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ABSTRACT

This report presents some ideas that were developed by participants at a conference sponsored by the National School Public Relations Association. The conferees from educational, political, and civic life participated in a brainstorming session to develop ideas for improving public confidence in education. The best of these ideas are included in this report. The report introduces (1) those ideas to be started at the local level, those at the State level, and those at the national level; (2) makes suggestions about how to run a brainstorming conference; and (3) includes an address by Sidney P. Marland, Jr. on meriting a good opinion. (Photographs may reproduce poorly.) (JF)

Ideas for Improving Public Confidence in Public Education

For Action at
Local, State, National
Levels

A Publication of
the National School
Public Relations Association

1201
Sixteenth Street NW,
Washington, D.C.
20036

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Foreword

This is an unfashionable report. Unfashionable because it refuses to succumb to the prevailing mood of calamity that paralyzes much of education today.

This report confronts the hard fact that people have lost confidence in their schools. It suggests that faith and confidence can be regained. How to regain them is the heart of this report.

There are really two stories here. One describes in detail how to take hold of a discussion technique—brainstorming—and use it in any individual school, school district, local community, state organization, or national agency which is seeking to enlist fresh ideas and new troops to zero in on educational problems.

The other story reports what happened when 300 people from 40 states used the techniques at the 1971 "Priority One Conference" sponsored by the National School Public Relations Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers at Columbus, Ohio, on July 9, 1971.

These participants from every segment of educational, political, and civic life were asked: "How can we improve public confidence in public education?"

Their answer, 55 minutes later: 1,468 ideas. The best of these ideas—for local, state and national implementation—are spelled out here.

The Columbus conference participants have no copyright on the ideas. They are free for the taking. Nor do the participants hold any patent on brainstorming. The technique worked for them. Maybe it could work for you.

This, then, is a report for the believers, the optimists, the can-do thinkers. If you count yourself among those ranks, it's a report for you.

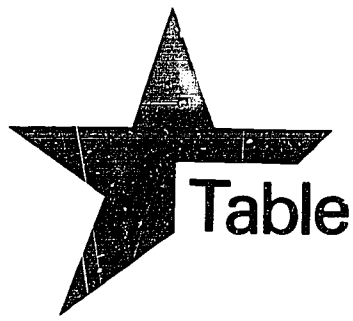
For assistance on the Priority One Conference we extend appreciation to Floyd T. Christian, Florida Commissioner of Education, who served as president of the Council of Chief State School Officers in 1971, and to Don Dafoe, former executive secretary, and to Byron W. Hansford, the current executive secretary of the Council of Chief State School Officers; to John A. Gillean, director of public information for the Los Angeles (Calif.) City Schools, who served as president of the National School Public Relations Association in 1971; to the state school board associations of Ohio, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Kentucky, Indiana, and Michigan; to the Ohio State Department of Education, the Columbus Public Schools, and the Ohio Education Association.

We also extend our warm thanks to the United States Commissioner of Education, Sidney P. Marland Jr., for the inspiration for the conference and for the challenge which he issued to the 300 participants in his keynote address.

The original manuscript for, "Ideas for Improving Public Confidence in Public Education," was written by Anne Hamilton and Robert Olds. For editorial assistance, we are indebted to Lyle W. Ashby, Helen H. Cox, and Beatrice M. Gudridge; for production assistance, to Shirley A. Boes and Joyce B. Praschil.

The ideas expressed in this report do not necessarily have the endorsement of the National School Public Relations Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers. The report reflects the major ideas of the participants, especially those agreed upon by the conference work tables as their most important ideas.

Roy K. Wilson
Executive Director
National School Public Relations Association



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The Priority One Conference

In the spring of 1971, there was little cause for joy about the state of the public schools in the United States.

An era seemed to have come to an end. The problem of financing, which had lurked in the background for years, again cast its shadow across the land. It recalled the lean years of the late 40's and the Depression itself.

But the times also were difficult. In years past, despite the nature of the difficulty or the challenge, school people could usually count upon a solid kind of shoulder-to-shoulder support from the citizenry, the wealthy and influential, the parents, the blacks, the intellectuals, the immigrants --almost everyone. School problems were largely money problems, almost everyone agreed. And communities and states taxed themselves, again and again, to be certain that the younger generation would have its full educational opportunity.

Then something happened. It was the first-into-space Soviet Sputnik, some said, which revealed that the U.S. public schools were seriously deficient in quality. Expert and pseudo-expert found it easy to win news media attention by blasting the quality of the schools. And almost everyone else joined in.

By 1970 it was virtually man-bites-dog type of news to find any cheers for public education in the news media. Lawmakers were exploring experimental alternatives to public education. Opinion polls showed that citizens would not vote school tax increases no matter how badly the money was needed. Some schools closed.

It was evident that the great American achievement of mass public education was in deep trouble.

Sidney P. Marland Jr., in December 1970, was in Washington, D.C., going through the swearing-in ceremony as U.S. Commissioner of Education. If he was to be successful, and if the U.S. Office of Education (USOE) was to do its job, Sidney Marland told the newsmen after the ceremony, then primary concern would have to be focused upon certain priorities.

Commissioner Defines First Priority

The first priority, said the new commissioner, would be the strengthening of public confidence in public education. "Public education is, of course, the overwhelmingly important issue confronting educators at this moment in our history," Marland told them. "We must work to restore the trust that has in recent years undeniably diminished."

It was a good speech. It pointed a direction. But Sidney Marland was only too aware that his concern was a hope. Confidence could not be appropriated by Congress, secured by a Presidential directive, or guaranteed by USOE guidelines.

How do you go about restoring confidence in public education?

Action is implied. Local action, state action, and national action. First, however, there had to be ideas for the actions to be taken. Where would they come from?

300 Brainstorm at Columbus

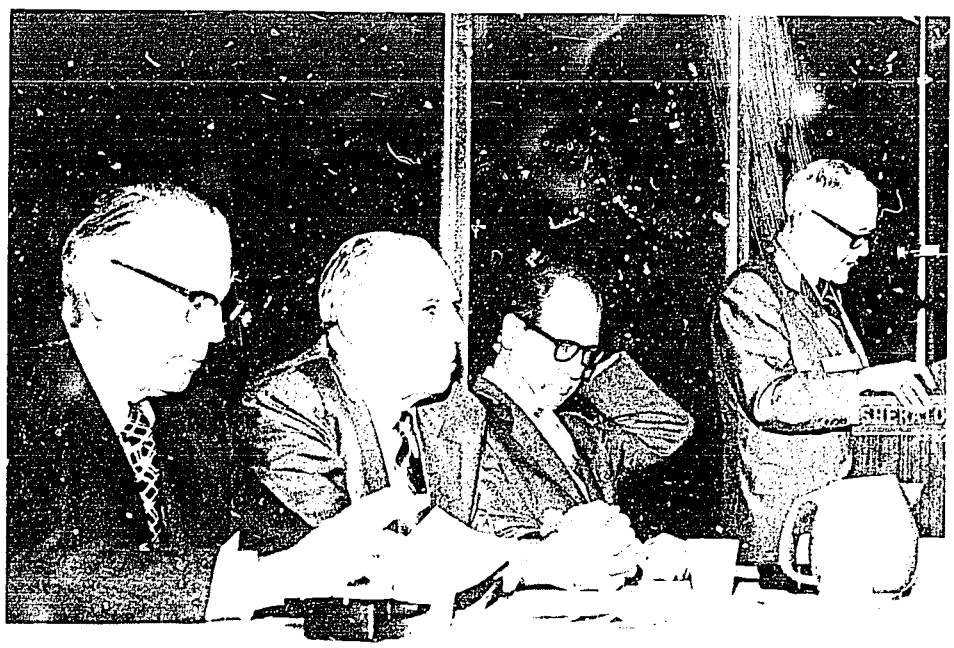
In Central Ohio in July the sun rises early. By the time the government and office workers converge on the statehouse and the downtown skyscrapers, the sun is in full blaze.

So it was comforting to move into the coolness of the ballroom of the Sheraton-Columbus Motor Hotel. This was particularly so if you had been driving on the interstate highways since dawn, coming in from Pittsburgh, Indianapolis, Wheeling, Ann Arbor, Louisville, or possibly Chicago.

On this July 9, 1971, you might have been a newspaper editor, a school board member, a PTA leader, a teacher association officer, a legislator, a labor leader, or a lobbyist, taking your seat at one of 33 round tables located throughout the room. You would find at these same tables officers of education-connected state and national organizations and dozens of educational public relations and information officers from throughout the United States.

The group of almost 300 persons had been brought together for a large scale venture into "brainstorming" for the benefit of U.S. Commissioner Marland and his colleagues, and for those all over the country who, like Marland, wanted to change the public attitude toward the schools.

A brainstorming approach appeared to be ideally suited for the task to be undertaken at Columbus. A great name in advertising, Alex Osborne, was the developer of the idea-generating technique. He and others of the advertising fraternity years earlier had employed brainstorming to spark creative ideas for the solution of marketing and advertising problems. Working against the clock, a group would spew out ideas--the more ideas the better--devoted to the solution of specific problems. Later there would be



a sifting through the big pile of ideas, which had been tossed out around the table in uninhibited fashion, in search of the gems. One or two ideas produced in this fashion might make the entire venture most profitable.

It was not known whether a brainstorming session could be managed with hundreds of participants when the classic version consisted of six to ten persons. This was the gamble taken by the leaders of the National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA) who had organized the conference.

Commissioner Marland also was taking somewhat of a gamble. He had been approached months earlier by NSPRA's officers with an offer of assistance to help focus attention upon the concern which he had expressed forcibly at his swearing-in ceremony--that first priority task for public education of building public confidence.

Since NSPRA's 18th National Seminar would bring together more school public relations practitioners at Columbus, Ohio, than would be assembled at any other place during 1971, why not make the most of the opportunity? Why not earmark an entire day for Marland's first priority concern? Why not add to this group of school PR people a cross section of national and state leaders--educators and lay citizens?

The Commissioner accepted an invitation to appear.

State school superintendents and state school board association executives of the states involved jointly established invitation lists of those to be invited from their respective states. The lists contained names of

leaders of chambers of commerce, union officials, state teacher and school employee organizations, business leaders, legislators, parent-teacher association officers, state education agencies, school board and administrator organization officers, and other public and private interests.

What was named the "Priority One Conference" appealed to those who received invitations. Despite the fact that there were no funds to pay travel or other expenses, a large number of those invited from West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Indiana, and Kentucky joined Ohioans in meeting with the school information officers attending the NSPRA Seminar.

When the registration work had been completed and 9 a.m. arrived, NSPRA President John A. Gillean looked out across the groups clustered at the 33 tables in the hotel ballroom and officially launched the Priority One Conference.

Representing the Buckeye State co-hosts for the event, Ohio State Superintendent Martin Essex, Executive Secretary Staynor Brighton of the Ohio Education Association, and President Paul Langdon of the Ohio School Boards Association shared the assignment of introducing the visitors who had just arrived from the adjoining states.

Charles F. Kurfess, speaker of the Ohio House of Representatives, and Robert E. Cecile, special assistant for educational matters in the Office of the Governor of Ohio, both spoke briefly to the group. They wasted no time with the kind of perfunctory greetings expected for such occasions but talked about the nature of the problems participants would wrestle with that day. They were fully appreciative of the objectives of the Priority One Conference.

Marland Challenges Conferees

Then Commissioner Marland moved to the microphone and began.

"My hope is that out of this conference will emerge a new understanding of the situation we face and new knowledge that we can employ together to overcome the depressing and potentially very dangerous malaise that has infected and soured so much of the public's attitude toward a great and fundamental institution of our national life," he said.

"Correcting education's failings--and convincing the public of our willingness and ability to act swiftly and usefully--will demand that we work cooperatively, strenuously, and creatively; in essence we are called upon to produce a far better system of education in this country than we presently have, and to tell the story of education in a far more compelling and far more effective way.

"We are, in short, in search of a renewal of faith in our schools."

Marland underlined the difficulty of the assignment given to the conference. "We have little hard data on which to base our efforts to analyze why the people have come to distrust the schools, why bond issues are shot

down with unhappy regularity, why tax levies are rejected, why there are bitter confrontations at board meetings, why students are in open rebellion --at all levels of education--against the forms and standards of instruction that have long served the country with honor--that served us in this hall to our satisfaction and profit."

He said he was deeply disturbed by "an unhealthy obsession with negativism such as we are approaching in America today" which could lead only to "self-fulfilling prophecies of doom."

"We have, I am convinced, reached the point in time and events when further nonconstructive criticism of our educational system is no longer in any sense or for any purpose useful," the commissioner said. "We have reached the time when the forces of positive reform must not only be completely engaged in regenerating our system of education, but must be known and understood by the great mass of the people to be so engaged."

Marland Proposes Public Affairs Panel

The commissioner offered a proposal which dramatized his concern for positive action. He proposed the formation of a panel of public affairs officers to advise the commissioner of education and his key staff members. Such a step was taken later in the day.

A short course in brainstorming followed.

Participants at the 33 tables would generate just as many ideas as possible about ways in which public confidence could be restored in public education at the community level, at the state level, and at the national level.

At an earlier briefing, table leaders had been given operational principles and details.

No idea, however odd, was to be rejected. No idea was to be criticized.

The aim was to be free-wheeling and creative and to pour out ideas. Later would come the task of sorting out those of greatest apparent value.

Then the word "go" was given.

Flow of Ideas Accelerates

The flow of ideas was detected almost immediately as attractive young lady messengers moved among tables, picking up the ideas as soon as they were recorded. The momentum increased. Idea reports, after being picked up, went to a Reporting and Analysis Center where they were categorized and studied.

Some brainstorming time periods are limited to 15 or 20 minutes; some are extended to 45 minutes or more. With the large number of persons involved, the decision was made to approach a one-hour time limit. So furiously were the ideas being generated at the 45-minute mark that the deadline for the Priority One Conference was set at 55 minutes.

No one could know until later in the day that the participants seated around the 33 tables had produced 1,468 ideas during the 55-minute period.

Without skipping a beat, the conference moved to its second task, that of identifying some of the most promising ideas and partially developing them. The ideas had been recorded as brief single sentences.

Each of the 33 tables was next given the task of selecting three of the best ideas created at the table, one for local action, one for state action, and one for national action. The table participants were asked to develop a 100-word written description of each of the three ideas.

With luncheon sandwiched in between sessions, the conference participants worked on their fleshed-out ideas until midafternoon. Then they were given a one-hour coffee break.

After the coffee break they were called back into session. The ultra high speed Reporting and Analysis Center team had been through the entire 1,468 ideas and the 99 descriptions of the "best ideas." The team was ready to make its report.

Two former television newsmen, Philip D. Hill of Salt Lake City, Utah, and Ken Brown, Bakersfield, Calif., read summary reports about the nature and quantity of the ideas produced and a summary of the "best ideas."

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Participants were more than a little impressed to learn that at the end of the session they would receive printed copies of the reports, including descriptions of 33 of the 99 "best ideas." This magic was made possible by the Ohio Education Association's highly skilled and speedy information, publications, and printing staff and facilities augmented by crack writers and reporters drafted from among the NSPRA seminar participants.

Although the day had been an exhausting one, it was also an exhilarating experience for both the leaders who had come to Columbus and the public relations seminar participants.

Brainstorming, even on the vast scale attempted at the Priority One Conference, appeared to be quite feasible. Numerous ideas from the morning session had, in fact, advocated that brainstorming be attempted in many other ways at state and community levels.

Final Observations About the Conference

When the reports had been given, Don Sweeney, then assistant commissioner for public affairs of the USOE, went to the rostrum to make some final observations about the conference.

"The good ideas that have been produced here belong to all of us and they are available for all of us to use," Sweeney said.

"This conference has been an unusual one. Instead of just listening, you came here in all good faith and were put to work.

"The good ideas that have been produced here are ones that are certainly going to be delivered to Sid Marland--but it's only symbolic. He is the magnet that has attracted all of us to this enterprise today.

"We've been talking about public confidence in education. We've spent the day producing ideas on how public confidence can be improved.

"Now, I want to ask you to join with me in a resolve to put these ideas to work. I want to ask you not to wait for us federal bureaucrats in Washington to take the burden. Don't wait for those fellows in the statehouse to do it. You are elbow-to-elbow and eye-to-eye with the public--the people we've been talking about. You are in intimate daily contact with these people and if these ideas are good--and I think many are excellent--the thing to do now is to put them to work."

Sweeney returned to some of the things which Commissioner Marland had said at the start of the morning session. Sidney Marland had said: "The victories in this struggle will be achieved one at a time. They will be isolated in some instances, almost unnoticed perhaps--the times when you and your colleagues in school districts throughout the nation win a millage election with facts and hard work; when you meet and dissipate the criticism of a hostile and misinformed group; when you help promote a strike settlement without rancor or recrimination; when you skilfully plan and execute a program of community involvement in the solution of school problems; when

you survey the public's opinion in your town, your county, or your state so that the real points of concern in the public mind can be identified and answered quickly."

The assistant commissioner did some final underlining of his own. "I'm very interested in many of the ideas--and I'm buoyed up because, actually, some of the ideas are already being done in this state or that state; in this district or that district," he said.

"Now, all we have to do is to put them to work everywhere! And, if we're skillful, if we're professional, if we're dedicated, if we're imaginative...we can win the battle."

So what happened to the 1,468 ideas?

In the months which followed the Priority One Conference, the account of the Priority One Conference and many of the ideas were reported in journals, newsletters, and bulletins of the organizations and school districts which were represented at the conference.

This report contains a cataloging of the major ideas to help those who may want to use or adapt them to their own situation.

If you wish to attempt a similar type of Priority One Conference, including brainstorming, you also will find in this report suggestions for planning such a conference at the state or local level. (See page 41.)

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The Best of the Ideas To Be Started at the Local Level

From among the dozens of ideas spontaneously generated in the opening brainstorming period, each of the 33 tables at the Priority One Conference selected its best local, state, and national project and developed each "best" idea into a 100-word presentation, explaining the idea's methods and goals.

The total yield of these expanded versions was more than 90 detailed project ideas selected by the tables from more than 1,400 suggestions.

Edited versions of those ideas are presented in this chapter. "Further details" are left up to you as you adapt the ideas to your district, organization, or agency.

Involving Parents and Other Citizens

Educational Innovation. Change requires research and inputs. To be effective there must be total participation. Leaders with skills in group dynamics should bring people together to discover answers to identified problems. Outline goals and objectives in the fall and review them in the spring; establish departmental advisory committees; select parent committees to meet with principals; talk in plain language; set up block home contacts; and give students an advisory role with school boards.

Schools Belong to the People. A campaign to demonstrate this could include the following: school and administrative offices open house for the community; informing-entertaining school open house; radio and television spot announcements; support by the news media with editorial, feature, and news stories; and support by the school newspapers. The campaign could follow a public opinion poll indicating the need and identifying various factions and groups within the school community. Pupils could take home flyers developed around the theme, "These are your schools."

Public Opinion Sampling. There should be a continuing program of sampling within each school's community (being sure to include minority groups) throughout the school district. This would serve as an aid to the

school board in communication and policy-making, reflecting the thinking and level understanding of each of the subcommunities. The poll should be designed by professionals, but administered locally. This would determine what the public thinks it knows about schools, what it actually knows, and what it wants to know. This should give the public a greater voice in solving the school district's problems.

School Visitation. Local school systems should encourage visitation as a continuing process rather than a once-a-year effort. Use of modern technical procedures should be experimented with (i.e., one-way vision panels in doors and corridor walls, and videotape recorders in central rooms). Schools, through teachers, should encourage parents to come to school individually on an all-day basis. Ideally, almost every parent would spend a day per year in school. Businessmen should be invited to visit, with emphasis on typing and shorthand classes, shop classes, English classes, and also be encouraged to make suggestions for improvement in them.

Priority Conferences in Local Schools. Each school could serve as a center for a Priority One Conference to brainstorm ideas for improving public confidence in education. While participation would be open to all residents of the area, a special invitation would be sent to leaders of identifiable groups. These conferences could be sponsored by the school system or local citizen groups with help from school system and teacher association professionals. Buzz groups within the conference would be organized to provide a mingling of background and perspectives. The results should receive wide publicity and action should be taken as soon as possible on some of the best ideas.

Involving the Public. The school board must go to the community with information and for information. Greater involvement of the public may be achieved through: (1) advisory committees; (2) open-to-the-public board meetings; (3) communication media; (4) school board traveling to different areas of the community to hold board meetings; (5) advance notice of meeting date and agenda; (6) expanded school board membership to include students and minority groups; (7) town hall meetings.

The Charette Planning Process[1/]. In developing new educational programs and facilities, this process will facilitate dialogue and decision making, allowing all segments of the school community to plan an instructional program and instructional facilities to meet the unique needs of a specific community. The planning group will represent all social and ethnic groups, all ages, and governmental, social, educational, and civic agencies. Once

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1/ Charette--literal meaning is a two-wheeled cart. The word as adopted by architects is associated with building design and has become synonymous with creativity, compressed time, deadlines, and feverish planning. It may be a series of day and night meetings as a process of community planning, a vehicle for citizen participation, and a technique for studying and resolving educational facility problems. Has been used in a variety of different planning situations to develop community facilities, i.e., high schools, elementary schools, and community health facilities.

a board has given such a group the power to plan a program, it should implement all feasible proposals.

Citizen Participation. (1) Establish a local citizens advisory group in each school building area composed of a cross section of citizens; (2) actively encourage parents (and press) to follow children through routine school learning (not showplace) activities as co-participants; (3) include students as full participants in all aspects of the involvement project.

Improving School-Community Relations

Inservice Public Relations Program. The local school should have an intensified educational public relations inservice program for its staff conducted by experts in public relations from various business and industrial and educational sources. This training would be designed to carry on a vital continuous program "to tell the school's story like it is." Each teacher should adopt a measurable public relations objective capable of annual evaluation. In addition, public school administrators and teacher organizations should be urged to form a public relations committee to keep abreast of the opinion and PR problems of staff and community and recommend remedial action.

Building Public Understanding. Local school systems should improve their public relations programs by using such methods as these: (1) involve the public in defining the school's goals and get them accepted by the community as a means of judging the value of that system; (2) use the public address system as a PR tool; (3) place greater emphasis upon electronic media, radio, and TV, with school personnel trained in the best use of electronic and print media; and (4) prepare videotapes for showing to special groups.

Spending for Communication. Local school districts should budget and spend a minimum equivalent of $5 per pupil for the purpose of developing and maintaining two-way communication with the school district citizens. In addition to this formal communication effort, a citizen information team should assist in the communication program. The public's right to know and participate must be encouraged.

A Three-Part School-Community Relations Program. (1) Teachers need guidelines for implementation of inservice programs and workshops which will dramatically point out the teacher's role in educational public relations. (2) Students need programs--and classes--and a curriculum which stresses the need of individual participation in a democracy. We must begin to help students to understand the total operation of the local school system and the value of local interpretation of national standards. (3) Taxpayers need suggested procedures for involvement of all individuals and groups to participate in the formulation of policy and the use of power. There is need for a kit which clearly presents a step-by-step outline for community use.

Influence of Citizens. Schools should be influenced by, and directly related to, the people they serve--the people who financially support edu-

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cation in their communities. In each school one staff member should be appointed, at supplemental pay, to assume the duty of making the school responsive to the educational needs of the people living within its boundaries. Patrons will tend to make use of the school since they will receive direct benefits from their tax dollars. Once involved, these people will become interested in and informed about their schools, and their confidence will eventually be regained.

Honest Reporting. School officials must report successes and failures honestly and realistically. This must be an ongoing policy. A strong communications office will result in an informed community.

A Planned, Systematic, and Comprehensive Program for Increasing Direct Personal Contact Between School People and Their Several Publics. This program should be planned cooperatively by representatives of the board of education, administration, staff, pupils, parents, and others. Included in this program should be such components as: An ombudsman for the district; easy accessibility of board members and staff to answer questions and give information to parents and others; systematic two-way visitation program between schools and homes; a local resident school-community coordinator; open phone lines to an information center for questions and answers about the schools; advisory councils at each school consisting of representatives of staff, parents, and students.

Communication Channels. The local school board must become more responsive to the needs of the public by opening effective communication channels and must encourage public participation in "idea exchange forums." The school board can open communication channels by publicizing advance

information on board meetings, agenda, and brief statements describing pertinent educational issues. Idea exchange forums can be held at the beginning or end of board meetings to allow the public an opportunity for open debate and honest discussion of educational problems.

Teacher-Parent Relationships. A decentralized public relations department will facilitate communications between parent and teacher in a useful, constructive manner. All the tools of public relations currently used on an administrative level should be used in such a decentralized organization. The specific ways and means would be those most appropriate to the community being served. The focus of the program should be on the education of the child. A one-to-one relationship should be established between parent and teacher. Local school administrators in conjunction with local teacher organizations could develop ways and means to establish local public relations programs on a teacher-to-parent level. This is based on the assumption that the story of good education that is taking place in many classrooms across the country is best told to the parents and taxpayers by the children or students themselves. Happy, enthusiastic, challenged, learning children are the best possible public relations program any school system can have.

Making Accountability Real

Development of Salable Skills. If the schools are to build public confidence in the output of schools, students must leave the schools as useful, productive members of society. Every student before leaving school should have achieved a "salable" skill which will provide him with a job to support his family and enable him to grow as an individual and to contribute to society. This does not preclude his further education and training to acquire new skills. By making it possible for students to acquire employment upon leaving school, unemployment and underemployment will be reduced considerably; thus public confidence in education will be enhanced.

Discipline in the Public Schools. As evidenced by class disruptions, assaults on teachers and administrators, intrusion of outsiders, use of drugs, immorality, and sloppy dress, the apparent lack of school discipline is "turning off" the public and is interfering with the proper functioning of the schools. It is recommended that: (1) board policy be formulated on advice of parents, students, and community representatives; (2) appropriate authority for principals be set; (3) appropriate security measures be taken; and (4) appropriate legal safeguards be established.

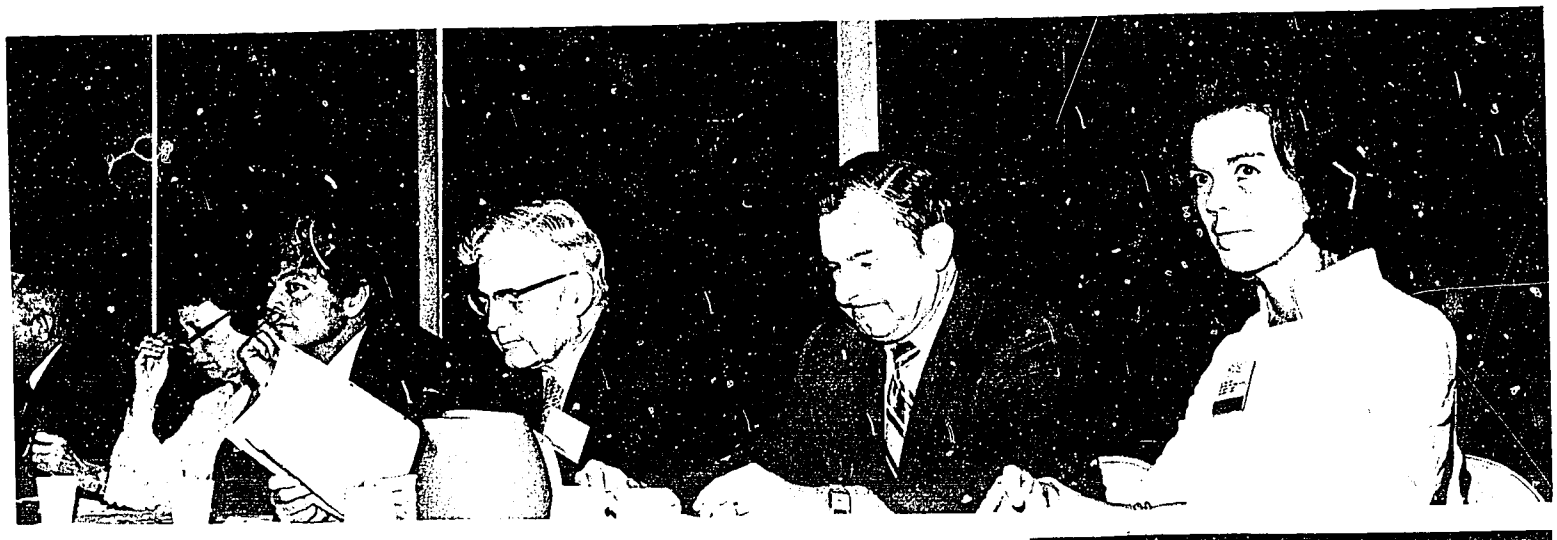
Improving the Quality of Education. Public confidence in schools can be restored at a local level primarily as the educational program is improved. Areas emphasized in this effort should include: (1) improvement of the quality of teacher performance; (2) clearly defining curricular goals; (3) establishing ways of evaluating success in terms of goals.

Building Staff Pride and Understanding

Building Pride. Well-informed employes who are proud of their jobs

build public confidence because good public relations for the schools come first and foremost from the day-to-day, face-to-face contact by all school system employes with the community. Building pride in the job can best be accomplished by a genuine and continuing effort by the school administration to include all employes as a part of the team. An ongoing program to insure such a team effort might include: the appointment of an advisory council in each district composed of representation from all employe groups and all areas of the district for the purpose of two-way communication with the administration; a series of special seminars for all employes to help them deal with people on a day-to-day basis; the provision of regular written communications to keep all employes informed as members of the team; and recognition of achievements or exemplary service by all employes either on the job or in the community. Public confidence in education must start with confidence and pride on the part of the front line workers.

Keeping School Personnel Informed. Personnel at all levels should be involved in the development of the goals and policies which directly affect them. This involvement may be accomplished by conferences, written communications, "hot line" telephones, and other media. Involvement is the best kind of information device. Those who participate in policy making will not only understand the policies but will support them. In addition to involvement on issues which directly affect personnel, all school personnel should be kept informed concerning all of the goals and policies of the district.



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Ensuring School Board Responsiveness

Board Responsiveness to Citizens. Local school boards should be responsive to the citizens they represent. To bring boards closer to the people, the boards should schedule meetings in various geographical locations throughout the district instead of holding sessions only at the board office. More involvement by the public at board meetings should be encouraged--with emphasis on two-way dialogue, gripes being listened to with sympathy, and direct, honest answers provided then, or later should research be needed before a reply. The superintendent and members of his administration, including principals and teachers, should hold weekly round-table sessions and/or make themselves available regularly for informal two-way dialogues in reply to questions phoned in by citizens.

Student Representation. Each board of education should provide the student body an opportunity to be heard through some form of representation on the board. The students should be selected by their own peers on an annual basis to establish a direct line of communication between the board and student body.

Coping with Size. People are afraid of things they know nothing about. As the enrollment in districts has grown, people become more fearful of loss of identity and of size in general. One approach to alleviating this problem is the establishment of miniboards and/or advisory committees. These boards should include representation from every segment of the community (i.e., students, teachers, noncertificated staff, parents). The group should be encouraged to recommend changes which are guaranteed consideration by the board.

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Taking Lessons from Business

Management Clues from Business. These should include systems analysis, management by objectives, employe and student incentives, program budgeting, and continual communications. Use of local business management advisory councils and consulting services in implementation is essential. Educators should serve in business internships and take general management courses supplementing those emphasizing education. Such efforts will move education closer toward financial accountability, eliminate red tape and bureaucracy, and help justify expenditures for programs which will provide better education for children.

The Public as a Customer with an "Account." Schools must quit acting like the monopoly they are and act as if there were a competing agency to which they will lose their customers if they fail to provide prompt, courteous, and effective service. The "performance contracting" idea may spread and private educational agencies could drastically alter the role being played today by the public schools. Most successful private businesses have a customer service department and provide specific training to their employes on how to get along with customers. Can the public schools afford to do less?

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The Best of
the Ideas To Be Started
at the State Level

Providing Funds and Leadership for Local Action

Local Personnel Training. State departments of education should provide funds and leadership to train personnel in local school systems and to provide material for the media (including commercial television and radio spots that will be of interest in all local school districts). Such television spots are often beyond local technical production capability so should be provided by the state. Also desirable are public relations seminars conducted by the state department of education with role-playing and low-cost tape techniques. To improve the skills of local personnel, board members, superintendents, principals, and especially teachers should engage in face-to-face situations, emphasizing truthfulness, clarity, and tact.

Regional Facilities and Services. State education departments should create, amplify, or improve regional facilities and services to assist local school districts. Insofar as this regional service can relieve local administrators of certain jobs so that more time can be concentrated on local needs, and insofar as these centers can help local districts improve their public accountability, this service can lead to a restoration of public confidence in education. It should, however, be pointed out that local districts should at all times have a major voice, based on enrollment, in determining those regional services most needed.

Continuing Program Development. The chief state school officers should be charged with organizing a continuing program to develop a plan for restoring confidence in public education. An advisory commission should include the executive officers and presidents of all major educational organizations in the state, representatives of business, industry, labor and the media, students, and representatives of minority groups. The chief state school officer should publish the recommendations, resulting from a conference with these leaders, and action taken through this state-funded activity.

Promote PR Programs in Each District. State departments of education should require or encourage the development and implementation of an

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objective, comprehensive, and effective public information program by each local school district. Adequate funds for this activity should have high priority. Such a program should include extensive community involvement, with minority group and student representation. Local news media and information devices generated by the district itself should be used.

Briefings on Current Problems, Needs, Achievements. State departments of education in cooperation with the state school boards associations, state teacher associations, and the state school administrators associations should jointly prepare and conduct planning and informational briefings for the public on the current problems, needs, and achievements of public education in the state. The briefings should be conducted as soon as possible after the election of legislators and held at various locations throughout the state to provide for maximum attendance by all concerned.

Modification of Certification Requirements. To make education more relevant and to better utilize community human resources, state agencies should modify certification requirements to encourage utilization of occupational specialists in classroom instruction. The agencies also should encourage employment of trained information specialists at the local district level and provide consultative services to these specialists. Teacher training institutions should stress the importance of public relations. These actions would help restore public confidence in education by placing "today" in the classroom and letting the public know what is being accomplished.

Clarity of Objectives. State education departments must provide service to local school districts in setting objectives, developing measuring instruments, and reporting results to citizens. Citizens and legislators are--and should be--demanding clear objectives and statements of needed resources before providing funds for education. When these objectives can be measured by predetermined criteria, and when local school districts can demonstrate that objectives are being reached (or why they are not), citizen confidence in the schools will follow. Without goals, measurement, and success, such confidence is unlikely.

Cooperation with Local PR People. Closer cooperation is needed between state departments of education and local PR people. The public relations division of the state department of education should serve a twofold function: (1) Clearinghouse Function. The state department should serve as a clearinghouse, sensitive to the pulse of local school systems, to hot issues and trends, and to potential problem areas confronting local communities which could have statewide implications. An open line in and out of the state department could serve to alert local districts to impending problems before they become insurmountable. (2) Service Function. The state department should serve as a resource center for local public information practitioners providing planned inservice activities for teachers, noncertified personnel, principals, and central office administrators. These would include financing, program planning, procedures, and resource personnel. These functions can best be served initially by the formation of an advisory commission to the state department which would include representative public information officers throughout the state.

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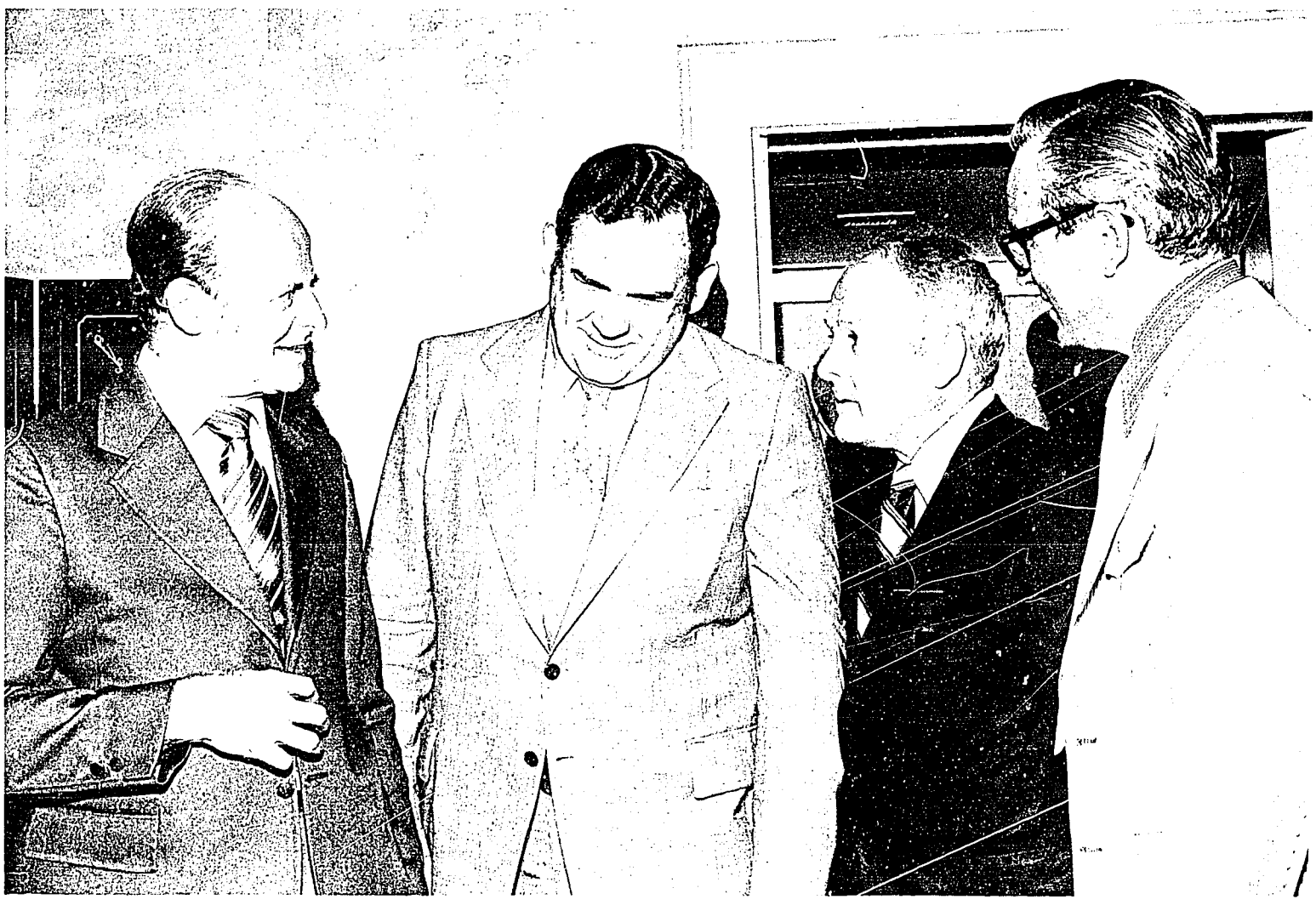
Creating Awareness of School Needs

State Department Communication Program. Every state department of education must plan, operate, and evaluate an information and communication program; provide vigorous leadership and funds for the development and operation of communication programs in local, county, and intermediate units.

1. This program must be supported by board policy, and staffed by competent personnel with a director who provides service to the agency's external audiences.

2. The program should provide assistance for the planning and operation of communication programs in local districts which have been provided funds for partial or complete communication program support from or through the state department of education.

Public Information Staff. Each state department of education should have a public information staff with the size and capability to: (1) maintain a flow of relevant information to citizens throughout the state to enable them to vote on legislation more intelligently; (2) assist local school districts in the development of their public relations programs through conferences and workshops; (3) serve as coordinating agency for public information efforts for various organizations within the state (i.e., state education associations and school board associations); and (4) interpret and coordinate federal and state programs in the local districts.



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Enlistment of Noneducational State Organizations. State education leaders should encourage the enlistment and participation of state organizations (such as chambers of commerce, trade and industrial associations, manufacturers associations, public relations societies, industrial public relations personnel) to assist the schools in explaining school problems and helping to solve them at state, county, and local levels.

Statewide Assessment. The state department of education should develop a statewide assessment program which allows local citizens and educators to compare the performance of children in a given community with the performance of all children in the state. Performance data would be limited to pre-established tasks. The purpose would be to give local decision makers a standard upon which to evaluate the effectiveness of their program and to make necessary changes.

Annual Statewide Conference. The state department of education should sponsor an annual statewide conference on school problems and solutions. Consultants with expertise concerning areas in which there are current problems should be involved. Participants should represent all minorities, socioeconomic groups, as well as business, education, labor, and government. Guidelines should be formulated for the conference by the state education department, and formal recommendations should be presented to the state legislature.

Statewide Conferences. These conferences on major educational problems should involve noneducational groups. It is recommended that state departments of education call a conference in the state capital which brings together, in particular, noneducational participation to seek a solution to the particular major educational problem. This should be done using experts in group process. Delegates to such a statewide conference would be invited from existing statewide organizations such as Farm Bureau, American Medical Association, and labor groups, expenses to be paid by such statewide organizations. The proven method of brainstorming should be used constantly among those holding decision and policy-making power. State education departments and other state educational groups should hold frequent brainstorming sessions aimed at solving crucial problems. Ideas that are generated should be shared almost immediately with those on federal and local levels. Implementation of each idea, where feasible, should begin within a month after the idea germinates.

PR Interns. Young college graduates should be encouraged to enter school public relations by developing intern programs for "community affairs," "communications," or "public relations." Fellowships can be derived from funds contributed by both federal agencies and local districts. State departments of education could be responsible for administration of the program and training of participants, with input from various education-oriented statewide associations.

Sparking New Legislative Policies

Negotiation Laws. State legislatures should provide for negotiation laws, including binding arbitration procedures, for school employe disputes.

This system would help restore morale of staff members who would no longer be pitted against local administrators and board members. Equally important, it would rebuild public confidence that has deteriorated as a result of contrived disagreements that occur in most negotiations.

Tax Reform. To provide adequate and continuing support for public education, energies must be mobilized at the state level to provide greater tax equity through tax reform. This should include a shift of the school tax burden, now primarily upon the local property tax, to a progressive, equitable tax source that will provide for the meeting of the educational needs of all of the state's people. Funding at these state and federal levels must provide for greater equalization of financial support for local school districts. Adequate educational programs must be provided for every student in every school district. Local educational leaders must take the lead to build public understanding of the deficiencies of the present method of financing education.

Funding PR Programs. Public confidence in the schools will be restored when, through the efforts of communication specialists, professional educators, and concerned citizens, respective state legislatures make such laws as will enable local school boards to fund programs to adequately inform their citizenry.

Maximum Use of School Facilities. State legislation should be enacted, and financing provided, to insure that at least 50 percent of a district's public school facilities be kept open a minimum of 16 hours daily, 12 months per year, offering for all citizens, regardless of age, creative, well designed educational and recreational programs. These educational centers, or open schools, should provide live and taped "Sesame Street" type programs for adults, especially those in urban areas who are functionally illiterate. They should create special programs for senior citizens, preschoolers, and other age groups, so that they community begins to feel a close and cohesive (and thereby more committed and supportive) part of the school. A large urban school plant should become a motion picture theater, a civic center, a YMCA, a recreational center, and an educational museum functioning throughout the year for the benefit of all citizens and not just those who happen to fall into the artificial limits of ages 5 through 18.

Redirecting Education to the World of Work. State school boards should initiate policy requiring all local boards to redirect their educational opportunities to the world of work. The state board should commission local and regional surveys to be undertaken to determine future growth of business and industry as well as job opportunities. The state board should cooperate with institutions of higher learning for the implementation of teacher training courses to redirect future counselors and guidance personnel to occupational orientation, rather than college entrance and degree programs. By 1976, all local school districts should have multidiscipline occupational education awareness programs beginning with the kindergarten and aimed at dispelling job smobbery and motivating children to occupations. Local school boards should insure that each child has an employable skill when he leaves the public school system. The state board should, with state financial support, implement vocational and technical skills centers providing school

graduates and dropouts alike with alternative educational opportunities for developing a salable or employable skill.

Local Autonomy. State governments must grant more local autonomy in decisions affecting public education. Community involvement leading to board decisions reflecting the advice and consent of local citizens will restore and enhance public confidence in the schools. This will require coordinated effort by parent and professional organizations, school board associations, and other forces united to bring about changes in unduly restrictive state education laws and policies.

Continuing Reports to Legislators. Legislators should be provided with year-round progress reports, making school news available to the point where it becomes a number one priority for them. Relate public pressures that affect the schools to the pressures that influence the election (or re-election) of and action of state legislators. This could begin with the legislative program just passed, with a short paragraph on how each item enacted has advanced education in your own school system.

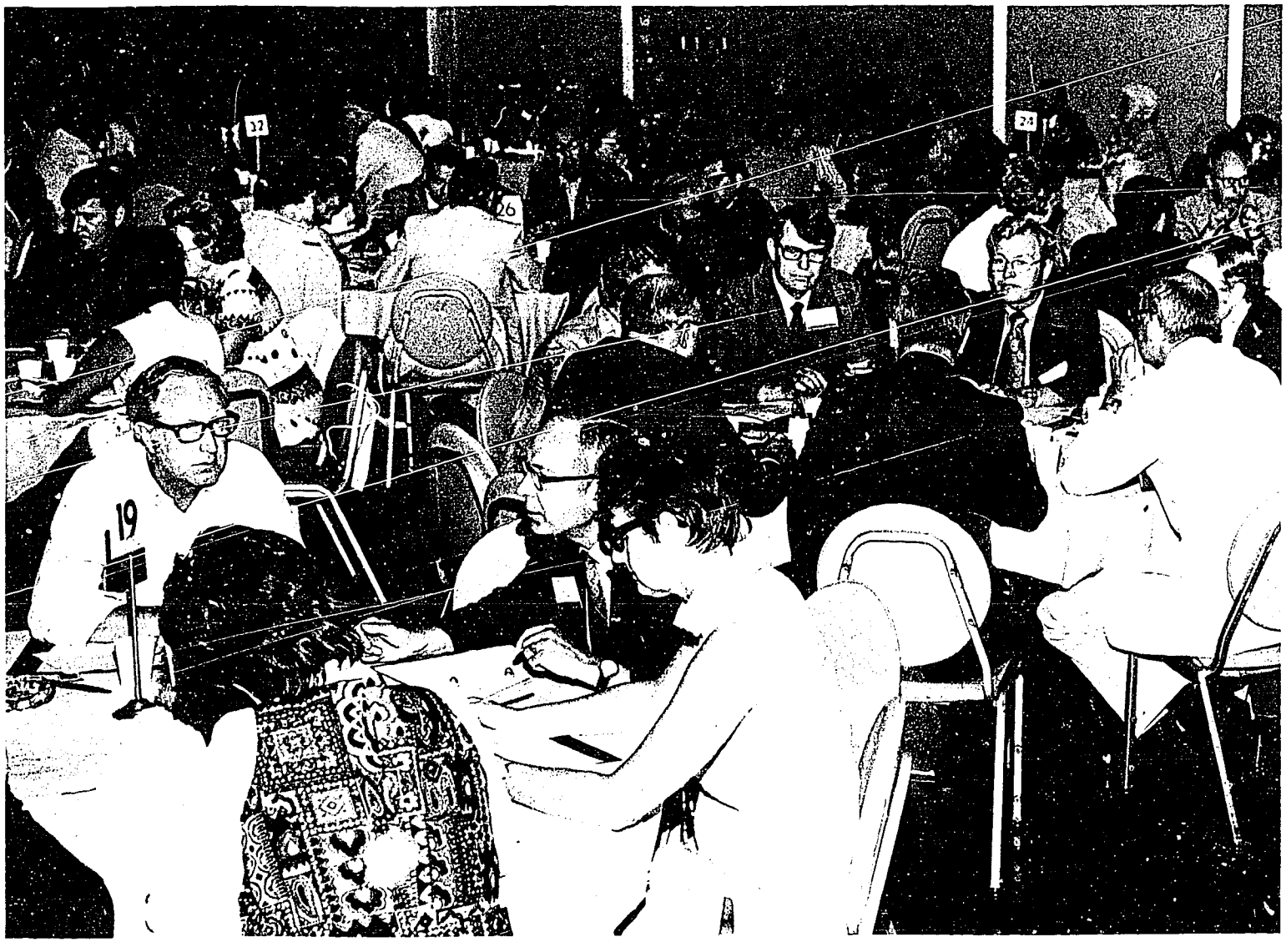
Seeking Help from Other Agencies

Getting the House in Order. The total education profession must "get its house in order" before public confidence in education can be restored and fostered. Procedures for this necessitate: needs analysis at local, state, and national levels; establishment of adequate evaluative procedures to upgrade the instructional team and eliminate incompetency, thereby improving learning experiences for children, youth, and adults; promotion of public attention to outstanding teaching-learning programs; reassessment of

of curriculum priorities in terms of today's and tomorrow's requirements; establishment of an experience exchange program for maximum utilization of talent to enhance the total educational program.

Statewide Citizen Groups. Each state should organize a statewide citizens group, broadly representative of all segments of the population, including students, to study, hear all viewpoints, and promote innovative and better education at all levels. As "tools," it would involve personal contacts and public meetings and, as the situation dictates, mass news media. Extensions of the statewide organization would be set up in all school districts, with similar goals. Members would speak up for education, getting the facts before the public, not spasmodically but regularly. A publication, devoid of professional jargon, would be published regularly, going to as large a readership as could be economically feasible.

Opinion Polls. Periodic statewide public opinion polls should be developed with the help of professional consultants to provide feedback for educators and government officials on community thinking. Using a scientific sample, printouts should be developed and delivered on statewide, regional, and district levels. Such regular polling techniques would enable us to see trends, identify opinion changes and misunderstandings. The results of the poll would be used as a basis for program development, legislation, general indicators of public sentiment, and for interpretation to the public.



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Liaison with Lay Groups. Continuing liaison should be established among school units, industry, labor, and professional groups to further support education among powerful groups. The function of such liaison is to promote understanding of the mutual problems so that beneficial programs may be established. Greater public confidence would be a natural outgrowth of such a cooperative effort.

NSPRA State Chapters. A series of grassroots legislator, educator, citizen forums in various regions should be planned and implemented throughout the state. The NSPRA staff and membership would encourage state chapters to initiate planning groups of legislators, education administrators, teachers, students, nonteaching employees, parents, and nonparent citizens. State departments of education or state education associations could provide the staff support.

Education Association Lobbies. The best way to achieve maximum results from state legislatures is to unify, where possible, the lobbying activities of all state professional education associations. This premise is based on the fact that public confidence in education is weakened when educational groups are unable to agree on programs in support of education. Particularly this is true when educators divide among themselves when battling against noneducational groups for governmental, financial, and program support. This unification will not only maximize our legislative productivity but also provide needed clarity to legislators confused by a myriad of proposals presented as "what educators want."

Advice of Industrial Leaders. A large group of industrial leaders supplying the educational field should be involved to get their suggestions for improving the image of public education. This would be followed by meetings of educators to analyze the suggestions and determine their value in education and their effectiveness in the public relations program.

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The Best of the Ideas To Be Started at the National Level

By U.S. Office of Education and Department of Health, Education, and Welfare

Education as Top National Priority. Education must be reorganized as one of this nation's top priorities. Rhetorically, the federal government has already done so. In reality the national commitment to education is weak. Potential funds have been directed toward other more politically expedient areas. It is apparent that education must become a real top priority with adequate funding and a program for educating the people about education. Eventually grassroots support will work its way into the institutions of our representative democracy. The U.S. Office of Education, with the urging and approval of the President, should organize a committee of experts who will advise the National Institute of Education in the area of communicating information for the institute and effectively shaping it for the public. This task can only be accomplished through use of communication professionals. We urge the institution of this nonpolitical, nationally representative body of professionals at the earliest possible date.

Documentary TV. The Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, with the endorsement of the White House and the cooperation of the Advertising Council, should sponsor a nationwide network, prime time one-hour documentary --four times a year. This program could feature public education throughout the United States. The story should include curriculum, problems, financing, objectives. The initial documentary might feature national celebrities, black, white, poor, rich, left, right, Democratic and Republican. It should use the tools of the hard sell, projecting a symbol that will be a household word throughout the nation. The programs should have continuity, stressing the historical importance of public education and how it has made our country great. The documentaries should indicate that public educators are aware of change and are meeting the challenge.

Cabinet Status. The U.S. Office of Education must be elevated to cabinet status with the commissioner as a member of the President's close team.

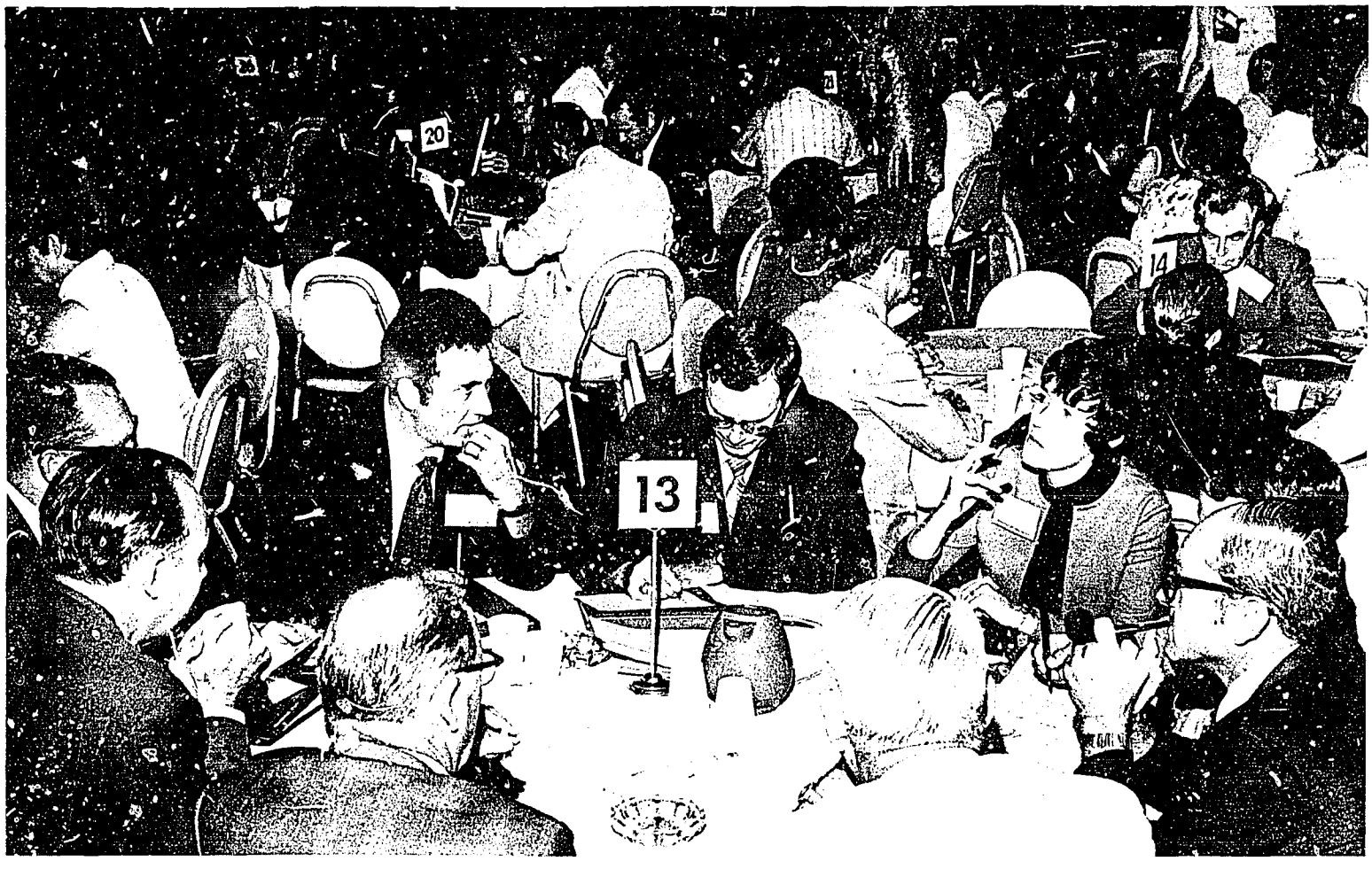
Twenty-Five Percent Federal Funding. To facilitate the immediate national priority action on the educational goals of reform, relevance, and

accountability, we recommend that national funding for education be not less than 25 percent of the total federal budget. We recommend a redirection of funding into education to assure the equalization of educational opportunities for all public schools.

State Conferences. The U.S. Office of Education should encourage establishment of and give financial support to state conferences on education designed specifically to lead to strengthening the people's confidence in public education. This could be accomplished through broad public representation, including minority groups, students, legislators, industrial leaders, public and nonpublic school leaders, parents and nonparents, communication media representation, other professional and lay groups. The President of the United States should include the establishment and financing of such a conference in each of the 50 states as part of the national bicentennial celebration. These conferences could be a part of a five-year program to culminate with a national conference in 1976 under the general theme "Rediscover the Importance of American Education."

Professional Organization Cooperation. It is necessary for all professional organizations in education to work cooperatively toward effecting an improved image. The office of the U.S. Commissioner of Education should assume the responsibility of leadership to bring about this change of attitude.

Sophisticated Communications Techniques. The USOE should institute a continuing, coordinated public information program on national, state, and local levels about important educational issues using sophisticated communi-



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cation techniques. USOE should enlist the support of educational and community oriented organizations at all levels in the implementation of this program. The program should inform the public of major problems being faced by education, propose solutions to these problems, and facilitate evaluations of alternative solutions.

Implementing Community School Models. Citizen involvement can restore confidence in public education. It can do this most effectively by restoring confidence through the ultimate community school concept. Therefore, through the U.S. Office of Education, leadership and funding should be provided to implement development of conceptual models.

Accreditation Reassessment. The Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) should reassess the total accrediting process. Presently, local schools are tied to the Carnegie unit, required staffing patterns, class size, and other traditional and inflexible regulations thus stifling the introduction of new, experimental programs in curriculum and teaching techniques. HEW's urging and leadership could shake accrediting agencies loose from traditional shackles and enable the local school system to reach out to students, teachers, and community at large for total organizational flexibility.

People's Hot Line. The USOE should establish a "people's hot line," a toll-free incoming WATS line, which would permit any citizen anywhere in the country to pick up his telephone and call Washington to ask questions about education, make suggestions for improvement, criticize, or just sound off. All calls would be referred to the appropriate responsible authority--federal, state, or local--for immediate reply by telephone, mail, or in person.

Strengthened PR Services. The equivalent of a national educational public relations firm should be established within the Office of Education and be responsible for the following functions:

Promotional Services

a. National advertising campaigns to increase public understanding of education, its successes and its problems, and to eliminate provincialism.
b. Education news subscription service.
c. Develop coalition of athletes and entertainers for support of education and fund-raising assistance.
d. National "Sesame Street" type of program to inform adult citizens.
e. Support public information functions in education as a vehicle for interpretation and understanding--not "whitewash jobs."
f. Develop education news channels through industrial house organs.

Funding

a. Create matching fund program through states to support establishment of local school public relations or information positions.
b. Provide funds to make PR consultation available to local districts.

Inservice Education
a. Promote joint administrator-PR personnel conferences.
b. Provide annual refresher courses for school public information personnel.

Service to High School News Media. The U.S. Office of Education should create, finance, and operate a nationwide news bureau for distributing news of education to high school news media, including the "underground" media. Objectives should be to make the Office of Education and students more knoweldgeable about education at all levels, and to instill an understanding of the channels for bringing about educational change. The bureau should collect news through regional editors from around the nation. A central bureau office would receive and distribute the news via weekly mail packets of articles, briefs, illustrations, and public service advertisements. Youth-oriented editors should sift, condense, and prepare the news objectively in ways that relate to students. Student media could take advantage of the service by subscribing at no cost directly with USOE. Subscribing media would be expected to contribute news to the bureau from the local level via the regional office. Development and operation of the bureau should be governed by a policy board made up of professional newsmen, educators, and students. At least one-half of the board should be of high school age.

Elimination of Tenure. The U.S. Office of Education should encourage state departments of education to seek elimination of tenure provisions for teachers. This would in no way intimidate the professional educator and should serve to encourage districts to retain only competent staff. Provisions regarding protection from capricious action by boards of education could be assured by legislation. This would establish universal guidelines for evaluation, deter the perpetuation of patronage, and restore confidence in the professional.

Performance Competencies. The U.S. Office of Education should assist state departments of education and local school districts in developing and implementing programs to improve performance competencies of experienced teachers and administrators through: (1) more effective inservice programs; (2) creation of enticing opportunities for older teachers and administrators to move to other school districts on temporary and/or permanent basis; and (3) programs that provide partial and/or total early retirement for some teachers and administrators.

Funding Communications Programs. USOE should provide financial assistance and training opportunities and encourage state departments of education to establish full programs of communication by: (1) funding model training programs in colleges and universities; (2) giving inservice training at both local and state levels; (3) issuing communication guidelines for state department of education and local school districts; (4) funding a program in every state for public relations training.

Round-the-Year Campaign. USOE should be urged to develop a year-long educational public relations campaign including research, campaigns by the Advertising Council, promotional campaigns by various educational associations, and local shopping center and other public displays of teaching methods and techniques.

Regional Meetings. USOE should sponsor annual meetings in each of ten HEW regions on legislative ideas to be forwarded to the Congress of the United States, on a selected basis, by the executive branch of the federal government. These meetings would reflect the regional concerns of a broad cross section of citizen leaders and would, hopefully, call attention to potential problem areas. The meetings would be called by the Office of Education Regional Commissioners of Education.

Ombudsman System. USOE should provide school districts with encouragement and adequate funding for establishment of an educational ombudsman system. This would provide adequate staff to handle liaison between school and community. This process should help to inform the community of services, make the schools better aware of services needed, resolve problems, and handle disputes between school and community. The office would not be part of the school system, but should be funded separately--with school and community being involved in its initial establishment.

Noncategorical Federal Assistance. USOE should take an active role in campaigning for the granting of noncategorical federal aid to state education departments for disbursement to local education agencies. Categorical federal aid to education has not created the desired results. Too many local school districts are unable to apply for aid due to a shortage of adequate personnel to handle the program or because guidelines are too specific. Noncategorical aid could be better utilized at the local level.

Emphasize the Positive. A coordinated national effort should be made during the next year to inform the public that, in addition to deficiencies, there are many positive aspects of public education. Under the leadership

of the U.S. Office of Education, such organizations as the Council of Chief State School Officers, National Education Association, and American Association of School Administrators should plan and carry out specific ways for getting this message across. For example, TV, radio, and motion pictures should be utilized as showcases of the merits of public schools. The theme of American Education Week should be "What's RIGHT with Our Schools."

By Other Federal Agencies

Restoration of Confidence. Efforts to restore confidence in public education from a national level should include the following:

1. Establishing education as number one national priority through adequate funding to meet the needs of a number one priority; Mrs. Nixon, a former teacher, could become the leader in efforts to dramatize the problems in education; federal agencies should avoid "blame-fixing" and address their energies to problem solving.

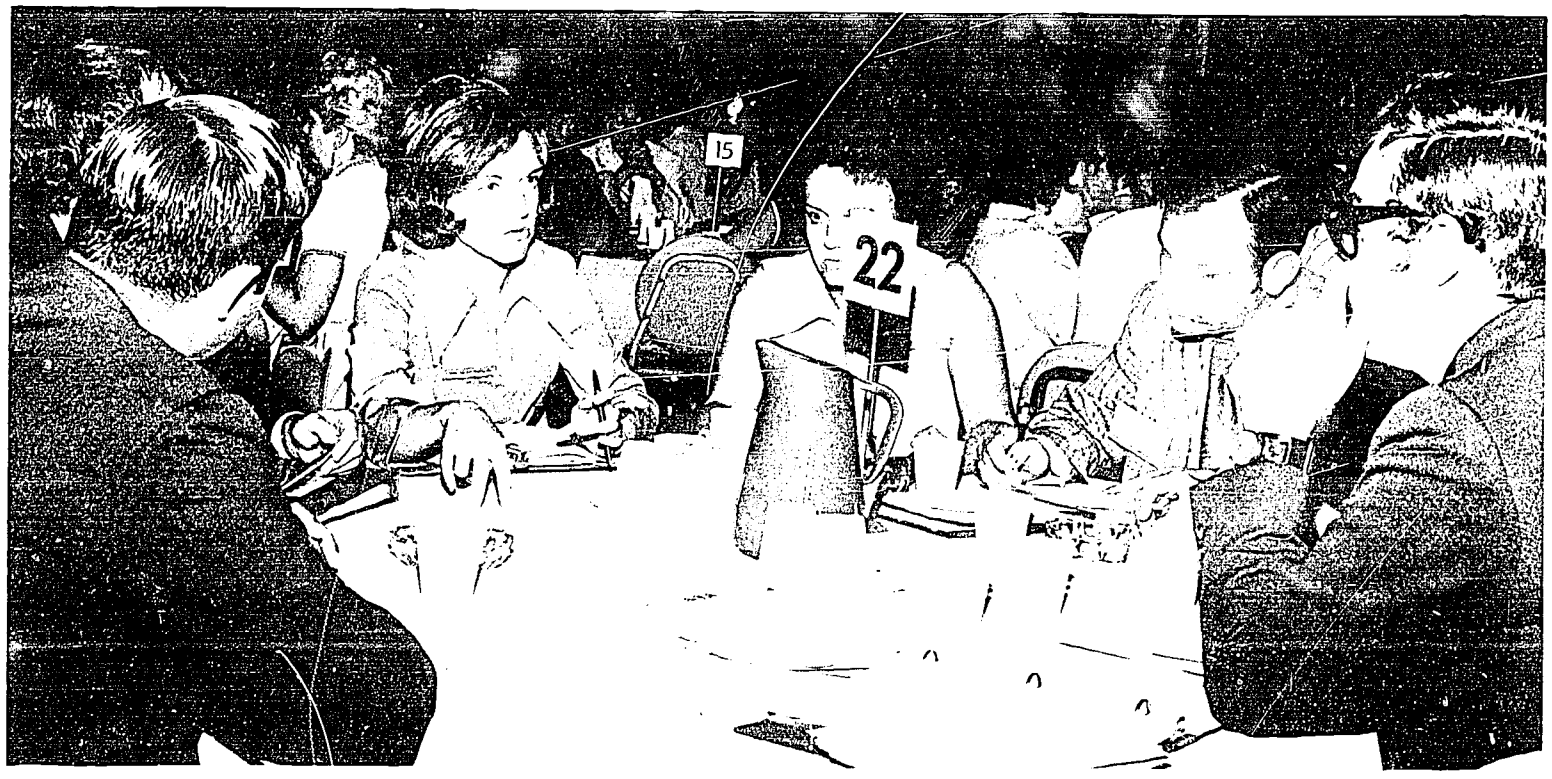
2. Research to develop long-range projections of personnel career needs in education should be disseminated to colleges and universities.

3. Bipartisan leadership from the President, Congress, and national leaders should point out the accomplishments of public education and help to restore public confidence. Leaders outside the education community must involve themselves in finding solutions.

Resolution of Financial Assistance Early. The federal government should resolve school-aid financial matters at a date well in advance of a fiscal school year. This would, in turn, afford local school administrators and boards of education the opportunity to make budgetary decisions and financial commitments at a time more pertinent for developing public understanding through responsible citizen participation and involvement in financial decision-making.

Allocation of TV Time to Education. Recognizing that television is the greatest undeveloped and untapped medium for promoting education and for building public confidence in the schools, we recommend that for license renewal by the Federal Communications Commission of commercial stations a certain percentage of all broadcast time be allocated to local public educational institutions. This broadcast time allocation should be used to present a variety of programs informing the public of the problems and goals of education and of the programs established by local school boards to meet these problems and achieve state goals.

Comparative Education Study. The federal government should fund, through the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), a comparative research study of education in the United States and other nations. The study would include an investigation of educational methodology of proven effectiveness in other nations. All findings resulting from this study, both favorable and unfavorable, would be heavily publicized throughout the nation to demonstrate the strengths of our system, and its



present weaknesses, in order to restore faith and credibility in our educational system and to develop a total commitment of first priority to education, by national, state, and local governments.

By the National School Public Relations Association

Mount Support for National Institute of Education. The National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA), with the guidance of USOE, should mount an immediate and intensive campaign to generate public and Congressional support for the National Institute of Education (NIE). The institute program, in addition to its present components, should include studies of effective school public relations techniques. If the National Institute of Education is approved by Congress, NSPRA should undertake a continuous public relations program to interpret NIE operations to the public, and disseminate usable results to educators throughout the country.

Advertising Council. NSPRA should develop a plan to enlist the public service aid of the Advertising Council to plan and conduct a comprehensive national campaign through all media to achieve better understanding and greater support for the American public school system.

TV and Radio. HEW and NSPRA should produce a regular flow of well produced television and radio public service announcements designed to keep the public informed of the needs, problems, goals, and achievements of public education. The importance of the television and radio media in informing the public is unchallenged. National polls reveal the sole source of information and news for 60% of Americans is television. Available public

service time at the national, state, and local levels is not being utilized. This information would not need to meet the news-value criteria or undergo the editorialization of news media personnel and thus would reach the public in the exact manner desired by education.

School District of the Year. A national program could be patterned after "Teacher of the Year" program. Nominations, based on sound criteria, would be made by interested citizens at the local level. Various categories to include: school district (by size), elementary, secondary, and adult education schools. Program to extend from local to state to national. Potentials for publicity are obvious at all levels. Sponsor: NSPRA. Results to be announced during American Education Week (first, second, third, fourth, fifth, and honorable mentions).

By National Newsmakers and National Media

National Newsmakers. National newsmakers, including the President of the United States, should be encouraged to speak out supporting more financing for education. These top people, including the President, will in turn respond to public opinion. An alliance of business, industrial, fraternal, and educational groups could be formed to develop a program of public information that would result in positive public opinion. Enlist the Advertising Council to present this program in a sustained campaign using all media. A great variety of messages and people, including famous personalities, should be used to reach all segments of the American public.

American Education Week. In redirecting the focus of American education on the nation's children, make American Education Week really meaningful by relating it to the public support of schools. It should begin with a strong, nationally televised prime time keynote statement from the President, and ultimately include all the country's governors, mayors, school districts, and civic and community groups. The President should speak for 10-15 minutes, followed on local TV by governors and mayors. The program should be combined with live local activities, such as meetings of community and education leaders. The general theme should be "Support Your Schools," with the specific thrust being that education is for students, not for administrators, teachers, school boards, or parents. It should emphasize that without strong public support of the educational process the future of these students is in serious jeopardy.

Opinion Polls. An opinion research effort should be launched to determine national concerns for education and answer questions relating to the current lack of public confidence in our educational system. In concert with the opinion research effort will be an opportunity to suggest a theme or slogan which best generates increased confidence and interest in our democratic system of public school education. The "theme" will be the rallying point--running through the entire campaign at all levels. It will be seen and heard in every area, through all media. The campaign will be field tested and refined.

Prime TV Time. Commencing with the fall of 1972 and a reopening of schools begin an annual program centered around five one-hour, prime network

TV programs using a name star as a host-narrator and utilizing top talent in the entertainment field to tell the newer exciting changes in modern education. The one-hour programs would utilize three- to six-minute documentary segments showing (1) an open school at the elementary level; (2) how a junior high youngster from the ghetto is confronted by educational needs and programs; (3) a high school "career education" program through a comprehensive vocational education program; (4) the varied and changing face of higher education (i.e., the universities without walls). An alternative to the short-segment documentaries (using name singers and comedians) would be making longer 15- or 20-minute films on two or three of the areas and later making them available for purchase to local school districts for use in schools or community groups. Budgeting (production costs and TV time) for such a project could be accomplished by approaching commercial interests for donating time with tag-line for credit to contributing companies.

Public Service TV Programs. Education must make broader use of commercial television in order to inform the American public about current educational problems and issues. A public service effort should be started immediately on the commercial networks using positive approaches as employed in "Sesame Street" for adults. Such programming, developed by all educational organizations and the Advertising Council, should not be restricted by the FCC's three-hour prime time limitation. The emphasis should be on "what is" as opposed to "what can be."

A National Commission. Education has been too long on the defensive. It is time for an offensive in developing public confidence in the schools A national commission should be established with or without the support of the U.S. Office of Education. It should be composed of top public relations practitioners from business, industry, government, and the professions to advise and develop specific programs. This commission could: (1) establish a working relationship with the Advertising Council; (2) make public opinion surveys; (3) develop radio, TV, and press materials; (4) prepare kits of public relations materials for local school systems; (5) provide audiovisual presentations for community groups.

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How To Run a Brainstorming Conference

Out of the Priority One Conference came many suggestions that every possible group connected with education--teachers, administrators, board of education members, PTA groups, citizen advisory committees, school volunteers, paraprofessionals, all school staff members, concerned citizens--get together and brainstorm. During the opening months of the 1971-72 school year, instances of brainstorming sessions were reported in several local school districts. Brainstorming know-how may have been an extra dividend that Priority One Conference participants took home from Columbus.

Here are some of the behind-the-scene details of a brainstorming priority session which draw upon the experience of the Columbus, Ohio, Priority One Conference.

Things To Do Ahead of the Brainstorming Day

Do the maximum amount of preplanning for a brainstorming session. According to the expert Alex Osborn, the fiascoes have been due to failure of leadership.

Remember that, unlike the typical seminar session, brainstorming devotes itself solely to creative thinking.

Identify the problem to be brainstormed and have it clearly stated as the goal you wish to accomplish. The problem should be specific rather than general. It should be narrowed down so the brainstormers can attack a single target. The subject should also be familiar, simple, and talkable. Now...

1. Name and invite the people you wish to include in the brainstorming session. Be sure your group is representative and includes both line and staff members--Chiefs and Indians.

2. Make your group-table assignments. The ideal brainstorming group numbers between five and ten. Again, be certain that each group is representative of both line and staff members of your organization.

3. Don't overwhelm them with technical details--paper and pencil to record the ideas generated, the duplicating of "tips for table leaders" and "tips for idea collectors" and the facts for everyone on "how to be a brainstormer."

4. Invite and get commitments from those people you wish to have as table leaders and idea collectors. Plan a briefing session for them prior to the actual brainstorming session.

When the Day Finally Arrives

From 8 to 9 a.m. participants should be registered and given their table assignments. Table leaders and idea collectors should have been briefed the day before; the reporting and analysis team should be set up and ready. There should be time for a get-acquainted cup of coffee.

At 9 a.m., the meeting is called to order. Special guests are introduced. The keynote address should present the problem to be brainstormed.

Last-minute briefing announcements and time schedule revisions can be given--and the opportunity for one more cup of coffee. From the outset, the conference should be informal.

The few simple ground rules for group brainstorming should be reviewed quickly (even though every participant has received a copy of the ground rules ahead of time):

1. Criticism is ruled out. Adverse judgment of ideas must be withheld until a later time.

2. "Free-wheeling" is welcomed. The wilder the idea, the better; it is easier to tame down than to think up.

3. Quantity is wanted. The greater the number of ideas, the more the likelihood of useful ideas.

4. Combination and improvement are sought. In addition to contributing ideas of their own, participants should suggest how ideas of others can be turned into better ideas, or how two or more ideas can be joined into still another idea.

A 10:30 a.m. Group Session I at round tables in groups of nine or ten with balanced representation can go to work. Each table should have a table leader and two idea collectors.

Brainstorming can continue for up to one hour, depending on local circumstances. The merit of each idea produced should be judged only on the following qualifications:

A. Each idea must consist of a complete sentence.

B. The idea must propose an action to be taken at local, state,

regional, or national levels. More than one level may be involved in an idea, but the level of initiation must be designated. The action may be by an organization, institution, or agency, private or governmental, singly or in combination, at any level.

C. The idea must propose one of the following: (1) An Event (this would be a single activity, one time or infrequent, such as American Education Week, recognition banquet, rally, or open house). (2) A Program (this would be a more extended activity, incorporating planned actions aimed at a preselected goal, such as campaign, organizing of preschool parents, forming student board of education). (3) Procedure or Practice (incorporating a new activity into an existing operation such as personal contact with all new residents moving into school building area, hold school board meetings in various sites, require schools to have minimum communication program, or employe training in public relations).

The table leaders should be briefed in advance on their responsibilities:

1. Keep the brainstorming session informal.

2. Explain, in your own words, the guides for brainstorming. Let your team know that no idea is worthless.

3. If someone persists in being a critic of ideas, it is up to you to warn him and stop him. "Think up or shut up."

4. Keep a spirit of encouragement going. Be enthusiastic about this chance to be creative and let that enthusiasm be contagious.

5. Let your brainstorming team feel they are playing a game. Try hard, but with a relaxed frame of mind.

6. Remember that the aim of brainstorming is to pile up a quantity of alternative ideas.

7. Be prepared to throw out some ideas of your own, some of them in the "wild" category to stimulate other ideas ("prime" the joint flow of ideas).

8. Encourage "piggybacks," the ideas that are directly sparked by a previous idea.

9. Keep ideas flowing. Have the idea collectors make sure each idea meets the technical qualifications stated in A, B, and C above.

10. Assist your table's idea collectors in getting the ideas processed.

11. Grab ideas as they are offered and help get them into sentence form.

12. Follow the time schedule.

Likewise, the idea collectors (two per table to handle the rapid flow

of ideas) should be briefed in advance on their responsibilities:

1. Be seated with your idea collector colleague at the table next to the table leader (chairman) so that you are in the direct line of conversation between the chairman and the participants.

2. Use the special forms given you to record the ideas. Each form is to be used for one idea. Record "piggyback" ideas (those suggested by an earlier idea) as separate ideas on separate forms. (Special note to readers: The forms used at the Priority One Conference were three-copy forms, approximately 7-1/2 by 8-1/2" of sensitized paper.)

3. Be sure each idea is recorded as a complete sentence.

4. See that each form designates at the top whether the idea is Local, State, or National. Also, identify with your table number.

5. If the flow of ideas is so rapid (and we hope it will be) that you or your colleague personally cannot write them down, pass the form to the person offering the idea. Be sure you get the form back and be sure it is filled out correctly.

6. Remove the top copy of the forms so these top copies can be ready to be picked up by a staff member and taken to the Analysis and Reporting Center. Keep the remaining copies at the table.

7. Determine in advance which of the 100-word idea descriptions from your table you will write and which will be done by your idea collector colleague. You may wish to collaborate on the first one to meet the time requirement.

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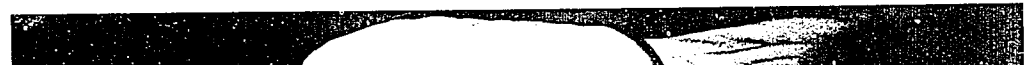
HERATON COLUMBUS



After each idea has been jotted down on the form, the top copy should be removed--to be picked up in minutes by staff members and taken to the Analysis and Reporting Center which should be located very nearby.

Here a team of analyst-writers should review the ideas and sift through them looking for trends, duplications, uniqueness of ideas for local, state, and national levels--tying together all of the brainstorming activity taking place at the tables.

The analysis and reporting team ideally should be geared to turn out a duplicated conference summary analysis of the ideas generated via brainstorming at the final reporting session at the conclusion of the conference.

After the brainstorming period is over, phase two of the morning session should begin.

From 11:30 a.m. until 12 noon, each of the brainstorming groups should select the three best ideas--one local, one state, and one national--generated at each table in the opinion of the participants at the table.

Lunch Over, the Afternoon Session Begins

Group Session II should begin at 2 p.m. For one hour each of the groups should have the task of amplifying its best three ideas (as selected from 11:30 a.m. to noon). The single sentences should be fleshed out into paragraph descriptions of up to 100 words.

If there are a large number of tables, some might be assigned to work first on their best local ideas; some, on their best state ideas; and some, on their best national ideas.

Again, the developing of the ideas should be done on the sensitized three-copy forms. When that first assigned best idea is fully described, the top copy should be taken to the Analysis and Reporting Center to be checked for editorial correctness. The "best ideas" should be typed and reproduced and ready for distribution to all conference participants at the close of the final session at 4:30 p.m.

The Final, Reporting Session

From 3 to 4:30 p.m. the reporting session should feature the verbal analysis reports on the ideas generated and the reading of the summary report on the best ideas. As the participants leave the conference each one should be given a copy of the keynote address, a copy of the "best ideas," and the analysis report on all of the ideas generated at the conference.

An address by S. P. Marland Jr., U.S. Commissioner of Education, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, before the 18th National Seminar of the National School Public Relations Association, Sheraton-Columbus Motor Inn, Columbus, Ohio, Friday, July 9, 1971, 9 a.m.

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On Meriting a Good Opinion

When I received a copy of the flyer describing this conference, I was a little startled to be greeted by a photograph of myself underneath a headline proclaiming: "DISCOVER NEW ANSWERS TO YOUR URGENT PUBLIC RELATIONS PROBLEMS."

Permit me to dispel instantly any incorrect impression that may have been created by this document: I am not here to supply answers to your urgent public relations problems. In fact, coming from the great federal bureaucracy, I may be one of them. I imagine a good number of you have despaired from time to time of every successfully explaining the mysterious ways of Washington to your constitutents. I sympathize, believe me, and we in Washington are trying to clear things up a bit, as I shall explain a little later on.

No, far from supplying answers, I am here to indulge in that time-honored speaker's gambit of raising questions--questions as to what our public relations problems are in education and what we can do about them. I would like to examine with you for a few moments the general condition of disaffection that unquestion-

ably exists between the educational system of the United States--preprimary through graduate school--and a significant portion of its citizenry. My hope is that out of this conference will emerge a new understanding of the situation we face and new knowledge that we can employ together to overcome the depressing and potentially very dangerous malaise that has infected and soured so much of the public's attitude toward a great and fundamental institution of our national life.

A Crisis of Public Confidence

Assigning blame in this or almost any other situation that I can think of is a generally fruitless exercise. Yet any analysis of what must be called a crisis of public confidence in education lays a particularly heavy responsibility on those of us in this room today. Correcting education's failings--and convincing the public of our willingness and ability to act swiftly and usefully--will demand that we work cooperatively, strenuously, and creatively; in essence we are called upon to produce a far better system of education in this country than we presently have, and to tell the story of education in a far more compelling and far more effective way.

We are, in short, in search of a renewal of faith in our schools. We are seeking to affect in a profound and permanent way what the English educator Thomas Henry Huxley called "the mysterious independent variable of political calculation--Public Opinion."

Public opinion, as you know so well, operates in a thoroughly mysterious fashion. It is elusive, fickle, and in many ways, unfathomable. Yet it remains the only barometer by which we can finally judge the quality of our performance, the only standard against which we can measure how well we are meeting the needs of the people--not as we see those needs, but as the people themselves see them. And it is precisely in this act of measurement and response that I hold our failure lies. The old gentleman said: "It's not what the facts are; it's what people think they are."

There is, I concede, a great deal of imprecision in all this. We have little hard data on which to base our efforts to analyze why the people have come to distrust the schools, why bond issues are shot down with unhappy regularity, why tax levies are rejected, why there are bitter confrontations at board meetings, why students are in open rebellion--at all levels of education--against the forms and standards of instruction that have long served the country with honor--that served us in this hall to our satisfaction and profit.

Examples of Accomplishment

Perhaps criticism is harder to bear just now because we know and can cite example after example of honest accomplishment and broad success as the world's most effective educational system. There is measurable progress and reform energizing the educational enterprise in this nation. We know that three out of every 10 Americans are engaged in education full-time. This cannot be counted as a loser. We have statistics that illustrate that

more than three million young men and women graduated from our high schools in June of this year--contrasted with fewer than two million 10 years ago; we have numbers that show that nearly 8.5 million students are enrolled in higher education today as contrasted with slightly more than 4 million less than five years ago. Our statistics show that total black enrollment in colleges and universities more than doubled during the 1960's to nearly 500,000 today and that all manner of educational opportunities are opening in significant volume to the hitherto shamefully treated minorities of America. For example, in 1970 a larger percentage of blacks were enrolled in higher education in America than were all races enrolled in higher education in Western Europe.

Concern for Failures

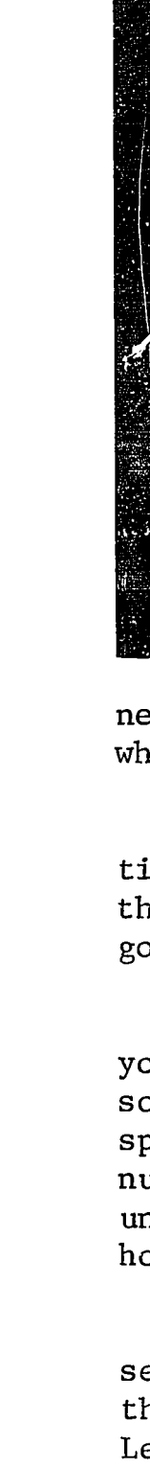
Yet numbers of these kinds, however impressive, are bleak fare somehow, and little comfort to all those who have been failed--who are being failed--by our schools. Our failures are much smaller, percentagewise, than our successes, granted. But small percentages represent large numbers of human beings whose unfulfilled condition defines in poignant terms the job we face. Yes, there is a sound basis to the cry against education that is echoing and reechoing across this nation. And I submit that our part is not to be indignantly offended by what is said against us--though such a reaction would be completely human and thoroughly understandable--nor to carry injured pride to the point of blindly rejecting the entire body of critical comment that pours out through our television stations, our newspapers, our books, and--Lord knows--our mouths. Our part is to listen, and to understand, and to learn what the people are saying about their condition of life and what their opinion is of our attempts to help improve it.

For government, in the last analysis, is organized opinion. Where there is little or no public criticism there is likely to be bad government. Therefore, we should recognize and react to criticism for what it is--a powerful force that converted to constructive and positive channels can carry the educational enterprise in this nation to new heights of excellence and into a new era of reform that every responsible educator knows is necessary and desirable.

For whatever comfort we can take from it, I think we should remember that when the critics come down on us the hardest, it means that they are most interested in our success. That philosophy makes the stresses of the business easier to bear--and it happens to be the truth. Honest controversy is the crucible of change--whether at federal, state, or local level.

We Must Actively Seek Criticism

Going further, I would say that we should not only accept criticism as an unavoidable part of the job, but that--in a sense and for a definite purpose--we should actively seek criticism. My duty as commissioner of education is not to issue weekly press releases dedicated to the proposition that all is well with education; the papers--to their eternal credit--wouldn't print the stuff and their readers would not believe such alleged



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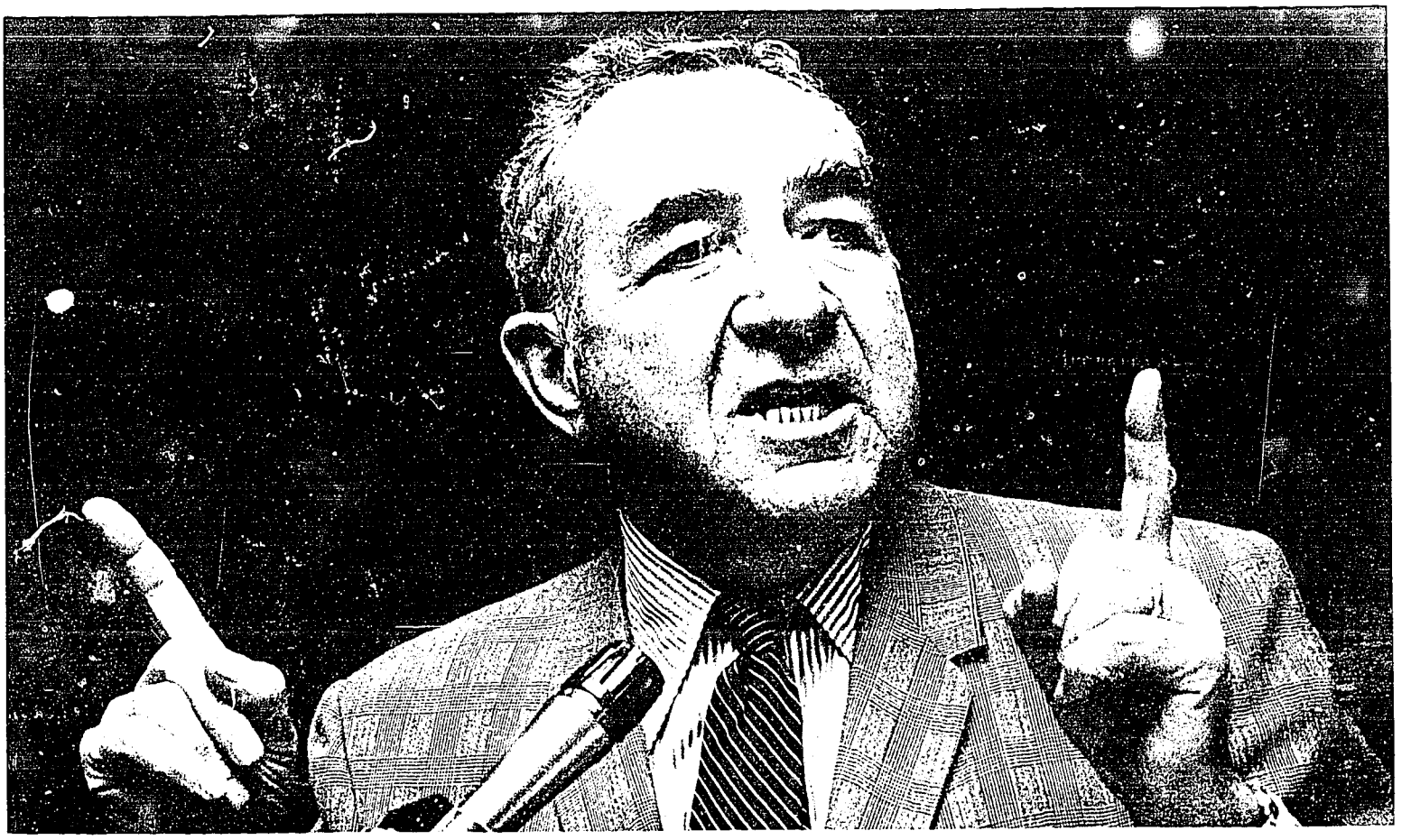

news if it did appear in print. Obviously, I am obliged to report failure when public statements of this nature are needed to produce a remedy.

And I would offer the point to you who are concerned with public relations strategy that the illumination of our failures or our shortfalls in this time of sophisticated educational audiences would be a startlingly good piece of public relations technique.

Your duty as school PR men is not to struggle to put a happy face on your local school situation, to produce a flood of brochures filled with soap opera accounts of all the students who are going to college or how splendid the new gymnasium is, while maintaining a prim silence on the number of young who are dropping out and plummeting directly into the local unemployment pool, how many pregnant unmarrieds, how many suspensions, and how many attacks against teachers.

Tell in all simplicity both sides of the story--the good with the bad, seeking not to pull wool over eyes but always to open them further, to give the people a better grasp of the true condition and needs of their schools. Let the people know the awful problems that teachers and administrators live with in some schools. Informed discontent, straightforwardly generated, will not only serve the eternal cause of truth but the cause of the schools as well--and with luck will keep them solvent and keep them from wandering too far from the path of service, efficiency, and common sense.

Yet there is the danger that we would do well to recognize, the threat that what was begun as a sincere attempt to goad American education into badly needed reform will result not in the reform that was sought but in a

destructive, divisive pessimism--a new agony of spirit that will further divide black from white, city from suburb, rich family from poor family--that will spread throughout this nation the corrosive conviction that the schools are not relevant to our times and needs and cannot be made so. For while negative judgments are certainly inevitable in any honest scrutiny of human affairs, an unhealthy obsession with negativism such as we are approaching in America today can only lead ultimately to self-fulfilling prophecies of doom. I reject this essentially pessimistic stance. For I have a deep and basic faith in the purposes of education and in the utility of education and I shall work with whatever power I possess to prevent these prophecies of educational doom from self-fulfillment.

Make Known the Forces of Positive Reform

We have, I am convinced, reached the point in time and events when further nonconstructive criticism of our educational system is no longer profitable or useful except to the writers of books on the subject. We have reached the time when the forces of positive reform must not only be completely engaged in regenerating our system of education, but must be known and understood by the great mass of the people to be so engaged.

The first part of the job--educational reform itself--is one of the primary responsibilities of the Office of Education and of my colleagues throughout the education profession. We seek the tough reexamination of our entire approach to learning that was called for by President Nixon in

his March 1970 Message on Education Reform. And I would say the profession as a whole is well along in this root examination and is beginning to respond to the call for change. Emerging only in the past two or three years is an attitude in the profession entirely receptive to criticism and suggestions and more nearly free of paranoid suspicion of the capabilities of nonprofessionals to do impressive work in our field. Consequently, readiness for change and movement is perhaps education's principal characteristic today. Which leads to the question as to what kind of change we are talking about. What are the actions we propose to take to advance specifically the cause of reform and relevancy in education?

At the federal level the goals we have established are predicated on the twofold concept that they, first, advance the cause of educational reform and, second, that these actions make education substantially more responsive and understandable to the public we seek to serve. This means relevance. Reform will come only when school patrons as well as educators understand it, and because they understand it, want it.

We must work where the people are, where they live, and above all, we must meet their needs as they exist and in ways they can readily understand. There is much about education--calculated or not--which baffles the minds of the patrons and the taxpayers. Obtuseness is never a virtue in communications, least of all at a time when we are playing catch-up ball.

Key Objectives of the Office of Education

Let me touch upon six key objectives we have set for OE for FY 1972, as we consider the views of our clients:

Career Education. For example, the people cannot understand why so many of our high school graduates are not equipped to hold decent jobs. These thousands of high school students who leave the system with or without diplomas, unschooled and unskilled, are not products of vocational-technical education, but of the bogus offerings called the general curriculum. Career education is an attempt to bring new, meaningful purpose to all of education--from kindergarten through graduate school--to prepare and equip our students for useful and productive lives. Career education would not replace vocational-technical education but include it as an important element in the overall educational design. We are working now within the National Center for Educational Research and Development to develop three career education models: for the school, for business and industry, and for the home. Properly validated and installed, these three models will have the effect of integrating all of the educational forces of the community--teachers, production facilities, television and radio stations, and so on--into a cooperative, coordinated program to achieve a new and, we believe, real and useful meaning for education.

Disadvantaged and Isolated. People cannot understand, particularly minority people, why a child should be a less successful learner simply because he or she happens to live in an urban ghetto or rural slum. In our academic way, we labor at length to explain the child's shortcomings on his family's failure, or the effect of his environment. This is no longer

acceptable as a solution. Racial isolation and its related educational disparities are no longer an acceptable condition. Our goal in the Office of Education is to achieve truly equal educational opportunity for all racial, ethnic, and cultural minorities by the year 1977. If federal dollars can help break down the walls of segregation and allow all people full access to all that is good in American education, we are going to try to make that happen.

For the first time in our history, the present Administration is actively seeking large-scale federal assistance to help school districts desegregate. The proposed legislation, the Emergency School Assistance Act, would provide $1.5 billion for this purpose over the next two years. We expect favorable action from the Congress on this legislation within a short time.

Innovation. The people fail to understand why, despite the arrival some time ago of a wondrous age of science, technology, and revolutionary systems of communications, the schools remain stubbornly enmired in old ideas, old subject matter, old methods. It is true that educational technology has clearly not lived up to its advance billing; perhaps, everything considered, it could not have satisfied the extravagant expectations that grew up around it though Sesame Street is, of course, an outstanding example of the sort of success educational technology can realize. We are building on that success by more than doubling our investment in Sesame Street in the fiscal 1972 budget. We also plan to seek development of this kind of programming to cover other priority areas high on OE's agenda--such as the Right to Read, career education, and environmental education. We are working with NASA on preliminary uses of satellite broadcasting for instructional programs.

Congress has before it an Administration proposal with special significance for the future of educational innovation--the National Institute of Education. This organization is intended finally to achieve a critical mass in educational research by coordinating present scattered efforts and initiating scholarly

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inquiry into the great unsolved educational problems. This is a bipartisan proposal and we expect early passage of the law establishing the institute.

Right to Read. The people cannot understand why, in a nation that spends over $60 billion a year on education, there are so many functionally illiterate people. We are trying to mobilize all the dollars we can to target in on this problem, to help improve the reading skills of the seven million school children who require special help, and the 18-1/2 million adults who cannot read well enough to complete simple application forms for public assistance or medical care. This problem is too big to be solved by the schools alone. Solution will require the skills and resources not only of the educational community but of the communications media, the libraries, business, labor, government at all levels, and the public as well.

Handicapped. The people cannot understand why only 40 percent of the estimated seven million school-age handicapped children in the United States are receiving the special educational assistance they require. Our purpose is to secure a national commitment to provide these youngsters with the specialized training and other essential educational services they require, and to correct the present disparity of the unattended 60 percent by 1977.

Management. Many people feel that the funds the federal government spends on education--about seven percent of the total U.S. expenditures--are not spent well. I don't believe this is true. The great majority of federal education dollars are indeed well spent and effective. But we are moving to take up whatever slack exists by strengthening our management and simplifying our procedures in order to give all our clients more effective, consistent, prompt service.

In particular we are trying to cut down the paperwork that has trapped our people and burdened yours in the states and localities. There are instances in which a single piece of paper has been checked, approved, or otherwise processed by no less than 24 people before it reached its labored resting place.

We are working to correct this through such measures as regionalized decision-making, simplified grants review procedures, multi-year funding for a number of programs, and reducing state plans from complicated volumes to simple sets of assurances.

We are also pressing, as you are aware, for the Administration's revenue sharing proposals. These are companion measures: General Revenue Sharing, to bring the strength of the federal taxing structure to bear on the grave financial problems of the states and communities, and Education Revenue Sharing, to simplify and consolidate over 30 categorical programs into five broad areas, relieving the states and localities of a large burden of federal red tape and giving them greater flexibility and responsibility for meeting their own educational needs.

NSPRA Project. Finally I would like to mention briefly an Office of Education project that has special meaning for your communications profession--the series of workshops on school-community relations that NSPRA has begun to operate for the Office of Education. Working with Don Sweeney and

our Office of Public Affairs staff, Roy Wilson and his people have developed a project designed to improve and expand the educational communications network. The first series of workshops, which took place this spring in New Orleans, Atlanta, and Nashville for state and local public information personnel from the Southeast, has been evaluated favorably. This is a program we think is going to work and we are increasing this commitment. But the final judgment is yours. Let us know if you like the workshop idea. If not, we'll do something else. But in any case we mean to help you get the story of American education across to the people of this country with force and clarity.

The kind of government sponsored innovations that I have been describing constitute a sound investment of public funds only if they are put to work in thousands of classrooms to benefit millions of children. You and your colleagues can help importantly in spreading knowledge about such projects --and stimulating a public desire for them. It is one of many services that we in the field of education have come to expect from you as colleagues and companions in common cause.

Public Participation in Education Affairs

We look to you for strong and meaningful contributions in the area of developing public participation in the affairs of education. This is still a trickly and often unclear territory but one that is essential to our future. The most carefully crafted plan for community engagement will surely fail if it does not reflect a thorough knowledge of how the community can be reached and how the community can be honestly and legitimately involved in whatever process is intended to be served. Make-believe engagement of the community is dangerous business and public relations officers have a growing dimension of responsibility in this arena of educational change.

This NSPRA conference has a particular importance to education at this time of crisis in public confidence; this meeting, and the OE/NSPRA workshops and other refinement techniques you have developed, are intended principally to sharpen your skills and more tightly define your activities. Sharpness and exact definition have traditionally been in short supply in both our fields--education and public relations. I urge much more self-discipline on both counts to both groups. The hoary definition of public relations as shooting first and painting the bullseye around the hole will no longer serve. Call it accountability or call it common sense: but let all of us approach this enlarged new demand with the highest respect for candor and accuracy and with the greatest sense of responsibility for accomplishing in measurable modules what we set out to do.

Rebuilding Public Confidence

For, in the final analysis, confidence in American education is going to be rebuilt only to the extent that our performance--in terms of accountability--earns the genuine respect of our constituents, including the young people in our classrooms. Hence the public relations job is to stim-

ulate improvement, and to communicate it when it occurs. Do right, as you say, and let the people know about it.

The public relations man in each school district and each state must be prepared to advance the understanding of and respect for American education as a whole, not only in his own community. Consequently, we in the Office of Education call upon you and every public relations person engaged in the field as full-time allies in the effort to improve American education and to restore its full quota of public confidence, support, and participation.

Victories in this struggle will be achieved one at a time. They will be isolated in some instances, almost unnoticed perhaps--the times when you and your colleagues in school districts throughout the nation win a millage election with facts and hard work, when you meet and dissipate the criticism of a hostile and misinformed group, when you help promote a strike settlement without bitterness or recrimination, when you skillfully plan and execute a program of community involvement in the solution of school problems, when you survey the public's opinion in your town, your county, or your state--so that the real points of concern in the public mind can be identified and answered quickly. But the cumulative effect of hard public affairs work by dedicated professionals coupled with the hard work of teachers and administrators is the only solution I can offer as we tackle the restoration of trust in the schools. There are no PR tricks, no magic, no quickie cures--demonstrated results, well grasped by the American people, are what I ask.

In closing, I want to congratulate NSPRA for conceiving and bringing to reality this excellent conference--and I also want to express my profound hope that from it will flow hundreds of ideas for the radical improvement of educational communications.

I pledge you the maximum effort of my office and myself as we set our sights very high for this cause. I know of none that serves a higher purpose in our land.

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