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EDUCATING FOR SURVIVAL

Remarks by

Ernest L. Boyer, President

The Carnegie Foundation for the  
Advancement of Teaching

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I'm delighted to be in the twin cities of Minneapolis-St.Paul.

- First--because this is such a vital place.
- Second--it is so far from Washington, D.C.

Frankly, the timing of this conference could not have been more strategically arranged.

There are two dramatic currents in the world today, currents that seem almost to be on collision course.

On the one hand

- we seem increasingly to want to fragment ourselves and build artificial barriers.

While on the other

- the need for more togetherness becomes more and more urgent.

I believe the task before us in--quite literally--educating for survival.

Twenty years ago the Soviet Union pushed a 184 pound object into space

- and almost overnight the complacency of the nation's colleges and schools was completely shattered.
- Congress passed the National Defense Education Act.
- Over 181,500 Education Fellowships were awarded.
- Foreign language--once again--was taught at every level.
- We heard all about something called the "new science" and "new math" to improve our position in the world.

And we began to understand that--somehow--this small planet Earth was, in fact, a "global village."

But I don't have to remind this audience that during the decade of the 1960's this world view was badly shattered.

- We were savaged by the tragedy of Vietnam.
- Students became enormously disillusioned.
- On campus after campus, "isolation" rather than "engagement" became the prevailing mood.
- And because of this self-indulgent "me generation" attitude in our midst, we have paid a terrible price.

II

- o Today, less than one percent of the college-age group are enrolled in any course which features contemporary international issues.
- o College enrollments in foreign languages are off 30 percent in the past seven years.

And a recent national survey revealed that:

- o Even after President Carter's speech on energy, only half the public, 52 percent, understood that America needed to import any oil to satisfy its energy demands.
- o And, of these, only a third (or 17 percent of all adults) know how much petroleum the U.S. must import--42 percent in 1976. (Imports reached almost 50 percent by the end of 1978.)
- o Fifty percent of the 12th graders tested could not choose correctly an Arab country from among four choices.
- o And fully 40 percent of the 12th graders thought that Golda Meir rather than Anwar el-Sadat was president of Egypt.

Incidentally, last year--during the TV coverage of the Sadat-Begin discussions,

- o which was interspersed with coverage of the Chicago Bears football game,
- o three out of every four of the spectators interviewed had never heard of Sadat or Begin but were well aware of the prowess of their local hero, Walter Payton.

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Recently, while flying from New Orleans to Orlando, Florida, I read in the morning paper that University of California scientists now conclude

- o that the earth's ozone band is being harmed by contaminants at "twice the rate" that had been earlier predicted.
- o It was symbolic of our time, I thought, that this important--perhaps life or death story--was reported in a single paragraph buried deep in section II.

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The degree of our isolation was also illustrated dramatically several years ago--the Stanford University student newspaper crossed my desk.

- o After having dropped almost all requirements in the 60's,
- o a faculty committee proposed--in 1976--a required course in western culture. The student newspaper in a biting attack said the new report "proposes to remove from students the right to choose for themselves a course. . . This is not to deny that courses in western culture are valuable and that most persons could benefit from them. To require them to take them, however, carries a strong illiberal connotation. . . It imposes a uniform standard on nonuniform people."

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Frankly I was startled by that statement.

It was enormously depressing to confront the fact that one of our most gifted students

- o after 15 years of formal education
- o had concluded that there was no common agenda which should be commonly preserved.

III

But I believe that--once again--a new sense of urgency is beginning to emerge. Every day we are confronting the harsh fact that this is indeed a global village.

Just a little over two years ago, President Sadat of Egypt said he'd like to address the Israeli parliament.

- o Hours later, satellites beamed his remark around the world.
- o Television played and replayed his statement, and held him to it--almost as a dare.
- o Days later, Barbara Walters, Walter Cronkite, and John Chancellor arrived in Cairo to certify the trip.
- o And millions of people--all around the world--watched transfixed--
- o as an Egyptian plane touched down on Israeli soil.

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It is not to diminish what happened--politically--in the Middle East to say that

- o none of the words exchanged during that visit,
- o none of the speeches,
- o none of the documents,
- o none of the private meetings,
- o none of the toasts--

was as significant as the riveting of the whole world's attention on one single, breathtaking, symbolic image-- as tow former enemies shaking hands.

Instantly, 500 million people

- o felt their "connectedness".
- o Instantly their perspective was expanded,
- o and--momentarily--the world was brought together
- o in a grand human gesture on behalf of peace.

Since that day--

- o we have all shared the hope and disappointment of Camp David.
- o We've watched a dynasty topple in Iran.
- o We've seen a Chinese leader toasted in our Nation's Capital.
- o We've heard an American President say that the United States has the world's fourth largest Spanish speaking population.
- o And we've seen the United States held hostage by one religious leader--10,000 miles away!

We are quite literally being catapulted into an age of interdependence and a new sense of urgency is beginning to emerge.

The harsh truth is that

- the human race continues to expand at the rate of 200,000 people every day.
- That's 73 million more people every year.

And painfully we are reminded that

- our gas pumps are somehow connected to the Middle East.
- We are beginning to discover that--American industry is almost wholly dependent on foreign sources for chromium, cobalt, bauxite, manganese, and tin.
- We are discovering that--40 percent to 95 percent of our precious metals are imported from Third World countries.
- We vaguely sense that about a third of the profits of American corporations come from their exports or from foreign investment,
- that one out of every six factory workers in this country is making something to be sold abroad,
- and that a child born today into a world of four billion people will, if he attains age 60, be sharing the Earth with three times as many human beings.

IV

For educators, the point of all of this is absolutely clear. I'm convinced that in the days ahead--

- o students must be taught that all actions on this planet Earth, whether physical or social, are inextricably interlocked.
- o And I believe that international education which underscores the rule of law must be aggressively preserved.

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Well to be still more precise, I must confess that international education may not quite be the term.

- o Students must consider not just the relationships of nations. They must also focus on the agenda of humanity itself.
- o What we need perhaps is something called "global" or "interdependence" education.

In any event--regardless of the nomenclature--I'm convinced we need a new curriculum.

And the curriculum I have in mind would introduce students to these crucial questions.

- Where will we get our food, and how can it be appropriately distributed?
- What about our energy supply, and how can it be equitably shared?
- How can we reduce the poisons in the atmosphere?
- Can we have a proper balance between the population and the life support system of this planet Earth?
- And how can we live together, with civility, in a climate of constraint?

These are the transcendent issues which we must begin to think about and begin to talk about with great care.

Let me put the issue as pointedly as I can:

Sputnik was in orbit. We educated in the sciences to establish our future in outer space.

Today in 1980--we must educate in the social sciences to establish our future here on Earth.

In a monograph published by the World Affairs Council of Philadelphia, Robert Muller said:

"A child born today. . . will be both an actor and a beneficiary or a victim in a total world fabric, and 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?'"

Classroom teachers increasingly have an obligation to educate world citizenship. And to achieve this goal we need not only a new curriculum, but we also need renewed emphasis on language.

- o Language is something very special--it's the process by which a nation's culture is sustained, continuity is assured,
- o and respect for the richness and diversity of our own language and the language of others must be reaffirmed.

Last year President Carter asked me to work with Congress to establish a Presidential Commission on Foreign Languages and International Studies.

- o The Commission, under the outstanding leadership of Jim Perkins, has worked very hard and recommended that we teach all students a second language in the schools.

I also believe that if "interdependent education" is to move ahead, we must move beyond the classroom with TV. Television has now become the nation's most important teacher.

- o Children watch TV 4-5,000 hours before they go to school.
- o They watch 16,000 hours of TV before they graduate -- while spending only 11,000 hours before the classroom teacher.

Television must be a partner in global education.

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Several months ago the Office of Education signed an agreement with Children's Television Workshop to produce a new TV series.

- o The focus is science, technology, and the environment.

- And it's geared to junior high school students 12 years old.
- The aim is to underscore the impact of technology and the connections between "consumption" and the "resources" of the planet Earth.

In completing its preproduction research CTW discovered startling ignorance about the facts of life.

- Some children, when asked where the electricity comes from, replied, "the switch."
- Water comes from "the faucet."
- And garbage went "down the chute."

Our connectedness reaches out only as far as we can see or touch!

I believe that by linking mass communication to classroom instruction we can overcome some of the ignorance about our world.

One final note.

American colleges and universities also have a special obligation to build scholarly bridges in science and in the arts.

Last year at a Swedish embassy dinner I met Senator Fulbright, who had just been honored by Sweden in celebration of the Fulbright program.

- ° On the way home it occurred to me that this nation had never had such an occasion.
- ° And so it was that last year the Office of Education hosted a special conference--
- ° to honor Senator William Fulbright for the scholar exchange program which has contributed so much to world understanding and world peace.

A decade ago Arnold Toynbee observed that we have conquered nature and that now our great unfinished task is to conquer self.

- o He said that humanity is our most formidable enemy today.
- o The time has come, Toynbee said, for humanity as a whole to unite against the common enemy in itself

Toynbee concluded by suggesting that

- o the great irony of our time is that humanity may be destroyed,
- o not by its madness,
- o but by its failure to recognize its special relationship to the planet Earth.

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After our first astronaut orbited into space, Archibald MacLeish wrote:

- o To see the Earth as it truly is,
- o small and blue--beautiful in that eternal silence where it floats--
- o is to see ourselves as riders on the Earth together,
- o and to see ourselves as truly brothers.

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We do not yet know that we are truly brothers and truly sisters.

- And yet I'm confident that as we better educate ourselves
- and make more sensitive the human spirit,
- and as we affirm the rule of law,
- we may be able to make our future more secure
- and prevent this angry, frightening world from self-destruction.

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