ADDRESS *

Ernest L. Boyer
U.S. Commissioner of Education-designate

President Dick, Paul Salmon, Friends, and Colleagues:

I am especially pleased that my first opportunity to speak since my nomination comes today, at this convention, with school administrators from all across the land.

As you know, I have not yet been confirmed. For several weeks I have been serving as "intermittent consultant" to the United States Office of Education, but since the time I've spent in Washington has not been intermittent, I can only conclude that my advice is being taken intermittently.

And, while Washington may not be the wiser because of this arrangement, I, at least, have become more humble.

In fact, I've thought frequently of Robert Benchley, who, while a student at Harvard College, found himself stumped by a very hard exam. The professor had asked his class to discuss the conflict between Great Britain and America over offshore fishing rights --

> first from the United States vantage point, and then from the British point of view.

After a frantic yet futile attempt to recall the facts, Benchley finally wrote in desperation:

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"I know nothing about this confrontation over fishing rights from the position of the British.

"I know even less about it from the American point of view.

"I therefore should like to discuss the conflict from the viewpoint of the fish."

My early days in Washington leave me in quite the same predicament. Often I feel submerged, and frequently I see the world only from the perspective of the fish.

One other point by way of introduction. I have, as you all know, spent most of my life in higher education, and I am -- for the moment, at least -- a stranger to most of you.

However, I also want you to know that I accepted this new challenge not to promote a special interest group but rather to work aggressively for education at all levels.

Of course, colleges and universities have an important job to do. They are partners in the enterprise of learning. But we all know the elementary and secondary classrooms control the heartbeat of American education.

It is here that we first provide our children with what James Madison termed the power to govern -- that only knowledge gives.

In these classrooms children and young people learn the basic skills, and there they are introduced to the broad sweep of human understanding.

These schools are the cornerstone of education, and I pledge to give every ounce of my energy to see to it that your educational interests are defended and your cause effectively exposed.

I need help, of course, and I want you to know that--

The next Executive Deputy Commissioner -- the number two person -- in the U.S. Office of Education will be a distinguished Administrator from the field of elementary and secondary education.

The Deputy Commissioner for elementary and secondary education will be a successful colleague chosen from your ranks.

And other public school associates will be brought to the Federal office to carry on our essential work.

In short, I pledge that there will be a strong and balanced team in Washington,

and I'm convinced that we can make great gains as we work together.

When Paul first called and asked me to join you here today, I accepted, assuming confirmation hearings would be over and I could talk about the Office of Education in a more official way. Obviously, such a presentation by me would be inappropriate. Therefore I should like to set forth several of my own broad-based concerns and save our nuts and bolts discussion for a later date.

Specifically, I'd like to suggest four goals which I believe should guide our educational efforts in the days ahead.

I

First, I believe the time has come to speak out aggressively for education. It's time to reaffirm that American schools and colleges are, in fact, the driving engine of this democracy and that education has been, and must always be, a top priority.

In 1647 -- over 125 years before our Nation's birth -- the Massachusetts colonists passed a law requiring every town and village to appoint a schoolmaster to teach the children to read and write. Their goal -- of course -- was to teach the Bible, and get the children ready for their eternal home. But the early colonists also wanted life to be worthy and worthwhile here on earth -- and education was the key.

And this was only the beginning. As pioneers looked westward to the plains and prairies, their educational sights were raised as well. The ability to read and write was not enough! Grammar school education for all became the goal. And, while pioneers planted corn and wheat and barley, they planted schools as well.

Later, technology exploded in our midst, and Americans faced a strange new world. There were new machines and new urban centers. New jobs emerged. Old jobs became obsolete. Clearly, still more education was required, and something called the "Free Academy" was born. From

this, America's great high school movement was firmly launched and, by the end of the 19th Century, secondary schools were being built at the rate of one a day! Twelve years of formal education had now become the Nation's goal.

More recently, as knowledge and the complexity of our world continued to increase, even high school education seemed insufficient for many of our students. Unskilled jobs were fading from the scene; the demand for skilled technicians, researchers, and social service leaders continued to increase.

Once more we took a giant step ahead. Two more years of formal education for most students became the goal. Junior colleges sprang up beside our great Land-Grant colleges and private institutions in many States. During the past ten years a new community college was opened in America every ten days.

The point is this: The people of this country have understood full well that ignorance and human progress are incompatible. And as our social and economic sights were raised our educational sights were also elevated. We built new schools to meet new expectations so that each new generation would have the tools it needed to make it on its own.

In Moby Dick, Ishmael describes himself as having "an everlasting itch for things remote." In this democracy we have confidently affirmed that everyone -- not just the favored few -- has a longing for dignity

and self-respect, a capacity to learn -- an urge to scratch "the everlasting itch". I propose that this inseparable connection between universal education and the Nation's progress be vigorously reaffirmed.

II

This brings me to a second observation. I believe it's time to clarify the Federal, State, and local role in education and seek to understand more clearly just what it is a central agency should and should not do.

> Fundamentally, education in America is primarily a State and local function.
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> Schools must be run by those who are closest to the people--and any move to "federalize" this essential function must be vigorously opposed.

At the same time, the Federal Government does have an obligation to promote those goals which are national in scope. Converting that general mandate into specific policy is not easy. I have no magic formula to propose. I do believe, however, that we might search together for some clarifying guidelines. Tentatively, may I suggest the following:

-- First, the Federal Government should help the schools when Federal policy brings to the district a special education challenge or a special obligation. The Emergency School Aid program illustrates the point.

-- Second, Federal support is needed to help schools move toward equal opportunity for education, to overcome basic economic and social barriers among student populations.

-- Third, Federal support is needed to help groups of exceptional and disadvantaged students. Title I programs for handicapped children and Indian education are examples here.

-- Fourth, we must have Federal assistance to promote the excellence essential to our Nation's intellectual health. The library assistance program and research funding relate to this objective.

These are only illustrations, to be sure. I do suggest, however, that in the days ahead we seek to clarify our relationships and bring increased coherence to our effort.

Currently, the Office of Education administers over 100 separate programs. Most of these are crucial and frequently well-targeted to meet specific needs.

Without doing violence to any single program it may be possible to cluster some of these more isolated enterprises, simplify the process by which they are administered, and be of greater help to you.

Speaking of simplifying the process, I should say a word or two about our regulations. At present, over 90 different rules and regulations are being drafted in the Office of Education. About half of these

are updating existing programs, and the rest implement the amendments of last year. I understand that not all of these can be discarded. You need to know just what the legislation is and how it works, and the public needs to be assured that honesty and fairness are maintained.

Even so, I'm convinced some progress toward simplification can be made. As a start, I hope to have, as an introduction to every regulation, a simply written statement that says what the regulation is all about, something a busy administrator can quickly read and quickly understand.

The point is this: The machinery of bureaucracy should not be so complicated that we lose sight of just what it is we're trying to achieve.

> Several years ago in the New York Museum of Modern Art,
> I saw a marvelous "Rube Goldberg" contraption with
> elaborate gears and pulleys. This "art object" chugged
> along all day -- accomplishing absolutely nothing except
> to keep itself in motion.

It's time to attack the Rube Goldberg mentality in our midst --

> to talk more simply;
> to write more clearly;
> have paper work only when the laws and good management
> require it.

In short, I hope we can clarify and simplify procedures so that more of our energy can focus on the classroom -- rather than the clutter.

III

Thus far I've suggested that we reaffirm the centrality of education in America and work together to clarify relationships.

Now I'd like to share with you a third conviction. I believe the time has come for us to form new partnerships in education.

Over fifty years ago, Henry Clinton Morrison of the University of Chicago said we don't have an educational system in American. We have an elementary school, a high school, and a college. We don't offer our children a ladder of learning. Rather, we provide layers without sequence. Morrison was a bit harsh perhaps, but he makes a point.

The truth is we in education are divided. We do live in separate worlds. Administrators from the separate sections stay apart. High school teachers seldom speak to their fourth grade counterparts. College professors rarely plan with high school colleagues, and the faculty members of private schools and colleges usually talk with public school people only at faraway conferences or when they meet in supermarkets.

It seems quite clear to me that the days of splended isolation are drawing to a close.

Change is too rapid.

The intellectual and social needs are too complex.

Clearly, the time has come to break down the "layer cake" design and work to build linkages among all learning levels.

For several years I directed a coordinated education project in Santa Barbara, California.

> Twenty separate elementary and secondary districts worked closely with the universities and colleges in the region. An interlevel board of superintendents, principals and college presidents directed the total enterprise.

Our goals were --

> to build a more sequential curriculum;
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> to share teacher resources more effectively; and
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> to probe cooperatively for innovation

No dramatic overhauls occurred, but there was solid progress as adminstrators from all levels met -- not to defend their turf, but to work for excellence.

I'm convinced this vision must be kept alive. And while in education we face . . .

> barriers of attitude,
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> barriers of time,
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> barriers of budget,
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> barriers of distance . . .

the education of students must still be seen as a process in which all of us -- regardless of our title -- are inextricably interlocked, and somehow we must plan together.

Incidentally, this same point was brought home to me in quite a different way when I visited the People's Republic of China -- several years ago. While there I learned that those who hold desk jobs go periodically to so-called "cadre schools" where they also dirty their hands by feeding pigs and working in the fields. University administrators and school teachers go into the factories or to the countryside to help with the crops and, not incidentally, to also study the teachings of Chairman Mao "to purify their mind".

Politics aside, it did occur to me that administrators here at home also might move from their desks and have more contact with their colleagues in the field. Soon after coming back from China, I suggested to my own staff that I would like to spend more time on our University campuses in New York, comparing notes with students and with teachers, listening to maintenance workers, riding with campus security officers, sleeping in a dormitory. I meet, of course, endlessly with other administrators and "official" delegations -- but I had in mind something quite different. Talking directly with individuals, people who are intimately responsible for the essential day-to-day work of the institution.

The response to this proposal was revealing, and disturbing too. Some said my schedule allowed no time for such excursions. Others warned that the idea was too gimmicky and would be viewed as a "P.R.