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~~DRAFT PRESS RELEASE~~ *for Basic Ed. Speech*
MINNESOTA CONFERENCE FOR SCHOOL PARAPROFESSIONALS

MINNEAPOLIS, MINN., October 20, 1972. Senator Walter F. Mondale (D-Minn.) called today for reform of our school financing system.

"Local property taxes -- even with the steep increases that many localities have had to impose on taxpayers in recent years -- cannot continue to meet the soaring costs of public education." He added, "Most school districts are pressed for funds, and many have cut back services and programs."

"Local school systems need more help from the federal government to cope with problems of educational finance and educational quality," Mondale said in remarks to the first State-wide Conference for School Paraprofessionals.

Noting that the federal share of the total cost of elementary and secondary education has decreased from 8% in the late 1960's to roughly 6% today, Mondale urged passage of general-aid-to-education he has introduced with 20 bipartisan cosponsors.

"An investment of this kind would more than pay for itself," Mondale said, pointing to economic reports which indicate "every \$4 spent on education ^{can} produce \$7 in increased tax revenues due to greater productivity."

"Inadequate education is costing American tax payers \$3 billion a year in welfare costs, and another \$3 billion a year in crime," the Minnesota Senator emphasized. "Adequate support for our schools is a far better approach, and it is cost-effective."

BASIC EDUCATION SPEECH

During my career in the Senate, it has been my privilege to serve on every major Committee concerned with public education -- as a Member of the Education Subcommittee, and the special Subcommittee on Indian Education . . . and as Chairman of the Subcommittee on Children and Youth and the Select Committee on Equal Educational Opportunity.

I have heard thousands of witnesses testify about the condition of education in America . . . carefully studied federal aid-to-education programs . . . visited schools throughout Minnesota and the Nation . . . and fought for needed legislation and adequate funding.

I am proud of the gains our schools have made in recent years, and of the landmark education legislation we have passed.

More American children than ever before are getting a good education. They are attending schools for longer periods, and learning more.

--In the past twenty years alone the proportion of elementary school students who graduate from high school has risen from 50% to 75%.

--Since 1950 the number of young people attending college has doubled.

--And illiteracy has almost been eliminated in this country.

Problems remain, but the central truth is that we have made tremendous progress in recent years. And this reflects, in part, an unprecedented record of new federal support. In the past decade alone we have:

--Enacted and improved the historic Elementary and Secondary Education Act . . . which now provides over \$155 billion annually to help educate disadvantaged children . . . and millions more to improve school libraries, mount bilingual education efforts and reduce the school drop-out rate.

--Provided steadily increasing funds for the education of the handicapped . . . loans and scholarships for college students . . . vocational education . . . school lunch and school breakfast programs.

--Passed the Indian Education Act -- which I sponsored with Senator Kennedy -- to meet the special educational needs of Indian students.

--Enacted Emergency School Aid legislation to help school districts undergoing desegregation provide quality education.

--And created the National Institute of Education to conduct carefully focused and long overdue research into basic questions about the learning process.

American education has come a long way. For most American children, our schools are doing their jobs well. But despite the impressive progress we have made, there remains for many children an intolerable gap between the promise of education, and the reality. The blunt truth is that too many of our young people still don't receive an equal educational opportunity.

Over 10 million children -- 1/5 of our school population -- are poor. Over 8 million children arrive at school with no breakfast, at least 5 million live in substandard housing, 21 million receive inadequate health care. And too often the schools are unable to counter the effects of this deprivation.

--In the ghetto schools of Hartford, Connecticut, the average IQ score of black school children actually declines between the 4th and 8th grade from 94 to 86 -- only 6 points above the entrance level of special schools for the mentally retarded.

--Half of American Indian children enrolled in school today fail to finish.

--In rural Appalachia, fewer than 80 of every 100 5th graders graduate from high school.

And these remaining education problems are not limited just to the children of the poor:

--60% of our handicapped children still don't receive the special education services they require . . . and approximately 1 million of them are told to wait at home because no school facilities exist to serve them.

--Principals tell us that over 40% of our elementary school children cannot keep up with their classmates because of weaknesses in reading.

--More than half of all the students who attend college never graduate.

--And as Charles Silberman and others report -- too often our schools become overcrowded and joyless bureaucracies in which students and teachers feel trapped.

I don't know an easy solution to the remaining educational problems our schools face today. But I do have some hunches. And I know very clearly that we won't solve these problems by retreating from the efforts we are making now, or by refusing to undertake new initiatives.

One problem we have to face immediately is the financial crisis. Total support for education is grossly inadequate. Large numbers of school districts are downright broke.

Of 63 major school systems surveyed last September, for example . . . 38 had been forced to lay-off teachers . . . 20 had cut expenditures for books and teaching materials . . . and 8 had either shortened the school day or the school year. That is not a formula for further improvement in education. That won't even permit our schools to retain the gains they have already made.

The severity of this problem was acknowledged by President Nixon in his last State of the Union Message. He put it this way:

"In recent years the scope of rising costs of education have so overburdened local revenue that financial crisis has become a way of life for many school districts."

But it will take more than words to deal with this crisis. It will take action and resources. And the three Nixon vetoes of education appropriations bills in the last 4 years have only made the situation worse. They cost Minnesota schools over \$25 million . . . and denied schools across the nation almost \$2 billion of vitally needed new funds.

At the very time when States and localities are strapped for funds, the federal share of the total cost of education has slipped from 8% in the late 1960's to roughly 6% today.

This policy is hurting education. And it is not saving us money. Economists paint out that inadequate education is costing American tax payers \$3 billion a year in annual welfare costs . . . and another \$3 billion a year in crime. Furthermore, ~~the~~ Select Committee on Equal Educational Opportunity found that every \$4 spent on education can produce \$7 in increased tax revenues due to greater productivity.

If we care about education, we must begin by making sure our existing programs are funded adequately.

And we must do more. We must deal with the inequitable distribution of funds. Per pupil expenditures range from \$407 to \$2,586 in California alone . . . and from \$213 to \$14,554 in the nation as a whole.

A large part of this inequity is related to our over-reliance on local property taxes as a source of revenue. Property values differ so markedly among communities that in Michigan, for example, the poorest school district would have to tax itself at 40 times the rate of the richest school district . . . just to raise the same amount per pupil.

We need a new program to deal with this problem. That is why I have introduced . . . with the support of 20 Senators from both parties . . . major new legislation to meet the Federal responsibility. It would provide general aid to State and local school districts . . . relieve the pressure of property taxes . . . and help bring spending in the poor school districts closer to that of the more privileged school districts, without lowering expenditures or quality in any district.

We also must establish voluntary sensitive and comprehensive programs of preschool education and child development. We know the importance of the first five years of life. That is when a child develops his feelings of self-worth, his motivation, initiative, ability to learn

achieve. Yet, millions of children spend these years in abject poverty, without necessary health care, nutrition and educational stimulation. And millions more preschool children are left alone to look after themselves while their parents work . . . or are placed in understaffed day care centers that destroy the mind and the spirit.

These first five years can be the period of most exciting development . . . or most permanent damage. Yet, with the exception of the successful and underfunded Head Start Program, we stand neutral during these critical years.

Erik Erikson said it well:

"The most deadly of all possible sins is the mutilation of a child's spirit."

Yet, this mutilation occurs daily. We must stop it at once. We must enact legislation that provides families with young children the kind of help they need -- whether that is prenatal care, nursery school, tutoring in the home, or a quality day care setting if the parents work.

I sponsored such legislation last year -- the Comprehensive Child Development Act of 1971. It passed both Houses of Congress. And it was vetoed just in time for Christmas.

We have passed it again this year in the Senate. And we must continue this fight until we have quality preschool programs that equip children to take advantage of what our schools have to offer.

I believe we must also create a Cabinet Level Department of Education, headed by a Secretary of Education. The federal status of education is a disgrace. We need a new Secretary of Education with power to coordinate federal education efforts . . . and to bring our nation's educational needs directly to the President and to the highest levels of government.

We can make these improvements if we have the will. We have never been so close to our goal. And we have never had more of the necessary resources at hand:

--For the first time in history we have enough highly trained teachers

--For the first time in history we are learning how our schools can be strengthened through the use of para-professionals and greater parent participation.

But the necessary investments will not be made . . . vital legislation will not be passed . . . and education vetoes will not be stopped . . . unless the friends of education become more involved in the political process.

Those who believe in better education for our children just don't count for enough in politics today. Too many national politicians ignore your please vote against your recommendations -- and find it makes no difference at all when they go home to get re-elected.

It is a sad fact that it is safer to vote against the nation's school children than against Lockheed Aircraft, the oil depletion allowance or another unnecessary wasteful space extravaganza.

It doesn't have to be that way. There are over 2.2 million educators in this country. That is more than the number of engineers, lawyers, doctors and bankers put together . . . almost 3/4 million more. And there are over 8 million members of the National PTA. But you wouldn't guess it when the Administration submits its budget . . . or when Congress acts on key legislation or appropriations necessary to make them a reality.

Those of us interested in education can and must become more involved in our political process. There are friends of education -- both Republicans and Democrats -- in Washington who deserve your strong support. And there are those who have twisted the priorities of government to put special business interests and a tragic, senseless war above the needs of America's children.

In the interest of education, I urge you to hold all of us accountable. A broadly based bipartisan effort could refocus our country's attention on the needs of education.

And if it has the support of millions of Americans across this land who care deeply about children, we can strike down the remaining barriers to equal educational opportunity.

Let's get on with the job.

AGING
PRESS RELEASE

Senator Walter F. Mondale (D-Minn) called today for "prompt, effective and comprehensive action" to provide property tax relief for America's senior citizens.

Mondale urged passage of his bill to provide property tax relief to homeowners and renters over 65 with a total family income of \$6,000 or less. The bill would provide a substantial credit against the federal income tax for all state and local property taxes assessed on senior citizens. *+ would complement property tax relief available for elderly persons in income of \$3500 per year provided under Minnesota Law.*

"Passage of this legislation must be the first priority for action in the next Congress," Mondale declared. "We have no more urgent obligation than the obligation to offer basic economic and social justice to older Americans."

Expressing satisfaction with recent Senate actions to improve Social Security and Medicare programs, Mondale praised Social Security "pass-through" legislation. This legislation, which Mondale introduced, guarantees that the 20% increase in Social Security benefits approved earlier by the Congress will not cause some recipients to lose eligibility for other benefit programs. "By a cruel paradox," Mondale said, "many Americans found that better Social Security benefits would mean loss of welfare, food stamps or Medicaid. My legislation was designed to correct that grossly unfair situation."

Mondale also emphasized the need to develop programs that counteract the loneliness and sense of purposelessness which often plague older Americans. He pointed to the success of manpower programs like Operation Mainstream, Green Thumb and Green Light in providing jobs for "thousands of older Americans, often in rural areas, who want to work but face the bitter prospect of never again finding a job." Mondale originally introduced the Operation Mainstream Program 6 years ago.

"But what is most impressive is not what the Federal government is doing for our senior citizens," Mondale declared. "It is what they are doing for themselves."

He called the new educational programs at North Hennepin State Junior College and the Meals in the Community Program in Minneapolis "a tribute to the ~~spirit~~ spirit of older Americans."

Senior citizens now make up more than 25% of the student enrollment at North Hennepin State. Under the Meals in the Community program, which is a cooperative effort of the Minneapolis Old Age and Opportunity Center and the Minneapolis Restaurant Association, 150 restaurants are currently offering meals at reduced prices to 14,000 older low-income residents of the Twin Cities.

PROBLEMS OF THE AGING

Visit a nursing home or the bleak apartment of an elderly couple afraid to venture out onto the street... spend an afternoon talking with a group of America's older citizens...and you will grasp the meaning of Thoreau's famous remark:

"The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation."

Thoreau's words are especially and tragically true of millions of older Americans, many of them forced to cope with ill-health without adequate medical care...self-sufficiency without sufficient means to live a decent life...and the indifference and neglect that strike at the very roots of self-respect.

By a bitter irony, we have increased the life expectancy of our people...at the same time that the opportunities for older Americans to lead full and rewarding lives have grown slimmer.

There are more than 20 million Americans over the age of 65 -- one American in every ten. Half are over 73.

In our country today, an American of 65 can look forward to living another fifteen years.

But what really does he have to look forward to?

Our senior citizens receive less than half the income enjoyed by younger Americans:

--50% of the families headed by older persons have incomes of less than \$5,000;

--the median income of older persons living alone is less than \$2,000;

--one-quarter of our elderly exist on incomes below \$3,000, the official poverty level...and another 40% live on incomes between \$3,000 and \$7,000. Many find themselves poor for the first time in their lives when they reach retirement age.

Inevitably, there are the problems of health that come with age. On the average, our elderly face annual health costs of almost \$800...one-third of which must be paid from their own limited resources.

What were once regarded as the golden years...a time for family and friends, travel and new interests...have become instead the nightmare years of declining physical and financial resources.

Nowhere do we see the despair of old age more clearly than in our nursing homes.

One million Americans live in these homes. They are men and women who contributed their energies and talents to society over a period of many years.

Today they are old and infirm. Often they have no family to speak out on their behalf. They lack the ability... or the assurance...to speak up for themselves.

At the time in their lives when they most need and deserve care...and compassion...they are too often treated with callousness and contempt.

--Two years ago, the Associated Press reported that 14% of drug prescriptions to nursing patients are administered incorrectly...that drugs are commonly misused to make patients "easier to handle"...that in many homes the average food cost per patient is

less than \$1 a day...and physician care is virtually non-existent.

--And at hearings held in the Twin Cities less than a year ago, I found that many of these tragic abuses persist even in Minnesota, where as a rule conditions are far better than in many other states.

The helpless residents of inadequate nursing homes are not the only victims among our elderly of social neglect.

Inflation has placed a heavy burden on the fixed incomes of millions of retired persons. The figure on the monthly check never changes...but the value of that figure is less and less.

In four short years, the value of a \$5,000 annual pension has fallen to barely \$4,000. And the standard of living that \$5,000 represented in 1968...can only be maintained in 1972 by an income of nearly \$6,200.

Yet property taxes have risen relentlessly.

In the space of four short years...1967 to 1970... property taxes increased approximately 35%. They are still going up.

While the average urban household uses approximately 4% of its income to pay property taxes, these taxes often consume 20%...or even 40%...of the limited income available to many older Americans.

There is no escape from this terrible burden. Those who do not own their own homes pay the tax...disguised in the form of higher rents. Home owners...and 2/3 of our senior citizens own their own homes...pay directly.

--There is a cold and absurd illogic in a system that requires an elderly couple to pay three times more in property taxes than they once paid in mortgage payments.

--There is a clear and repugnant inhumanity in a system that leads an old woman to skimp on food...to exist for weeks on cabbage...in order to have the money to pay her taxes.

--There is a cynical disregard for human dignity in a system that can threaten to deprive older Americans of the home...and the promise of security...for which they have worked and saved over a lifetime.

We must take prompt, effective and comprehensive action to end this shocking and tragic fact of life.

Here in Minnesota, we've made a start. We have a limited sliding property tax exemption for senior citizens... but only for households living at or below the poverty line.

It's not enough for our state to offer a 75% income tax credit or rebate for elderly families with a yearly income under \$500...or a 10% tax break to households trying to make ends meet on \$3,000.

We need a national program as well.

That's why I have introduced legislation that would provide property tax relief to homeowners and renters over 65 with a total family income of \$6,000 or less.

My bill would provide a substantial credit against the Federal income tax for all state and local property taxes that senior citizens are required to pay.

Passage of this legislation must be the first priority for action in the next Congress. We have no more urgent obligation than the obligation to offer basic economic and social justice to older Americans.

Earlier this summer the Congress acted to relieve one aspect of economic injustice by increasing Social Security benefits...despite the President's objections...by 20%. Yet thousands of Americans were horrified to discover that this action actually increased the grim pressure of property taxes and rising prices on inadequate income.

For by a cruel paradox, higher Social Security benefits often resulted in ineligibility for welfare...or food stamps...or Medicaid.

"Why when you get a raise in Social Security does housing or welfare take it from you?" wrote an anguished woman. "If housing leaves you rent, off it comes from welfare."

And another woman found...to her dismay...that she was no longer eligible for the Medicaid which had previously paid several thousand dollars in hospital expenses:

"If they'd just left me with a pension of \$1 or \$2 and Medicaid, I'd have been a lot better off," she said. "If I had some illness now, I don't know what I'd do."

To correct this grossly unfair situation , I recently introduced essential "pass-through" legislation...to ensure that no person will have to suffer a reduction in total benefits as a result of the Social Security increase. This legislation was approved overwhelmingly in the Senate. I will do everything I can to see that it is finally written into law.

We are taking other steps to remedy the weakness in our Social Security and Medicare systems. The Congress has passed legislation to require automatic cost-of-living increases in Social Security checks.

And the Senate recently voted to:

--pay widows the full amount of their husbands' benefits, rather than 82%,

--raise the amount which a Social Security recipient may earn without losing benefits from \$1,680 to \$3,000,

--extend Medicare to cover the cost of hearing aids, eye care and glasses, foot care and dental work for persons with incomes of less than \$3,000... and couples with incomes less than \$5,000,

--include under Medicare certain "life-giving" prescription drugs...at a nominal cost of \$1 for each prescription...for persons who are not hospitalized,

--and to extend Medicare eligibility to more than 1.5 million persons who now receive disability benefits under Social Security.

Clearly, we have to do more. We must improve the delivery of our health care. We must guarantee the decency and reliability of private pension plans, so that working Americans do not face the fate of 1800 Minnesotans who faced the loss of half ^{or all} their current pensions when two plants threatened to close in Hopkins and Minneapolis.

But better Social Security...and better Medicare... will be meaningless so long as rampant crime deprives our people of safety of the streets...and security in their homes.

Crime has cast a dark shadow over our cities and imposed a curfew of fear on millions of Americans. Its likeliest victims are often our most innocent and defenseless people, the elderly.

Fear should play no part in American life. As a young journalist pointed out:

"People who are afraid to go out for a quart of milk after the sun sets are victims of oppression."

Yet dozens upon dozens of stories tell us that the elderly are crushed by the burden of fear. Crime...and the numbing fear of crime...has made them virtual prisoners behind locked and bolted doors.

The stories of these assaults are numerous...and familiar...and heartbreaking.

--An elderly couple cash their Social Security check...and are attacked as they leave the bank;

--An elderly man refuses the food stamps he is entitled to receive...because he is afraid of attack by street criminals who know that the stamps are more negotiable than Social Security checks;

--An elderly woman never leaves her apartment on the day welfare checks are delivered...because although she is not on welfare, she might be attacked on the mistaken assumption that she was;

--A group of Roman Catholic residents in a public housing project always go to mass in a large group...as many as twenty-five persons...because they are afraid of assault.

Fear is the greatestcrippler of all. It confines our elderly...and reinforces the sense of helplessness...the isolation of loneliness...that too often come with age. It corrodes the dignity and self-respect that should be the birthright of every American.

Freedom from fear can protect that dignity. But freedom from fear alone cannot sustain it.

At the heart of the problem of aging -- along with the concerns of adequate income and medical care...and the fear of crime -- is the sense of purposelessness that can come with retirement.

Here, too, we are making slow progress.

I was heartened by the recent Senate vote to create an Institute on Aging. In addition to medical research, the Institute is charged with studying the social aspects of growing old. I hope that the INstitute will take up the problem of removing barriers...like unsuitable housing and inadequate transportation...that keep older Americans from full participation in our society.

I am also heartened by the Senate vote to establish an Older Americans Advocacy Commission. This Commission would help our senior citizens to find their way through the maze of government bureaucracy. It will enable them to make known their concerns and ideas for changing current programs...and creating new ones.

And I am encouraged by the results of Operation Mainstream, which I first introduced six years ago. This program has meant jobs for thousands of older unemployed Americans... healthy and able people who wanted to work...but faced the bitter prospect of never again finding a job.

The Green Thumb and Green Light programs, a part of Operation Mainstream, have created meaningful jobs for thousands of unemployed men and women in rural America. And these programs have meant cleaner and more beautiful recreation areas... parks...libraries...and better staffing for schools and senior citizens...in our rural communities.

But what is most impressive is not what the Federal Government is doing for our senior citizens. It is what they are doing for themselves.

In the Twin Cities, senior citizens are cooperating with the Restaurant Association on a program called Meals in the Community.

This program now involves 14,000 low-income citizens and 150 restaurants. In various ways, it offers the older members of our community an unprecedented opportunity to have good food at special prices...and to enjoy an outing that would otherwise prove impossible.

At North Hennepin State Junior College, an exciting new program enables our senior citizens to return to school... to take up their education where they left off decades ago... or to begin an education they never had. Their presence has enriched the lives of their younger classmates. As one twenty year old said in a classic understatement: "You can learn things from those old people. They've been through the mill."

The program at North Hennepin State...and the Meals in the Community...both came about through the initiative and determination of our senior citizens.

They are a tribute to the spirit of older Americans, and they give substance to a fundamental truth expressed one hundred years ago by John Stuart Mill in his famous essay on Liberty:

"Human nature," said Mill, "is not a machine to be built after a model. It is like a tree...which requires to grow and develop itself on all sides, according to the inward forces which make it a living thing."



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