

*file Shanker
speeches*

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PARAPROFESSIONAL SCHOOL RELATED PERSONNEL CONFERENCE
MARCH 9, 1985

Thank you very much and I want to congratulate you on the work that you've been doing and all of you who are here today and those who couldn't make it for the size of this group and the enthusiasm and the activities during the year. In my folder here I have a list of places that we won over the year and there is a full page listing and I know that there are some elections that are scheduled in the next couple of weeks. The group that you represent certainly is on the move in terms of organizing. I don't know whether it is correct, but if you are not the fastest growing; you probably are the fastest growing group within the AFT, and if not, you may be tied with somebody. That is a great record especially during the period of time when the union movement is palling and when most unions are losing members because unionism today is one, it's not very popular and two, we've got all these obstacles starting with the President of the United States on through the National Labor Relations Board and the state boards and others. Then there are all the new attitudes on the part of management which were never great but now are downright medieval. When you continue growing in spite of all that, it really is a sign that you know what you are doing and also, of your commitment and your great effort.

Most people join a union because they have come to understand what Bob (Porter) was just talking about. They understand that the union is an instrument of power and they know that as individuals they feel very weak when they have to deal with their state governments or their city governments, the board of education, or their employer. They know that together they will have much more power than they will ever have individually. Together they have perhaps the only chance of bringing about important and basic changes. But many union people think of unions only as instruments of power. Many of them think that the power is something that comes from Washington or something that comes from the union office. Many of them don't understand that there is a lot more to a union than that. They don't understand that a good part of the union is what they do together. They are the union really, that is their own Solidarity that makes the strength. Strength is not somebody flying in from somewhere else. The strength is the fact that they are acting as one.

The other thing not frequently recognized is that in addition to having power and togetherness and Solidarity, that there is something else that is very important for a union to have and if you don't have that, sometimes the power and Solidarity can get you into a lot of trouble. That is, you really have to have knowledge and understanding of what is going on in your industry or your business or your field. If you have a lot of power and exercise it in a way which is stupid, you don't have it very long. We can all think of organizations and businesses and unions that used to be around and made one big mistake because they were very powerful and they are not around any more. Power has to be exercised with the knowledge and intelligence of what the whole field is about.

I start with that statement because it explains what we have been doing in the union over the last couple of years in this whole movement for education reform. You know that there is another organization out there and it too has power. We have power and maybe the difference between these organizations during this period is not so much a question of which has more power, we could have that debated for a long time, but which one uses the power intelligently. And therefore is likely to increase that power.

We are living in a very exciting and a very dangerous period. It is very dangerous because you just have to listen to the President of the United States, in almost every speech, talk about giving vouchers and tuition tax credits which essentially means giving tax money to parents to take their children out of public schools and to send them to private schools. It is as simple as all that. That is what the President is devoted to and there is legislation in many states. A bill for tuition tax credits was introduced in New York last week in the state legislature. It has a very good chance of moving through and passing. There are bills in about 28 other legislatures and there will be continued pressure by the President to do that. If that happens, I'm not going to dwell on the social issues involved, but if that happens there is no doubt that if you tell parents they can have \$250 or \$500 or \$700 or a \$1000 to help them pay for tuition in private schools, a large number of parents will take that money. First of all, a large number of new private schools will open up and they'll say there's a lot of folks out there that now have money in their hands. So you're not only talking about the schools that are out there now, but you'll have a bunch of new ones that open up and they'll start doing all sorts of things. They'll advertise on radio and television and they'll give the kids a free daily lollipop if they tell their parents to enroll them. They'll do all sorts of things and it's going to be a tough world. The problem will be that first of all, a lot of people are considering that; and the second problem we have is that a lot of people do not think the public schools are such good places. That is why they are thinking of private schools.

Why don't they think the schools are such good places? They used to think that schools are such good places. Well, my parents thought that American public schools were wonderful. Why? They came over from another country, they didn't speak English very well. In that other country their children never would have had a free public education. Never would have had a chance to mix with children from other religions and races and cultures and so as far as they were concerned, the public schools were the greatest thing that ever happened. But now, we made a terrible mistake, we educated all the people in this country. And when you get educated, you feel you can criticize. My mother and father never thought they could criticize the teacher or the principal or the custodian or anybody. We didn't have bus drivers in our schools, it was a big city school and we walked, but I'm sure that if we had a bus driver, he would have been a part of that school system, a part of that whole structure that they respected very much and they felt had authority.

What we have is a different society. We have an educated public, and educated people do demand more and better things. They are not satisfied with the things that poorer people and immigrants and others who feel that that is a great opportunity. They want more. There is nothing wrong with that. It's great. That's what the country is about.

But it does make problems for us because it means that unless we do either a better job, or if we're doing a great job, unless we find a way of letting the public know what a great job we are doing, we are going to be in trouble. If you take a look at these polls out there, more and more people in the last ten years - Every year they have a poll where they ask the people would you give the schools an A, B, C, D or E rating, maybe there is an F on there too I don't remember how many marks they've got, but more and more people have been

giving the schools a failing grade. Now remember those are our customers. We don't generally think of them as customers but what are they going to do when their kid gets to be this age and they are going to send him to school. We don't tend to think of them as customers in the same way as if we were trying to sell them some insurance, or encyclopedias. But more and more of them are saying we are customers but we don't have to be forced to buy your product. If you don't have a good product we are going to press the government to give us this money so that we can buy this other product. And furthermore, if people don't think that what they are paying for as taxpayers is good, they are not going to be willing to pay more. So we have a problem.

Part of the problem is one of information. The schools are much better than the general public thinks they are. They are not as good as they should be. We all want them to be better and the way you can tell that is if you take all of the people who are asked that questions what mark would you give the schools, and if you separate out two groups, in one group you put the parents and children who are actually going to school and they give the schools very high marks. And then you've got those who have no kids at school and they give the schools very low marks. So what does that tell you. It tells you those people who know about the schools because they are taking their children there, they are taking a look, they are talking to the teachers, they go into the school office, they walk through the building, they see what's going on, they feel pretty good about what's happening. The people who haven't been in a school since they went, read about it in the newspaper or watch on television, what do they hear. They hear that a kid got stabbed down at so and so high school or a girl got raped in that school district. And that is what they hear. They go through the year and nobody has a front page story saying 5,000 kids graduated in our school system and 2,600 of them are going to college. You never see that headline. Once in awhile you get the thirty Westinghouse scholarship winners. There's a little bit of that. But for the most part, good news is not news. And bad news is news. If people don't come and actually see what is going on there we have to find a way of handling them.

We also have, aside from a public relations problem, a public information problem. In recent years, test scores starting going down very substantially and you know I don't accept the view of that other organization that test scores don't mean anything. That is a lot of nonsense - they do. And we all know they do. If test scores didn't mean anything, teachers wouldn't give any tests to kids. The same organization that would fight to have kids pass tests. They do mean something. If test scores really go down, it means the students are not learning too much. There are all sorts of tests to show that students did fall in their reading ability and their math ability and also that they cannot do problem solving which is very important.

A lot of this, of course, is not our fault. Back in the 1960's there were some educational thinkers who said it is very bad to force kids to learn anything that they don't want to learn at a given time. Very bad, very authoritarian. You should wait until the child wants to learn something and you should never force a child. What the child learns should be not some thing from years ago - old fashioned junk like Shakespeare or Dickens or algebra or geometry - it should be something the kid is really interested in. That's what kids will learn like living and loving and camping, all sorts of rock and comic books. Well, sounds kind of stupid today but in 1968, 69 and 70, if you stood up and said you wanted your kids to read Shakespeare people

would look at you like you came from some old fashioned planet. You got personality problems mister, you keep trying to boss those kids around. Just because you like that crazy stuff doesn't mean that you have to shove it down their throats. So as a result of that loosening up, the scores did go down and the public stopped supporting schools.

But what happened last year was tuition tax credits being pushed, you've got more and more people saying the schools get failing marks, you've got the kid's scores going down and you've got more people living longer. Great, but they don't have any children in schools any more, they are more interested in problems of senior citizens. You've got a smaller percentage of the population with children in the public schools. We used to have more than half the grown-ups used had a child in the public schools. Now it's about twenty-three percent. So whereas we used to have better than one out of two it is now a little better than one out of five. So we don't have as many parents out there yelling and screaming support the schools, put some money in.

Well fortunately, last year,, just as we thought that things were in very bad shape with tuition tax credits and the squeeze on the budget - help came. The help came from a very surprising place. It came from the business community. A lot of these multi-millionaires, it kind of started in California, they said we don't like to pay taxes but this is kind of bad because if more and more kids leave school and they can't read, write and count, where are we doing to get the people who are going to work our business a couple of years from now. We are going to get a bunch of illiterates. We are just going to have to run our own school system in the company. Imagine getting some kid who is 18, 19 or 20 years old and he comes to work for you and you've got to teach him how to count on his fingers or how to write and we'll keep him here for four years and send him to our own school. That's very wasteful.

But that is literally what happened. The business community of this country said just as we have to rebuild our factories, and just as we need roads and bridges, we have to develop the brain power of this country because those are our future workers. You have all of these top business people who usually are yelling no taxes, no taxes, we don't care what they're for. They are actually going to the government, to the legislature, and even to the President of the United States, although he doesn't listen very long. They are saying you've got to invest more money in education. then they said but, we're willing to give more money and we think the country should give more money, but we're not willing to pay for the same old thing. We want to get something for our money and we want you to tighten up on standards. They said we want teachers to take tests to make sure we're not hiring unqualified teachers. We want kids to take tests to get promoted. If a child doesn't learn something they shouldn't be automatically promoted. We want students who have graduated to be able to reach a certain level. Some of them said we want merit pay for teachers to reward those teachers who are better or to give incentive to those who are working harder or to encourage others to work harder. They started looking over the textbooks that we use because some years ago the school system decided that the textbooks were too difficult, the kids couldn't read the words so they made the words smaller and smaller and simpler and simpler. Finally the textbooks got very boring because if you are using three letter words, four letter words and five letter words you can't have more than six words in a sentence. Not very interesting. You read those kids books you know why they don't read. It's boring. You wouldn't read that stuff either.

We have this movement and we still have it, it's blooming state by state. If it hasn't hit you yet, don't be surprised if it happens tomorrow, next week or next month. Last year as I went around, a lot of people said, well that's happening elsewhere, it's not going to happen in my state. I get a phone call a month later - it happened. Well, it's going to happen in practically every state. What you usually get when that happens is a big fat piece of legislation, and the governor says I'm going to put more money, and I'm going to raise salaries. But we've got to do a million kind of hole-punching things in this big book.

We have taken a position that by and large we are going to support these movements for more money and protecting ed reform even if in some cases we don't like some piece of the package. We'll try to change it. We'll try to make it better. We'll try to take out those things that we don't like. But if somebody comes to me with \$2.5 billion and says take it and I say well I don't like this \$30 million over here and you realize when you start quibbling with him about a few dollars instead of looking at the \$2.5 billion, he might lose interest and he might say here I am giving you all this dough and you're going to quibble. The hell with it. There are a lot of other people who'd like \$2.5 billion. So we've generally taken the position that we were going to support this and we don't want to push away, drive away, those of our friends in positions in the political community who want to improve conditions and salaries in the schools. We will discuss it with them. We will even argue, but we will not ask in such a way that it will drive them away saying the schools are hopeless. You come to these people with this tremendous amount of money and support and they kill you because they don't agree with one or two things. They are like children that unless they have everything exactly the way they want they yell and scream.

Our position, which is very different from the position of the other organization which has done the yelling and screaming about every little issue - our position has been one of welcoming the changes. I think that most of you have seen the newspaper articles in your local papers, which is really amazing, that the image of the two organizations is now very sharply and clearly etched in the minds of the American people. It used to be that the NEA would be the professional organization and the nice group that everybody should belong to and we were the group that was the union group and we were tough and we were not really professional and we had the power and they were the nice folks who care about children's education. In newspaper after newspaper and radio editorial and TV shows, what has now come out because of our position on these issues as contrasted with their position on these issues, is that we are not only the union that fights for the interests of teachers but we are also the only national group in education representing employees that cares about the quality of education for children. That says yes, teachers should be tested before they are hired. Lawyers go to law school and they have to take a bar exam. Doctors go to school and they've got to take an examination. Real estate agents, barbers, everybody has to do it, why not teachers. What is coming out loud and clear is that this is the organization that is not just in the business of narrowly protecting it's own interests. Sure we have to do that. But it is also in the business of improving the quality of education in this country. That is very important to the parents, of the willingness of states and communities to give support. If you look like you don't care about the children and you don't care about the

quality of education, there isn't any reason why anyone should put money into it. The worst thing that that other organization is doing is creating the impression that they don't care that the school district hires illiterate teachers. If they hire teachers who can't read and write it's the superintendents fault. Well, so what, it's the superintendents fault. Who suffers? The superintendent? No, we all suffer and certainly the children suffer. But our image suffers, our support from the community suffers and ultimately we don't know if we will have public schools left if that is the kind of reputation and image that we have.

Now we are about to go into another problem period because there is; remember a few years ago when they were laying people off in schools because there was decline in student population and there were at one time 100,000 people who wanted to be teachers waiting for jobs. Well, now there is a teacher shortage and it is going to get bigger and bigger every year because there is a little baby boomlet (Isn't that wonderful - who says we're not interested in customers.) and it's starting to come into the elementary schools and it is going to mean that there will be a growing one million or more students coming into the schools over the next 10 or 12 years and these students are going to need a lot more teachers of course and ultimately many more school related personnel to meet teachers. Because a few years ago it looked like there was not much of a future in teaching, not many people are preparing to become teachers. Not only that, but the pay is not very good so that is why a lot of people are not preparing to come in. While there are more children entering kindergarten, first and second grade because there was a baby boomlet, there are fewer students entering college because the students going to college now are from that period when people were not having many children. So what you've got is a lot of customers and not very many salesman at the other end. Everybody is going to be going after these college graduates, not just the schools. IBM is going to want them, and all the private companies and all the other state agencies. Everybody is going to be after them. Anyone who is getting out of college in the next couple of years is going to be in very good shape. Everybody is going to be saying come with me, especially if they really know something and were a pretty good student.

That means that at the very time when the business community and the governors are saying we'll give you lots of money but you've got to shape up and do things better - well how we are going to teach kids more math if nobody is becoming math teachers. How are we going to teach kids more science, if anybody is interested in science he's not going to become a teacher, they're going to go to some company where they are going to get two or three times the money. Even people who are good just at the English language, all these companies need people to write copy, and write instruction manuals and all those things. It doesn't make any difference what the skill is, it's going to be very, very difficult for us to get those people.

Of course, we talk about higher salaries and better conditions and so forth, but one of the most important things we talk about is that if you want to get people into schools, I'm sure salary is important and working conditions, but the most important working condition is how you are treated. Whether you are treated with some sense of respect and dignity or whether you are just treated as just some hired hand that nobody really cares about and the only thing they care about is whether you are following their orders. You are not viewed as having a mind of your own. And part of this problem of all the legislation, it's a lot of money but when that legislation comes through it tells you

everything, it tells you your text books, subjects how many hours to teach this, what to do with that. And very few people with any self-respect are going to come in and just follow somebody else's orders. People don't want to do that today. Years ago when you had to feed the family, you'd take any job like that. But most people say I don't have to take this. And they don't.

We're talking about it and where we're going in the AFT in terms of teaching, and all of this will have a very important impact on all of us, we're talking about not just more money and better conditions, but professionalization. What we mean by professionalization is simply this - you train good people, you hire them, and then you watch them for a little while to make sure they are good, and then you leave them alone. Nobody watches over doctors every day, or over surgeons or lawyers, or other people. You hire somebody who is highly qualified, you look at them for a little while during an internship and then you leave them alone. Nobody would go to a doctor who has an inspector following him everywhere to see if he's doing the job. Of course, if you hire people at \$12,000 or \$13,000 you better keep looking at them. I wouldn't trust people who would work for wages like that. It's pretty expensive, probably more expensive to pay all those people watching everybody than it is to pay the good people the right money in the first place. That is what the schools are like.

I would like to talk about what this means for all of us because it does mean something. I want to move here, to what is meant to some extent by professionalism. It is very closely related to what you might call a new style of management. In this new style of management, everybody, not just teachers, but all employees will have an essential and very important, and I might say an equal role. There is a book that came out last year called In Search of Excellence, and if you haven't read it you should, because when you read about how some of the great companies in American are run and then ask yourself how is your school district run, and you compare the two, it gives you an idea of how far we still have to go and what it is that the public school districts can learn from private management. If you go into a company like IBM or one of the many great companies, you go to everybody in that place, the person could be an engineer, a secretary, a custodian, or involved in an internal mail delivery system. You talk to those people and you have a feeling on their part about how important they are because they are part of something that is important and it's big and it's not that I am merely doing so and so, there is no attitude on the part of anybody that their job is not important, because they know how important and they are proud to be a part of the whole thing. You contrast that with most of the school systems in the country. You walk in and say what do you do here - Oh I'm only a teacher. Well that tells you something about the whole institution. There is one school district that has changed that. They've got everybody involved and they've got buttons on that say "I'm only a great teacher." But how many of us feel that nobody thinks we're important that the whole institution really doesn't listen to us.

I'm going to talk about it, because it involves not only teachers alone, but it involves everyone who works in a school district, and I'd like to spend a minute or two talking about Japan. Now some of you my age or thereabouts, some of you may have one or two years of seniority on me, those who don't you'll have to listen carefully because you will not have had this experience. But those of you who are my age or a little above will remember that once upon a time the words Made in Japan on any product were the mark of cheapness and

inferior quality. The junk that if you were poor you bought because you had no other choice. It was really something that fell apart very quickly. It was made of paper or balsa wood or cheap stamped tin or whatever and it sold for very little, for exactly what it was worth.

After the war was over, and Japan had been bombed out, Douglas MacArthur was there running the military government of Japan, and the business men came to MacArthur and said well we want to rebuild our businesses and we'd like you to bring an American expert over here to help us MacArthur got somebody on his staff to find out who should come over and they found a man whose name is Deming. During the war he was one of three people who developed "quality control techniques" so that when we have all these tanks and everything coming out, these guys developed a system of making sure that the bullets were counted, everything was right, a whole system of quality control. He said all right, I'll go over there, but I'm only going to go if you get all 47 of the major Japanese industrialists in a room.

Sure enough they all came and Deming went over there and he talked to them for a couple of days. They said how do we rebuild our business and he said you shouldn't. They said why not and he said junk. Cheap stuff. Nobody is going to buy it. They said look, this is Japan, not the United States and he said, you know something, within a few years you can really whip the United States in terms of not only the cheapness of the product, you will make a better product and you will make it cheaper. Instead of people buying American cars and American appliances and everything else, they will be buying Japanese stuff all over the world because you can really do it. They said how do you do it. Well look, here's how the American's do it. They are going to build a car and a vacuum cleaner. Some guy says you put this thing on the assembly line and the first guy puts this nut on and the second one tightens it and the third one puts the screw in and the fourth one puts this on. And each one does something and they've figured that whole thing out. Then what they've got are inspectors, supervisors who are watching these people. If these people don't do the job or they are missing something that they are doing, they get punished. Maybe they get fired. The one's that really are very good might get merit pay. And that's it. Now when a product comes out at the other end, there are inspectors who look at it and this slow process produces a certain number of lemons. Some of these things can be missing parts. Then they send the lemons back to be redone, if they catch the missing part. If they don't they sell it and then it gets recalled later on, They recall 400,000 Chevrolets; 600,000 Fords. You know what they never do. They never go up and down that line to talk to these workers about what is going on out there. Because if they did, the workers know what's wrong with the screws, with the machines, or if something is moving too fast. They would tell them. But instead they put out this stuff and do you know how expensive it is to recall 400,000 cars? So their cars are not going to be so good because there are going to be a lot of lemons and they are going to be expensive because they have to pay for all the recalls.

Now if you will not repeat that mistake. You go in there and you listen very carefully to everybody who works for you, everybody, because everything has something to do with it. There might be pieces of dust getting into those parts because the floors weren't cleaned right. The person who cleans them might tell you about the lousy cleaning equipment you give him or not enough people or time and that's why the stuff just goes up in the air and settles into the motor. Every person who works here knows something about how to make

this thing better and if you find a way to really involve each and every one of them you will end up with people who are out there always telling you every week, every month things that you ought to improve and before you're finished you're going to have an almost perfect product. It's going to be better than theirs and it's going to be cheaper because there's no lemons, no rebuilding, no recalls.

Well, the Japanese didn't believe him. After all, they had just lost the war. But Deming was an American and so they accepted on authority and they all went back to their factories and they tried it. Some of those factories in three or four weeks increased their productivity by thirty percent without changing a single machine. And so the Japanese, since the end of World War II, at every major outfit in Japan, has devoted itself not to hiring lots of supervisors to watch the people who are working there, but to spending lots of time listening to everybody who works there. Everyone is an inspector. Every one of you sees something that's gone wrong in the schools and the school system. If they would listen to you and if they would change each of these things that's gone wrong, the net product would be a better school system. For everybody, not teachers alone. Everybody within the school system.

Then some people went over and said that's great. They said it's because of the Japanese culture. We could never do this in the United States. So then there was this plant, I don't remember if it was in Kentucky or Tennessee, but it was an American plant down south, there were 60 Ford plants in this country. They were number 60 in terms of producing the largest percentage of lemons. I think 8 out of every 10 trucks they produced had to be returned. They were about to close up the plant.

So in went some people. What did they do? They started asking everybody, there's this fellow working down in this pit and his job is he's got this tool and underneath the truck there's a bolt there and the machine grabs the bolt and he squeezes the trigger and tightens the bolt. That is his job. They come to him and they say to him, tell me Jack do you ever miss one of those bolts? He says yeah I do. One a day? No, every ten minutes or so. Well why do you miss them? Well very simple, when you've got to hold something up like that, every once in awhile you get this crick in your neck and you just go like that and the next truck is gone. I don't want to do it. But I don't care who else is put here, they are going to get cricks in their neck if they are standing like that all day long and when they get a crick they are just going to go like that. So Jack, what can we do about it? Well, you can do two things. You put a foot pedal right next to my foot that enables me to keep the car there, stop the line, and every time I go like this, my foot will go down and then you won't have to bring back the whole damn truck. Then he said I'll give you an even better idea. I don't know if the only way to tighten that is from the bottom. It's hard to hold something up. It's easier to push it down. You do this thing so that the bolt is up there and I'm standing up on top. So they go around to every single employee in their plant and they get little ideas like that. Now they are number one in terms of the quality of their product. There are practically no lemons. The people are very happy. You don't just do this once. You've got to keep looking at what happens. But here's a place that respected everybody, they didn't say this guy is just a bolt tightener, or this guy is just that. What you do can make or break this entire company.

Now that is what we're trying to do. We are trying to bring to schools a new

style of management which will say that we are all partners in trying to improve what is going on. Not one boss and 15 supervisors looking at you and looking at the teachers and looking at everybody else, because we are all partners in terms of the improvements. As a matter of fact, we are the only ones who can really improve them. That means a very different attitude for all of us. In the future I hope if somebody asks what do you do around here it won't be I'm only a secretary or I'm only a teacher or I'm only a school bus driver or I'm only something else. That we will feel that it is our school system and that it is a terrific place. It's terrific because we know about it, we have improved it and it is ours.

That is why I think that what Dade County did, for instance, in Florida; well they came up with a career ladder plan down there where some people are going to get more money. They did something that was terrific. They said, this career ladder is not going to be just for the teachers in a school that turns out to be a good school. If it is a good school, let's make it good for everybody to work here and everyone in that school is going to share the money and is going to share the benefits of that program.

Well that is where we are. I think what you are seeing here, I don't know how many other unions in this country are doing the exciting kinds of things that we are. I don't know how many of you came here expecting to hear a speech like this, but if you think about it for a minute or two, if you understand what is wrong with the schools, with management, if you understand that there is a public out there that has to like us or they are not going to support us. If we understand that there are customers out there who don't have to always give us their business, they can take it elsewhere. What a union is for is just to bring people together to use power, but the power has to be exercised with intelligence. That power has to be used not to hit the customers over the head, and drag them in. They won't take that very long. But power has to be used in order to attract and appeal to people and get the people who are paying our salaries and the general public to say look, teachers want our kids to have a good education, they are terrific people, they have a commitment. If things have gone wrong in the past it's because nobody would listen to them and treated them like a bunch of hired hands who had to do what they were told. Well now, they are not just a bunch of hired hands. They are going to have a partnership, a piece of the action and things are going to get better and we are going to address more and more education. Well that is what we are about and I want to thank you for being such an important part of this. Keep up the good work.

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