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Jim Lake, Press Secretary
(traveling with Governor Reagan)

RELEASE: WEDNESDAY, JUNE 2, 1976
12:30 P.M. PDT

Remarks by The Hon. Ronald Reagan,
at the Sacramento Press Club Luncheon,
Sacramento, California, Wednesday, June 2, 1976

If there are any parents in the United States today who are not concerned about the quality of education our young people receive in our public schools and colleges, I have yet to meet them.

Parents I have met all across the land are troubled, as I am, by the implications which glaring educational deficiencies have for the future welfare, prosperity and happiness of the American people, and on the ability of the United States to maintain a leadership role in the free world.

Parents wonder why Johnny can't read or Mary can't add and why the schools, instead of trying to build and strengthen character and standards and self-discipline and respect for American traditions, appear instead to be engaged in a campaign to dismantle them.

For 200 years, education has played a crucial role in the growth of this nation. It has been a spectacular growth in a speck of time as measured against the span of human history. But, as the world becomes more complex and time and distance shrink, education will carry an even greater burden in the decades and generations ahead.

Not too long ago, most Americans could view their public schools and the products of those schools with great pride. Some still can, but for a growing number, it has been a case of schools in decline, especially in the cities. And, there is no end in sight.

A case in point are last year's College Entrance examinations. Test scores dropped for the 12th year in a row. The high school class of 1975 scored 10 points lower in verbal skills and eight points in mathematical skills than the graduates of 1974. And, the average scores were the lowest in 20 years.

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What is causing the decline?

There is plenty of evidence to support the belief that federal interference -- a decided shift in control of school affairs from local communities to the federal bureaucracy -- deserves much of the blame.

There can be remedies, but they will take decisive action.

America's belief in the importance of education goes back a long way, even before the Republic was founded. The Northwest Ordinance, adopted by the Continental Congress in 1787, while it was laying the ground rules for the governing of the new country, proclaimed (in Article 3) that "schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged". It reasoned that "Religion, morality and knowledge" were "...necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind..."

Religion, of course, is not taught in our public schools. No one argues that it should be, for one of our basic principles is separation of church and state. But morality -- sound ethical attitudes and behavior -- was regarded as a basic component of education until not long ago. In recent years, however, a new view has come to prevail in the schools. The view that no differentiation should be made between right and wrong and between good and evil because such distinctions are irrelevant. This has coupled with the view that schools should neither establish nor enforce rules of conduct. We have been told that schools should be neutral or permissive and should not even try to instill in their students "old fashioned" and presumably obsolete norms or discipline or moral values which the new theories regard as repressive.

New textbooks disregard -- and often ridicule -- American tradition; distort the picture of the American past and present; and disdain the maintenance of standards of any kind by adopting what they call a non-judgemental approach.

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We have all seen -- with sorrow -- the impact which these teachings have had on the attitudes and behavior of millions of children.

Many view with serious concern the prospect of federalized textbooks. The National Science Foundation has developed, at a cost to the taxpayers of six-and-a-half million dollars, a social studies course for Fifth Graders which is now being taught in 728 schools in 47 states and is feared by some as a prototype for federalization of curriculum. Called "Man -- A Course of Study" ("MACOS" for short), the course devotes half of its time studying the primitive culture of an Eskimo tribe of northern Canada. The Fifth Graders are taught, among other things, how the Netsilik Eskimoes slaughtered seals, murdered infant girl children and the old, and practised wife-swapping and adultery.

It isn't clear to me what the educationists who designed "MACOS" hoped to accomplish by showing this to 10-year-olds, but it can scarcely be the development of higher community moral standards.

Recently, even the third precept named in the Northwest Ordinance -- the transmission of knowledge -- has been weakened. Many still remember the slogan that was broadcast under the auspices of the U.S. Office of Education after World War II: "We don't teach subjects, we teach children".

The question is: What do we teach these children? Do we teach them the essentials they will need in life? Or, do we teach them what the social engineers want them to learn? Should we let children exercise judgement of what -- at any given point in their development -- they regard to be "relevant"? (That is one of the fashionable words today and it could be translated as meaning a more entertaining soundbox.)

There is a great deal of evidence that our young people are acquiring fewer skills and less knowledge in the public schools today than ever before. I have mentioned declining scores in achievement tests. When these are

available they show a falling curve, but most such results are being kept secret by education bureaucrats -- for obvious reasons. Many school administrators have even discontinued the taking of tests, or at least their publication, presumably because the results aren't what the bureaucrats wanted.

SAT's -- Standard Achievement Tests -- administered to college applicants, have dropped steadily over a dozen years, as I have said. Employers complain that high school graduates who apply for jobs lack adequate mastery of the 3Rs. Colleges complain that they have to teach many freshmen the basic skills they should have learned in high school. Parents are bewildered by their children's inability to function at the level they should.

In 1974, the U.S. Office of Education surveyed 19 million American adults. It found about 12 percent of them to be functionally illiterate. Yet, nearly all American children have been attending school at least between the ages of seven and 15.

Last year, the same agency found that 20 percent of American adults have a hard time coping with the skills needed for everyday life, even though they had gone to school the requisite number of years.

Shouldn't we expect that after attending school for nine years or more a child should be able to read, if the school really teaches the essentials? That "if" has become a very big "if" with the abandonment of standards of grading and promotion and the handing out of diplomas for mere attendance rather than for real achievement.

Under our Constitution, education is a power and responsibility of the states, not the federal government. Though highly regarded by the Founding Fathers, education is never mentioned in the Constitution. Yet, the federal government -- especially since the establishment of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare -- has injected itself increasingly into the local

schools, interfering in their conduct, prodding, harassing, molding them according to bureaucratic ideas of what schools should be like in an age of group dynamism. Federal control of education has become a reality.

If I am elected President, it would be my intention to issue strict instructions to H.E.W. and other federal departments to get off the back of state and local school systems. To leave the setting of policies and the administration of school affairs to local boards of education. Schools governed at the local level by boards elected by the voters are the finest example of grassroots democracy. Only if a school system were to discriminate among students on the basis of race or religion or national origin would there be a reason for the federal government to intercede.

No one has the welfare and the best interest of children more intensely at heart than the parents of those children. No one can be more safely relied upon to make the right decisions regarding the education of children than boards selected by the parents and their fellow citizens for that purpose.

Those boards should not be pressured or overruled by education bureaucrats obsessed with a desire to control things; by bureaucrats beyond the citizens' reach who can and do exercise dictatorial powers. The time has come to restrain the federal bureaucracy and its allies and restore to local communities the right to run their schools as they deem best.

It has been claimed that educational deficiencies are due to lack of money; that schools have been starved because many states do not have adequate fiscal powers to raise the money needed. Therefore, the claim goes, only more federal action can improve education. This is standing logic on its head, or more bluntly, it is nonsense.

The American people have faithfully supported their schools with sufficient funds. Whatever shortcomings exist in the system cannot be blamed on lack of money.

Over a recent 20-year period (1952-72), while enrollment in the public schools and colleges throughout the nation increased by 87 percent, the staffs of those institutions expanded by 200 percent and their expenditures by 704 percent.

During a period when the general price level rose 58 percent, expenditures per student in public education went up 330 percent.

Here, in California, during the eight years I was Governor, educators eloquently plead poverty as enrollment went up at the University of California by 43.9 percent, but budgets increased by 101.9%. In the grade schools and high schools, enrollment increased by five percent and expenditures by 118.60 percent. And, so it went in Community Colleges and the State College and University System and in State Scholarships, as well. Indeed, we increased the State Scholarship Fund to more than nine times what it was.

If money alone could improve education, the skills and knowledge of the students throughout America should, by now, have reached dizzying new heights.

But, to all appearances, just the opposite is true. The knowledge and skills of graduates in terms of the 3Rs and other achievements has been deteriorating at the same time the education budgets have soared to new records.

Despite the claimed inability of the states to raise their support of education, more than 90 percent of the income of public educational institutions has been coming from state and local sources. The federal government contributes less than 10 percent of the total. It does it, however, through more than 100 different programs, and these give the bureaucrats the leverage they need to browbeat the schools and colleges. As it is in so many cases, Washington -- when it comes to education -- is not part of the solution; it is part of the problem -- a large part.

Federal direction and control has been a major adverse influence in the schools. As a result, millions of youngsters leave high schools with diplomas, but with no marketable skills that would enable them to land jobs and earn a living. It's little wonder that more than one-fifth of our young people between 16 and 21 years of age are unemployed and drift aimlessly. They lack the capacity and attitude to produce the equivalent wages they would have to be paid. Therefore, they are not being hired. And this is not because they are inherently lazy, but because they are not being equipped by our schools to cope.

Among the most pernicious actions on schools -- well-intended, but ill-conceived -- have been the pressures and court orders to bus large numbers of children against their will and their parents' will to distant schools. All of this has been in a futile attempt to create an equal racial mix at every school. Some of the other Presidential candidates have also expressed disapproval of forced busing. They know, as I do, that most Americans are opposed to it. But none, so far as I know, has spelled out what he would do about it, or even promised any action.

Now I believe that public schools and colleges -- and all other public institutions, for that matter -- must treat all citizens alike, without discrimination on account of race, ethnic origin, sex or creed. Schools must be "color blind" and must treat every student alike with regard to admission, promotion, grading, graduation and in every other respect, except for reasons that bear directly on his or her qualification.

Every student should have the right to enroll at any public school he or his parents wish, provided that he is qualified for that particular school or grade.

It was the intention of the United States Supreme Court, in the 1954 decision Brown vs. Board of Education, to outlaw deliberate segregation of

students by race. I agree. I am convinced that the overwhelming majority of Americans feel, likewise, that public schools should not be allowed to treat students differently -- or to segregate them -- simply because they are white or black or red or any other color.

Therefore, I don't believe a black child should be denied admission to a school for no reason other than the number of black or white children there. Nor should a white child.

By a strange twist since 1954, the principle of racial nondiscrimination has been turned around and perverted to do exactly the opposite of what it was intended to do. Black children, as well as white children, are being denied admission to schools of their choice -- mostly neighborhood schools -- for no reason other than their race. They are bused mandatorily to distant schools in order to provide something called "racial balance" -- a goal that is never reached except for a short while.

This has not worked because many parents, when faced with such unreasoned tyranny, try to move to another location, if they have the means to do so, or they may enroll their children in private schools. As a result, only parents who cannot afford to move or to pay for private schooling suffer the full impact of forced busing. Many of the politicians and judges who favor forced busing to achieve "racial balance", send their own children to private schools or move into neighborhoods unaffected by forced busing.

Forced busing has caused friction, conflict, violence, riots and crime in many schools and cities throughout the country and, in the process, it has adversely affected the educations of thousands of children. There is not a speck of evidence to suggest that forced busing has ever improved education for any child, black or white. This was shown in an article by Richard J. Armour entitled, "The Evidence on Busing". It appeared in the publication, The Public Interest, four summers ago. And, it has been shown

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in several statements by Dr. James Coleman, the sociologist who in 1966 conducted the most extensive survey of American public schools ever and who has often been called the "father" of busing.

Numerous polls continue to show that the overwhelming majority of Americans, black and white, are strongly opposed to forced busing. While deliberate racial segregation simply has no place in American public schools, neither has forced busing. It has wrought too much damage already. It is only coincidence that achievement levels in the public schools were falling -- as measured by test scores -- exactly in the years when compulsory busing was fanning controversy in so many communities, cities and districts throughout the land.

Parents have an inalienable right -- and a responsibility -- to direct the education of their children. This should include the choice of school their children attend.

Unfortunately, some courts have misinterpreted or misconstrued the meaning of racial nondiscrimination in the schools and have issued mandates which inflicted injustice and brought dissension and disorder to many schools and cities.

As President, I would order the Department of H.E.W. not to actively aid forced busing. I would propose to Congress legislation -- in keeping with the 14th Amendment -- to remedy this situation. Should that prove inadequate, then I would propose a Constitutional Amendment as follows: No state nor the federal government shall refuse admission to a public institution to any person, otherwise qualified, solely on account of race, color, ethnic origin, sex or creed.

What I have said today does not mean that I am opposed to all federal action in the field of education. But I believe that such action should be indirect so as to avoid any possibility of bureaucratic control.

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The federal government might, through vouchers or tax credits, aid students and their parents to enroll in schools of their choice. Thus, there would be little, if any, connection between the federal department and the educational institution, and thus no possibility of control. Indirect aid would enhance the ability of parents with limited means to enroll their children at a school which they regard as best for their children.

As President, it would be my goal to see that the direction of our childrens' education be returned to their parents and their communities. It is by the principle of local control that American education achieved eminence and strength. By the abandonment of that principle, education has deteriorated. It is time we put education back on the right track.

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For information:

Jim Lake, Press Secretary
(traveling with Governor Reagan)

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FOR RELEASE UPON DELIVERY

Excerpts of remarks by the Honorable Ronald Reagan,
Los Angeles, California, Monday, June 7, 1976.

In Ohio and here in California, there have been some revealing developments in these closing days of the primary period. Mr. Ford's surrogates -- those tax-subsidized troubadours who seem to have plenty of time on their hands to go about singing the praises of their chieftain -- have decided to make an issue of the alleged inconsistencies of Ronald Reagan.

This is the latest change of strategy of the Ford campaign. There have been so many changes of "game plan", I've lost count. Indeed, Mr. Ford has switched strategies more often than he and his Attorney General have flip-flopped over forced busing.

Given the gap between his words and deeds, on everything from inflation to tax cuts, to federal spending ceilings to the purpose of the Panama Canal negotiations, I should think that consistency is the very last issue Gerald Ford would want to raise.

This resorting to a personal assault on me in the final days of the campaign reflects, I believe, a conviction of Mr. Ford and his men that they have no record of accomplishments to defend.

One third of the Ford crowd is calling me too doctrinaire. Another is saying my positions are too flexible. And a final third is saying I would make a good Vice President on a Ford ticket. Mr. Ford has no more settled on the kind of campaign he wants to run than he has on what kind of President he wants to be.

The only consistency of purpose I find in that White House bunch is a burning ambition to stay there. The only vision they have shown is a vision of holding their jobs for four more years. I think the country should not renew the contract of an administration that believes in nothing more than itself.

Gerald Ford has already suffered the worst string of primary
 defeats of an incumbent President. That and the prospect of political
 humiliation in the largest state in the nation may explain a note of
 desperation creeping into the campaign rhetoric and paid advertising of
 the Ford campaign

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