

OPENING REMARKS

Fellow Americans:

The film you just saw tells the story of the school dropout -- it is a story of frustration and failure -- a story which usually ends in the lines of the unemployed.

It's important that our teenagers get this message. But it's also essential that every community in America understand this basic truth: nobody wins by dropping out of school.

That's the message we hope will be carried to every home in this country. And, make no mistake, this is a job which must be done in the local community and by the local community.

President Lyndon Johnson has asked me to direct a nationwide Youth Opportunity - Stay-in-School Campaign to help our local communities mobilize for this vital job of keeping our young people in school.

Some communities have effective stay-in-school programs already in operation -- others are just getting started. But no city or town in America can afford to permit this tragic waste of ability and talent to continue.

~~Through the cooperation of the~~ We are asking your help in this stay-in-school campaign. Later in the program

I will be joined by some famous Americans who are deeply concerned about the school dropout problem: the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, the Honorable John Gardner, and the well-known TV personality, Allen Ludden, a man who has always demonstrated his special concern for the future of our young people.

Right now, let me dramatize for you the nature of the school dropout problem in America.

There are, today, more than 5 1/2 million young people who have dropped out of school.

There is, today, the prediction that 750,000 more will leave school this year unless we act now to prevent it.

There is, today, the estimate that, if this trend continues, 32 million dropouts would be in the labor market by 1975. We must act now to prevent this.

These are only statistics. But, these statistics are part of a story of human failure -- perhaps the failure of the student himself, or his family, his school, or his community and neighborhood.

And, as we have seen, more failures are probably just around the corner. A student who enters the labor market without his diploma can look forward to a life of reduced income. --

And he must expect more frequent periods of unemployment, and all the personal and economic problems which likely follow.

Listen to these facts:

- the unemployment rate for school dropouts is four times the national average;
- the high school graduate earns in his lifetime over three-quarters more than a person who failed to finish eight years of school.

We've adopted a slogan in our Youth Opportunity - Stay-in-School Campaign which sums it up; shortchange your education now and you may be short of change for the rest of your life.

CLOSING REMARKS

I am convinced we can solve the dropout problem. The
battlefront is the school, but the war belongs to all of us.

-- What must we do? -- First, the school must identify the potential dropout. He usually has a poor elementary or junior high school record. There may be some truancy in his background. He is usually below grade level in reading and below average in paper and pencil intelligence tests. He may come from a disadvantaged home. His record usually shows no interest in extra-curricular activities.

-- Once identified, potential dropouts should be referred to counselling.

-- The counselor may find our youngster needs a job or that one of his parents needs a job. He may need remedial reading. He may not be suited for or interested in the college preparatory curriculum. But he may be interested in music, art, drama, athletics or mechanical skills. One success in any one of his real interests could head off total failure.

-- You can organize your community and your facilities for an all-out attack on the problem. Schools can analyze course offerings -- do they meet real needs? The best teachers can be assigned to courses for these youngsters -- we do that already for accelerated students.

-- Schools can make their "no-show" names, addresses and phone numbers available to your Community Committee. The students who didn't return for the fall term can be contacted by representatives of your committee. Organize a community effort of "each one reach one."

3. -- Continue the drive all year. Truants should be immediately contacted. Make them realize they're missed. Review their programs and records. Be sensitive, not critical toward student failure. See them before they fail.

-- Interest can reap rewards. When you're seeing your potential dropout, cut off your phone calls and the people coming in and out. That meeting could be the most important meeting in that young student's life.

-- Parents count, too. They often need help, encouragement, adult education courses, maybe. Perhaps the father or mother is unemployed. Contact the State Employment Service about enrolling them in Manpower Development Training Act or other programs leading to employment.

-- If all efforts fail and a student drops out, don't quit!

Try to get him a job and then follow up monthly. Try to get him back to school -- even if it's evening high school. Remind him of Junior College potentials. Keep your interest in front of him.

-- Combine the short range with the long range. Bring the world of work to the school. Industrial and business leaders, organized labor and school administrators should begin planning realistic vocational education programs and meetings with students to inform them of what it takes to qualify. We need more vocational education facilities; let's start planning now. Be sure you're aware of the Federal funding programs available for work-study, counselling, equipment and supplies, vocational education and Manpower Development Training Act programs -- all these can help. We are all busy people, but you have the dedication needed to do the job.

Our success depends on your creativity, your imagination and your hard work.

As soon as your community forms its committee -- or if you have one already -- have your chairman wire me in

Washington, D. C. Let me know what you're doing and
what I can do to help. Thank you for giving me your
time. (Thank other participants.)

[TV Transcript: Youth Opportunity Sept. 24, 1965]

This is an employment office. It could be anywhere in the United States. These people are unemployed and many of them are school dropouts. President Lyndon Johnson, on August 21, Launched the Youth Opportunity Stay In School Campaign. He asked the Vice President of the United States, the Honorable Hubert H. Humphrey to coordinate it. We present to you now the Vice President of the United States.

The film that you have seen tells the story of a school dropout and it is, as you can well tell, a story of frustration and of failure, a story which usually ends in the lines of the unemployed. It is important that our teenagers-yes, the teenagers in your town-get this message. It is also essential that every community in America understand this basic truth, nobody wins by dropping out of school. Now we hope that this message will be carried to every home in our country and make no mistake, this is a job which must be done in the local community and by the local community. President Lyndon Johnson has asked me to direct a nationwide Youth Opportunity Stay In School Campaign and to help mobilize our local communities for this vital job of keeping our young people in school where they can develop and mature. Now some communities have already effective stay in school programs. They are working and in operation. Others are just getting started. No city or town or village in America can afford to ignore this tragic waste of potential ability and talent. We are asking your help in this stay in school campaign. Later in this program I will be joined by some famous Americans who are deeply concerned about the school dropout problem and deeply concerned about young Americans, the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, the Honorable John Gardner and two movie and television personalities who have a special interest in our young people, Douglas Fairbanks, and Allan Ludden. Right now, let me dramatize the nature of our school problem and then we will hear from our participants and guests.

There are today more than five and a half million young people who have dropped out of school. There is today a group of seven hundred and fifty thousand

more young people who will leave school this year unless we can do something and act now to prevent it. There is today the estimate that thirty-two million school dropouts will be in the labor market by 1975 if this present trend continues. I think that tells that we must act now to prevent this tragic waste of talent and ability. Of course, these are only statistics, just figures, yet these statistics tell a story of human failure and human waste-the failure of the student himself, or his family or school or his neighborhood and community. As we have seen, there probably are more failures just around the corner unless we take some preventive action. A student who enters the labor market without his diploma-I speak of the high school diploma-can look forward to a life of reduced income. He must expect more frequent periods of unemployment plus all the personal and economic problems which are likely to follow. Listen to these facts and they are facts-the unemployment rate for school dropouts is four times the national average. The high school graduate earns in his lifetime over three quarters more than a person who failed to finish eight years of school.

Now we have adopted a slogan in our youth opportunity stay in school campaign which sums it up-short change your education now and you may be short of change for the rest of your life.

As I said, we have some very distinguished guests. We are privileged to have with us three guests who share this concern that I have been speaking of, this concern over the problem of the school dropout. First I wish to introduce a distinguished educator and a scholar, a man who has directed the attention of America to the goal of achieving excellence in education, John Gardner, Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare. Next, we have with us a man, according to my visit with him-I do not quite except this however, he has semi-retired from his role as one of the movie industry's most renown personalities, but as I said who has never retired from helping his government: A person who has given his time in many public service activities, Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. Finally I would like to introduce a TV personality

and a gentleman I know most of you have met many times over TV and radio, who has brought some of America's brightest young people into the homes on the College Quiz-bowl program, Allen Ludden. He is the author of four plain-talk books for young people and believe me these books are plain talk in the kind that young people understand, and the moderator of that outstanding quiz show, Password, Mr. Allen Ludden.

Now, I want to direct this program to first the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare. Mr. Secretary, you stress the importance of our schools achieving educational excellence. My question to you is, how much of our problem of school dropouts is related to the courses of study, the curriculum, which are not suited to the students' interests or skills? Let me add, how relevant is vocational education in our schools to the skills needed to hold a well paying steady job of today? That is a big bundle of a question for you.

Mr. Vice President, let me say first that the total curriculum of the schools is immensely relevant, not just vocational education but the traditional academic courses. It is of immense importance to prepare these youngsters for work but they must get a heavy dose of the basic academic subjects. They have to read and write and know something about their society if they are going to function in their society. For a high proportion of youngsters the basic academic subjects must be supplemented by a very good vocational education and this vocational education must be relevant to some jobs that they can conceivably get when they get out and to achieve that goal, we are going to have to go far beyond where we are now.

Mr. Secretary, I have long been interested in education as you know. I term myself sometimes a refugee from the classroom, having been a teacher. All too often in the past, Vocational education was sort of looked down upon. I mean in many communities in years gone by the vocational school would sort of be looked upon as the school for those that just couldn't make it. Is that necessarily the case now? Can't we get these vocational schools so that they are looked upon as schools of technology, technical schools, like technical institutes with a sort of respectability

an acceptance all of their own?

No question about it. I think we are well beyond the point at which we are inclined to look down on vocational education. And this is really something that is going out of fashion. And I have emphasized very strongly in my own writings the possibility of excellence in vocational courses.

And, as you have indicated so many times in talking around the nation to educators and others, the Federal Government now has a very broad program of assistance in vocational education, as in other areas of education, to upgrade the standards.

Very broad in getting at all the multiple causes of school dropouts which inadequate vocational education may be one.

Well, we'll come back to you I'm sure again, but I wanted to get to Mr. Fairbanks now because Mr. Fairbanks has a unique capacity to get to young people, to contact them and to speak to them. And, I'm sure you've heard as I have, Mr. Fairbanks, that some young people just believe they never have a chance to succeed. How do you reach these young people who believe that way? How can we demonstrate to them that we, the rest of us, all of us, really care about them and about their future?

Well, Mr. Vice President, my first glib reaction to the question would be that a great deal depends on the teacher, on the educator himself in providing an inspiration. Of course, we could do a lot by compulsion, raising the school leaving age which is already higher than most places, but compulsion often defeats itself, and the carrot is certainly better than the stick. But, if educators and teachers themselves could provide the inspiration - provide the appetite, the desire to learn more and to disabuse the conception which a lot of young people have these days that the word opportunity is now a dead issue, that it doesn't matter. What good does it do to have it because once I have it I'm still not going to be any

better off. It's all taken care of by a lot of computers, and what I can do is useless. And, if we could instill in them an appreciation that failure in life is only partly a matter of luck; the rest of it is the individual's own initiative and imagination and ability and that education is one of the tools to complete the job, and it's going to be up to him. And, if the educator can provide that inspiration to them, then I think that goes a great deal to getting at the student himself. We can't completely blame the student. He may have a number of other reasons - personal reasons - for dropping out, but if you can create the desire to learn. And that appetite - that desire - is only going to be stimulated by the educator, the teacher himself. That would be my first reaction.

You know I saw a headline story here recently that indicated that American business today, when it seeks to put new plants into a community, one of the first areas that it surveys is the educational establishment, not only the quality of education and the quantity, but the educational level of the people. Now, this I think carries a message within itself, that when that young person has an education - an academic education - yes, and in many instances a vocational education, he himself is like a magnet to the job opportunity. And if he has it and the investment of plant is made there, the opportunity is there. And, as I said, one of the facts that we have is that the unemployment rate amongst the school dropout is four times that over the national average. So, when you get that diploma in hand - I don't think you can say it's the key to success, the sure-key to success, but at least it opens the door.

Mr. Ludden, you've talked to young people on your college quiz bowl program, and you've worked with some very brilliant young people. I have come in contact with some of them - they're mighty brilliant. How can we bring out the potential ability and the skills which lie dormant in so many of our school dropouts? How do we get at them? That seed which could flower there into a great skill and ability?

Well, Mr. Vice President, I'm glad you asked me, because I think that all the people who are watching this program this afternoon should feel that this dropout situation is not something that we can just discuss as being unrelated to your personal and community problems. If you will think of those people who are now not going to come to their full flower of ability because they dropped out of school, you think of them as kind of an untapped natural resource, and those people can bring money into your town, health into your town, activity into your town. And the point you made then of the industries coming into your town because of the educational level of your community, then perhaps it becomes a real vital community issue, and I think that's what it needs to be. I am all the time distressed when I hear people say that I don't want to vote for a school bond issue because my children are out of school, or I don't have any children so the school bond issue is something - it's a school tax - it's one tax I can control so I'm against it. It seems to me that community organizations, the Kiwanis, the Rotary, the Chamber of Commerce, the Junior Chamber of Commerce, the PTA if you will, need to understand how exciting and how challenging this issue is of getting to these young people and trying to sell them a very valid story, the story being that there is in Dr. Gardner's Pursuit of Excellence a great deal of pleasure, a great deal of excitement. I have talked to young people and they don't know why they're in school. They don't know why they have to learn mathematics and read poetry. Well, there's a very good reason why, and it's an exciting reason, but they need to be told that. Of course, the teacher has the responsibility of telling them originally. But, if we can only get the whole community and the educators together, and somehow to sell the idea that learning is exciting and pleasurable, and that there's a great deal of pleasure from accomplishment. And, if we can point out not only the economic benefits but the personal benefits of learning. Learning can be fun. Take a girl. She can learn how to knit. She can learn the most complicated knitting stitch in the world

and she can't memorize a poem. She doesn't want to memorize a poem, she wants to stitch. And the young guy who can learn a football play wants to learn it, and it's more complicated than anything he's got in math - so it's this desire to learn that if we can get that going so that everybody in the community is talking about it, then I think you'll find a reaction.

You know, I was thinking as you gentlemen were visiting about this that - and this really wasn't even in our advance planning, thinking about this program at all - but sometimes a thought just hits you. It seems to me that every government in every one of our fifty states ought to have a program of state-wide recognition for outstanding school performance. Do you know we have these E Awards for industry when they do a job on a government contract particularly in our defense contracts. What about an E Award, an Award of Excellence, a John Gardner E Award for excellence in education for the school that does the real job of upgrading education and keeping young people in school and getting something done with them. I hope governors will take that under consideration - and maybe mayors in large cities.

May I just link that with an earlier comment of Doug Fairbanks with respect to teaching and the importance of this in the function of education. And, if this could be basically an award for teaching. This is where the process actually works.

Now, the Jaycees have such an award right now. The outstanding young educator is honored every year by the Jaycees. The Jaycees are working on this. But every organization should have some kind of recognition, it seems to me, of teaching and what it means to their community and their nation, really.

And, the National Education Association, I think, has an award along this line. You know, one thing I noticed - and I might since we are talking to community leaders here - you will find that the communities that seem to have the

greatest amount of tension, which explodes sometime to riot and to violence and to disorder, has the highest ratio of school dropout. Do you want to go into that community that we heard so much about recently - and I'm certainly not trying to select it for any unusual purpose because it isn't unique, it has happened elsewhere - but Watts, California. The rate of school dropouts there was about double what it was in the total metropolitan area - to the rest of the metropolitan area. And, you can almost track it down where you have a high rate of unemployment, high rate of unskilled worker, high rate of school dropout, you can almost predict that you're going to have trouble. And, imagine the amount of loss of property and of life and limb and property in a violent situation such as was experienced there. And if the same amount of resources that were lost there could have been put into a program of betterment of education, and of counseling. There are many factors involved here. Sometimes this school dropout needs tutoring, sometimes he needs counseling, sometimes he needs advice, sometimes he needs love and attention. Sometimes he needs much more than what the school can offer.

Sometimes he needs a Head Start.

Yes, he does, like the youngsters that are getting it now.

Doug.

I would be interested in hearing from the Secretary his view on how effective raising school age would be, and compulsion. Because, when you think back, Shakespeare's school hours were twelve hours a day for about ten and a half months a year, in which about 90% of the lessons were in Latin, and he did all right. And, that was pretty standard provincial schooling in the Elizabethan renaissance age. Now, that was compulsion. If you didn't go, you got the birch where it hurt most. Obviously, what we're talking about is an age older than that and more

sophisticated. But, adapting it to our century, how effective would compulsion be in raising this?

Do you mean raising the age at which youngsters are allowed to leave school?

Yes.

I doubt that this is the key factor in the situation. I think it's much more helpful --

Would it be a contribution?

It could be a contributing factor, but I think that the main thing is to make the experience in school so commanding and so attractive and so rewarding that these youngsters will profit by it.

I said to a group of young people the other day that were studying for our foreign service, junior foreign service officers, they were at a meeting at the State Department with their wives. I said, why in the world is the teaching of history oftentimes considered by students to be dull. History is our life, you know. It's everything that we're doing. It ought to be the most exciting, thrilling replay. It's sort of, you know, like Mr. Fairbanks seeing those movies once again. It's a very exciting thing. And, I think that we can almost judge educational standards sometimes by how the student reacts to the portrayal of life, a replay of life in a very real sense.

Yes, Mr. Ludden.

In the case of these dropouts, is it possibly true that among all the dropouts, there is a large percentage of young person who is really restless, who isn't being attracted. Now, out of that restless individual, there seems to me to be very often a very bright and very talented human being who, failing to be challenged, is dissatisfied, finds things to be dissatisfied, and gets out on his own,

and is even more restless, of course, out. But, that restlessness indicates not necessarily worthlessness, but I think in some cases - if I'm wrong correct me - in some cases that restlessness means that this is a vital person who needs to be exploited and developed because he can be of great value to the community and the country. Isn't there a large percentage of real talent in these dropouts?

Oh, yes, there is a percentage of them who could easily, not only get through high school but through college.

And that's a waste. And, I think when we take a look at this problem of waste of human resources, gentlemen, we have a patriotic obligation here to see that this is stopped. We are going to be faced for the foreseeable future with severe challenges and tests. The problems that we now have in Viet Nam, in Europe and South America, and at home and abroad, these problems are not going to diminish. And, it is to the advantage of every person who is not a school dropout to see that the school dropout or potential dropout gets back into school or stays there, if only to sort of relieve some of the responsibility and the burden that the rest carry. But, truly it maximizes the strength of the nation. It gives a broader base upon which we can place this heavy burden of world responsibility for the future. I think we have to look upon it as a patriotic duty - and we're talking now to community leaders, and I want those community leaders to know the struggle in which we're engaged in this world, struggles of ideology, against poverty, and the struggles that we see on many continents, these struggles are not going to fade away simply because we want them to. And, we are going to have to be prepared to come to grips with them. Well, Gentlemen, we could really talk about this problem all afternoon and evening, and I'm grateful to you for your observations, and I truly believe that we've profited from this discussion. I would like to summarize it now, because I think what we've said demonstrates that we're convinced

that we could if we would, if we will it, solve this school dropout problem and we ought to. And, we've noted that the main battlefield is the school, and that school of course is in the community. So the war on the school dropout belongs to each and every one of us. There can be no conscientious objectors in this. We all have to be in this struggle. Now, what must we do to win this war? Well, first the school must identify the potential dropout; you mentioned that. He usually has a poor elementary and junior high school record and maybe some truancy in his background. He usually has a below grade level in reading and below average in intelligence. These are some of the symptoms. He may come from a broken home or a disadvantaged home. His record usually shows no interest in extracurricular activities. And, once identified, that potential dropout then should be referred for skilled counseling and guidance. The counselor may find our youngster that we speak of here needs a job, or that one of his parents needs a job. He may need remedial reading. He may not be suited for or interested even in entering college or taking college preparatory courses. But he may be interested in music or art or drama or athletics or mechanical arts, and that interest should be satisfied. All children are not alike, thank goodness. And one success in any of these areas of real interest could head off total failure in the school. You've mentioned that here in your conversation that there is a restlessness, if you can attract that energy with one area of interest it will hold that youngster in school. Now, you can organize your community and your facilities for an all-out attack on this problem. Schools can analyze course offerings and ought to. Do these courses really meet the practical needs? The best teachers can and should be assigned to courses for potential dropouts. Why use our best teachers for just the better or the accelerated students? Schools can make the names, addresses and phone numbers of dropouts available to your community committee. And, the students who didn't return for the fall term should be contacted, individually. Therefore, organize

a community-wide effort of each one to reach out and reach one. And, continue this back-to-school drive or keep-in-school drive all year. Truents should be contacted at once. Make them realize that they are missed and that we need them. Review their records and their programs. And, above all be sensitive and understanding, not critical, toward student failure. See them before they fail. Personal interest can reap extra dividends. Arrange for a private meeting where you can discuss his problems at length. This could be the most important meeting of that young student's life. And I want to mention that parents above all count, and sometimes they even need encouragement and help, adult education for example. Or, often the father or mother is unemployed. Contact the State Employment Service about enrolling them in manpower development training programs, leading to employment. And, if all efforts fail, and a student drops out, don't quit. Try to get him a job and then follow him up regularly. Attempt to get him back to school, even if it's an evening high school. Continue to demonstrate your interest in his future, because your future is tied to his. Combine the short range with the long range. Bring the world of work to that school, industrial and business leaders, organized labor, and school administrators should plan realistic vocational technical educational programs. We need more vocational educational facilities, so let's start planning now. I know we're all busy, but I want to say that working together we can get this job done. Let me know what you're doing and what I can do to help. The President has asked each of us to join in this Youth Opportunity Stay-in-School campaign, and I know that I can count on you. So keep in touch. Let's get the work done, and let's have a record of success for helping our young people. Thank you.



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