

FOR RELEASE UPON DELIVERY

Statement by

Ernest L. Boyer  
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, DC

Tuesday, February 23, 1982  
9:00 a.m.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

Mr. Chairman, thank you for inviting me to meet with you today. The subject of this hearing, teacher excellence, is a matter of great importance to the future of our nation. We can have neither a strong economy nor security as a nation if our schools fail adequately to educate the coming generation. And when all is said and done, good schools depend absolutely on good teachers.

Yet, today we are witnessing a declining commitment to excellence in education. The education safety net for needy students is being shredded. A buildup in sophisticated military hardware goes forward at an enormous cost, while federal investment in human capital--at both the school and college levels--continues to go down. 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 and the production of oil wells, as if such outputs can, somehow, be divorced from people and from the quality of education.

In 1917, during the crisis of World War I, Congress recognized the link between education and the vital interests of the nation. Through the Smith-Hughes Act, states were reimbursed to help pay the salaries of secondary school teachers in agriculture, home economics, and other trade and industrial subjects. Funds also were provided for teacher training in these

subjects. The Smith-Hughes Act affirmed that education was linked to the priorities of the nation and that teachers were central to the process.

In 1958, this linkage between education and national priorities was dramatically reaffirmed. In the wake of Sputnik, President Eisenhower shaped the National Defense Education Act providing money to discover gifted high school students and to provide special institutes for teachers.

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

- o ". . . 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. . . ."
- o "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."

Today, we face a challenge greater than the one introduced by Sputnik over twenty years ago, and I believe that, once again, national leadership is required.

Today, teaching in this nation is imperiled—the 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.

- o 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.
- o Less than 5 percent of last year's college freshman class indicated a preference for teaching, down almost 40 percent from ten years ago.
- o More than one-third of today's teachers (37 percent) say they are dissatisfied with their current job.

- o Forty percent say they had no intention of remaining in teaching until retirement.
  
- o 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.

- o Between 1962 and 1976 the percentage of public school teachers with 20 or more years of experience was cut in half.
  
- o 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.

o And in the critical areas of science and mathematics, the situation is alarming. A recent survey reports that nationwide 22 percent of teaching posts in mathematics were unfilled. And in North Carolina, 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.

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. 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--an education crisis, and we must respond with a sense of urgency and vision. In response, I suggest that 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.

- o From 1972 to 1980, SAT verbal scores for education majors dropped steadily from 418 to 339--a loss of 79 points.
- o 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.)
- o Recently, teacher education students scored lowest of all college students in an examination of international literacy.
- o 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.
- o Among graduating seniors in the class of 1976, education majors ranked 14th out of 16 fields on SAT verbal scores.

- o 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.

At the federal level, we may wish to consider a forgiveness arrangement in the student loan program for students going onto selected fields. And at the state level, scholarship programs might be considered to attract gifted students into teaching. The immediate response, of course, is that nothing can be done since everything must be cut except vital services. The only response, of course, is that the national budget still reflects our priorities as a nation. And I believe that attracting gifted students into teaching must be a top priority as it was twenty years ago.

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

The improvement of teaching does, of course, relate not just to public attitudes, but to professional procedures, too. There is strong evidence to suggest that 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.

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

The certification of teachers should, I believe, 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.

It also seems quite clear that 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.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, teachers must be more adequately 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.

-10-

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 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.

-11-

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.

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.

-12-

The time has come to affirm that excellence in teaching is the nation's most essential education goal, and at the national, state, and local levels, response is urgently required. The leadership of this Committee in focusing the attention of the nation on the centrality of teaching is enormously encouraging.

Again, thank you for inviting me to meet with you today. I shall be pleased to respond to any questions you may have.