

ADDRESS
by
ALBERT SHANKER
before
QUEST CONFERENCE
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MR. SHANKER: Thank you very much,
Jackie. It is very good to be here.

Vice President Jackie Vaughn, Dick Manley,
I guess i owe some note of explanation about the change
in this evening's agenda. I guess the best way to do
that is to tell an anecdote about ancient days when
Caesar brought all of his friends together in the
Coliseum to witness one of those famous spectacles
of Lions versus Christians.

While all of his friends were gathered
in the Coliseum he gave the sign for the gates to go
up. The gates went up on both sides and out of one
set of doors the Christians came running; and out
of the other set of doors the lions came running. And
as the lions were running towards the Christians one
of the Christians ran forward and shouted something
towards the lions. And the lions all of a sudden
stopped and just sat down and would not move another

Jerry De La Mar

Caesar was very angry because he had spent tremendous amounts for this show. And all of his guests were very disappointed. So he stood and asked, "Who is the Christian who shouted to the lions?"

And one of the Christians came forward and said, "I did, Caesar".

And Caesar then asked him, "What did you say that made the lions stop in their tracks?"

The Christian said, "Caesar, I told them that there would be speeches after dinner". (Laughter)
So this is one of those before dinner. (Laughter)

I am here tonight to sound some warnings about the state of American education. And I am here to urge that all of you involve yourselves in trying to bring about a transformation of the schools that we have today.

Now we have been through a period of years that pretty soon will be a decade, an amazing decade, because most people in the United States do not have very long political attention spans. Something comes up on the screen, or in the newspapers and it is important for a day, or a week, or a month, or two

months but rarely have we seen anything that was the focus of attention for so many years as education still is today.

And the question I guess is do we deserve all of that attention?

Well, we certainly deserve it in terms of importance. The importance of it is highlighted, I guess, in another anecdote about a Frenchman, a Japanese man, and an American who go out on a hunting expedition together. And after two or three days of successful hunting they, themselves, are captured by a hostile group of natives. And they are informed within a short period of time they are going to be executed.

They were, however, told that they will each receive one last wish. The Frenchman says that he would like one last time to sing his National Anthem. He was told that that wish would be granted.

The Japanese man said, "Well, I would like one last time to give my famous lecture on quality control". And he was told that his wish would be granted.

And the American thought long and hard about what his last wish is to be and he finally said, "My last wish is that you execute me before I have to listen to that speech on quality control again".

(Laughter)

Of course that is not funny because we are very sensitive about the fact that we are losing in the world. Our standard of living is going down. Not so many years ago Japanese goods were viewed as being cheap and shoddy and nothing that anybody who had any money would buy. Whereas today in Fremont, California when two automobiles that are identical come off the same line and one of them is called a Nova and the other is called a Toyota, you cannot sell Nova, even though it is the same car, because "Made in America" has become viewed as shoddy, of poor quality, and Americans are willing to pay more money for "Made in Japan". And just think of the short number of years of that transformation.

Sure, we are not hurting that much because basically we have two people working for a living where there used to be one. And you would think

they would be twice as well off. They are not. We are slipping and we are slipping badly.

And the question is, is this the result of what the Japanese schools do?

And I guess the first question we need to deal with is what they say about schools. Is it poor performance? Is that really so? Or, is this just something where newspapers and television stations it is not news unless it is bad news? Good news does not make headlines very long.

Just a couple of weeks ago we had this discussion at the meeting of the AFT Executive Council and Dick Manley said it is very difficult to believe, and I am sure many of them in any Local would not believe a lot of these things.

And we started looking at some of the materials that we had distributed. And what I am going to say now is going to be hard to believe, but please do not walk away saying, "Al Shanker made up these figures". They are there.

And do not believe them, and if you do not believe them, and if you do not believe that

plight of your district then I suggest that you make some sort of assessment of some of these things to see. There are ways of finding out.

We do have a national assessment of educational progress in this country which has been around for a little over 20 years. It is a sampling. They take 50,000, 100,000, 200,000 youngsters all across the country every couple of years and they check what 9, 13, and 17-year-olds are able to do. They do that in reading and writing and mathematics, social studies, science, and so forth. And the ones that are the most common subjects are done quite often.

And for the results I am not going to deal with 9, 13, and 17 unless we want to get all of these volumes of information; but what I am going to say is that these assessments over 20 years have been remarkably consistent -- pretty much the same.

The good news is that practically nobody is totally illiterate. The other good news is that Bernard is starting out very far behind and catching up very, very quickly. That is very good news.

Now the bad news is that when minorities catch up this country will still face an educational disaster because while we can understand why Blacks and Hispanics in the United States, as the result of slavery, poverty, discrimination, poor health care, also some other things, why they are behind, the fact is that the overwhelming majority of middle class and fairly affluent kids in this country are not learning very much in school. So this is not one of these things, "Well, that is New York", or, "That is Chicago", or, "That is Los Angeles".

I am going to be talking to you mostly about other districts, although obviously you are in an area because of special problems they have made at the low end of this totem pole.

So, what does it look like?

The national assessment works this way. They give the kids various things to do, and they figure out what percentage of them are able to read some little line; what percentage of them can take a look at the cafeteria menu and if you tell them they are going to buy a bowl of soup and a sandwich what

change would they get from a \$10.00 bill, all the way up to can they read the Wall Street Journal or the New York Times, or do a two-step mathematics problem, and so forth.

What I am going to deal with is this: there is nothing more boring than going through all sorts of statistics. I am not going to do that. What I am going to do is this: what the national assessment does is they place the students in various categories.

The bottom is sort of illiterate. The next category is barely above. And the next one will be somebody who can function at a fairly low level. Then they have somebody adequate, and then they have a top level. And what I am going to talk about is what can our 17 and 18-year-olds do. That is, those kids who are still in school at age 17 and about to graduate after most of the dropouts have dropped out.

I am going to ask how many can perform at the highest level? And I will talk about what those highest levels are; for example, what percentage of kids who are still in school between 17 and 18, about to graduate, are able to write a good essay, or a good

letter?

Well, the answer is three per cent, and that is nationally. This is not urban areas; this is nationally. This is all kids who are still in school, but urban areas with huge dropouts are not even in those figures very much.

Now suppose you said, "Well, all right, a good essay, or a good letter, well, that means no errors, and it really means saying something. That is pretty tough."

How about one level below that? How about how many, what percentage of kids are able to write a letter applying for a job to the local supermarket? One or two paragraphs with some errors in it but you can read it; you can understand it? But at least the letter has one idea in it; it says, "Hire me because". It is right in there, you can read it.

Well, only 20 per cent are able to do that of those who are about to graduate. Eighty per cent cannot write one or two paragraphs, with some errors but a letter which contains within it one persuasive idea.

Well, suppose we move over now to reading or mathematics. By the way, the highest level in mathematics is a two-step problem. What a two-step problem is if Mary Jane deposited \$500.00 in a savings bank at nine per cent interest, and if they keep the money for a whole year and then pay it out at the end of the year, how much money would she have?

Four and a half per cent can answer that one.

Depending upon whether you talk about reading, writing, mathematics, science, we are talking about three, four, five, six per cent of the youngsters who graduate are able to perform at those levels.

Well, is that good or bad? After all, maybe God only made three per cent of us smart enough to write a good letter. Well, maybe He made four per cent. There is a little room for improvement.

How do we compare with the other countries? And we cannot compare ourselves with other countries not because they give the same tests but because in all other industrialized countries in the world they either have some high school examinations that you must

pass in order to graduate and get a diploma, or they have college entry examinations. So if you take a look at how many kids get into college and you know what that standard is, and if it is pretty close to the top you get pretty good comparisons. And it comes to where we stand compared with where these other countries stand.

For instance, in Germany everybody goes to college who passes something called a five-day examination where you solve problems, write essays and answer questions in physics, chemistry, mathematics, German history, and so forth. And if you look at that examination and if you look at what the passing score is you would say there is absolutely no doubt that anybody that passes that examination in Germany would be in the top group in all of the U. S. categories, which would be in our top two per cent.

Because if you know three per cent can do one thing, and four per cent another, and the top group that can do all the things is two per cent.

What per cent of the kids in Germany meet that standard? Twenty-six per cent meet it in Ger-

many, meet the standard, and only two per cent meet it in the United States.

In Great Britain, where they have national examinations for college it is 16 per cent, and it is the lowest. In Canada, it is about 24 per cent; in France, it is 21 per cent. Otherwise you can mention all over -- and I am not even mentioning Japan -- I am talking about Canada, Great Britain and have not mentioned Singapore, Holland, Denmark, and places like that where the kids have to take examinations like that.

Well, what does this mean? It means we are in for some very unpleasant and shocking conclusions from this information.

First, this tells us that the overwhelming majority of the most affluent kids that ever walked the face of the earth are not learning very much. Because when you talk about three per cent can write a good letter or essay you are talking about the overwhelming majority of kids who graduate in the United States of America.

Even if you think your district is a

terrific district, if it is terrific maybe six per cent can do it; 10 per cent can do it; 14 per cent can do it. If you have 20 per cent who can do it you are so far ahead of our national standard that it is unbelievable.

Now if you do not believe this go back home and try it. You check it out. I mean, I hope that you go back and check it out, and you find there is some fatal flaw in all of these tests you have been giving for 21 years. But nobody else can find it unless everybody is looking for it.

The first thing is that the overwhelming majority of kids who have no excuses not to learn are not learning.

The second thing it tells you is that 95 per cent of the kids who go to college in the United States would not be admitted to a college or university anywhere else in the world, which essentially means that in the United States the people get to junior high school and high school education in colleges and universities except for the elite institutions which are more or less meeting European standards. Two per

cent of those who go to college are meeting European standards.

Now since we hire 23 per cent of our college graduates to go into teaching every year, and since only about two per cent are really able to read, write, or understand science, and that is the two per cent who go to Harvard, Princeton, the University of Chicago, or one of a number of other institutions like those. And the number of those people who go into teaching rounded off to the nearest whole number is zero, which also tells us, by the way, that every single teacher in Germany, who met those standards to even enter college, essentially every single teacher in France, Holland, Great Britain, and Canada has met the same standard as people who meet it in the United States at the University of Chicago, or Harvard, or Princeton.

In other words, the point is when I go to Germany and talk to German teachers and say, "What percentage of your elementary teachers feel uncomfortable in arithmetic?" -- they look at me as though this is the beginning of a joke he is going to tell.

We know it is not a joke because we know in the United States in places like California arithmetic tests given to incoming elementary teachers is a sixth-grade test to the teachers. They know they will have the same passing mark the kids have, 65 per cent.

And we know 30 to 40 per cent of the prospective applicants taking the examination means the teacher gets the same score that is passing now for a sixth-grade kid.

And we have to face those things up front. If we do not face them we are not going to have a feeling of the extent of the changes that need to be made. I think that having this information -- and I want to stress again that there is a lot of evidence, a lot of it, that this is not a one-shot assessment. These assessments go on every couple of years. They are very similar. They are samples of kids.

Lots of people have tried to look at it and show that they are not right. You can do something like that in your district, or your area, and I think that if and when you do it you will find that your

district is somewhere at fault. If your district is a more affluent community you will be a little bit above those numbers. But you are going to be surprised at the percentage of kids who cannot do a lot of simple things.

By "surprised" I do not mean you are going to find that 10 or 20 per cent can not do it; but you will find that 80 to 90 per cent cannot do a lot of things that you believe an educated person ought to be able to do.

And so that kind of leads me to a conclusion. I think with this kind of information the conclusion that you ought to draw from this is that small changes will not work. You see, if I had told you that we had a little bit of trouble here, and a little bit of trouble here, and a little bit of trouble somewhere else, it is like a car that will not run after you fix it. It has two little problems; fix the two little problems.

But I think the picture I have just painted is that we do not have one, two, or three little problems. We have some huge problems, and you do not

solve huge problems with a little bit of tinkering.

To put it the way that a former Vice President of Internal Education for IBM, who was at our meeting of the Executive Council when someone asked him what about the educational reforms, he said, "Well, if I were running an IBM plant producing computers, and if 30 per cent of the computers fell off the assembly line and they did not know where they were and could not find them and put them back on the assembly line, and if 90 per cent that did get finished did not work most of the time I do not think I would want to run that plant an extra hour a day, or an extra month a year".

In education if we are not doing something our answer is, "We will do it for an extra month". If you do something wrong, do more of it; if you do a lousy job, do it faster.

Well, that is not just educators. Most people when they do not think things are right tend to do more of the same thing, and we are like others. If you look at the industries that have not done very well they try to do pretty much the same thing.

But that you see is what the extent of that is if we keep turning them out. If we have problems we should stop the whole thing and start asking ourselves what are we doing wrong and try to figure out how do we do it right. And so that is a key issue, that we are not going to solve educational problems by doing more of the same thing, or by doing them faster, or by doing a little bit better, or even a lot better. Because if we do it twice as well as we do it now we still would not be anywhere near compared to anybody else. Even if we make a big jump we would not be where we need to be.

So then the question is, what do we do? What changes are needed? What is wrong?

And there we really have to look at a lot of things that are wrong. And there are a number of ways of approaching this. I mean to say that one way of doing it is to make a list of the things that are wrong.

And I like to look at it from two points of view.

One is to look at it from the -- let me

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dwell one more minute on those problems and what they imply.

There are other indicators of where we are. In 1965, we produced twice the number of Ph.D.s in engineering that we produced last year. And last year half of the ones we produced were foreign nationals who tend to return to their countries.

Six years ago, five per cent of the high school graduates said they wanted to be math majors. Last year only one per cent said they wanted to be math majors. There is no way you can say that raising salaries of teachers is going to get you a lot of math teachers because we are not producing any. If one per cent of the kids go into mathematics where are we going to get math teachers? Because IBM needs them. The Army needs them. The government needs them. And schools need them. Education needs them.

So it is not a question of their waiting in line outside. And all we have to do is raise salaries and they will come over here. In fact, there is not anybody in the line who really knows high school mathematics. And the other outfits will raise their

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salaries and keep them if we raise salaries. So we really have to think about how we produce them. If not, how do we patch up this one.

And let me put out a few examples of the kind of thing that we have been engaged in, and here this is kind of semi-autobiographical. I spent most of my life fighting for what? Fighting for the same things you have been fighting for -- higher salaries and lower class size, and more time for teachers so they can do preparation, talk to each other and have time to think a little bit, to communicate, to develop relationships with colleagues. And these are things that I fought for, led strikes, went to jail for, and went across the country organizing teachers. And we organized a terrific organization on that basis. And I did it because I believed in it.

It is still possible to raise salaries in one district or another. It is still possible to lower class size in one place or another -- to do something. But let's take a look at it on a national basis.

We get some good years in state aid, and a good economy, and for a couple of years you make a

little bit of progress.

And then what happens? Then you get a couple of bad years and you fall behind. And then you get a couple of good ones. And what is happening? From a national point of view we are basically on a threshold. We work like hell and we are all finished and we find we stand still. How much progress have we made in class size nationally in recent years?

How much progress have we made in getting teachers to get a substantial amount of free time? And after we made that progress, I mean New York made a lot of progress in the Sixties and most of it was wiped out in 1975 when the city went bankrupt.

I was elected President of the AFT in 1964. They worked for another 10 years to get back the things they lost. I felt I could not leave while everybody was talking down. I left in 1975. Now they are in the middle of a two billion deficit and are about to lose it all again and fighting to go right back up.

Well, I hope your district is better. I hope you have been going only onward and upward. But

I doubt it. And so we are not as long as we organize schools the way we organize them now. In another hundred years I do not believe that teachers are going to earn salaries that are commensurate with what teachers ought to earn in this country, as long as we say 2.4 million teachers all must earn the same salary, and as long as there must be a teacher in every classroom.

Because if we have 2.4 million people that is two per cent of the work force. And it is not like you can raise a hand full of people. It is going to have an amazing effect on the entire economy.

Let's talk about reducing class size. Suppose we could reduce it. Suppose we found the money tomorrow and we could reduce class size by one-third. Well, that would be pretty good. It would still be a lot of papers to mark, wouldn't it? Because when you have to mark 20 sets of papers it will still take you a long time.

But that would mean we would have to hire 800,000 more teachers. Aside from the money, and the classrooms, and the pension costs, the Social Security

costs, I just said there are not any people out there to be hired. We are already hiring people that can hardly read and write, those at the bottom.

I do not mean, and I am not saying they are all of that level. They are a range of people and some are great. Some are very good; some are average. There are a lot of people who should not be teaching but when you hire another 800,000 you are not going to be hiring 800,000 who have other jobs. You are going to be hiring 800,000 who cannot find any other jobs, and they are looking.

So if you substantially reduce class size, or if you give teachers a lot more time, which means hiring other teachers to come into the classroom again it means hiring lots of teachers who are below standard.

Now I am not saying we cannot raise salaries. I am saying we cannot raise salaries in the way we have been talking about. And I am not saying that we cannot have a school in which teachers can reach this level more effectively than they can now because of more individual relationship.

I am saying you cannot do it as long as you maintain a self-contained classroom. And the same thing is true with the amount of time. We have to think differently. Suppose a doctor decided around the time of the Flexner Report that everybody who dealt with a patient, or an x-ray, or a medicine, or performed any service for any patient had to be a doctor. In other words, no nurses, no paramedics, no x-ray technicians, no pharmacists -- in other words, everybody who deals with health care and a patient is to be a doctor.

Today there would be eight million doctors in the country instead of 500,000. What do you think eight million would get paid rather than 500,000? Well, they would probably get paid teachers' salaries.

And guess what kind of education those eight million people would get. You would not give them the type of medical education they have today.

For that eight million you would have two doctor principals telling eight million doctors what to do. You would not trust them.

Well, I am serious. You would have doctor principals, doctor principals who would tell them what

to do.

Because when you hire eight million people you cannot get eight million people out of that top two per cent that I was talking about who really are able to function intellectually. You would have to get that eight million people by going a lot lower. And you would not trust them.

Well, that may tell us something about how we organize our profession.

Now let's talk about kids a little bit. Why is it that so many kids are not learning? They are not learning because of what Mortimer Adler in one of his speeches said, and he said it right. He said the answer was provided by Socrates 2000 years ago.

Someone in one of the street corner debates in Athens said to Socrates, "You're a great teacher".

Socrates snapped back and said, "No. I am not a great teacher. I am only a midwife." And Socrates was comparing the development of, I guess, learning, comparing and developing an analogy which essentially said that one's education is something

like giving birth to a child. And what he was saying was, "Look -- you have to get pregnant if you want to have a child, and you have to carry the child, and you have to do the labor, and I am only a midwife. I can only be of some help at a certain point but the mother, you, are the one that has to do all of the work."

I mean, I am not the one that is going to do it. And he was saying that the role of a teacher is analogous to the role of the midwife, by which he meant students only learn as a result of the work that the student does. The student has to listen, has to read, has to write, has to imagine, has to love, has to hate, has to build, has to do all sorts of things.

But it is the result of the work that the student does as a result of learning and the teacher can only be of some help.

Now what does that mean?

If the student is the worker -- and by the way you know I hear it all the time -- I go across the country and I hear the phrase, "I taught them but they did not learn anything". Did you ever hear that? "I taught them but they did not learn".

Did you ever hear a salesman say, "I sold them but they did not buy it". (Laughter)

Did you ever hear a contractor say, "I built it but I don't see it any more"?

What does that mean? I taught them but they did not learn it.

Well, it means what the teacher does is not important if the kids are not working at it. If the kids are listening, obviously, and remembering then it is worth something; otherwise it is not. So it is what the kid does that is important.

And essentially that means that we have the wrong idea of school. We keep talking about teaching and good teachers as though the teachers are pouring things into kids. We have the ideas. We have a good lesson. We have a good lecture. We have good teachers. We are pouring stuff into the kids whereas we ought to be thinking of is what most managers think of in most organizations, "How can I make the workers want to come to work because they like it? How can I make them want to work? How can I make sure they work when I am not watching because I cannot watch them all

the time?"

The only ones left are listening. I cannot tell whether you are listening. You cannot tell whether the kids are listening, either. You know what they say about listening. They say in any given audience the people are basically able to listen for about 10 minutes, and after that 10 minutes the next 10 minutes their minds start to wander. They listen a bit. And after 20 minutes they are having sexual advances. So I am glad you will enjoy at least part of my speech. (Laughter)

Well, Charles Handy, an Englishman, has given us a very good picture of what is wrong with the way we view kids in school. He said, "All right, the kids are workers. Unless they work at it they are not going to learn. What kind of workers are they? They are not like coal miners or steel workers, or auto workers. They are like an office worker because they sit at desks, as office workers do.

"And they read reports. And they write reports. And they listen to oral reports, and they give oral reports. And they plan. Those students are

a special kind of office workers."

Now just imagine many of you who are principals and superintendents, and board members -- you have an office -- I cannot talk to teachers having offices -- yet -- yet; we will, because that is part of what this is about. But think about it this way, look at it like a classroom is organized.

That is, if your principal's office or your superintendent's office, or the local insurance office, or the local newspaper office, or the union office was organized like a classroom was organized, then you would have about 20 or 30, I guess desks in a room, and you would have each behind a desk, and each would be a worker.

And if I were one of those people you would say, "Al, sit at this desk". You see all these people around you they are going to do exactly the same work you are doing. Everybody in the place does exactly the same work.

And one thing -- we have a rule here that you are never to talk to any of the other workers here -- never.

And the next thing you want to know is that after 50 minutes a bell is going to ring. All the workers get up from their desks and they all go to different offices and sit at different desks. And then we give them different work to do; give them different books, and tell them what they will do. Do you know any superintendent's office that is organized that way? Do you have your own union office organized that way?

Well, what is wrong with it?

What is wrong with it is that first of all, in any office if somebody does not know what they are doing and they just sit all day long, you come and ask, "Why the hell didn't you ask somebody next to you?"

In the beginning you ask and then you probably fire that individual who sat there all day and did not ask the person next to him. You say that person does not even have even the elementary common sense.

So it is all common sense and intelligence and in the real world it is called cheating.

Now, of course, you have 50 minutes to do it. Well, hell, half of them are only getting to understand it after 50 minutes. My kids do not understand it in 60 or 65. The bell rings and off they go. And we give them totally different work to do. Is that what you do in any workplace when you give everybody totally different work to do in 50 minutes? You have to wait until somebody gets to know what they are doing.

You have them at a different desk, right? It is a different room and desk. Did you ever move to a new room and desk? What do you do the first day? You open the doors, see if they work. You open the window, see if it closes. You see if anybody that was there before left something there. You never get anything done the first day at a new desk. I am exploring the desk. That is my whole first day's work. Some people take three days. I optimistically can usually do it in one day.

But what makes us think kids are any different? When you put them in a different location what makes you think you can move them from one place

to another and have them get right to work? It takes time to get used to a boss because different bosses have different personalities, different styles, and different expectations. Hell, people have one boss when they form a union. (Laughter) That is my only commercial. (Laughter)

And we give these kids seven different bosses a day. They have to get used to the fact that every one of those people up there tell them what to do and they are totally different. One person is only going to give them good marks if they achieve something. Another bases it on classroom participation. Another works on the basis of effort. How are the kids going to figure it out?

Well, what do we do about it?

By the way, the kid raises his hand in the math class and says to the teacher, "I have some work in science I do not understand".

The math teacher says, "I am a math teacher, not a science teacher". The only person in that school who has to know the organization in the school is the student. (Laughter)

Charles Handy answers the question about why it is possible to have that office organized in that way. He says it is very easy. Because you organize it this way if you think of the person not as a person or a human being. You seem to think the student as sort of raw material coming down the line. In the first period the English teacher is hammering on him. As he moves to the next teacher, the math teacher is drilling him. If you view students as inanimate objects moving down an assembly line where the teachers are working on them and doing something to them, then this whole thing makes sense.

And by the way, where does this come from? This is a system that came from the factory system -- specialization of teachers and the movement of raw materials down the assembly line with uniform periods, and so forth. That is where it came from.

It does not make any sense so it has to be changed.

Now what is wrong with our schools? I said a few minutes ago we do not pay teachers enough. We cannot reach kids. We do not have enough time.

From the kids' point of view we do a lot of damage to them. Why? We put them all in school on the same day, first grade. They all have to do the same work. We say, "Well, you are six years old. You go into first grade."

Are they all the same age? You know how we take kids in the schools. There is a cutoff date, and if you are there they say, "Come in", and the others have to wait one more year. We do that and what does that mean? That in any given class the oldest kid is a year older than the youngest kid.

At the age of five or six does that make a difference? It makes a tremendous difference. It makes a tremendous difference at third or fourth in the intellectual development of a child. It is not like the difference in being 30 or 31.

What do we find? We find that the oldest kids in the class feel they are smarter, and they are because they are a lot older and more mature. Because their development is not that of the kid of a superior age, and the younger kids do not understand that, the younger kids in the class generally feel they are weak

and stupid. And the higher percentage of dropouts are from the kids who happen to be the youngest kids in class. We all know that if you put a heavyweight and a lightweight boxer in the ring who has the best chance of winning. Right? Occasionally there is an accident, something happens, but most of the time the heavyweight is going to beat the lightweight.

And that is what you are doing here. I do not mind competition. I like it. But unfair competition is when you are putting two people in to compete with each other that are not equal.

Why do kids have to come to school the same day? Because that is when the teacher starts talking. You would not want the kid to come in at the middle of a movie, would you?

Well, that is another thing that is wrong with schools. We ask kids to sit still for five or six hours a day. Most of those kids do that. If you cannot sit still, and if you are fussing and moving around, and everything else, then you are disruptive, or Speical Ed, or you are something.

Most people, the majority of people, can-

not sit still and listen to somebody and retain anything. By the way, a lot of these people who fail in school do go on to be very successful in life. Being a poor student is no obstacle to becoming successful in life. Some of the people can become Vice President.
(Laughter)

No. I am saying that he has smarts. He has something that we should recognize. He did. Because there are those in the business world who scored very poorly in school and they are heads of large organizations, and they are in politics, and those sorts of things.

I did not vote for Quayle, but that is not the point. The point is that our schools are very narrowly posited. Do we have to have a school where everybody comes in on the same day? Couldn't we have a school where kids come in on their birthday? I think we could.

Do we have to have a school where the teacher is talking all the time? What about kids who cannot listen? It is not just kids who cannot listen. Seymour Harris, a great thinker, came to our Quest Con-

ference this year. He came to me and said, "I heard you gave a terrific speech. I would like to have a copy." I knew we would not have a transcript of it for about two or three months, and I said, "We won't have it for a while but I have a tape and I can send you a copy of that."

He said, "I can not listen. I do not know things that way." Here is a person who is an author of many books, one of the outstanding people, who cannot listen. And there are a lot of people that way.

Now you know if you went to a doctor and one pill would not work, what would he do? Would he say, "Double the dose? If it is no good for you just take more of it?"

He would say, "If that does not work we will try something else. And if that does not come back and we will try something else."

Where is the videotape, the audiotape, the computer simulation, the cooperative learning, the peer instruction, the student-to-student? Where are all of these other ways of reaching kids? Because we know the number who are reached by teachers is very

small.

Now, are there other ways of doing things?

It is very, very hard for us to think of school, all of us who are thinking about reform and restructuring schools, and what we are trying shall be when we are all finished, and whether when we are all finished it will look just like what we have right now. We are just going to make some improvements.

It is hard to think about a school that is different from the teacher standing there giving lessons and the kids sitting there as it is to think about a family that does not have a grandma and grandpa. We did not learn about school after we went to college. We learned about school where we went for so many years. It made a tremendously deep impression on us. And moving from the schools that we have today to the schools that we need tomorrow is about as different as the hand craftsmen of the Middle Ages to moving to a factory system. It is as difficult as the Swiss who invented quartz not realizing that that was going to be the way of the future.

And the Japanese picked it up, and the

technicians picked it up, and the Swiss did not bother patenting the whole thing. And the whole Swiss watch industry just moved out because of something different, something new that had happened.

We have to move with something that is very different and very new.

What else do we do in schools?

We call on kids to answer questions.

What happens when you call on a kid that does not know the answer? Well, once is not so bad. What about the second, third, and fourth time? What are we really doing about the kid? We are humiliating him in front of his peers.

What does humiliation do to people? Does it make them want to work hard? It makes them want to get even. It makes them say, "This is not my game. I am going to start something different." Can we create schools where they are learning in relative classes not in front of their peers?

How many of us take driving lessons from our loved ones? Your loved ones cannot be good driving teachers. We do not like, none of us like people we

care for to see us make mistakes. We cannot take it. We have to pay somebody to do it.

Well, kids are like that, too. Kids who want to do something will try a little harder. If they fail it will be seen by everybody.

Well, I think what you need to do is think of how you can organize the school so the teachers can make a lot of money, so that they can reach kids individually or in small groups, where they have time to talk and to think, and so the kids do not have to sit all day and do the same thing at the same time and move from one room to another.

So the kids are learning by listening. The teacher is going to work, and the teacher is thinking about how to get kids to work. And the kids do not find one kind of work but basically find the work they are good at. They do not like to do work they are not good at. So teachers are really managers who try and figure out what kids will like which is work that will help them learn. That is the job of the teacher.

The teacher's job is not to stand up

there and talk especially when now most of the time the kids are not listening.

Now there are some models. I have written about one, which is this Cooperative Learning School in Germany. I talk about three models now, and that will wind it up because I know everybody is hungry. But I cannot do this in a very short period of time.

I move from a system that does not work and exists, and that we are all deeply enmeshed in and committed to in certain ways when intellectually we want to try something else and try to create a picture of another world that could be.

In the school in Germany the teachers work in teams of seven, and they have 120 or 130, or whatever number of kids they would ordinarily have in that school. But those seven teachers really constitute a school.

That is, there are no bells. How do they distribute the kids to classes? They can redistribute them so if a kid is not doing well, among themselves they can redistribute that student without asking anyone's permission.

There are no bells. So collectively the seven teachers can say, "Let's write an essay on the history of Germany". If they do it and it lasts too long they can say, "Let's change it", but they do it on the basis of professional judgment.

That is what I mean by empowerment. The teachers have the power to exercise their professional judgment to get the learning process to be effective. It has nothing to do with taking the power away from the school board. It has to do with exercising the decision-making to make the thing work.

Those teachers stay with the same kids five years. What does that mean? It means that the kids are not on the assembly line. The teacher cannot say, "I inherited these kids from someone who spoiled them last year and I cannot wait to get rid of them next June".

It takes you time to learn their names each year. You are not going to be able to say, "Well, it is not my fault. I only have them for a short time." You can look at them for five years. Whatever happened to those kids you have some responsibility for.

You can take a burocratic factory system and turn it into a moral community. You do not need the principal coming in to check on the teachers because if you have seven teachers who work together for five years guess who is going to get after the teacher who is not doing a job -- the other six, because the one lemon is going to ruin it for you.

It is one thing if you are down the hall and have nothing to do. It is another thing if you are a team working for that period. In the classroom this is cooperative learning because the kids are essentially working together. That is the system.

I will give you a second one. Think of the Boy Scouts of America, or the Girl Scouts. They do not all join the same day. They have a curriculum. When you come you are nothing. You have to pass tests to become a Tenderfoot, First Class, Second Class, and there are hundreds of merit badges.

You have a curriculum and you have an advancement thing, and you have graduation after accumulating certain points. You can join at any time. You do it with one, or two, or three other kids.

The Scoutmaster can never stand up there and give you a lecture because there are 40 kids that are probably doing 35 different things.

How do kids in a Scout Troop get their merit badges, and how do they pass the tests if the Scoutmaster is not giving lectures? Well, all the older kids help the younger kids. And there are volunteers who do not know it all because nobody knows it all. But there are volunteers in there helping. And some kids are asked to get it from a book. And some of them have a thing in the clothes closet that has actual notes on it. This is a very close tie.

Could you organize a school where teachers did not talk but every kid has a whole series of tasks to perform? Wherein if he did that through the year he would learn what he has to learn without your saying anything?

If a kid in the Scouts does not learn it by one way the Scoutmaster says, "That is a hard way. Why don't you try it another way?" The Scoutmaster is suggesting different ways to the kid in which he can do it, not different lectures that teachers are

going to give.

Well, I have gone long and you are hungry, and you have been a wonderful audience. I want to conclude with this, just to say that we are in very deep trouble. It will be very hard for you to believe that until you do some checking and some assessing that will convince you, and perhaps the parents, and perhaps the school board, your superintendent, your principal, and your teachers.

Nobody is going to go through fundamental change, which is very painful, if they think things are okay. You have to convince yourself that things are pretty bad, and that is why you have to change.

And when we are finished we may have a school that has some lead teachers, and some certified teachers, and some paraprofessionals, and some college students who want to become teachers and who are interns and residents, and some volunteers, and some technology and kids who are learning on their own with the help of all these people who are around them.

One where the teacher is no longer lecturing. The teacher has plenty of time to coach indivi-

dual kids, to suggest to Johnny if he cannot learn it that way there is a second way and a third way of doing it. Think of the school as more like the organization of a hospital or a law firm or an accounting firm.

There is no other institution like the school where 2.4 million people are exactly on the same status, the same rank, and locked into a room with a bunch of kids.

That is one of the problems with teaching. Very few adults want to spend their life locked in a room. Most human adults want human contacts. And the kids will eventually become human. That is what education is all about. But they are not quite there that way. Think of that sort of a model.

Let me conclude in this way -- you might say, "Well, I want to see it but I did not agree with him because it is too big, too heavy to lift. Because he is talking about not having self-contained classrooms and having paraprofessionals play a much better role. And all of this is really very heavy stuff. When I go back to my school I will not get reelected, or the school board will get rid of me, or the voters will get rid of me, or something else will happen."

I want to tell you that you basically do have a choice, but not much. The one choice you do not have is there is no way you can keep doing what you are doing now. Because it does not work. And more and more people are finding it out. More and more businesses, more and more governors, more and more Congressmen, and more and more people in general are finding out that we are not educating anyone to the proper levels.

So there is one thing you can be absolutely sure of and that is that 10 years from now you will not be doing what you are doing now. The only question is what will the changes be, and who is going to make them? Who is going to lead them?

Now when people get fed up they do some angry things, and sometimes some nasty things. You have Milwaukee and the voucher proposal, kids going to private schools. The Chicago Reform may very well work out well, but it is not a friendly reform in the sense we say we do not try it with the parties that are in there. Let's get a new bunch of actors in that are going to change it because it was something designed to inflict pain on people inside the system.

Let's face it. I know the efforts that are being made to make it work, but that is not what it was up for. The only choice is not vouchers. There is a whole movement out there that says, "Hey, if you guys don't change yours we're going to get it changed in some way. We are going to prioritize. We are going to use tax credit."

You can see it all across the country. It is happening. A corporation was just formed that if the citizens of your community are unhappy we have a corporation and you can contact your school system to use it for 10 or 20 years, and they will run it. They formed a corporation, and they will get business.

So one way is do nothing, make believe everything is okay; make believe nobody will understand it, or know it, and I guarantee that sooner or later, but not very late, some sort of external, horrible mess is going to come along which will not make much educational sense.

The other way is to say we are going to do it ourselves. It is going to be painful. We are going to have to do things very differently. It is

going to be very tough, but we are going to be in charge. And basically what we have to do is what doctors do in this system.

They have not cured AIDS. They have not cured the common cold. We do not get rid of them. You know why? You do not get rid of people because of problems. You only get rid of people if you think there is a better way of doing it. You cannot get rid of doctors because if you did get rid of them who will find the answers to these things? Nobody else.

We have to convince the public that we have not all the answers and we are not going to have all of the answers. We are not going to put a perfect system in place. We have to convince them that we are sincere and willing, and we are willing to do painful things because we want the kids to learn.

If we show the public that they will say they have no better place to go. Nobody else is going to do better. And so it is going to be one or the other.

And that leads me to my final anecdote which comes out of my trip two years ago to Poland

and this is pretty unbelievable because it was during martial law. We met with Mr. Gromek, who is now the legislative leader.

As I walked into his apartment he put his finger to his lips like this (demonstrating) and pointed to the window so I could see. Out there were microwave antennae, and we were not to talk there. We went out and walked along the street so we could talk to each other.

And by the way, we have the same problem that Gorbachev has. The system has been in place for a hell of a long time and everybody is not adjusted to change. Think about that. It is going to be very painful for them. It will be just as painful for us.

As I boarded the plane to come back from Poland I picked up a copy of the Wall Street Journal, and there was this story in it. I broke out laughing because it sounded like a Polish joke. And when I laughed the first time I laughed because I thought it was a Polish joke. The second time because I realized it may be a Polish joke but it is also a joke in good taste so please translate it that way.

The story in the Wall Street Journal dealt with an interview by an interviewer of an economist, a Polish economist with the Wall Street Journal interviewer asking him, "Do you really think life in Poland can be lifted from the terrible state of poverty to the state of prosperity?"

The Polish economist thought about it and said, "Yes. As a matter of fact, there are two ways of doing it. One way is a natural way, and the other way is a miraculous way."

The Wall Street Journal interviewer said, "What are they?"

He said, "Well, the natural way would be if a band of angels descended upon Poland and lifted it from poverty up to prosperity".

So the interviewer said, "If that is the natural way, what is the miraculous way?"

He replied, "Well, the miraculous way would be if the Poles did it themselves". (Laughter)

Now I suggest to you that there will be no band of angels to restructure our schools, and it will indeed be a miracle if we do it ourselves because we

have not up to now. But if we do not perform that miracle we are going to have some very bad, some very painful times because if we do not do it ourselves we are inviting other people to do it to us.

Thank you. (Prolonged Applause)

Jerry De La Mar