

Kansas City Mo  
Teachers Federation

EXCERPTS

From an address by

1-14-48

MAYOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

of Minneapolis, Minnesota

"It is the task of every teacher to have a basic philosophy of education that embraces its purposes, methods and objectives. The teacher has a great responsibility to the teaching profession and to the community. All too often teachers have not developed a philosophy of education which includes within it democratic purposes and principles and a realization of what we mean by the democratic way of life.

"Teachers who are honest with themselves and their student body attempt to provide an educational environment which promotes mental alertness and mental discipline.

"The first responsibility is to present fundamentals as an aid in the development of objective analysis and logical thinking. This may be termed a theory of education, or, more aptly, the teaching of how to think and not what to think.

"While mental discipline and the development of logical and constructive thinking are fundamentals for a sound educational program, it is equally important that instructors and teachers be aware of the controversial issues and of the economic, social and political substance of the society of which they are a part.

"Teaching cannot take place in a vacuum, nor is the sole purpose of public education the development of scholars and intellectuals. This is part of the job, but in the main American public education in elementary and secondary schools should provide an opportunity for the student to receive an orientation in the problems of the society in which he is a member.

"We need to remember that less than 5% of our young people go on to college. If our democratic way of life is to be protected, if it is to survive, the caliber of teaching and the subject matter during the years of the high school level are of fundamental importance.

"Just as we must have mental discipline, we likewise must be courageous in our effort as teachers to seek the truth, to present the facts, and to aid our students in the evaluation of those facts.

"It is the task of the teacher to be as objective as possible, but to be objective within a frame-work of an educational philosophy which is predicated upon a true understanding of democracy.

"I know there are those in our school system who would be propagandists. Many teachers are serving as propagandists without even recognizing it. They are

caught up in the established patterns of social conduct and are incapable of releasing their minds from that which is so well known to them. I think this is particularly true in the field of economics, race relations and labor-management problems. Unfortunately there are deep seated prejudices in these fields.

"If the American public educational system is to be close to the people, and I think that it should be, it must come to grips with the problems which confront the average citizen in his every day living.

"To ignore such problems as urbanization, labor-management relationships, race relationships and the economic factors in our industrial society is to fail miserably in the responsibility of education. I recognize that there are those persons who fear that a teacher who brings these issues to the fore-front is a dangerous person. In fact, the teacher who ignores these problems is the dangerous one and contributes to the decadence and the destruction of our society.

"The majority of young men and women coming out of our high schools will go to the farms, and the factories, and the shops as wage-earners or as self-employed people. Some of them will go into business in clerical or administrative positions. It is important that they be told in a frank and honest manner the history, for example, of the trade union movement.

"It is important that they receive sound principles of economics and understand that there are competitive economic systems. There can be no solution to the problems inherent in urban life unless the teaching profession through a course of study, makes a constructive analysis of the relationship of city life to the agricultural community.

"The greatest demonstration of American democracy is our public school system. Our public institutions of education are, in the full meaning of the word, the people's property. There are times that this fact is lost. Communities frequently come to regard schools as the property of some vested group of the School Board or of the Superintendent. When such a situation occurs it should be apparent to the casual observer that the schools have lost contact with the community, they have become institutions of vested interest devoid of their responsibility to the citizenry.

"The task of the school and its responsibility is to enrich the life of every individual, not just the majority of them. The normal school program does not meet the needs of each and every child. We must think in terms of individuals and not in terms of the mass. This is an integral part of our democratic way of life.

"Public education in America should give to every American boy and girl a full and complete opportunity for individual development to the best of his or her capacity. Every American community should dedicate itself to providing the finest of public buildings for our schools and the highest caliber of public instruction.

"Public education today must include within its scope such programs as public health, counseling, aptitude testing, the visiting teacher, the visiting nurse, along with mental health facilities. One of the great problems that faces our nation is that of mental health. Corrective programs can be instituted in public schools on the basis of definite economy to our communities.

"Our democratic way of life is based upon the existence of an intelligent electorate. It cannot flourish half-educated and half-illiterate. It is a shocking fact that today in America over 3,000,000 American children of school age are

not in school, and an additional 2,000,000 are in schools where they are receiving an inadequate or what we might call a sub-standard education. When we add up these figures we find out that about one child out of every six of school youngsters is being denied the chance of citizenship participation by our apathy and our selfishness.

"I call upon the public school teacher and the school administrator to take the case of public education into the family and the homes of America. The great work of the Parent-Teachers' Associations is clear evidence of what can be done by organized effort on the part of parents and teachers in behalf of American schools.

"I am convinced that education can no longer be financed on a local basis. There must be cooperation and sharing the financial responsibility by local, state and federal government. I strongly endorse federal aid to education.

"If our country can afford to spend approximately \$20,000,000,000 a year on recreation, tobacco, alcohol and beauty preparations, it surely can afford to increase its budget for public education. A budget which in 1946 was slightly over \$3,000,000,000. Edmund Burke, a great British philosopher once said 'Education is the cheap defense of nations.' If we cannot afford this cheapest of defenses then it is about time that we face the fact that we must cut down on our consumption of comforts and luxuries.

"We must think in terms of doubling our educational budget. We must repudiate the economics of scarcity in educational structures. It is estimated that America needs an outlay of at least \$5,000,000,000 to adequately prepare its public schools for a program of modern education.

"While it is important that we recognize the necessity of tenure for teachers, it is even more important that we recognize the payment of an adequate wage or salary for competent teaching. It is my opinion that we would be far better off to pay much more for public instruction in terms of teachers' salaries and to modify tenure in the sense that a merit system be introduced providing recognition for outstanding ability.

"Our supply of competent teachers is dwindling every year. A recent survey by Dr. Fine of the New York Times brought some glaring truths to our attention. Dr. Fine pointed out that 350,000 teachers have left the American public schools since 1940. One out of every seven teachers in the profession is serving on an emergency or sub-standard certificate.

"In 1946, 70,000 teaching positions were unfilled because of the inability of communities to get the necessary teachers. Fewer students today are entering the teaching profession than at any time in the past twenty years. In 1920, 22% of all college students attended teachers colleges. Today only 7% are preparing themselves for the profession of a high school or primary school teacher. This tells us nothing about the tremendous demands which will be made upon universities and colleges. The great increase in enrollment in American institutions of higher learning is not just a post-war problem. It will be with us from here on out.

"When thousands of young Americans have been afforded the privilege of a college education you can rest assured that they will want to complete it, and that they will look forward to the day when their children can have the

same opportunity. This means if we are to go forward in the program of education we must recognize the need of plant or school facility expansion and the imperative need of a greatly increased educational staff of administrators and teachers.

"When you economize on education you are not merely affecting the income level of teachers and school administrators, you are playing with the destiny of a nation. This wealthy country of ours is amply able to support good schools. Our national income rose over 500% from 1932 to 1946, while expenditures for public education rose approximately 25%.

"It would not be a fair criticism to say that public education has failed, but it can be said that at times it has been out of tune and out of touch with the world about it. The question we must ask is whether or not school teachers and school administrators should permit themselves to be victimized by the tide of the times, or whether or not they should follow the challenge of the greatest Teacher of them all, which was to seek the truth.

"The pioneering days of public education have just begun. We are entering upon the greatest era of educational opportunity which has ever been given to a people. It would be a singular tragedy if we failed.

"The American people went all out to teach our young men to fight and die for democracy. Is it any less important that we prepare our youth for the battles of peace which lie ahead?"



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