting a toughening of standards and these improvements in education is because we believe that public education in this country is in very serious trouble.

I gave you the signs before in terms of how the public marks the schools, A, B, C, D. But there are other signs too. About 50 percent of the people of the United States say that they are now willing to support tuition tax credits to give parents the right to get government monies to take their children from public schools and move them to private schools, and that is certainly a very serious issue. And I would like to spend my last few minutes with you discussing that issue, even though it is popular with some people, as you saw here today. It certainly is.

The question is, is it good for the country? And that's what we ought to look at. There is no doubt in my mind that if we had tuition tax credits that many parents would take the money and send their children to private school. As a matter of fact, there are not enough private schools out there now with enough empty spaces to accommodate

those parents. And most private schools would be able to pick and choose the students that they would take, at least the first few years until there was an expansion of private school education.

The chances are that the first students in many places, the first students to leave would be more affluent students, students who are doing very well in school but whose parents feel that they are not doing well enough. When those parents took their children out of school, the grades, of course, would fall, those parents would stop working for public schools, and would then work for the schools -- that is, work to help the schools that their children were now in. That's only human and only natural. They would each year go to the legislature or to the Congress, not to demand more help for public schools, but more help for the private schools that their children are in.

There is no doubt in my mind that within a fairly short period of time, the majority of students in this country would be in private schools and not in public schools. This exact situation happened in Holland where, once upon a time, 85 percent of the children attended public schools, and now 85 percent of the children attend private schools.

Now, why am I concerned about this? I am concerned about it because what will happen is very clear. Most of the 94 percent of the private schools in this country are separate religious schools. And what will happen in this country is that if we have that type of support, we will have Catholics going to Catholic schools, different Protestant groups going to different Protestant schools, Jews going to Jewish schools. We will have Hispanics setting up schools to teach their students in their schools, many of them in Spanish. And we will have some political groups doing it. Undoubtedly, you will have some small left wing fringe groups and maybe a small school here or there by the Communist Party, maybe another small school here or there by the Klu Klux Klan. There will be a wide variety of schools for parents to send their children to.

Now, you know, in France, it doesn't make very much difference. Everybody in France just about is French. And everybody in Germany is German. And everybody in Japan is Japanese. But what is everybody in the United States? We are not all Americans to start with, no, we are all something else to start with. That's the difference between the United States and those other countries.

And one of the reasons that we still have a country today is because we have provided the overwhelming majority of our children with an Americanization experience of being with children of other religions and other colors and other nationalities. And we brought them together, and they have been -- no one gets Frenchized in France or Germanized in Germany. There is no such word in those countries. But the notion of to become Americanized is very much a part of this country because we all come from so many different places.

We are taking in as many immigrants today as we ever did. The amount of immigration in the United States today is vast. And I think that those of you who are thinking of tuition tax credits ought to ask yourself what the United States of America will be like 20 or 30 or 40 years after our children have not had a common experience of being in school with each other, of learning to live and to work with each other and to respect each other.

But after they have all gone off to their own separate schools and had their own separate experiences, take a look across the border and see what's happening in Quebec. Take a look at every country in the world where there are separate education for separate groups and ask yourself

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whether there is a single one of those places where they enjoy democracy, where they enjoy a society where they are not literally shooting at each other and killing each other, where they enjoy a society where the question of whether they are going to have one country or many separate countries exists in any of those places. There is no place in the world with that sort of a system of education which has democracy and peace and freedom and is free of tearing itself apart.

That's what is at stake in this. Teachers will have jobs whether we have private schools or public schools. The same teachers now teaching one place will move right over to the other. They will get jobs. That isn't the issue.

The issue is what will this country look like, what will it be like if that's what we have? There's no doubt. Other countries have that experience. Just take a look at every country that has such an experience and see what the strains and what the tension and what happens to a country like that.

So I congratulate you for holding a conference concerned with public education. And I hope it is more than a concern. I hope it is a support for public education. Those who want private schools for their children, it is a free

country, they should have them. But the taxpayer's dollar ought to go to those schools that are necessary to hold our nation together. That's the public schools.

If I don't like the public swimming pool, I have a right to have a private swimming pool in my own yard. But I don't ask anyone else to pay for it. I pay for my own.

If I don't like public transportation and I want to buy my own automobile, I have an automobile, I pay for it, I don't have an automobile tax credit which helps me pay for it.

Any parent who wants a private school has a right to do it. And they should if they feel that their children will get a better education there. They should not ask other people to pay for it.

Public education is in danger. It's very important for the future of our country.

I congratulate you for holding this conference. I urge you to join us in supporting the strong standards, discipline in schools, values of education, and in opposing tuition tax credits and other vouchers which would destroy not only public schools, but the future of our country as well.

Thank you very much.

(Applause)

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Thank you very much.

(Applause)