

ADDRESS BY THE HONORABLE JOHN E. FOGARTY, M. C. 2ND DISTRICT, RHODE ISLAND AT THE ANNUAL CONVENTION OF THE NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS, AT NEW OCEAN HOUSE, SWAMPSCOTT, MASSACHUSETTS, ON OCTOBER 8, 1959

The United States has always been an education-conscious Nation. but lately there has been a noticeable change in our attitude toward it. This changing attitude deserves our careful attention.

At the time we were getting established - during the heroic and troubled years of the Revolution and the period of constitution writing we were convinced that education was essential to the operation of a democratic government. This belief, of course, we still firmly hold.

As our prosperity and material wealth enlarged and multiplied we tended more and more to believe that education was essential if our citizens were to enjoy something called "the good life." A better education meant a better job, increased prestige, and more money for luxuries and comforts. This, too, we still believe.

Then came the terrible years of world wars - the second followed by the continuing struggle of democracy with communism. And one dark night Sputnik lit up the sky. With these events before us we started thinking of education as something more than a necessary preparation for the management of a free and democratic government - or more

than the key to a better way of life. Education, we now see quite clearly, is the major factor in our survival as a land of freedom and justice.

This may seem to be an over-simplification and perhaps it is. There are few studies more complex than those of changing attitudes. But we cannot ignore the fact that today, as never before, education is considered to be a force, in fact a weapon, in the fight for democracy.

Suppose we frankly admit that we were taken off balance by the announcement of the Russian space satellite. It was natural that many of us would take out our resentment on the public school system. But much of the criticism has been unjust and totally without foundation. The critics, or most of them, ignored the following facts among others:

First, the average American is better educated than ever. The median schooling of adult Americans in 1957 was 10.7 years. In other words, the average American had gotten nearly through the junior year of high school. Yet, as recently as 1940, the average American had

only completed the eighth grade. By 1970 we anticipate that the average American will complete 12 years of formal schooling - which means that he will complete his secondary education.

Second, we have a larger number of young people in our schools than ever before in history. One out of every five Americans is a public school student. There are 36 million in our public elementary and secondary schools. Twenty years ago we had only 26 million in them.

Third, our example of education for all citizens has provided an inspiration for other nations. The countries of Europe and South America, as well as the emerging nations of Asia and Africa look to us as the prime example of how to educate for good citizenship and happy, useful lives.

Fourth, this huge system has provided us with the professional leadership which maintains a larger measure of freedom than any other great nation has ever had. It has given us the technically competent men and women who have developed our resources to an astonishing degree.

We have better homes, more abundant and varied food, finer clothing, and a higher standard of living than nearly all the other nations of the world. Only one or two others can approach or equal our standards - and they, I hasten to point out, are democracies with highly developed educational systems.

The American educational system has provided the vast majority of our people with the best education possible. Now it must adjust to the demands of our space age struggle for survival.

What are the special areas of emphasis our secondary schools must face if they are to meet our national goals? I see two such areas where we must concentrate our efforts in the secondary schools during the coming years.

The first stems from the increasingly high standards which are being placed on manpower by industry and the armed forces. Both are demanding men and women possessing high level skills which come through formal education. At the same time they are stressing the importance of a well-rounded education for all high school graduates.

The second is based upon the fact that more and more secondary school graduates are going to be demanding admission to college in the coming years. Within less than two decades, some educators anticipate that twice as many as this year will be knocking on college doors. Admission standards will be almost certain to rise.

Thus, secondary schools will be called upon to produce a more thoroughly educated student than ever before. No matter what future the graduate plans, he will have to be better prepared than ever before. Industry and the armed forces have a huge number of opportunities - but only for the well-trained and well-educated youth. College and university registrars and admissions officers are interested only in the academically well-prepared.

I have already stated my firm faith in our public school system complemented by our private schools. They have accomplished, and are continuing to accomplish, an enviable record. However, I would be less than candid were I to ignore the weaknesses which need correction.

Early this year James Bryant Conant published his study of the

public secondary school which he named The American High School Today.

The book promptly became a best seller - in fact, an all-time best seller among books on education. To me this indicates two things: one is that there is a tremendous and wide-spread interest in our secondary school system; and the second is that Conant's suggestions are practical as well as readable.

One might think, based on one's knowledge of what constitutes many of today's best sellers, that Conant's popular study would be filled with frightening facts and figures. But such is far from the case. It is a calm and sound appraisal of what is right and what is not so right in American high school education. There is no hysteria in this report. Instead, Conant makes twenty-one logical and practical suggestions for improvement.

I do not think this is the place to list all twenty-one of them. But I can say that the most of them center around the following general points:

- (1) There is a need to identify and provide more adequate guidance and counseling for the academically talented;
- (2) There must be greater stress placed on science, mathematics, and foreign language instruction in the curriculum;
- (3) There should be ability grouping, subject by subject, and individualized programs for the slow, average, and rapid learner;
- (4) There must be more emphasis placed on English composition and on the teaching of certain social studies such as American government or American problems;
- (5) There must be a sharpening of educational processes in certain marketable vocational skills such as typing, distributive procedures, clerical machine operation, agricultural methods, and so on.

These recommendations have received the respectful attention of the professional educator and the layman. Many have already been put into effect in school systems where they did not previously exist -

and I want to stress that our better secondary schools have been doing the things Dr. Conant recommends for many years. Sooner or later, it seems probable that the basic principles of sound education advocated by Conant will be in effect in all our schools.

Traditionally, the responsibility for education has rested with the State and local community. In essence, education has been the joint responsibility of devoted men and women working at the community, township, county, and State levels. But over the years the Federal Government has provided support and cooperation to stimulate effort in those areas in which the Congress has recognized a definite need and responsibility.

Nearly a century ago the Congress offered Federal financial assistance to colleges for agricultural and mechanical education. This assistance was accomplished without interference in the operation of those colleges established, or assisted, under the terms of the grants.

Since then the Federal Government has assisted education in many other ways. Funds have been appropriated to help public and private schools establish vocational education programs. Areas that are



affected by Federal operations - such as communities that have large military installations or Federal offices nearby - are given financial assistance. The Congress appropriated money for educational research programs, and for trainee programs to work with the mentally retarded.

The most recent, and perhaps most important, assistance offered the State and local community has been the National Defense Education Act of 1958. This includes programs that touch upon a large number of secondary and higher education activities. There are programs for identifying the academically talented student and advising him, for strengthening instruction in science, mathematics, and modern foreign languages, for providing loans to needy and worthy college and graduate students, for providing fellowships to graduate students, and for furthering the education of technicians. The National Defense Education Act is an acknowledgment of the point that I made at the start: education is the key to the survival of our democracy.

The Federal Government has been providing active assistance to education for many years. It has been given without interference or

control over the free exercise of State and local direction. This direction is as absolute as it has always been.

A few examples may show how the Federal Government helps without interfering.

Over one and one-half billion dollars has been spent under the direction of the Division of School Assistance in Federally Affected Areas, United States Office of Education, during the first nine years of operation of the program. This money was used to provide financial assistance to local educational agencies for current operating expenses and for school construction.

Even by today's astronomical figures, one and one-half billion dollars is a large sum of money. But there has not been a whisper of interference in State and local control.

The first year of operation of the National Defense Education Act, Fiscal Year 1959, saw more than 115 million dollars appropriated for the enactment of various titles of the Act. Fiscal Year 1960 will see this figure increase to 150 million dollars. Here, too, there is no Federal interference.

I do not want to appear to be hammering home a point which I have already made. But I stress this idea about Federal assistance without control, and leadership without interference, because I believe the State and local community can profit from Federal help. Education is a matter of national survival - and therefore a matter of national responsibility.

My own record shows how firmly I believe this. As chairman of the House sub-committee which handles educational appropriations I take pride in the record we have established for making available funds necessary to carry out programs approved by the Congress. In fact, the reports of our committee beginning in Fiscal Year 1956 have been instrumental in leading the way to new progress in education - for example in research - in education and programs for mentally retarded children. Our committee has consistently supported the grant programs of the Office providing for federally-affected areas, vocational education and rural library services.

The development of secondary education in America is a unique story. No other nation has ever had anything quite like it. So far it has accomplished what it has set out to do - provide the best possible

education to the largest number of citizens. There is no doubt but that it will prove adaptable enough to meet the requirements of the space age.

As a group our secondary schools have already begun to face up to these needs. New courses are constantly being introduced in science, mathematics, and modern foreign languages. There are indications that many secondary schools are tightening English and social science requirements. Last summer more than 2,200 educators were enrolled in counseling and guidance institutes sponsored by the Office of Education. These people will help greatly in reducing the shortage of counselors and guidance officers in our high schools. Many others will be receiving training in foreign language institutes financed under the National Defense Education Act.

All in all, we are moving rapidly toward meeting the demands of the mid-Twentieth Century for men and women who are better educated than ever before in history.

Since I feel that the secondary school, like the elementary school

and the institution of higher education, is an integral part of the national security pattern, I pledge myself to its continued support. This I will do through the recognition of the responsibility of the Federal Government.

As a Member of Congress, I welcome my responsibility, shared by people on the local, State, and National levels, to make the American secondary school the envy of the world and the hope of democracy.