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AL SHANKER SPEECH

In the United States today, there are a number of problems that have a dramatic impact on education, which do not at first appear to be education related. For example, the United States suffers from having an industrial plant that was for the most part built during the 1920s and 1930s. These plants cannot compete with those of other countries, which had to rebuild after World War II because their industrial capacity was destroyed during the war. There is a certain irony in the fact that because the United States was spared some of the property devastation of war, we now have outmoded physical plants in many of our most vital industries. Those plants must be rebuilt and that requires money.

Now, of course, the current international situation undoubtedly means greatly increased military expenditures. And, of course, one other problem that must be mentioned is the very rapid decline of the major cities of the country. When I speak of decline, I am not referring simply to a loss of population. I am talking about the fact that New York, Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, San Francisco, Washington, D.C., and practically all our major cities are on the verge of bankruptcy. Bankruptcy is not an hysterical word used by an outsider; it is the term being used by the bankers and financial experts themselves.

Part of the reason these cities are facing such difficulties is that they offered better social services for the poor than other localities. The poor realized that in these cities they would have better hospitals, libraries, schools than elsewhere, and cash relief assistance would be higher than in other areas and so they came to the cities in great numbers. These services were better in these cities because the cities substantially supplemented whatever federal aid was given.

As these cities increased their services for the poor, they also had to raise taxes to pay for the better services. But those who paid the taxes began to ask why they should stay in the city and give so much of their income to the poor when, if they moved away, they would be able to keep more of their money for themselves. These cities then became the repositories of the poor and the unemployed. And as the people with higher incomes--the taxpayers--moved away, there was no one left to pay the taxes to support these services for the poor left behind.

The effect this has had on education has been immense. These cities now have the poorest children, those with the greatest problems at home and with the greatest problems educationally. Yet if the cities keep taxes at the level they are now, they won't be able to provide all the services these children need, and they will have inadequate school systems. If they raise taxes, however, they will drive out of the city those remaining taxpayers and businesses that have not yet given up on them. Either way, the cities will lose.

There is a movement afoot in the U.S. now to reform the way in which education is financed. As you know, education in the U.S. is primarily financed at the state and local level, with some money for special programs coming from the federal government. There are some school districts that spend \$700 per year on a child and others, right next door, that spend \$7,000. The courts have declared in several states that this is unconstitutional. Those court decisions for the most part were handed down in the 60s--a period of prosperity--when they resulted in general increases in education to enable the poorest districts to be raised to higher levels. Now, with the general shortage of money, the opposite result: the richer school districts are now lowering

their expenditures to the level of the poorer ones. The result has been that a larger number of people end up saying, "I'd rather not spend any money for school taxes. Just give me the money to send my children to private schools. Give me a voucher. Give me a tax credit, give me some form of financial assistance so that I can go out and purchase the education I want for my children." If such programs of direct aid to private schools are ever enacted nationally, they will have a devastating effect on public education.

Politically, the demographics of the decline in enrollments is greater than one would expect by the fact that we have lost in eight years 7 percent of the pupil population. At the same time we are losing pupils, we are gaining in the population of older people who now live longer. Therefore, the percentage of adults in a population who now have children in school has declined very rapidly--from something like 38 percent a decade ago to 24 percent this year to 19 percent two years from now. The over-55-years-old population in the United States also vote in higher percentages, 65 percent compared to only 45 percent for the below-55 age group. This makes it even more difficult to bring political pressure to bear for education.

There are several other items which should be mentioned. One is that, because of the shift in the population in states and regions in the United States, the next two years will be the last time in the history of our country that the industrial North will have a majority in the House of Representatives. The U.S. census is now taking place, and that census will show that, beginning in 1980, the South has the majority. And if the South has the majority, it means that after reapportionment of seats

the South will have a majority in the House of Representatives. The South is still relatively unindustrialized and much more conservative in its attitudes toward government spending, so we can expect that there will be a shift in public policy in the United States from relatively liberal to overly conservative. And this shift would be much greater than a shift of, let's say, losing the labor party election in England and moving over to the conservative party. The political difference is quite substantial.

At the same time that there is less money available at the federal government has passed many pieces of legislation requiring that school districts spend more money for particular purposes. For instance, several years ago the Congress passed legislation mandating an appropriate education for every handicapped child. So, in a city like New York, we now have 70,000 handicapped children who must be educated. The cost of educating the handicapped child is three times the amount of educating a normal child. So with these 70,000 children in New York, we have the equivalent of the cost of educating almost a quarter of a million children with almost no help from the federal government.

The cost of educating handicapped children, the cost of providing help for other classes of children who need special help--the disadvantaged, the non-English speaking, etc.--the cost of assistance to achieving racial integration, the cost of equalizing school finance, all of these special mandates of the federal government come at a time when the other fiscal pressures on the schools are greatest. They also come at a time when the pressure to give parents financial aid to send their

children to private schools. And if we were to lose 10 or 15 percent of our wealthiest students from public schools, we will lose more than 50 percent of the political influence that the schools have.

Well, what is it we are trying to do to solve some of these problems? First and foremost, we know that these problems cannot be solved unless some basic economic problems are solved within the country. And, therefore, we work together with the AFL-CIO, of which we are an important part. Teachers by themselves cannot expect to influence national policies unless they are part of a labor movement, which is broader. But being a part of that movement means that we have to educate our own members to convince them that they have a deep interest in the success of the private sector, because money to support our jobs comes basically from the productivity of the private sector. It is difficult to educate teachers about this. Now in Michigan with the automobile plants closing, the teachers soon will find out the connection between automobile production and education. And each state has similar problems.

Secondly, there is the United States a very large growth in what we traditionally think of as education. That growth is taking place also in most of the countries represented around this table as well. There is a growth in child services and education for those who are preschool age in most of our countries. There is also a growth in worker education, adult education, lifelong education. In the United States, billions of dollars are now being spent for those who have left high school, either dropped out or graduated but who do not have enough skills to be able to get a job. The problem is not that education is shrinking, education is

growing. It's growing very rapidly. Our problem is that this growth is not taking place through the public schools. There is almost a hostility on the part of the government to giving the public schools any of these new functions. Some people say that the public schools are failing with the children, so why give them still another job to do. One of the things we are fighting for in the United States is that early childhood education, adult education, worker education should be done through the public schools. It is a very difficult battle that we are fighting.

The third thing we are doing to try to solve our problems is to develop coalitions with other groups. We now have regular meetings with the National School Boards Association, with the Superintendents, with the national group that represents the President, with our rival union--the National Education Association--with the National Parent Teachers group. We also work with civil rights groups because any cutbacks in education have a greater effect on Blacks and Hispanics since those groups have greater problems in terms of educational needs.

There is a Gallup Poll which is conducted every year in the United States on the attitudes of the people towards the school and towards education. In recent year that has been going down. Ironically, I think the public's attitude has been going down because we have been so successful in educating the public. When most members of the public were uneducated, they had automatic respect for schools and teachers because we stood so far above them. Now that they have all been educated and many have been to college, they no longer feel that we are above them. We are either

their equals or their inferiors. There was, however, one interesting thing revealed by these polls. The one factor that changed the minds of people as to whether they thought the public school was doing a good job or bad job was whether or not those being polled had physically been in a public school at least once during the previous year. Those who had had a much better opinion of public education than all of those adults who did not step into a public school during the year. Just the fact that the building was not filthy, that students' work appeared on bulletin boards, counteracted the stereotype the media presents of violence and vandalism run rampant in the schools today. Being able to see schools firsthand creates a very different impression. Therefore what we are trying to do with these other national groups is to engage in national campaign to acquaint the public with the successes schools can achieve and also to try and develop programs that would bring adults into the schools so that they can see that what is happening is much better than what they think has been happening.

Now we're also trying to do something that is very difficult. We are trying to convince teachers that once or twice a year they should pick up the telephone and talk to the parents of each of their students. Once a year they should tell the parents how the students are doing and what the parents might do to help. I had an experience recently which not only impressed me, but everyone with whom I shared it. Some months ago my telephone rang at home one Saturday morning and I was asked whether my son had graduated at such and such a high school last June. I said yes. The person on the line said that he was from the school from which

my son had graduated. He went on to say that most of the school's students go on to college or they have jobs. Occasionally, some youngster doesn't make it somehow, and so the school makes a call several months later to see if they can help in anyway. Now this is very inexpensive to do. I think if I were a parent who no longer had children in school and was likely to vote against school taxes and some months later someone from the school called me up to show that they are still concerned! A simply thing like that is better than all of the slogans and radio shows and other things being done now. In Philadelphia and New York and a few other places, teachers are doing something similar. In New York, we hired teachers to sit at elephones after school, and we tell students and parents "when you go home to do your homework, if you find difficulty and you need help from the teacher, call this telephone number and we will help you do your homework over the telephone." Tremendous relationships have developed with the parents over a little thing like that. Maybe the youngster won't call at all, maybe he will call once or twice a year. But these are little things which create a connection so that when there is talk about reducing the number of teachers there will be millions of parents there who feel a more personal relationship with the teacher.

Now, one other thing we're doing is to get very very heavily involved in politics and political action. The reason that we are losing the money battle is because conservative, right wing, business types of groups have let the politicians and government officials they are opposed to know that spending more money on education and other sorts of programs and that they will use their money and power against politicians who support such

programs in the next election. Unless the politicians know that there is a machine which is equal to or greater than the business concerns in favor of these programs, then we have to count on the personal courage of every elected official who is willing to risk his own position for something that he believes in. Sometimes we find a politician like that. Not usually. And so teachers came from a position of not doing anything politically to a point where we now are in many states--certainly if you were to take both teacher unions in the United States together, the NEA and the AFT--probably the most effective political machine in the country.

Finally, one other item on the list of what we are doing and must do to help education is this. We are now dealing in all of our countries with an educated public. When I grew up, I lived in a neighborhood where most of the people spoke Italian or German or Russian or Yiddish or something else, and if a child went to school and learned to speak English that was enough. The parents felt that it was a wonderful school. But today that is not enough. And, if teachers are to regain the position that we once held, if education is to be held in esteem once more, it seems that we have to be the ones to constantly fight for higher standards in education. And frequently teacher organizations don't do that. Because we feel that when there is an attack on education, it is an attack on teachers. We as an organization have taken very strong positions in favor of the use of testing and strong opposition to the movement that says people can do anything they want in school and the purpose of school is to make the child happy and so forth.

Let me conclude by saying that, at the international level, we heard in the course of this conference that the commitment to education has not been very strong on the part of OECD. OECD came to it rather late and it has these other problems of great importance such as national energy. So, I think that one of the things all of us could do is to try to influence our own government and also our own trade unionist locals to press for not only the maintenance of the budget for education and the OECD but for an increasing budget for that purpose because of the educational problems that we all face. I think, secondly, having gotten off to a good start with this conference but that we should find ways of continuing our contacts so that we can continue to share the problems that we have, and share some of the experiences, success and failures that are not dissimilar. I think we need more time to provide specifics on some of the things we've been talking about. And third, I think we ought to continue to do what we started doing in TUAC and that is to select certain issues which would result in the expansion of education or at least maintaining it in our countries. Issues like early childhood education, worker education, these are areas where, if enrollment continues to decline because of birth rates, it doesn't mean that there has to be a contraction of education. It gives us the opportunity to improve quality for those in elementary and secondary schools, but it also should give us a capacity to reach above the younger children and to adults throughout their working lives to be able to improve themselves as individuals and also their careers.