

11/7/85

PRESIDENT SHANKER SPEAKING
LFT
BEFORE THE ~~LPT~~

PENGAD CO., BAYONNE, N.J. 07002 - FORM WERL

Dorothy Fitzgerald
3114 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20016
202/244-0101

11-7-85
pg /DF
(IFT)

PRESIDENT SHANKER: Thank you very much, Nat.
It's good to be here and as I come to your conventions,
not every year, but periodically, to see them get so much
bigger.

I have about 20 minutes today before we go into the
second part of the program and 20 minutes is kind of
unfortunate because some research was done recently about
the relationship between speakers and audiences and they
found for the first 10 minutes the audience listens care-
fully and for the second 10 minutes the audience is having
wandering thoughts and then after 20 minutes people start
having sexual fantasies.

(Laughter)

PRESIDENT SHANKER: So given the time limitations
you might not enjoy this talk as much as you would have if I
had more time.

(Laughter)

PRESIDENT SHANKER: I would like to go back just
a few years ago before all these reform reports came out
because so many people in education are tired of constantly

being criticized and told what to do and told what is wrong, there are many people who, if they could press a button and make the reports go away, would do that. Because somehow they remember that before that there were these happy days.

But I would like to point out that the days before these reports were not particularly happy. We had declining student enrollments. We had a smaller and smaller percentage of the population supporting us.

We had a Gallup poll showing that the public each year gave the schools worse and worse marks.

We came very close to getting a tuition tax credit bill in the Congress of the United States. The economy was so bad that we had Proposition 13 types of revolutions in California and they started travelling across the country.

As we started thinking about making improvements in education we saw the Nation had a lot of other agendas such as rebuilding our factories and our infrastructure and our defense and things looked pretty gloomy. So I suggest to you in these 30 or so reports we have had in a short

period of time that something very good, very worthwhile, has happened. They represent the acknowledgement and awareness, coming to awareness on the part of the business and political community of this country that you can rebuild your factories and you can rebuild your infrastructure, and you can rebuild your army, but if you do not have an infrastructure, you are not going to make it.

There was a very interesting article last week in the Wall Street Journal called something like: frost belt, sun belt. The article essentially said remember a couple of years ago when everybody said that the north was going to shut down and everybody was going to move to the sun belt because there were more favorable tax situations here and the unions weren't as strong and all sorts of reasons.

What has happened now is that in the majority of sun belt States people are moving out. There are factory closings. The rate of unemployment in Vermont is three percent, whereas, it is 8-1/2 percent in Texas. And then this article started analyzing why is it that the south is not doing as well as it is supposed to do, and the answer

was that the reason you have got an economic miracle throughout New England is because they are getting the payoff of decades of high investments in public education.

They have a more educated work force and that is where industry is ultimately going to go. It is not much use having lower taxes or even not having unions around if you can't get people who need to work your facilities working them.

So there is that realization and we have cooperated with that movement, have welcomed it and it has resulted in reform in a good many States and there is a package. And the package is very simply in most of these States that there is a lot more investment and money that goes into education, but not for the same old thing.

The increased investment comes along with major changes in education. There is a good and bad aspect of these major changes.

The good aspect is that there is increased investment, that usually we get programs which will result in higher standards for teachers, higher standards for students, a tightened up curriculum. In many places,

procedures and facilities for students who are chronologically violent or discipline problems. There are all sorts of good aspects to these reforms but there are also negative ones.

The negative one, of course, is that you can't really run schools from State capitals. You can't really run schools from decentralized legislation.

When you get a piece of legislation like it was in Texas or California, that reform legislation was 150 pages long. It tells you what book to use and how many minutes to say this and just imagine some bright young person in college about to graduate and think of becoming a teacher, and then they take a look at this big, fat book and then they say, you know, teachers are really not respected. Nobody passes a book of rules and regulations for any other profession. They don't respect us. They must think we are a bunch of idiots because they are telling us every little thing to do. They don't respect our judgments.

So at the same time that it has brought some improvements to education, these reforms are in many ways

sending the wrong message to people and they are counter-productive because of this very central control.

Now the great realization all through the country is that we are about to experience a massive teacher shortage. And just a few years ago we were worried about teacher unemployment, but about one-half of the teachers throughout the country, 1.1 million teachers, are going to leave teaching in the next eight years.

We no longer have the same sources of supply that we used to get. The greatest supply of teachers in recent memory came about as a result of the Great Depression of the 1930's. We had our pick of a great lot of people who were unemployed out there and they stayed because every job was a good job.

Then, of course, we got quite a few people during the military conscription from the beginning of World War II to the end of World War II, and many people preferred fighting in our schools to fighting in Korea or Vietnam, and once they came they stayed for a while.

Then, of course, the other major opportunity for education was discrimination, discrimination against women,

discrimination against minorities, and there were many doors closed elsewhere and that meant many people came to teaching not because teaching was their first choice, it was because they were refugees and had no other place to go.

Now you look into law schools and business schools and see that half of the people in law schools today are women. All of them would have become teachers. Almost all of them would have become teachers. A few would be nurses, look at all these professional schools. That is where they are.

The result is that the scores of those who say they will be teachers are lower than they would have been. That is in college.

As a matter of fact, many of those who say they want to become teachers should not because teachers -- many of those who say they want to become teachers should not be accepted as teachers because they themselves have problems reading, writing, and counting, and they are supposed to be teaching, not learning when they become teachers.

The other indicator is back in 1973, 23 percent of all students enrolled in college said they were preparing to become teachers. Twenty-three percent in '73; 23 percent of all students enrolled in college said that they were preparing to become teachers. Twenty-three percent in 1973.

Remember the students who were there in '73 -- that was a large group of students. It was still the baby boom.

Now last year in 1983 we are into the baby bust. It is still a smaller group of students. Only 4-1/2 percent of the students now enrolled in college said they wanted to be teachers.

So I go all across the country attending a conference that has exactly the same name. It is called how to attract and retain competent teachers. That is what it is called. They have it in almost every town in the country and every State, and I ask people as I go to these conferences how come there are no conferences on how to attract competent surgeons, doctors, actuaries, or anybody else.

They know in those fields if you want to attract people, you have to improve the incentives. There are many different types of incentives. Some of them are working conditions. Some of them have to do with prestige. Some of them have to do with status. Some have to do with money -- there are all sorts of incentives.

Then as I go to each of these conferences, I realize what the conference is really about. It is how we attract and retain competent teachers without the incentives.

Now, of course, in a free society that can't be done. In totalitarian countries, they can. They can just assign you. But in a free country there is no way in which that can be accomplished.

The interesting thing is that here we have a shortage of teachers. How can you tell? You can tell because Baltimore gave an examination this summer to prospective teachers and a lot of the prospective teachers failed the examination, and then Baltimore turned right around and hired all the teachers who failed the examination and they also hired those who passed it.

The reason they hired those who failed it was that there wasn't anybody else around who wanted to teach.

New York is up to 13,000 uncertified teachers. They even went over to Spain to hire a few teachers. You should meet them now. Spanish teachers do not know how to deal with American kids. They are not like the kids in Spain. They are all buying their airline tickets ready to go back.

Los Angeles has a large number of uncertified teachers. Houston -- they don't call it "uncertified" anymore. They give it a fancy name. They call it "alternative certification procedure."

I wonder what we would think if there were an alternative certification procedure for surgeons. You know, shortage of surgeons and you go out there and get somebody who really hasn't gone to medical school, but took a few courses in biology, and say he is an alternative doctor. Or alternative lawyers.

Let us face it, these alternative schemes are ways of violating and abrogating regulations and standards which the State itself has put into place. We didn't put

I must say we are making progress there. New York City in this round of negotiations went from 14,500 for a starting salary and next September it will be \$20,000 for a bachelor's degree. That is in next September.

In California, according to the California Commission on the Teaching Profession, say California is about \$19,000, but they propose to go to \$25,000 as a salary to bring teachers in.

New Jersey has just passed an \$18,500 mandatory starting salary, so all across the country, the word is out and the governors and legislatures and business people do understand that if we continue to have starting salaries like 12 and 13 and \$14,000, that the chances are that we will get only two kinds of people: those who are so absolutely dedicated and in love with teaching that they feel that there is nothing else that they can do, and the other people will get people who have no other choices. Nobody else wants them and there is a reason for that. We shouldn't want them either if nobody else does.

That is now getting to the consciousness of

those regulations into place. They put them in place. And now because they can't find enough people they have created and talk about these alternatives.

So not only do we have thousands and thousands of teachers now who are being brought in who don't meet minimum qualifications, but also, of course, we have a massive situation in the country where teachers are mis-assigned.

You have an English teacher, but we don't really need you as an English teacher. We need a math teacher. So, of course, that person who is an English teacher is probably a very good English teacher, but doesn't know any math.

We have got that all across the country. We have got uncertified teachers and teachers teaching out of their field.

This is going to get worse unless we do a number of things. What are the things that are going to be done? Well, that is pretty clear. The incentives certainly have to increase. We can't be so far away from what college graduates can get in other fields.

people across the country.

??????

The second major area, of course, has to do with working conditions. I don't know how many of you have read Ted Sizer's book, "Power is Compromise."

If you haven't, you should. If reading a book is too much of a chore, get hold of an AFT tape of a lecture he gave this summer at the QuEST Conference. Better yet, go to hear him when he speaks somewhere around the country. He has a very good picture of just a very simple working condition.

You know that as teachers what we are trying to do is not to get kids to pass multiple choice examinations. The last multiple choice exam you will ever get is when you are in school. That is not the way the world outside works.

What we are really trying to do is to get students to be able to read, to write, to be able to think, to be able to argue to persuade, to be able to express themselves, and do a whole bunch of things that represent higher order skills and you really can't get students to do that unless they do it.

The only way to do it is to get students to write, you have to get students to do an awful lot of writing, then you have got to mark the papers. Then you have to sit down with the student and talk with him about it and coach him and get him to redo it in the same way you might coach somebody for an athletic event -- to show him how he might slightly improve and to get him to keep practicing that way.

Well, what about a secondary school teacher with 30 students in a class and five classes in a day, so you have 150 students and if it takes five minutes to mark each paper, that is 12 hours. If you spend five more minutes with each student trying to coach him, that is another 12 hours. It is just impossible. The teachers won't tolerate that.

Either you don't give them those papers to do or you don't mark them that carefully, or you don't give them very often, or you give multiple choice exams. And essentially it means the intrinsic satisfaction and the pleasure that a teacher would ordinarily get from the job is lost when it becomes so onerous and so impossible. So

that is the second area.

I would like to spend the few minutes that I have left talking about what I think is the single item that has been most neglected in the debate and which people across the country are beginning to zero in on, and that is the notion of professionalism. It really is that there are two ways of running any business, and there are two ways of running a school.

One way is to hire a bunch of people at very low salaries. Once you hire them at very low salaries you don't respect them because you know someone who will come in at a very low salary, you better watch them very carefully because there must be a reason that they came to work for you at such a low salary like that and the more you watch them and supervise them and check them and evaluate them and reevaluate them, the more you drive out good people who have other opportunities because they don't want to work in a place like that where they are constantly hounded and watched.

The more you drive out good people, the more bad people you bring in. And the more you have to go back to

watching and supervising and all that, eventually you have a downward spiral where your school system gets worse and worse and worse because it is a system that drives out good people.

The only people who will come or most of the people who will stay are people who have no place to go.

I had the privilege as a vice president of the AFL-CIO of being on the AFL-CIO Committee on the Future of Work. What we were asking was, we were asking why is it as a whole that the labor movement was losing members? We looked at one reason which was that a lot of plants were closing and going overseas. So that was one reason we were losing those.

Then we looked at the Ronald REagan appointees to the National Labor Relations Board and how difficult it is to win cases against unfair practices wherever you don't have an objective set of umpires when you have a fight. That is another reason we are losing mbmers.

But then we looked at a third one. The third one has to do with what kind of people we are today. When I was a kid and I asked my parents why do you work, I don't

remember if it was my mother or father, but one of them said: You want to eat?

The other one said: Do you want a roof over your head?

That was it; eating and shelter. It was the only reason they did work.

I remember how when they were in their early thirties they would sit up evenings praying that they would instantly become 65 years of age so they could collect social security because they hated work because work was so rotten.

It was so ugly, it was do dirty, it was so exhausting that they would gladly skip 30 to 35 years of their lives. I mean, heaven was reaching 65.

Well, a lot of people spent their lives that way wityout any satisfactions coming from work and work being so burdensome that that is all they could think of -- reaching that age.

Well, we did some polling in the AFL-CIO and we found that 30 percent of the people working today still feel that way. They have got poor paying, dead-end, dirty

jobs, and the only reason that they are doing it is that otherwise they won't eat.

Seven out of 10 people who work for a living in America today, when you ask them why do you work, say because I enjoy my job, because I have certain talents and abilities, and the job enables me to exercise those and, furthermore, I am not told exactly how to do things.

I can do things my own way. I am respected. I can exercise judgment and because I can do things in my own way, I can do them better than a lot of other people do and a lot of people recognize that. They come to me and ask me to show them.

In other words, the whole complex of things that involve getting satisfaction from your work.

I am not saying those people wouldn't work if they didn't get paid. Obviously, they do have to eat and they do have to take care of shelter. But that is not the first thing that comes to their minds when you ask them why is it that you work.

Now, this tells us something that is very important. It tells us that because we are a more educated

society that most people in our society are going to look for jobs in which they are permitted to exercise judgment and use discretion in which their judgment is valued and respected, and they are going to leave jobs where they are treated merely as hired hands, that is we don't think of you as a mind or as a brain, or as a human being, or a person of judgment. We just hired you as hired hands and you do what we hired you to do.

That is pretty much a model of what schools are like now and it is pretty much a model of what a lot of these legislatures do when they pass these laws and it is a model of what a lot of this is when they come in with a check sheet or some States I have seen come in with volumes of objectives which have to be checked off as to whether you have met them. And in some of them you have to do it in five or six different -- you ought to see what they do in Texas. Every teacher has a multicolored book where they have to keep a record of each student on each lesson and on each objective. It is very mechanical, you know, as if the teacher is an idiot and cannot be trusted and every little item has to be documented and so forth --

sort of a factory workers, and assembly line worker who is constantly being inspected and being rewarded with merit pay for doing a good job or being threatened with some sort of punishment, or leaving if they don't think you are doing a good job.

Well, we are never, never going to get 1.1 million teachers who have any brains at all to come into a job where they treat you like a bunch of idiots.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT SHANKER: They have got other choices. This is not the Depression of the 1930's. This is not the time when millions of people are being forced to come into schools. We are in the baby bust. There are going to be very few people coming out of colleges and everybody is going to want those people, and we are going to be competing with private industry and other government agencies to get them.

What is the answer? The answer is to turn teaching from what it is now, which is an occupation which is managed in a traditional factory manner, into a profession.

And what is a profession? Well, I know the

word is almost a dirty word, at least it was for me when I started teaching. When I started teaching, every time I heard the word "professional" it was un ng -- un ng. It was negative.

It was like a parent scolding a child for stepping out of line a little bit. It meant don't criticize. Don't shake things up; don't rock the boat.

As a matter of fact, the professional in those days was the closest thing to a propped up bed person that you could possibly imagine.

(Laughter)

PRESIDENT SHANKER: That is not what a professional is. A professional is a person who has been so educated and so well trained that he or she is trusted to make decisions and exercise judgments. As a matter of fact, you could probably say that a professional is a person who is basically unsupervised. Nobody stands over the doctor. Nobody stands over other professionals telling them what to do.

You have high standards. You have a terrific

educational and training program before a person comes in. You have a rough series of examinations of various sorts before the person comes in.

You then give him some sort of an internship or residency or some sort of training period so that they are not instantly given full responsibility, so they are given practical as well as intellectual training.

And then once they are certified and once they have got the ticket, people, by and large, are on their own because you can trust them because of the nature of the people you have got and the nature of the training that you invested in them.

I am happy to say that this message is getting across. I hope that you will get copies of a Commission Report that came out two weeks ago in California. It was called California Commission on the Teaching Profession and, by the way, a very prestigious Commission.

The State Commissioner of Education appointed one-third and the chairs of the Senate and Assembly Education Committee appointed the other two-thirds. And this Commission says that the only way we are going to

get decent teachers in the future is the same way that you treat doctors, lawyers and actuaries, and that is let them run their own profession. Let them hire the teachers. Let them train the teachers.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT SHANKER: Respect their judgment to select their own materials and to select their own textbooks. Let them operate their schools in much the same way that a good law firm operates, where the senior partner is in the law firm -- you don't have one single principal telling everybody what to do or you would lose a lot of people.

Create a situation where the teachers buy in, where they own the school, not where they are the mere assembly line workers with somebody else telling them what to do, because only if you do that, are you going to be able to get enough intelligent people to come and to stay.

Notice, that by saying that the teachers are going to hire and are going to do the internships, and are going to make tll these decisions, we are saying

something else. There is another reason why you can't get a lot of people into teaching and that is because most intelligent educated adults don't want to spend a lifetime locked in a room with a bunch of children, and, therefore, in addition to being with children, what we want to do is create a professional life where a good part of the teachers live is with the teachers' peers, with other teachers, helping other adults, future teachers, working with people who create textbook and materials to tell them what it is we need to create a different sort of life in this area.

Now, this is quite revolutionary. If you look at the California Commission, it is made up with a majority of teachers. Teachers would end up evaluating what the teachers' colleges do. There would be many outstanding teachers in school districts who would become adjunct professors in the local colleges.

Who is it that educates lawyers in law school? It is lawyers, many of them still practicing.

Who are the professors in medical school? They are doctors, many of them still practicing.

Why shouldn't we have a situation where the ones who teach teachers in terms of the practical aspects are also teachers who have a ranking in a college or a university, so we are really on the verge of very important and revolutionary change which will give us status and will give us power based on the knowledge that we have.

Now, what do we need in order to do this? I have gone a few minutes over our time, but I just want to say this. If we are to be entrusted, that is the reasons that doctors and lawyers and architects and others are trusted, to make major decisions, is because society believes these people are people who are outstanding and bright people.

It is hard to get into a law school. It is hard to get into a medical school, et cetera. They also believe that they have been adequately tested and adequately trained and, furthermore, we also, as a general public, believe professionals make decisions on the basis of what is good for their clients. We must move toward this.

I know you have a session today with Dal

Lawrence about the Toledo plan. That is an outstanding program which, in terms of peer review and training and internships moves teachers toward professionalism. And I especially want to thank all you for the great work you have done organizing this State, and I want to thank Nat LaCour, who is my right-hand man on not just the Executive Council, but we have a smaller executive council. Doing these things is not so easy.

After they are done and they succeed everybody can say that is a good idea. But when you first do it, it is kind of risky.

What we have done in the last few years is to radically change many of the policies and practices. If somebody told me five years ago that I would be standing before an audience urging that teachers hire teachers and decide not to grant them tenure or even if they are not so good involve themselves in a process to dismiss teachers that are not competent, that we have a group responsibility to do that and if we are willing to take that responsibility, the public will invest more confidence and more power in us, I wouldn't have believed

it if somebody told me five years ago that I would be saying that.

On the other hand, if we weren't saying it today, I think we would be losing a great opportunity because if we don't create a profession that brings in good people and if we bring in stupider and stupider people who get more and more evaluated, what is going to happen is that the public is going to lose more and more confidence in the schools.

They will say: Look at that, we had school reform. We gave them all sorts of money. Look at what has happened. Nothing has happened. They are just as bad now as they were eight, nine, or ten years ago, and that is why they will say we need vouchers and tuition tax credits because the public schools can't do the job.

They are too bureaucratic and we will end up destroying public education in America. We have a great opportunity. The opportunity is to come in with new ideas that will improve public education and improve all of you who are supporting this.

The contrast, as Nat said, with the other

(IFT)

pg/DF

organization which doesn't understand what is at stake and which keeps fighting every change, is a remarkable change.

I think all of us in the AFT can be proud of the leadership we are giving, not to just the teachers, but to all the educators in the country in terms of turning public education around.

Thank you.

(Applause)

(end of
tape)