

Albert Shanker
speech
March 23/85

ADDRESS BY
ALBERT SHANKER, PRESIDENT
of the
AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS
BEFORE THE
ILLINOIS FEDERATION OF TEACHERS
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It is especially good to be at this convention, your largest. I remember a number of your conventions that were smaller, some of them much smaller, and the size of this convention is clearly an indication of the very effective job that you have done all these years in building your state organization to the size that it is now. It is also an indication of what you are going to do in the future.

You have been very successful in organizing and there is no reason why you should not be successful in continuing with it. At this convention you have been or will be discussing some of the mechanisms that will make that possible.

We in the AFT have given very substantial support to you during this period of time in the way of expertise, and some of it in the way of considerable financial support, but everyone who is a strong AFT and IFT person, and I

don't have to convince you that in your own local if you are one-third organized, you will not be that effective, and if you are one-half organized, you are more effective, but still not in very good shape. And if almost everybody or anybody is raiding, we are much stronger. That is true at the state level as well.

You have come from a much smaller percentage to the point where you are the dominant organization in the state and bringing in more teachers and health care workers and higher education people and school-related people and also others into the organization.

It does take investment and it does take money. I know it is hard. We don't have people who are very wealthy and I know that every dollar counts, but every one of these dollars is an investment. It is an investment in a larger organization and one that will be more effective locally and at the state and national level, so I want to thank you for moving toward greater and greater support of the organization.

I would like to speak on professionalism. I don't know how Bob could guess that I would speak on professionalism, (laughter) but I would like to start by saying that for most of my years in the American Federation of Teachers, my own personal reaction to the word "professional" is generally that it made me

sort of want to throw up. The reason for that is the way in which the word "professional" has been used among teachers.

Remember George Orwell in 1984? The way they were able to control the people in their society and to prevent them from discussing important political issues was from the time that children were very small, they were subjected to an interesting kind of education.

Downtown there was that big building which had a sign on it that said "Freedom is Slavery. War is Peace," and if we get people constantly thinking that one concept is exactly the same as its very opposite, then you are incapable of thinking or conducting a discussion because you get paralyzed in your thinking processes.

While in the world of education we have been subjected to that same type of Orwellian education in terms of the use of the word "professional," I can remember very well the first time that I heard it after I became a teacher. I started teaching in an elementary school. I had great doubts as to whether I could make it, and after a couple of weeks, the assistant principal opened the door and I said to myself, "Thank God! Help is coming. He is here to help me out. (Laughter)

I kept waiting on him, but he just stood there

like this (indicating) and I didn't know what sort of a pose that was, but it seemed to me as though it was three or four minutes and it seemed like a very long time. Actually it was probably 30 seconds or so, but then he said to me, "Mr. Shanker, there are a couple of pieces of paper on the floor there. It is very unsightly and very unprofessional."

Then he closed the door and left.

(Laughter)

So that was the first time that I really got to know what "professional was.

And then I went to my first faculty conference. This was in elementary school. In those days there were not too many men who taught in elementary school. I was the second man to teach there. There was one who had been there for a few years.

At the first faculty conference, the distributed the organization chart of the school so you had every room number and which teacher was in which room. It was a period of overcrowding, so they had a couple of teachers floating from room to room.

So that schedule was there and then they had

the room patrol and lunch patrol, but there was a tradition in the school that snow patrol was reserved for the male teachers and snow patrol was, of course, on the snow day you would give up your lunch period and you walked around the building telling kids to stop throwing snowballs at each other. (Laughter)

So I looked at the schedule and there it was:

Mr. Jones and Mr. Shanker: Snow Patrol (Laughter)

So Mr. Jones raised his hand and the principal called on him and Mr. Jones said, "Well, in the last couple of years, I was the only one here, " meaning the only male, "and now there are two of us. Would it be okay to rotate snow patrol? The first day of snow patrol, he goes; the next day I go."

So the principal looked at him and said, " Mr. Jones, that is very unprofessional."

I was sitting there trying to figure out how they were using this word "unprofessional," and the principal said, "Well, first of all, it is unprofessional because the duty schedule has already been mimeographed as you see."

("Laughter")

"And secondly, I am surprised that you are not

concerned that one child might throw a snowball at another child and hit him in the eye, and it may result in a permanent injury, and you are not concerned enough for the welfare of the children to do this."

So that was the second run-in that I with the word "professional."

And then just a short time later, there was a very interesting case which made national publicity. A teacher in Fox Lane High School in Mount Kisco, New York, about 45 or 50 miles north of New York City, made headlines.

This teacher had been there for a long time, James Raleigh. A lot of principals had come and gone and his file was loaded with marvelous recommendations: Greatest teacher who was ever here; Very Creative; Worked Beyond the Call of Duty. You looked through that file and you saw that there were many principals and many superintendents and they all had exactly the same opinion of James Raleigh.

A new principal came in, and they had their annual faculty conference the day before the kids got there, and the new principal said to them, "I want to show that the teachers in this school are more professional than any teachers anywhere else in the country, and a professional is a person who

is willing to sacrifice himself for the students and go beyond the call of duty and, therefore, I am asking that all of you go home this weekend and do something which other teachers in this country are not professional enough to do. You will write a period by period lesson plan and submit it next week for an entire year in advance (laughter)."

So all of the other teachers in the school being professional; in the sense of being dead from the neck up, went home and did it. James Raleigh didn't do it.

He went in to the principal--he was not a union member--he went in to the principal and said, "Look, look at my file. I am a very good teacher and every superintendant said so and every principal said so, and all my colleagues say so too. I am not afraid of work.

"You want me to do an essay on what I expect to accomplish this year--fine. You want me to write about some new things that I expect to try--I will be glad to do that. If you want me to do a sort of month-by-month overview--I will do that. I will do any amount of paper work on thinking and planning that you want, and of course I have my lesson plans which I do about a week in advance, but I will not do something which is unprofessional,

and that is to tell you right now what I will be doing seven months from now at ten o'clock in the morning because the answer is that I don;t know, and if I did know, you ought to fire me."

So the principal was very responsive to what Mr. Raleigh said. He said, "Listen, that is very unprofessional. Everyone else went home and did a one-year plan book, and I am not going to allow you to be the the only one--just think about all those poor people who do know their week and what would they think if I allowed you to get away with it?"

Raleigh didn't do it and he was fired.

His dismissal went all the way up to the State Tenure Commission and the State Court of Appeals and he stayed fired.

Of course he wasn't unprofessional. He was really insubordinate (laughter). If you want to know who was unprofessional, it was the principal. There is no question about that. The principal was not only unprofessional, he was incompetent. So there it was, I got another lesson in what the word "professional" meant.

But, of course, "professionalism" does not mean

those things. In a few minutes we will get back to how we can rescue the concept and get rid of a bad name which it has earned among teachers because of the way it has been used and see what it is that we are talking about when we talk about "professionalism."

In previous years when we had conventions and conferences and when I came to conventions of this sort, we talked about other things. For many years we talked at conventions like this about collective bargaining and it wasn't such a long time ago that we had to convince our own members that collective bargaining was a good thing. After all, the American Federation of Teachers and the Illinois Federation of Teachers and the Chicago Teachers did not always believe in collective bargaining.

We were founded as a union in 1916 and 1917 and it was not until the late fifties and the early sixties that we began to support and think about collective bargaining. It wasn't about until about 1963 and 1964 that the AFT adopted its first resolution in favor of collective bargaining. It was after a few of our larger locals had already attained it.

For many years we believed that the reason for bringing teachers into the union was just to tell them how good we were, how good our leadership was, and it was a good thing

to be part of the labor movement. We went out and tried to get people that way and we did. We organized 3000 of them in the entire United States by 1980, so we were not moving very quickly.

The reason we went for collective bargaining was because those of us who were leaders in the organization said: Look, it took us all the way from World War I to well after World War II. Sure, we got a lot of wonderful and committed people in the organization, but unless we find some new way of dramatically wooing teachers from a different level and a different plane and getting their relationship with their employers to be different, their relationships with their supervisors to be different and with their school board; unless we espouse what is really kind of a revolution within our schools, we are not going to get very far. Teachers aren't going to get very far either, so we pressed for collective bargaining.

At the time, of course, the NEA was running all around the country saying that collective bargaining was unprofessional and that, after all, collective bargaining is something that steelworkers and autoworkers and garment workers engage in, and AFT is engaged in collective bargaining and it will be terrible because people would think they work and that would lower

our image in the eyes of the public.

So we supported collective bargaining, and I would like to stress the fact when we supported collective bargaining, that that was a very strange thing for us to do. The AFT as I indicated, was a small organization, 50,000 members in a country when there were 1,500,000 teachers at that time.

Now what does collective bargaining mean. It means that we have an election in which the majority picks the exclusive bargaining organization. Why would a tiny organization of 50,000 people say let's have an election? That was really strange. Generally, if you are a small organization, you say let us have proportional representation or let us have advisory committees so we can get one seat even though we are very, very small, so the gutsy thing that the AFT leaders said was even though we are very small, if we lead the fight for collective bargaining, we are not afraid. We are going to do very well in those elections even though we are quite small and in the minority because people are going to vote for the group that shows leadership and the teachers will vote for us far beyond the numbers that are now in our membership and, indeed, that actually happened.

So after a number of years of organizing teachers and winning collective bargaining and getting contracts, we said that this wasn't moving quickly enough, we really ought to have a bigger and stronger teacher organization in this country, so we proposed merger to the Education Association as a way of bringing two million teachers in this country together as one organization, and in a few places we did get merger, and where that has worked, the teachers are indeed very strong and more effective because of their numbers.

Then a few years later we found that what we were doing at the bargaining table was getting tougher and tougher. Merger action slowed down and we found that it was very, very important for us that collective bargaining was not enough and we had to get heavily involved in political action.

If you lose an election and you get a Ronald Reagan in the White House nationally and then if you get school board people and governors and legislators who have similar philosophies across the country, you can't bargain in the same way. Instead of winning things, you are just fighting to hold on or to prevent yourself from losing very much.

So throughout this period of the last 20 years, we did many things.

We introduced collective bargaining and made it a way of live. But in addition to that we have supported an ocean of overall teacher unions for merger and we have gotten very effectively and and helpfully involved in political action. And we have done all these things because it was necessary to do what we set out to do which was essentially to improve the voice and the power and the status of teachers and to improve education.

So the question is why the new direction on professionalism?

Why this new emphasis?

Why don't we keep doing what we did before?

I want to make very clear that in talking about professionalism, I am not talking about abandoning or weakening collective bargaining. Just as when we went for collective bargaining, we didn't repudiate the idea that teachers ought not to belong to the AFL-CIO. It was a way of bringing in more teachers.

We are not repudiating or weakening our political activity, our desire for teacher unity, our involvement in the labor movement or collective bargaining. It is, and I hope it will be clear, it is a very important new concept as to what it is that we as teachers and an organization have to do if we are to

accomplish the very same objectives that we set out to accomplish originally, and I would like to, as quickly as I can, mention a few of the reasons why the change on emphasis and why it is that we need a new direction at this time.

First, education is still in great trouble. I do want to spend a minute reminding you that the President of the United States once again talked about tuition tax credits and vouchers, and the union message is that he still continues to talk about that. I know we keep saying that nobody believes he is ever going to do that. When Ronald Reagan talks about something, that is not going to happen. Week after week, all the things he said are there, but in our own head we think he will never be able to get away with that, but there is a chance that he will.

In addition to that tuition tax credits are moving in various states. I am sorry to tell you that last week the New York State Senate Education and Finance Committee passed a tuition tax credit bill which is now on the floor of the senate in New York State and that unless it can be kept bottled up, if it reaches the floor, it will pass.

If the senate passes it, there will be tremendous pressure on the assembly to pass it. When Governor Cuomo was

asked what he felt about the bill, he said "In principle, I favor 8 to 9 public schools, but I haven't see this piece of legislation, so I won't comment on it."

You already have one in Minnesota.

You could have one in New York.

You could have one in Pennsylvania.

You could have one in New Jersey.

You could have one here, so we are not finished with the tuition tax credits problem.

Now let us remember why we have got the problem. It is not just because Ronald Reagan is there. It is because the public over a period of time has come to believe that the schools are not doing a good enough job. When I went to school in the 1930s and 1940s, most of the people were immigrants. They came from other countries, and they looked upon the schools and the teachers as doing a great job.

They were uneducated people who respected the schools because of schools were filled with educated people. But today we have an educated public out there. They don't have the same attitude toward teachers and toward schools, and so there is greater dissatisfaction. The Gallup Polls show that more and more

people give the schools a failing mark. SAT scores in the last decade did go down, so here we are, and we are back to the analogy that I have been using which I believe is a good analogy, and that is that we, in public education today, are very much in the same position that people in the oil and steel industry were in ten, eleven, twelve or fifteen years ago.

The oil people knew what the Japanese people were doing. The Japanese people were coming over here and were looking at our factories. They were meeting with our union leaders. They were meeting with our management. They were asking us what goes wrong, why do we have these recalls. Then they were going over there and using our experience to do it better and our people were going over there and they were watching them do it better. And we were watching the dissatisfaction that our people had with our own cars, and what happened?

People sat down and they said: It is going to be too tough for us to make the changes that we have to make. It is going to mean a lot of sacrifices on the part of the employees. It is going to mean a lot of sacrifices on the part of management. It is going to mean a tremendous number of changes, and we can't deal with changes because they are very unpopular. Let us hope and pray.

Let us wait. Let us hope that American people won't buy small cars. Let us hope that they can't buy cars that they can't pronounce--Mitz-u-buchi or something like that (laughter). Let's management and union get together and go down to Washington to pass a law that they can't bring them in the country or that we will put tariffs on them or something else--so we did everything except make a better car.

So what happened? It didn't work. And right now we don't know if there will be an auto industry in the country five years from now. We don't know if there is going to be a steel industry five years from now.

Well, we don't know if there is going to be a public education system in the country ten years from now. If the trends in decline of public support continue, and the feeling on the part of the public that the schools are doing a poor job, that the scores are low, that the standards are not being maintained--if that is out there, we will come to the position where the public will say this is a situation that just can't be fixed, so let us give parents the right to take their children and send them elsewhere, so we are facing the possible death of a major and important institution. That is a major reason for doing

something very, very different.

The second point I want to make is that collective bargaining is really important. I congratulate you after all these years of finally being able to get it enacted into law, even though many of you have been practicing it even before you had the law and doing it very, very effectively. It is almost strange to be standing here at the time when you have just achieved collective bargaining legislation and for me to say the next sentence, that this: Collective bargaining alone will not get you what you want for teachers as a group. You need collective bargaining. There is no reason why teachers aggrieved should not have a good grievance procedure.

There is no reason why, if there is a dirty job to be done in the schools, why everybody shouldn't have their fair share of doing those, and if there are some very pleasant things, why those shouldn't be shared. I don't to be convinced of the virtues of collective bargaining, but you know most people who join the union when there are only three, four, five or six other people in and they know it is going to be a very unpopular thing to do at the beginning and they know there is some jeopardy, they may even lose their jobs or they won't get a promotion, or in the days when schools were crowded, they would be floating teachers

with a different room every period and everything else.

Those people are dreamers. Many of you knew when you first sat down with a small group of people as to what could happen as a result of building a stronger teacher organization. Suppose you were to make a list of all the things that you had hoped for and dreamt about at the time when you originally sat there and pulled your union together. I have a pretty good idea of what would be on that list. It would be a pretty long list, and if today after 2 or 5 or 10 or 15 years or 20 years or 24 years of collective bargaining, you sit down and you take a look at the original list that you made and you see all the things you hoped and prayed and worked for, that you hoped for that would come through this, and then what you were actually able to achieve through collective bargaining, you will find the list is pretty impressive. There were a number of things that you could do.

You will also find that there is another impressive list, a whole bunch of things that you couldn't do through the process because the process is narrow.

Management says that we won't talk to you about those things. Those are educational policies. Those are professional issues. That is what is good for children. You are

here to teach children. So there are certain things which after a certain number of years of collective bargaining you find that you are no longer moving ahead on.

One year is a good year and you got a lot of help from the legislature. Good. You are going to go up a few points.

The next year is a bad year for the state economically. and you are going to go down a few points. And after a while you reach a certain plateau in collective bargaining and you feel that you have got to do collective bargaining because if you don't do it, you will fall behind and lose what you don't have.

But after a certain point, collective bargaining can become not a way of elevating and moving teachers ahead, after a while it becomes a treadmill. You are walking and you are running and you are working very, very hard in order to stand still, and you have got to work hard because if you don't work hard, you are going to move backward.

So I am not talking against working very hard, but is that what we as leaders of the American Federation of Teachers want in ten or twenty years or 30 years from now to be written on the scrolls that will be given to us when we retire? "...who ran fast for 30 years to stand still"?

(Cries of no)

I didn't think so . That isn't why we made the breakthrough for collective bargaining. Collective bargaining, when you get it, does move you an entire plateau ahead, lifts you to a completely different relationship.

What we have to do is think about a way in which we do not abandon collective bargaining, but while maintaining and improving that, see if we can move to a level of existence and level of operation which can get us some of the things which we found that we can't get through the bargaining process. Now I want to say that something else has been happening in the last twenty or thirty years in the United States.

What has happened is that more and more people are being educated in this country. We have been doing it, colleges and universities have been doing it. As we get more and more educated, employers do not treat educated workers the way they treated uneducated workers.

Employees who are more educated want more voice in what it is that their jobs are all about. With the old-fashioned worker, if you worked in a coal mine or sweatshop, there was only one thing that you wanted from your job. You wanted a paycheck so that you could feed yourself and feed your family. My mother never talked to me about getting satisfaction from the work that

she did. That is what you do after you have gone to school and then you talk about what else work can be about, so collective bargaining sort of starts with making sure that you can pay for your housing and other things, but after that--and teachers are more and more talking about their voice, about dignity, about their ability to make decisions that affect their own work, about not having a whole bunch of bureaucratic rules imposed on them where they are told everything to do, but they want to be respected so they can exercise their judgment in their work.

It also happens in terms of the tax credit issue and the voucher issue. What the public thinks about teachers is very important. At one time when they used to think about us, they used to feel very sorry for us. We were these poor powerless people. Once a year they could come around on Teacher Day and put flowers in our lapels. It was like Be Kind to the Handicapped Week. We feel sorry for those poor characters.

Now we have a strong union, a chance to go on strike. We have got important public leaders who are viewed as power figures and people don't feel sorry for us the same way.

I don't want to go back to the good old days where they were treating us as a bunch of people that they had pity on.

But on the other hand, it also is not good if the public has an image of teachers as being only interested in their own economic well-being and self-interest. Now, part of that is the way the press judges teachers. You do something to help kids, you do something professional -- it never makes the front page.

But you get a contract, you get an increase, you threaten to go out on strike -- that makes the front page. But that is something we have got to do something about, because the public support of schools depends on whether they think you have a commitment to education and to quality, then we have to work just as hard getting that side of the message out as we do getting the message out as we do in a message that comes out very strong and clear in terms of defending our economic self-interest.

Now, what is it that teachers want? I talked about that a minute ago. Like other educated people, they want more and more decision-making power and John Cole, our state federation president in Texas, had a very good little insight a number of weeks ago when I was down there.

He was talking to Ross Perot, the multimillionaire who is the head of the state commission down there. He said "Mr. Perot, I understand why they are always watching teachers

and evaluating and inspecting them and everything else. If I hired somebody for \$13,000 a year, I would watch them pretty closely, too."

(Laughter.)

So what we have is a syndrome. First they go out and hire people at real low salaries and then they say to themselves, anybody who is willing to work for a salary like that better be watched very closely.

(Applause.)

And then, of course, now this is not the good old days. People are not coming to work for us because there is the Great Depression of the 1930s, they are not going to get a draft exemption, and they are not coming because they are women and have no other place to go.

One-half the students at the law schools these days are women; huge percentages are prospective doctors, dentists, accountants, business managers and so the only way we will get people in the future as good as we now have or better than the people we now have is to go out there and to compete for them, and part of competing for them is to, yes, pay them a decent salary; but not many people are going to come in to a field that are treated the way teachers are now treated.

(Loud applause.)

Think about it. Before the reform legislation in California, the legislators passed a law 150 pages long. They put a lot of money into it. They put in \$2.7 billion into education over two years. It is a lot of money, very good; raised standards; required new teachers to take a test, got rid of automatic promotion policies, required students to pass examinations, required English, science, mathematics, had special schools set up for violent and disruptive students, put into effect early childhood education.

Very, very good. But a bright, talented student going to college will take a look at that and say, "You know what, they just passed a piece of legislation 150 pages long, telling me what to do; telling me what books to use, how many weeks to spend on this or that. They don't pass laws telling doctors or lawyers or dentists what to do. They must think that educators are a bunch of idiots to let the legislature pass something telling them what to do; every single thing to do, and that, of course, is the image.

We hear constantly of white college students going up to a professor and the professor says, what do you intend to be? And the college student says, I am going to be a teacher. And the professor says: You? But you are so smart.

(Laughter.)

Well, we have to get rid of that syndrome of treating teachers like children, the public attitude, the attitude on the part of legislatures. Unless we turn this around, we are not going to attract the people that we need, so it is a combination of money; it is taking care of discipline problems and working conditions, so that an English or social studies or a mathematics teacher doesn't have to mark 150 papers or more a day. Class size involves all of those things that have to do with, is a school going to be like a factory?

Is it going to be we are workers in an educational factory and we are viewed as people who have no minds and somebody up above. The legislature, the superintendent, the principal, the school board -- everybody is go-ng to lay out the rules. Our only job is to follow the rules. Our union contracts will protect us from abuse of the rules, those rules.

Well, if that is what we have, no one is going to come in in the future. Well, what is the professionalism about? A professional is a person who is an expert, and by virtue of that person's expertise, that person has a high degree of decision-making power and authority. Nobody stands over the surgeon,

telling him to cut a little to the left or a little to the right.

(Laughter.)

If you hired a good lawyer, you watched him in your firm for two or three years while he was still a junior person. But in most of that person's life, there isn't anybody following him into the court or following him elsewhere. You don't find that with actuaries or accountants. There is no supervising dentist standing over him in the room, watching that fellow in what he does.

You are trusted. You are very well trained and educated. You are tested before you come in and then after you have gone through some sort of internship or probationary period, by and large, you are left alone because you are respected and trusted.

Should we have any other idea for teachers? Sure, you can say outstanding training, very difficult examination, not one of these \$20, two hour short answer things. A full day of essays on subject matter, a full day on professional knowledge, a three year internship program where people can see whether you can really work with other teachers or parents or students or anyone else.

Then once you are certified to the society as a teacher, why should people constantly come in with check sheets, asking for your plan book? Does anyone ask for a surgeon's plan book, asking how he intends to proceed? So that is essentially what we are talking about.

The tests are a very important part of this. We are about to experience a teacher shortage. We have a baby boomlet. There are more kids coming in to elementary schools now. There are very few people in college training to become teachers.

Now, do you know what happens when there are more children and fewer people becoming teachers? What happens? The school board has a new examination for new teachers, known as the feather test. A feather is put in one nostril. If it moves, you pass. That is it.

(Laughter. Applause.)

Now, the test is very important. To show you how important it is as to how people feel about us, I was out in Utah about four or five weeks ago. I gave my speech at the National Press Club, calling for the national teacher exam. The next morning I was in Utah. The morning I got there, there I was on the front page of the Salt Lake City newspaper. The headline was, "Union

Boss Supports Teacher Exams."

I gave a bunch of talks that morning. The next day there was another headline which said, "Speaker Reiterates Teacher Test Support."

Then the third day after I had given more talks on this, the headline was, "Educator Supports Strong Teacher Standards."

Mind you, in two days I went from union boss to educator on exactly the same issue. There is a very broad lesson to be learned from that as to how the public sees this whole issue. There is no possibility of professionalism without high standards. The public will not respect us if we have the reputation of being a group of people who can become a teacher easily; you don't have to know very much. If the word gets out that there are a lot of teachers who can't read or can't write or can't spell or can't count, and I am sorry to say this, that four years ago when the State of Florida instituted an examination for its prospective teachers, about 35 percent of all the prospective elementary school teachers could not pass a sixth grade arithmetic test made up of multiple choice questions where there was only one obvious answer, where all the others were ridiculous, where all the answers could be arrived at without pencil and paper -- everything came out even -- it is the

kind of stuff you give kids as warmup questions at the beginning of the hour without pencil and paper.

Now, 35 percent failed. Those prospective teachers who felt they couldn't pass the test, didn't even take it in Florida. They went to some state where they didn't have to take the test. If we develop a reputation like that, then we are finished. Public education is finished, the public is not going to pay the kinds of dollars necessary. Forget what they are paying today, it is the kinds of dollars they will have to pay the year after that and the year after that in order to have the kind of teachers we are talking about; to have the kind of profession we are talking about.

Standards are very important now, here, I am sorry to say, we ought to have everyone's support in the struggle for standards. We ought to be out front. Why is it when a teacher's union leader stands up and says, We ought to have an examination for teachers similar to what lawyers, doctors and others go through, why does it make front page headlines all through the country?

If lawyers stood up and said there ought to be an examination for lawyers, it wouldn't make any headlines at all. The reason it makes headlines, unfortunately, is because people are suprised to see teachers and other people in the education

community supporting the notion that there ought to be high standards and we can do immesurable good for education and ourselves not only by saying it, but by really meaning it in anything we do.

This is not a public relations gimmick. If you don't follow up and really do things and devote the same kind of energy to accomplishing these kinds of things as we do in other areas, you odn't really mean it. It is just on your long laundry list of things that somebody else can do.

Unfortunately during this period where we have an opportunity either to raise education to a new level or perhaps see, or perhaps to end up seeing the destruction of it through public support for private education, the National Education Association is still living in some other world and the positions that it is taking are not only likely to lose their members which they are not too concerned about, might even welcome it, but I am very concerned that a major organization in American education is taking positions which are likely to lead to the destruction of American public education, likely to lead the average parent out there to say, teachers really don't care.

They oppose an examination. Why? We have all gone

to college; it is a shame to have somebody take an examination after they graduated college. Well, the lawyer has gone to law school and he takes a bar examination after that. Doctors have gone to medical school, but they take an examination. Actuaries, accountants, real estate brokers -- everybody else within our society takes an examination after they have received their education. It is one of the things that keeps colleges honest.

Any college that produced doctors, 98 percent of whom flunked the medical examination, will have people starting to look at that medical school. The same with a law school.

So there are a whole series of issues. The public is very concerned with the whole question of discipline. Now Ronald Reagan, not my favorite President, a couple of months ago came out and said that discipline was a major problem in public schools. I am sorry that he was the first President to say it, but he was, so what happened?

The National Education Association came out and attacked him and said that the President of the United States is exaggerating the violence and discipline problem for political purposes.

Now, I think that is a ridiculous position to take.

If you ask teachers and parents all over the country what is the major problem that you face, and they are going to say that in many places it is the fact that you have one or two kids that take up all your time, they prevent you from teaching, they drive a lot of parents to move their children to private schools.

Teachers say, "I can't teach without either being a psychiatrist or a jailer, and I love to teach. I want to be a teacher and not a psychiatrist or a jailer," so when the President of the United States, instead of saying that he is not telling the truth, why not say that the President is absolutely right and why doesn't he give us some money to set up some special facilities to help them instead of saying that he hasn't said the right thing?

(Applause.)

So I would like to touch on a few controversial issues before winding up.

(Laughter.)

I thought those were just the standard issues.

If we start a move toward professionalism, and I have just indicated that "professional" means that you are an expert and you really know your stuff, and because you are an expert, you are relatively unsupervised. You don't have the authoritarian,

traditional military or factory type of structure which exists in other places. You need a different structure.

What structures do other professions have? Doctors don't just go off for the rest of their lives doing what they want to do unsupervised. You do not go to a doctor who says, "I know what all the other doctors would do for this sickness, but I am not that sort of a doctor. I am going to do something different and you will see how it works out. Doctors discipline themselves and so do lawyers and so do others and the way they do that is by having a strong peer relationship; that is, doctors talk to other doctors and doctors are not afraid to sit and say, I know you haven't seen this sort of thing before, what would you do with it?

Doctors make a wonderful reputation by publishing articles showing that they tried to do something, but the patient died anyway. And they are considered to be great doctors when they published their failures, because no other person will ever die of the same cure again.

Do you know of any school superintendent who has made a reputation by saying he tried something and it didn't work? You do? I don't. Every educational experiment is doomed to succeed. They are all wonderful. They come in and they tell you, We have

got to do something. It is brand new. You have nothing to say about it; you do it and it doesn't work, but they have all the press say it is doing something, and then they quietly pull it out as they bring in the next innovation.

So what we have to do is develop a system of peer assistance and peer support, and I would recommend your looking at something which is very controversial but which is very good. It doesn't have to be your model, but it is a model that has to be looked at. There are other models. You are developing some.

I have seen some of the outstanding proposals that you are making in terms of education reform. Toledo, Ohio has a system that is kind of interesting. By the way, that is a system that was going down. It was one of those places where the voters wouldn't vote the money and they closed the schools for three months. The teachers would be out on strike and the parents were moving the kids out of the schools, and I guess one day they got a new superintendent and they got an outstanding union leader, and they got together and said, this place is falling apart and we are all going to lose, so let us do something to improve education. And they did. They did a lot of things.

One of the things was that they said: You know what,

supposing the union picks ten teachers who are outstanding teachers and suppose those teachers are going to be something special -- they are not going to be called administrators -- and after that there will be another group that does it for three years. For three years these people are going to pick all the people who are hired in the district as new teachers. For three years they will give them all the help that they can possibly give them, just the way a doctor's internship has helped for a long period of time with other people.

They are given to teach one class, to develop a curriculum and they are given an opportunity to see all sorts of teaching styles and, furthermore, after the three years are up, all these teachers who have been helping these teachers will have a critical role in deciding who should not be given tenure.

Now if you and you have helped those people all you possibly can for three years, at the end of that three years, if you tell that person that they don't have tenure, you are really doing them a favor. There is nothing that is worse in the life of a person who cannot teach to be locked in a room with kids for the rest of his or her life. The time to do this is not 15 years later. The time to do it is at the very beginning of a person's life, when

he can still do something else.

That is one of the things that is wrong with our system. 15 years later you are still not sure that someone hired 15 years ago, and have said is okay for 15 years, you are still not sure. You still have to take a look at them. That tells you more about the system than it tells you about the individual. So they have a system.

But why not in addition to having teachers involved in that, have groups of teachers who are expert and let us decide on what textbooks are used.

Now, we have had a lot of stuff on textbooks in the last 15 or 20 years. First they said the textbooks are too difficult. Let us make them easier, so you get a lot of short words that don't say anything and they are boring. Then you say Hey, the textbooks don't have enough women in them, so you change the pictures. Then you say the textbooks don't have enough minorities, so you change those.

I am not against those changes, but I am going to make a different point in a minute. Well, it doesn't have enough about labor history in it. Fine, all those things.

Now they say the books are too easy, so they are

rewriting all the textbooks and they will bring the bigger words back. Has anybody sat down and said: Hey, is this a good textbook, is this something the kid can understand, something the kid can learn from?

If there are questions there, are the answers right near the questions? Do the pictures and the diagrams really explain certain concepts so that if a student went home and spent a half hour with it, he is going to see something and understand something perhaps from a little different perspective?

What is a textbook for? It is an educational tool? Who should be making that decision? We now have school boards making the decision. What do school boards know about textbooks? It is okay if they want to say we want textbooks that properly represent women, minorities and other things. That is a political policy question and that is fine.

But teachers who are expert in this -- now, not every teacher is an expert in this, but that is part of what ought to be the professional training in teachers, but can you imagine doctors to allow the board of the hospital to determine what pills or what instruments are going to be used in an operation? Can you imagine any other profession saying what are the major tools of your trade

that are going to be in the hands of your clients?

That is how far we are from professionalism and what it is that we have to do in order to redress the balance. I am talking about a change in management. I am not against principals, I am not against superintendents, I am not here to argue that they are bad people. We have done polls of teachers across the country which show that most people think the principles are good guys, and the superintendent -- not all of them, but most of them.

We do not have a view that teachers are afraid of evaluation or anything like that. On the contrary, teachers like most evaluation systems and they think most of them are fair, but I am talking about applying to education what American industry is now learning. I recommend to you a book called "In Search of Excellence." It is about America's best corporations, and if you read about those corporations, and if you read about those corporations and look at how workers are treated in relationship to management, you will find something which is an eye opener.

When I went down to see Ross Perot in Texas, we had a discussion for an hour and then he said, "Let's go to lunch," and he stood up and said, "Now, I am probably going to disappoint you, but I don't have an executive dining room for myself and a

few other people. I eat with everyone else in this place; the same dining, and you know what, I can tell you that because I eat there the food is a lot better."

The next thing he pointed out to me. When we went out and went to his car and we went down about a half a block on the grounds. "I don't pay extra to park on these grounds, but I don't have a reserved parking lot on this spot right now. I am like every other person who works in this place; I get the next one who is available. Yes, I am in a hurry and yes, I am an important person in this place, but do you know what that meant when that parking spot that was there for my predecessor got abolished, and I decided that I was going to be like everybody else; what that meant in terms of the involvement of the people who work here?"

So I am talking about things that management out there know and things that school management does not yet know.

Now what we ought to be doing is called Japanese management. Now, there is nothing Japanese about it; it just makes good sense. There was an auto plant in the Ford Company; there were a number of different plants. This was number 30. What does this mean? It meant that there were more lemons that came out of there

than from all their other factories. It was a very, very poor operation. They decided before closing it, they would send somebody to see what they could do.

What did they do? They went around and they asked each worker what is wrong there. Not why were there lemons in general. They went up to one guy. He was working in a pit and these were little trucks which came across the assembly line. The job that he had was there was a chassis and it was on a frame and he had a tool which he had to raise and pull a trigger and tighten and that would tighten a bolt and that was one of the bolts that kept the back part onto the body.

So they asked him, "John, tell me, when you are doing this, do you ever miss and not tighten the bolt?"

He said "Yes, sometimes."

They said, "John, we are trying to improve this product. Will you tell me how often this happens?" John said, "Oh, well, about every 9 or 10 minutes."

They said, "What? Why does it happen?" He said, "Well, look, here I am; this tool is heavy. I have got to keep looking up all the time and I have got to keep pulling the trigger all the time." And he said, "You know what happens when you do

that for a life, or even a day? You get a crick in your neck and every once in a while when I go like that (indicating) this goes like this (indicating), and I miss. And if you fire me and get somebody else, the only difference is that somebody else will get cricks every 7 minutes and some every 14 minutes, but you are not going to get anybody who stands in this position and doesn't get cricks."

"What do you think we can do about it?" "Well, for a long time I have been thinking about this, but I had nobody to tell it to. First, if you put a little button on my foot so that every time I get a crick, I push down on it and it stops the assembly line and then I get the crick and I tighten it up. Sure, every 9 or 10 minutes you will hold up the assembly line for one second, but you are going to have every one of those bolts on.

"Also, there is another thing, I don't know why I have got to tighten this from the bottom. Could you put me up on top, because it is a lot easier to hold something down and to look down than it is to look up."

Well, that is what they did. They went to every worker and they asked them, Hey, when do things go wrong? When do you not put on your bolt and tighten it? And you know something,

they redesigned the whole factory and now they put out what is perfect. They are now the most profitable. Same workers. Same workers. Same company, same product, same workers except that instead of thousands of lemons and everything coming back.

That suggests something. 85 percent of what is wrong in an auto factory or in a school has nothing to do with whether you are a good person and trying hard; it is the way the system works and if people, instead of inspecting us and rating us and evaluating us would start talking to us and ask us what we see and what it is that ought to be done.

(Applause.)

And there is a job for the principal and the superintendent. His job is to listen to us and then to redesign the system. The management had a big job in that Ford plant. They listened and they changed the job in accordance with what the employees wanted.

...equal rights, they agreed that the poor should be helped, they agreed that civil rights should be maintained, they agreed with Ronald Reagan and on the abortion issue. You go up and down there and you have got certain issues where everybody said they agreed with Mondale. Then the same people went out and voted for Ronald Reagan. Why?

I am not of the school who believes that the people are drugged or hypnotized or something else. I will tell you, Ronald Reagan, as corny as it may seem, created a positive image of where he wants the American society to go. He got a lot of people to forget about all the little differences or big differences or a lot of specifics, because he got people involved in his picture of what this country is or ought to be in the world.

I suggest to you that ultimately teachers will decide on a teacher organization not so much on a series of little issues. They are going to select a teacher organization not on the basis of their feelings or their dislikes, but they are going to do it on the basis of their hopes, of the image of which organization is going to lift them from a position in which they are in now, a position in which they are not treated very well, a position in which teachers are basically treated the same way that children are on every level of the school system, and that organization which provided the uplift of the image of where teachers are to be and what their role is to be, that is the organization which will be able to organize the teachers.

A few weeks ago, I was at a meeting with a man who has studied all sorts of corporations and organizations, and he

talked about go-ng into a factory that makes cosmetics, it is one of the biggest outfits in the country, and we walked through the place and he went up to somebody who was really sort of a security guard.

He said, "What do you do here?" He answered: "I-work-for-" and then he mentioned the name of the company and said it was very important.

Then a couple of blocks down he went into an IBM place and he asked this person what she was doing. This person was clearly a secretary, but they started talking about how IBM was the real leader in computer technology and she had the real role in moving that whole company ahead and then this man said, "That afternoon I went downtown and walked into one of our schools. I walked down the hall and I asked a person who was standing right in front of me, "What do you do here?" The person looked straight at me and said, "I am only a teacher."

Now let us think of that. Let us think of a world in which there are guards and secretaries and people who say I am somebody because I am part of something which is important and I am being treated in a way -- those people didn't say I am only a secretary or I am only a security person, and how many times have

we heard the answer in a school, "I am only a teacher"?

That is what professionalism is all about. In a few years from now when we are finished with this process, no person in this country should ever again answer that question by saying, "I am only a teacher."

(Applause.)

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