

## KEYNOTE ADDRESS

## PRESIDENT ALBERT SHANKER

Seventy-five years, that's a long time.

Two years ago, when we met in San Francisco, I was able to say proudly that the AFT, with unprecedented growth of 55,000 members, had had the two best years in its history, and one of those years was the best year in ten. And now I can proudly say that in the last two years we've taken in nearly 70,000 new members — 36,000 in this last year alone.

*(Applause)*

Some of you were around during the years from 1916 to 1950, '55, '60 — a long period of time — and we managed to reach 50,000 members after all those years. And now we've grown more in a two-year period than we were able to grow in more than three decades.

As Bob Porter pointed out, it's not only the 70,000 members that we've added since our last convention. We also need to recognize that, just to stand still, we had to sign up 80,000 more members. And that means that all together we really organized over 200,000 people in the last couple of years. Membership in the AFT now stand at 743,000, and we can see that with a growth rate like that, one that is accelerating each year, we'll be reaching that million mark soon, something that seemed impossible just a short time ago.

*(Applause)*

Part of our future prospects rest with the 40,000 people in the brand-new units that we organized in the last two years. Some of them are members, but most of them are not yet members. And since we now represent them, bargain for them, handle their grievances, we have a great opportunity, that being, that the overwhelming majority of them will be with us as members by the time we meet two years from now.

We have other records that we can be proud of, as well. In general, there are fewer and fewer collective bargaining elections in the United States. It's getting more difficult for unions to sign up people even to get an election. And then once the elections take place, not very many of them are won. But we were involved in 237 bargaining elections, and we won almost 75 percent of them, which is the highest record of success in the entire labor movement.

*(Applause)*

This growth is not in one area at the expense of others. Every single one of our groups — K to 12, higher education, PSRPs, health care professionals, state and local employees — all of them shared in that growth.

Moving into our 75th year, we've paid tribute to some great people and to all of those 400 outstanding locals, the Pride of the Union, that made the AFT's growth possible. And as we move through this convention, we need to recognize the contributions that so many others have made.

With us at this convention, not well in recent months, over 90, and still an important part of us is our long-time president, Carl Megel, who helped this organization grow. *(Applause)*

Retiring from our executive council this year will be two of the strongest and best people the union has had in all of the years of its existence. People who are tough, people who work hard, people who have the integrity to differ with everybody else on the council when they feel that they're right, who help to shape us up: Bob Healey of Illinois and Pat Daly of Michigan.

*(Applause)*

There are many more, but I think special mention ought to be made of Bob Porter, now in his 30th year as AFT secretary-treasurer.

*(Applause)*

There are certain ideas that have moved this organization throughout all these years. Many things have changed. We've changed many policies, we've changed our minds on different things. We've changed tactics, we've changed strategy from time to time. But there are some things that have been with us from the beginning.

First, the idea that, in a democracy and a free society, every group of people — that includes teachers, paraprofessionals and school-related personnel, college teachers, government workers, health care people, every group — has the right to organize and fight for their economic well-being and that there's nothing wrong with that.

In 1916, a lot of people thought that there was something wrong with that idea. They felt that if you were a teacher or a health care worker or a college professor or a government worker, somehow you ought to give up your rights. And of course, it was not only the general public we had to convince. The most difficult part was convincing our own colleagues, because they, too, shared the general view that there was something wrong with organizing and fighting for their economic well-being.

I remember going from school to school in the 1950s and early '60s and relating a story that came from an essay by Arthur Koestler, the Hungarian novelist and essayist. He wrote an essay that retold the story of the fox

and the grapes. And his telling of it was that the foxes all looked up and the grapes were up there very high, and none of the foxes could reach the grapes. One fox, however, decided that he would go to school at night and take climbing lessons. He enrolled in a course, and he did his homework. He practiced every night, and after quite a while, that fox was able to climb all the way to the top of the wall. He was able to reach the grapes.

He was about to reach out and eat them when he thought to himself, "You know, not only will I get pleasure from eating those grapes, but I'll get even more pleasure from having all the other foxes watch me because they will be so envious."

So he made some loud noise, whatever loud noise foxes make, and he summoned the others. They gathered down below, and because they indeed were envious, they started shouting out, "The grapes are sour. The grapes are sour."

He grabbed a bunch of grapes and threw them into his mouth. Indeed, they were the sourest grapes he had ever tasted in his life. But of course, he wasn't about to admit it because there were all those envious foxes looking up, shouting that the grapes were sour. So he ate all the grapes, and a half hour later he rolled over and died of extreme stomach acidity.

*(Laughter)*

Now this was an essay on snobbery. Many of our colleagues came from working-class families. They took lessons at night, and they climbed up to taste the fruits of professionalism. When they found that the fruits of professionalism meant that you couldn't drink, you couldn't participate in politics, you couldn't express your views, you had to sign oaths, you had to live in poverty, you had to do all sorts of things, they still went around saying, "But we can't organize for our rights because we're professionals."

Somehow the toughest job that we've had, and the greatest success that we've had over the years, was not so much convincing the general public as convincing our own constituencies of their rights and what they ought to be doing to secure them. This has been the greatest breakthrough.

Something else we've seen throughout our history is that we have not achieved this success in the way that some people get rich, namely, by inheriting their wealth from their parents. We fought for every member that we have, and we did it from the ground up, and we did it against tremendous opposition. As soon as we started, there were locals that formed very quickly, but they were wiped out right away because their members were all fired. Even in the state of Illinois, there was a decision that membership in the American Federation of Teachers constituted enough evidence that a person was not professional to cause that person to be fired.

We were accused of being all sorts of things: unprofessional, communists. As late as the 1960s in New York, some local school districts would actually dismiss our teachers because they prevented the district from having 100 percent membership in the Association. So if we look at the other organization, we see they have done some organizing and growing recently, much the same that we have. But their early growth, and probably their first million members, was pretty much gotten the easy way, through principals and superintendents and requirements to join.

Over this period, we also have been leaders in a very special way. There is something that unites all the groups in this room, even with the differences that we have, and that is that we all engage in a special kind of work. Teachers and other school employees, those who work in colleges and universities, in the health professions and public employment can all say that there is a very special bond that exists between us and the public. That is, that the public expects things of us, and, indeed, we entered into these fields because we want to serve in certain ways. There is something different about being in these fields from most other types of work.

And throughout all these years, another one of the guiding ideas was the idea of being in the labor movement. Years and years ago, when John Dewey helped to found this union, he wrote, "Teachers had, from time to time, banded together to take care of their own interests, but the public usually gets angry when teachers fight for their own interests in isolation. And the success is much greater if teachers would realize that they need to band together with other people who work for a living."

And then he said, "Other people who work for a living have a special reason to help teachers and public schools, because rich people can afford to, and usually do, send their kids to private schools, but the public schools provide the avenue for the children of workers to succeed," and that's why workers and unions throughout our history have provided that support.

So let's look at who is here, who we are, what we're doing. Twenty-five years ago, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, in those days, Title 1, established paraprofessionals. Oh, yes, we've had other school-related personnel going back to 1916; we had some school secretaries in the very early days and some others. But paraprofessionals came into existence 25 years ago. And we can be proud that, throughout AFT's history, paraprofessionals and other school-related personnel have always had exactly the same rights as teachers. We never said, "Here's second-class citizenship; join our organization, but you can't vote or run for office."

*(Applause)*

And we now have more than 150,000 paraprofessionals and school-related personnel in this union.

*(Applause)*

Every one of you who works in a school, whether as a teacher, a guidance counselor, a bus driver, a paraprofessional, a secretary or in food service or maintenance or as a custodian, must be part of the answer and the solution in terms of restructuring schools. Every one. Having all of you people in one organization gives us strength. It gives us an ability to cooperate. And all of us have an interest in seeing to it that the purpose of the schools, which is to educate our kids, is carried out and done so properly.

With our paraprofessionals and school-related personnel, we can be proud that we didn't say, "This is a dead-end job. Stay there. We are teachers, and you are 'other' people." In most of our jurisdictions, we have developed career ladders, college programs, staff development. We've essentially said, "You're part of a team. There's room to move, there's room to grow. But if you want to stay in the position you're in right now, that's great, too. That job needs to be done and done well, and we'll help." And each year we've had our special PSRP conferences, and huge, huge groups attend. The rate of growth has been just phenomenal.

We have just barely begun to scratch the surface here. There are still one million unorganized paraprofessionals and school-related people working in the United States, and another 150,000 who are in unions not associated with the AFL-CIO.

So here's a job that needs to be done. But we're moving quickly, and we can see our union moving not only to a million but way past a million as we do this job effectively. Many of you here have in your own districts people who are still unorganized. The job is there and needs to be done. Higher education. I mentioned John Dewey, a college professor, a philosopher. From the very beginning, people in higher education were an integral part of — pioneers — in the American Federation of Teachers. We pioneered in the unthinkable: collective bargaining for higher education personnel. Believing that professionalism meant that a union was unnecessary was not a disease exclusive to K-12. It was in higher education that this idea had its strongest hold.

Yet, we moved. We organized across the country until we had one very important and crucial setback: the *Yeshiva* decision of the United States Supreme Court. That has had a chilling effect because it has, effectively, said that no private college or university comes under any labor laws and, therefore, organizing has pretty much totally stopped there. There are a few exceptions.

There's a close connection between higher education and elementary and secondary schools. There is no way we will reshape our elementary and secondary schools without research and development in our colleges and universities. There's no way in which we will improve our schools without changes and improvements in teacher training.

On the other side, you are not going to be hearing speeches any longer tooting that we have terrible elementary and secondary schools but the greatest higher education system in the world because many of the poorly prepared kids who graduate from high school are the ones who go to colleges and universities. And if we can't do a better job in elementary and secondary education, we will have more and more of what is a growing trend in higher education; that is, students are getting the education they should have gotten in junior high school and high school when they advance to college or university. Speeches about the finest higher education system in the world will not pass muster unless we work together to solve this problem.

FNHP: Twelve years ago, a number of groups came to us from the American Nurses Association and from other independent groups. We'd had inquiries about us before that, because many nurses and other health care professionals liked what they saw in our union. They liked the militancy, they liked the professionalism, they liked the autonomy. And we've grown from 11 up to 60 locals: 40,000 members. Here's a group that includes not just registered nurses, but LPNs and medical technicians, physical and occupational therapists, pharmacists, laboratory and other technicians, and, recently, some doctors and some dentists.

You might say, "Why only 40,000? How come we're not talking about 150,000, since with others the numbers are so big?" The answer is that FNHP deals with employers in the private sector, and they are a much tougher group of opponents.

I'll give you a feel for how difficult this has been and what an achievement the 40,000 represent. It's an example from one of our original health professional locals, St. Anthony's FNHP in Denver, Colorado. In 1978, we organized a number of hospitals in Denver, 2,500 members. We had a very good local. We had tough opposition, with management going in with all sorts of anti-union stuff, but we won these elections.

Then what happened? Well, we thought we would just sit down at the bargaining table, the same way we usually do. But not in this situation. The

employers immediately fired some of our people. They declared that the elections weren't worth anything; they claimed that there were some supervisors involved or that there shouldn't be nurses in with others. They raised all sorts of questions as to whether the bargaining unit had been shaped correctly.

And from 1978 on, we saw lots of intimidation, spreading of fear, firing of people active in the union, employment of anti-labor consultants and more. We went to the NLRB local; we went to the NLRB regional to appeal; we went to the NLRB national. We went back and forth. We went to the Circuit Court of Appeals and finally back to the NLRB. By now, we have only one group left in this one hospital. And yet finally, the NLRB has said that the AFT was right all along and has given an order to the hospital to bargain in good faith.

*(Applause)*

I know that the reasons we're at last bargaining is because of a very courageous woman, Dorothy Mall, who's our president there. She started with us in 1978. She made phone calls, she issued newsletters, she kept holding people's hands, and she kept a small local intact from 1978 on. And now this week, she and the remaining members of the group have formed a negotiating committee. The reason they're not here is that they're in there trying to negotiate a contract after 12 years of this struggle.

*(Applause)*

We all face tough situations. We face budget cuts, unfair management, crazy legislation once in a while — we face all sorts of things. But very few of us have faced the kinds of problems that our colleagues there have. So that 40,000? That membership is going to grow. But the opposition has been so great.

We still win over two-thirds of our elections in the health care field, and we have contracts in 90 percent of the cases where we win an election, which is the highest percentage in the labor movement. We believe that very soon, there will be an NLRB ruling that will define these bargaining units, and that will mean employers can't get away with this trick of saying, "Well, we're not sure whether you can put this category of worker with that category of worker, so we're going to take you through 12 years of litigation in the courts." Once that definition is before us, we will engage in major drives and make major progress.

Just as we have problems in elementary and secondary education, we also have problems in health care. I'm not going to give you a speech on health care problems. You've been reading about them. We appointed a committee, chaired by Candy Owley, and that committee studied the problems of health care. The U.S. spends more, but we're not getting as much for our money as other countries. There's great dissatisfaction with the health care system in this country. While we spend more, we have more people who have no medical care at all. It's a horrible situation.

The FNHP committee came through with a fine analysis and report that will help us define our policies. And you will have before you at this convention a resolution that summarizes the report and establishes policy for the American Federation of Teachers as the president and the Congress and the business community and others move to figure out how to straighten out the health care system.

State and local employees: Our fastest-growing group. It's kind of neck and neck with paraprofessionals and school-related personnel. Because state and local employees started later with us, their percentage growth is faster. We have been affiliating a large number of organizations that have been around for a long time, and we have done a good job for their members. These organizations have a history, and they have come to realize that they ought to be part of the labor movement. And so they start looking around, and they ask, "Which union should we belong to?" A very large number of them come to us because we have a structure of autonomy. We have no provision in our Constitution that enables the national union to come in as a trustee or take over local unions. And they like the kind of assistance that we offer and the kind of expertise that we provide.

We have organized and affiliated more independents than any other union in the last two years. We recently brought in North Dakota and Alaska. In addition to affiliating independents, we're also organizing from scratch. We're reaching out to state and local employees.

I guess the best example of that is in Baltimore, Maryland, where our members — teachers, paraprofessionals and school-related personnel — have organized just about all of the city employees in the City of Baltimore. And our Baltimore union now represents 15,000 members and is the largest union in Baltimore.

*(Applause)*

We did the same thing in Montana. And the result of reaching out and organizing many of these other groups is that the AFT is now the largest union in the state of Montana.

*(Applause)*

In Kansas, the Kansas Association of Public Employees, with our support, is now reaching out to organize a number of bargaining units. As I

said about PSRPs, don't just take this as a report of nice things that are happening somewhere else. Look around in your state. Is there an independent association that is not affiliated with labor? Is there a group of state or local employees nearby who have no union affiliation? Talk to them. Let us know. That's how we build the union.

The biggest challenge that we have in the field of state employees is the state of Indiana. There soon will be an election for 35,000 employees in that state. This represents a tremendous opportunity for the AFT, and it would be great for those workers. The governor of the state issued an executive order. It's not an order for collective bargaining. All the employees have is the right to vote for a bargaining agent. That will be the exclusive agent, but there's no bargaining yet. We'll have to go to the legislature and get a law.

We need help with this campaign. It's a whole state. We need volunteers. We're going to call you, we're going to ask for staff, we're going to ask for people, especially in nearby states, who can go in and spend some time there. Because this will never ever be done with only full-time AFT people. The state is too big, and the campaign is too important.

Our state and local employees face problems similar to the ones education faces with vouchers and tuition tax credits. They face constantly the threat of privatization. They face constant budget cuts and layoffs. And the answer is the same: Just as we're working as school employees on improving and restructuring schools, our state and local employees are taking the position that the best defense and the best way to get the public on your side is to talk publicly about what the shortcomings of state services are and to provide our own answers and plans about how to improve things.

Now, times have changed, because I used to stand up here and talk almost exclusively to teachers. And you can see from this talk that we have become a different kind of union. Yes, we are a teachers' union, but we also are a union of higher education and health care professionals, paraprofessionals and other school workers, state employees and, in some cases, local and city employees. So we've begun the process of thinking about how we organize ourselves internally to make the greatest use of the diversity that we have while maintaining a sense of unity in the organization so that we don't go off in different directions.

Two years ago, you voted to create separate divisions for each of our groups, and this was a very important and a very good step. This year we move a little bit further in that we will devote a period of time for each group to have a separate meeting where members can deal with problems that affect only their own group. This gives us the opportunity to have general sessions where we all deal with issues together, and it gives us the chance to meet separately. And we need to look at this approach each couple of years to see whether it needs to be expanded or modified in some way.

We're all together on some things. We want to elect a president of the United States whom we can work with. We want to make sure that we've got world-class institutions so that we can face international competition. We want to make sure that we have adequate financial support for all of the services that we deliver, which really define the quality of people's lives. All these things we're together on.

But there are some things that are technical or special that a group will want to work on alone. And in each and every one of our groups the idea is the same: nobody has a better idea of how to fix what is wrong with each of our institutions than the people who work in those institutions. As a matter of fact, a lot of what's wrong with them right now is because somebody far away, somebody high up, really knows it all and understands it all, and that we don't; we're just there to carry out and follow somebody else's orders. John Dewey had something to say about that during the foundation of the union, as well.

It's rather interesting that those countries in the world that stood for that idea — that somebody up on top has all the brains, and all you have to do is get the people down there to follow orders — are falling apart. I mean the authoritarian and totalitarian countries. That idea doesn't work. Because you can't get good ideas and you can't get commitment to fulfilling those ideas unless you involve all of the people who are working in the institution. And if you try to do it from the top, you're absolutely destined to fail.

*(Applause)*

While most of us are sitting in this room enjoying the rights of collective bargaining — and I don't know whether enjoying is the right word — we should remember our weaker members. But with all our suffering — budget crunches, layoffs, other problems like those — just remember that there are brothers and sisters among us for whom collective bargaining is still far in the future. In their states, nobody is talking about it, at least not their governor or their legislature; only our members are, and they are still in a small minority. The dues that you pay this organization have gone to help bring about our overall membership growth. But it's also going to bring collective bargaining to those states that do not have it.

There are other items on the agenda of this convention designed to change our operations on the basis of the new organization that we now

are. For example, there's a constitutional amendment that will be before you to change the way in which people are represented at the convention. It used to be that people were represented on the basis of the amount of per capita divided by the total amount that you pay. And since those who are lower-paid workers pay less in the way of per capita, they were not represented on the basis of one person, one vote; it was sort of one dollar, one vote. I hope that we change that at this convention so there's not only representation but full representation.

*(Applause)*

Another exciting proposal that will be before us deals with the fact that, within the next ten years, 350,000 of our current members will retire. And they will live long in retirement. *(Applause)*

It would be a terrible shame for us just to say good-bye, thank you. Of course, we've had retiree membership in the past, but it's hard to ask people who are retired and who are no longer working in a school to constantly write letters or to make phone calls. So we came up with a different idea. We said, "If you've been an AFT member all these years, once you retire you can be a member without any cost for the rest of your life."

*(Applause)*

Now, of course, that does cost something, and so there is a piece of that per-capita increase that's going to pay for retirees. But the idea is that we all will be paying a few cents a month while we're members so that after we retire we'll still be in the organization. It's like Social Security. And, of course, it will add tremendously to our numbers. It will mean an additional 300,000 to 350,000 with whom we can communicate, for whom we can provide some service, and who will be politically active in their states and localities. It is extremely important.

I would also like to mention the AFT's Futures Committee; you may have heard about it. The world is changing and our union is changing, and there are all sorts of questions to address. How do we help to prepare a new round of leadership? I mentioned two great people who are retiring. Within the next number of years, many more people who were there at the beginning of collective bargaining, who led the first strikes, who led their unions into the AFT, who started things and worked them up to something really huge, will be retiring.

How do we develop a successor generation? How do we modify the organization to see to it that each of our constituency groups has the proper services and the proper types of representation? What role can we play to help build a strong labor movement in this country? We've been growing bigger and stronger, but the labor movement in general has not. Of course, other unions face those tough private employers I was talking about. But even if we were to build a union of one or two or three million, if the rest of the labor movement declined, we would not be in a particularly strong situation. The public would not favor us if private employees have all abandoned unions and the only unionized employees left are in the public sector. The attacks have already started.

So, our committee is working very hard, and we hope that in the next two years we'll come up with some proposals for modifying our union, our services, perhaps our structure and for changing education in the schools.

Finally, I'd like to say something about our relations with the National Education Association. We still have some competition with them, and there's still a few places where they try to raid us, and there are a few where we feel that the teachers want us to represent them. So that hasn't totally ended. However, for almost 20 years now, since the early 1970s, we have worked for the idea that there ought to be one united teacher union in this country.

*(Applause)*

One time in the early 70s, we thought that maybe merger would happen, but it didn't. Instead, the war heated up and lots of differences emerged: differences over the AFL-CIO, over where we should go in education, and a lot of other differences.

I'm happy to report that over the last year our relationship with the NEA have become significantly better. As she was leaving office, I had a number of meetings with outgoing President Mary Futrell; we were able to exchange some ideas and concerns. She's still working on the international scene with the NEA and on the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, and we've had a much more cooperative relationship. I've also had several meetings with Keith Geiger, who was elected last year. We've had two very good meetings.

This is not an indication that there's a piece of paper in my pocket that we're about to sign; that isn't so. But we are thinking and talking about ways in which we can cooperate more to bring the two organizations closer together. If that happens, that may lead to other things.

We have cooperated on a number of pieces of legislation this year, and we've cooperated in a few other areas. But that is a changing scene. And I hope that, when we meet two years from now, there will be a positive report about a bunch of things that we've done that will bring us closer together.

I want to reflect over the last couple of years, years that have been very exciting. I mentioned our growth, but there were outside events, as well.

There was the education summit, and I'll have more to say about that. I've been working on the President's Advisory Committee on Education, and that will have some important things to do.

This also was a period in which a school system in this country, in Chelsea, Massachusetts, was turned over to a private concern, and we're still in the middle of that. It was a two-year period during which the schools of one of our largest cities, Chicago, engaged in a very radical type of decentralization, the creation of parent-majority school boards in each school. This poses a new challenge and new work for our union there, and it's a model that's being looked at elsewhere.

Milwaukee: quite bad news. The state legislature passed a voucher bill that will permit students to go to nonpublic schools at public expense. I'll have a little more to say about that, too.

Over the last two years, we also began a new process of assessing students. For the first time in our history, the National Assessment of Educational Progress actually assessed students on a state-by-state basis that will permit reporting results on a state-by-state basis; I think about 40 states participated. But when the next batch of results come out, for the first time we'll get a picture of how similar or how different states are in terms of student performance.

Chapter One: There have been some changes in terms of concentration for areas of need and greater flexibility in the use of money. But in the early childhood bill we face a major problem. Here's a major piece of legislation, but in it is a specific provision that would allow not only religious institutions to be used as sites for early childhood programs — we have no problem with that — but the money to be used specifically for religious purposes. The institution can require that only teachers of their own religion be hired, that any teacher who disagrees with the tenets of that particular faith be fired, and that students be restricted on the basis of their religious views. It will be possible to support religious instruction with public funds. Directly stated, that is a major challenge we have.

Kansas City: The federal judge came down with a landmark decision. The decision was that when a federal judge orders a school district to desegregate, the federal judge can also order that district to spend the money that's necessary to make desegregation work. And the Supreme Court of the United States upheld that.

Now, you have gotten some fliers here about the tragic situation in Boston concerning whether to preserve seniority or affirmative action. I suggest that, instead of picketers or demonstrators or leafleters being outside this convention, that they ought to be in front of Judge Garrity's headquarters. Because instead of ordering that one group or another group of teachers be dismissed, he ought to be ordering the city to put up the money to avoid this type of confrontation.

*(Applause)*

Over this two-year period, I had the great privilege of meeting with some quite amazing and wonderful human beings. I met with Andre Sakharov at AFL-CIO headquarters and spent a few hours discussing things that were happening in Eastern Europe and especially in the Soviet Union and getting his wise advice about what the American labor movement could do to help.

Just two weeks ago, I had the privilege of meeting in that same room with Nelson Mandela, a meeting that was broadcast by satellite throughout the world, a meeting at which Nelson Mandela recognized that the AFL-CIO's commitment to ending apartheid didn't begin last year or two years ago or five years ago. It began in the 1950s. We were one of the first organizations in the United States of America to enter into that campaign, decades ago, not yesterday.

*(Applause)*

And there was an exciting event at the time of the AFL-CIO convention when, as chairman of the International Affairs Committee of the AFL-CIO, I had the privilege of spending several days with Lech Walesa and his associates. They not only came to the AFL-CIO convention but they also were greeted at the White House and in the halls of Congress.

And I had the privilege just a year ago of visiting a totally different type of school. It's a medical school, and there are five of them around the world. It's something that ought to make us think a little bit about education. This is a medical school in which students do not go to class. Instead, seven or so students work as a team, and they constantly meet simulated patients. The students spend their time figuring out what's wrong with the patients and how to cure them. That's their entire medical education, solving problems. These schools — they include Harvard, McMasters in Hamilton, Ontario, which is the school that we went to, one in Beersheba, Israel, one in Holland, and more — are some of the finest medical schools in the world. You will be hearing more about this, because they give us some idea as to how teachers and principals might be educated in the future, and they give us some ideas as to how high school students might be educated in a totally different way.

During this two-year period of time, we also had our San Francisco vic-

tory and San Francisco merger with the local NEA.

*(Applause)*

We have also seen the creation and forward movement of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, an idea that we first proposed. The idea was that it shouldn't be some private company or some state that figures out how to recognize teacher professionalism; it should be a national professional board that is dominated by teachers and not by outsiders.

*(Applause)*

We've seen statewide strikes in West Virginia, Oklahoma, and elsewhere. We've seen a very comprehensive educational plan in Kentucky, which includes the creation of centers that will take care of the many problems of children in poverty and give assistance to schools. It also legislates school-based management and shared decision making, programs of incentives, and totally new ways of assessing kids. There are some things wrong with it, but it is the most comprehensive and interesting statewide reform plan in the country.

We had with us at our last convention Osvaldo Verdugo. He then didn't know whether he could get here because the government in Chile didn't want him to leave. Since then, Mr. Pinochet has been ousted, and we had dozens of observers from the American Federation of Teachers helping down there to make sure that the people had a free and democratic vote.

*(Applause)*

We can also be proud that we have had contacts with and educational programs in Hungary and in Poland. There will be two of those this summer, with AFT staff members and local leaders and volunteers going both to Hungary and Poland. There also will be teachers there, as there are here, from Bulgaria and Romania and Czechoslovakia and Lithuania and Yugoslavia. Basically, they want several things. They want to know how unions operate, how you function here in political action, how you organize, how you communicate, the relationship between a national and a local organization, and other such things. And they also want to know what kinds of materials we have for teaching democracy in the schools. This is very exciting, and we can be very proud of our role.

We recently had a committee of officers visiting South Africa with the goal of helping the black teacher trade unionists there end apartheid. And we had a group of people in Nicaragua during the elections there.

So it has been a very, very exciting time, two years filled with all sorts of things. Some of them, like Milwaukee and like the religious provisions of the child care bill, were and are tough challenges. And some of them have been great opportunities.

I have some remarks on education, but if I went on now my speech would become very Castro like in length, and I'm tired and you are. I will have an opportunity to speak about education issues on Wednesday at 2:15 p.m.

I want to thank you for your tremendous support over these two years. We in the AFT have really carved out a special role in this country.

## ADDRESS

### PRESIDENT ALBERT SHANKER

I'm standing here this afternoon to ask for your help. To some, it may seem strange. I know that there are lots of articles that talk about me as being a powerful person or that talk about the organization as being powerful. I have traveled across the country urging certain reforms, and our organization has adopted many resolutions and positions. Yet, the fact that I talk about these things or urge that we adopt resolutions doesn't necessarily make anything happen.

Some critics are starting to say that, while the organization has the right positions and I'm saying the right things, not that much is happening. Now, of course, I don't have the power, and I shouldn't have the power, to tell local unions what to do, and neither does the AFT, and we don't seek that. We do have the power to persuade, to plead, to offer leadership, to argue. And, of course, the only real test of leadership is whether anybody follows. So I want to reach out today, and I want to ask you to do a number of things to make things happen.

Let's look over the last seven years. There have been lots of reports. And largely as a result of things that we have done — I should say that you have done and that we have publicized and assisted — we've gotten a good deal of support from the business community. There's been a good deal of money spent on education over the last seven years. I know, not everywhere, but overall, a lot more money, more than double the rate of inflation. Of course, all it did was enable us to catch up to where we were in 1972 and go a little bit beyond that.

But now good times seem to be ending. There's a budget crisis in lots of places. The New York City delegation is sitting here with a huge budget

deficit back in New York and wondering what negotiations are going to be like, wondering whether there may have to be layoffs again.

You heard during the debate that Connecticut is facing severe problems. Massachusetts certainly is, and Boston is just one example. The whole state is in a terrible fiscal situation.

I've been to southern states, and it's the same kind of thing. We've seen statewide strikes. Chicago has recently discovered a tremendous budget deficit. I was down in Florida a few weeks ago with Pat Tornillo, and our people were in the middle of a tremendous budget fight with the governor, one that, unfortunately, the governor won. I'm sure I've left many places out. The good times cannot last. They were with us for a time, thank God, but we can't count on their lasting.

Once again, we've got to ask ourselves if we are just going to settle for a few gains a few years, then go down again, then go right back to where we were before, and back and forth, like being on a treadmill.

Well, since the last convention, there was a national summit on education. I know most teachers and maybe most of us here kind of shrugged it off and said, "Well, it doesn't make any difference. It won't have any effect on us. We've seen this kind of thing before." I can understand that attitude, but it's wrong. The summit started something. The governors and the president met a second time to issue national education goals. The governors are continuing to meet in order to make the process work. I mean all of them. I'll be in Mobile in a few weeks where the governors are having still another session.

The Business Round Table, a major business organization, has enlisted 200 executives of the top corporations to meet regularly with the governors of the states in which they do business to make sure that the agenda of the education summit is moved ahead.

Other parts of the world are concerned about our educational performance. I don't know if you noticed it, but the other day the United States and Japan entered into a trade agreement. These two countries had been talking for a couple of years about structural barriers to trade. Among them was our complaint, because Japan doesn't have a certain type of department store, we can't go over there and sell all sorts of materials to one vendor. We complained about all sorts of ways in which they inspect our products and make it difficult for them to get in. And we said, "Look, these are really a way of stopping us from selling stuff to your people." They said, "Okay, there are some things that we do that are no good; we'll recognize that. But there are some things that you do that you have to change if you want to trade with Japan." If you saw the papers the other day, one of the things the Japanese government put on the table was that we do not do enough for education in the United States, and that's why we have a lot of poor products. We're not investing in education.

*(Applause)*

And the United States actually is involved now in signing a trade treaty with Japan in which we commit ourselves to improving American education. Essentially, each country is telling the other one what to do to shape up. And education has become part of this. That's very fascinating.

What is the education summit structure like? Where do we go from there? What's going to happen?

The first thing the governors and president did was to come up with some goals. Now, you may say, "Well, that's just words." But think about this: One or two or five years ago if any president had said we're going to have national goals in education, he would have been considered out of his mind. "Education is states' rights, it's local rights: keep the federal government out of it, get the government off your back. We don't want the federal government doing this," is more likely something the president would have said.

To have a Republican president, in a period of time that's fairly conservative, say that we are going to have goals that over-arch all of our states is a very radical act, and it's the first time it has happened in the entire history of the United States. That in itself is very important.

I don't necessarily think that the goals they adopted are particularly great. For instance, the goal that says we're going to be first in the world in math and science by the year 2000 is pretty unrealistic. When John Kennedy said that within the next few years we're going to reach the moon, they were already polishing up the equipment. If George Washington had said in the next few years we're going to reach the moon, that would have been a different kind of statement, and we wouldn't have believed him. And the math and science goal is that kind of statement.

But what we have to realize about goals is that every couple of years they'll sit down and say, "That wasn't so smart," and they will change them. We will now be a nation with national goals in education, and we'll keep changing them and improving them.

The second thing that they're now working on is the question of knowing whether you're meeting the goals. How do you know whether you're succeeding? It is the old question of assessment. And this is important to us because we have been making a lot of noise over the years about the negative effect of the overemphasis on standardized tests. I'm not saying that standardized tests are never any good or should never be used. I'm

against the overemphasis, against our having to spend so much time getting kids to figure out choice A,B,C or D instead of reading or writing or doing things that are worthwhile.

Now we're going to get an assessment that will be different. It will give us information, and it's going to tell us and the public what's really happening. So that's an important difference.

Then there's a third thing that the president and the governors are committed to. If you have goals and if you figure out how to measure whether you're getting there, the next thing, they say, is you have to get rid of a lot of state, local and federal regulations so as to allow people in the schools to try different ways of reaching those goals. You know these regulations: 12 minutes for this, 22 for that, use this book, use that for something else. And so you will see very soon in state after state, a tremendous amount of attention directed at eliminating and reducing these restrictions, and many of them will be lifted.

*(Applause)*

Finally, they're committed to a system of accountability. And that is because if we're going to let people in the schools exercise their own judgment as to what ought to be done, then there needs to be something that says that those who succeed are treated one way, and those who have tried, made a good effort, treated another way, and those who constantly fail and are always wrong, treated another way. So there is discussion of accountability.

No, this summit and the goals are not just public relations: they are not just "read my lips"; they are not just bully pulpit. There is something there. They can be used as a whip. They can be used to say, "The public schools are never going to change; they're not going to reach these goals; they're too bureaucratic; they're too inflexible, we have to change things." That's what Mr. Chubb and Mr. Moe say. Remember those names: They just came out with a book that essentially says the public schools are too bureaucratic and too rigid, and we've got to have a voucher system. So we have to be very careful because the whole voucher movement has been given new life. Or it could be that the goals become a powerful tool for us. We could say, "Sure, we're going to try to reach those goals, but you've got to help us. You've got to provide Head Start for every single kid who needs Head Start. You've got to provide services for pregnant women so they give birth to healthy babies and not babies who enter the world neurologically damaged."

*(Applause)*

"You've got to provide full service centers, and you've got to provide staff and other types of training." We can use these things, and the governors actually are saying exactly that. There will be an increase in Head Start this year, largely because the governors and we and other groups pressed the president of the United States. We said, "These goals don't mean anything unless every kid comes to school ready to learn. And if you really mean that, start putting some money into Head Start and programs of this sort."

How this works out is going to depend on what we do. I told you the good news about the assessment. I think there will be new and much better methods of assessing. But, in some ways, there will be negatives. I don't mean we should be against new assessments. But the testing system we've got now doesn't give anybody any information. When you give tests and your school district says 58 percent of the kids are above average, what does that mean? If you're above average in height in a nation of pygmies, you're not very tall.

*(Laughter)*

So being above average doesn't mean anything unless you know what the average is. So all these tests we give and all this time and money we spend don't tell us anything.

But now you are going to have an assessment that is not just going to tell us national averages. It will be state by state, and it will probably be school by school, and it may even be individual by individual, so that teachers and parents and business people and governors and other people are going to know how many kids are able to write a letter, how many kids are able to read this type of newspaper or this type of book. And we will for the first time have a lot of bad news out there that people will understand.

Now, I'm often criticized for saying these things. I've been traveling the country and talking not only to many of you in your meetings but also to many business people and others. And, often, many members and our leaders and other people come up to me and they wonder — and I understand why they do — "Why should you, Al, be saying these things? If you go around saying how bad things are in the schools, don't you think that there's going to be a loss of confidence? Don't you think some teachers will think this is teacher bashing? If you talk about how poorly the schools are doing, doesn't that mean that the teachers are doing a bad job?"

Well, I look at it a little differently. First of all, I think that if you get a reputation for telling the truth, even if the news is bad, other people develop confidence in you. For example, some of you weren't around or were too

young to remember, but during the first part of World War II, Hitler was winning, and the news was all pretty bad. The British Broadcasting Corporation every night broadcast the news around the world, saying "Today, the Germans killed 5,000 British soldiers; today they sunk three of our ships; yesterday they sunk two of our submarines." People thought that the British were crazy. Why were they broadcasting all over the world that their own ships were being sunk and their own submarines and their own soldiers were being killed?

Well, the BBC knew what it was doing, because when we started winning the war and the British broadcast that they advanced 20 miles and got so many German airplanes and so many German tanks, people believed them. Because the British told the truth when they were losing, people believed them when they were winning. I think we need to adopt precisely the same philosophy. Would the public have more confidence in doctors if doctors went around saying that the AIDS crisis isn't really serious? Would we have more confidence in the police if they said crime is really exaggerated, don't worry about it?

We can gain the public's faith and confidence as teachers and as an organization if we are the first to bring them the news, whether it's good or bad. And the news has to be the truth. And if we tell them the truth now that things are bad, when we see and say that things really are improving, they'll know that it's not just public relations. They'll say, "When things were bad, the AFT and Al Shanker told us they were. They said that the kids couldn't read and couldn't write and couldn't do mathematics. And now when they come and they say it's improving, we believe them because they told the truth when things were bad." We need to see that. I know it's tough, but we need to explain that to our members.

I'm especially bothered when the question is raised, "Doesn't this reflect badly on teachers? Isn't this teacher bashing? Teachers work hard. They don't get very much money, and the last thing they need on top of all that is to be dumped on all the time."

Well, it isn't the teachers. There's a lot of evidence as to what's wrong in education. There's a plant in California called the NUUMI plant. It's a joint Toyota-General Motors operation, I believe. And it used to be a lousy plant that almost closed until Japanese management came in. The workers were blamed for the plant's troubles. But Japanese management came in with exactly the same workers, the same United Automobile Workers members, and with a different way of organizing things and a different kind of management team and style, those workers started turning out some of the best cars in America.

It wasn't that the workers were no good; it was that the plant had a lousy management and production system before that. The same workers, if the system changes, can produce great work, and if the system is lousy, they produce lousy work. And precisely the same thing is true of schools. It isn't the teachers.

So I need your help — and I'm going to ask you for it a number of times. I need help, and the AFT needs help. We need to get teachers, starting with all of us in this room, to talk honestly to each other and with the public about the seriousness of the problem. We shouldn't act like public relations people out there with a big smile, saying everything is fine when everything is not fine. We ought to look at the facts; we ought to look at the National Assessment of Educational Progress; we ought to look at the various international comparisons. We ought to look at many things because we ought to be knowledgeable. And in each and every one of our communities, we shouldn't make believe that nothing is wrong, and we shouldn't be the last ones to agree that something is bad. We should be the first.

The public will know it sooner or later. But if we're the first to tell them, we'll be doing the right thing — which I think is the most important — and we'll also be in a much better position.

Now, how bad are things? I talked about that in detail in my speech last year at QuEST and the year before that at the convention. But we all know something about human beings, whether they're children or adults. You're not going to change things very quickly. Change will come slowly. Therefore, anybody who thinks that you can turn things around in a short period of time is just kidding. But in order to pursue change, you first have to know and believe the facts. And the facts are still hard to believe.

Only 3 to 6 percent of the kids who graduate from high school in this country are really able to meet world-class, college-level standards. Three to 6 percent are able to write a good essay, a good letter, able to read something that's fairly difficult, or solve a mathematical or a scientific problem — only three to six percent.

Even if you accept being able to produce a one- or two- paragraph letter applying for a job, something that can have some mistakes in it, you'll find that only 20 percent of our 17-year-old high school students are able to do that.

Ninety-five percent of the kids who graduate high school in Japan do as well in math as our top 5 percent of students do in math. South Korea comes out on top in international comparisons of mathematics and science performance. The United States comes out on the bottom. But when Korean

kids were asked how well they think they do in math and science, they said, "We don't think we do so well." When the American kids were asked how well they thought they did in math and science, they said, "We think we're great."

*(Laughter)*

If you ask the American public what it thinks of education in America, they answer it's bad. That's because they've been reading the newspapers. But when you ask, "How do you like the school your kid goes to?" most of them say, "I think it's great."

Why do they say it's great? Because 55 to 60 percent of the kids are going on to college. "If my kids are going to college, the school must be good; my kid must be getting a good education, right?"

Wrong. I'd say ninety-five percent of the kids who go on to college in the United States would not be admitted to a college anywhere else in the world. The reason so many kids go to college is that our colleges all have different standards. It also means that, since only 3, 4, 5 or 6 percent of our kids could meet college standards elsewhere in the world, we're bound to have a shortage of teachers in this country who can themselves read, write, do mathematics and science at a real college level. In other words, if only 3 to 6 percent of these kids really can handle college-level stuff in these fields, and yet 23 percent of college graduates have to become teachers to meet the demand, and from that 3 to 6 percent you also need doctors, dentists, nurses, lawyers, people working for government, and so forth, then there's bound to be a shortage of qualified teachers. There's absolutely no question that as long as low standards prevail in elementary and secondary schools there will be a continuing and increasing crisis in terms of getting not only the number of teachers we need, but also the quality we need.

These are the unfortunate things that the new assessments will probably show. And so there's a second area in which I need your help. Most of our members, maybe most of the people in this room, maybe most Americans don't believe this. We probably think, "This really doesn't describe my school, so it must be schools in that big city down the road. Sure, we understand why they have those problems: They've got all those kids in poverty, there's discrimination and racism and everything else. We understand why that's happening there, but that isn't my community." So here's how you can help show whether the problem is in your community. First, study the national figures. Second, figure out a way of assessing your own 17-year-olds who are still in school. See how many of them can write a really good essay or a good letter. Give them an editorial in a fairly difficult newspaper and see whether they can read and analyze it. Give them a two-step mathematical problem, not anything very complicated, but something where they have to read and do some thinking about whether to add, subtract, multiply or divide and whether to do so more than just once.

Don't just do it for the public. Do it for your own members and for yourself. Because you are not going to change things — nobody is — unless you really believe that things are bad. It's going to be hard. But we're not the only ones in that situation. After all, these are much harder times for police. They are doing a much more dangerous job, and yet crime keeps going up. We're producing better automobiles in the United States than we ever produced before; we did finally wake up. But we keep losing on percentage of sales. Why?

Because people have lost confidence in American cars. One of the interesting things about that factory in California is that it turned out two cars that were the same. One was a Chevy and one was called a Toyota. They were the same. But everybody in the United States was buying the Toyota, even though it was the same car as the Chevy, because they were confident Japanese products were of high quality and American products were of low quality. Even when you turn things around, you have the problem of re-establishing a reputation.

Of course, there's another reason why it's hard, and that is because there are so many conditions beyond our control. Not everything that determines whether a child becomes educated is under our control. But still, it's our job to recognize the problem, to tell the truth to ourselves and to the public, and to do everything that we can within the power of schools to change and to make things better.

What are some of these outside factors? One of them, and the most solid one, is poverty. If there's anything that we know in education, if there's anything that anybody who's ever done any educational research agrees on, it is that success in education and income — money, socioeconomic status, whatever you want to call it — are correlated perfectly. That is, if you're down and out and real poor, statistically your scores are going to be a lot lower. If you're not down and out but pretty bad off, they're going to be higher. If you test all the rich folks and their kids, on average their scores are going to be very, very high.

Income makes a difference. It has a lot to do with health and with the things you can do for children when they're young to protect them from the kind of life that you saw depicted on the screen the other day. Yes, you can rescue desperate, neglected, poor kids, but it's difficult.

What has been happening with income in the United States? In 1972, individual earning power was greater than it is today. The reason most families don't feel the pinch so much is that, today, two people are working. But they're not doing a heck of a lot better than when only one person used to work back then.

In 1972, somebody could go into the job market and expect to buy a house and pay 16 percent of his salary on his mortgage. Today, a new entrant into the work force who wants to buy a house will probably be spending 40 percent of whatever he earns on a mortgage.

The average U.S. manufacturing worker is making a thousand dollars more a year now than in 1972. When you take added taxes into account, he's making less. The average German worker has increased his salary by \$7,500 in that same period. The average Japanese worker has increased his salary by \$5,000 in that same period. We've got an economy that's standing still. As a matter of fact, it's going downward.

You heard the facts: 25 percent of our kids are in poverty. And almost that same percentage, 24 1/2 percent, of all the kids born in the United States last year were born out of wedlock. In 1952 it was 2 1/2 percent. Last year it was 24 1/2 percent, one million out of four million kids.

What does that mean? These kids were born mostly to mothers who were 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16 years of age. They were born, many of them, to mothers who did not have adequate nutrition. Many of their mothers were on alcohol, on drugs, and most of them were depressed and somewhat emotionally disturbed. Four hundred thousand of those youngsters were born neurologically damaged as a result of alcohol or drugs. They will never function normally.

Every other country in the world has early childhood programs. Every other country in the world has all sorts of family support programs, child care, and so forth. And here I'd like to talk about President Bush's veto the other day of the family medical leave act. In most other countries, if you've got to take leave to care for your family, the government requires the employer to pay you while you're out. But the bill the president vetoed was about unpaid leave.

*(Applause)*

Just to give a human picture of what that means, here is a paragraph from the newspaper about the impact of President Bush's veto. The Denver Post says, "Somewhere in the U.S. today there may be a man who spends his days at work while his cancer-stricken wife slowly dies alone in the hospital. If he stays by her side instead of coming to the factory, he'll lose his job. And if he loses his job, he can't feed his children. So, she dies in solitude while he toils in despair.

"And somewhere there may be a woman who has lost her job for the crime of getting the flu. A few weeks ago she used up all her own sick leave to care for her seriously ill child. When later she herself became sick, her employer fired her for being absent. The family leave measure would eliminate such desperate situations. But Bush obviously believes Americans should have to endure such personal heartache for the privilege of earning a paycheck. Is this his idea of a kinder, gentler nation?"

*(Applause)*

The headline on this veto the other day in the Boston newspaper was that the president showed ignorance and indifference. That's pretty close to ignorance, and apathy.

*(Applause)*

Some teacher asked a student which is worse, ignorance or apathy. The student answered, "I don't know, and I don't care."

*(Laughter)*

We can be very proud of what we've done. We welcomed reform. We proposed charter schools, which would mean that like-minded teachers who agreed on the kind of program they wanted could get together to run one. That's really the origin of the idea of school-based management and shared decision making. And two years ago, we unanimously adopted the report of the AFT's Committee on the Future of Education, "The Revolution that's Overdue," which called for wholesale restructuring. If you haven't read that, you should go back and read it. There are a tremendous number of very good ideas there, which, unfortunately, have not been picked up by management.

We've urged our locals and our members to loosen up, to get ready for the deregulation that is part of the summit. But I'm very disappointed because we've been out there alone pushing for reform and, unfortunately, we don't really have any eager partners. And we can't do it alone because we don't manage the schools and we don't run them.

Sometimes we're fortunate and have superintendents and school boards who will say okay. But I don't sense very much enthusiasm out there on the part of school management. I don't hear many of them saying, "You guys and your union have come up with some pretty good ideas. We never thought we would hear a union say that. We want to be partners and help make this work and really do it together."

You know we can't do these things without a certain amount of support. Take a look at what General Motors and the UAW have done. They have

this new plant in Tennessee, the Saturn plant, which will start producing a new car this year. When they decided they wanted to produce a new automobile, they didn't tell the workers who were making Chevrolets to start making some new car while they're still putting out the Chevies, that is, have two assembly lines next to each other. They actually gave workers some time off. They sent them to Sweden and to Japan and to Korea, and they allowed them to look at different systems of designing cars and managing a work force. They put a lot of money into it, a lot of planning, a lot of retraining of workers, and other changes. They invested in it.

There's no way in which we're going to radically transform schools unless a school district agrees to put up some resources. You can't run the current school system and create a brand new one at exactly the same time.

*(Applause)*

I also think that when both sides get into reform, we're a little bit too cautious. As I look at many of the agreements across the country, I find the school board says, "If the principal wants to do something, he's got to ask somebody upstairs. And if the teachers in the school want to do something, they've got to get waivers from the union." It's almost as though we think that if all the faculty of a school were given the freedom to do what they want, they'd destroy the school system and the contract all at once; the next day they would do things that are so radical it's unbelievable. Well, do you really believe that? I don't.

People — all people, not just teachers and principals — are pretty conservative. They like to do what they did before.

They're cautious. The more obstacles we put in the way, the less people will change. If we tell some teachers in a school who have a really good idea that they can't move ahead until they get permission, send in an application, and try to convince somebody, some teachers will do that, but a lot of them will get discouraged. It's hard enough to get people to change, and the more obstacles we put in the way, the more difficult we make the enterprise.

So, here is another way that you can help. Try to make the changes the teachers want to make at the school level as easy as possible. Take away obstacles. Urge the superintendent and the school board to do the same thing.

One more thing that you can do — and this is a very powerful one — is develop model schools. You know, talking about new ways of teaching kids does not appeal to many people. Most people in the United States are not very attracted to ideas. They want to know, "Where is it? Where can I see it? Where can I touch it? Show it to me." And if you can't show it to them, they don't believe it.

So, we very much need schools that are fully restructured. Now, I know that all across the country, and with great effort and difficulty, you have been putting into place peer review, or cooperative learning, or satellite schools, or experiments with technology, or some form of career ladder. If you go across this country, we find a tremendous list of all kinds of different things that have been done. However, one piece of reform is in one place, another piece is in another place, a third piece is in a third place. We don't have any place where we can go and say, "This is a totally different school. This is what we're talking about. It's not finished yet because we just put it into place. We're sure we made lots of mistakes, and we're flexible enough to change them as we learn from our mistakes. But here is something that parents and educators and the public can believe because they can see it."

And so I ask you to do this: I ask you to get the support of your own local and go to your superintendent and your school board and see if you can get one school — or if you're a really big district, maybe two. We have been pushing for systemwide change, and I don't want to stop that. But if you start with one or two schools, maybe we can give them resources. Maybe we can get staff some time in the summer or after school, time when they can look at other things and do the kind of planning that would cost too much if we tried to do it on a much, much larger scale. We need to get at least one school that has a tremendous number of reforms, and not just one or two, in a district.

Of course, there's the whole business of money. I just alluded to it: You need money. But there's a chicken-and-egg problem here: We're saying we can't make any changes unless we get money. But what we found in Dade County and in Rochester and a lot of other places is that it usually works the other way. If we start doing something that's exciting and daring and that the public does not expect us to do, we have a much better chance of hearing, "Since you're doing something that's so different and unexpected, now we're going to put up the money."

So, we have to come up with these models. And if a school board doesn't have the money, let's go to a foundation. If it's one school, you can get some of that money from private and public sources and make it work.

I have a warning about this one school: Let's not promise anybody anything. One of the problems with reform, and one of the ways in which we educators kill ourselves, is that we always have some new idea and tell people this is sure to turn things around. Well, I've never met a doctor who

has said, "I'm sure this cure is going to work."

As a matter of fact, after it works once, they stay pretty cautious and say, "We don't know if it really works on everybody, and we don't know what side effects it has, and we don't know what other problems it has." In fact, the big complaint in medicine is that there are cures out there that you can't even buy because the doctors aren't sure yet.

I think we need to be just as careful. Let's just show them that we've got something that's full of good and promising ideas. And let's tell them that we're going to continue to try. But let's not over-promise as to what we can do.

What do I mean by a school that is really restructured? Well, I mean the following: Let's have a school in which teachers do very little talking.

**(Applause)**

Let's have a school in which the teachers are not talking and the kids are doing all the work to learn.

**(Applause)**

Let the kids learn in many different ways.

**(Applause)**

Let them learn over different periods of time. Let them do it either privately or in small groups, so that they don't get discouraged or embarrassed because they're doing it a little more slowly than some other kids.

**(Applause)**

Let's put as much technology into schools as we can, so the kid who isn't quite able to read yet is able to get the same thing on a videotape. We've all seen today how powerful this is. There's a tremendous amount of stuff out there that's free, and the kids can even take it home. There aren't many kids today, except the homeless, who don't have the capability to watch these things.

Let's look at cooperative learning, where kids teach each other. Let's develop systems where kids do peer tutoring and cross-age tutoring. Let's take a look at merit badges and ask ourselves whether we can create our own, not necessarily using the boy scout merit badges, but the same ideas. You'll see that they ask kids to do things as an individual, with a couple of other kids, and in the community. You'll see a certain structure to those activities. Let's think of group and individual projects. Let's think of portfolios. Let's think of putting ungraded primary blocks into the elementary schools.

**(Applause)**

Let's make sure that we have team teaching. Let's make sure that we have differentiated staffing, and I'll get back to that in a minute. Let's have a greater role for paraprofessionals and other school-related personnel within the school.

**(Applause)**

If teachers aren't talking all the time and the kids are doing the work, we can find a place for volunteers who want to help in the school. Let's find a place in the school for talented college kids who want to be interns and residents, much as doctors start their careers. Let's give these people a chance to help kids and to help us.

**(Applause)**

Let's see if we can keep a group of kids with the same group of teachers for two, three or four years so they really get to know each other instead of just being moved on.

**(Applause)**

Let's see whether we can put into that school a curriculum in which we're not just teaching kids to manipulate words and numbers — that's very important — but also developing the other talents that kids have that are very important.

I heard a story a couple of months ago about the talents of people. You know, most high schools have a yearbook, and in the yearbook they record votes for the best-dressed kid and the best dancer, and the one who is most likely to succeed. In this particular high school, they also voted for the student most likely to fail, and that was put in the yearbook.

About five years later the high school class had a reunion. The kid who was voted most likely to fail — he was voted that because he could hardly count and he could hardly read — arrived in this huge stretch car with a chauffeur.

**(Laughter)**

Everybody thought it was some sort of a joke, that somebody had paid for this limousine and chauffeur. But he convinced them that he really was wealthy. So, they surrounded him and asked, "How did you succeed after we voted you most likely to fail?" He said, "Well, it's very simple. I manufacture this thing and it costs me a dollar to make, and every one that I make for a dollar I sell for five dollars. And what I learned was that those four percents really do mount up."

**(Laughter with applause)**

Now, people may not know mathematics, but they may have an awful lot of practical intelligence. The kid who can't pass math in school may know an awful lot about how to sell stuff on the street, and what the profits and losses are and everything else. There's no reason why schools can't

take practical intelligence into account.

What we also need — and you saw this on the screen yesterday — is more and more individual contact with children. At-risk kids need more, but really all kids need individual contact.

I've just read off a list of things, and you applauded many of them. It's our job in the AFT to put this list together and to describe how some of these things are done. Again, I need your help to make sure that teachers get this information and know about what could be put into schools in order to get them to be fully restructured. I'm not talking about doing one or two of these things: I'm talking about putting almost all of these things into a given school.

You might say, "If we believe that schools ought to do their thing with school-based management and shared decision making, why are we coming in with all these plans? Isn't that top down? Isn't that telling people what to do?"

No, not at all, because there's an infinite number of ways in which these things can be done and in which they can be combined. These are not plans. They're not architectural plans. These are building blocks. You can build all sorts of totally different schools with these ideas.

These are ideas. They are designed to stimulate. They are designed to give a picture of what such a school will be like. They are not final plans. We won't do final plans.

What we can do is put out the best and latest information. We've done a lot of that already in the American Educator, at QuEST conferences, in ER&D programs. We'll continue doing that, but we'll get them out in other formats, too.

There's one other way in which you can help, and this is a very important one. Many, many teachers do not come in contact with a lot of these ideas. Something that we have found very helpful and that you can do in your district is to put together a group of people who are interested in changing schools, a group that wants to read something once a month and sit down and have a seminar, a discussion. I'm not talking about some lecturer coming in and telling them what's in the material, but about a group of teachers reading something that's worthwhile and sitting around for two hours and asking themselves, "Is this stuff good? And how can we apply this to our schools?" These are materials that we can make available, as well.

What if we don't do these things? Well, if we don't do these things, we are going to be in very serious trouble. Some of you have heard that about a month or so ago the Wisconsin legislature passed a bill that provides vouchers for students in Milwaukee to go to private schools.

That's a big city, and it's an important state. One of the important things about the bill is that it was not just the doing of a conservative Republican governor. The governor there is Republican and conservative, but the legislation was sponsored by a black woman, a state legislator, who was the manager of Jesse Jackson's campaign in the state. Here you have a coming together of people who are sort of on the left and people who are on the right.

I want to give you a flavor of how powerful this is. If you think this is just another voucher plan, listen to a recent editorial. This is the kind of stuff that's going to be hitting because this woman is traveling all around the country talking about why she found it necessary to secure voucher legislation in order to get decent education for kids.

Here is a Wall Street Journal editorial that will give you a taste of how powerful and how dangerous this proposal is, and why we need to move on our own agenda to reestablish confidence in public education.

The editorial says: "Arkansas Governor Orville Faubus called out the National Guard in 1957 to prevent black children from attending all-white Central High School. In 1963, George Wallace stood in the schoolhouse door to block two black students from enrolling in a school of their choice.

"Now in 1990 Herbert Grover, Wisconsin superintendent of public instruction, is openly trying to block a law that will allow one thousand low-income black children in Milwaukee to use vouchers to attend a private school of their choice." "State Representative Polly Williams, the law's author, says Mr. Grover is condemning inner-city students to a mediocre education and a bleak future. She says, 'He would rather support an outdated, entrenched system of privilege than let the sunshine of competition in.' Mr. Grover has publicly encouraged a teachers union lawsuit to enjoin him from implementing the Williams plan.

"And though the law defines his role in certifying eligible schools as minimal, he insists that participating schools comply with a blizzard of rules and forms never specified in the law. Among them are that each school have facilities to handle every type of learning disability, a requirement that is now not required of Milwaukee public schools.

"Only two private schools filled out all the forms. Six others didn't, and Herbert Grover is set to declare them ineligible next Monday. A judge has granted the Landmark Center for Civil Rights, the lawyers for Polly Williams, a hearing tomorrow on its request for an injunction to force Grover to certify the schools if they meet legal requirements but not his dictates.

"Mrs. Williams came by her pro-choice educational views after years of trying to reform Milwaukee's crumbling public schools. A single parent and former welfare recipient, she watched her four children graduate from public schools while the system's budgets rose and the quality of education plummeted.

"Starting in September, the plan will allow up to one thousand children from families with incomes of no more than 175 percent of the poverty level to attend private nonsectarian schools. For every child involved, the state will pay up to \$2500 in tuition and subtract that money from the Milwaukee public schools budget. 'It really puzzles me that Mr. Grover would try to stop this,' says Faye M. Jackson, a Milwaukee single parent. 'He should be concerned about the city's children, and if he was, he would not be doing this. It really doesn't make sense.'

"But Brookings Institution scholar John Chubb says the teaching establishment's opposition makes perfect sense. If the Milwaukee plan delivers better results for less than half the cost of public schools, it brings the idea of choice in education front and center. The Williams plan is a tactical end-run around the public education monopoly's Maginot line.

"William Carr, the acting administrator of the private Urban Day school and a former public school board member says, 'The rules mandated by Grover would turn schools like Urban Day into public schools and defeat the very purpose of the law. Tuition at Urban Day is \$3,300 a year, but donations allow poor parents to pay only \$650 if they also do volunteer work. Urban Day says we have to deliver results or the parents will take their kids and go elsewhere next year.'

"Polly Williams crafted her school choice plan and pushed it through the Wisconsin legislature with the support of conservative Governor Tommy Thompson. 'White liberals didn't support us,' recalls Mrs. Williams, who was twice the chair of Jesse Jackson's Wisconsin campaigns.

"They care more for the education lobby than for the welfare of Milwaukee children. The public schools are basically just losing interest,' says Lon-zetta Davis, a single parent who wants to send her six-year-old daughter, Sabrina, to Urban Day. 'I refuse to put up with it. I know a specific place where Sabrina can get the education she deserves.'

"The question is how long will the Wisconsin superintendent of public instruction and his reactionary allies stand in the schoolhouse door and block Sabrina's way."

Powerful stuff. And notice how we are being made to look. We are the Governor Faubuses, like the racist governors standing in the way of kids getting the education that they deserve.

Chubb and Moe have just written a book. What is important about it is that it is published by the Brookings Institution. The Brookings Institution is a liberal, Washington think tank. If this came out of the Heritage Foundation or the right-to-work group or some other group like that, we could understand it. But it is the Brookings Institution, a liberal establishment group.

And what does the book call for? It says, "States would provide schools with tax-funded scholarships for every eligible student enrolled. Depending on the preference of parents and students, enrollees would be free to attend any state-accredited school, regardless of the school district."

That includes religious schools, and it also includes any brand new school that's created. "Student scholarships would vary with educational needs of students, with disadvantaged receiving greater assistance. Schools would set their own tuition and make their own admissions decisions subject only to nondiscrimination laws based on whatever criteria they think relevant.

"The application process would provide a fair shot of getting into schools that students want. Each school will be granted the sole authority to determine its own governing structure, and the state can do nothing to tell schools how they must be internally organized or do their work."

Well, I guarantee that this will be the book that is discussed all year and all across the country. It is a serious book. And its analysis of school bureaucracy is a good one. The California State Superintendent of Schools, Bill Hoening, answered Chubb and Moe, and I agree with him. He said the following: "The voucher approach risks creating elite academies for the few and second-rate schools for the many. It allows schools to exclude students for virtually any reason, almost guaranteeing exacerbation of income and racial differences. Their plan violates the constitutional prohibition against aiding religious schools. Their plan opens the door to cult schools.

"Public schools are the major institutions transmitting our democratic values. By prohibiting common standards, Chubb and Moe enshrine the rights of parents over the needs of children and society and encourage tribalism. Should we pay for schools that teach astrology or creationism instead of science? Should we inculcate racism? The lack of accountability and naivete of relying on the market to protect children are alarming. Deregulation produced the savings-and-loan crisis. And weak regulation encouraged widespread fraud in scholarship-supported private trade schools.

"The plan would be chaotic. Vast numbers of new schools would be created, yet most new enterprises fail. Many youngsters will suffer during the transition period. And finally, taxpayers will have to pay more because they

will have to pick up the cost for all those who are now going to private schools."

The book is out there. And, unless we act, we will get something along those lines.

The reason that most members of the business community have not gone along with this so far is something we ought to congratulate ourselves for. Because of the positions that we in the AFT have taken, because we've said that we think things are bad and we want things to change, the business community has been essentially saying, "Let's not abandon public schools. Let's not move to publicly supported private education. Let's fix the schools we have instead of destroying them." We must maintain that position.

*(Applause)*

I need to deal with one other issue, and that's the idea of incentives. You see, that's what Chubb and Moe are saying, that the only way to get schools to really work for kids is for the teachers and principal in the school to know that, if they don't do their job, they're going to lose their customers and, therefore, their jobs.

I think that that's a rotten way of doing it, but I must say we are not going to win on the argument that we don't need incentives.

The Russians can't feed their people because the farmer gets just as much money whether he pulls the potatoes out of the ground or not. All of Eastern Europe is suffering because people got paid whether they produced junk or good stuff. They got paid whether they produced a little or whether they produced a lot.

There it is, there's an experiment, a big worldwide experiment that shows you've got to have incentives. Therefore, we have to consider them. All right, we don't like Chubb and Moe's incentives. What incentives will we deal with? What will be put in there to make teachers and the principal in a school seriously think about making changes because making changes will mean something? What will they get? How will those schools that do the best be recognized, be rewarded, be paid? And how will the schools that consistently fail and do a miserable job be treated? What happens to them?

We will not convince the public that we're serious and we will not convince the public that there will be real change unless we come up with some incentives that we can accept. I'm sure that if we think about it and talk about it, we can come up with some that will not do what Chubb and Moe's do. Because they don't recognize that you can entice kids into your school without having good education. Just find the right lollipops, and you'll get a lot of kids.

We've got to find incentives, though, to establish credibility with the public. This is another one I need your help on. Start this discussion. The discussion is, "All right, we don't like and want individual merit pay because it pits teacher against teacher. We don't want tuition tax credits because it will drain the public schools and move kids to private schools and destroy public education. We don't want this sort of a voucher plan because of all the problems it raises.

"But what kind of system can we put into the public schools that will convince the public that schools will be doing the right thing because, if they don't, there's something bad that will happen, and if they do, something good will happen?" We need to come to them with some sort of an answer or we will not be credible.

*(Applause)*

Finally, let me say this: A lot of you have asked me why is this the job of the union? Why don't we just negotiate for better salaries and working conditions and a grievance procedure?

I just gave you one answer. One answer is that if we don't do it, nobody else will, and the whole thing will go down the drain. It will be like when the Rubber Workers Union came to the tire industry and said it ought to put in radial tires. The industry didn't listen, and the result is we don't have much of a tire industry any more. We're really trying to save our industry.

But there's another reason: We need to get higher salaries and better conditions and effective grievance procedures, but that alone isn't necessarily going to make most of our members happy. There are a lot of people who don't work in public schools because they find greater satisfaction in private schools, even though salaries are a lot lower and certain conditions are a lot poorer. Auto workers in many plants were well paid, but they hated the work that they were doing and kind of sabotaged it on the line because they were being treated like parts of a machine.

So, how can we reorganize the work of a school in such a way that the school is better for kids, but it also satisfies the intrinsic desire of teachers to be able to reach kids and do an effective job with them? We will never be able to do it so long as we've got 25 or 30 students per class; so long as we're isolated in a classroom, so long as we're the only college graduates with no telephone and no office on the job; so long as we're loaded with nonteaching chores, lots of meetings that have nothing to do with the profession, lots of "snoopervision" and supervision, extra paperwork, disciplinary problems, custodial care—

*(Applause)*

You can't get rid of any of these things without really changing the system. We can't just talk about improving the present system; we really need to talk about a totally different kind of division of labor. Sure, our members wanted money and they still do. And sure, they want better working conditions. But when they talked about working conditions, they were really saying, "Give me a place to work where I can get the satisfaction of seeing something good happen to the kids I'm working with. That's why I became a teacher." We don't have that now.

That's the job. I can't do it. AFT resolutions can't do it. You can't do it alone. You can only do it if you've got the support of the membership. The job that we have is to go back and tell the story of the dangers that we're facing and convince the members by the time we get back here two years from now — or I should say before we get back here two years from now. I would like to be able to take the president of the United States, the governors, the top businessmen to 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70 schools. I would like to show them schools that are totally different from the schools that we have today. And then I would like to say to them, "You're not going to get this in all the other schools unless you provide for some time and some money and training and technology and the ability of other teachers to visit and see this and to get committed."

You can do it. You convinced the teachers to join the union. You convinced them to go on strike. You convinced them to engage in political action. You can convince them to change the schools. Do it.

*(Standing Ovation)*