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GOVERNOR'S CONFERENCE
ON EDUCATION
OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLAHOMA
SEPTEMBER 14, 1979

INTRODUCTION

THANKS VERY MUCH FOR INVITING ME HERE TODAY.

IT'S A SPECIAL JOY FOR ME TO SHARE IN THIS STATEWIDE EDUCATION CONFERENCE
AND I CONGRATULATE GOVERNOR GEORGE NIGH
AND ALL OF THE INVITED DELEGATES FOR FOCUSING ON EDUCATION.

I'M ALSO PLEASED TO BE IN OKLAHOMA
BECAUSE IT'S SO FAR AWAY FROM WASHINGTON.

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THIS AFTERNOON I HAVE ONE ESSENTIAL MESSAGE TO CONVEY.

I'M CONVINCED THE TIME HAS COME FOR THIS NATION TO
REAFFIRM ITS COMMITMENT TO PUBLIC EDUCATION.

0 IT'S TIME TO RECOGNIZE THAT DEMOCRACY
AND OUR SCHOOLS ARE INEXTRICABLY INTERLOCKED,

IN 1647 THE MASSACHUSETTS COLONISTS PASSED A LAW REQUIRING
EVERY TOWN AND VILLAGE TO APPOINT A SCHOOLMASTER TO TEACH THE CHILDREN
TO READ AND WRITE.

OVER 130 YEARS BEFORE OUR NATION'S BIRTH — THE EARLY SETTLERS
COMMITTED THEMSELVES TO UNIVERSAL EDUCATION.

IN 1832, WHEN ABRAHAM LINCOLN ANNOUNCED HIS CANDIDACY FOR THE
ILLINOIS STATE ASSEMBLY, HE DECLARED THAT:

"UPON THE SUBJECT OF EDUCATION...
I CAN ONLY SAY THAT I VIEW IT
AS THE MOST IMPORTANT SUBJECT
WHICH WE AS A PEOPLE CAN BE ENGAGED IN."

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TO THE IMMIGRANTS WHO CAME TO THIS LAND OF PROMISE

- 0 IT WAS EDUCATION—NOT ELLIS ISLAND—
THAT WAS THE REAL GATEWAY TO AMERICA.
- 0 AND TO THESE NEW AMERICANS,
LEARNING WAS SYNONYMOUS WITH PROGRESS.

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- 0 FORMAL EDUCATION HAS BEEN THE DRIVING ENGINE OF THIS NATION
- 0 AND SCHOOLING HAS PUSHED AMERICA DRAMATICALLY AHEAD.

BECAUSE OF SCHOOLS

- 0 ILLITERACY IN THIS NATION HAS DROPPED FROM
11% IN 1900 TO 1.2% TODAY.

BECAUSE OF FORMAL EDUCATION

- o WE HAVE CRACKED THE GENETIC CODE.
- o WE'VE VIRTUALLY CONQUERED POLIO, TUBERCULOSIS, WHOOPING COUGH, AND RHEUMATIC FEVER.

BECAUSE OF EDUCATION

- o OUR INDUSTRIES HAVE FLOURISHED.
- o WE'VE LED THE WORLD IN BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH.

BECAUSE OF EDUCATION

- o WE NOW HAVE MICROSURGERY, HEART PACERS, COMPUTER MEMORY BANKS AND

BECAUSE OF EDUCATION

- o WE'VE PLAYED GOLF ON THE MOON.

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BETWEEN 1901 AND 1978, THE UNITED STATES HAD MORE NOBEL PRIZE LAUREATES IN SCIENCE THAN ANY OTHER NATION IN THE WORLD.

WE RECEIVED A TOTAL OF 132 IN CONTRAST TO 212 FOR ALL OTHER COUNTRIES OF THE WORLD COMBINED.

BETWEEN 1901 AND 1929

THE U.S. RECEIVED 75 OF THE PRIZES,

FROM 1930 AND 1965 THE U.S. WAS AWARDED 45% OF THE PRIZES,

AND IN THE PERIOD 1966 TO 1978 THE U.S. WAS GIVEN 57% OF THE PRIZES.

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THESE DRAMATIC LEAPS ARE ROOTED—NOT IN IGNORANCE—BUT IN EDUCATION.

HENRY STEELE COMMAGER DECLARED THAT

"NO OTHER PEOPLE EVER DEMANDED SO MUCH OF EDUCATION—

NONE WAS EVER SERVED SO WELL BY ITS SCHOOLS AND EDUCATORS."

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TO PUT THE MATTER AS POINTEDLY AS I CAN

IN AMERICA WE MUST HAVE GOOD SCHOOLS TO SERVE EVERY CHILD.

AND ANY TALK ABOUT

0 DESCHOOLING OUR SOCIETY,

0 OR CLOSING DOWN OUR SCHOOLS,

0 OR DENYING SCHOOLS OUR FULL SUPPORT

SHOCKINGLY DENIES OUR PAST

AND DARKENS HOPELESSLY OUR PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE.

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IN THE DAYS AHEAD THIS GREAT NATION WILL NEED MORE—NOT LESS EDUCATION—
PRECISELY BECAUSE:

OUR WORLD IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY COMPLEX
AND THERE IS MUCH, MUCH MORE TO LEARN.

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MY GRANDFATHER WAS BORN IN 1872 AND HE LIVED ONE HUNDRED YEARS.

- o SEVERAL YEARS BEFORE HE DIED I ASKED GRANDPA BOYER
HOW LONG HE HAD GONE TO SCHOOL.
AFTER A MOMENT OF REFLECTION HE REPLIED—
"WELL, I GUESS IT WAS ABOUT THREE YEARS"
"YOU SEE" HE SAID, "WE ONLY WENT TO SCHOOL FOR
SEVERAL MONTHS EACH WINTER WHEN WE COULD NOT
WORK IN THE FIELDS.
AND OUR GOAL WAS TO LEARN TO READ AND WRITE."

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MY FATHER WAS BORN IN 1899—THE LAST YEAR OF THE 19TH CENTURY.

- o PRIMARY SCHOOL EDUCATION HAD NOW BECOME THE EXPECTED PATTERN,
BUT FOR MOST STUDENTS—THAT WAS IT.
- o AT THAT TIME ONLY ABOUT 15% OF ALL TEEN-AGE YOUNG PEOPLE
WERE GOING ON TO HIGH SCHOOL.

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- 0 AND YET BECAUSE MY GRANDMOTHER WAS AMBITIOUS FOR HER GIFTED SON SHE SENT MY FATHER TO LIVE WITH RELATIVES SO HE COULD GET A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA.

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WHEN I WAS BORN—FIFTY YEARS AGO—WE HAD NO TELEVISION.

- 0 I WAS 12 YEARS OLD BEFORE WE PURCHASED OUR FIRST RADIO

- 0 WE DID RECEIVE A DAILY NEWSPAPER, AND THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC, WHICH I EAGERLY DEVoured AS SOON AS IT ARRIVED.

- 0 OUR MODEL A TOOK US ON "SHORT EXCURSIONS" FROM OUR OHIO HOME, RARELY MORE THAN 100 MILES OR SO.

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AS I LOOK BACK ON THOSE EARLY YEARS

- 0 SCHOOL WAS STILL THE CENTRAL LEARNING PLACE.
- 0 THE TEACHER— FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE — WAS THE KEY SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE.
- 0 AND THE CLASSROOM WAS THE INTELLECTUAL WINDOW TO THE WORLD. (IT WAS ONLY LATER ON THAT I LEARNED JUST HOW CLOUDED THAT WINDOW COULD SOMETIMES BE.)

TODAY EVEN THAT WORLD I KNEW IS ANCIENT HISTORY.

MY CHILDREN

TRAVELED BACK AND FORTH ACROSS THE COUNTRY
SEVERAL TIMES—BEFORE THEY WENT TO COLLEGE.

BOOKS AND MAGAZINES WERE EVERYWHERE

AND THROUGH THE MIRACLE OF TV
THEY HAVE TRAVELED TO THE MOON AND BACK.

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- 0 YOUNG CHILDREN — 2 TO 5 YEARS OLD — NOW WATCH TELEVISION
OVER 4 HOURS EVERY DAY, NEARLY 30 HOURS EVERY WEEK.
THAT'S MORE THAN 1,500 HOURS EVERY YEAR.
- 0 AND BY THE TIME A YOUNGSTER ENTERS FIRST GRADE
HE OR SHE HAS HAD 6,000 HOURS OF TELEVISION VIEWING.

TODAY — FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE

- 0 ARCHIE BUNKER IS BETTER KNOWN THAN SILAS MARNER
- 0 FELLINI IS MORE INFLUENTIAL THAN FAULKNER
- 0 AND THE SIX O'CLOCK NEWS IS MORE COMPELLING
THAN THE HISTORY TEXT.

EIGHTEEN MONTHS AGO PRESIDENT SADAT OF EGYPT SAID HE WOULD LIKE TO ADDRESS THE ISRAELI PARLIAMENT.

- 0 HOURS LATER, SATELLITES BEAMED AROUND THE WORLD THE NEWS OF HIS REMARK.
- 0 TELEVISION MULTIPLIED HIS COMMENT, PLAYED AND REPLAYED IT, AND HELD HIM TO IT ALMOST AS A DARE.
- 0 AND THEN BARBARA WALTERS, WALTER CRONKITE, AND JOHN CHANCELLOR ARRIVED IN CAIRO TO ACCOMPANY SADAT ON HIS HISTORIC TRIP ALMOST AS A WAY OF CERTIFYING ITS CREDIBILITY.
- 0 THEN, AT BEN GURION AIRPORT, 500 MILLION VIEWERS AROUND THE WORLD SIMULTANEOUSLY EXPERIENCED THE ELECTRIC MOMENT AS AN ARAB PLAN TOUCHED DOWN ON ISRAELI SOIL.

IT IS NOT TO DIMINISH WHAT HAPPENED DIPLOMATICALLY IN THE MIDDLE EAST TO SAY THAT

- 0 NONE OF THE WORDS EXCHANGED DURING THAT VISIT —
- 0 NONE OF THE SPEECHES,
- 0 NONE OF THE DOCUMENTS,
- 0 NONE OF THE PRIVATE MEETINGS,

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- 0 NONE OF THE TOASTS — WAS AS SIGNIFICANT AS THE RIVETING OF THE WORLD'S ATTENTION ON ONE SINGLE SIMULTANEOUS, BREATHTAKING, SYMBOLIC IMAGE.
- 0 THE IMAGE OF TWO FORMER ENEMIES AS THEY GREETED ONE ANOTHER.

INSTANTLY 500 MILLION PEOPLE FELT THEIR CONNECTEDNESS,

- 0 THEY WERE DRAWN TOGETHER,
- 0 SHARED A COMMON IMAGE,

AND FOR ONE FLEETING MOMENT, THE CENTER SEEMED TO HOLD.

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TELEVISION HAS BECOME THE NATION'S
MOST PERVASIVE TEACHER.

BUT WE DO NEED THE CLASSROOM TO GIVE MEANING,
TO DEAL IN DEPTH WITH ISSUES NEVER COVERED IN
"60 MINUTE" SPECIALS, TO CONFRONT THE NUANCES OF
THE MESSAGE GLOSSED OVER ON THE EVENING SERIES
AND TO WEIGH THE VALUES THAT WILL
ALL BE LOST IN A SLICK COMMERCIAL.

THE DEPTH AND RICHNESS OF THE CLASSROOM MUST PERSIST.

UNHAPPILY, TELEVISION — WITH ALL OF ITS POTENTIAL — IS STILL A PASSIVE
NOT AN ACTIVE _____.

AND WE NEED SCHOOLS AND CLASSROOMS AND LABORATORIES
AND DISCUSSIONS AND DEBATES
TO CHALLENGE THOUGHT AND REBUILD THE CREATIVITY CAPACITY OF THIS NATION.

THE TRUTH IS THAT THE INVENTIVENESS OF THIS NATION HAS BEEN GOING DOWN:

- o BETWEEN 1966 AND 1975 THE U.S. PATENT BALANCE DECREASED WITH RESPECT TO THE UNITED KINGDOM, CANADA, WEST GERMANY, JAPAN, AND THE SOVIET UNION. BY 1975 IT WAS NEGATIVE FOR THE LAST THREE.
- o THE PROPORTION OF THE WORLD'S MAJOR TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATIONS PRODUCED BY THE U.S. DECREASED FROM 80 PERCENT IN 1956-1958 TO 59 PERCENT IN 1971-1973.
- o THE REAL GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT PER EMPLOYED CIVILIAN DECREASED IN THE U.S. RELATIVE TO FRANCE, WEST GERMANY, JAPAN, THE UNITED KINGDOM AND CANADA BETWEEN 1960 AND 1976.
- o THE U.S. MOVED FROM FIRST TO LAST IN RELATIVE PRODUCTIVITY GAINS (OUTPUT/MANHOURL) IN THE MANUFACTURING INDUSTRIES IN COMPARISON TO FRANCE, WEST GERMANY, JAPAN, THE UNITED KINGDOM AND CANADA BETWEEN 1960 AND 1976.

WE MUST FACE A DISTURBING FACT.

OUR SCHOOLS HAVE PUSHED AMERICA DRAMATICALLY AHEAD.

BUT IN RECENT YEARS WE HAVE BECOME INTELLECTUALLY SLUGGISH
AND THE CREATIVE CAPACITY OF THIS NATION HAS GONE DOWN.

WE HAVE BECOME THE "INFORMATION SOCIETY" WHERE OUR SUCCESS—AND EVEN
OUR SURVIVAL HINGES ON OUR CAPACITY TO MANAGE AN INCREASINGLY
COMPLICATED WORLD.

TAKE THREE MILE ISLAND TO ILLUSTRATE THE POINT.

- o NOT MANY MONTHS AGO MILLIONS OF AMERICANS SAT
GLUED TO TV SETS LISTENING TO STRANGE TALK ABOUT
"REMS," AND "COOLING SYSTEMS" AND "COLD SHUT DOWNS"
AND FOR ALL THE WORLD IT SOUNDED LIKE A FOREIGN LANGUAGE.
- o IN FACT, FOR MOST OF US IT WAS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE—
AND IF THREE MILE ISLAND TAUGHT US ANYTHING AT ALL
IT TAUGHT US HOW IGNORANT WE ARE.

AND THE HARSH FACT IS THAT WITHOUT EDUCATION WE ALL WILL BECOME
INCREASINGLY IGNORANT—NOT JUST ABOUT NUCLEAR POWER BUT
ABOUT ENERGY AND ECONOMICS AND SALT II AND A WHOLE HOST
OF VERY VITAL ISSUES.

SIMPLY STATED, I BELIEVE IT'S TIME TO PUSH FOR EXCELLENCE
AND TO GIVE SPECIAL HELP TO THE GIFTED WHO IN MANY SCHOOLS
ARE THE MOST NEGLECTED STUDENTS.

- o BECAUSE THEY DO THE WORK THEY ARE FREQUENTLY OVERLOOKED,
- o THEY ARE UNCHALLENGED BY THE ROUTINE CLASSROOM RITUAL
AND THEY ARE EXPECTED TO CONFORM RATHER THAN CREATE,

IT'S HARD TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN BRASHNESS AND BRILLIANCE AND
THE STUDENT WITH A NEW IDEA

- o WILL OFTEN FAIL TO SPEAK
- o RATHER THAN RISK RIDICULE OR CONTRADICTION.

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THIS WASTE OF TALENT MUST BE STOPPED.

WE NEED NEW SOURCES OF ENERGY

NEW KINDS OF CARS

NEW SOLUTIONS FOR OUR CITIES

AND OUR SCHOOLS MUST INTRODUCE SPECIAL PROGRAMS FOR CREATIVE STUDENTS.

VACHEL LINDSEY SAID—

IT IS THE WORLDS ONE CRIME TO GROW DULL,

NOT THAT THEY SERVE

—BUT HAVE NO GOD TO SERVE,

NOT THAT THEY

—BUT THAT THEY SELDOM

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ONE FINAL POINT, WE ARE AT A CRUCIAL TIME IN HUMAN HISTORY, AND I BELIEVE WE MUST CARRY ON OUR WORK IN EDUCATION NOT ONLY WITH CONFIDENCE BUT WITH A SENSE OF URGENCY AS WELL.

WE MUST BEGIN TO THINK ABOUT A WORLD AND TEACH ABOUT A WORLD

- o WHERE HARD CHOICES MUST BE MADE,
- o WHERE BASIC HUMAN VALUES ARE MORE WIDELY SHARED,
- o AND WHERE OUR DECISIONS ARE SHAPED BY LONG TERM REQUIREMENTS OF SURVIVAL AND NOT JUST THE SHORT TERM SATISFACTIONS OF TODAY.

I KNOW THAT WHENEVER THE DISCUSSION TURNS TO VALUES WE ALL BECOME EMBARRASSED. WE SEEM TO SQUIRM A BIT. BUT THE SIMPLE TRUTH IS THAT, IF WE ARE RESPONSIBLE PEOPLE,

- o WE MUST OCCASIONALLY TAKE SIDES,
- o WE MUST EXPRESS CONVICTIONS ON FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES.
- o WE MUST, IN SHORT, HAVE MORAL COURAGE.

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GEORGE STEINER REMINDED US THAT

- o EVEN WHEN A MAN IS INTELLECTUALLY ADVANCED,
HE CAN AT THE SAME TIME BE MORALLY BANKRUPT.
- o WE NOW KNOW, HE SAYS, THAT SUCH A MAN
- o CAN LISTEN TO BACH AT SUNDOWN,
- o READ GOETHE IN THE EVENING
- o AND THE NEXT MORNING TO HIS DAILY WORK
AT THE CONCENTRATION CAMP AND KILL HIS FELLOW MEN.

TO AVOID A GROTESQUE MISMATCH BETWEEN SELF-INDULGENCE AND TOMORROW'S URGENT NEEDS,

- o WE MUST NOT ONLY TEACH THE BASIC SKILLS WHICH
ARE ESSENTIAL TO BE SURE OF EDUCATION,
- o WE MUST ALSO HELP STUDENTS TO UNDERSTAND THE
CRITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL
CHOICES TO BE FACED BY THEM AND BY THEIR CHILDREN.

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THE HARSH TRUTH IS THAT THE HUMAN RACE CONTINUES TO EXPAND AT A RATE OF 200,000 PEOPLE EVERY DAY — THAT'S 73 MILLION MORE PEOPLE EVERY YEAR. AND EVERY DAY MORE THAN 800 MILLION PEOPLE FACE GNAWING HUNGER, LIVING LITERALLY FROM HAND TO MOUTH. TENSIONS OVER RESOURCES GROW MORE ACUTE, AND THE QUALITY OF OUR ENVIRONMENT IS THREATENED.

THE QUESTIONS, THEN, ARE THESE:

- 0 WHERE WILL WE GET OUR FOOD, AND HOW CAN IT BE APPROPRIATELY DISTRIBUTED?
- 0 WHAT ABOUT OUR ENERGY SUPPLY, AND HOW CAN IT BE EQUITABLY SHARED?
- 0 HOW CAN WE REDUCE THE POISONS IN THE ATMOSPHERE?
- 0 AND, CAN WE HAVE A PROPER BALANCE BETWEEN POPULATION AND THE LIFE SUPPORT SYSTEM OF THIS PLANET EARTH?

THESE ARE A FEW OF THE TRANSCENDENT ISSUES WHICH TODAY'S YOUNG PEOPLE — AND ALL OF US — MUST BEGIN TO THINK ABOUT AND TALK ABOUT WITH GREAT CARE.

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RECENTLY, AT A SEMINAR IN THE ANCIENT PERSIAN CITY OF PERSEPOLIS, JOHN GARDNER SAID:

"OUR PLANET IS BUT A SPECK OF DUST IN THE UNIVERSE, AND OUR LIFE ON IT IS BUT AN INSTANT IN THE LONG STRETCH OF ASTROPHYSICAL TIME. STILL, IT IS THE ONLY PLANET WE HAVE, AND OUR LIFE ON IT HOLDS GREAT POSSIBILITIES OF BEAUTY AND DIGNITY AND MEANING. YET IF IT WERE ASKED OF US HOW WE SPEND OUR INSTANT OF TIME ON OUR SPECK OF DUST, WE WOULD HAVE TO SAY, 'WE SPEND A GOOD DEAL OF IT FIGHTING ONE ANOTHER AND LAYING WASTE OUR EARTH.'"

"SURELY," GARDNER WENT ON TO SAY, "ALL OF US HERE BELIEVE THAT WE CAN DO BETTER."

IT JUST MAY BE THAT, AS WE EDUCATE OURSELVES AND MAKE MORE SENSITIVE THE HUMAN SPIRIT, WE WILL INDEED MAKE OUR FUTURE MORE SECURE AND PREVENT THIS ANGRY, FRIGHTENED WORLD FROM SELF-DESTRUCTION.

I AM CONFIDENT THAT, BECAUSE OF YOUR GREAT DEDICATION, AND YOUR DETERMINATION, THIS GREAT NATION CAN MEET THE CHALLENGE.

THANKS VERY MUCH FOR INVITING ME HERE TODAY.

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