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F. Speeches outside ops

[In today's educational crisis, we are confronted with sputnik problems but we are trying to meet them with bow and arrow weapons. The time has come when we must make a bold and revolutionary change in our approach to education. Small and slow measures will not only not do the job; they will, by virtue of their evasion, aggravate our problems to an extent that will render them irremediable.]

Unfortunately we have become so accustomed to glib verbalisms in this area that often we hardly listen to our own words as we utter them. At the risk of falling into this groove, I must begin by reminding you that education in our state and nation is suffering a breakdown of disaster proportions.

[Until a few months ago we basked in the smug complacency bred by a super-patriotic emotional feeling of total superiority over the Soviet Union. But sputnik, and the attendant publicity about the progress of the Russian educational and scientific system, blasted us out of this self-deluding complacency. For a moment it seemed that we were ready to give everything that it takes in order to reassert our spiritual supremacy and to fortify our national security.]

[But our determination seems to have fled, along with the competing sputniks. How much of a jolt do we need to keep us alert long enough to face up to the true dimensions of our problem? Are we waiting for some super-sputnik to knock us out of our senses?]

[Well, this super-sputnik has arrived, but some of us don't recognize it because we have not yet felt the full potential of its damaging possibilities. It is here in the form of widespread juvenile delinquency and crime, in and outside of the schools. It is here in the less obvious yet equally ^{damaging} important form of a rampant resistance to learning that spreads like a festering sore; it is here in the form of an undermining of our nation's faith and of our national security.]

[The gravity of the crisis in our schools has been dramatized by the unfortunate suicide of a school principal in New York City and by public warfare between a judge and a grand jury on the one side and the New York City Board of Education on the other. But ~~want to warn you that~~ these events, serious as they are, are merely surface manifestations of an inner chaos that is fundamental and well-nigh universal.]

I implore our upstate friends to avoid the comforting temptation to look upon this as a purely localized problem of the "foreign" community at the foot of the Hudson River. [We are dealing with a statewide and nationwide problem, even though it is more clearly evident in the massive statistics of the great metropolis.]

In order to approach the problem with understanding and perspective, let us mention briefly a few of the underlying causes of the current impasse. To begin with, we have mandated universal education but have gone along on the fallacious assumption that this can be achieved by doing business in the same old ways as when our schools catered to the few, the socially and intellectually elite.

The fact of the matter is that the atypical child--the bright on the one hand and the slow, the retarded, and the emotionally maladjusted on the other hand--demands attention to a degree that was unimaginable a generation ago. In place of attention, however, they are getting neglect.

A sound approach to universal education is rendered futile because we made it identical with mass education. Objectively this is most clearly evidenced by the overcrowded classes which negate individualized instruction and multiply the problems of students and teachers alike.

→ Volatile ethnic changes in our population have generated insecurity and conflicts and have brought new types of teaching problems into our schools.

As we seek to provide a decent education for all our youth, we must bear in mind that the educational system can rise no higher than the status of the teacher who gives it form and substance.

Teacher morale is at a deplorably low ebb, and cannot fail to be reflected in the effects on the learners in the classroom. This is hardly surprising when serious behavior problems, coupled with overcrowded classes, make teaching impossible in all too many cases. Working conditions are unreasonable and frequently unbearable, to a degree that would never be permitted in private industry. I am certain that it would amaze you, for example, if you were given a job description showing the overwhelming burden of clerical and other non-teaching duties that sap a teacher's energies and keep him from his real job of teaching.

Salaries are too low to attract and retain a competent, adequate, and contented staff. In New York City ^{10,000} 5,000 classrooms are without regularly licensed teachers. In the state as a whole 10% of the staff lacks full certification, even with the low standards that often prevail.

Perhaps most important of all from the teacher's point of view, personnel relations in our schools are in the feudal stage. With few exceptions, they are managed in an authoritarian manner that debases and stultifies the human personality. The principal, or the superintendent, or the board of education lays down the law, and the teacher's initiative and viewpoint count for practically nothing.

With these frustrations and with this low status in society, how much inspiration, vision, and courage can teachers be expected to impart to their charges?

At this point I might suggest the advisability of some large-scale studies of the needs of our schools, and I am sure that one of the most fruitful areas of research would be the relationship between personnel policies and teacher morale, and the consequent effect upon student well-being. Rear Admiral Herman G. Rickover has informed us quite ironically "that the United States home permanent wave industry budgeted for research into ways of improving the looks of human hair a sum amounting to two cents per United States female per capita. The whole nation, meanwhile, was spending only three cents per capita for research into the distressing things that go on inside the human head."

the Teachers Guild

[For our more immediate purpose, ~~I~~ *urge* an investigation of our public school system to be conducted by a non-political Citizens Committee to be appointed by the Governor and the State Legislature. Such an inquiry should not be a witch hunt, but should be geared to a positive and constructive solution for the crisis in our schools. Briefly stated, it would ask the question: Are Boards of Education, city administrations, the state, the Board of Regents, the teachers, the parents, the courts, and other agencies of society living up to their responsibilities in relation to education in the new age? ~~I~~ *we* would then proceed with recommendations based upon these findings--recommendations that would be respected in accordance with the make-up of the body from which they came.]

[But while this organic investigation is taking place, the patient must not be allowed to wither away. It is imperative that we proceed forthwith with the immediate and broad remedies which our present store of knowledge considers mandatory.]

For our present purpose I will deal concisely with a few of the major items that typify the general approach that is required. For a more comprehensive statement of necessary state legislation I refer you to the Legislative Program of the Liberal Party. A parallel program is that of the Empire State Federation of Teachers and of the New York Teachers Guild (Local 2, American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO).

[We must begin with a sizeable increase in state aid.] The Liberal Party asks for \$150,000,000 which is indeed a conservative figure. This would permit localities to make a dent in the improvement of salaries and reduction of class size. Additional state aid

[*Note: See the news article on page — for some of our specific proposals.*]

should be allotted for such special needs as summer schools for gifted students, intensified summer training for teachers in science and other subject areas where a shortage exists, increased guidance and counseling services, and special schools for problem children.

Along with this must go a state bond issue of \$600,000,000 for school construction during the next five years. It is not asking too much to provide a decent school building and an individual seat for every student.

In order to attract an adequate supply of competent teachers, the state should set up a salary schedule that is commensurate with both the training required and the high cost of living. A basic schedule of \$5,000 to \$10,000, in ten equal annual steps, is a modest request.

The reduction of class size to a maximum of 30, and to 20 in under-privileged areas, should be mandated by law. It is noteworthy that a 30-maximum regulation for high school classes by the State Department of Education has been flagrantly violated by boards of education, so much so that the New York Teachers Guild has had to take recourse to legal action in an attempt to enforce compliance.

The use of substandard teachers is a method of cheating our children and undercutting the standards of the profession. Therefore the substitute teacher category should be eliminated, and quota teachers should be provided for every thirty teachers regularly employed.

Sound personnel relations should aim to place the teaching staff on a par with workers in progressive industry. The Condon-Wadlin anti-strike law should be repealed, as a first step. This should be

replaced by a system of collective bargaining through unions or organizations freely chosen by the teaching staffs, together with appropriate machinery for the adjustment of grievances.

While my major emphasis has necessarily been on elementary and secondary education, college education must come in for its due share of attention.

At present, 1/4 to 1/2 of the most talented youth never get the opportunity of a college education. This is a tremendous waste of a vital human resource. It is imperative that we seek out these potential leaders and enable them to pursue the studies of which they are presently deprived by circumstances beyond their control. To this end we need a stepped-up program of state scholarships, together with increased facilities for loans to college students. The State University must be expanded in every one of its aspects, and in all fairness the municipal colleges should receive substantial grants of state aid. The State University and its various colleges should be tuition-free for residents of the state, with state providing 2/3 of ^{the} cost and the community 1/3.

It is a sad fact that at present the Empire State ranks 41st among the 48 states in amount spent per capita for higher education.

In keeping with the emergency needs of our nation, special attention should be given to encouraging science education at all levels. But by no means should this be done at the expense of the humanities and the social sciences. For these studies are basic to the development and strengthening of the human values and democratic institutions which we seek to defend as our most precious heritage.

These and many more improvements and expansions in our educational system are imperatives in our race against social deterioration. [Let no one say that we cannot afford such a vast program. We must get a clear picture of the alternatives before us. The alternatives are not low costs and high costs of government. The real alternatives are high costs for education today or higher costs for courts, prisons, and custodial institutions tomorrow. Added to the latter will be the ever-growing human costs, not measurable in dollars, involved in crime, misery, ignorance and the weakening of the national security.]

[The question can also be put--are we ready to gamble with the life of our country, of its survival in the face of the ever-growing challenge and menace of the Soviet and Communist world? Can we pay too high a price for our national security and for the preservation of the democratic values of the free world?] Either we make great, yes, tremendous progress in education and science, or we lose. [P Unfortunately our American system of division of powers, with all its merits, encourages the evasion of responsibility. If we are to justify our system of government, we must break through the log-jam of buck-passing among our federal, state, and city governments.]

On November 18, 1957 Governor Harriman said: "I have little patience with those who say we cannot afford to do those things that are essential for survival". On February 3, 1958 he added: "The improvement of our school system is the most fundamental obligation

of government. I will do everything in my power to promote an improvement in education." But he went on with this unfortunate qualification: "If there is to be an increase in education spending, where is the money to come from? There is simply not enough money in present state taxes to produce it. The only alternative would be money from local taxation". But the localities, we know, claim fiscal helplessness.

When the New York City Board of Education, in an act of desperation, suspended insubordinate students en masse the Governor and representatives of the State Education Department hastened to the city to offer assistance, and the city fiscal authorities hunted up some emergency funds to keep these delinquents off the streets. Almost a week before all this, the State Legislature ^{had} deleted \$105,000 in reimbursement to New York City toward the cost of probation services. nor has the Legislature yet acted in a big and emphatic manner on aid to Education. Why can't we get together-- state and city, executive and legislative branches--in a major act of statesmanship, to provide the remedies before the disease becomes even more violent and virulent?

[The time is propitious for a breakthrough. The public is ready for a bold new program of education. It is too late now to think in terms of past budgets.]

[The states have appropriately been called the social laboratories of our nation. ^{New York State has an} ~~this is your~~ opportunity to undertake an experiment in real education daringly, with vision, and without prime consideration for the "Almighty dollar". No less than the future welfare of our people, yes, the very survival of our nation depends upon the action that ^{it} you will take.]