

NOTES FROM SHANKER SPEECH TO STATE FED. PRESIDENTS IN NEW ORLEANS, OCT., 1979

1. How we deal with the decline in support for public education will determine the fate of an important institution in our society. We are at a crucial point in the history of Western democracy. Such problems as inflation and the energy crisis mean we have to make choices relating to the quality of life and to establish priorities. References to the G.N.P. Cites Choose We Must by Amita Etzioni, chapter called "The Individual and the Future of Society." Thesis: This society must rebuild the machine that makes everything prosper.
2. Declines in birth rates and enrollments have been accompanied by rapid decline in the percentage of the population directly involved in public education or who perceive themselves as having a stake in public education, i.e., more couples without children, more senior citizens.
3. Before WWII teachers were considered a highly educated elite, highly regarded by society. They have, however, done their jobs so well that they have created a country filled with educational equals. Cites Ladd Study which reveals that more education=more radical ideas=more negativism about our institutions. Yet there is adequate evidence to show that there has been considerable upward mobility through education.
4. Teachers must earn respect now by showing they have something special to offer. Like doctors and lawyers they need to build a mystique.
5. Along these lines, educational schools must be built up and upgraded, not destroyed. There should be institutions for educational research.
6. Underscored the anti-public education mood by citing the following books:
 - DeLone-Small Futures
 - Bowles-Schools in Capitalistic America
 - Colin Greer-????

7. Attacks on public education are surfacing in many forms:

A. CBO's -- Trend toward funding educational programs through CBOs rather than public schools, despite the lack of: criteria for teachers; accountability; assessment of learning; assessment of job performance; job placement programs.

We are talking about several billion dollars that could funnel through public education. This situation could lead to the creation of a federally financed alternative school system devoid of standards or accountability which is part of a system of political payoffs to mayors in terms of how funds are distributed.

EXAMPLE: In NYC \$56 million is going to CBOs while public schools are closing.

B. Tuition Tax Credits and Vouchers.

C. Truth in Testing -- NEA says they want a moratorium on tests. What they really want is the abolition of testing. The public thinks, "They are doing a lousy job and want to throw the evidence away."

Arguments Against Total Public Scrutiny of Tests:

1. Once answers are given out the tests can't be reused. Thus tests can't be given as frequently, and will cost more money because it takes years to develop sound, culture free tests.

2. Total scrutiny will mean lots of lawsuits, which in turn will mean the release of tests will be held up by litigation. This will score the end of testing. Once you start a process of litigation, it could filter down to the classroom teacher.

D. Creation of Separate Department of Education.

E. Prop 13 Type Legislation.