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REMARKS OF
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I would like to touch on a number of topics which I think have some kind of thread. I guess the thread is my interest -- and your interest -- in both public education and union education. I would like to start with a few of the priority problems hitting us in the public education field. Now before discussing these problems, I would like to point out that all of the major problems that we are facing in public education stem from a very radical change in the attitudes of the public toward public schools, public education, and public school teachers. If throughout most of the history of this country we had taken our Gallup or Harris polls or polls of our AFL-CIO members, we would have found that the schools were thought of as very good, important institutions. They were regarded as an avenue of mobility for most of the children of our members, and teachers were held in esteem and high regard. There is also no question that somewhere in the late 1950's or early 1960's all of that changed very rapidly, and is continuing to change.

Now there are probably as many reasons for this as there are people in this room who would care to develop theories, but I would like to suggest one overall reason for that change, and think about what that implies. Until World War II very few people in this country went to college. As a matter of fact growing up as I did in New York in the 30's and 40's I know that huge numbers of people in the neighborhood that I grew up in did not graduate from elementary school. Those who had an elementary school diploma had an indication that they had accomplished something which many others around had not accomplished and

the high school graduation was something which was quite rare. College was known only to the doctor, the dentist or the lawyer. Teachers were people who had gone to normal school or college for 1 or 2 years. Some high school teachers had actually graduated from college and had a BA. So, throughout most of the period before World War II and through World War II the overwhelming majority of people had achieved a level of education which was by present standards very, very low. At the same time, teachers who filled the public schools were among the top 5% or 3% or 4% in terms of education -- they were part of an educational elite. I suppose that the attitude of my parents was typical. I'm sure it was typical of practically all the parents in the community. They thought that if we didn't go to school, we were not educated. They trusted the doctor for medical advice because the doctor was an expert.

(Those were the days before malpractice became popular.) They trusted the lawyer and the dentist and the teacher as educated people. The parent regarded the teacher as someone who was going to bring "my child" away from "where I am" up to some other position.

Now after World War II we got the G.I. Bill of Rights, and along with that the opening of institutions of higher education. Millions of people went to college and the percentage of those educated changed very dramatically. The result is that we no longer live in communities where teachers and doctors, lawyers and dentists compose a very small handful of people who have higher education and who everybody else looks up to.

More and more teachers operate in communities where the majority of people have had an education that is equal to their own, and in many cases greater. You now have communities where the average parent says "I could do a much better job educating my kid if I weren't

busy with my job. We have gone through a transformation of attitudes as a result of opening up education and creating educational mobility. The problem this creates for educational institutions is that they lose authority; the mystique that surrounds them is lost; and they lose public respect. The average man or woman in the street now feels that it is proper to criticize and to question educational institutions in a way he or she never would have before. In a peculiar way it is the very success of educational institutions that has brought waves of criticism to public education and the schools. This means that if teachers of public education are to continue to have public support they can never again rely on the respect of a public which is by and large uneducated. Right now we are living through a kind of an adjustment period where teachers and schools haven't quite understood that the good old days are never going to return again.

The current loss of respect for the schools is resulting in a number of very serious attacks on public education. I'll talk about a few of them very briefly. The most serious one, of course, is the movement for tuition tax credits. It is a movement which has been around for awhile but it became really serious for the first time last year when a bill passed the House of Representatives and failed narrowly in the Senate. It has been reintroduced this year. It will undoubtedly become part of presidential politics next year. One can easily understand why public school teachers would oppose tuition tax credits. But there are also reasons why the AFL-CIO opposes them.

Are there parents who are now somewhat dissatisfied with public schools? Sure, many of them. Are many of them considering taking their children out? Sure. Is one of the questions they ask themselves, "How much is it going to cost?" They sure do. If you say to them, "Well, we're going to help you out and give you

\$500.00 towards the tuition," will some parents who are interested but haven't made the move take that \$500.00 and say "okay, that does it"? Yes, there are some. Is there a majority? No, I don't think so. Well suppose it's only 5% or 6% or 7% or 10% -- it's some small percentage. The number isn't small but the percentage is small. Well which parents will take that tuition tax credit and move their children over? Is it likely to be parents who are economically poor? Probably not. They are not going to be able to dig down and get the additional money since that \$500.00 was to be no more than 50%, meaning that the tuition would have to be at least \$1,000. for the parent to get \$500. Tuition could be even more, with the result that a poor parent would be unlikely to match that sum. Who would leave the public schools? Well, probably the most affluent would leave. When they leave what happens? Generally, student achievement test scores in reading and writing and mathematics correlate perfectly with the income of parents. This means that by taking the higher income children out of public schools that you automatically contribute to a drop in average reading and math scores. The scores will go down because those children who bring the scores up are no longer in school.

What happens next? When parents move from one town to another, part of the reason they're moving is that they want their children to sit next to other children who will be models for them. Their question is, "which children do my children sit next to?" "Are they going to learn one thing that's negative or are they going to learn something else that's positive?" Children learn from each other. When you take these children from wealthier families out of the schools you make the schools less desirable. Not only that, but these children have parents who are the most politically active and politically connected. They are the ones in the PTA. They are the ones who are fighting for state aid to education and federal aid to education and all sorts of programs.

If you take 5% of those parents out of the public schools and move them over to private schools, you substantially reduce the political power of the public schools to operate. The next year those parents are not going to the state and federal government and to the school board for more money for the public schools. Rather, they are going to be saying, "Hey, \$500. is not enough. Give me \$750. for my private school. Give me \$1,000. Give me the same amount that you give to a child in the public schools." There is no question that if you start giving money to parents to send their children to private schools, it will be the beginning of a process that will end public education as we know it. We will always have a public school system, to be sure. But, in that public school system will be those children who couldn't get into any private school. Remember, that is the nature of the private schools. They have the right to say no -- private schools do that. There are also the children who are too expensive to educate in private schools -- the handicapped, and the emotionally disturbed. We will end up with a public school system that is the poor house.

Now what's going to happen over in the private sector? And this, it seems to me, is the major interest of the labor movement in opposing tuition tax credits. The experience in private schools will follow the experience that we have had in private health insurance. Now everybody in this room knows that once upon a time there was no private health insurance and you used to go to a doctor, and the doctor charged \$5.00. Then we all negotiated schemes for our workers that said if a worker goes to a doctor Blue Shield gives him \$5.00. The doctor found that out and the doctor said okay now it's \$10.00 and the worker still paid \$5.00 but now the insurance scheme paid \$5.00. So, we negotiated again and we got a \$10.00 payment, but then the doctor said now it's \$15.00 or \$20. We found out that with private health insurance no matter what you negotiate the worker still has to pay something. All we've done is

escalate the amount of money that the doctor, or the hospital or the laboratory gets. The worker still has to pay on top of that. This, of course, is why we're trying to change the nature of the delivery of health services.

Is there any doubt that the same thing would happen once large numbers of students left the public schools? Public schools would be closed, the buildings would be sold, the textbooks would be sold and the teachers would move over to the private sector. Eventually, we would have a very small number of public schools to take care of the disturbed and handicapped, and we would have private schools all over the lot. The private schools could charge what they want, using the tuition tax credit as a base. What we will have done is wiped out one of the major free institutions and avenues of mobility within our society and created another sort of private health insurance scheme where every worker is going to have to pay \$500, \$1,000 or \$1,500 to private schools on top of the tuition tax credit. If we think first of what this means to workers and their standard of living, and then ask a second set of questions: "What is the nature of these private schools?" "Do they provide the same experience in bringing people together that the public schools have provided?" Then we can easily see why the AFL-CIO is against tax credits.

In California we have an even more serious threat -- the fathers of Proposition 13 are now supporting vouchers. With vouchers every parent gets a voucher equal to the per pupil amount spent in the public schools. This can be taken to any school to buy a child's education. It sounds like free choice. That is the beginning, but what happens after the public schools contract for this service? Is there any law that says private schools have to limit their fees? Is there any law that says that they have to educate the handicapped or provide any of the other services the public schools must provide? Not at all.

I should add one more item to the list of attacks on public education, and that is in the area of higher education. There is a tremendous movement for government help to private institutions at the expense of public institutions. That is another way of saying there is a tremendous movement to help institutions that charge high tuition and to raise tuition at public institutions. A lot of research has been done showing that for every \$100.00 tuition is raised many people are kept out of college. The people kept out are by and large the sons and daughters of our members. Those who are in absolute poverty have access to government funds designed to help those who are very, very poor. Of course, the very rich don't have to worry. It is the people who are in between -- generally the children of workers -- who are not given that much public assistance. One proposal that's been placed before Congress comes from the New York State Board of Regents. I don't think it has a chance of going anywhere, but there are others that are similar to this that do. The New York State Board of Regents says that the federal government should give a tuition tax credit to college students in this country that amounts to 20% of the first \$1,000 and 100% of any tuition above \$1,000. It is quite clear what they are interested in -- they are really saying that if you are in a low tuition institution which charges \$700.00 you are going to get \$140.00 in help from the federal government. But, if you are in an institution that charges \$3,000 then you will get \$2,000 which is the amount over \$1,000. By the way, it could be one of the most inflationary items in any education program if the federal government and state governments decide that they're going to fund very high tuitions.

Well, I said I would touch on some of the public education issues. I would like to now deal with a few issues in terms of union experience which I

think will be of general interest because as far as I know some of these things are not widely done. A few years ago the teachers in New York State in the NEA and the AFT merged, and that resulted in the creation of an organization in New York State of 200,000 -- the New York State United Teachers -- the majority of them coming from the National Education Association. A number of us felt that this was a rather interesting experiment in terms of research because out of 200,000 people there were 110,000 that had been hit over a period of time with materials which were hostile to the AFL-CIO. Everytime we tried to organize them and bring them into the union they would put out literature saying that, "If you are in the AFL-CIO you'll just be another worker," or "You'll be forced to punch a time clock." "You won't be a professional anymore," or "George Meany will dictate to you what the teaching of a lesson is," or "If New York City goes out on strike, Buffalo will have to go out on a sympathy strike." I can put together a folder of all of their junk that was distributed in all the jurisdictional campaigns. I assure you that each and every one of the points that I just mentioned would be adequately represented by rather nice looking literature that was very carefully designed to make people feel that they were about to lose their freedom, their identity, and their status. The merger took place in 1972. In 1975 we decided we would do something to find out where our own members were because we didn't know. We had 110,000 people who had been in the Association before, and we had about 70,000 that had been in the union and we had about 40,000 or so who came in just because they were excited by the whole thing. They had never been members of anything before. We decided that if there was to be a big fight between the NEA and the AFT we needed to know where teachers would be likely to go. How did they view the organization? So, we decided to hire Louis Harris pollsters, and they did a very widespread poll of

both members and leaders. It was broken down into 17 different regions so that we could find out whether there were regional differences, differences in age, differences between men and women, and differences between those who had been in the union and those who had been in the Association. At the same time we broke out a certain number of leaders, local presidents, delegates to the state convention, and delegates to the national convention so that we could tell whether there were any major differences between the leaders and the members.

We did three additional polls this last year when we were faced with a challenge in the State University of New York, which is a unit of 16,000 professors and instructors and non-instructional professionals on campuses throughout the state of New York. We were being challenged by the National Education Association and the American Association of University Professors and we were vulnerable because when the state legislature passed an agency shop provision, 11,000 professors who had never joined AFT one day found that they were being checked off for approximately \$200. a year in dues. That does something to a college professor. So, the other organization came in and capitalized on that, and immediately got a show of interest and here we were faced with the possibility of losing all 16,000 because maybe the 11,000 who were now being taxed felt that their academic freedom had been violated, and would vote against us. So, in the course of that election campaign the Harris Associates did 3 polls to find out who the electorate was, where they were, and what they were thinking.

Now I talk about these polls because I think that one of the things that the labor movement, individual unions, and the AFL-CIO itself needs to do more of, is some sort of frequent polling of members. (By the way, the results of this poll are available and we could send

copies to you if you ask for them.) One of the first questions we asked was, "Do you think you should be represented by a professional association or a union?" That had been a big question in the jurisdictional fight earlier. The leadership voted pretty strongly for a union, over the professional organization which showed that we had educated them in the 3 years of affiliation. The members were torn -- they wanted both. We then asked them a series of questions about the AFL-CIO, since for years they had been given all sorts of anti-labor material. We asked them things like, "Does the AFL-CIO interfere in what you're teaching in the classroom?" Answer: "No." "Does the AFL-CIO help you locally?" Answer: "Yes." "Does it help you in Albany?" Answer: "Yes." "Does it help you in Washington?" Answer: "Yes." "Does it make you stronger?" Answer: "Yes."

All sorts of questions about the AFL-CIO were answered positively. Then, after you go through that whole list of questions, there is one question that is different, "Has being affiliated with the AFL-CIO lowered your prestige in the eyes of the community?" Answer: Overwhelmingly, "yes." Well, that is a very important thing to find. I wonder how many other workers in the AFL-CIO feel that way. I don't think that it is only teachers or college professors who have these views. Could it be that all the negativity that comes out in editorials and radio and TV only affect teachers, or does it affect other workers as well? Maybe they feel, "We have to have a union," but maybe they also don't feel quite right about it because they're constantly being bombarded with the image of what the newspapers and television think a union is.

Something similar to this came out in one of our polls of the college professors. We asked -- first of all we wanted to find out whether these college professors were a liberal or conservative audience. For example, were they against the agency shop because they like Richard Vigurie, or they are "right-to-workers," or something like that. And, are they really against the

agency shop? If so, which ones are against the agency shop? We asked them a number of other questions -- things like, "Do you favor national health insurance?" Eighty-two percent favor national health insurance. "Do you think that the union movement does good progressive things and fights for the underdog?" About 85% think the union movement is a good movement and has done good things for workers. "Does the union movement fight for higher education?" Answer: "Yes." An overwhelming majority said that it does good things for higher education. So, we took a number of other liberal issues and we found that we had an overwhelmingly liberal audience. Not only that, one of these polls was taken at the time of the last election when Governor Carey was running against Durea and we found that among college professors 66% voted for Carey as compared to 52% of the general electorate. Professors were much more liberal than the general population in the state, and this was true wherever they were -- even in little rural areas in old teachers' colleges, the professors were liberal. By the way, we also/^{asked}some questions on quotas. They were very strong for affirmative action and very strong against rigid quotas. That cut across ethnic groups. We got almost the same results from minority groups as from professors in general. We wanted to see whether this was an issue with the campaign. It turned out not to be an issue. Then we asked them -- remember they had already said that unions are good, and unions make you stronger -- then we asked them a question which said that, "If a union does not collect dues from everyone, is the union considerably weakened in its ability to deliver?" Eighty-five percent said yes. It is considerably weakened. Next question, "Do you favor the agency shop?" Eighty-four percent said "No," including a majority of those who are voluntary dues payers. The majority of those who are already paying opposed the imposition of a payment of dues. So, there you've got it.

Two questions right next to each other -- one of them: "Will it considerably weaken the ability of the union to perform if you don't do this?" Answer: "Yes." Next, "Should you do it?" Answer: "No." And all the other questions indicate that they want the union to be strong. Well, why do I report this? I report this because I think that very frequently we believe that our people behave and think logically and we make certain assumptions when we are in a campaign. We make assumptions that because our own members believe one thing, they will automatically move over and believe the very next thing that is so closely related to it. On dozens of items on these polls -- not just this one -- we found that first of all you have to find out what it is that the members are thinking. Then you look for what you think is a breach of logic -- a place where they did not move to a certain logical conclusion depending on what they wanted. That is a place for the union to engage in some educational work.

I would add a footnote to this. In some of my nastier moments I have thought of renting myself out as an advisor to Vigurie or to one of these right-wing outfits. I sit on the AFL-CIO Council and I vote for the resolutions that come out and are published, and the ones I vote for I support. I don't think that we have yet seen the most effective campaign that the right-wing can run in this country. It would be directed to labor union members. If the right-wing were to take out 5 or 6 or 7 or 10 positions that the labor movement has taken which are not necessarily the positions that our members totally support, and if Mr. Vigurie or others got a computerized mailing list of trade union members and wrote them saying "Do you know some of the AFL-CIO positions?" He might get some interesting results. We know that some of our positions are complex. For instance, we supported major parts of Carter's tax reform program before he gave up on it. We supported taxing not just the three martini lunch type of thing, but we supported removing tax incentives on mortgage payments for higher priced homes among other things.

Now, of course, what we intended to do was to change the income tax rates and make a more progressive tax structure. But, any right-wing character who wanted to go through our own program and say, "The AFL-CIO stands for these things -- if you don't like them contribute to me." This kind of vulnerability means that we need to launch a major campaign to make sure our own members fully understand our positions. I would submit that without a tremendous amount of effective education within our own ranks, the right-wing could have a pretty successful time among union members.

There is one other item that I want to add to these thoughts on union education and that also relates to an experience in New York State. Since 1972 the 200,000 teachers in New York State have contributed voluntary COPE funds ranging from a minimum of \$400,000 a year to a maximum one year of about \$700,000. Al Barkan tells me this is a record for any union, anywhere. I raise this in a union education context because, as you know, throughout most of that period of time we have operated under an open shop. Our people are all civil servants. You know all the arguments about tenure. Our members have tenure. This means none of them feel that the union has special power to affect their lives positively or negatively. When they contribute large sums of money to COPE they're doing it because they have been reached and they have been educated. One of the things that I think that we ought to be doing is taking the successful experiences around the country with voluntary collections and contributions and finding out why it is that those members contribute and why it is that they participate politically. One of the things that we can do in response to the Vigurie's of the country -- one of the things I guess we have done and which I'm not in very much sympathy with -- is to shout about the tremendous power that the right-wing has and how they're taking over the country with computers. Now, what's the right-wing doing? I think that the right-wing is doing exactly what the labor movement has been doing all the

years that it has been effective. We have a computer. We have membership lists. We have issues. If they have done well for a few years, maybe it is because they've copied us and maybe in copying us they have sharpened the thing up a little bit over a few years and done it a little bit better than we have. What I am saying is that I am very skeptical of the attack that we make on groups that are collecting money and using computers, because in a sense it excuses us from doing the same kind of thing. There are things that we can do to educate and reach and mobilize our members -- the fact that the right-wing is doing it should enable us to get to our own members and say, "Look if you don't get out and do the same thing and participate and do things which you have not done up until now, you're going to be very badly hurt, because the other side has learned from us and they're doing some things that are very effective.

Now I want to raise two other points, then I'll be quiet. We are seeing many articles about the declining influence of the labor movement. I've been reading articles like this for at least 25 years. There are some things happening that hurt us. There is a movement of jobs out of the areas that are unionized. Some are moving out of the country, and others are moving south. We also know that the 1980 census is very likely to provide us with a massive redistribution of members of Congress and that the industrial north is going to lose a large number of seats, and those places in the country that are not heavily unionized are going to gain a tremendous number of seats. Therefore, unless certain other things change the labor movement is in for a rough time in Congress -- a time which will make the last 10, or 15, or 20 or 30 years look like the golden age of labor in the Congress of the United States.

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Now one final issue is a problem which we haven't talked about very much in the labor movement. But, I think it's going to be a major topic in the next couple of years and beyond. It is quite likely that for the first time in the history of our country, we are going to go through a period of time where the standard of living of our people does not increase. As a matter of fact we may go through a number of years where the actual standard of living decreases. The reasons are obvious. One is that we are going to be paying for our energy.

The other is also obvious. It was two weeks ago we had two Cabinet members on the same day -- Schlesinger and Brown -- saying that we may have to use armed forces to intervene to protect our energy sources in the Middle East. That was two days after they said that somebody in Iran had taken over some of our top secret material. The combination of those two things -- the fact that we are going to be shipping out a lot more of our goods and our wealth in order to pay for energy on the one hand; and secondly, that we now have two members of the Cabinet who for the first time since the end of the Vietnam War have talked about American military intervention and have thereby also raised the question of our ability to intervene militarily -- means that there is no question but that we are in for both a squeeze on energy and increase (with a few more Iran's or something like it or Afghanistan's, Angola's, Mozambique's, etc.) in the feeling that our enemies are getting closer to us,

that it is due to our weakness, and that had we been stronger or had Carter done something, things would have been different. If there is a decline in the standard of living, this will be the first time in the history of the United States when people are not saying look, "I'm getting richer every year, I have a bigger house, I have a bigger car, I've got more for vacations, more for clothing. I'll pay a little more for federal aid to education, for help for the handicapped, for college scholarship programs, for national health insurance, for social security, for a whole bunch of other things. Yes, I will share the increased wealth that I am getting." What happens now if there isn't any increased wealth? What happens if next year or the year after that or the year after people have to live on 3%, or 2%, or 5% less, in real terms, than they had lived on the year before -- not just individuals who have fallen into bad times but the country as a whole. How do we hold our own members when it comes to the persuasiveness of a Proposition 13 type of mentality. If each member has to worry about coping with a little less in these other areas what happens to their support for social programs which also determine the quality of life? What is it that the AFL-CIO's own unions and labor educators can do to prepare for that? On that happy note