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Statement by
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President
The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching
Before the
Subcommittee on Postsecondary Education
Committee on Education and Labor
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C.
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9:00 a.m.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

Mr. Chairman, thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify before your committee. The subject of this hearing, teacher excellence, is not only a matter of paramount importance to education but to the future of our nation as well. We can have neither real national security nor a dynamic economy if we allow our schools to fail this generation of students. And good schools depend absolutely on good teachers. It's that simple, but that important.

Yet, today we are witnessing what can only be described as a non-commitment to the classroom. The education safety net for needy students is being shredded. A buildup in sophisticated military hardware goes forward at an enormous cost, while an economy that we want to be more productive languishes. At the same time, the investment in human capital is allowed to dry up. Is it really possible to have a stronger, more productive America, while education is given a back-burner priority? Irresponsibly, I believe, the national answer to the crises we are facing in our schools is to reduce support for education. It is sadly ironic that at a time when productivity is the watchword of governmental leadership, the term so often seems to mean simply the output of factories, the production of oil wells, as if such outputs can, somehow, be divorced from people.

-2-

As early as 1917, with passage of the Smith-Hughes Act, our government recognized a vital link between itself and education at the public school level, and the special importance of teaching in that linkage. By the mid-twenties, Congress was providing more than \$7 million annually to advance vocational education nationally. States were reimbursed up to half the salaries of secondary school teachers of agricultural subjects and of teachers of trades, home economics, and industrial subjects. Funds also were provided for training teachers in these subjects. We knew then that not only was education important to our national interest but also that the teacher was central to the process.

In more recent historic times, President Eisenhower shaped the National Defense Education Act that linked the quality of the nation's schools to the security of our nation. The 1958 legislation, triggered by the crises over Sputnik, provided money for advanced training for teachers for discovery of talent and special aptitudes among high school students, and for higher learning institutions to operate short-term institutes.

-3-

In pushing this landmark legislation, President Eisenhower said to Congress that

- ". . . I believe enactment of the emergency four-year program would have far-reaching benefits to education and to the national security in the years ahead. There is a compelling national need for federal action now to help meet emergency needs in American education. . . .
- "If the United States is to maintain its position of leadership and if we are further to enhance the quality of our society, we must see to it that today's young people are prepared to contribute the maximum to our future progress and strength and that we achieve the highest possible excellence."

The President's Commissioner of Education, Dr. Lawrence Dethrick, was enthusiastic in his first report to Congress on NDEA. He noted: "The provisions of the Act are of such scope that positive effects upon education in America will greatly surpass the immediate defense objectives and thereby strengthen and enrich our education and cultural heritage."

-4-

As you may know, at The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, we are conducting a study of the American high school. We still have 12 months to go. But already one issue is absolutely clear: The quality of education in the nation is inextricably linked to the quality of teaching. And if the teaching profession is diminished, the nation's future is diminished, too.

Americans--from the very first--have had an almost touching faith in education. Over 130 years before the Declaration of Independence, the Massachusetts Bay Colony passed a law requiring every town and village of 50 or more souls to provide, at public expense, a school master to teach the children to read and write.

Indeed, the Massachusetts Education Law of 1647 order that, "where any towne shall increase to the number of 100 families....they shall set up a grammar school the master thereof being able to instruct youth so far as they may be fitted for university...."

Now, in the fourth quarter of the 20th Century, Americans still have faith in education because we care so deeply about the future of our children.

But as the authority of other institutions has eroded, we ask teachers to stand in for parents, supplement the police, and combat racial and class discrimination. They are called upon not only to teach the basics, but monitor the playgrounds, build respect for authority, counsel the delinquent, impose discipline and be moral mentors to our youth. And when they fall short anywhere along the line, we condemn teachers for not meeting our idealized expectations.

In consequence, confidence in teachers has declined and teacher frustration has increased. And as teachers organize themselves and go on strike, frustration of the public grows more intense.

The teaching profession is caught in a vicious cycle, spiraling downward. Rewards are few, morale is low, the best teachers are bailing out, and the supply of good recruits is drying up. Simply stated, the profession of teaching in this nation is imperiled.

- In just 11 years from 1969 to 1980, the number of parents who said they would like to have a child of theirs become a teacher in the public schools dropped from 75 percent to 48 percent.
- Less than 5 percent of last year's college freshman class indicated a preference for teaching down almost 40 percent from ten years ago.
- More than one-third of today's teachers (37 percent) say they are dissatisfied with their current job.
- Forty percent say they had no intention of remaining in teaching until retirement.
- Almost one-half (45 percent) of the teachers in the public schools say they probably (32 percent) or definitely (13 percent) would not become a teacher if they could start again.

Today, despite tight economic conditions, teachers are resigning and the ablest teachers are leaving first.

- Between 1962 and 1976 the percentage of public school teachers with 20 or more years of experience was cut in half.
- One study of 437 Wisconsin high school graduates who became teachers revealed that 40 percent had left teaching after five years. Based on ability grouping, 72.97 percent of the low ability students were still in teaching compared to only 59 percent of the most able students.

Of course, there are still a host of superb teachers in classrooms from coast to coast. And yet, while serving students in imaginative and creative ways, too often they are portrayed as overpaid and careless and unless we find ways to stabilize the situation many of our most gifted teachers will move out of the profession.

The quality of education in this nation can rise no higher than the quality of teaching. If public support continues to decline, and if teaching standards continue to go down, the intellectual and economic future of this nation will be threatened.

We confront--in short--and education crisis and we must respond with a sense of urgency and vision. Three interlocking steps are absolutely crucial.

First, better students must be recruited.

The harsh fact is that we cannot have gifted teachers if gifted students do not enter the profession. The evidence here is enormously disturbing.

- From 1972 to 1980, SAT verbal scores for education majors dropped steadily from 418 to 339--a loss of 79 points.
- SAT math scores during this period fell from 449 to 418--a 31 point drop. (The comparable national averages: verbal scores dropped from 445 in 1972 to 424 in 1980, a 21 point slide; math scores declined from 481 in 1972 to 466 in 1980, a 15 point drop.)
- Recently, teacher education students scored lowest of all college students in an examination of international literacy.
- Further, of 19 fields of study reported by the American College Testing Program, education was tied for 17th place in math scores, and 14th place in English scores.

Among graduating seniors in the class of 1976, education majors ranked 14th out of 16 fields on SAT verbal scores.

- On the SAT math test, education majors ranked 15th among 16 fields.

Attracting better students will not be easy. Teaching has become less and less attractive and students--especially women--have, happily, more professional options than before. Still, the priority of teaching must be reaffirmed on campuses and the disdainful attitude of many academics must be removed.

States, I believe, have a role to play, too in helping to ensure better teaching. They can establish scholarship programs to attract gifted students. There are those who argue that current fiscal stringency precludes such an option. But I say that it's a matter of the priorities we wish to set. Our national budget contains an unprecedented deficit. Yet, the government is enormously increasing defense expenditures because it believes that is a national priority. I believe that attracting gifted students into teaching should also be a top priority.

There are other actions states can take that do not cost money. Steps can be taken to tighten standards for teacher training programs. In Florida, students must have at least mean SAT and ACT scores. They also must pass competency-based tests prior to graduation if they wish to proceed into the profession. Finally, full certification is not granted until satisfactory completion of one-year of teaching in school.

Second, the education and the continuing education of teachers must be strengthened.

There are serious problems with the education of our teachers. Many teacher training programs are inadequate, accreditation of schools of education has been ineffective, careful selection of recruits for teaching is almost nonexistent, and teacher credentials do not correlate with job performance.

In most states the college not only recruits the students and provides the training, but also--through the college's department of education--certifies the student for credentialed teaching. This interlocking authority is seriously flawed.

-11-

I suggest that the content of teacher preparation include a strong program of common learning, solid training in academic subjects and early apprentice experience in the classroom.

Further, training and certification should be a two-step process. Under such a scheme, the beginning teacher would receive provisional certification upon completion of the degree--followed by a period of apprenticeship (at normal entry level salary) before the standard license is issued by the state.

In addition, the possibility of a recertification arrangement--every five years perhaps--should be considered. Clearly, good teachers must be retained and rewarded for their work but incompetent teachers must be identified and weeded out.

But the education of teachers is not a one-shot process. School boards must accept life-long education as an essential condition for every teacher. Today, knowledge is changing at a dramatic pace. Still, we expect a teacher trained 20 years ago to prepare students to live 40 years into the future with no policy of systematic continued education. Even the most dedicated teacher will fall behind and students will learn how to live, not in the future, but in the past.

Third, good teachers must be recognized and rewarded for their work.

Today, teaching in America is not financially rewarding. Many other professionals with equivalent years of education earn far more than teachers. Last year, teachers entering the profession with a bachelor's degree earn an average of \$11,758, while salaries for entry-level engineers average around \$20,000. Computer science majors begin jobs at around \$17,700, and liberal arts majors earn an average of \$13,296 at entry-level jobs.

A survey of Texas teachers revealed an average salary of just over \$14,000 after 11.7 years of teaching. In the same state, a bachelor's degree graduate in petroleum engineering begins at \$21,000.

While teachers--nationwide--earned an average salary of \$17,264 in 1980, construction workers earned an average of \$17,509. For sanitation workers, the average salary was just over \$19,000. An experienced policeman earned around \$18,500, while an experienced firefighter earned approximately \$17,800 in 1980.

For the average teacher who spends about 46 hours per week for about 36 weeks a year with 25 students, the rate of pay is a little over \$.50 per student/per hour--considerably less than the average babysitter collects.

Especially disturbing is the fact that good teachers are not financially rewarded for their work. The good and bad drift along together. Indeed one of the most troublesome points of teaching is the lack of career ladders. The notion seems to be that if you're good you will move out of teaching and become a counselor on teaching--or the football coach. The irony is that to "get ahead" in teaching you must leave. It seems clear that good teachers must be reorganized and moved forward within the profession, not outside it. Consider the possibility of having special rewards--senior teachers or master teachers--to reward the gifted teacher and help the beginning teacher, too.

Teaching is a grueling, thankless job. I'm convinced most people who criticize the schools could not survive one week in an urban classroom. And yet we expect teachers to work miracles day after day and then get only silence from the students, pressure from the principal, occasional criticism from an irate parent, and lectures from the editorial pages of the local press.

Of course, there are some inept teachers and certainly the teaching profession can improve. Still, the climate is so relentlessly hostile and nonsupportive it's no wonder teachers choose to leave. Indeed, after visiting classrooms from coast to coast the miracle to me is that so many stay.

We confront nothing short of a national emergency in teaching, and the time has come for every caring institution in society to honor excellence in teaching. Let's find ways to identify the great school teachers in our midst and give them the recognition they deserve.

It's time to move swiftly to reaffirm the importance of teaching to education, and the centrality of education to the national weal. We cannot afford to lose the potential skills and talents of a generation of students who are not only destined to man our defenses and keep our economy viable but who will also be participants and decisionmakers in our democracy.

Yet, the data shows we will not be able to meet the education requirements of these young people because we're falling short in providing enough trained teachers in such key areas as mathematics and science. In mathematics alone, a 1980 National Education Association report shows that we're only meeting about three-fourths of the demand in public schools. And a more recent study in Iowa makes the following points:

1. Competition in hiring from business and industry, especially within the past two years, has dramatically changed the job market. Prospective math and science teacher education candidates are being attracted by higher paying jobs in business. Teachers with one to five years of experience are also leaving for higher salaries in the business sector.
2. There are critical shortages of teachers in the areas of mathematics and science. In the science area, there are shortages in general science, earth science, physics, and chemistry.
3. Long-range consequences of continued critical shortages on the total educational system can be extremely serious. Many math and science courses are being taught by less qualified teachers with minimal preparation in these subjects. Many schools will be forced to drop some mathematics and science offerings because of staff shortages.

And in North Carolina, hardly in the backwater of American education, almost half the secondary school teachers of mathematics and science in the 1979-80 school year were not certified in their fields, according to another study.

1000 0000 1054

-16-

The failure--at this time--adequately to educate, a new generation of students, would be a shocking denial of their rights and a fatal undermining of the vital interests of the nation.

I've said, and I profoundly believe, that the time has come to affirm that excellence in teaching is the nation's most essential education goal and that a national response is urgently required.