

REMARKS OF HONORABLE JOHN E. FOGARTY, MEMBER OF CONGRESS,
SECOND DISTRICT OF RHODE ISLAND AT ANNUAL AMERICAN
FEDERATION OF TEACHERS DAY AT RHODES ON THE PAWTUCKET,
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 24, 1957 AT 12 NOON

As I understand it, teachers' institutes are almost as old as the public school system of education itself. For a brief period of two days, you are provided with the occasion for taking inventory, evaluating and reappraising various facets of professional skills and competencies. Your attention is focussed on the problems which beset the educational process from the kindergarten on. And in general, you are exposed to experiences which aim to stimulate and inspire you to more effective means for advancing the intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical needs of our children and youth.

But interest in public education and the problems attendant upon it is not restricted to the professional educators. Of late, nearly all segments of our community are beginning to reveal an unusual awareness and interest in our public schools and the problems of education. Stimulated, no doubt, by the grass root organization of the White House Conference in 1952, citizens councils, business, industrial and social organizations press forward to consider -

the growing school population; necessary facilities; the teacher shortage, and above all, costs. With these developments, I am sure, you are all familiar. Disclaiming any thought or pretense of being a professional expert in any area of education, I would like to address my thoughts to some aspects of behavior and thinking which, although incidental to the general problems of education, should, I feel, command our attention and interest.

First, there is the growing tendency on the part of many people in our local communities to think that the only solution to local problems is action by the Federal and National Government. This is a habit of thought or attitude of mind that seems to have been a product of the depressions of the thirties. That national catastrophe brought to light many problem areas, social and economic, in which state and local governments ought to have taken but either would not or could not. Into this void came the Federal Government with laws governing areas of living formerly considered restricted to the states and local governments. Since then, Federal

action in our socio-economic life seems to have been intensified. With the result, that today individuals and groups often pressed for the solution for local problems, resort to action by the Federal Government. And this seems to be true now in the area of education.

A glance at the evolution of social control in education would seem to substantiate my new point. In the early history of the United States, education was considered the duty of the home -- the private individual or agency. But when the private individual could not or would not accept this responsibility, the towns and local governments were asked to take over this function. Since the towns often would not, or could not provide the means, the State governments assumed the function. And today, as you are all well aware, the Federal Government is being asked to aid education because the states either have the resources and will not do it, or they want to do it and lack the resources. And with the development of the United Nations might there not be set up a supranational body -- to provide aid for the education in countries lacking the resources?

Now there are many who view this development with a great deal of apprehension. To them, this incessant

expansion of Federal service seems to foreshadow the disintegration of our Federal political system and the destruction of state rights and independence. Furthermore the consistent flow of money from the states and local governments to the Federal Government for all sorts of services rendered could accomplish the same end, by leaving the states financially impotent to cope with their own problems. Whether this development is desirable or not is another matter.

I do not believe the Federal Government wants to take over these services. But, if the people of the several states demand action by the Federal Government, the Federal Government will take the action -- but at a price -- no services are free. And the money expended by the Federal Government for these services to people of the states can come only from the states.

May I make my position clear in terms of Federal aid to education. If states have the resources to provide their own financial means to expand and sustain their educational facilities, I believe they should, and ought. If states cannot, then out of respect for the rights of children and youth, the Federal Government must aid.

This tendency of so many of us to throw so many

of our problems into the hands of Government, is, it seems to me, contrary to one of the fundamental purposes for which our founding fathers desired the establishment of a universal system of public schools. It was their hope that the schools would train minds to think correctly -- to know what was right -- and to train the will to do what was right. Under the impact of this universal public education, individuals would exercise spiritual discipline and self-control. As self-control was exercised, Governmental control would be minimized. Yet, today, government control seems to be steadily expanding. For some unexplained reason, there is a growing tendency to rely less upon ourselves and more upon the Government.

Intimately related with this tendency to seek relief through federal action is another facet of education today -- that is the high cost of education. It really should be a surprise to no one that the costs of education are going up. The costs of all goods and services have gone up. Why education should merit some paralyzed exemption is hard to see. Building materials and labor costs have followed the inflationary spiral. Teachers' salaries seem to be slowly approaching a

professional level under the twin influences of pressure from your professional associations and the economic law of supply and demand. Our shame is that it took an economic law to address a moral and professional wrong which endured for so many years. And the tragedy is that our policy of low salaries never attracted the constant and adequate supply of teachers so vitally needed today. We reap only what we sow. For years, teachers in this state, and other states, by accepting low salaries were in a very real sense subsidizing the public schools. If there prevails in some areas of our national life today an anti-intellectual attitude, could it not be possibly traced to the cheap value our educational institutions have placed on the skills and competencies of our professional intellectuals?

But there is another aspect of school costs which should merit some consideration - -

For some time now, there seems to have developed in the minds of many of our citizens the concept that the school is the sole educational institution in the community. Only the school seems to be competent enough to provide the necessary experiences from which the young can learn. As a result, over the years, the responsibilities of other institutions within the community have been thrust upon the school. I am sure you are all well aware of the additional subjects, services and activities, formerly the responsibility of others, and now assumed by the school.

Whether the school should take these additional responsibilities is a question beyond my competency to decide. But they do measure a sizable part of school costs. If the people of a community want these items in the schools, then they must pay for them-- the necessary facilities, faculty and equipment. But, it seems to me that such additional responsibilities should not be assumed at the risk of not having enough money to cover other facilities - one of these would be teachers' salaries.

Finally, there is the area of professional relationships - the whole climate of personal and professional relations which ought to prevail among

administrators and teachers if effective teaching is to be realized. To sustain the right climate if it exists, or to promote a better climate, teachers organize into independent associations or associations affiliated with the AFL-CIO. No one, it seems, questions the teachers' right to form such associations for the protection of their rights and the advancement of their professional welfare. But there are many who question the right of teachers to take any effective or dramatic action when these rights and this welfare are not respected or are threatened.

Now the right of teachers to strike is still debatable. Denied by law in some states; not covered by law in others; restrained by courts in some states; not yet adjudicated in others. But, until our legislatures act, it might be well to remember that the principle of "Separate but equal" was a court decision that governed racial relations in this country for many years - until 1954.

Some day, some court or legislature will provide us with the answers to such questions as: Do teachers when they strike, strike against the authority of the state, or against the abuse or arbitrary use of that authority?

Does a majority of the people of a community through their agency, the school committee, have the right to violate with impunity, the rights of a minority in terms of wages, hours or working conditions?

I suppose the real tragedy involved in a teachers' strike is that they should ever have to resort to a strike. It seems to me that, deprived of a right to take direct action to protect their rights and advance their welfare, immediate steps should be taken to provide some procedural means by which conflicts can be resolved with justice and despatch.

Personally, although they may have queer ways of showing it, I believe that most parents respect teachers, esteem them and are grateful for their interest in the young. There is no question, that slowly but surely, the professional status of teachers is advancing. What you might not be able to accomplish through reason and discussion, the law of supply and demand may effect quickly.

To my knowledge I can recall no teacher who died leaving a large estate of what we called wealth - as a matter of fact - even a small estate. If perchance there were teachers outside these categories, I feel certain the surplus could not have come from their salaries.

In view of the fact that we have been so late in adequately evaluating the services of the teachers, I am strongly disposed to nourish the conviction that teachers draw their energy and their inspiration from a source above and beyond the anticipation of material rewards.

The fact that throughout all these years of financial famine, so many of you remained within the teaching profession and so many others entered, bespeaks a sense of dedication and consecration to the services of others that too often has been unheralded and unsung.

And as time and honest conviction show us the error of our ways, I hope that the mind and heart of all your pupils will speak eloquent gratitude in terms of higher and more professional salaries.