OFFICE OF
ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS

NOTE FOR DR. BOYER

Dr. Boyer --

This a transcript of your speech at the meeting of the National Association of Independent Schools. Please look it over and make any changes you would like before we distribute it.

Peggy Rhoades

Attachment

April 3, 1979

SUSAN BROOKS BALIS

Dear Ms. Rhoades,

Enclosed is the transcription of Boyer's speech at the NAIS Annual Conference. I apologize for getting it to you so late, however we just received all of our conference tapes from the audio-visual company in Wasington last Friday.

Please read this over and get back to me if you find any glaring inacuracies.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Susan Brooks Balis

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Ayrault - introducing Ernest Boyer

background - audiology, speech, speech pathology

UCSB, SUNY (chancellor) 1977 - became U.S. Commissioner of Ed., now president-elect of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

Boyer

It is true that the federal obligations to education in this country do not, in fact, relate to schools; they relate to children. Soon after I arrived, I on several occasions made the point that "I am commissioner of education, not commissioner of schools." I have no authority--a fact of which I am reminded every day--but more precisely there is no governance design that connects the commissioner of education in this country to the state departments of education, nor to the 16,000 local public school districts, and certainly not to the great sector of nonpublic education.

Rather, the office was established 110 yaars ago, after much debate not unlike the controversy surrounding the legislative proposal to create a new department today. It was created, not to run schools, but to exercise leadership, and more precisely to advise Congress regarding the health and status of education in this country.

Now we've come a long way in time and in complications of structure in 110 years, but the fundamental public policy at stake has not been altered. In fact I've been fascinated,

having been in this job now for several years, that the legislation is not directing funds to schools, but rather to students. And all of the major pieces of legislation have identified groups of needy students to be served by federal aid. And so it is that Title I, which serves needy students who are disadvantaged, the large handicapped legislation recently passed, bilingual education, migrant education--and the list goes on and on. Clearly 70 to 80 per cent of all of the money in the Office of Education for elementary and secondary education is channeled toward groups of eligible children. And increasingly the law has made it abundantly clear that those children to be served are to be served irrespective of the kind of institution in which they are enrolled.

We have a legal mandate to see that that service is provided. More than that, this Administration is absolutely committed to the centrality and importance of nonpublic education. And during the past 24 months we have had in the office the first officially sponsored conference on private education. We have conducted the first workshops with nonpublic educators in the re-authorization of the Elementary and Secondary [Education] Act. We have sponsored the first state-level conferences for independent education. We have prepared the first brochure that describes the services at the federal level for nonpublic

schools. I have met regularly with the board of directors of CAPE in order to keep them informed. We have involved them in advisory panels throughout the office. And I take special satisfaction in the fact that it will be during my administration in which we will establish, in the Office of Education, a bureau of nonpublic education, headed by a deputy commissioner--the first time in the history of the office that such administration is provided.

It is my judgment that that structure is absolutely expected and required under the law because the United States Office of Education, I repeat, is not a line organization to serve public schools; it is the federal assistance office to be supportive of all of education in this country, and above all to be protective of the independence and autonomy of those institutions that are nonpublic. This is not only moral and administrative; it is a legal obligation on the part of this Administration, and I am pleased to see it vigorously enforced.

. . . . . America's independent institutions have contributed brilliantly and enduringly to this nation's heritage and I am convinced public policy should strengthen rather than diminish these essential institutions. It is fascinating to recall that in 1875 the United States Commissioner of Educatin reported that nine of America's academies that were founded before the Declaration of Independence were, one hundred years

later, still in operation. My predecessor in 1875 reported the following lists of independent schools that had survived for one hundred years. On his list he had the Latin Grammar School, of Boston, established in 1635; the Hopkins Grammar School, of New Haven, ~~1961~~ 1660; Germantown Academy, 1759; Dummer Academy, of Byfield, Massachusetts, 1763; Columbia Grammar School, of New York, 1764; University Grammar School, of Providence, 1764; Rutgers College Grammar School, 1766; Charlotte Hall School, 1774; Kingston Academy, 1774. That list was submitted in 1875 by the Commissioner of Education, honoring one hundred years of survival.

Unhappily, commissioners of education are not always one hundred per cent correct; at least my predecessors have demonstrated that characteristic. And two other schools should have been on the commissioner's honor list: the Collegiate School, of New York, which was founded in 1639, and Roxbury Latin School, of Massachusetts, 1645.

On the otherhand, I am happy to report that, of these 11 institutions, all founded before the Declaration of Independence, 10 are still in operation two hundred years later, though their names have been altered somewhat, and they continue as private schools. I think this is a remarkable tribute to the vigor and to the vision of these ~~outstanding~~ institutions and to the

movement they represent. Today, in fact, there are over 20,000 private schools in the United States, with 270,000 teachers serving 5.3 million young people, or 10 per cent of all of the children enrolled in education in this country.

The title John Esty reads like this: "Independent Education: Public Perceptions and Personal Reactions." What do you do with that? Well, I will try.

I do not have a special revelation about what the public thinks of independent schools. There are, however, four impressions that came quickly to mind when I reread John's title several weeks ago.

It occurred to me almost immediately that the public perceives independent institutions as those that excel educationally, those that have high academic standards--institutions, indeed, that stress something called "the basics." You will have to tell me as to the validity of that perception or write it on the back of an envelope and send it unmarked at the end.

I will now comment on my personal reactions. I think in large part the perception is valid. More than that, it seems to me that those of you in independent education have a special obligation to see that this definition we call "the basics" is appropriately and legitimately interpreted. I, as

you may suspect, am often asked to define the basics, and I respond that, in my view, the core of education is the mastery of language. Language is what separates us from other forms of life--the porpoise and the honey bumblebee notwithstanding. Language determines the civility of our culture, and if language is not in place, there is no formal education. Language is the basic of the basics.

My own discipline was somewhat scattered, but I spent most of my time studying the processes of communication because symbolization fascinated me enormously, and even the breakdowns of communications in our servosystems [??] I found remarkably stimulating as well. In those early training years, I spent some time in clinic work, engaged with children who found the development of language difficult, if not impossible. In that study of language development, I was always impressed by the miracle of communication. I was impressed that in the earliest of months the little child began to make the most profound conceptual breakthrough of any life, and that is to transfer reality to symbol, and then to manage with some consistency a symbol system that established social connections in your culture.

Now, true, this began accidentally. The child, while choking on a piece of fruit, may say "Dada," and suddenly the whole house would come alive. Our baby just said "Father"! No,

the baby just choked on a banana peel, but father was confused.") On the other hand, the responsiveness to those early excursions, those playful mouthings that then made social conenctions, started the child on the miraculous breakthrough of the manggement of language and, more profundly, the management of his mother, or her mother. And so Mama and Dada became not just playful verbalizations; they became the tools of social control. And ~~xhexxexxxxfxthxxxxexxxxx~~ out of that, then, the comprehension we have developed a symbol system,and our place in a culture by and large is established and sustained through symbols.

And then in formal education the profoundly important and yet logically sequential task of taking oral symbols and converting them linearally, because of Newtonburg, into the written symbol, and I believe that task is absolutely fundamental, I believe it can be as universally achieved as is the oral comprehension which is an antecedent, and I believe if it is not achieved in the first few years of formal education, the child ~~xax~~ automatically has been determined failure/. It cannot be permitted to be endlessly postponed.

One important caveat before I lea e this point: I'm talking about the basics, and I'm talking about the role of the independent school, not only to affirm the centrality of the basics, but to broaden it as well. In my opinion, no culture can afford to permit its symbol system to stop with the auditory or the print-lar- - system alone.

Any culture that is called civilized, in my opinion, must extend its spectrum of knowledge to include the other means by which we send our messages through music, through dance, through theater, through mime, and through the visual arts. These, in fact, are tools of message sending too, and sometimes they have the capacity to capture nuances of feeling and extensions of emotion that no other symbol system more crudely developed can extend.

Several months ago, I was asked to chair a panel at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. It was a panel involving people in the arts some of whom were handicapped. One member of the panel was a young woman named Linda Bovee, who is a featured performer on Sesame Street. Linda, a beautiful dancer, has the disadvantage of never hearing. Therefore, she cannot speak, because speech is a response to what already has been auditorily imprinted. But Linda talks. Linda spoke with the symbols that those who cannot hear and speak have learned to use. At the conclusion of her speech, which incidentally was transferred for many of us who could not understand this symbol system auditorially--it was translated--at the end of her speech, Linda quoted Robert Forst "Two paths diverge in a wood, and I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference."

As I watched that woman sending her signals to me, visually, and her facial expressions and the intensity of her emotion as these were conveyed, I discovered a curious thing occurring. Suddenly I found the irritations of the auditory bombardment actually intruding in the direct connection I was having with the signals that Linda provided. And I was caught up in the power and the meaning of her translations, which seemed to me to be more authentic than these little chug-along verbalizations and phonemes we call words.

I suggest that illustration in order to reinforce a point. When I talk about language being basic, I am suggesting that the test of civility of any culture is the breadth by which it defines communication. And the broader the definition, the more adequate the culture to carry on its meaning and its feeling. Now in the earliest days of humanity, I am told, clubs were used to convey a message: "I hate you," klonk. We then developed this magic we call words, but as we became more and more civilized, and as we became more and more capable, we developed the nuances of the dance and of music --the creativeness that allows us a spectrum of communiation that is as full and complete as the breadth of human experience itself.

Anyone who tries artificially to drive a wedge between the basics and the arts is misunderstanding the very function that the so-called arts perform. Language is the centerpiece of education, and the broader the language and the broader the tools the more civilized we are, and those of you who have the beauty of independence and the respect of the community in terms of the academic and intelligence role you play have, in my judgment, a special obligation to keep reminding us of the integration of language.

I am suggesting that what separates humans from other humans at their best are art and color and rhyme and rhythm and form and sound, and that words give expression to profound meetings of the human spirit, which words very often words and phonemes cannot do. Wallace Stephens, in his poem "Anecdote of the Jar," put it this way: "I placed a jar in Tennessee and round it was upon a hill, it made the slovenly wilderness around that hill and the wilderness rose up to it and sprawled no longer wild." The arts represented by the jar in Tennessee can in fact tame the slovenly wilderness of modern life; they can give shape to chaos and establish patterns of meaning no other symbol system can provide.

Independent schools, if I read the public mood, are expected to be exellent academically. You can act as bellwether in defining the nature of basics, and I urge you to understand both the intellectual and aesthetic meaning of that term.

What else came to mind when John dictated my title for this meeting: "Independent Schools Publicly Perceived." It occurred to me that you are seen not only as being academically excellent; you are seen as being educationally unique, if I can draw that distinction. Diverse, a special little something. Over 50 years ago, Samuel Drury, in his book entitled Schoolmastery, said that"the private school excels in one great particular, that of personality." I suppose that's the word I sought. You are seen as having schools with personality.

I think all of us, and now I drift into my personal response, to that observation, I think all of us have experienced this essential characteristic called personality. As you've learned in the introduction, I spent time at an undergraduate private institution, got two graduate degrees from a large private urban institution, taught at a Jesuit institution, was dean at a small liberal arts college, private church college, and I think it is fair to say, as I look back on it, that

each of those institutions had what they at least very much wanted to identify as distinctive purposes.

But I would like to challenge you on this particular point. I think distinctive purposes do not grow out of catalogue cliches. To be small or to be independent does not inherently make one unique. Nor does being distinctive mean that one must not also continue to be imaginative. I would urge you, especially at this moment in history, to understand what I think to be the important impact of nonformal eduaation. To help us think through and even experiment with the relationship between the schools and the other forms of learning that now are overwhelming our children. We cannot be complacent because we sense we are isolated and removed. I think we are being overwhelmed by teaching tools that are becoming more powerful than traditional institutions.

Now when I grew up in southern Ohio, 100 years ago, I was in a home that was poor but intellectually privileged, I thought. We had no radio until I was twelve years old and got one for my birthday. We had no television, of course. The first TV that I saw was observed when I went with our high school class to a trip to Radio City in New York, and we saw a 10-inch tube with some snow flutteringon it, and I said to the girl

that I was dating at the time, "Nothing will come of this." We had a Model A Ford, which, with some luck and gas and no flat tires, would get us 100 miles from home.

When I went off to school as a first grader, I had sense of anticipation I can't describe, and I was in awe of my first grade teacher. She represented the authority I had never known, and my classroom was a window to the world. I was so inspired I asked if I could fail the first grade, so I could stay with my first grade teacher. She almost obliged.

When I compare that world with where we are today, with children watching television 5,000-6,000 hours before they ever go to school, watching 16,000 hours by the time they graduate, and are in front of the classroom teacher only 11,000 hours, I think it's not an overstatement to say that television has become the nation's teacher, and there are clear studies to show that television has more credibility than the classroom. I think we must find ways to connect our formal learning with the impact of information that is exploding on all sides and to understand the power of the media in our midst.

Just a little over a year ago, when Prsident Sadat of Egypt

said he'd like to address the Israeli parliament, his message was beamed by satellite all around the world. Television played and replayed his statement and held him to it almost as a dare, and then Barbara Walters and John Chancellor and Walter Cronkhite traveled to Cairo to travel with him just to certify the trip. And millions of people all around the world watched, transfixed, as an Egyptian plane came down on Israeli soil. I think it is not to diminish what happened politically in the Middle East to say that none of the words exchanged during that visit, none of the documents, none of the private meetings, none of the toasts was as significant as the riveting of the whole world's attention on one single breathtaking symbolic image when two former enemies shook hands. Instantly, 500 million people felt their connectedness. There were 500 million people, they say, watching that event. That's a pwerful classroom. Instantly their perspective was expanded, and it seemed to me that momentarily the world was brought together in a grand gesture of human peace.

Since that day, we've watched a dynasty topple in Iran, we've seen a Chinese leader toasted in our nation's capital, once again Hanoi is being bombed on the evening news--this time by Chinese planes.

I think for those of us in education--public or independent education--to fail to understand that now are a society moved by the mexssages x that are sent, and fail to find ways for the power of those messages to be linked into the purposes of the classroom and instruction, is to fail education and the next generation at a fundamental point. Just several months ago, Joan Ganz Cooney and I signed a joint agreement in which we will help fund the preparation of a new television series by Children's Television Workshop, this time geared to junior high school studnets/ The theme of the program will be science, technology, and the environment. The aim will be to see if we can eduate young people more about their relatedness, and also in the process to prepare teaching materials for the teacher as well as working materials for the studentx.

I drifted into this to make a point, and I am giving my own speech in spite of what John required. The second obsrevation of the independent school is that it is not only educationally excellent, it has distinctiveness. But that must not be complacency. And education, I think, requires the greatest sense of urgency to stay in touch with what many of our children already intuitively and often overtly understand, that there is a great

that's a classroom outthere, and sometimes the formalities of our structure not only ~~xxx~~ advance but in fact inhibit. I do not know how technology will take over or improve or relate to, but I think we have an obligation to confront. I was told just yesterday that an industry that is now preparing technology toys--small computers, learning machines, and the like--is to be a $1 billion industry by next Christmas, having multiplied exponentially its growth in the last three years. How can we somehow ~~x~~ wed the realtionship of the power of the classroom, which can do things that television can never do, and yet understand the power of the media, which are doing some things that we are incapable of doing?

There's a third impression that came to mind when asked "What's the ~~x~~ public perception of the independent school?" I think there is a perception that the schools are, to some extent, and please forgive me, but I was ~~w~~asked to do this, socially isolated, that is, that their service, their band of service, is quite circumsribed, and they do not serve a diversity of students. I am trying to report as carefully as I can what comes to mind. I believe this notion must be candidly confronted. I have examined carefully the work of this association, and I have been enormously impressed. I applaud the effort that you hav made to expand

the representation on your campus. I know also that this association cooperates with the project A Better Chance. I know that Project ABC has enrolled 4,500 inner city black children in independent schools, and I know also that the overall minority enrollment, if my data are correct, is 19,000, or 7 per cent of the total population.

I am convinced that it is an important obligation for all of us, and most especially the independent schools, with such a remarkably rich tradition, with the freedom and the image of excellence you convey, to help us confront what I think to be one of America's greatest tragedies. While we have worked aggressively at the federal level to expand access, we have not been as successful in expanding the excellence. I believe there has been a great failure in that among the minority populaton to serve effectively the gifted and talented student. One of the greatest challenges is to find the gifted and talented minority student and give him or her the unusual opportunities that many of your schools provide.

I was in Israel several weeks ago and visited an experimental school they have, which coincidentally is called the Boyar School. Israel is seeking to go into the communities where a large number of the so-called

Eastern Jews are located; they are equivalent to our minorities, but numerically now a majority over there. Isolate them early, bring them in to the best school they can find, give them round the clock experience with some of their most gifted students precisely because they know they cannot afford to lose one gifted leader. The successes of their intense location and then excellent support are already paying off enormously. I don't think we have sufficient equivalents to that in our schools in America. I am enormously impressed by the searches that are carried on now by many independent schools, and to some extent you are the equivalent to the Israeli experiment of the Boyar School, and I simply urge--speaking personally--I urge your continued aggressive action, since in my judgment human dignity and social survival are at stake.

One final point. I think independent schools are also very clearly perceived as places where values are taught. Now I know that the mentioning of values is often leaves us a bit uncomfortable, but it's also true, I think, that we're beginning to understand that we canot forever ignore the fact that our lives are driven by values.

Mr. Miller said in his book Faith and Learning that a decent tentativeness is fine, but we seem to have a dogmatic tentativeness in which it's intellectually indecent to make up your mind. We've gotten, I hope, a little smarter than that. George Steiner was the one who reminds us that we have discovered that you can be intellectually alert and still barbaric. He reminded us that it is possible now to study Goethe in the evening and listen to Bach and Schubert and then go to the concentration camp and destroy your fellow men. There is no assurance that excellence in education will lead to excellence in living unless it is bathed in a structure of values where our commitments are clear and students understand that there are things that are right and legitimate and those that are destructive to human dignity and to themselves. If that element is not present, education can, in fact, lead to barbarism.

I would like to extend this one step further and say that I do hope, and this is my personal reaction to your unique role of values, which I think you have. I would hope that you will continue to help American young people overcome our parochialism, you will avoid the inclination toward academic isolation, and you will help students understand the unity of our world, not just in a physical sense, but in a social sense as well

In 1770, when John and Samuel Phillips gave # 141 acres of land and 1,614£ to establish Phillips Academy at Andover, the deed of that new school read as follows: the goal was to lay foundation of a public free school or academy for the purpose of instructing youth not only in English and Latin grammar, ~~xxxxxx~~ writing, arithmetic, and those sciences where they are commonly taught, but more expecially to learn them the great end and the real business of living.' I believe that the independnet schools are uniquely equipped to focus not only on the fundamentals, as I've tried to describe them, but to prepare students effectively for life. I am increasingly convinced that to do this we must begin to learn more about our complicated world. We cannot indulge ourselves in selfsserving isolation.

Today, less than 1 per cent of the college-age group are enrolled in any course that specifically features international issues. College enrollments in languages are off fully 30 per cent. A recent survey revealed that even after President Carter's energy speech, only half of the American public--52 per cent--understood that America has to import oil--any oil. And of that 52 per cent, only one third--thats 17 per cent of the entire American population--had any idea as to the

percentage we imported. In 1976, it was 42 per cent; this year it's 50, post-Iran. Fifty per cent of the twelfth graders tested in a recent survey could not choose correctly an Arab country from four choices they were given, and fully 40 per cent of the twelfth graders tested thought that Golda Meir, rather than Anwar Sadat, was president of Egypt.

Lat year, during the TV coverage of the Sadat-Begin discussions, which incidentally were interspersed with coverage of the Chicago Bears football game (where but in America?), three out of every four of the spectators interviewed while they ate their hotdogs had never heard of Sadat or Begin one year ago, but they were well aware of the prowess of their local hero, Walter Payton.

(side 2) in the morning paper, University of California scientists had concluded that the earth's ozone band is being harmed by contaminants at twice the rate that had been earlier predicted. I thought it was symbolic of our time that this important, perhaps life-and-death, story was reported in a single paragraph buried in section 2. Environmentalists are fond of talking about the vulnerability of our ecosystem, but I suspect that it is in fact our own life system , which, because of ignorance, may be most fragile and most threatened. Louis Thomas, that remarkable science author who wrote that powerful and popular book Lives of a Cell,

sadd that it is an illusion to think that there is anything fragile about the life of Earth. Surely this is the toughest membrane imaginable in the universe. We, he said, the human species, are the delicate part. We are transient and vulnerable as cilia. And yet with all of our vulnerability, we have assumed that we can move ahead in the name of something we call progress without understanding our connectedness to each other and to nature, and with no negative price to pay.

But I believe that once again a new sense of urgency is beginning to emerge, and I believe that it is incumbent upon all of us in education to help students undrstand that this is indeed a global village. Painfully we are now reminded that American industry is almost wholly dependent on foreign sources for chromium, cobalt, bauxite, magnesium, and tin, that 40 per cent of precious metals are imported from Third World countries, about one third of the profits of the American corporations come from exports or foreign investments. One of every six factory workers in this country is making something for export. And a child born in the world today--of 4 billion people--will, if he attains age sixty, be sharing the arth with three times as mahy human beings. We must help our students understand that all actions on the planet

whether physical or social are inextricably interlocked.

In a monograph published by the World Affairs Council, Robert Mueller said, "A child born today will be both an actor and a beneficiary or a victim in the total world fabric. He may rightly ask, 'Why was I not warned? Why was I not better educated? Why did my teachers not tell me about these problems and indicate my behavior as a member of an interdependent human race?'"

Well, I am pleased to be with you as educators. I think that the day has long passed for us to box ourselves in as isolated entities. We are dealing with young people who will guide the destiny of this globe after we are gone. Those who will live well into the year 2000. I believe the independent schools of this nation, upon which education in this country has been founded, have an essential role to play. I believe it is the obligation of our government to see that your role is not only protected but enhanced. And in response to your rpesident's invitation, I have suggested that you are perceived as being academically excellent.

That imposes an unusual obligation to see that those standards

are maintained and appropriately defined. You are perceived as being distinctive, and I would hope and believe you will continue to be imaginative as well. You are perceived to have a special role, to help us get on with social justice, bringing to your campuses many students who have been, through no event of their own but the accident of history, encumbered with disadvantage and should be allowed to excel. Finally, you have a special perception as contributing to values, the missing ingredient in much of education. I would hope that you would push those values as vigorously and include in that value system the rare conviction that we are all brothers and sisters on the globe together. Thank you.