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(The meeting was opened by Gerald E. Warren, President, The Economic Club of Detroit, who presented James A. Kelly, President, National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, as presiding officer.)

JAMES A. KELLY: Thank you, Jerry.

As someone who has spent his professional life as an educator, it is a privilege for me to introduce today's luncheon speaker. The fact that I also get to work with him on a regular basis -- because he's a member of the Board of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards -- makes this a personal pleasure, as well.

The name Albert Shanker is virtually synonymous with the term "teachers union." His long and distinguished career as a labor leader includes two decades as head of New York City's United Federation of Teachers, where his influence was felt far beyond the city's public school system.

During the fiscal crisis of the 1970s in New York, Al Shanker helped the city bail itself out of bankruptcy by accepting the idea that teachers' pension funds could be used to purchase New York securities.

As president of the 750,000-member American Federation of Teachers for 16 years, and as vice president -- now international vice president -- of the AFL-CIO, and the first teacher to sit on its executive board, Al Shanker ranks as one of the great leaders in the history of American labor.

Al Shanker is more than a labor leader. Educated at the University of Illinois and at Columbia University, he is a teacher, finding time, for example, this year to teach a graduate

course at Harvard University.

He is an advocate for excellence, an educator who is vitally concerned with children and what they need to learn in order to succeed in the world that lies ahead.

He is a leader in the education reform movement. He anticipates trends, discusses problems forthrightly -- as you will hear -- and proposes bold, new solutions to the problems that schools face.

For more than 20 years now, his weekly column in the Sunday *New York Times*, "Where We Stand," has been a fixture in the intellectual dialogue of the nation.

Al Shanker has a longstanding and active commitment to civil and human rights. During the 1960s, he marched in Selma and Montgomery with The Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. Twenty years later, he marched in Poland with Solidarity leader Lech Walesa to advance the democratic rights of workers.

Three years ago, *U.S. News & World Report* published a special edition, which the editors called "The New Establishment: Who Runs America?" In one section, they profiled three of America's most influential writers. Al Shanker was one of them. Their "Who's Who" list for education included then Secretary of Education Bill Bennett, a governor, seven university presidents and one person from the field of pre-collegiate education -- Al Shanker.

On a more personal note, our speaker is a wine aficionado, a lover of classical music and an expert on how to buy the world's

best stereo equipment at deeply discounted prices. In case he says nothing interesting about education, you may ask him to talk about those things. (Laughter)

Historians claim that the father of modern education was a fellow from Massachusetts named Horace Mann, who gave up a promising political career in the mid-nineteenth century to become the first commissioner of education in Massachusetts. Mann used to say that the surest way to scatter a mob was to start a speech about education. I'm sure you'll find Al Shanker's comments an exception to that rule.

Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Al Shanker.

(Applause)

ALBERT SHANKER: Thank you very much, Jim.

Why are we here to talk about education, and why is it that the mobs generally gather these days -- not just when I'm around but in general -- to talk about education? Maybe the best way of defining the nature of our current interest in education is to relate the story of the three men who went hunting -- a Japanese, a Frenchman and an American. They hunted successfully for several days, and then they were captured by a wild tribe and told that they would all be executed.

However, they were given one last wish. The Frenchman thought for a minute and said, "Before I'm executed I'd like to have the chance to sing my national anthem one last time." And he was told that his wish would be granted. The Japanese fellow came next, and he said, "Before I'm executed, I would like to give my famous

speech on quality control one last time." And he was told that his wish would be granted. The American came last, and he said, "My wish is that you execute me before I have to listen to that speech on quality control again." (Laughter)

The reason that the whole country is talking about education is that we have become less and less competitive. We are concerned about our economic future, and we know that education is a very important part of that future. If there's anything that Japan teaches us, it's that the economic geography I learned when I was a kid in the '30s was wrong. As you probably remember, geography books said that any country hoping to be a strong, modern, industrial power has to have oil, has to have coal and has to have iron. Japan doesn't have any of those. What it does have is a well-educated, well-trained and well-disciplined workforce. These other things can be bought, can be imported; the talent makes everything else fall into place.

But is public education really in such bad shape? Or is the education issue, like many other issues, a product of the way we sell news? After all, we always have to have something on the front pages to drum up interest.

Fortunately, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) can help us answer this question. NAEP is a series of national examinations on various subjects given to thousands of students aged 9, 13 and 17 every year. Since NAEP has been in business for 20 years now, we can compare how students have done over time; and we can see how what they knew 20 years ago and 10

years ago compares with what they know today.

I'm just going to spend a few minutes talking about one of these groups of kids -- the 17-year-olds -- because that gives us a pretty good picture of the problem.

Headlines all across the country in recent years have focused, and properly so, on dropouts and at-risk kids. And there is absolutely no question that these kids are, and continue to be, a very great problem. However, in focusing our attention there, we seem to imply that all our other kids are doing just fine.

This is not so. The National Assessment of Educational Progress puts kids who are tested into one of four or five categories. The bottom one, let's say, is "illiterate." The next one would be "semi-literate," or just barely above illiterate. And there would be a number of categories in terms of what a student is able to do, all the way up to a top category. A 17-year-old in the top category in writing would be able to write a pretty good letter or an essay. A student in the top reading category would be able to handle material comparable to what you find in a first-year college textbook. In mathematics, top-level students could deal with elementary algebra and two-step verbal arithmetic problems. There's nothing more complicated than elementary algebra.

So what percentage of our youngsters who are 17 attain the top levels in these NAEP exams? Remember, these are the youngsters who are still in school after about 25 to 30 percent of their classmates have dropped out. They're the kids who are about to

graduate from high school, and most of them will be going on to colleges and universities. We should have some pretty good results with this group.

But the percentage of youngsters in that top group who are able to write a good letter or essay, who are able to read something as difficult as an elementary college text, who are able to do that elementary algebra problem or comparable problems in science or social studies ranges between three and six percent. Only three to six percent of kids who are about to graduate are able to function at those levels.

Maybe God only made three percent of us smart enough to write a letter, and maybe that's true all over the world. But how do the achievement levels of our students compare with the achievement levels of students in other industrialized countries? These other countries don't have NAEP examinations, but in Germany, for example, and in France and in Great Britain, there are national or provincial school-leaving examinations that also function as college entrance exams. You cannot get into a college or university in Germany unless you pass the *Abitur*, a written examination that includes lots of writing and problem solving. You can't get into a college or university in France without passing a national examination. And there's no question that anybody who passes one of those exams would be in our top group here.

So at least 28 percent of German high school graduates -- the ones who pass the *Abitur* -- can function at a level that is

equal to or better than our top three to six percent. And the same is true for 21 percent of French high school graduates and 16 percent of British.

The achievement levels I've been talking about have a number of very sad implications. They mean, for instance, that about 95 percent of the kids who go to college in the United States are really getting their junior high school and high school education in college. We call it a college education, but it isn't. Or you could say that everybody who goes to college in France or Germany would meet the standards for our most elite institutions in the United States. Still another way of putting it is that everyone who is a teacher in Germany has met the standards for entry into, let's say, Harvard, Yale or Stanford. How many who will become teachers in the United States could meet those standards?

Now, how long can the U.S. be remotely competitive without producing an adequate number of students at this top, this edge?

This is a serious problem, and I believe very strongly that if we are to solve it, we need to overhaul almost everything that we do in public education. When Jack Bowers, a former vice president of IBM, was addressing the AFT's Executive Council, somebody asked him what he thought of school reform. He answered, "If I were running an IBM plant making computers, and if 30 percent of my computers fell off the assembly line before they ever reached the end and we didn't know where they were, and then if 95 percent of the computers that did reach the end of the assembly line didn't work most of the time, the last thing in the

world I would want to do would be to run that assembly line an extra hour a day or an extra month a year."

Turning out more lemons isn't the answer; we've got to think about what we're doing and start doing things differently. So I would like to make a few suggestions that I think are keys to reform.

One step revolves around teachers and another around students. Let's start with teachers. I think we all know that we are not going to have a good school system unless we have good teachers. I've just indicated to you that only three to six percent of our high school youngsters meet world college standards. Let's say that some of the others get an education in college, so maybe, by the time they're out of college, 6 or 12 or 15 percent of college graduates are really able to read and write and do mathematics at a level comparable to graduates of university systems in other industrialized countries. But, if we are to fill the places in our classrooms, we need 23 percent of each year's college graduates.

In other words, even if we took all the people at the top of our college classes, there still wouldn't be enough. And of course we wouldn't want to do that, even if we could, because we don't want a country where people at the bottom of the talent pool become doctors and lawyers and engineers. So the teaching profession has to compete for the 12 or 15 percent at the top with the other professions.

This means, in my view, that it is not possible to have a



separate teacher in each of our 2.5 million classrooms who is going to meet the standards that we need. And it means that we are going to have to alter our schools so that teachers function in teams. Then, perhaps each team could have a teacher who met world standards, along with intern teachers, paraprofessionals and even volunteers from the community and from business.

If this plan is to work, we need to attract some excellent people into teaching. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards can help achieve this by demonstrating that teaching is not a flat profession. The Board will provide a mechanism for giving good teachers formal recognition. And they'll be able to achieve it not just through pencil-and-paper tests, but also through a review of their performance and their experience. As a result of being nationally certified by a professional board, they will earn more and will be able to play a different role in their schools, as a leader in the school or as a head of a team.

The certification of teachers means that people who don't want to be part of a mass of 2.5 million teachers, all of whom are treated the same, will finally get something to look forward to. They'll be able to say, "I believe I'm going to be outstanding, and I can expect to be recognized and compensated for my work." That, very briefly, is how we need to change the structure of the teaching profession if we are to reform our schools.

We also need to change the way we look at learning.

One day, two thousand years ago, Socrates, who was standing on

a street corner in Athens, gave a particularly fine speech. When somebody said to him, "Socrates, you're a great teacher," Socrates shot back, "No, I'm not a teacher at all; I'm only a midwife." What he was saying was that learning, giving birth to new ideas, is something like giving birth to a child. And it is the mother who gets pregnant, who carries the child and who ultimately goes through labor and gives birth. The role of the midwife in that whole process of nine months is to provide some help during the last few hours. But most of the work, most of the job of carrying and bearing the child, is not the midwife's; it is the mother's.

So learning is not mostly the job of teachers; it is mostly the job of students. The student has to listen; the student has to question; the student has to build; the student has to imagine. It is the work the student does that creates student learning. People who run businesses spend a lot of time trying to figure out how they can get their workers involved in doing a good job. We have to do the same thing in the schools -- figure out how we can get students to become actively engaged in their own learning.

Now, how do we go about getting employees to do a good job? One of the most important things is to provide decent conditions, and we certainly don't do that for students. Just think of the working conditions for students in secondary schools. The bell rings every 50 minutes and kids have to move to a different room, where they have a different subject, different teacher and different students sitting around them. And except for when they

move from one class to another, they have to sit still, be quiet and listen to somebody talk for six hours a day.

Another way of getting workers to do a good job is to offer them incentives. But we don't provide incentives for our students, either. This is one of the big differences between the United States and all of our competitor nations that are so successful. Please notice, I didn't mention Singapore, I didn't mention Korea and I didn't mention Japan. I mentioned countries with a western tradition somewhat similar to ours so that nobody can say, "But the whole culture is so different." It is in Japan, but it's not much different in Canada.

What are these incentives? What is it that makes students work harder in Germany or France or England or Canada? There are two things. Students are people, and people generally do things they don't enjoy because they expect to get something out of it.

When I was a youngster going to school, I often didn't feel like doing my school work. But every time I tried to slack off, my mother and father told me, "Al, if you want to go to college, you're going to have to do better. Sit down and work, now, or you're not going to get into college." Those were days when only five percent of the kids in this country went to college, and I had reason to believe my parents. So I did work hard.

I later tried that approach on my kids, and guess what? They laughed at me. They said, "Nobody works hard. We're all going to college."

So, one of the reasons kids don't work hard -- unless they

want to go to an elite institution where they won't get in unless they have excellent grades -- is that they know they can get something they want without working for it. And I submit to you that, until we develop a set of college entry standards that reflect the ability to do college work, kids who are aiming for college are not going to work hard.

What about those kids who want to go to work when they get out of school? Well, there's a difference between this country and other countries here, as well. I can tell you that in Germany and in England and in France, if you got terrific marks in high school, if you can read well, if you took three years of mathematics -- real mathematics -- and did well, and if you had a good attendance record, the day you walk out of high school you'll have a good chance of going to a good company and getting a job that leads to some sort of a career.

If you were a poor student, the chances are you will be unemployed for a while. And if you were just adequate, you'll get a job that is so-so. In other words, the kind of job a new graduate gets reflects how well or how poorly he or she did in high school.

Is that what happens in the United States? Not at all. Most large businesses say, "We don't hire anybody until they're 24 or 25 years of age. Why should we hire an 18-year-old kid? Let someone else break him in." And most U.S. employers never bother to ask for a high school transcript. (Most high schools couldn't produce a transcript, if they were asked for one, within a month

or two.)

So most kids who do not go to college end up getting the same kind of job, whether they did very well in school or not. And the kid who didn't work is able to laugh at the kid who's been sitting next to him for the last three or four years and working hard. The non-worker is able to say to the other youngster, "Look at that. You worked hard while I was having a great time, and here we are with the same job."

Just think what business could do in instilling values in our youngsters, and just think how they could help reestablish the authority of the schools. Suppose, when high school kids went to Pizza Hut or McDonald's or Roy Rogers, the managers all said, "We are going to hire people on the basis of how good their schoolwork is. So, before we hire you, we want to see your last report card; and we want a letter from your teacher saying that your work in school is good enough for you to work 15 hours a week." If a kid's job depended on it, he'd start doing his homework and he'd start getting good marks.

There's one final piece that I think is very important. I focused at the beginning on the need to change radically what schools do. Each and every one of us learns in a different way. Some of us can learn something in two seconds that would take others of us an hour or even a couple of days to learn. We learn in different ways and at different speeds. And yet given the way schools are organized, everyone had better be able to learn in exactly the same way and exactly the same time. Why? Because

you're going to have to learn by listening to me, the teacher, talk, and you're going to have to learn at the speed at which I'm talking because I can't talk at 25 or 30 different rates of speed. This means that the traditional classroom is a very ineffective way for kids to learn because the teacher is usually talking to the average kid. So, one-third of the kids in the class are bored to death because the pace is too slow for them or they know the material already; another third of the kids are so far behind that they don't know what's going on. And then, of course, some are having daydreams or looking out the window or they're absent that day. So, having the teacher stand up and talk to a class of 30 kids is a very ineffective way of delivering instruction.

We had to do it that way for 2,000 years because there was no other way, but now technology gives us other, better ways. There is no reason why kids, in addition to listening to teachers talk, can't learn from videotapes. There are hundreds of thousands of tapes prepared for television by organizations like National Geographic that kids could learn from and that would provide outstanding educational experiences. There are audio tapes; there are computers and computer programs. What we need is a revolution in education through the use of technology so that kids can learn in their own ways -- one, by listening to a lecture; another, by reading a book; a third, by watching a videotape; a fourth, by listening to an audio tape; a fifth, by using a computer program. And the student who doesn't learn during class time can take a

videotape or audio tape home and watch it there.

Why are we still using the methods of 2,000 years ago when we have a technology developed in recent years which is extremely powerful from an educational point of view?

I have one final point, and that is, if you want schools to change, you've got to give them time. If you have kids growing up, you know that there are lots of things you want to change about them at different times. But you know these changes never happen with a snap of the fingers, and that's true of schools, as well.

We need time. We won't see results from the changes we begin making in schools today after one year; they might show up in five years or in 10 years. But the changes we make today will make a real difference for the kids who are now entering kindergarten and the first grade. Not much that we can do will change a 17-year-old kid who's gone through the old system. We've only got one more year to work on him, and his habits are pretty well set.

So, we need something like a 12-year lead-time. And we've got to get away from this business of each year hopping on some test scores that say we've failed and abandoning the changes that we've just started making because they haven't succeeded. We need to realize that all we're doing is measuring the old system. If we make some of the changes that I've suggested, and if we give them time, I think we can be successful.

Well, I've been talking for 30 minutes. A couple of months ago, I read a piece of research that said most people are able to

listen to a speaker with undivided attention and remember everything he said for about 10 minutes. In the next 10 minutes, their minds begin to wander and daydream. And, after 20 minutes, the majority of people in any audience begin to have sexual fantasies. So, I'm glad that you enjoyed at least part of my talk today. (Laughter)

JAMES A. KELLY: The first set of questions has to do with President Bush's advocacy of schools of choice as an approach to solving the nation's school problems. And a sub-question under that is whether you're worried that, if we move toward a schools-of-choice system within the public schools, this will have a tendency to resegregate urban schools?

ALBERT SHANKER: I think we should have choice, but not because it will improve schools. I think we should have choice within the public schools mainly because, in a democratic society, we try not to force people to do things against their will unless there is an overriding public interest. And I don't see any overriding public interest in having a kid go to a public school six blocks away as against one four blocks or a mile away. But I think there are some resegregation dangers that would have to be taken into account in formulating the rules for any choice plan.

To follow up, let me say that I do not believe that choice will improve schools. Choice will make some people happier because they will be able to take their kids away from a place they don't like and send them to a place that they do like. But that's not the same thing as getting them a better education.



Let me give you an example of one of the things that is likely to happen under choice. The theory is that parents are going to select a school that will do the best job educating their kids. Well, that may not be so. Suppose a given school decides that it will reduce its budget for textbooks, sharply reduce teachers' salaries and sharply increase class size. Then, it will take the money that's been saved and tell parents they can drop their kids off any time after 7:00 A.M. and pick them up any time up until 7:00 P.M. That school would be filled in no time at all because it would serve a very important need of working parents, which is to take care of their kids before and after working hours. But this school would be sacrificing education to satisfy that need. So, you could actually get a deterioration of education. People would choose schools on the basis of lots of other things than their educational effectiveness: exciting trips; where friends go to school; convenience; athletic programs -- all sorts of other things. We should permit choice because it's the democratic thing to do, but after we do it, we'll still have the job of making schools better.

QUESTION: What incentive does a good teacher have to be excellent and to improve throughout a career when, at salary time, the poor teacher and the good teacher receive commensurate pay?

Why is tenure necessary?

ALBERT SHANKER: Well, let me start with the second one. I don't know if tenure is necessary, but in case you think that tenure makes schools worse, you can easily conduct an experiment.

The State of Texas has no tenure for teachers, and if not having tenure would improve schools, Texas ought to have one of the best school systems in the country. But it doesn't. And it doesn't have collective bargaining for teachers, either. Things that people often blame for failings in our education system -- tenure for teachers, collective bargaining, the right to strike -- are missing in Texas, but they have very poor school systems. So, it's got to be something else that's the problem.

As for the first question, the problem of rewarding people is often a difficult one -- in businesses as well as in schools. It's one thing to reward a sewing machine salesman or someone who sells encyclopedias: You can count how many sewing machines or encyclopedias the person sells. But it's very difficult in a field like teaching to measure quality. It's also difficult to keep the reward system from being political -- you know, a principal or superintendent or politician or somebody says, "You're a friend of mine, so you're going to get more money." Problems like this in the system prevent people from entering teaching -- and encourage them to leave. You lose a lot of people if they feel their efforts and achievements are not being rewarded.

That is one reason the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards will be so important. It is a national board, very much like the boards that certify surgeons, public accountants or architects. And when it certifies a teacher, there will be an objective basis for recognizing the teacher's

excellence with a higher place on the salary structure and job opportunities that are also out of the ordinary. So the question of how you reward merit is very important. Until now, we have had an absolutely flat structure in which the merits of individuals were not considered. Now we've got the National Board, and that should make a big difference.

QUESTION: Do you not think it an oxymoron to call teachers professionals and also have them belong to a union?

ALBERT SHANKER: No, I don't think it's an oxymoron at all. The professionals most people think about are self-employed. For instance, doctors don't work for a company; they work for themselves. But the situation has changed for lawyers. Most of them used to work on their own; now they work for firms. By the way, there are doctors who work for various institutions who are organized, and also lawyers who are unionized.

But professionalism isn't a question of whether or not you are self-employed. Being a professional means you are a person who has a body of knowledge, you are well educated in your field, and you apply that knowledge in the interests of your clients. To have a union means that you work for an employer where you are unlikely to have a voice unless you have a collective voice. And I can tell you that in New York City, with 180,000 employees working for the Board of Education, there is no way that you as an individual are ever going to be heard by anybody unless you've got an organization and unless that organization has the right to meet with the people who are making decisions.

So, I think you could make a good argument that people who work in organizations of any given size may not actually be able to exercise some of their professionalism unless they have that kind of an organization. And instead of a professionals' union being an oxymoron, it may be that professionalism and a union go together. At any rate, there have been various sociological studies over the years which show that the attitudes people usually take as being professional are very highly correlated with those of union members.

There's even evidence that school reform is more likely to take place in school districts with strong unions. A year or so ago, the RAND Corporation studied schools in a number of cities, some of which had very weak unions or none at all and some of which had strong unions. What they found is that only in the cities that had really strong unions was there any significant educational reform going on. And this was true mostly because the union was part of that reform. You need to have the employees behind any kind of big change. If management tries to make changes unilaterally, you have a lot of suspicious employees dragging their feet. But where you have the union and management working together, you get effective reform, and that's also an effective move toward professionalism.

QUESTION: Why should the business community be concerned about the quality of public education? And What can business do to help improve the quality of public education?

ALBERT SHANKER: Why should the business community be

concerned? It should be concerned because businesses are the customers of the public schools. You would certainly be concerned about the quality of a company's products if you were buying copper or steel or spare parts from them. Well, you're buying a product from the public schools -- their students. These students are your future workers, so you've got to be concerned about them. If students are not educated to the point where they can compete in the labor market, then they're part of your future tax burden. And if our schools produce large numbers of people who can't participate usefully in our society, these people are part of a future decline in the quality of life that will affect us all. Those are all very important reasons why business must be concerned with education in the United States and elsewhere.

I think business has to play an active part. There would not be a reform movement in the United States today if it were not for the business community. School reform actually got started in California with the California Business Roundtable. In Texas, the reform movement was started by a commission headed by Ross Perot, who was appointed by then-governor Mark Wright. The Business Roundtable in the United States now is working with the governors and with the President of the United States to help realize the national goals that were established following the Education Summit in September 1989.

Basically, there are several groups of adults who are interested in what goes on in education. There are those people who work in the schools -- like teachers and others -- and there

are parents. But parents as a group are shrinking. After World War II, about 55 percent of the people in this country were parents of kids in school. Now, it's about 21 percent. We've had a decline in the birth rate and an increase in the number of people over 65 years of age.

I would say the business community is the only strong group that's capable of pressuring schools and governors and the national government to make the changes that are necessary. And you have a very strong self-interest, as well as a public interest, in doing so.

JAMES A. KELLY: A comment which implies a question from a businesswoman in the audience: "I personally recently spoke to 25 students who will graduate in June from Detroit's Martin Luther King, Jr. School after a four-year course in international business. Every one of them can speak two foreign languages and each of them is going to college this fall. Please remember that we have many students in schools like this."

ALBERT SHANKER: Well, we've got three percent.

JAMES A. KELLY: We've got our share then!

A related question has to do with an organization that some of you may not be familiar with. It's called Teach for America. A young woman graduated from Princeton University a year ago and formed an organization called Teach for America to attract into teaching -- mainly in cities -- the graduates of the nation's finest liberal arts colleges and universities. The question asks: "What is your comment on this approach to bringing more

high-quality people into teaching?"

ALBERT SHANKER: I think it's terrific. I think that anything like that that we can do to bring them in is fine. The problem is going to be keeping them because it's one thing to get somebody to try something. You can have lots of advertisements and you can create a terrific national movement like this. But what if they get into schools where they find that they aren't going to be paid very much, and if, in addition, they don't get very much satisfaction or end up dealing with a terrible bureaucracy? What if, after a year or two, they say to themselves, "Look, I'm willing to work for less money and make some sacrifices, but am I really teaching these kids? Am I doing anything?" In other words, if they don't get real satisfaction they're not going to stay very long.

There are millions of people in this country who used to be teachers. I do a lot of traveling, and there's hardly a day that I'm in an airport when somebody doesn't come running up to me and say, "Hi, Al." I look at the person to see if it's some relative or friend, and usually he then says, "Well, you don't really know me, but I used to be a teacher." At one time, I thought of quitting as President of the American Federation of Teachers and starting a bigger organization called the American Federation of Former Teachers. (Laughter)

QUESTION: Membership in unions in this country is declining in proportion to the workforce, and we have two teachers' unions. How are you two getting along? What are you doing together or

separately to implement the changes that you are proposing?

ALBERT SHANKER: Well, we've been working pretty hard together during the last couple of years, and I don't think you've seen any nasty shots taken at each other. I hope eventually that, instead of two competing organizations, there will be one organization. There is nothing to indicate that's going to happen right around the corner, but I certainly hope it happens in the near future.

Let me be clear about what I think the role of our unions is and why we are interested in reform. I'm interested in school improvement for the same reason that Owen Bieber is interested in better automobiles. He's interested in better automobiles because if our auto companies go out of business, there won't be a union either, and there won't be jobs for those workers. So, there is a common interest here on the part of both our country and its economy, on the part of management and on the part of labor. And in the auto industry recently there have been many moves -- successful moves -- to involve the union and the employees in various programs to improve the quality of the product.

Now, it may seem that we don't have to worry about public schools shutting down, but of course we do. You know that there are various plans that would lead to privatization in the form of vouchers and tuition tax credits. And just as if the private sector doesn't produce the best products it will lose out, I think the same thing is true in the public schools. If the public schools do not shape up, the American people will soon get angry and frustrated and say, "If the public schools don't shape up, let's give parents the money and buy the education they want for



their kids," and we won't have what we know of as public education.

We have a very strong interest in maintaining public education, and the only way to maintain it is to make sure that people are satisfied with it. Because if they aren't, they will abandon American public schools, just as they will abandon the products that we make in the private sector.

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