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REMARKS OF
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THE UNITED STATES OFFICE OF EDUCATION
REFLECTIONS AND REAFFIRMATION

One hundred and ten years ago -- on March 2, 1867 -- President Andrew Johnson signed a bill which created the United States Office of Education.

This new office, according to the law, was to have

- a commissioner of education
- and four supporting staff.
- The budget that first year was \$15,400.

And here's a point worth noting: for its first 2 years OE was officially called the "Department of Education."

Even though the new department was insignificant in size, the battle waged over its formation was very large indeed.

Representative Ingnatius Donnelly from Minnesota urged Congress to pass the education bill because, he said, education would finally have:

- o "a mouth piece and a rallying point."

The new department, he said,

- o "will throw a flood of light upon the dark places of the land.
- o It will form a public statement which will arouse to increased activity the friends of education everywhere, and ignorance will fly before it."

On the other hand, Andrew Rogers of New Jersey said that this whole business of a Federal education agency was a "mere wild scheme of philanthropy."

Wild scheme or no, an education office was established, and Henry Barnard--a popular figure who had edited a prestigious education journal -- was named its first Commissioner.

Barnard's annual salary was \$4,000, and his three clerks earned considerably less:

- o one \$2,000,
- o another \$1,800,
- o and the third \$1,600 a year.

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The new Commissioner's job -- by legislative mandate -- was to collect education statistics and send them on to Congress. Barnard took this data gathering job very seriously -- too seriously, perhaps.

- . His first report to Congress was a mind-boggling 900 pages long, and the print was small and hard to read.
- . (Obviously, OE's reputation for paperwork was well established from the very first.)

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. When the House of Representatives saw Barnard's mammoth tome it was stunned, and quickly decided to print only the first thirty-three pages of the 900-page report.

In his second year on the job, Barnard asked Congress to double his appropriation to \$30,000. The Hill -- in characteristic fashion -- responded by cutting Barnard's salary back to \$3,000.

The next year, Congress cut the staff of the new Commissioner down to two clerks, and OE's budget was slashed to \$600 -- clearly an early example of what we know today as zero-based budgeting!

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In 1869, when OE was renamed the Office of Education, it was also moved into the Department of the Interior.

The Secretary of Interior, Orville Browning, was obviously quite grumpy about having this anemic orphan dropped unceremoniously on his doorstep.

In his annual report, Browning proposed quite bluntly that the tasks of this new office be given to the states, and he urged that OE be abolished.

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"At the Federal level," Browning wrote, "There is no necessity of anyone knowing anything about education."

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The confused and frantic spirit of those early OE days was captured by Commissioner Barnard, who was being badgered by the President to get out his education report on time.

After months of frustration and delay, Barnard said, "I shall get the whole work done except my general conclusions in 3 or 4 months."

And then, he said, "I shall retire to my grave -- or Europe."

Soon after Ulysses S. Grant became President, Barnard was pushed out of office, describing his days in Washington as "a dismal experience."

John Eaton, the second Commissioner, actually came to Washington hoping to be appointed Ambassador to Constantinople by his old army buddy, General Grant.

To his dismay, instead of Turkey, he was offered Education. Not wanting to look a gift horse in the mouth -- he took the job.

Eaton's first report to Congress was received no more enthusiastically than Barnard's. Senator Eugene Casserly of California, when he got a draft of the OE Report, said,

What have we here? We have a book of five hundred and seventy-nine pages, which should have had on its title page the words De Omnibus rebus et quibusden alliis-- About everything in the world and several things besides.

Eaton's report was not only condemned for its bulk, but for its content, too. One Senator was enraged to read that a district in his state "did not pay a cent of (school) tax in ten years."

And Senator Bayard of Delaware was furious when he read that, in one school in Delaware, boys "did not stand in a straight line when they stood up to spell and they spat tobacco juice." Bayard complained,

If the part that relates to the other States is as contemptibly false and absurd as that which relates to my own State, (the report) will only increase the mass of ignorance in the country, instead of lessening it.

II

The United States Office of Education has traveled far since those early days of Turkey and tobacco juice.

- o The \$15,000 budget now exceeds ten billion dollars.
- o The staff of four has grown to over 3,000.

- o 120 separate programs are now administered by this Office.
- o And each year we receive about 70,000 applications for grants.
- o We serve 16,000 school districts all across the land.
- o We deal with nearly a thousand colleges, universities, technical, and proprietary schools.
- o And over three million college students receive grants and loans from this Office.

The United States Office of Education has, in short, become one of the most diversified, most complicated, and most consequential institutions in this Nation.

And every day those of you assembled here come to work at something called "OE," transforming these empty piles of stone into a living institution.

Every day we come together

- not just to fill out forms
- or read reports
- or go to meetings
- or pass the paper clips
- but to serve students and teachers and administrators -- touching, quite literally, almost every school and higher learning institution in America.

But here I must strike a more somber note. For it is quite clear to me that the Office of Education--as an institution--also faces problems.

- . Since arriving here I've met confusion about the mission of the office.
- . I sensed that many of our colleagues feel trapped in bureaucratic boxes.
- . I've also sensed that all too often talents are not fully used.
- . Good ideas go unnoticed, or worse still -- they are suppressed.
- . Most seriously, perhaps, we don't have effective ways to communicate with one another.
- . And we do not develop fully the professional abilities of our staff.

These symptoms are not uncommon to bureaucracies. They are found anywhere. But while OE has its share of problems it has something else as well.

We have here

- . a high aspiration for our agency,
 - . a reservoir of talent,
 - . an eagerness to work for self-improvement,
- and these are precious assets which also give us special strength.

For years we've talked about

- . how large organizations must constantly revitalize themselves
- . and how adult workers must go on learning.

But too frequently the response of public and private agencies to these challenges has been unimaginative and lethargic.

All too often our Rube Goldberg structures simply squeak along.

III

I believe the time has come for the United States Office of Education to itself -- become a model of continued learning.

- . It's time for this Office to demonstrate that a Government agency can be more than a pipeline for providing grants that it can be flexible and wise enough to encourage individual growth.

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To begin this process I propose to establish within OE a new unit to be known as the Horace Mann Learning Center.

- o This new unit--a kind of "institution within an institution"--will serve as the continuing education center and consulting service for OE staff.
- o The new Center will bring together all existing staff training and enrichment programs and coordinate a great variety of new initiatives as well.

- o The new program will divide its work into 3 separate, closely related parts.

First, the Horace Mann Center will have a Specialized Career Development Unit. The goal will be to help OE employees develop working skills to perform their assignments more effectively and to advance themselves within the organization.

Training already underway will continue, including

- . the orientation for new employees,
- . the office skills lab,
- . the secretarial workshop,
- . OE participation in the Congressional Fellowship and Federal Executive Institute programs,
- . and on-the-job training for guaranteed student loan lender examiners, to name a few.

New activities will include steps to implement an expanded Management Development Project that has been prepared with care and thoughtfulness by many dedicated OE employees in recent months. The Office will also be participating in the Department's new Financial Management Institute training.

Second, the Horace Mann Center will also have an Academic Program Unit -- offering flexible degree programs for employees of OE at the Associate of Arts, baccalaureate, M.A., and doctorate levels.

The Center will not become a degree-granting institution. Rather, it will enter into formal agreements with one or more accredited colleges, technical institutes, and universities in order to provide degree-granting academic programs for OE employees. The new Center will offer a flexible program geared to serve the student, not the sponsoring institutions.

As a first step we are entering an agreement with George Washington University in which GW will offer a doctorate program for OE employees--right here in this Southwest site of the Office of Education. Students will be counseled here and classes will be offered after hours. This same "on site" collegiate pattern will be duplicated for other degrees as well.

Of course the Upward Mobility and Stride programs will continue, perhaps with some revisions.

Finally, the Horace Mann Center will serve as the administrative focal point for OE's National Leadership Unit.

- o I'm convinced the United States Office of Education must exercise leadership on the crucial educational issues of the day.
- o We must become a place where distinguished colleagues can assemble, where great ideas are exchanged, where alternatives for the future are discussed.

To promote this third objective, the new Center will serve as host to several projects.

--Every month or two, we will have an OE Forum.

This seminar for OE employees will permit OE staff to talk with other colleagues in this office about developments in their field. This feature will be an extension of the "Professional Seminars" that have been held.

-- A Teacher of the Year Lecture also will be sponsored.

Each year a Teacher of the Year is selected under the sponsorship of the Chief State School Officers, Encyclopedia Britannica, and the Ladies Home Journal. I propose that annually we invite this distinguished teacher to be a featured speaker at OE delivering a lecture on the importance of the classroom teacher in America.

-- I'd also like to propose a Student Panel. Once a year OE will invite a panel from the 50 Presidential Scholars which comes to Washington to share their views of American education with our staff and with the public.

-- The Education in America Seminar: A year-long symposium will be scheduled to permit distinguished educators and national leaders to discuss with us major themes in education. This seminar, to begin in 1978, will explore as its first topic "The American High School -- A New Vision." I'm pleased to let you know that Kenneth Clark, the distinguished scholar and statesman, will be our first guest lecturer.

There may be other innovations, too. As one example, we might establish a "residential scholars" program to bring members of the teaching, research, administration, and education governance community to OE to work directly with employees here for periods of several months, or a full year.

-- The Global Education Seminar. I'm convinced the Office of Education must be an international leader, too. We must consider education beyond our shores. And I propose we sponsor every year a seminar on "education and the world" which would relate developments here at home with educational developments abroad. I'm delighted to announce that former Senator William Fulbright, the distinguished statesman and friend of education who sponsored the Fulbright Exchange Program 31 years ago, will be our first lecturer in this important series, and at the same time, special recognition will be given to Senator Fulbright for his leadership in international scholarship.

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To carry out its programs, the Horace Mann Center will be a separate administrative unit within the Office of Education.

- o Its advisory board will include both outside members and employee representatives.
- o The staff will be small.
- o Its internal structure will be flexible enough to permit it to regroup easily as various projects begin and end throughout any year.

- o OE employees will be associated with activities of the Center as teachers, students, counselors, writers, and researchers. Rotating or short-term appointments to the Center will become a part of the career pattern of staff, as well as a primary way by which the work of the center will be conducted.

The Horace Mann Center -- which will be formally established early in 1978 -- is only a beginning--and a modest one at that. But it will coordinate our self-improvement efforts, promote leadership in Washington, and demonstrate that people and ideas are important.

In a world where the uniqueness of the individual is all too often smothered by the group, I often think of Vachel Lindsay's:

It is the world's one crime its babes grow dull,
Its poor are ox-like, limp and leaden-eyed.
Not that they starve, but starve so dreamlessly;
Not that they sow, but that they seldom reap;
Not that they serve, but have no gods to serve;
Not that they die, but that they die like sheep.

Our institutions should enhance not diminish those who carry on the work.

IV

During this Education Week I have one other priority to propose.

- . In the days ahead the U.S. Office of Education must not only promote the quality of our staff; we must clarify the purposes of this Office, too.

In 1867 the primary objective of OE was to gather data.

- . Today, 110 years later, we have three more fundamental objectives to fulfill.
- . We must continue to expand access to our colleges and schools.
- . We must push more aggressively for excellence.
- . And we must rebuild new linkages between the school and other social institutions.

It's true, of course, that access to formal education has expanded geometrically since Henry Barnard first organized this Office a century ago.

- . In 1870, only 2% of the Nation's youth completed high school. Today over 75% now finish secondary school, and half our high school graduates go on to higher education.

In recent years laws

- . like the Civil Rights Act
- . like ESEA
- . like Title IX

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. like the Education for all Handicapped Act, and
. like Section 504
have sparked a revolution of opportunity in this Nation.

We have dramatically declared that access to education
is a fundamental right. And we have openly affirmed that the
doors of learning must be opened

-- not only to the privileged few,
-- but also to those who for far too long have been
suppressed and bypassed and ignored.

We have made dramatic gains in opening up our schools.

But this is no time to be complacent.

In 1977

. We still have disadvantaged and handicapped children
who are not well served.
. We still have migrant and Native American children
who do not have equal access.
. And we still have academic cul-de-sacs at graduate
and professional schools which all too frequently
trap minorities and women.

Promoting equal access will continue to be a fundamental thrust
of this Administration.

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But now, urgent new priorities also have emerged.

The simple truth is that access to education is insufficient. We must have access to excellence as well, and to achieve this goal we must have linkages between the school and other social institutions.

To promote these urgent goals, I propose we organize within OE six interbureau teams:

First, we plan to organize a Basic Skills Team to focus on education content. This team will bring together representatives from 16 separate OE programs and staff offices to coordinate our somewhat blurred and fragmented focus on the fundamentals. We are determined to push aggressively a national literacy program to improve language usage and computation all across the land.

Second, a Teacher Education Team will focus on excellence in teaching. Eleven separate OE offices will begin to work together, led, of course, by Teacher Centers and Teacher Corps. The goal will be to encourage statewide networks for the continuing education of classroom teachers.

Third, a Teaching Resources Team will coordinate our five separate library, technology, and TV programs. The goal will be to encourage better connections between the classroom and these other education resources. We are already planning to host jointly with the Library of Congress a conference on "The Classroom, Television, and the Book."

Fourth, a Gifted and Talented Student Team will coordinate our work in fourteen separate offices. They are able students in every social and economic group, and I'm convinced the day has come for us to support these students. We must see to it that special talents of the gifted are encouraged, not ignored.

Fifth, An Urban High School Team also will be organized. OE colleagues from a dozen separate programs will come together to focus on the drop-out problem in the urban school and on chronic low achievement. It will encourage more flexible "schools within the school" arrangements at the upper grades and promote more academic options--including work experience.

Finally, the School-Community Team will assemble eight separate OE offices to bring into the school a broad range of special services and also to tie the school more closely to the home.

To summarize we have today three primary purposes to fulfill:

- . expanding access
- . promoting excellence
- . and building bridges between the school and other social institutions.

To promote these goals, we'll have six interbureau teams to focus on the content, the teacher, the school and the student.

One further note:

I also believe Art Education and International Education must be given greater emphasis. To promote these areas I'd like to organize interagency panels to bring together OE personnel and to coordinate our work more effectively with other agencies to develop Federal strategies in these essential areas.

Some years ago John Gardner observed:

"We like to think that institutions are shaped according to the best men" and women I might add "in them, and sometimes they are.

But that is not the only way institutions get shaped.

Sometimes institutions are the sum of the historical accidents that have happened to them.

Like the sand dunes in the desert, they are shaped by influences but not by purposes."

However, Dr. Gardner did express the conviction--and it is a conviction which I share--

- that "men (and women) can shape their institutions to suit their proposes

- provided that they are clear as to what those purposes are;
- and provided that they are not too gravely afflicted with the diseases of which institutions die--among them complacency, myopia, (and) an unwillingness to choose..."

I share this much and it is also my conviction that the true test of leadership comes, not at the pinnacle of success, but when times are tough. And in education at this moment in human history the job we have is difficult, but I'm convinced it can be done.

One final word. Horace Mann--the one honored by our new learning center--has been called the "Father of the Common Schools."

- o Born just twenty years after our Declaration of Independence, Mann played a leading role in establishing the basic school system in America.
- o He gave up a law practice to become Secretary of the newly-established Massachusetts State Board of Education, and at the end of his career he was President of Antioch College. Mann's influence was dramatic.
- o He pushed for free education.
- o He founded the first State Normal School in 1839 to improve the quality of teacher preparation.

- o He resigned from the Board in 1848 to take a seat in the House of Representatives as an anti-slavery Whig.
- o He fought vigorously for the establishment of the United States Office of Education.

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In his last public statement, Horace Mann summed up his vision of public service when he said:

"Be ashamed to die until you have won some victory for humanity."

Today at the United States Office of Education

- . Our lives so often seem rooted in the day-to-day
- . Our grand gestures are infrequent
- . And our spirits sometime sag because of cramped and crowded quarters.

But beyond all of these constraints I'm convinced there is a greater vision and a larger purpose to fulfill. And in the days ahead as we work together I'm also confident we will be able to win some small "victory for humanity."