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CROSSTALK

SHOULD TEACHERS BE REQUIRED TO
PASS A COMPETENCY TEST BEFORE
THEY ENTER THE CLASSROOM?

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GUESTS:

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Federation of Teachers

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MR. WOODRUFF: Should Teachers be Required to Pass a Competency Test Before they Enter the Classroom?

This is Crosstalk. I am Les Woodruff.

Our guests are Albert Shanker, the President of the American Federation of Teachers; and Mr. Gary Watts, The Assistant Executive Director of the National Education Association.

Mr. Shanker has called for a national competency or certifying examination for new teachers. Why do we need that, Mr. Shanker?

MR. SHANKER: We need it because other professions have it and because state and local authorities can't be trusted to do it. We have had about 30 reports on education in the last year. Most of them point out that states have very low admission standards, and as soon as there is a shortage and you can't get teachers, they just hire anybody they can get.

We have many emergency teachers, substitute teachers, temporary teachers. There are no emergency surgeons and unless we have a standard, a national one, not a government standard, I am talking about a profession developing an examination very similar to the bar association

or to examinations that are set up by medical boards.

Look, every other profession has one. You can't be an actuary, a doctor, a lawyer, and you can't sell real estate. You can't do anything. The only thing you can become in our society without passing an examination is a teacher. It is ridiculous .

MR. WOODRUFF: Well, states are certifying teachers, are they not? All the states do that?

MR. SHANKER: They certify them, but many of them do not require an examination. As to those that require an examination, some of them are a joke, requiring a teacher to pass a sixth-grade arithmetic test to be a teacher. That would be like asking a doctor to take an elementary biology course or something like that and passing an examination at that level.

I think if we mean it about a nation at risk, if we mean it in terms of standards, we will have a national standard and we will tell the public that those states that do not adhere to the standard are hiring people who are not competent.

MR. WOODRUFF: As I understand it, these emergency teachers, and I am thinking primarily about

California, all those who are hired are college graduates. They may not have taken education courses per se, but they do have a bachelor's degree. That is not acceptable?

MR. SHANKER: A bachelor's degree doesn't guarantee anything except that you have the bachelor's degree. We have got thousands of institutions of higher education in this country and some of them graduate people who don't know how to spell or how to write or how to count unfortunately. By the way, the people who have gone to law school, why do they have to take a bar exam? They have all gone to medical school. Why do they have to take medical boards?

The fact is that you have got to maintain a standard if you want to guarantee to the public that you have people of a certain caliber.

MR. WOODRUFF: We do have paralegals and we do have paramedics.

MR. SHANKER: We have paraprofessionals in schools to do the jobs that are not jobs of teachers. We agree with that.

MR. WOODRUFF: Is this an attempt to upgrade the standards of teaching or to make sure that only union

teachers get into classrooms?

MR. SHANKER: No, there is no union requirement at all. Anybody who can pass the examination can pass the examination.

By the way I am not talking about a cheap examination, one of these twenty-dollar, multiple choice jobs.

MR. WOODRUFF: I understand.

MR. SHANKER: I am talking about a day with subject matter and a day on professional issues, and I am talking about 1 to 3 years in an internship program. It is not just who is good with pencil and paper, but who is good with children and other adults in a school setting. I think if we are going to turn education around in this country and bring about the improvement that people are talking about, we have got to set a different standard than what we have right now.

MR. WOODRUFF: The teacher circumstance, the demographics of our teachers are very interesting. Some of the things that I have been reading is that a good percentage are about ready to retire, a lot of them.

Before we get to that though, Mr. Watts, what does the NEA think about Mr. Shanker's proposal?

MR. WATTS: Well it is an intriguing idea, but it may not be meritorious and for the very thing that you are leading to.

The major problem that we are going to have to face in the next decade in this country is to bring quality teachers into the profession and to improve the training and measurement of the teachers before they are certified. I am afraid that a national test might be the easy way out, the cop-out.

MR. WOODRUFF: I don't understand that.

MR. WATTS: What we need are more rigorous training programs. We we need are more fundamental requirements placed upon teachers. I think we need a full-year internship. I think we need testing before they are ever entered into a teacher education program. Thirty-four states now have testing programs.

It is true, they are varried. I wouldn't make as light of them as Mr. Shanker does. In many ways the idea of a national test is an idea whose time has passed, and

what we need are more and stronger certification requirements.

I fear that a national test may actually defer us away from--

MR. SHANKER: What do you mean by an idea whose time has passed? What does that mean?

MR. WOODRUFF: That is a good question. I was going to ask the same question.

MR. WATTS: 34 states use testing as a part of the certification process.

MR. SHANKER: Yes, their own test.

What is the cut-off point?

Do you have states that admit people who are at a very, very low level to be teachers?

MR. WATTS: That is another point that I would raise that causes us concern and that is the idea of federalizing or standardizing the tests.

MR. WOODRUFF: Is the standard for teaching in Massachusetts or New York the same for teaching in Alabama and Georgia?

MR. WATTS: No, it is not.

MR. WOODRUFF: Why not?

MR. WATTS: Because the states decide what those standards should be.

MR. WOODRUFF: Is that right?

MR. WATTS: Yes, I think it is right.

MR. WOODRUFF: What about the child who goes to school in Alabama or Georgia compared to the one in New York or Massachusetts?

MR. WATTS: In this country, teaching is a state responsibility and I believe that is where it should rest.

MR. SHANKER: I think--

MR. WOODRUFF: Just a minute, Mr. Shanker.

The President of the United States has raised the question of education to a national level. The Carnegie Commission, the President's own commission, indicates that we have a rising tide of mediocracy in our educational classroom setting.

Why, if that is true then, should we allow this disparity to exist? Why not go with Mr. Shanker's proposal that every teacher has to pass a litmus test and this is it?

MR. WATTS: I don't have trouble with every teacher has to pass a litmus test. I have trouble with somebody at the federal level deciding what that litmus

test is.

Now I know he claims it is nationalized.

MR. WOODRUFF: He said a professionally drawn test?

MR. SHANKER: That is right. It would not be the federal government. It would be a national board which would ultimately be controlled by the profession itself.

I would like to say that I am really shocked that the NEA is standing here as a major spokesman for states rights in this country because the NEA has supported a national mandate for bilingual education. It has supported the idea which is the federal government shoving down the throats of every school district how you teach kids who don't speak English.

They have favored one-third federal funding for all schools.

MR. WATTS: Now--

MR. SHANKER: Let me finish.

That means federal control of schools.

They have favored a Department of Education in the cabinet which we opposed, which means more control by the federal government.

They have favored having the federal government in every single program in our schools. The only thing that they oppose is the idea that there ought to be some federal standards to make sure that somebody who is not literate, who doesn't know how to read, write or count does not teach in public schools.

I don't know what the interest is of the National Education Association in making sure that poor states are able to hire people who don't belong in the classroom.

MR. WOODRUFF: Well, what is your interest in that?

MR. WATTS: I obviously deserve a response to that.

MR. WOODRUFF: You seem to see some evil in Mr. Shanker's proposal.

MR. WATTS: No, not at all. The problem that I have with it is that it isn't enough.

MR. WOODRUFF: It isn't enough?

MR. WATTS: We need to upgrade the standards and qualifications for teachers.

MR. WOODRUFF: How do you determine whether or not you have done that without a test?

MR. WATTS: A single, one-day test--

MR. SHANKER: No, I didn't say that, it is a three-year test.

MR. WOODRUFF: He said we are going to take the test for three years.

MR. SHANKER: One day for subject; one day for education, and one to three years in internship.

MR. WATTS: He is talking about--

MR. WOODRUFF: I want to try to moderate this the best I can.

MR. WATTS: I understand.

MR. WOODRUFF: Without everybody jumping on each other.

MR. WATTS: I understand.

To me every test expert knows that a test does not answer every question. Now we also pretty well know that the quality of instruction in many of the colleges of education are insufficient. The focus ought to be on changing their standards, having higher standards of students before they go into teaching curriculums; having higher expectations before they leave teacher curriculum and the

idea that we can solve all of that by a one or two-day national test is not the answer.

MR. WOODRUFF: Okay, we acknowledge that we have some diploma mills in this country who have been grinding out education degrees with very little requirement to get those degrees--right?

MR. WATTS: Yes, I think there are some.

MR. WOODRUFF: There are lots of teachers teaching today who are products of that education and degree mill who perhaps should not be in the classroom. I don't know if you want to acknowledge that or not, but we have all had bad teachers.

MR. SHANKER: I acknowledge it and I think the best way to close them down is to make sure that their graduates have to pass an examination, and when some diploma mill finds that 95 per cent of their graduates, people that they have awarded degrees to, cannot pass an examination, I think that is the way to shape them up or close them down.

MR. WOODRUFF: Mr. Watts, we have such an entrenched system that to make any dramatic changes is so difficult, and so almost impossible, that that is why you are taking the position that you have, that you are protecting

this system which is a bankrupt system?

MR. WATTS: No. Look at the authority issue.

Mr. Shanker sat here and said it is not going to be a national test, it is going to be run by--

MR. SHANKER: No, it is a national test, but it is not a government test.

MR. WATTS: If it is not a government test, under what authority do we impose it on a state?

MR. SHANKER: We don't impose it.

MR. WATTS: Good.

MR. SHANKER: It is the same as the bar examination and the medical examinations. The states accept it and those states that don't accept it are then recognized as states that hire people below certification and industries that are looking for good places to move where they will get educated--

MR. WATTS: How does that shut down a diploma mill?

MR. SHANKER: It sure does.

MR. WATTS: The other approach is to certify the diploma mill and not give it certification and not accept uncertified graduates which now takes place. There

is a certification program and many colleges are uncertified and yet their graduates can go out and get teaching positions.

MR. SHANKER: Why?

MR. WATTS: Because the school boards will hire them.

MR. WOODRUFF: That is local control again.

MR. WATTS: And if they passed a national test or failed to pass it, the school boards could still hire them.

MR. WOODRUFF: Let me just back up a moment.

Does the NEA have a basic opposition to raising the teaching profession--

MR. WATTS: Absolutely not.

MR. WOODRUFF: Wait a minute. Let me finish the question --to the level that Mr. Shanker suggests that lawyers, doctors, architects, other people who are viewed as professionals, have to meet--some state and national standards, some criteria?

MR. WATTS: I absolutely believe that they should meet some state standards.

MR. WOODRUFF: Yes, but the state standards--

MR. SHANKER: You have just said that the state standards are too low. Not only that, but in every state where the state is trying to put an examination in, and I can give you examples--Oklahoma, Oregon, Florida--in every one of those states, the NEA is opposing the legislation which requires a state examination for teachers or has gone into court to try to knock it out, so what we are getting here is a kind of doubletalk.

First they are against the national examination because they are in favor of state examinations and then in every single state where that is introduced, they will go into court or politically--

MR. WATTS: Well here I am going to have to interrupt.

MR. WOODRUFF: Just a minute now. Let me go to your own definition as why we ought to have it, that doctors do and lawyers to, but states certify doctors and lawyers and there are different certifications standards within the states for doctors and lawyers.

As a matter of fact some doctors can shop around if they are marginal medical school graduates, and find a

state where they can become licensed to practice, and with reciprocity in many states, and then start practicing in states where the state boards would have been tougher.

MR. SHANKER: Yes, but that is now viewed as a problem. They are now talking about tightening up on standards so that people can't--

MR. WOODRUFF: You want to do something similar to that for teachers and you suggest that the present system which has inequities in its certification ought to be changed.

How can you be sure that what you want to go to is going to be any better or worse than doctors and lawyers which you used as an example?

MR. SHANKER: Well, right now teachers are being hired across the country who do not even have the basic skills that the students in their classes need. I am sorry to say that, but there are some teachers--

MR. WOODRUFF: Are they members of your union?

MR. SHANKER: Some of them join our union. Some of them join theirs. Basically teachers join whatever union is dominant in their area. If they come to work in Chicago or New York City or places where we represent the

teachers, they will join us.

If they go to work in a town where the NEA is dominant, they will join the NEA. That isn't the issue. The issue--

MR. WOODRUFF: Do we have a union squabble here?

MR. SHANKER: No, we have a squabble on what should be the educational policies in this country. I say that you cannot tell who is going to be a good teacher by having people take an examination, but you can tell who is illiterate, and anybody who is illiterate I don't care how much they love children, how much they love teaching, how much they love education; if they are illiterate, they shouldn't be teaching and tests do tell you whether someone is illiterate. College graduation is no guaranty that someone is literate.

And any organization that opposes a screen of that sort, that says that the public doesn't have a right to know whether that person who comes before a group of children can read, write and count at a level which is substantially above that which the children are going to need, then standards are absolutely dead.

MR. WATTS: I have got to have a turn at this now.

MR. WOODRUFF: Of course, what does the NEA offer as a counterproposal?

MR. WATTS: We offer just what he said. I will make just one flash statement. I don't want to respond to his inaccuracies, as he describes the NEA, of which there have been multitudes in his comments. He portrays us inaccurately on occasion.

No teacher should be admitted to a teacher training program who doesn't have literacy, and there ought to be a test to measure that, and they should get it, but I oppose the idea that after they are finished, some national test will screen them out.

I also agree with him that a test in and of itself can't determine whether you will be a good teacher. We need more than that. Our point would be that: We need more than a test. We need higher standards. We need rigid enforcement of the standards that are already there, and that authority rests with the states. We need to work at that, where that authority is and exercise that.

MR. WOODRUFF: You have 50 jurisdictions if you are talking about states. You could come up with 50 solutions. Is that what you want?

MR. WATTS: I would rather have 50 improved solutions, yes. I do not believe that the idea of a national test will go anywhere.

MR. WOODRUFF: I understand what both of you are saying, I think. I certainly understand what Mr. Shanker is indicating, and I have yet to hear you say in any concrete terms, Mr. Watts, what your alternative would be.

You say we need something. We want to do this. We want to improve.

MR. SHANKER: Name one state where you have supported an examination?

MR. WOODRUFF: Can you, Mr. Watts, give me something specific as an alternative that you at NEA would like to see states do?

MR. WATTS: We would support an up-graded, significantly strengthened program of certification in every state.

MR. WOODRUFF: That would accomplish what?

MR. WATTS: That would require a test for literacy, that would require practice teaching for a full year, that would require an academic major, that would

require skill development--and all of these prior to be certified to teach.

MR. SHANKER: I think it is an outrage to ask that teachers only be asked to pass a test for literacy, an absolute outrage. That means that somebody who is barely literate could get by.

I think a person who becomes a teacher ought to be an educated and a cultured person in our society.

MR. WOODRUFF: Is a BS or a BA enough. Should they have more than that?

MR. SHANKER: I think a BS with a major in their subject, and then a Master's Degree in Education, and the ability to organize thoughts, the ability to write well, the ability to be way ahead of any of the students, the ability to be a leader on educational matters in the community.

The idea that all the profession wants is a literacy test is absolutely outrageous!

MR. WOODRUFF: That sounds wonderful.

Now let me say something. Every parent would like to have his kid involved in a classroom like that, but we have a teacher shortage looming, do we not? A major one?

MR. WATTS: A major one.

MR. SHANKER: Yes.

MR. WOODRUFF: Where will we get all of these teachers?

MR. SHANKER: You will.

MR. WOODRUFF: With one third or two thirds of them retiring? Where are they going to come from?

MR. SHANKER: I will tell you something. Right now there are kids in college, bright kids, and they go up to the professor who says to him:

"Johnny, what are you going to do when you are graduated from college?"

And Johnny says, "I am thinking of being a teacher."

The professor say: "What, you Johnny? You are so bright."

Now we have got a reputation of taking people in who haven't made it, and I will tell you something about what happened in California and in Florida where a lot of people failed; bright people came up and said "Now I am willing to go into a field that is recognized as having some quality and some integrity."

I think this is one of those areas where, yes,

the examination will keep out the people we don't want anyway, but it is going to attract people who want a challenge and who don't want to go into an easy field.

MR. WATTS: It is going to require more money for teachers.

MR. SHANKER: It will require more money for teachers and it will require better working conditions and it is all a package, that is right.

MR. WATTS: There is no question that it is a package. It involves, first, dignity for the profession. It doesn't have that now. It needs that respect. It needs a good salary to attract. Number three, it is going to need high standards. No question about it.

MR. WOODRUFF: If I am a young person in college and I am taking a science course or I want to become a computer engineer or any of those kinds of things that I could take while in college that would lead to a starting salary that would be fairly attractive to me outside in the real world, teaching, at the moment I would think, salary-wise would be very low on that totem pole. I mean the engineers start where -- in the middle twenties?

MR. WATTS: Teachers start at the mid-teens. Twelve thousand to fifteen thousand to sixteen thousand.

MR. SHANKER: You don't have to talk about engineers. You can just talk about a liberal arts graduate with a "C" average, those people are coming out and they are earning salaries of \$18,000 or \$19,000 as trainees, whereas teachers are starting out with \$12,000, \$13,000 and \$14,000.

MR. WATTS: People in a fast-food restaurant can make as much we know as management trainees.

MR. SHANKER: That is right. We demand tremendous sacrifices on the part of teachers financially and then of course we make it impossible for them to get any sense of satisfaction from their work.

If you are an English teacher and you have got five classes a day with 30 students, that is 150 students and you know they will not learn to write unless they write, unless you mark their papers, unless you meet with them and tell each child what it is that that child could do to shape up the paper, you have got an impossible job. You can't get any satisfaction from it.

MR. WOODRUFF: Do you think that the public is signed on to this package concept? Everybody seemed to get energized. Do you think everybody is signed on to the fact

that we have a rising tide of mediocrity?

Do you think the public is signed on to increasing property taxes for the teachers?

MR. WATTS: No, and neither has the federal government and a lot of other agencies that should. We have had a lot of bully pulpit talk from the federal government that education is important, but at the very same time that that has happened, under the Reagan Administration, federal support for education dropped from 9 per cent to just a little over 6 per cent of their share, so they are actually reducing their share.

MR. WOODRUFF: Federal dollars have always been very, very small.

MR. WATTS: It has always been very, very small, but two or three per cent is more than nothing.

MR. SHANKER: I see that there is increasing support. I see it all across the country. When you get to California, a state with Proposition 13, that added \$2.9 billion in two years.

When you get Ross Perot in Texas, when you get Governor Graham in Florida, when you get Governor Alexander in Tennessee, you have the business community all across

the country--

MR. WATTS: That is only two states.

MR. WOODRUFF: I am hearing a lot of sunbelt talk. What about New York City? What about Manhattan? What about Pennsylvania with a shrinking tax basis?

MR. SHANKER: Massachusetts did last year. Governor Dukakis had legislation that would have provided a tremendous increase in money, but it also provided testing for teachers, but it was knocked down by the National Education Association here because they didn't like pieces of that program.

Now I agree with you that sunbelt states, because they haven't taxed anybody in the past, have more room to move than the states that already have extensive programs, but I think there is tremendous commitment by the business community, and I think it is very important for teachers to come forward and and say: Look, we are not going to fight you on these things; we are going to join you.

MR. WOODRUFF: Mr. Shanker, can I ask you to put a moratorium on your comments for just a couple of minutes and let Mr. Watts respond to all of those things

that you think you haven't adequately responded to Mr. Shanker about?

MR. WATTS: About 15 states have passed comprehensive form packages which include increased funds, but in only two of those did the actual funds increase the amount of revenue above what would have been necessary to keep it on par with inflation and other factors of that kind.

While states are putting more money in, it isn't dramatically that much more yet. There is a slowing down this year from the previous year. However, there is and I agree there is, major attention on education. There is a lot of concern.

We are finding business support, but the answer is not that simplistic. It is packaged. It is a composite, and it is expecting higher standards of teachers and enforcing it.

I am afraid that one single national test is not the answer to this multiple problem.

MR. WOODRUFF: Mr. Watts, is there not a danger that if the public sector education doesn't get involved in some way of increasing professionals, what we are going

to find is that those people who can afford to go to private schools will go, but education is going to face a future of underfunding, mediocre teachers, and very, very poor graduates?

MR. WATTS: Absolutely. The private schools always have the advantage on competition because they can decide who they are going to take and public schools can't.

Again when we started this session, the very first of this session, it was stated that in the next ten years, we have the confluence of several major social trends.

One it is the new baby boom. It will be equal in numerical size to the previous baby boom. Secondly in a trough between booms, the teaching force has aged and some estimates are that as high as 900,000 of the nation's 2 1/2 million teachers will retire in the next decade--as much as 1 1/2 million teachers.

MR. WOODRUFF: Do you want those million to be carbon copies of what we have now?

MR. WATTS: No. We want them to be superior to what we have now, and it is important that the training for those teachers be more rigorous and more demanding.

MR. WOODRUFF: But you put the onus on the school as opposed to the state?

MR WATTS: I put the onus on several places I suppose. That is the one difference. I want the states to stiffen their certification requirements. I want the states to stiffen their graduation requirements. I want tests before they are ever admitted into a teacher training program.

The time to test for literacy is not after they have graduated, but before they enter the program. And if they are not literate, I don't want them in the training program.

MR. WOODRUFF: Mr. Shanker, your green light is back on again. Are we going to be able to accomplish this? Both of you seem to be saying the same thing, that you want better teachers in the classroom, but you are miles apart on how you want to go about testing them. Is there a middle ground?

MR. SHANKER: No, I don't think there is a middle ground. I think it is very simple. I think you make it complicated. I think you make it complicated the way Mr. Watts has done which is to say: Yes, you have got to improve "A." You have got to improve "B." You have got

to improve "C." You have got to improve "D." And when all that happens, everything will be better."

I agree, but it won't happen.

It will only happen if every one of these institutions knows at the end of the whole process, there is a test where they will be viewed as failures, they will have graduated, certified and given degrees to people who can't read, write and count because there is a test that measures that, then they are all going to shape up.

And people who are unqualified and incompetent won't even bother to come in and take those courses if they know at the end they won't get a job because there is an examination, so I have a way of controlling it and handling it.

Mr. Watts has a good general philosophy. Sure if everybody else did everything right, you wouldn't need examinations if you had great medical schools and great law schools, but the fact is that you do need it.

And if the public demands the right to be protected in every other field, then we ought to be protected in the field of teaching as well.

MR. WATTS: One of the most common historical trends has been that when we get a shortage of teachers,

we fill that shortage by lowering the standards.

MR. WOODRUFF: That is what is happening now?

MR. WATTS: And it is happening with the tests.

MR. WOODRUFF: What tests?

MR. WATTS: The State of Louisiana. The state tests.

MR. WOODRUFF: You seem to be arguing his position?

MR. WATTS: No, I am not.

MR. SHANKER: With state tests, you can lower the standards. If they had a single national test, with a national cut-off point, they couldn't do that.

MR. WOODRUFF: You lower the standards. So a national test would lower the standards?

MR. WATTS: No, As a single device it is easy to circumvent. Tests are an important and significant element of the discrimination.

MR. WOODRUFF: If everybody has to toe the same mark?

MR. WATTS: Who is going to guarantee that everybody is going to toe the same mark?

MR. SHANKER: That is the whole point of it.

MR. WOODRUFF: You folks, the education profession.

MR. WATTS: Are we are going to be given authority--

MR. SHANKER: I would make it illegal to practice without having passed the examination the same as it is illegal to practice without a license in any other field.

MR. WATTS: Now the truth is out. If it is illegal, it has now ceased to become a national test, but it has become a federalized test.

MR. SHANKER: No, there is no national government involved in it.

MR. WATTS: Because if it is illegal, you are talking about law. You are not talking about professional things.

MR. SHANKER: Illegal within each state.

Gary, come on, cut it out. You guys have gotten the federal government into every little thing from bilingual education to discipline problems. Why are you against federal intervention when it comes to illiteracy?

MR. WATTS: You want to add tests to the group?

MR. SHANKER: No, I want to get rid of everything else, all these other regulations that created all that paper work, and if there is to be any national

involvement in one thing, it ought to be on the question of a national standard.

MR. WOODRUFF: Who administered the test? The states? There would be a state bar exam for teachers?

MR. SHANKER: No, there would be a national group starting with a prestigious commission which will include teachers, college presidents and professors.

MR. WOODRUFF: Who picks the group?

MR. SHANKER: Probably a foundation.

MR. WOODRUFF: Who picks the foundation?

MR. SHANKER: Probably it would be self-selected. I think it will happen within the next couple of months.

MR. WATTS: Keep asking questions.

MR. SHANKER: ultimately it is going to be the profession that does it the same as the bar association and medical profession do their own.

MR. WOODRUFF: Are you concerned that an elitist group of educators might come up with some standards that aren't going to be able to be met by the overwhelming majority of young people who want to enter the teaching profession?

MR. WATTS: He is not talking about standards.

He is talking about a test.

MR. WOODRUFF: That is a standard, isn't it?

MR. WATTS: Not necessarily.

MR. SHANKER: Oh, come on. Come on. I am talking about a test that is a good test.

MR. WATTS: I am sure you are.

MR. WOODRUFF: Then that does measure standards?

MR. WATTS: You believe that every test can measure any quality?

MR. SHANKER: No, I didn't say that.

MR. WATTS: But I did.

MR. WOODRUFF: We are talking about a test for minimum competency?

MR. SHANKER: No. No. It is not minimum competency. I am opposed to a test on minimum competency. Minimum competency is something that is like a literacy test.

I think that we should not accept anybody in the profession who doesn't belong in the profession and that we should stop talking about minimum competency.

MR. WOODRUFF: Mr. Watts seems to be concerned that whoever is going to draw up the test and

whoever is going to administer the test is not going to do it fairly and it is not going to solve the problem.

MR. SHANKER: How does he know? He hasn't seen it yet.

MR. WOODRUFF: Is that right?

MR. WATTS: No, I don't think that is right. I am saying that a single national test is too simplistic of an answer. We need a stronger testing program at the earlier stages. We need also higher standards and expectations.

MR. WOODRUFF: I understand that.

Gentlemen, we are all out of time.

Our guests have been Albert Shanker, the President of the American Federation of Teachers, and Gary Watts, the Assistant Executive Director of the National Education Association.

For Crosstalk, I am Les Woodruff.

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