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## VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY DISCUSSES SCHOOL DROPOUTS

FRANK BLAIR: With millions of the nation's students now returning to school after the summer holiday, the Administration is again doing all it can to persuade our young people to finish their education and not become educational dropouts. One Administration leader in this effort is Vice President Hubert Humphrey, who, in this interview, taped yesterday, discussed this critical problem with Today show Washington correspondent, Sander Vanocur. Sandy?

SANDER VANOCUR: Mr. Vice President, we hear a lot about this problem of dropouts, but what is the nature of the problem? Do we have any figures on how many drop out, and how many are going to drop out in the next ten years, and what does this mean to our economy?

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: Well, we do have figures. Of course, these are all estimates. The figure that we have for this year is an estimate of approximately three quarters of a million--750,000--young men and women, that have been in high school but will drop out before their senior year--most of them around their sophomore year, as a matter of fact. This means that if the present rate of dropouts continues, putting this in relationship to the increase of our population, that by the year 1975, we'll have 32 million adults in the work force without a high school diploma. I must say that that's a rather frightening figure, primarily because in the period in which we now live, and in the days ahead, basic education is going to be very important for the purposes of employment and indeed, of a satisfying life. One figure that comes to mind, that I think tells the story so far as education--and I speak only of a high school education--is this, that over a lifetime, the income of a high school graduate is twice that of a non-high school graduate.

Now, that is an income figure that is, I would say, carefully calculated, that it is reliable, so that any young person that wants to think in terms of "What will my earning power be over the next 25,

30, 35 years?" --he ought to keep in mind that the facts that we have for the past ten years indicate that the income of a high school graduate over a lifetime will be twice that of a non-high school graduate.

VANOCUR: Mr. Vice President, we hear a lot of statements deploring high school dropouts, but do we understand, do we have the knowledge about why children drop out of high school?

HUMPHREY: No, I don't think we really know all the reasons why young people drop out of high school, but we surely have some vague notions, at least, about it. I think one that comes to mind immediately is the fact that all too often the school program is not related to the life that the young person is going to live. This is particularly true in vocational education. We're all, as they say, on a big kick about vocational education; we feel that young people need to be encouraged in skills in the trades; they need to have work habits, work disciplines which they do not get in the modern society because their father no longer is his own entrepreneur; he works in a corporation or he works in a store in a merchandising mart, and he can't bring his son along and train him on the job as my father was able to train me, for example, as a young druggist.

But the educational structure and the vocational field in many areas--now, I don't want to overly generalize here, because there's some outstandingly good vocational and technical schools--but most of the vocational education is related to trades and skills that are really not needed in the present society or in the days ahead. Now, this is being revised; it's being improved, but I must say to the educators at the school boards, we have to have, we must have a sense of urgency about this; we have to hurry up.

Now, that's one reason that young people drop out. There's another reason: income. Salaries and wages for a young person are very good. He can drop out of high school and go get a job in a factory or in a filling station or in a store for what he thinks is good money. And of course, if he stayed in high school and went on to a technical school or to a junior college, community college, or to college, he'd improve his life earnings immensely, but at the age 20 or age 19, he doesn't quite sense that.

Now, it's my task and my responsibility, and the responsibility of parents and counselors and community leaders to remind these young people that your dollar and a half, two dollars, two dollars and a half an hour right now at age 18 and 19 will be meaningless a little bit later unless you have a high school diploma or unless you've attended a vocational technical school and gone on to college.

So if you say--the implication of easy income, the lack of proper relationship of the educational program to the needs of the --the functional needs of our society--sometimes schools just aren't interesting; their teaching is uninteresting, and young people just drop out because of that. But there's another matter to be taken into consideration--it's easy to drop out. You just don't go to school.

VANOCUR: That's the question, Mr. Vice President. It used to be a truancy problem. Now, I sense that the government, the federal government, feels that it's more than just a school truancy problem; it's a community problem.

HUMPHREY: Yes, it surely is a community problem. The rate of dropouts, for example, in the urban slums, is very high. The rate of school dropouts in some of the rural, low-income areas, is very high. Dropouts in school, that is, checking out of school, just giving up the whole thing, is related very directly to the environment in which we live.

Now, in the earlier days of our society, when a young couple came to the United States as immigrants and had a family, that immigrant father and mother would almost make it a religious cause to get that boy or girl an education, because the father and mother did not have an education, and coming to this new and free country, they sensed the opportunity that was here, so that you would see amongst the children of first generation Americans a tremendous desire for an education.

Regrettably, in some of our areas today, in the urban slums, and in the areas of rural poverty, you don't see that same feeling--you don't sense it, I should say. The children have no incentive to go to school; the parents--if there is a family unit, that family unit doesn't encourage that boy or girl to go to school, all too often. The need of an income draws them away from the school--the immediate needs of income; the pressing demands for just food and shelter and clothing, so that you don't have the same motivation, let's say, the same inspiration to go back to school that the boy or girl of a father that just came from Italy or Yugoslavia or Rumania or Norway, Sweden, Denmark, any country you could think of.

VANOCUR: Well, that's precisely the point that I was aiming at before. When we talk about the educational system, it was created in the last century to train and to teach English to a great mass of immigrants and therefore, it was a leveling, equalizing, very democratic structure, but is that structure designed for this kind of America that we have today, when you have an economy that is jumping ahead with technological changes?

HUMPHREY: Well, now there, you've put your finger on the difference. Fifty years ago, the educational structure was, as you say, designed for the basics in reading, writing and arithmetic, to bring the immigrant and the worker's family into a better relationship with the total community through communication, through a common language and some knowledge of our history and geography. We need that now, too, don't misunderstand me; that still is basic.

But today, with automation, and the advance of science and technology and the unbelievable changes in our economic and industrial structure, man is competing with machine; man is not only competing with the machine, he must be a partner with the machine and he must be able to keep pace with the machine, and this, of course, brings us into a whole new relationship of employment to education. This is why, when I speak of the need of a high school diploma, the kind of intellectual discipline that a person will get out of just going to school is required, or the concentration that is necessary in employment from here on out, and I repeat again, that our vocational and technical schools must be geared to the computer industry, must be geared to the electronics industry, must be geared to the space program, must be geared to the integrated systems that we have of our industrial complex today, and this requires, I think, a sort of cross-breeding between education and industry for the industrial worker.

Now, I would not want my remarks to be interpreted as a lack of emphasis upon the cultural aspects, the fine arts and humanities. We want citizens as well as workers; we want citizens as well as scientists. We do not want science to be our master; we want to be the master of science. But having said that, it isn't good enough now to have just a liberal arts education for the man or woman that is going to try to provide a living for his family.

So, our educational structure needs to re-examine its curriculum. It needs to re-examine its teaching methods. It needs to re-examine its administrative structure, and we're beginning to do it out of sheer necessity. Let me just give you a--do you mind?

VANOCUR: No, sir.

HUMPHREY: Let's take a look at Project Head Start--that's for the little one, the three, the four-year old, and the five-year-old, the ones that ought to be in kindergarten or nursery school, preparing for the first grade. Now, we have over a half a million young people in Project Head Start, these little children. Most of them are children of families where there is low income, inadequate family training and discipline, and, well, they're underprivileged, to put it simply.



We find that these are sometimes emotionally disturbed children, they have problems of nutrition, diet, even of clothing. When they come into Project Head Start, they get their first physical examination, most of them; they get counseling; the parents are talked to; the community itself begins to re-examine its whole educational structure. We're finding now that our beginning in education was inadequate. Now, if you have a poor beginning in education, it lowers the whole structure. If your foundation is crumbling, or is mush instead of good solid concrete, you can expect the structure to settle down and to lower itself.

So, we're beginning to build a better educational system by starting at the beginning, with the nursery school, the kindergarten child, and the first grade child, and this will tend to lift education, and the word is excellence. I want to emphasize that. We need to have in every aspect of education, excellence-- better teaching, better facilities, better teachers, better teaching methods, the teaching machine, the audiovisual aid; we can learn a great deal, and we are learning, out of these programs.

VANOCUR: Mr. Vice President, if you're suggesting, and I guess you are, that the dropout problem doesn't just begin in the junior or senior high, it begins in the beginning--

HUMPHREY: The dropout problem is exactly what it says; it's the end of the line, but it started in the beginning--that's exactly right. It started at first grade. It may have started, actually, in the environment of the community; it started even before that child went to school. So, we have to build all the way back, let's say, the repair structure. No use in me lecturing young people here and saying, well, now, go back to school, if the whole motivation of life is one that took him away from the school experience.

VANOCUR: Well, sir, with all the massive amounts of money we're pouring into the aid--to aid education, without disturbing the cherished concept of local responsibility for education, are there not standards the federal government can urge upon the communities, knowing what the federal government does, what they've learned throughout the country, just to avoid this problem later on?

HUMPHREY: Well, I think what the federal government's role is and should be is one of leading, one of example, of counseling, of advice, of the--almost the pilot school, to show what can be done. Now, the federal government, through Project Head Start, is getting people started to help themselves, offering help so they help themselves.

Project Head Start--I'll go back to it again--it is showing the school board, it is demonstrating to the school board, to the school administrative structure, to the teacher, to the parent, what is needed in a good education. We're learning through doing; we're finding out that there have to be many changes made in our educational system. The

The Job Corps--the camp with all of its problems--these are young people that couldn't get a job. These are young people that were school dropouts, most of them in the Job Corps camps, but we're learning in the Job Corps camps a great deal about vocational education. We're learning, for example, that some of the best Job Corps camps are those that are supervised and managed under contract with a corporation. Now, I think people ought to contemplate that for a while. The better Job Corps camps--not all of them--but most of the better Job Corps camps are camps that are under the supervision, under contract with an American business corporation, where the teaching methods of that corporation for its personnel, is brought in. Now, we're learning a great deal there about vocational and technical education as well as the whole broad concept of a better life through education.

VANOCUR: Thank you, very much, Mr. Vice President. We've been speaking with Vice President Hubert Humphrey on the pressing need of our educational system and their relation to our society; and now, back to Today in New York.

FRANK BLAIR: Thank you very much, gentlemen, from New York. A critical problem, one that our country faces--educational drop-outs.



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