

NEW YORK STATE UNITED TEACHERS

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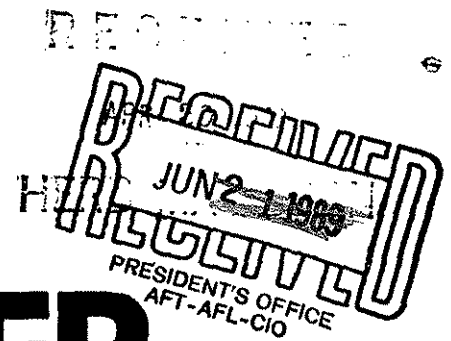
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**'KEEP
THE
CLOCK'**

**The Address of Executive Vice President
Albert Shanker
to the
Fourth Annual Representative Assembly
of the
New York State United Teachers**

New York City March 6, 1976



President Hobart, fellow delegates: I have been somewhat both amused and also concerned by the several references here from time to time to a central committee in this organization. I just hope that all of you will look into history, both current and past, and take note that any society that really does have a central committee does not

have people getting up at micro-phones to complain about its existence.

It is only a few years ago that all of us were brought together to bury the differences that we had previously and to form for the first time in the history of this state or any other state a single and united teacher organization.

In this very short period of time, four years, we have accomplished much. We have organized 217,000 teachers into one organization. We have undone much of the negative legislation which brought us together in the first place. We no longer need concern ourselves with some of the legislative issues, the immediate attacks on tenure, the threat of performance contracting, some of the immediate issues of the day four years ago.

We have developed a system of services which no teacher in this state ever enjoyed before, and which no teacher in any other state enjoys now.

And perhaps more important than any of these things is how quickly the fears of four years ago have disappeared.

I have been approached in the halls and corridors of this hotel a number of times by delegates and presidents of, in most cases, very small locals, geographically quite distant from this city, who have come and said:

"You have no idea of what our feelings and thoughts and fears about you were three and four years ago. We still don't agree on everything. But all of those rumors that were floating around then as to what would happen

if there were a merger today would provide a basis for humor and history, rather than serious discussion."

Now, these are things that are behind us, and we are very fortunate that it was during relatively good times that we pulled ourselves together and developed an organization, a political machine, a level of trust, because all those things are going to be needed in the months and the years to come.

We don't face the problems of three and four years ago. We face problems that are greater and more difficult, and in some cases the answers are further away from home.

I have lived through a nine- or 10-month period in which, if anything bad could happen, it did. But I also know that, unless we have strength, there is still a lot more that could happen that is even worse.

A Very Great Price

I want to spend a few minutes talking about the situation that all of us are in, and when I do that, I have to begin with New York City, because what happens there must, and will, and does have its impact, its repercussions. New York City has been temporarily saved. That means that it has paid its bills on time. But the price so far has been a very great price.

Thousands upon thousands of public employees have been laid off. The services that were there last year are no longer there.

In the school system class size has gone up.

In many schools the problem

is the disruption within the schools, the overcrowding, the packing, the lack of any kind of supportive services which have created a chaotic situation, one which no one can remember having lived through during a similar period of time in the past.

But the pain which so far has been experienced may only be a beginning because, as part of the package which involved the Federal Government in giving temporary aid to the city, the city pledged that it would balance its budget over the next two years. And balancing its budget over the next two years means that all of the cuts and reductions in services and layoffs which took place between last June and September, those reductions were only one-third of the reductions that have to be made; that the schools and the rest of the city will suffer equally this July and, once again, the following July.

When I say "equally," I mean dollarwise. In impact, the problems that are before us are greater than those behind us, because in the first set of reductions there were eliminated evening school programs and summer school programs and recreation programs. But now these things have largely been eliminated, and every single reduction and cut now directly affects the basic condition of the schools and of other services.

Now, what is happening? When you reduce services, when class size goes all the way up, and by all the way up I mean thirty-seven, forty-seven, fifty and fifty-seven and sixty — I don't mean

up to thirty. I am talking about classes that are huge.

When that happens parents who can afford to get out, get out.

When you reduce police, fire, when garbage builds up, when museums start closing, libraries start closing, people who can afford to move, move, and every month the headlines are that the City is not collecting the taxes that it expected to collect, and if it is collecting less, it has to cut even further than it had expected to cut because that is the only way to balance the budget.

Now, many of the industries and many of the individuals who are moving from New York City are not moving to other places in New York State. Many of them are moving to New Jersey, Connecticut, to the south, to the west, elsewhere. And if so, here we get to what this means for the rest of the state.

A major part of the tax monies of New York State come from New York City—from individuals and industries. It should be because there is an awful lot of wealth and then the money goes to places where there is less wealth, and that is correct, too.

But as that wealth moves from New York City and out of the state, it has a devastating effect on the economy of the entire city and that is what accounts for the budget crisis in New York State.

It is bound to have an effect on the ability to maintain state aid and to increase state aid.

We have a basic problem and it all stems from the basic problems of the economy. The City is not going broke because

teachers are affluent and making too much money or because other civil service employees are making a lot of money and getting rich.

That is a good part of the propaganda that all of us have to deal with, that the reason for this crisis is not our salaries, not in our pensions, it is not in our working conditions, it is not from the services that people are getting from public employees. It is in the broader economy. It is that hundreds of thousands of people are out of work because of policies of our federal government and they pay no taxes when they are out of work and when they pay no taxes, instead of paying taxes, they have to receive welfare and Medicaid and food stamps and unemployment insurance, and all sorts of other help. When the money the government gets goes down and the money that it has to pay out to keep people alive goes up, there is a budget crisis.

It is the state of the economy that has done this. (Applause)

But the effect on us is very great. You can see it all over. Yes, the basic issue now is something that none of us ever thought we'd have to face: massive unemployment among teachers, layoffs, not only in New York City, but on Long Island, furloughs, people being laid off there, not even waiting until the first of the year, but in the middle of the year. And this is something that is happening throughout the state, something that has happened throughout the country.

Strikes, the largest number of strikes in the history of this state or any other, took place in New

York this year. I would say in all of these strikes, and certainly in every one that I had a chance to look at the issues, the teachers had no choice.

There is a massive campaign on the part of the school boards not just to hold the line, but to take things away, to totally renegotiate what we have built up over the years, and as a matter of fact, to take things away that were there long before we had collective bargaining contracts and negotiations.

These strikes have been, for the most part, very lengthy. Think of the dollars each teacher lost in places like Nyack and Orchard Park, Eastchester, and I don't want to leave the others out, but those are three rather long ones that come to mind.

Teachers Had No Choice

Thousands and thousands of dollars, and yet the teachers there had no choice but to go.

A state-wide wage freeze we defeated in December, but it is sitting there. Yesterday the front page headlines talked about the fact that maybe the bankers will lend New York State a billion dollars to help in the fiscal crisis. That is good news, but you can be absolutely sure that the bankers sitting in the room with Comptroller Arthur Levitt and Governor Carey are saying that in exchange for lending you one billion dollars, we want cutbacks here and here and here, in order to show that the state is fiscally responsible, and many of our problems are being created in those rooms at the present time.

The legislature this year will,



once again, review our pension system. It is a very bad year for them to be doing that when there is all of this terrible news about the economy and the budget and many of our school districts this year. Many of you at first thought that the word default, well, that is New York City, we always knew they were spending too much; it is about time that something caught up with them. And then very shortly after that you found that your school district couldn't borrow money and that the interest rates became exorbitant and that the money to pay that interest had to come out of the budget.

The problems in one place have quickly become the problems in other places, and many of you called, you called me, called Tom

and you asked us to get through to the state to avert default in your school district. And so far, we have averted it but there continue to be new deadlines just down the road.

Well, it is a bad picture. I am not standing here trying to instill fear. All you have to do is read a newspaper. All you have got to do is go to the bargaining table and see what you face right now. All you have got to do is look at the tax situation in your own county, in your own community. All you have got to do is look at how usually liberal politicians and legislators are running their campaigns now, talking about cutting services and government getting too big.

Even people who used to be very liberal are making speeches

like Ronald Reagan. Without a program it is hard to tell one candidate from another these days.

I think that it is very important that we have an accurate picture no matter how saddening and frightening that picture is, because if you don't have a good picture of what is about you, you can't deal with it.

Something Can Be Done

But I did not come here to leave you with a message of doom and gloom as though nothing could be done about it. Something can be done.

Now, just a few months ago the American School Boards Association put out one of their monthly journals. Maybe it was even as much as a year ago and it was a kind of nostalgia issue.

It was an issue that dealt with education and teachers during the Depression of the 1930's, and I'll say one thing: Every time doom and gloom comes I think of that issue of the *School Board Journal* which has a picture of a school board member steering a ship, a large yacht, through this storm of dark clouds where you can hardly see three feet in front of you. Then it refers you to an article inside in which the big headline is: **DO YOU REMEMBER THE GOOD OLD DAYS OF THE 1930's WHEN WE WERE ABLE TO CUT TEACHERS' SALARIES AND THEY DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING ABOUT IT?**

Well, one thing we have got going for us is that, when any cuts are proposed, we have certainly got an organization that is going

to say something about it and is going to fight against those cuts. (Applause)

Now, there are answers. There are answers both within this state, and also nationally.

We came very close a few weeks ago. There was a public works bill. That public works bill would have provided \$6 billion across the country for job creation; \$215 million would have been provided to the State of New York for public employees alone. That is more money than comes in in Federal aid to education.

The bill was vetoed by President Ford. The veto was overridden in the House. We launched a massive campaign in this state, and we accomplished something: Senator Buckley voted to override President Ford's veto and provide \$6 billion in jobs. (Applause)

You know, it failed by three votes. And it is interesting that Buckley, after we launched the campaign, voted for it, but so-called liberals like Proxmire voted against it.

If other organizations had done the job that we did in this state, if they had sent a telegram to people, to their locals across the country — I think you know which organization I am talking about (laughter) — we might have had three more votes.

We would have had three more votes and we would have had it.

We are not finished. There will be a new bill introduced in Congress within the next few weeks. It will be a revision of the Humphrey/Hawkins bill. It will have widespread support. It will be a multi-billion dollar program

to create jobs throughout the country, both public jobs and private sector jobs. That is being carefully worked on.

If this last bill missed by only three votes, it is certainly possible, it is even likely, that with a massive effort over the coming weeks, that bill can be placed upon the president's desk; and if it is vetoed, we will be able to override the veto. (Applause)

Something else has happened, and that is that people all across the country are realizing that one of the keys to this problem is a federal takeover of the costs of welfare.

I would like to talk about that for just a few minutes.

I suppose that a few years ago a lot of people thought, well, welfare, that's a problem for New York City, it's a problem maybe for Boston, and maybe for Chicago, but it's not a problem for the rest of us, and there is no reason why we should concern ourselves with it.

Federal Takeover of Welfare

Well, that is no longer so. Every one of our upstate counties is now being forced to increase taxes so tremendously at the county level because, as people go off unemployment insurance and go on welfare, every county is required to give welfare of a certain amount because of state law. We have throughout the state and throughout the United States of America county executives demanding a federal takeover of welfare. Last month the AFL-CIO made this a top-priority program.

Unions across the country are doing it. Building trades people, who used to maybe not care about what happened in terms of welfare, now realize that, if the Federal Government takes over welfare, county and state governments will have billions of dollars to start building again, so that they will be going back to work.

Teachers weren't interested back in 1968 and 1969 when welfare reform was proposed by Congress. I doubt if there is a single person in this room who sent one letter or one telegram on the family assistance plan when it was before the Congress of the United States.

But right now, if the Federal Government were to take over welfare, New York State would have \$5½ billion that it is now spending available for other purposes. That's \$5½ billion, and instead of the recession we are facing, instead of the lay-offs, instead of the cutbacks, this state would once again be in a condition of relative prosperity.

There is good reason for the Federal Government to take over welfare. There is no reason why the taxpayers of this state should be burdened with a \$5½ billion tag in taxes because the people of Mississippi and the people of Alabama refuse to feed those people in those states who cannot work. There is no reason for that to happen. (Applause)

Hearings are going to be held on that bill about two weeks from now. That can go through. There is another one. There is legislation in Congress which would provide federal guaran-



tees for government bonds at the local level. That would mean that if your school district couldn't pay or if the state couldn't pay or if the city couldn't pay, it would be the same as a savings bank going broke.

The savings bank has a guarantee of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation. You know the bank can go broke, but you are not going to lose your money. And this would be precisely the same thing with respect to government bonds.

If that were to go through, it would mean that the interest rates would go way down because the reason you have to sell that paper at rates which are

6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, as high as 13 percent, or 13.1 percent, is that people don't want to take the risk. Somebody says, why should I buy these school bonds here when, if the state goes broke on April 1st and misses the state aid payment, we won't get our money back?

If the Federal Government says that you will get your money back, you won't have to be spending millions of dollars in interest. Instead of that, there will be a savings for the school district.

I might say that the Federal Government can do this and make money at the same time. Right now these bonds, state, municipal, and school district bonds, are tax exempt.

That means that people with hundreds of millions of dollars are investing in these and think of all of the interest they pay no taxes on. If the Federal Government were to decide that they would guarantee these bonds and tax the interest on them, the taxes that would be collected on the interest would be more than enough to pay off on any of the bonds that go down on any of the defaults.

Millions for Schools

Now, that is before us, and that means millions of dollars to schools that are not available at the present time.

I have talked about several bills that are before the Congress that have a chance of going, and if any one of these bills gets through, it will totally change the prospects that we have in our next rounds of negotiations.

But let us not say that everything is in the Federal Government. Before our State Legislature, we have to see to it that we not only get last year's state aid — you know, that is what they are sort of setting this thing up for: First they come in and they say, we are going to cut state aid by the following amount, and then they expect that we are going to fight and fight and fight and then we are going to be very happy if we get only what was there last year.

I say that our schools cannot get along in an age of inflation on only what we got last year; that this State Legislature has to give us more.

And we have not forgotten something else either, and that is that we had commitments from the majority of members of the State Legislature when they wanted our votes last time, that this state was not going to have penalties of two for one, and this is another election year and we mean to see that they keep their promise.

The third major problem in the legislature will again be the attack on pensions. I had a column on this several weeks ago. I'm going to be getting this material out. But public employee pensions in many ways are nowhere near as good as pensions in the private sector. They are certainly nowhere near as good as the pensions that the Federal Government pays its employees.

We have to see to it that not only is there no attack or reduction of pension benefits, but we have to see to it that the same legislation which was passed for the private sector which guaran-



tees pension benefits, which provides federal insurance in case the employer does not fund it, which sees to it that we are not compelled to invest our funds in our own employer's security, which is wrong — we have to see to it that we maintain our present benefits, that we improve them, and that we get the same federal protection of our pensions as every employee in the private sector has today.

We do that in a couple of ways. One of them, of course, is political action. I heard someone get up during the debate, a speaker, I agree with him completely, and he recalled a quote from the Governor of New York about Taylor Wines and the Taylor penalties.

A lot of teachers around the state are saying, well, we backed the Governor and look what happened, so this time I am not going to contribute to VOTE/COPE or this time I am not going to get in political action.

That would be the wrong lesson to teach political figures, because when you elect somebody and then he breaks his commitment, if you don't go out and see to it that the politicians learn a lesson, they will do that all the time.

We have got to make sure that every single person who ran for office and gave us his or her word and broke that word knows what the meaning of an agreement is, and we have got to be back in that district to impress upon him the meaning. They must know that we are going to be in there twice as strong this time.

Taxes Not Being Collected

One final footnote on this section of my remarks, and that is this: In a little while I see that there is going to be a meeting elsewhere for what is known as the Independent Professional Association. Let us look at the state of the economy and let us look at our problem with jobs. Why do we have a problem with jobs for teachers? We have a problem with jobs for teachers because building tradesmen are out of work, because garment workers are out of work, because steel workers are unemployed. Our problems relate to the fact that all sorts of things are happening out there in the economy which means the taxes are not being collected and those taxes are our salaries.

One of the major reasons we have got this problem is that independent professional associations do not understand the dependence that we have on the rest of the economy.

I will tell you why the NEA did not do anything about the public works bill, because they thought to themselves: "Public works, that's building things; what's that got to do with us?" They don't have the understanding that if you get a couple of hundred thousand people back to work building things, those people will be paying taxes which will end up as their salaries and as their pension benefits.

Let me move to a discussion of where we go from here within our organization. Yesterday's decision was a very difficult one for all of us. Those of you over the last three or four years have come to me at different times at many a convention and have said, this is terrible, we have to get out. You know that at no time did I ever encourage that. I favored staying in. I favored working for many years, if necessary, to bring them around to our point of view.

When I joined the teacher organization in 1952 in the city of New York I did not join a majority organization. I joined a small organization that had been around for a long time, and I am willing to work for a long time to try to convince other people for a long time. I don't think results have to be quick. But unfortunately we were not given the opportunity to do that.

I would like to deal with a few of the problems that we are now

going to face in terms of holding our own strength and unity together.

The first of these is the fact that a number of our staff people have been wooed to the other side. They didn't wait for us to come here and make a decision. They left before that decision. They were really trying to influence the votes of many of the local leaders in their areas.

They were saying we don't care what you think about this issue, we are going to twist your arm by saying that if you vote that way you don't have us any more, and also you don't have the files in your office and you don't have the arbitration awards, you don't have all the other things.

Well, I am very happy to say that this is just a very small part of staff people, a small percentage of our whole staff: 34 or 35 out of 309 or 310.

Think of the atmosphere in an office where you don't know what you can say because maybe the person next to you has already decided to go over to the other side. And people are constantly calling the Albany office and telling other people, gee, I saw that person down the street at a hotel having a drink with somebody.

Maybe this is what they are talking about. Maybe they are going to go to the atmosphere for that is Kafkaesque, terrible, terrible. It was, it was. It was an atmosphere where everyone doubted the person sitting next to them.

Well, I want to say something about the staff situation.

The 35 people who left were

35 people that NYSUT trained. They are 35 people that NYSUT is replacing, and you are having the same or better services within just a few weeks by remaining with these services.

Those of you who think they are going to get the services of those who left better think twice because one of the promises made to those staff people is that "Maybe very soon you will want to work in Florida or California or Puerto Rico or Texas or somewhere else, and if you come with the NEA you won't be limited to New York."

'We Need Mercenary Army'

One of the strong things that was told to them is, "Look, stay here for the war. We need the mercenary army during this period of time, and when the war is over you can go up there." So those who think they can keep their same staff by moving over may be very surprised, because this was one of the big selling points.

I think that while we are gathered here today in this room, I think there are many of our staff people, people who were called on the telephone or brought to the meetings and who were offered five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven and twelve thousand dollar immediate salary increases, and they decided to stay with you and with this organization.

(Standing ovation)

We have a great staff; they have an extremely important function in the organization. We couldn't run without them, couldn't operate. They know that and we all know that, but we also

know that some years ago we decided that we would have an organization in which elected leadership would determine the policy of the organization and before you consider, if you are, this other thing that is being set up, think of this.

Thirty-five staff people were hired. That is the key staff of that organization down the street.

Who hired them? Elected leaders?

They are hired by Washington staff, not by elected leaders within the state. Some of you were called on the telephone by staff people in the NEA asking if you wanted to be the president of the new organization. That is true. And I think many people may be thinking of going over there, but a lot of them are going to be disappointed because I think they will end up having only one president with a lot of congressmen maybe.

Well, there is one problem we have and it is that some of our locals are torn. They are torn between their loyalty to our organization and the feeling that they want that staff person who left.

But you have to ask yourself if someone could go over to the other side for \$10,000, you may not have him next week anyway. He may go over to the Board of Education or the School Board Association or anywhere else.

Well, there is another problem we are going to have. That is that the NEA is spending a lot of money in this state and they have already opened up a lot of offices and they are going to come to you and they are going

to offer you a lot of services and it may even be that in some cases, in some other areas, their services will look a little better than the services that NYSUT is able to supply today.

That will look very good and you may say, gee, they promised me something that is a little bit more and it is going to be very hard to turn that down because, after all, our job is to represent our members to do the best job for them, and if someone can offer a little bit more, why shouldn't we go with the side that can offer more?

Then what happens is you have to ask yourself some questions.

You know very well that when you get an organization like that which is not going to be large, the finances of that organization will not be able to support services that are superior. Their services will be supported by the dues of teachers from Mississippi and Tennessee and Alabama and South Carolina and North Carolina and California, Colorado and other places. That is what will be happening.

The Old Salesman's Technique

They will be taking the dues of teachers elsewhere and putting them in here to sort of, you know, it is the old salesman's technique. It is like an insurance company that comes in and offers you rates of half of what anybody else is paying. And once you buy the insurance, the next year they come up and they say they have had an unfavorable experience and then you are caught, you are in that program.

It wouldn't be very long until the teachers in those other states



are saying, "Why are our monies going to New York to help pay for their services instead of helping us in Mississippi, which doesn't even resemble the excellent service New York provides for its teachers?" If you are faced with that sort of an offer you will know that it is only for the period of time necessary to break up the organization that does deliver, that has delivered over this period of time, that is still delivering, and as soon as the organization is broken up, when that money goes back to Mississippi and Alabama and the job here has been accomplished, then you will be asked to raise your dues to whatever level is necessary to continue those services or to go out of business.

Now, we have still one more problem. We have the staff ques-

tion. We have this money offer question and yesterday on the floor during the debate there were a number of phrases that received a good deal of support. I know that they expressed the feelings of many teachers.

I think that these feelings unfortunately are not well thought-out and I would like to talk about a few of those appeals which will be out there.

'A Plague on Both Your Houses'

One of them I have heard applauded at several ED meetings. It is that here is this big fight, we think it is terrible, therefore, it is a plague on both your houses.

Now, I have heard that a few times in recent history. I remember when a bunch of poor coal miners who had thousands of

deaths each year were engaged in a bitter struggle against the owners of those coal mines for safety regulations.

I remember a liberal president of the United States saying, "A plague on both your houses."

I remember people in this country standing by, watching Germany swallow up one country after another, and they sat back and said, "A plague on both your houses."

And I remember, more recently, a national commentator watching the struggle between the NAACP and the White Citizens Councils down South with a commentary which said, "A plague on both your houses."

It's not a thought-out response.

There is only one way to maintain the power of teachers in this state. It is not to say, "A plague on both your houses."

In each of the instances that I mentioned, there was a cause that was right and a cause that was wrong. There was an aggressor and there were those who were attacked. I think that before that phrase is repeated again, we should think of where it leads and what the consequences are.

I have been to many of your districts when you have been out on strike. When I stand up before a group of teachers who have been out for a number of weeks — and many of them are perhaps sorry they went out at that point — they are thinking of how much money they have lost and how much they can possibly make as a result of a settlement, and I hold hands with those teachers. I have been

through it, too. I know what they feel like.

One of the things which I share with them at that point is that before you go out on the strike, the issue may be how much of a raise you get or what class size is going to be or whether you have an arbitration clause in the contract or whether you have a sabbatical leave provision or something else. Those are the issues before you go out.

But after you are already out on strike, those are not real issues any more.

There Is Only One Real Issue

Once you are out, there is only one real issue and that is whether you are going to have an organization at all, whether you are going to have a contract at all, whether you are going to be able to have a voice in the future. It will determine what your next set of negotiations will be, and the one after that and the one after that. Because if you don't go out in the first place, that's one thing. But once you go out, if you start going back one at a time so that the whole thing falls apart, then it is not a question of a salary increase or anything else. Then you have got no organization any more. Then your superintendent and your board can do anything that they want with any benefit and with any individual, because you don't have anything to back up your strength with.

That is what the issue becomes after you go out. After you go out, you can no longer measure the benefits in terms of money.

Yesterday we took a vote. In many ways it is like a strike

vote. If you take a strike vote, in many of these votes 60 percent of the teachers vote to go out on strike and 40 percent don't like to strike and vote against it. If the 40 percent who voted against it decide to go and cross the picket lines, you are finished. You base your organization on a willingness to abide by the decisions of the majority, and we are now very much in that same position.

NYSUT is your negotiating committee in Albany for state aid, unemployment insurance, pensions, Taylor Law. I am not talking philosophy, I am not talking unionism, I am not talking professional association. I am talking about the jobs of your members. We are the negotiating committee up there.

Now, how could you negotiate in your district if half the teachers were in another organization? If one-third were in another organization? What would that do to your negotiations at your bargaining table? Why, as it is, everyone here is having enough trouble with all the teachers on the same side. We are.

They Can Destroy, Weaken

As I say, that is your negotiating committee, and anyone who walks down that street is playing exactly the same role as a teacher after a strike vote who walks through a picket line. It is a destructive role because the NEA cannot build a united organization in this state. They cannot do it. They can destroy, they can weaken, they can take away this group and that group, they can go to Albany and say,

"Now there are two teacher groups, so don't pass what that other group wants."

They don't have a chance, when you have a vote of 80 percent that want to get out, they have absolutely no chance of having even a majority organization in this state. The only thing that they can do is to set up something that has enough credibility to hurt the majority. That's all, the only role that can be played by them.

When this whole disaffiliation thing came along, one evening I was reading a magazine and I ran into something here that I think is appropriate in this situation. It is from a magazine called *The Public Interest*, and was published in the winter of 1970, and it had a story about what happened on April 11, 1969, two days after the Students for a Democratic Society occupied University Hall at Harvard University with a whole series of demands which would have destroyed the academic structure of the university. And at one meeting a professor stood up to speak to the faculty about what that particular group was doing and here is what he said to the professors.

He was talking to professors, some of whom were sympathetic to some of the students' demands, just as some of us may feel that on one issue or another maybe the NEA was closer to our particular views than NYSUT is.

'The Most Unbelievable Thing'

He said: "Your trouble is that you have not studied the litera-

ture of the subject. I am not going to give you a long reading list, but I must summarize for you one single item on that reading list. This is a fairy tale by Hans Christian Andersen, a fairy tale which in the dark days of Nazi occupation the Danes used so subtly and so effectively. That fairy tale was called 'The Most Unbelievable Thing.'

"There was a kingdom and in the kingdom there was a king and he had a princess, and he was interested in the progress of the arts. And at a certain point he announced that he would give the princess in marriage to the man who would accomplish the most unbelievable thing.

"There was great excitement and tremendous competition in the land. Finally, the day came when all those prepared works had to be presented for judgment. There were many marvelous things, but towering high above them was a truly wonderful thing. It was a clock — a clock produced by a handsome young man. It had a most wonderful mechanism showing the calendar back and forth into the past and into the future, showing the time, and intellectual and spiritual figures of history throughout mankind were sculptured around the clock. And whenever the clock struck, these figures exercised most graceful movements.

"And everybody, the people and the judges, said that yes, to accomplish a thing like that was most unbelievable, and the princess looked at the clock and looked at the handsome young

man, and she liked them both very much.

"The judges were just about to pronounce their formal judgment when a new competitor appeared, a lowbrow fellow. He, too, carried something in his hand but it was not a work of art, it was a sledge hammer. He walked up to the clock and he swung out and with three blows he smashed up the clock, and everybody said, why, to smash up such a clock, this was surely the most unbelievable thing.

"And that was how the judges had to judge.

"And this is relevant to the present situation at Harvard. It is now 100 years since President Eliot started converting what, after all, was an obscure college into a great university, the greatest university in the land.

"What has taken 100 years to create can be destroyed in as many weeks. This university, like the clock in the story, like all great works of art, is a frail and fragile creation, however beautiful, and unless you do something about it, and unless you let the administration do something about it, this wonderful work of art will be destroyed and the guilt will be yours."

Our organization is a wonderful work of art. It has been put together. If destroyed, it will never be put together again. To each of us goes the responsibility of seeing that it is the clock that survives and not the sledge hammer. (Prolonged standing ovation)