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ABSTRACT

The president of the National Manpower Institute discusses the possibility of establishing a new set of institutions--for the development and implementation of education-work and vocational education policy--not in the "world of education" but in broader community. He suggests that there be community education work councils, designed to serve as go betweens for matching student need with those of employers. The council would be composed of representatives of the schools, employers, labor unions, service organizations, the media, and the public at large (including its younger contingent). Although the author views such a change as having difficulties, he suggests that something of this nature is commended by three increasing imperatives: (1) to meet what will be a constantly worsening youth unemployment problem unless we can develop an "economics as if people mattered;" (2) to channel constructively the emergent force of increased citizen involvement in community affairs; and (3) to exploit the possibilities that lie in making the human experience a continuing opportunity for both learning and working. According to the author, a larger pluralism in the structure of education-work or vocational education policy seems to be the key to developing and using the limitless human resource which alone affords the prospect of economic and societal growth upon which the future depends. Audience questions and the author's answers to them follow the lecture script. (WL)

Occasional Paper No. 17

COMMUNITY EDUCATION WORK COUNCILS

by

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Washington, D.C.

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PREFACE

The Center for Vocational Education was privileged to welcome at its Staff Development Seminar, Mr. Willard Wirtz, President of the National Manpower Institute in Washington, D.C., who spoke on "Community Education Work Councils."

In his lecture, Mr. Wirtz advocates broadening the base of vocational education to include local industry and community involvement in its planning and implementation. He stresses the need to focus on measures of human development as a source of economic wealth as well as the traditional Keynesian approach of the conversion of material resources into goods and services. In addition, Mr. Wirtz offers some stimulating and provocative comments on the role of vocational educators in "work" education research and development.

A native of DeKalb, Illinois, Mr. Wirtz earned his Bachelor of Arts degree (1933) from Beloit College and his Bachelor of Law degree (1937) from Harvard University. In addition, he has received many honorary degrees from these and other colleges and universities.

Mr. Wirtz has had extensive experience in both law and labor relations. He taught law at the University of Iowa and Northwestern University, and was a labor arbitrator and practicing lawyer in the Chicago firm of Stevenson, Rifkind and Wirtz. From 1963 to 1969 he was Secretary of Labor in the cabinets of President Kennedy and President Johnson.

In addition to being President of the National Manpower Institute, he is a partner in the Washington, D.C. firm of Wirtz and Gentry; chairman of the Board of Curriculum Development Associates, Inc.; President of the Citizen Involvement and Network; and Trustee of Amherst College.

Mr. Wirtz is the author of many articles and papers, and the books, *Labor and the Public Interest* (1963) and *The Boundless Resource: A Prospectus for an Education/Work Policy* (1975).

On behalf of The Ohio State University and The Center for Vocational Education, we take pleasure in sharing with you Mr. Willard Wirtz's presentation, "Community Education Work Councils."

Robert E. Taylor
Director
The Center for Vocational Education

COMMUNITY EDUCATION WORK COUNCILS

A NEW STRUCTURE FOR EDUCATION-WORK POLICY

In The Center's recent Annual Report, Dr. Taylor refers to the prospect of a larger pluralism in the structure of education-work or vocational education policy. He suggests the value in this area of increasing the ability of "diverse agencies, institutions, and organizations" to provide "full service research, development, and implementation capability."

This emphasis on the importance of institutional structure in the shaping of education-work policy, and on the desirability of introducing new elements of pluralism into this structural framework, seems to me so central to our hopes for strengthening this part of our social fabric that I want to take these few minutes to expand on Dr. Taylor's theme—at the risk of carrying it beyond his intention.

The architecture of the present vocational education structure—even, if you will, as it is reflected in the design of this Center—expresses the assumption that the better interrelating of education and work is to be accomplished largely within the educational system. We speak of "two worlds of education and work" and of "building bridges between them"—but this bridge building is conceived of as going on from only one side of this gap. If the supply and demand elements of the manpower equation get out of balance, it is on the training side that it is assumed the correction is to be made. "Work" is taken as a given; education is subject to correction. The "vocational training" and "cooperative education" and "experiential learning" terms all have education as their nouns. It is in the school system, in the world of education, that responsibility is recognized for whatever is to be done by way of change in this area.

Indeed the pattern of thinking about all this, and the institutional reflection of this conception of it, have become so thoroughly established that it isn't easy to take any different approach. Isn't it obvious that "work" is whatever the evolving economic system calls for? Aren't training, and education more broadly, by their very nature *preparatory*—for needs and opportunities the economy and the society create? And isn't it the traditional function of the educational system to adopt itself to change in these demands? Where else in the institutional structure of the society is there either any capacity or any responsibility for doing anything about whatever gap may develop between education and work?

What then is meant by talking about "a larger pluralism in the structure of education-work or vocational education policy?"

I venture these thoughts—at the risk of both misunderstanding and error: We are, I think, at a point of confluence in time of extraordinary forces of technological, economic, social, and political change, with the consequence that the relationship between education and work is undergoing such revision that attention to it by and within the traditional educational institutions alone will prove no longer adequate. There seems to me clear signs already that this situation is rapidly becoming such that educational institutions—from the high school level on through higher education, and with respect to all these institutions without regard to their liberal arts or vocational emphasis—will not be able to function effectively in what will become increasingly a vacuum of responsibility. With respect to institutional design and architecture—our principal interest here—I believe it is increasingly imperative to develop new institutions, particularly at the local community level, with responsibility in *both* the education and the work areas.

It would be another speech to develop the evidence in emergent experience of the need for such new institutions and of the price we are already paying for the lack of them. This would involve an evaluation of the reasons for a 20 to 40 percent youth unemployment rate, depending on which groups are considered; and of the prospect that this rate will not diminish significantly even with an improving economic situation. It would include an analysis of the implications of increasing numbers of young people being trained more and more intensively for occupations and careers which are not going to be open to them, and of the different trends between the statistics on college graduates and those for jobs requiring a college education. We would appropriately go on then to consider the evidence of an increasing need for new procedures permitting and facilitating the retraining and supplementary education of adults, including older workers, whose usefulness is impaired by their being locked into the courses they are already on.

There is enough obvious evidence of these needs, however, to warrant our looking here at the *institutional* aspects of adaptation to them, as in at least some respects a problem in itself. Most of us here are educators by profession, many of us with particular experience in and attachment to vocational education. We will not disregard the fact that there are inertial forces in this situation involving the stake we have as individuals in preserving traditional institutional forms and structures and processes. "Pluralistic institutionalism"—the development of new organizational structures and new distributions and allocations of responsibility—may carry quite a price as far as some of our traditional prerogatives are concerned.

In general, furthermore, such institutional pluralism probably depends on the recognition of broader *community* responsibilities in the education-work area—as distinguished from, or in addition to, the responsibility of the schools and the vocational education profession. Yet to talk or think about the exercise of the responsibilities of the general community, other than through the established educational institutions, is to recognize necessarily the problems of ways and means involved here.

COMMUNITY EDUCATION-WORK COUNCILS

Instead of discussing this further in general terms, let me suggest a specific possibility for what would be at least one conceivable form of new pluralistic institutionalism in the education-work area.

Suppose there were to be established at the local community level in this country what might be called for purposes of discussion here Community Education-Work Councils.

These councils would include representatives of the schools in the community (at all levels), of employers and labor unions, service organizations, the media, and the public at large (including particularly its younger contingent).

The councils would have neither authority or a treasury. They would depend not on any power to command or any power of the purse but on their capacity to persuade and to help. They would have a small nucleus of full-time professional staff (paid for either by private funding sources or conceivably by very limited government funds) but would depend largely on volunteer assistance.

The councils' charters, which they would draw up themselves, would include such matters in the education-work area as are commended by experience and felt-need in the various communities. But this is an integral point, so some illustrative possibilities are appropriately suggested.

A first order of business might well be to try to establish an adequate career guidance and counseling program, particularly for young people at about the upper high school age level. This critical function is today being woefully under-performed by a totally inadequate corps of high school counselors, most of them without experience in any field except education. Yet every community in the country has available a full complement of people—older, younger, or at mid-careers—who would welcome an opportunity to offer their services in connection with the career guidance function.

The council might well undertake to develop a community opportunity inventory—to provide at least some basis for informing both young people and school administrators about both present and prospective work and service needs in the particular area.

There are numerous "work-study" and "cooperative education" programs today in virtually every community in the country—but they are all being handled by the individual schools and colleges. There would be an obvious advantage in these programs being "brokered" through a single office in which the schools' and the employers' needs could be matched up.

As more and more young people take more and more education, there is an increasing need for the development of some agency through which arrangements can be made for some of them to stop for a year or two, do something useful, and then move back into school.

There is widening recognition today of the desirability of developing, probably at the local level, some form of community internship or community apprenticeship program—to provide not just "work" but also "service" opportunities for young people. The limiting factor in present thinking about this possibility is the lack of any agency in a position to develop and administer such a program. A community council could do it.

We are hung up today on the issue of how to reconcile youth work-experience programs with the provisions of the minimum wage laws. This issue will not, in practical political terms, be resolved at the federal legislative level; a youth exemption or exception to the Fair Labor Standards Act will be effectively opposed because of the risk it would create of jobs being given to young people at the expense of these jobs being taken away from adult workers. Yet there is every reason to anticipate this problem being constructively worked out in a local community forum where *specific* experience opportunities could be identified which would not threaten adult workers' jobs and livelihood.

Having taken up and handled some of these youth education-work problems, the community councils could go on to consider the comparable problems—and prospects—involving adults and recurrent education.

There is a limitless agenda open to such councils, taking as its possible items those matters involving the relationship of education and work which simply cannot by their nature be adequately handled within the educational system alone.

AN ECONOMICS AS IF PEOPLE MATTERED

So brief a sketch of the possible composition and concerns of local councils such as those suggested here is bound to raise at least as many questions as it answers. But let me suggest three sets of broader considerations which create, it seems to me, new reason for looking further into the general area of possibility—for finding a broader community base for the development and carrying out of education-work policy.

A little more, first, about the general prospect as far as the employment of youth in this country is concerned.

I think we are seriously underestimating the magnitude of the problem that is shaping up as far as the transition from school to work is concerned, at least if we continue to think about it in traditional terms.

Although this, too, is another speech, I see a period ahead of us in which there is going to be continuing high level (in traditional terms) general unemployment in the United States—despite what may be considered a satisfactory economic growth rate. The present talk about meeting this situation by greatly expanded public employment programs seems to me lamentably short-sighted; better designed to serve the customs and practices of election year political oratory than the more basic necessities of the national future. I think, frankly, that our orthodox economics, based on growth of the kind measured by the present gross national product index, is not going to carry us much longer or further. I find more sense in E. F. Schumacker's "Economics as if People Mattered" (unfortunately titled "Small is Beautiful") than in the neoclassical Keynesianisms I have grown up, and now older, on.

The immediately relevant point here, however, is that in this situation (characterized, too, by a substantial influx of women into the labor force), I see our trying to maintain at least a semblence of statistically satisfactory employment by (1) putting more and more older people out to pasture earlier and earlier, and (2) by cutting back more and more on the employment (except at hamburger stands and the like) of people under the age of about 20 or 21.

I don't mean this in any way apocalyptically or even view it as necessarily bad so far as working out the ultimately most desirable youth life pattern is concerned. It may be all to the good. But the point here is different. It is that if the educational system continues to try to discharge alone—and by a traditional curricular offering—the responsibility for getting every young person up to his or her career entry point, the most likely prospect is that the schools won't succeed in doing this and that they will be blamed even more than they have been in the past for not doing their job.

The signs, in short, seem to me to point to an increasingly serious youth unemployment prospect and to a more and more complicated school-to-work passage which it will be harder and harder for educators—vocational and liberal arts alike—to handle themselves, so that the sooner the broader community is brought directly into this picture the better.

If both the development of a new economics and the designing of new institutions seem too large tasks to be undertaken by institutions such as this Center, there is one important element in a strategy for change which lies clearly within the academic competence—at least in large measure. We do a large part of the research upon which effective change depends, and this research depends in turn, at least in significant measure, on the statistics we use. I think we are using wrong, at least inadequate statistics, so far as the development of education-work policy is concerned.

Looking at the situation of the 16-to-20 year old group in terms of the traditional Bureau of Labor Statistics definition of "employment" and "unemployment" is increasingly wrong and misleading. Theirs is a very different condition, with very different consequences. Lumping the youth statistics in with those for adults also tends strongly to conceal the seriousness of the youth situation. We should consider, and I think urge, the complete separating out of the measurement and reporting of the under-21 age group condition.

Perhaps even more serious is the continuing lack—except for the work of Dr. Parnes and now a few others—of adequate longitudinal survey information. We aren't going to know what experience tells us about the comparative effectiveness of various school-to-work courses until we have a much fuller picture of what happens to particular cohorts of young people. Comparing annual snapshots of *different* groups can be terribly deceptive, and at best it tells us only part of what we need to know.

What we do as a society is influenced greatly by what we measure. I suspect that probably the most effective single point of approach to the development of improved education-work policy is the development of new and more complete measures of the education, training, and work experience of young people between the ages of 16 and about 25—collected and presented in longitudinal terms. This doesn't relate to the structural or institutional problem we are talking about here—except that the proper measurements are essential to constructive thinking about all aspects of change.

THE YEASTING OF COMMUNITY

It gets back to the matter of institutional pluralism to refer now to a very different set of considerations and emergent experience. If there is a more basic and serious problem than anachronistic economics facing us as a nation today it is almost certainly the evaporation of confidence in our institutions—all of them, including schools as well as corporations and government agencies. We had gone very far in delegating virtually full authority for our affairs to representatives of one kind or another, and were exercising less and less control over them. Now, almost suddenly, there is a widespread sense of default in this representation.

Perhaps we will regain, under different leadership and more propitious circumstances, the comparative confidence we once had in the representative process and the institutions through which this process has traditionally operated. But I question this, or at least wonder about it. There seems to me signs in any event of the emergence of a new insistence on *participation* as well as representations. Disappointed and even disgusted with the functioning of those to whom responsibility has been delegated, more and more people appear increasingly disposed to get into things themselves, to reassert a broader and more direct citizen role in the handling of community's affairs.

Although this appears in general a salutary development, increased citizen involvement obviously has a potential for irresponsibility as well as constructiveness. One person's volunteer is another's vigilante; my independence, your anarchy. The "yeasting of community" is in democracy's most authentic tradition, but the fermentation of yeast works with different benevolence depending on the uses to which it is put. If it is good that people may now be disposed to get more directly involved in public decision-making and action, the ultimate gain from this will be critically affected by the forms this participation takes.

These considerations seem to me to commend the establishment in the education-work area of something like the suggested community councils. The better interrelating of these two functions, the sensible balancing of general and vocational education, the development of effective routes from classes to careers—these are indeed tasks for which the community as a whole, rather than the schools alone, should assume responsibility. But they are delicate jobs, requiring the continuing attention of organized and responsible bodies; the disparate pressures of different groups with conflicting views and interests will be as likely to worsen as to improve the situations. The question is not, I think, whether there is going to be increased citizen involvement, but whether this increased participation will take various possible guerrilla forms or be made effective through the establishment of responsible agencies.

BREAKING UP LIFE'S TIME TRAPS

Now, finally, a few words about what seems to me the critical importance of extending the development of education-work policy—and the responsibility of the pluralistic institutions which may be established for its implementation—to the interests and concerns of adults as well as young people. There are two considerations here. One is that the needs for interrelating education and work are by no means limited to the school-to-work transition. The other is that it will probably be impossible, as a matter of practical politics, to muster an effective working majority for meaningful change in this area except as a coalition constituency of those with related but different interests is developed.

It will be a step toward developing this coalition constituency to recognize that a retraining opportunity component is essential to implementing in practice the equal employment principle already established, but only on paper, so far as women are concerned. I can make at least as strong a case for offering one or two years of public education following or during maternity service, as I can for one or two years of education after military service. A woman leaving her employment to become a mother and a man to enter military service both interrupt their careers for reasons deemed important to the society. Their subsequent return characteristically requires retraining. We give the male seniority credit for his service, plus a "GI Bill" retraining entitlement; the female usually gets neither. This doesn't make sense.

There is also at least as good a case to be made for another year of free education between the ages of sixty and sixty-five, as for another such year between ages sixteen and twenty. We are not going to accept much longer the twin fallacies that life's ultimate door prize is security, and that retirement is an unskilled occupation. We should be talking about "social opportunity" instead of "social security," and providing the kind of training that will make retirement and leisure a worthwhile experience.

There should probably be a year's deferred educational opportunity for every member of the work force in this country, as there is today in West Germany and France—on a full or partial support basis, with the support payments coming out of the unemployment insurance fund. Instead of paying somebody for doing nothing when he or she loses a job, we should be providing retraining opportunities for those about to be displaced by machines—or some other form of "progress."

If twelve years' free education is a sensible part of the social compact we make with each other, there is no rational reason for requiring that these years all be taken in one long, uninterrupted sitting between the ages of six and eighteen. With fifty-one million adults in this country today with less than a high school education, we should consider the probable gains in straight cost-effectiveness terms of letting them go back and pick up what they missed.

I realize that some of these suggestions, put in such abbreviated form, will seem to border on fantasy. Perhaps they do. Or perhaps they at least suggest how much we have become captives of our assumption that life is to be divided into three time-traps: youth for education, adulthood for work, and older age for the denial of opportunity to pursue either of these courses to meaningfulness.

Until we can somehow lift our sights and our hopes in this country, we are not going to accomplish any major change. We are currently down in the mouth, which isn't a characteristic

posture for us. To consider how we can go about breaking up these time traps and establishing a continuum of educational and work opportunity offers at least a possibility for renewing the kind of spirit for which this country has been authentically famous in the past, and can be in the future.

SUMMARY

I propose, therefore, our consideration of the possibility of establishing a new set of institutions—for the development and implementation of education-work and vocational education policy—not in the "world of education" but in broader community. Recognizing fully the difficulties this involves, I suggest that something of this nature is commended by three increasing imperatives: to meet what will be a constantly worsening youth unemployment problem unless we can develop an "economics as if people mattered"; to channel constructively the emergent force of increased citizen involvement in community affairs; and to exploit the possibilities that lie in making the human experience a continuing opportunity for both learning and working.

A larger pluralism in the structure of education-work or vocational education policy seems to me the key to developing and using the limitless human resource which alone affords the prospect of economic and societal growth upon which the future depends.

QUESTIONS

Question: What kind of staff services will be relevant to the local community?

Response: Both professional and volunteer. I think it's too bad that we have developed in this country such a negative attitude about volunteer service. This is part of the influence of that gross national product obsession. One person goes to the hospital and is employed all day parking cars; his or her salary goes into the gross national product. Another spends all day working in the hospital on a volunteer basis; but that doesn't count in the gross national product. We have done a great deal to denigrate the whole idea of volunteer service. It is critically important, at the same time, that any such effort as we are talking about here have a full-time central paid secretariat. There have been too many attempts to bring education and work together by setting up ad hoc committees, and loaning somebody from a company to the board of education for three months. So it seems to me there should be a central full-time professional secretariat, but that we should get over our hang-ups about volunteer work and recognize that there are lots of people who under the right circumstances would like very much to work on this kind of thing on a volunteer basis.

Question: Will the local community really accept the responsibilities of the kind we are talking about here, and can it, in view of the mobility factor that is involved?

Response: My answer is yes, but I recognize the uncertainties about this. Louis Harris has done some very interesting recent polling in which he identifies two phenomena: that people are totally fed up with the present institutions, and that given the opportunity they will come back into the business of government a good deal more fully than they have in the past. You wonder, though, why they haven't even gone to the trouble to vote in the past. Harris' findings also indicate that if people do come back in they will reflect a much larger interest in the quality of life than in the materialistic aspects of it.

These Harris findings are borne out in some recent experience I have been having with what we call the Citizen Involvement Network initiative. We have looked into the situation in some 55

communities around the country, of which Columbus is one, in which there are relatively well developed citizen involvement experiments. We have come to the conclusion that there is a real eagerness to get back into involvement in public affairs at the local community level. Nevertheless, I cannot really answer your question except in terms essentially of faith. In connection with the Citizen Involvement Network project, we are going into a very broadly based social science research evaluation, recognizing that the answer to your question may be no, that it just will not work, or it may be that this kind of thing will work for about a year or two and then should self-destruct. It may even be that presently alienated citizens, having an opportunity to participate in the handling of their own affairs and then finding that nothing happens, will become even more alienated.

Question: What are the prospects for full employment in this country?

Response: Not good at the moment. The Congress has passed a public employment bill providing for, by various estimates, 600,000 to 800,000 people. If it is 800,000 people, that constitutes one out of ten of the unemployed in the country today. Exclusive reliance on public employment as the answer here seems to me an intellectual and political "cop-out" for which both parties today are about equally responsible.

I think that there is no decent answer short of working out a new economics along the lines that I was talking about before, and that answers any place short of this are false. Growth is unquestionably an essential element of life, for a society, as well as for an individual, but surely there is a concept of growth which does not depend so greatly on the conversion of raw materials. I would approach the answer to your question by starting from some fairly traditional points. If we were to do three things—build the railroad and mass transit systems we need, reduce the student/teacher ratio to what we all know is a decent level, and provide ourselves with adequate health services—there would be not only full employment but a people power shortage in this country. The constraints are political more than they are economic. It would be difficult politically to put automobiles in their rational place, even to limit their size to accord with the clear dictates of conservation—of steel and oil and clean air. So we are constrained from planning a transportation system which would make sense, from stopping the clogging of highways with huge tractor trucks pulling trailers which ought to be carried piggy-back on railroad flat cars, from building urban mass transit systems—and using that whole growth potential. If we would plan our functions, our production and service functions, to meet our manpower or people power problems as well as to obtain the highest gross national product in the world every year, we would find new forms of growth.

Knowing too little of economics to be sure of it, I am nevertheless strongly persuaded that there can be a viable, self-supporting growth economy based on the fuller development of the human resource and less on reliance on the exploitation of depleting natural resources. Unless this is true, I see no prospect of a return to full employment in this country, for the rest of the world is no longer going to put up with 6 percent of its population using 40 percent of its critical natural resources—which is what we have been doing.

Question: Would you remove vocational education from the educational system?

Response: I would not take vocational education out of the educational system. I would provide a base for vocational education which includes a much larger element of wider community participation.

Question: What, in your opinion, are some of the possible changes which must take place within the institutions of our society responsible for research, including government, that conduct the type of longitudinal research to which you refer?

Response: I think it is largely a matter of dollars and cents. Nobody has really made the case strongly to the Congressional appropriations committees for longitudinal studies. I don't believe the Bureau of Labor Statistics has made it clear that we are wasting billions of dollars a year because nobody has made a cost effectiveness analysis of various kinds and combinations of education and that this is impossible without longitudinal surveys. I suppose p[redacted]ulty is that a one-year appropriation will not cover this kind of survey, and th[redacted]e results for four or five years—which doesn't make it very appealing to the po[redacted] is a short-cut answer, I don't know it.

Question: We at The Center and in other educational institutions like this, can effect a certain amount of educational change, but how can we make those community-based changes? Also, how can we effect political changes other than by general influence?

Response: I wish I knew the answer. I don't. I guess I believe, in general, it would help just to recognize that it is in education—not, as I used to think, in government—that constructive change is worked out. Maybe this is the wrong way to put it, or maybe it's just wrong—period. Change "happens" I suppose, or at least emerges in a thousand different ways and forms and places. But it now seems to me much more than it used to that change is—or ought to be—the curricular core of at least "higher" education.

I know that my own 25 years of teaching were influenced more than they should have been by an unconscious realization that my students would achieve their largest material rewards—this was in a law school—by their defense in one form or another of the status quo. If those 25 years could be replayed, there would a lot more emphasis on the responsibility of the members of each new generation as architects of change.

Maybe it is meaningful, but I'm not sure, to suggest that education should put more emphasis than it usually does on values—on truth, as distinguished from facts.

It is implicit in what I tried to say in my opening remarks that there ought to be more emphasis in education on the ways and means of instituting and implementing local community initiatives—as compared with federal or state legislation and administrative action. And I guess I would try to think through the educational implications of trying to prepare people for the discharge of the membership as well as the leadership functions in a democracy.

But these are generalizations. I guess the specifics have to be developed on a case-by-case basis.

So this last question is the real one, and this speech, like almost all others, ends up where it should have started: with the question of "what can *I* do about the whole thing?" Perhaps some day speeches will start from that point. But then they probably won't be made for that critical question some way defies rhetoric and oratory. I guess its answer lies only in experience.