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HUMPHREY URGES 'NATIONAL COMMITMENT'
TO EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Senator Hubert H. Humphrey (D., Minn.) said today that a "determined, national commitment to upgrade the total educational structure is required to assure equality of educational opportunity in the United States."

"The challenge to secure equal educational opportunities for all citizens can not be met by promises, resolutions and policies," Humphrey said.

"Only when we have overcome a lack of a public commitment, a lack of public resources and a lack of advance planning can we expect to build adequate educational facilities at all levels," he added.

The Senator's remarks were prepared for delivery at the 46th annual meeting of the American Council of Education, in Washington.

"Millions of American children suffer from inequality of opportunity for a decent education and training in modern skills," Humphrey said. "It would be both economically and morally disastrous for the nation if this situation continues."

Humphrey said that the plight of the Negro child represents "the most tragic and dramatic failure of American education."

"The separate but equal doctrine applied to his education in the South is a cynical farce," he added. "The same people who promote that doctrine give the lie to the word 'equality' when they protest desegregation because at any given grade the Negro child is educationally behind.

"Of course the Negro child is behind. The separate but equal doctrine has kept him that way.

(m o r e)

"When the Negro child is taken north, this ball and chain of unequal educational opportunity follows both him and his parents. This is a real cause of many of the Negro problems in the North."

Humphrey emphasized that unbalanced educational opportunities affect all Americans, not just Negro children and families.

"Educational opportunities are influenced by local economic conditions, by shifts of Federal aid to education, by patterns of population change," he said.

"Many of our young people are being priced out of a decent education by the high costs of education.

"And there can be no equality of education if millions of young people in some parts of the country must attend schools with inadequate facilities and underpaid teachers.

"There can be no equality of educational opportunity if young people have no chance to attend technical or vocational schools to provide the skills they need for modern jobs."

Humphrey concluded:

"We should no longer accept a system based on the idea of just skimming the cream of students from the affluent sectors of society. We can not waste the real talent, intelligence and even genius in the vast reservoir below the upper economic classes."

file

American Council
of Education
October 4, 1963
Washington, D.C.

COMMITMENT TO EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY
IN EDUCATION

President Fawcett, President Babbidge, Presidents
Wachman, Benitez, and Proctor---my hesitancy to rush
into this distinguished company is evidence I trust
that I am not a fool. On the other hand, I can't ^{claim} ~~claim~~
to be an angel. I am delighted, however, to be here at
46th Annual Meeting of the American Council of Education.
I believe in the importance of this subject "Equality
of Opportunity in Education." Surely, it has been
a factor appearing in the discussion of all of the other
topics before you. It is well, however, to single it out
for special attention on its own.

(V)

I assume you have followed closely the course
of educational legislation in the Congress. Two concerns
have predominated: (1) Federal assistance in getting
buildings and equipment to meet the "tidal wave" of

(2) students coming to the institutions of higher learning, ✓
and (2) Federal assistance in ~~aiding production of~~ ^{providing} a
better educated manpower to serve the national interests.

Here the need for increased scientific manpower has
loomed large. I am more than happy, however, to see
the rising emphasis upon getting better vocational
education. I hold this to be very important.

Not all of the problems are being met, but I
think we are making progress in recognizing the necessity
of Federal participation in the educational needs of the
nation.

Legislation is only part of the problem of pro-
viding equal opportunity in education. Even where laws
are necessary one has to be discriminating about try-
ing to put everything into one ball of wax. In this

~~connection I am often asked~~---and I have been asked to
comment here---should education bills be considered with-
out attaching to them, the so-called "Powell amendments"
to insure that no Federal aid support discrimination upon
race, creed, or national origin?

Powell
Amend

I feel confident that the stand of Hubert Humphrey
on Civil Rights is well-known. I am going to be in
that battle for full Civil Rights for all of our citizens
until it is won.

Yet precisely for the sake of getting something
done upon behalf of equal opportunity, I have always
opposed these ^{so-called} "Powell amendments." The reason is simple.
They are self-defeating and kill basic education legis-
lation at the same time. Civil rights legislation attacks
a broad, deep, and very formidable aspect of American
life. It includes educational concerns but goes beyond
them. It is an issue which must be taken separately and

fought comprehensively. To mix it up with education legislation confuses and delays both.

We are going to get Civil Rights legislation at this session of Congress, if it takes until Christmas.

It does not make sense to try to go through that kind of a struggle every time an education bill comes up. Done once, the benefits will accrue to education legislation.

It is a disgrace that we have delayed as long as we have in this country, in achieving Civil Rights for all Citizens. Next month it will be one hundred years since Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. He noted then a span of 87 years since a "new nation was brought forth upon this continent, dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal." Time has run out on us. The "lead time" has been used up to achieve what

~~the~~ Constitution guarantees.

Here I would emphasize, that we are not making
new law. We are only implementing the fundamental
law of the land. We are only freeing to operate,
the basic moral law on which this nation was founded.
For that very reason, necessary as this legislation
is, the real effects and progress will come in proportion
as we have really dedicated ourselves to our moral
responsibilities.

No
new
law

The present aspect that America is beginning to
face its responsibilities, has already had tremendous
and favorable impact upon our strategic position in
the world. Only several years ago, literally every
American abroad was pelted with the question "What
about Little Rock?" Several weeks ago--on August 28,
we carried "live" around the world, the reporting of

tremendous "March for Freedom" in Washington. The world could witness and hear 200,000 Americans from all walks of life, all creeds and colors, and from 50 states demonstrate in the best American tradition. Tensions are much worse today than at the time of Little Rock. Events in Birmingham have been shocking beyond words. Yet the aspect of America facing its problems, candidly showing the world that it has a concern and is facing up, has won admiration and respect over the world. Nobody is asking us to be perfect. They are only asking us to be honest, to shed the mask of hypocrisy.

Everyone knows that we are the most powerful nation on earth. As the military say, we have made our nuclear power "credible". That is good enough for stalemate in the cold war, but is not good enough

to win it. When our moral power becomes as credible as our military, the tides of freedom will run irresistibly for us.

(X) This Civil Rights legislation affects the subject of equality of opportunity in education where the Negro is concerned at two points. In different ways Titles III and VI have a single end: to eliminate segregation in education. The Negro has never had equality of opportunity in education. That is the largest single root of the difficulty he is in, and the hardship he has in getting out of it.

I want to use my time on this subject of equality of opportunity in education to emphasize that it is a vaster subject than Civil Rights, important as that is. Problems are broader than will be solved by legislation, however, much some might be needed.

They begin long before they reach you in higher education. Yours in fact begin in the nursery so to speak.

In a word, the problem is that inequality of opportunity causes economic deprivation. It aggravates joblessness, and all of the health, welfare, and social demoralization that comes from this. It hurts people and it hurts the nation. An individual denied ^{equal} opportunity to education is denied the opportunity to acquire the social and cultural resources necessary for personal growth, citizenship, and social adequacy. Again an individual is crippled, and the strength of a nation is dissipated.

~~The hard nub of it is that a~~ vicious circle operates: equality of opportunity in education is necessary to get economic capability and social-cultural capacity, yet the absence of these cause the inequality

in the first place.

I wish to do three things briefly:

1. Illustrate the problem with the Negro for he makes a good case history.
2. Apply it in a classroom.
3. Specify some things which are needed and challenge you to give some leadership and help.

1. The Negro plight shows the vicious circle in operation.

The Negro suffers twice the unemployment rate of
the rest of the population. As unskilled labor is becoming
increasingly unemployable, he is told he has not enough
training to get a better job, or maybe any job. Yet
he has not been given an opportunity to get the training.

He is told he does not have the social habits
to fit him for white company. Yet he has been forced

Apart-hide!

to live and be educated in a state of apartheid.

L On one hand he is told in the South that his education has been "separate but equal." The same people, however, give the lie to the word "equality" here, when they protest desegregation on the ground that the Negro child of any given grade is "educationally behind."

Many Negroes have "escaped" to the North. Condemned to start out on the "lower side of the tracks" they suffer again in practical, if not legal apartheid. Again the schools are all of a kind. The students have dragged along the "ball and chain of separate but unequal" education. Standards slip necessarily to the lower denominator.

All this is good reason why the Negro earns \$2000 per year less on an average. Yet educational costs have gone up with everything else. He drifts

farther and farther away from capability to meet them.
Any education for him is difficult. The hope for college
is a mirage. Then sets in a loss of hope and ambition
along the line. Then comes the dropout's understand-
able cry: "What's the use?"

~~In these poor economics, the mother in the family
has to work. This hurts fathers and hurts families.
It is the children who suffer most.~~

↳ Economically, socially, culturally, educationally,
the bad results snowball and reinforce one another.

Economist like to talk about the "multiplier effect."

Here is a good illustration of it.

2. The classroom takes on difficult burdens.

Now let us think about a child regardless of
race. If the Negro mirrors a situation of suffering

from inequality of education, he does not exhaust it.
Hundreds of thousands of children white and colored
in our cities are suffering. In many rural areas this
society is not as affluent as it is sometimes cracked
up to be. We have ~~a lot of~~ ^{many good} good schools in America.
There are ~~a lot~~ ^{many} however, which are not. What happens
in the classrooms?

Take one of our neatly-lawned suburban communities.
The school is attractive. It is well-lighted and ventilated.
There is a seat for everyone. This may not necessarily
improve the quality of learning but it helps. Most
important, it is clear to the student that someone cares
about education. Parents, community, teachers, and ad-
ministrators are concerned.

Now come into a city---this city, Washington, D. C.
The school may not be falling down, but it has some hazards
in shaky plaster and overcrowded rooms. Some seats

are broken and by newspaper accounts, some children sit on radiators. Leaders recently urged dropout students here to return to school and continue their education. You might say someone cared. The students however know better. They had not been provided for in seats, in equipment, in teachers. Don't think for a moment that the students don't "get the word" and it is not a message that stimulates motivation, learning, or caring for education.

↳ That is only one phase of the problem. In the good school, a bright youth can hope to go to college. His parents are more likely to have the money or reserves. In any case his opportunities for scholarship are vastly better. In the poor school,

even if hope and nerve have not been dulled, the able and willing must give up the idea of advanced education. Either they do not have the money, or must use what funds they can earn to help support a family.

In the good school a teacher of history may hold a discussion on United States foreign policy. Some students may be stimulated towards a career in government, or foreign service. In the school of the underprivileged, however, a teacher with the same subject may draw only blank looks. The students do not know the words used. Or they may find it difficult to carry on a discussion in an area they never hear talked about at home or on the streets. Even if they clear these humps, they might well not aspire to careers as remote to their possible future, as is the possibility that one of us here can become an astronaut.

Millions of children in America are suffering from unequal opportunity in education. Wherever it occurs, in children of any race, cultural deprivation is mutually shared and feeds upon itself.

3. What needs to be done?

much
~~A lot~~ needs to be done. The challenge to secure equal opportunities for all citizens can not be met by promises, resolutions, and general policy statements. We have got to have deep public commitment in dedication and resources. We must have ~~a lot of~~ advance planning. We need some new vigor in ideas and leadership. Here the American Council of Education has a vital role to play.

Among things we need are:

-- more classrooms, and adequate ones for all our children. Local economic conditions,

shifts in population, the present pattern of Federal aid, all play into the picture of unequal opportunity.

In the fullest consistency with local effort and government, we must move towards national standards, planning and coordination here.

-- we need more and better paid teachers. ~~We are not getting enough and~~ ^{not} we are getting enough of the best students to be teachers. Part of the problem is money.

Part of the problem lies in challenge to students to choose this profession. To me this is at the very least as important as getting more people in mathematics, physics, and engineering.

In your institutions you can play a strong role in this.

-- we need a major new approach to vocational education. A lot of our unemployment problem

is due to young people not having any training or any place to get it for the skills which are more and more required. The Manpower Development and Training Act of 1962 has made a start in getting unemployed youth out of the rut of taking whatever sporadic job comes along, or resigning themselves to live off a relative, or drifting into social delinquency. So far nationally, 70 percent of the trainees ^{received} ~~have got~~ jobs upon graduation. Our economy could take up a lot of its slack if people were equipped for the new kinds of jobs the economy has. This start, however, is only a drop in the bucket in the educational job which must be done in vocational terms. Once a blacksmith father taught his son the trade, or a small shopkeeper showed his children how to keep the store. I can't have the transmission of

my car fixed by a blacksmith, (although I think a few have tried) nor can modern business machines be run by someone who never saw one.

-- we need a lot of curricular reform. This is a vast subject in itself, but I am relating it here to my prior point on vocational education, to emphasize that. A mechanically gifted student wants to be a television repair man. He sits uninterested in an English class studying Shakespeare. He cannot yet follow the written instructions of the repair manual and it scares him. Instead of futile study, he ought to have an English period wherein he could learn something which vitally interests him. I am not demeaning liberal education for all students. ^{But,} ~~I think~~ it will better take care of itself when we get some priorities established.

-- we are going to need financial assistance in loans and scholarships to the able and needy.

It is said that any needy and able student in America can get to college. I don't believe that.

-- I think we need less snobbishness than we have in education. This applies in the educational fraternity in attitudes towards those who teach in non-academic areas. It applies in attitudes towards those who work in non-academic vocations. I know some scientists who are probably vital to getting a man on the moon, but whom I wouldn't want working on my transmission anymore than a blacksmith. We are going to be in a sad way if we ever get away from Robert Burns' "a man's a man, for 'a that".

On some of these problems you can work directly in your institutions. On others you can give leadership in your communities and in association with other educational bodies. I know you are not unconcerned.

Your new committee on equality of opportunity in education, announced two days ago is a sign. I applaud you for that. Although you are in a position to, you are content just to sit and skim the cream from the affluent sectors of the middle class. You have wondered whether or not the competition you have been screening isn't a competition drawn from a two narrow segment of society. You have wondered how much untapped real talent and perhaps genius lies in the vast reservoir below it, where unequal opportunities have prevented students from even coming close to you. In short you have wondered not only about brain power, but about democracy in getting it.

Wonder some more! As you are committed and give leadership, I am confident we'll get something done.



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