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"LINKAGES FOR TOMORROW"

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REMARKS
by
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"COMMUNITY COLLABORATION IN CAREER EDUCATION: BUSINESS/INDUSTRY,
LABOR AND EDUCATION"

This year, AFL-CIO commemorates the 100th Anniversary of the founding of the modern American labor movement. It was right here - in Pittsburgh - in Pennsylvania - that the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions held its founding convention in November 1881. A few years later it would become the American Federation of Labor. That founding convention devoted three of the 13 points in its Declaration of Principles to education, urging legislation that would enforce, by compulsion, the education of children; affirming that "if the State has the right to exact certain compliance with its demands, then it is also the right of the State to educate its people to the proper understanding of such demands." Included in the Declaration was support of laws forbidding child labor and enacting uniform apprentice laws throughout the nation.

Much of the labor movement's history and traditions developed here in Pennsylvania. The first strike in our nation was that of printers in Philadelphia in 1786. And cordwainers -- whose job classification has been changed today to shoemakers -- were tried for "conspiring to seek higher wages" in 1806. The first national union - the Molders - was established in our state, as was also the first Central Labor Council. And who has not heard of the Molly Maguires? Industrial unionism, which formed the basis for the CIO,

whose first constitutional convention was in Pittsburgh, was led by our state's coal miners and steelworkers. How much of this history do the students who graduate - or drop out - from our schools get to know--even though most of them when they start their careers at whatever level that might be -- will have some direct relationships with unions--and should be prepared with a knowledge of its history and of their role and responsibility as members.

A system of free public education was first demanded by Pennsylvania unions in 1827, and the platform of the Workingmen's Party which led this fight called for a system that would "unite under one roof the children of the poor... and the children of the rich." During this period of harsh attacks on public education, the labor movement continues to champion its cause as essential to a democratic society. The sons and daughters of American unionists are prominent consumers of public education, and organized labor is deeply concerned with the quality of that education, and with the role of the schools in preparing their children for both life and work.

Consistent with its traditions, organized labor has over the past century vigorously supported legislation leading to the development of land grant colleges, the Vocational Education Act and its various amendments, the Comprehensive & Employment Training Act (CETA), the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and Higher Education and Career Education Acts. On both federal and state levels it has championed ample funding for public schools, integrated schools and quality education.

Because organized labor has been concerned with training its own members and with the education of its members' children, it is deeply committed to effective and quality career education.

I would like to comment here today on labor's viewpoint on the following three broad areas:

1. The role of educational institutions in career education,
2. The role of government - particularly implications of today's federal policies, and
3. The role of the labor movement.

First, THE ROLE OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Although labor and industry may look at career education from different perspectives, and will differ at times on specifics, there has been general agreement on what qualities and competencies we would like students to emerge with from high schools, vocational schools and colleges.

To determine what employers expect from new workers and how they perceive the present preparation of students for the world of work, the Philadelphia-based Research for Better Schools earlier this year undertook a study, "Perceptions of the Preparation of Youth for Work." Covering Eastern Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware, the report came up with five employee attributes that appear most important to employers:

1. Positive attitude, dependability, communication skills,
2. basic academic skills, and interaction with fellow workers.

Attributes of lesser significance were:

Craftsmanship, interaction with superiors, productivity, and knowledge of the world of work.

The employers also agreed that it was more important for young workers to have good transition skills than previous work experience.

They also felt that young workers were most deficient in precisely those attributes which they see to be most important, namely: positive attitudes, dependability and communication skills. Most union officers would generally agree with those conclusions.

Recently a group of some fifteen Philadelphia business representatives met with staff of Villanova University, which is pioneering

in training future teachers in concepts of career education. Those present -- I was the only non employer representative -- responded to a question, "What career education skills, attitudes, etc. would you like to see in recent graduates (high school and college)?" In an hour of discussion, the group listed 37 items, from general ones such as "ability to communicate," "higher ethical standards," and "social responsibility "; to very specific items such as "writing skills (grammar)," "computation skills," "appearance, manner, demeanor."

The group then ranked the 37 in numerical order---and the conclusions of the group listed "ability to communicate " as getting the highest vote. "Solid reading and comprehensive skills " and "writing skills" (grammar) tying for second. "Respect for job and value of work," "How to find a job" and "Flexibility" tied for the next spot.

In a slightly varied listing of which responses were most important, the results were, first: "ability to communicate," second, "well rounded background," and third, "respect for job and value for work." I had ranked the first two in that order - so my vote matched the pattern. You may imagine I was upset, however, that running tied for last in rank on all responses by this group -- excluding me, of course -- was "how labor unions work -- role and responsibility."

Too much emphasis on career education has been on helping students make early career choices. This, labor believes, is the wrong approach. Career education in our schools should focus on widening career options for students rather than freezing the student into a single trade or a single "saleable skill." Technology changes rapidly. It is estimated that half the job classifications that will exist ten years from now have not yet been discovered or invented.

Career education must prepare students for the world of work, true, but not at the expense of such broader activity as will help them reach their full potential. Education is to prepare youth for life-- and not simply for a specific job. Schools must promote adaptability based on the broadest possible academic and vocational programs.

We must develop a closer linkage between education and work, with particular concentration on easing the transition from school to work. Most jobs today, and certainly those of the future, will require an emphasis by the schools, on basic academic achievement levels.

We must try out new approaches to reach and motivate students. Alternative schools have been successful in Philadelphia---the High School for Performing Arts, the new Engineering High School, and High School Academies in the fields of Business, Electrical and Automotive Trades have proven their worth. A new Academy in Health Services, is now being planned.

Schools have a responsibility for adult education and a particular priority to reach the young people who have dropped out of the formal school system.

Retraining of workers is a continuing need. Particularly in Pennsylvania, which lost 251,000 manufacturing jobs between 1969 and 1980 (only New York State lost more). Retraining of displaced and laid-off workers is a responsibility of public education.

The Pennsylvania School Code provides that upon written application of fifteen or more residents above the age of sixteen the board of school directors shall provide free extension education (they may close the classes if attendance falls below ten). And the School Code further provides for vocational education for our school youth and adults when twenty or more apply, "having an

administratively feasible educational objective." I do not believe that even one school district in the Commonwealth fully implements these sections of the School Code - even though they represent our official state policy.

In recent years, there have been closer linkages between schools and other career education institutions - particularly CETA. 22% of YTEP---Youth Training and Employment Program - funds go to the Local Educational Agency (LEA), and good cooperation between schools and CETA has developed. With CETA being dismantled - and efforts to wipe out youth programs even while the legislation still exists - the future is bleak. But perhaps schools now need to apply their experience of working with CETA to cooperation with community colleges and universities, private schools, community groups, and other educational institutions.

Teacher training is essential. Teachers at all grade levels should be aware of the principles of career education. Career choices are of interest even to the child in kindergarten - and regardless of the high school teacher's subject matter, relevant career questions do arise in the classroom. At the prodding of the State Advisory Council on Vocational Education, the State Board of Education established in its Program Approval Standards for Undergraduate and Graduate Programs, a provision in Standard VIII that "each certification candidate shall demonstrate the ability to make students aware of the world of work, its opportunities, and to assist students in making the transition from the school to the community." Our teaching training institutions must provide students with this competency. Some in the Philadelphia area, with Villanova in the lead, have been discussing methods and curriculum - but little has as yet been accomplished.

Closely related are in-service courses for those already in the

profession - a responsibility of local school districts.

Equal opportunity is basic in career education. Career choices must be open to all. No longer should minority students be made to feel that certain occupations remain closed to them and should therefore not be prepared for. No longer should female students be taught that some jobs are suitable for men and others for women. Handicapped students should be encouraged to fulfill their potentialities. Great strides have been made in the past few years. But the current attack on affirmative action and the weakening of regulations, will resurrect the barriers of discrimination in career opportunities.

Let me now comment on the role of government in career education.

What role do government structures, other than schools, play? Educators have differed on whether there should be a separate U.S. Department of Education or such functions should have remained in HEW. But today's thrust in government appears to be not only to abolish the entire Department of Education but also its functions. True, the individual states administer public education. Yet our 50 states are highly interrelated, with similar educational problems - and success in attacking and solving these problems should be shared among them - with a strong federal role.

Technological changes and labor market information are national in scope, and unemployment is rarely a result of local phenomena alone, but of national, and often international factors. Careers - whether of electrician or surgeon - revolve around national standards. Apprenticeship programs, particularly in construction where there is much mobility, are based on national standards. The current deemphasis of the role of the federal government in education - and other aspects of our society - is, organized labor believes, a dangerous trend.

Money alone may not solve problems - and programs must be evaluated

continually to assure high quality. But federal aid has shown itself justified, and the sharp federal budget cuts in vocational and career education, school lunch programs, scholarship funds and research grants to colleges will prove a disaster for quality education.

Nor is our state blameless here. Often it is not the law, but the regulations written to implement the law that creates problems. One of the new regulations proposed by the Pennsylvania Department of Welfare would remove from AFDC families whose children attend college. This is a shocking manifestation of educational elitism. Its effect would be to out-and-out bar from higher education the children of this state's neediest citizens - and to prevent them from achieving their full career potential. Frequently these very students would be among the most highly motivated to have overcome financial handicap to arrive that high on the educational ladder.

Career education has at times been promoted as a solution to the serious problem of youth unemployment, now at its highest level with fifty percent of minority youth unemployed and 19% of all young people. Yet youth unemployment does not so much stem from lack of training and work preparation as it does from the simple fact that there are not enough jobs. The best assurance of a smooth transition from school to work is establishment of a full employment economy.

This nation passed a Humphrey - Hawkins Full Employment Act, but it was never enforced. Between 2 and 2½ million new jobs must be generated each year to meet the needs of a growing labor force--as more women and youth enter it, in addition to the jobs needed to replace those wiped out by technological change and to cut into the backlog of unemployment. Young people are at a disadvantage in competing for jobs - training and experience. And also because - unlike unions,

women, minorities - they are unorganized, and unable to fight effectively for an affirmative action share of the jobs. They need advocates and career education supporters can be that. But they will always be at a disadvantage in the fight for jobs---unless our nation moves into a full employment economy. For the problems of youth cannot be separated from those of adults; the crisis of youth unemployment is a crisis of the total economic system. And organized labor says that government must assume a responsibility.

Statistics in recent years showed that 40% to 45% of black youth who were working were on Department of Labor funded jobs. We were concerned that not enough of them found work in the private sector. But now with the cutbacks of CETA---both in public service jobs and in training programs--black youth will not only not be in private sector jobs, but opportunities for them under government programs will be limited or abolished.

Indeed government policies in many areas affect future careers. Increasing the age for eligibility for Social Security benefits, as proposed, would mean fewer workers retire and fewer jobs open up for new entrants into the work force.

Many state government leaders are looking forward to implementation of block grants to the states. Without clear guidelines on the distribution of what few federal funds there will be, conflicts will exist on division of funds even loosely geared for education. How will urban and rural areas fare? What priority will career education have among each of the 50 state bureaucracies? Will special needs be met? Those who want to see a continued and even strengthened emphasis on career education must prepare now to become participants in the allocation of funding through the block grant structure.

Administrators and teachers of career education are mainly government workers - public employees. As such, they are in danger of becoming second class citizens, in the wake of a general attack on the public sector. Salary increases and improved benefits will be looked at askance, - personnel cut, their status downgraded. Supporters of career education should vigorously oppose the current attack on public employment.

Now...what are labor's interests and role in all this? Organized labor represents the interests of both consumers and providers of educational services. Our members (outside the educational system) and their children are consumers of education services. Some union members are providers---as teachers at all levels, or as para-professional workers, or as those who provide maintenance, cafeteria and other essential services.

The labor movement wants to be involved and can play a constructive role in the development of local level career education activities. Often it is claimed that a program cannot be initiated because "the union won't allow it." In most cases the appropriate union has never been consulted. Administrators and teachers should know which union relates to a particular program---and should contact it before the program's start and involve it in the planning process.

There is a Central Labor Council responsible for labor activity in each of Pennsylvania's counties, and local schools should be in touch with its leadership. If you do not know whom to contact, the Pennsylvania AFL-CIO Council offices in Harrisburg will guide you.

Trade unionists should be involved in local Vocational Education and Career Education Advisory Councils. Local unions can be asked to adopt a school or particular program. Unions have resources---as industry does--which should be used. Speakers, films, visits to union halls, meetings and institutions are available. Shop stewards and

foremen are eminently suited to fill the students in on a particular career or job.

Career programs should be linked with union apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs and with training programs administered by organized labor.

Most workers obtaining jobs in Pennsylvania will have contact with local unions. They should start, not only with basic skills, attitudes, job skills--but also with an understanding of the structure and function of a union and their role within it as members --of their responsibilities and their rights. Your local labor movement will help you plan such orientation. The AFL-CIO Department of Education will be pleased to assist. There has been countless involvement by organized labor in career education projects around the country.

One of the most interesting is the handbook, Labor and Career Education - Ideas for Action, prepared by the Akron, Ohio Schools with the help of a Labor Advisory Council of Akron unionists. A number of copies of the handbook - which contains suggestions for course content from kindergarten to the 12th grade - are available at this conference. Among other materials of interest is Penn State's Labor Studies Program's syllabus on the labor movement for Philadelphia high schools entitled "Labor Unions - Progress and Promise." And prepared by AFL-CIO, one of the 12 national groups promoting career education, is "A Master Plan for Collaboration--Public Schools and Organized Labor."

Organized labor, as also private industry, possesses vast resources to help prepare youth for careers and life. Let's make good use of them.