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Excellence and Equality of Opportunity

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many people have given their lives to make it so.

Consider what might happen if we were to engage in a worldwide relentless insistence upon just one of the ideals, one of the essential standards of the free society, that is, the necessity for truthfulness, fairness and objectivity in the resolution of conflicts. In any dispute, if one party tells lies or twists the truth, the whole process for the just resolution of differences is compromised, and the possibility for an enduring peaceful outcome is damaged or destroyed. We have everything to gain and nothing to lose by exposing and condemning half-truths, distortions of fact and outright lies when they are enunciated by governments, and indeed, Senator Moynihan earlier and now Ambassador Kirkpatrick have made such denunciations in the United Nations, but we must go the next large step and insist, over and over again, that dishonesty escalates conflict and ravages peaceful relationships. Truthfulness is one of the absolute requirements of peace. This fact of mortal import to all people we must trumpet to the corners of the earth.

A carefully planned, intensive, worldwide campaign for the principles and ideals of liberty offers two large benefits. In the first place, totalitarianism cannot withstand such a campaign, for the blessings of the free society are, in fact, what is craved by people everywhere. The long-range result of the campaign would be a mobilization of world opinion in support of the free nations which genuinely desire a peaceful world and against totalitarian imperialism. In the second place, the campaign would begin to construct the only sure foundation for an endur-

ing world peace since, ultimately, it is the restrained and considerate behavior defined by the ideals of freedom that makes for peaceful relationships in a family, a neighborhood, a city or a world.

This fourth foreign policy option, if adopted, could not be substituted for the damage control course forced upon us by Soviet expansionism, nor could it at this time permit us to diminish the military forces which in fact do cause aggressors to think twice before starting a war, but it does offer a concrete agenda for developing a worldwide foundation of civilized conscience, and that, I insist, is man's best hope for a peaceful world.

If we allow the nuclear freeze to distract us from forcefully addressing the actual *causes* of war, then the veterans whom today we seek to remember and honor will have been betrayed by the civilization for which they made their sacrifices. On the other hand, the extensive popular involvement in the nuclear freeze gives our leaders an opportunity to capitalize upon this manifest yearning for peace, and to enlist the support of the nuclear freeze participants in other activities which actually can provide a better chance for a peaceful world.

And that, after all, is the profoundly longed-for goal of all Americans — a peaceful world. Recently we heard from this platform a welcome definition of patriotism. Let me offer another. American patriotism is an eternal love affair with a set of noble ideals, and that is a patriotism which can give hope to all peoples everywhere.

## Excellence and Equality of Opportunity

### EDUCATION AND SOCIETY

By DAVID P. GARDNER, *President, University of Utah*

*Delivered at Westminster College's Executive Lecture Series, Salt Lake City, Utah, November 2, 1982*

**M**Y topic, "Education and Society," is an expansive one dealing with basic concepts of "society" and "education" and the relationship between the two. In dealing with such a fundamental yet elusive relationship, I wish to proceed along three principal lines of discussion.

The first is to view the relationship between education and society in a comparative perspective, i.e., what can we observe and learn from a comparison of the education systems of the other industrialized societies with our own? (In assessing comparative education studies, I am indebted to two papers prepared for the National Commission on Excellence in Education by Christopher Hurn and Barbara Burn of the University of Massachusetts and by Thorsten Husén of the University of Stockholm.)

Next, I wish to comment on the state of American education as reflected in testimony given before the National Commission on Excellence in Education. Finally, I wish to conclude by drawing to our attention what I regard as significant connections between the health of education on the one hand and the health of society on the other.

*Control of Education.* One point of comparison among and between various educational systems is to assess the locus of power and control. For example, the Soviet Union, France, and Japan stand out as highly centralized systems where virtually every important educational decision is made at the national

level. In contrast, England and Germany, though very different from one another, are mixed cases of local, regional, and central control. The U.S., along with much of Canada, stands virtually alone at the other end of the continuum as an example of an educational system where local and popular control are dominant.

To the extent that power to make educational decisions is centralized, the role of parents and of local community opinion, both of great importance in the U.S., is minimized. In the Soviet Union, for example, parents are often criticized to their face by teachers for their child's shortcomings — for allowing the child to stay up late, or for failing to insist on sufficient homework. In considerable part, this relationship reflects the relatively weaker power of parents and the greater prestige of teachers that seem to be associated with centralized systems. Japanese, Soviet, and French teachers are in fact, if not in theory, civil servants. They are paid a salary by the central government and enjoy considerable independence from parental or community control.

Teachers often have a career path which will involve considerable geographic mobility. A French secondary teacher, for example, might expect to begin his career in a small provincial town as one of two subject matter specialists in the school; then to rise gradually in a series of jobs to head of a department, and then to end his career as a vice principal or principal in one of

the largest schools in a big city in another part of the country. In these respects, the teacher lives in the community but is not, in the American sense, part of the community.

Some researchers contend that the local control characteristic of the American system tends to be associated with the low status of teachers in this country. Here teachers are presumed to be answerable to the local community and parents in particular, both for their own and their students' conduct and performance. In contrast to French or Japanese teachers, contemporary American teachers seem routinely to be the object of pressure from angry or frustrated parents.

Central control of education means that educational change, when it occurs, is most likely to be planned, intentional change. A great deal of this form of planning has taken place in Europe over the last quarter century. While the expansion of American colleges after World War II was in considerable part a market response to student demand, the European expansion of higher education has been shaped by professional educational planners at the central governmental level. New universities, polytechnics and technical institutes were created after World War II as part of what was in many countries a national plan of educational expansion. Planners' projections were frequently wrong — student demands shifted, educational fashions as to what was relevant and worth studying changed, and the huge increase in demand for college graduates, which was anticipated in the 1960s, failed to materialize in the 1970s. The British government, to take one example, is now engaged in the painful task of partially or totally eliminating a number of the institutions that it created in the last quarter century. This suggests that planners do not necessarily forecast the future any better than a freer market.

The decentralization of the American system, by contrast, makes long-range educational planning or even a national educational policy very difficult to construct, indeed, if not impossible to do so.

*Selectivity and Participation.* Compared with all other industrial societies, the U.S. has an extraordinarily nonselective educational system. In the United States, and virtually nowhere else until very recently, it is possible for a mildly persistent but singularly untalented student to complete high school, to attend a two-year college, and to transfer to some four-year institution and obtain a bachelor's degree. Virtually every other society places a series of checkpoints along this path so as to screen out the less able or uncommitted student. In Britain and France a series of examinations makes it unlikely that such a student would achieve a university place and, even in the unlikely event that it occurred, examinations at universities would screen out the student before graduation. In Germany, where as late as the mid-1960s only 9 percent of the relevant age group graduated from upper secondary school as compared with 75 percent in the U.S., this hypothetical student would probably not be admitted to the academic preparatory secondary school and, thus, would have no chance to go on to higher education.

This hypothetical example oversimplifies what in reality is a much more complex matter. The contrast between our system and those of most other societies in this regard is really threefold. First, the American system permits, or more accurately encourages, high percentages of students to remain in the educational system for longer periods of time. Second, the American system tends not to erect clear, well-marked boundaries between high and low status education either in the form of separate schools or in the form of impermeable divisions within

schools. Finally, the American system tends to select by attrition rather than by examination. American students tend to drop out as often as they are flunked out.

There is, of course, considerable evidence of other societies' broadening their educational system to include wider participation for longer periods of time and fewer distinctions between schools for the academically inclined and those not so gifted. But despite this evidence of convergence, the differences have been and remain profound.

Access has been democratized almost everywhere, but access, outside the American system, remains controlled by examinations which imply the existence of agreed upon academic standards. Examinations in turn mean that boundaries between different kinds of institutions and between curricula within institutions are relatively impermeable. At first sight, for example, comprehensive schools in England may resemble American comprehensive schools. Certainly they aim to overcome the kind of rigid divisions between curricula and students which characterized the old academic preparatory "grammar" school and the "secondary modern" schools. But between one-third and one-half of the student body in the new comprehensive schools are preparing for the relatively prestigious General Certificate of Educational Examination and the remainder for the much less prestigious Certificate in Secondary Education or for no examination at all. The difference in the curricula appropriate for preparation for these two examinations is substantial and difficult to move between.

This tendency toward impermeable boundaries, characteristic of examination-based systems, is also visible in higher education. American universities, for example, allow the ready transfer of courses and credits from one institution to another. Thus, students can move freely from a junior college to a major state university on the assumption that an introductory biology course at both institutions is by and large similar. But elsewhere in the industrialized world, with the exception of West Germany, transferring between institutions tends to be quite difficult. In the more prestigious institutions, difficult and demanding examinations either before admission or before graduation separate these institutions from others as guardians of particularly high educational standards, which standards would be regarded as threatened if movement from lesser to more prestigious institutions were made relatively easy.

The ways individual differences are perceived and taken into account in organizing formal education in various societies are diverse and stem from long-standing differences in educational and political philosophy. In Western Europe and North America, they stem from Rousseau's famous discourses which argued not only that all human beings have the same political rights but also have the same right to basic education.

There are essentially three typical solutions to the problem of how individual and group differences are taken into account in designing educational systems so as to make provision for individual differences.

First is the American model with the primary school and then the comprehensive high school which accommodates all or most of the students from a given catchment area under the same roof but with differentiation by means of programs and ability grouping or homogeneous grouping within programs, particularly at the secondary level. Between-school and between-region diversification is built into the system by provision for local autonomy and parochial schools. On the whole, however, the common public school provides the basic formal

education to most children in a given area and epitomizes the classical American conception of equal opportunity. By being exposed to a uniform pedagogic milieu with comparable resources and by being mixed with age mates from all social strata and ethnic groups, the provision of equal educational opportunity is thought to be obtained in its highest form. The massive surveys that were conducted in the 1960s, such as the Coleman report, the Plowden report in England, and the IEA 20-country study, however, revealed that social background accounted for more between-student and even between-school differences in student achievement than did school resources.

Second is the West European model with a transfer of selected elite from primary to secondary academic school before the end of mandatory schooling. Such a transfer has, until recently, taken place after four or five years of primary school (from time to time postponed by means of the introduction of "orientation cycles," e.g., in France and Germany, and other practices).

Let me illustrate the West European model by citing the case of West Germany. Well into the 1960s, the decisive junction in the educational (and life) careers of young people in Germany was at the age of 10, when transfer on a selective basis took place to the 9-year Gymnasium which prepared students for the university. Some 20 to 25 percent of primary school students were selected for the Gymnasium or middle school. Of these only about one-third or one-fourth graduated with an *Abitur*, which served as a uniform entrance ticket to the university. The selective features of the German system contributed to the crystallization of imbalances between social strata in terms of participation in secondary and higher education. In the early 1960s, Ralf Dahrendorf showed that 50 percent of the university students came from homes of civil servants and professionals, who represented some 1 percent of the work force, whereas 1 percent came from working class homes who made up 50 percent of the work force. The IEA surveys showed that West Germany had the most pronounced social bias in the composition of upper secondary school enrollment among all the 20 participating countries.

Third is the East European model. Here the unitary school integrates all types of schools covering compulsory school age, be they academic or vocational. The unitary model is based upon a social philosophy of a classless society and the school is viewed as a major instrument in achieving this end.

By way of summarizing comparative studies of education, I believe three conclusions are of particular interest in the context of this address:

1. The earlier the selection takes place for separate academic schools and programs which run parallel to schools and programs for the remainder of students of mandatory school age, the stronger the association between family background and school attainments. Thus, the longer the period of common schooling for all children, the less pronounced the imbalances between social strata.

2. The greater the uniformity of structure and financial resources, the lower the between-school variability in outcomes. In the International Educational Assessment 20-country survey, it was found that the between-school variance in student achievement among 14-year-olds was greatest in India, modest in England and the United States, and lowest in Sweden.

3. Finally, and perhaps the most significant finding of Thorsten Husén's extensive studies was that a comprehensive educational system by its openness, lack of selective examinations during the primary and initial secondary school period and its

high retention rate appears to be a more effective strategy for nurturing a nation's youthful talent overall. By casting a net as widely as possible, an attempt is made to "catch" an optimum number of fish. A selective system with early separation of students who are rated to have academic potential is destined to produce good end products. But this advantage is bought at the high price of excluding a sizeable number of students from lower-class homes from further education and of limiting the opportunities for the great mass of students to gain access to quality education.

From a comparative perspective, then, the American educational system rates high marks in terms of the breadth of its coverage as well as the performance level of its most able students. Both the science and mathematics international surveys have demonstrated that the top five to ten percent of American secondary students score as well in these fields as do a similar proportion in other countries. Average performance levels of American students are, of course, lower because a far broader spectrum of students are retained in U.S. comprehensive high schools.

Given these very positive philosophical and educational performance ratings, why has the proportion of the public who give a high rating to public schools dropped from 48 percent in 1974 to 36 percent in 1981?

Drawing from testimony provided to the National Commission on Excellence in Education over the past 14 months, may I cite selective examples of concern:

—Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and ACT test scores have declined over the past 15 to 20 years. In 1963, the average SAT verbal score was 478; the average math score was 502. By 1981, the verbal score had declined 54 points and the math score 36 points. We have witnessed a leveling and even slight increase this year, however, and we may be experiencing a reversal of these trends.

—The number and proportion of high scoring students on the SAT have fallen precipitously over the past 8 to 10 years, i.e., the number of seniors who scored over 650 fell from 53,800 or 5.3 percent in 1972 to 29,000 or 2.9 percent in 1980.

—Although there has been much publicity about falling achievement scores in the "basics," the more alarming downward trends are in the "higher order" skills such as the ability to reason, conceptualize, or apply facts to complex situations. Data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress and from the National Institute of Education indicate that while reading instruction in the elementary grades is relatively effective and continues to improve, the performance of 17-year-old students in higher order reading comprehension skills is not any better than 13-year-olds.

—Grade inflation has occurred, both at secondary and post-secondary levels, during the same period that test scores have been declining. Professor Alexander Astin's annual survey of entering freshmen reveals, for example, that nearly 60 percent of 1981 freshmen agree that "grading in the high schools has become too easy." Parents seem to agree. A recent Washington Post/ABC News Poll indicates that about four parents in ten of high school or near high school age students criticize educators for offering "pass through" education with unjustified high grades.

—The type and quality of secondary school preparation does make a difference in performance levels of postsecondary education. The State of Kentucky, which has recently enacted minimum pre-college preparation requirements for all students

planning education beyond high school, conducted a pilot evaluation study which found very substantial differences in collegiate performance on the basis of compliance with the subject area requirement. For example, students who had met a given subject area preparation requirement earned an average of 37 percent more total credits during their freshman year, and compiled a cumulative grade point average of 44 percent higher than students who had not met the subject requirement. Similarly, students who had met the subject area minimum requirement had ACT sub-test scores in the corresponding subject area averaging 41 percent higher and ACT Composite scores averaging 38 percent higher.

At the Commission's hearing on science, mathematics and technology education, held at Stanford University last March, several areas of concern emerged, for example:

—A survey of the 50 state science supervisors in 1981 revealed that over 75 percent of the states are experiencing a "critical shortage" or "shortage" of mathematics, physics, and chemistry teachers at the secondary level.

—The National Research Council's recent report entitled *The State of School Science* reports that only one-third of U.S. high schools require more than one year of math or science and that only one-half of U.S. high school graduates have taken more than one year of biology with no other science and math beyond algebra.

—Up-to-date curricula in science appropriate for students not planning a career in science are in very short supply.

—Enrollments in remedial (high school level) courses in four-year colleges and universities rose 72 percent from 1975 to 1980 compared with only a 7 percent increase in undergraduate enrollments over the same period. Remedial courses now account for 42 percent of all two-year college mathematics enrollments.

Taking just one other hearing, of the six held, as further illustration, I cite some of the serious issues raised with respect to teacher education and the practice of teaching in this country.

—Between 40 and 50 percent of those employed as first-year teachers this year will not be teaching seven years from now; furthermore, two-thirds to three-fourths of those who do leave will do so in the first four years of teaching.

—Several studies, including the National Longitudinal Study, have shown a differential rate in the retention of those teachers who are highest in academic ability and those who are lowest. For example, of those who are in the upper 20 percent of measured academic ability, only 26 percent intend to teach at age 30 as contrasted with approximately 60 percent of those with the lowest academic ability.

—In contrast to the example given earlier of a French school teacher with a more distinct career line, the American teaching "profession" is decidedly "flat," i.e., teachers do not progress through a series of increased professional responsibility and they reach the top of salary schedules early in their teaching careers, thereby stifling further financial rewards.

I wish to conclude my formal remarks this evening by making some observations about the relationship between education and society. In doing so, I recognize that clear causal relationships are problematic and that research has thus far yielded up precious little commonly accepted evidence. To some extent, however, I believe the relationships are self-evident and can be reasonably derived from common sense.

The educational system does and, in my view, should, reflect the larger society of which it is part. The American educational

system mirrors, generally speaking, basic American values. My purpose in citing West European and East European models was to contrast the structures and values of those educational systems with our own. I do not propose that we emulate these educational systems which reflect societies more rigid in their class structure than is our society. This nation has historically broadened access as it could and, at least over the past century, has provided resources sufficient for major gains in the area of increased educational opportunity. Our commitment to increasing access and reasonably demanding academic standards has set us apart from other nations. However, public perceptions and objective indicators presently point to disturbing declines in the qualitative performance of our public education system. Over the past ten to fifteen years, education, with its widely publicized declines in numbers of students, has slipped as a public policy priority. Part of this slippage, particularly in recent years, is a function of demographics and short-term self-interest. Seventy percent of U.S. households now have no school-age children! No wonder school bonds have more difficulty in securing voter approval.

Slippage in support for the schools is, of course, not due solely to such political head counting. In addition to the educational performance indicators previously cited, there is also the problem of the multitude of purposes which our schools are now expected to obtain. In a sense, American schools are a victim of their past successes. Schools have greatly expanded access and retention, have taken on the responsibility of being the vehicle for many social reforms and the pursuit of diverse educational interests. The more complex and pluralistic our society has become, the more difficult it is for the schools to satisfy the varied demands of the sub-groups within it.

Nowhere is the expansion of purposes better reflected than in the curriculum of the American high school. The proliferation of courses and programs which has recently occurred, particularly within the high school, arose, in part, in response to what was an inappropriately narrow nineteenth century curriculum. Myopia, however, has given way to a deluge of courses, e.g., character education, consumer education, distributive education, driver education, sex education, family education, and safety education — as though the schools are and should be responsible for educating about every aspect of modern life.

The central purposes of the schools — which, as John Henry Martin has suggested, are to foster intellectual competence and citizenship in a free society irrespective of one's chosen field of work — have been smothered, indeed nearly supplanted by assumptions about the role of the school in society rather than about the role of education in the schools. Our confusion about these matters tends to deprive us of our capacity to make judgments as to the worth of one purpose as against another and as to the significance of student performance in one area compared with another.

For reasons that are traceable to demographic changes in the population, the structure and character of family life, the governing structure of our nation's schools, the nature of the work force, the composition of the student body, the patterns of school funding, the contending views of professional educators, and the politics of education, the schools have tended to take the view in recent years that if education is to be had, it is to be had in the schools. Such assumptions, or ambitions if one prefers, are increasingly unrealistic and, in my opinion, will be made obsolete by forces at work within our society that are well beyond the capacity of the schools to control. The education of

our citizens will be less and less the monopoly of the schools in the formal and conventional sense of the term and their futures will be promising only if what they undertake to claim as their proper and legitimate role is fitted to what they are uniquely able to do well, i.e., to help develop in their students the intellectual skills of effective speaking, reading, writing, comprehending, analyzing, reasoning, interpreting, extrapolating, synthesizing and computing, and the evaluation of evidence and proof; and to foster the skills of citizenship which will enable students to fix their place and possibilities within the scheme of the larger social structure, to understand the broad sweep of ideas that have shaped the world and animate its economic, political, cultural, religious, and social systems, and to grasp the significance between free and repressive societies.

We as a nation have been living on the educational momentum of the past. During the late 1950s and early 1960s, education received renewed national and local attention. There was a widespread sense of importance and urgency, occasioned in part by Sputnik, about the business of education. This sense of priority, for example, was evident in the growth of research in our universities. From the end of World War II to 1970, the compound growth rate for funding of university-linked research and development averaged 15 percent per year. It is not surprising that in the late 1950s, the U.S. accounted for 80 percent of all the new products developed in the world. Education is important to our economic and political security as a nation and public recognition of these relationships are vitally important if the significance and quality of education are to be grasped and furthered. For example, a study commission of the National Science Board, in a preliminary report released just two weeks ago, concluded that the root causes of the problems facing precollegiate mathematics, science, and technology education in the U.S. are related to public perceptions and priorities.

I believe the time is ripe for education at all levels to narrow the range of its programs by focusing upon what it can do best among the array of educational programs which presently entangle its purposes and encumber its natural standards. This can be done while preserving the comprehensive character of its student body and the invitation such openness represents to all those who wish to advance their education. This more restrained view of education's essential purposes would permit it to concentrate resources, talent and energies upon the development of the student's intellectual competencies and citizenship capabilities. With the focus of educational programs being more tightly defined and more narrowly scoped, the formulation of standards and expected levels of performance could be both articulated and benchmarked against a heightened sense of

student potential and teacher demand.

Genuine excellence, under such circumstances, would be more clearly discerned and striven for, thus pulling the middle toward the upper reaches of their potential rather than permitting them in the absence of such norms to slip toward the lowest common denominator — giving rise to minimum competencies rather than excellence. The myriad of other educational programs which our citizens have come to seek and which education has come to want would, under this scheme, be left to the sponsorship of other institutions and resources in our society.

There is, of course, a tendency for some to view a commitment to standards and excellence in education as elitist, as emulative of the European model discussed earlier, and as hostile to the unfinished agenda of further enlarging educational opportunity. In this view, educational excellence and equality of opportunity are seen as competing, almost mutually exclusive, with undue attention to the former being considered as undemocratic and to the latter as being to democratic. In the 19th century, many foreign observers and even some Americans believed that by its very nature the United States was incapable of producing anything of real distinction. The British critic, Matthew Arnold, for example, deplored the forces that worked against any kind of distinction in our national life and talked about the leveling process fostered by a democratic society.

We have been an ambitious nation in attempting to achieve both equality of opportunity and excellence in our educational system. Achieving both these aims requires a judicious balancing of efforts required in each policy area. When the idea of excellence and the effort needed to reach it are neglected, demeaned or opposed, as I believe we have had a tendency to do in recent years, the individual and the society are losers together. To conclude, I wish to quote John Gardner whose superb book, *Excellence*, crystallized many of these important issues:

We cannot have islands of excellence in a sea of slovenly indifference to standards. In an era when the masses of people were mute and powerless it may have been possible for a tiny minority to maintain standards regardless of their surroundings. But today the masses of people are neither mute nor powerless. As consumers, as voters, as the source of public opinion, they heavily influence level of taste and performance. They can create a climate supremely inimical to standards of any sort.

They can also create a climate conducive to and supportive of standards if the idea of excellence is seen to be a positive force in our society rather than one to be shunted aside or ignored.

## The Auto Industry in Transition

### THE OPPORTUNITY AND THE THREAT

By W. PAUL TIPPETT, *Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, American Motors Corporation*

*Delivered at the City Club, Cleveland, Ohio, November 5, 1982*

IT'S always a pleasure to visit Cleveland, and to be here with the City Club is a special pleasure. I understand this club is the oldest weekly forum in the country — founded in 1912. For you auto buffs, that's the year when Ransom E. Olds sold his company to General Motors and introduced what he called

his "farewell car." Just before selling out, Mr. Olds introduced the Reo — R. E. O. — his initials. He ran several newspaper ads proclaiming that the 1912 Reo was the perfect car — it could never be improved on, and nobody should bother trying.

Needless to say, the rest of the industry had other ideas and