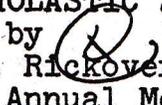


A NATIONAL SCHOLASTIC STANDARD

by 
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I am delighted to be here in the home territory of my good friend, George Andrews, and to speak to his many friends. I should like first to pay tribute to him and to the members of the Appropriations Committee of the House of Representatives. As the third ranking member of that Committee he reviews all programs that have to do with atomic matters.

The United States now has a nuclear fleet composed of 74 submarines, a nuclear aircraft carrier, a cruiser, and two frigates. In addition, we have under construction or authorized an aircraft carrier, three guided missile frigates, 32 attack type submarines, and a small submarine capable of exploring the ocean bottom. Much credit for this must be given to Congressman Andrews and to his colleagues.

I speak from personal experience when I say that without the support he and members of the Committee have unfailingly given it is doubtful we would now have a nuclear submarine Navy, which is a major factor in preserving our peace.

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Congressman Andrews has constantly and wholeheartedly supported the Naval Reactors Program and has devoted much time and effort to helping us. It is a comfort to be able to go to him for his wisdom, his objectivity, and kindly advice. I am proud to be associated with so fine a gentleman and patriot who does such honor to his State.

Now to the topic of my speech: A NATIONAL SCHOLASTIC STANDARD.

It has long been evident to me that the absence of a standard handicaps American education. Our schools and the diplomas they award have always been qualitatively of the most amazing diversity. This was perhaps unavoidable in earlier times when Americans were still engaged in subduing a wilderness. Different parts of the country were then at different stages of development, and education, of course, reflects the state of culture. It was bound to be better in the long-settled communities along the Atlantic seaboard than in pioneer country. But today we are one nation technologically and culturally; we should be one nation in education as well. Our children's educational needs are the same whether they go to school in California or Maine, in Illinois or Alabama.

Everywhere, and at all times, a country's level of culture and technology sets the requirements for education. Of this, the men who direct our public school system seem to be but dimly aware. They subscribe to a philosophy of education, an ideology, which is at odds with reality. They recognize neither the educational needs of children in today's world, nor the reality of their diverse native endowments which necessarily determine what each can accomplish educationally. Nor do they have a clear concept of the basic purpose of a tax-supported public school system.

Schools do not exist in a vacuum. Nor are they set up to serve as laboratories for testing newfangled ideas dreamed up by theoretical educationists. They are established to supplement home, church, and community as educators of the young. Their primary task is intellectual education, a task no other agency can do. It matters not how well they serve children in other ways. They will have failed their purpose if they do not transmit to them the knowledge, and develop in them the intellectual skills that children must acquire if they are to become contributing members of their society.

How well then does American public education perform its primary task? Do our young people acquire at school the knowledge they need to understand our complex modern world, the intellectual skills they need to qualify for the kind of work that is available? Have they received the best preparation--commensurate with their ability and industry--for the responsibilities of adult life?

To meet these responsibilities they must have adequate knowledge in the areas of language, mathematics, science, government, history, and geography. Success in adult life--as an individual, a breadwinner, a citizen--is closely linked to the amount of education one acquires at school in these areas of basic knowledge. Have our children learned as much, have their minds been stretched as far as would have been the case had they gone to school in some other culturally and technically advanced country?

The world is now so small, so competitive. The economic and political position of nations is bound, in the long run, to reflect so accurately the quality of their people that what is achieved in foreign

school systems can no longer be disregarded by us. There is a sort of international Plimsoll mark in education that sets a standard below which it is unsafe to let public education fall.

My work gives me a unique opportunity to judge the products of our schools. Over the last two decades, I have interviewed several thousand top graduates of the Naval Academy and of our best colleges who wished to enter the nuclear program as designers and builders or as operators of atomic-powered ships. I look for bright, well-educated young men with initiative and the ability to think for themselves. I find, though nearly all the applicants have excellent minds, disturbingly few qualify educationally. I constantly come up against the results of poor education; I see how much talent is wasted, how little progress has been made in education, despite the vast amount of thought and money we have expended in recent years. I find that technically the young men are better trained now, but their general education remains inadequate. The schools are letting us down at a time when the nation has urgent need of the developed intellectual resources of all the people.

Ours is the most complicated technical society in history. We live in a democracy, hence under the most difficult kind of political system, since it requires so much of each citizen. We need better educated people to manage our society, better educated citizens to assure that it will be well governed.

In the military, we are used to comparing ourselves with other countries, for we know it would be dangerous to let anyone get ahead of us. After extensively investigating school systems in other advanced countries, I must regretfully say that our competitive position in

education vis-à-vis these countries is unsatisfactory. There are many reasons why our schools are less effective educators of the young than schools elsewhere, and I have spoken and written of them at length. Underlying them all and perpetuating them is our commitment to standardless comprehensive schooling.

Five years ago, I testified on English education before the House Appropriations Committee. The late Chairman Clarence Cannon asked by what means I thought Congress might help speed educational progress. My reply was: By establishing a National Standards Committee, and I outlined what kind of committee I thought it should be and what specific functions it should perform. In the preface he wrote to the published hearings, Mr. Cannon expressed the hope that they would "stimulate a national debate on the question of whether there shall be set up an agency of some kind to provide permissive national standards." Perhaps my remarks tonight will stimulate discussion; I hope they will induce you to give thought to this urgent matter.

It should be said first off that we are the only civilized country where public education operates without a national academic standard, where neither the names of educational institutions, nor their curricula, nor their diplomas or degrees represent a definitive and known standard of intellectual accomplishment. In Europe--the only area we need to be concerned with since the Europeans (including the Russians) are our only true competitors in public education--in Europe it is taken for granted that children must be tested against an objective standard before they are promoted. Otherwise, there might be gaps in knowledge, or repetition of subjects already studied, or children might embark on new programs before they are ready for them.

Educators and public alike are agreed that study programs must be carefully planned and that they must lead to a variety of educational goals, reflecting the variety of learning ability and of vocational objectives of their pupils. They are agreed that for efficient progress, programs must be sequential, each year building on what has been learned in the preceding one, each phase of schooling articulating closely with the one below and above it--as from primary to secondary and from the several secondary schools to vocational-professional schools, building upon the general education received at the secondary level. None of this would be possible if there were no national scholastic standard. Because all European schools concentrate on intellectual education, there are transfer possibilities all along the line for anyone who suddenly develops talents he had not previously shown, provided he is willing to make the effort to catch up with programs at a higher level.

Next to the greater length of the European as compared to the American school year, it is this close articulation in European public education that makes it possible for European children--all of them, bright, average, and slow--to reach any level of scholastic achievement at a much earlier age than ours. It also accounts for the fact that geographic inequalities due to different rates of economic progress in different parts of the country are not as pronounced there, and transfer from the schools of one locality to those of another is easier.

Though our children would greatly benefit from a national scholastic standard, the prospects are not good that we shall be able to obtain it for them. Theory and practice in American public education are strongly opposed to testing children against objective standards.

There is a school of thought which considers tests irrelevant to the process of becoming educated. But this, as one of England's university examiners aptly remarked, would be true only if one felt it "to be sufficient to expose the pupil to learning and undesirable to discover if there are any results." Many schoolmen object to achievement tests because some children would fail and this might injure their psyche. But in life, all of us are constantly tested against objective standards of performance; all of us at some time or another will fail a test. Would it not be better to let children discover at school what their abilities and limitations are, thus giving them experience in coming to terms with the truth about themselves before they have to face the demands of the adult world? Fewer young people would then need to be counseled by "career doctors."

I am inclined to think the main reason why our schoolmen oppose a national academic standard is that it contravenes the "Freudian" or "Social" ethic to which most of them are committed--an ethic which deprecates individual responsibility for what one makes of his life, and places responsibility on society. Those who accept this ethic tend to look upon education as a "right" possessed in equal measure by each child; in other words, a right with no conditions attached to it. It is not enough that there be equal educational opportunity; what is demanded is the right to higher education and to degrees without giving proof of qualification. Removing the price tag from higher education has had the curious effect in this country of transforming education into a sort of "consumer good" which a democratic society is expected to hand out equally-- "fair shares for all."

At present the American people have no yardstick with which to assess the performance of the schools for which they tax themselves so heavily. A national scholastic standard would give them such a yardstick, but the educational establishment will not even tolerate a permissive standard. We therefore have no way of finding out what, concretely, our children have learned at any given age and ability level, or how this compares with achievements in other school systems.

Such feeble attempts as we have made to evaluate our schools have been warded off by raising the bugaboo of federal control of the curriculum. Comparison with education in other advanced countries is rejected on the grounds that all foreign school systems--including the Russian!--are "aristocratic." We alone, it seems, have "democratic" education. Consequently, so it is said, the objectives of American education, the educational needs it serves, are so unique that what is accomplished elsewhere can be of no interest to us. Consider this statement made by an influential educator before a committee of the United States Senate: "Good teaching of reading beyond the fundamentals," he said, "is one thing in a society where a person is being prepared to read and instantaneously believe government propoganda, and it is an entirely different thing in a society where a person may be expected to enjoy the privilege of reading a free press."

I have thought and thought, but I can't get the sense of it. Does he mean it is more important to be able to read in Russia than here? Or does he mean the opposite? Does he really mean that how you teach children to read depends upon what they are going to read when they grow up?

One is always tempted to see in this or that defect the root cause of mediocre school performance. My own feeling is that most of the inadequacies of American education can be traced back to misconception of what "democratic education" really is. The schoolmen are passionately committed to the dogma that, to be democratic, education must not only be free but comprehensive as well. I would say that it must be both free and of high quality. It must provide public schooling that is as good as the costly private schooling available to children whose parents can pay the fees.

As I see it, the reason we and every other advanced country support expensive systems of public education is that we are determined that no child shall be denied schooling because he cannot pay for it. We socialize the cost of education to equalize opportunity.

Educational inequalities resulting from differences in wealth can be eliminated by shifting the financial burden of educating children from parent to taxpayer. "Inability to pay" school fees is a removable bar to educational advancement. There remain then the inequalities of ability and drive that are inborn. Society cannot play God and create children that are identical in mental capacity. Society cannot eliminate educational inequalities resulting from differences in aptitude-- "inability to learn" is an irremovable bar to educational advancement. Many a poor child is gifted, many a rich child is stupid; either child may be industrious or lazy. The best that society--any society--can do is to make certain that the educational levels a child attains are determined solely by his own giftedness or stupidity, industriousness or laziness.

It matters not whether fees are charged or schooling is free, an educational system that takes no account of differences in learning capacity will give neither the bright nor the slow, nor even the average child the education his capacities warrant. When you eliminate "ability to pay" as a criterion for educational advancement you get democratic education; when you eliminate "ability to learn" you get noneducation.

Differences in learning ability, already evident when children enter school, increase year by year, as more difficult subject matter is studied. By about age 11 to 12 the gap in mental age in any representative group of children will then be six and one half years overall; three years if the top and bottom two percent of the intelligence range are absent. The gap in achievement levels will be greater still; it may be eight years. Studies in geography, history, English composition, literary knowledge, science, arithmetic reasoning, etc., have shown that in every high school grade "the complete range of elementary school achievement is present." Indeed, it must be present in a comprehensive high school since a substantial segment of the school population is intellectually incapable of advancing beyond the elementary level. Half our children, let it be remembered, are by definition below average, they are below 100 I.Q.

Comprehensive schooling in the primary grades is common to every system of public education. Experience has shown that all normal children if properly instructed, can master the elementary subjects, though at different rates of speed. So long as the program is the same for all, differences in the pace at which children progress can be accommodated. But when mental inequalities affect not merely the speed of learning but its very substance, comprehensive schooling no longer makes sense in terms

of what children need. They need to be challenged, to stretch their minds, to absorb the maximum amount of knowledge consistent with their endowments. Experience has shown that if they are to have this kind of education, they must separate at the end of elementary school, as indeed they do abroad. On the Continent, especially, there is an adequate choice in types of secondary schools to fit the abilities and goals of bright, average, and below average children.

In this country, comprehensive schooling continues to the end of public education. Abroad, it is discontinued when the point has been reached where subjects which bright children are able to absorb with relative ease have become extremely difficult for average children, and are incomprehensible for those at the bottom of the ability scale who are still struggling with the elementary subjects everybody else has long since mastered. Preoccupied with the comprehensive dogma and the impossible goal of "higher education for all," the educational establishment in this country has failed to develop programs for different levels of ability that are as well thought out, as efficiently organized as the system of secondary schools in Europe.

We have the most expensive public education in the world, yet nowhere can a bright child obtain the excellent academic secondary schooling that European lycées and Gymnasia provide--usually at no cost or, if a nominal fee is charged, at no cost to those who cannot pay. In these day schools, which are to be found in every town of 10,000 or so, students are carried by age 18 to 19 to a baccalaureate that is fully the equivalent of the B.A. of a first-rate American college, with only the student's "major" missing. No European child is barred by poverty

from attaining this educational goal; not a few American children are so barred, for even in a nominally free state university, the cost of room and board may be beyond his financial resources.

Nowhere in our expensive school system can the average child find the excellent secondary schooling below baccalaureate level that is to be found in Europe. Upon the general education that is received in these secondary schools, there is built a network of vocational programs producing competent artisans, technicians of every kind, librarians, nurses, and a great variety of semiprofessionals.

All of Europe has a shortage of unskilled labor and imports large numbers of foreigners; we have a surplus of unskilled labor and a shortage of every kind of skilled technicians and professionals. We go abroad seeking to lure such people with high salaries, a practice which is deplored by countries that have invested much public money in the education of their talented youth and resent this "brain drain."

Nowhere in our expensive school system can you find the equivalent of the "common" school which in Europe provides the absolute minimum of education, the rock bottom below which no one falls who is not hopelessly retarded, since attendance during the period of compulsory education is virtually universal. We still have a serious illiteracy problem. In all of the advanced European countries every normal person is literate and numerate and this has been so for some generations. Speaking of the European "common" school, a prominent French educator, diplomat, and scholar recently said that "a vast amount of experience and understanding the "imagination and inventiveness" of many great educators had been invested in building it into a school that turns out "youngsters with a

real comprehension of their destiny and environment," youngsters who in their early teens already are "equipped with a sense of freedom and a command of verbal expression and communication for which adolescents of other areas may well envy them."

A great deal of nonsense is put forth in support of the dogma that to be democratic, education must be comprehensive, such as that it has never been proved that learning proceeds faster in an intellectually homogeneous group, or that it is an enriching experience for all if bright, average, and below average children study together, or that it is a democratic duty for bright children to be present so that they might act as a sort of "yeast" that will cause the overall level of a heterogeneous class to rise. One senses something of a feeling that nature is "undemocratic" in its distribution of talent and that the school should counteract this. What else but a basic hostility to very bright children can explain the curious American custom of classifying them in the category "exceptional," together with the subnormal, the blind, the deaf, and all others whose distinction from the "norm" is an inborn defect?

I am sure educators are kindly people, well-disposed toward the children in their care. Yet, when I read their disquisitions and observe their actions, I cannot help but feel that they sacrifice good education to questionable dogma. In their educational philosophy, social and political objectives appealing to the adult community sometimes take precedence over the need of the school child to be given the best possible chance of becoming an educated person. Does this not "use" the child for purposes not his own? I should like to see the Kantian imperative applied

to children, as most of us agree it should apply to adults. He said:
"Every man is to be respected as an absolute end in himself; and it is
a crime against the dignity that belongs to him as a human being, to use
him as a mere means for some external purpose."

One of our most eminent educators says that we are unalterably
committed to "a common core of general education which will unite in one
cultural pattern the future carpenter, factory worker, bishop, lawyer,
doctor, sales manager, professor, and garage mechanic." One wonders
whether we are committed to this objective because great educators and
scholars, upon mature consideration, and after observing educational
experience in many other countries, have come to the conclusion that
such comprehensive schooling is the best means to educe or bring out our
children's innate mental capacities. Is it not rather a Utopian dream of
grown-ups, this vision of children from every conceivable background,
bound for every imaginable vocation, all growing up in "democratic
togetherness"? A dream that carries us back to the one-room schoolhouse
and so to a simpler life when people were friendlier and communities more
democratic than today. Those who promise that comprehensive schooling
will continue forever, appeal to emotions that run deep in the American
character.

Nostalgia for our pioneer past at times assails 20th century
Americans, though not to the point of voluntarily relinquishing the
sophisticated gadgets that make life pleasant and comfortable. These
gadgets are products of a society quite unlike the one where everybody
attended the Little Red Schoolhouse. It is a society where differences
between people are much greater than in preindustrial America.

People now differ more in what interests them and in the kind of entertainment they seek. The difference has little to do with money. Cost does not explain why only a tiny minority read the New York Times or the Atlantic Monthly while multitudes enjoy the comics. People now differ more in the kind of work they do. They differ more educationally. Some of the most vitally important work in our technically advanced society can be done only by persons who must be much more intelligent than most others and who have absorbed a far more intellectually demanding education than the majority of children are able or willing to pursue.

What our children need is not "common core" education leading to a single cultural pattern but diverse schooling suitable to their diverse talents and objectives. A genuinely "democratic" school system should encourage all kinds of individuals to run on all kinds of tracks. Slow teenagers need very intensive instruction in the fundamentals of education; bright ones should be getting into calculus, foreign languages, science, etc.; average ones should be encouraged to absorb as much of true secondary education as possible.

Practical necessity has forced the educational establishment to introduce some diversity into the comprehensive school. This has led to a uniquely American kind of secondary schooling in which there is a "common core" program, supplemented by "electives" chosen by the students. The common core program provides the "Education for All American Youth" that the schoolmen demand. Of necessity, it must be devoid of all intellectual content, so that all children may attend it together. It is a mishmash of courses in simple skills with which European schools do not concern themselves; they leave it to the home and to the experiences of

life itself to provide young people with this sort of "life adjustment education." The electives are intended to provide diversified education. By leaving the choice to boys and girls, the schools abdicate their responsibility to guide the intellectual development of our youth.

The best compromise so far devised between the dogma of the schoolmen and the educational needs of the children is the multiple-track comprehensive school. Its drawback is that the school must be very large-- instead of the several hundred pupils of European secondary schools, ours may have several thousand. This is not good for young people. Even college students resent having to obtain their education in gigantic "knowledge factories." Their sense of being "cheated" by the adult world is at the bottom of most of the student revolts on campuses across the nation. And the students are right. Educational gigantism has no justification in terms of the needs of students. Its only justification, whether in high school or in college, is the comprehensive dogma to which the adult world subscribes.

Though growing in number, multiple-track schools are still under attack as "undemocratic." Many schoolmen prefer to cope with the diversity of human intelligence by easing educational advancement of the less able. We have gone a long way toward automatic promotion and the granting of diplomas that are little more than certificates of attendance. Witness the following remarks of the superintendent of a large city school system: "Regardless of the variation of high school courses and the range of scholastic achievement...straight thinking and democratically minded school administrators have long since adopted the idea of the same diploma for all." He notes with approval, that high school diplomas no longer

carry "the name of the course in which the student went through school."

I can see nothing "democratic" in promoting a child before he has mastered a prescribed course. He will only seem to move up the educational ladder. In reality he will be standing still on the same rung. Nor is there ~~anything~~ "democratic" in granting diplomas that meet no recognized standard. By not setting standards, we have brought our so-called higher education down to what Dr. Robert B. Davis of Syracuse University so aptly terms "creeping lowest denominatorism." All our diplomas and degrees have suffered the fate of paper money that is not backed by gold bullion. They have no intrinsic value. Their value can be ascertained only by checking on the institution that has issued them and the study course for which they were granted.

The process of down-leveling must somehow be stopped. This is what my proposal for a National Standards Committee is intended to do. Let me describe what I have in mind.

I suggested to the Congress that it be a small committee, composed of men of national stature and eminence--trustworthy, intelligent, scholarly, and devoted to the ideal of an American education second to none. The committee would have two tasks:

The first would be purely informational; it would act as an educational watchtower announcing danger when it saw it approaching. The members would keep under continuous scrutiny, and periodically report on the state of American education. Does it meet the needs of our times? Is it scholastically as good as education in countries at similar levels of culture and technology with whom we compete economically, politically, or militarily? How do American children compare in academic knowledge

with children in Europe or Russia, say at age 12, or 16, or 18; taking, of course, into consideration different ability levels?

The committee's second task would be to formulate a national scholastic standard on the basis of its findings; a standard which would make us internationally competitive and would also respond to our specific domestic needs. The committee would do this by means of examinations set at different ability levels. No one would have to take them, but those who passed would receive national accreditation. The committee would in no way interfere with established institutions now granting diplomas or degrees. It would simply set up a higher standard, offer it to anyone who wished to meet it, and certify those who had successfully done so.

Neither the committee's informational nor its standard setting function would represent a radical departure from established practice. Many federal agencies collect and distribute information. We need a disinterested agency to tell us the unvarnished truth about the true state of American education. The committee would help prevent complacency and illusions of superiority, and thus save us from such painful shocks as Sputnik and other evidence of Russian scientific proficiency have given us in the past few years. There is precedent, too, for the committee's setting of permissive national standards. We have something very like it in the 1965 Water Pollution Act.

Under this legislation the federal government is authorized--if so requested by a state--to research and develop new methods of pollution control and to award grants-in-aid to localities and states wishing to use these federally established methods. We have here a national standard

very much like the scholastic standard of the proposed committee, in that it is not imposed but merely offered as a service on a take it or leave it basis.

Let me interject a word here as to what I mean by the word "standard." It has, as you know, a number of different connotations. I use it in the sense that comes first to mind: a specific requirement or level of excellence deemed worthy of esteem or reward. Not a law, enforceable in the courts. Falling below standard does not put one in jail. Nor a conventional rule imposed by society. Failure to meet the standard does not get one socially ostracized. No one has to live up to the standard. It is simply an optional criterion for determining the value of an act or accomplishment. For those who accept the standard it becomes the yardstick by which the worth of these acts or accomplishments is determined.

Water pollution and mediocre education have this in common: they are problems that cannot be solved by local and state authorities alone, but require some assistance from the federal government. Population growth and technology threaten us with a severe water shortage unless we devise better means to preserve the quality of our water resources so that they may be used over and over again. Pollution abatement has therefore become a national problem, and we accept a new kind of federal aid, just as we accept federal aid for clean air and for automobile safety. I believe improvement of the quality of American education is at least as pressing as the need for an assured supply of clean water, pure air, or safe automobiles. Education is now the indispensable medium for survival and progress. Education is so basic to the quality of our national life that

by steering it in the right direction we can change America's future; we can make it secure. To steer it right we need a new kind of federal aid--the kind of aid that the proposed National Standards Committee would offer.

I hope I may convince you that it would be entirely proper and exceedingly useful for us to have such an agency. Let me make it crystal clear that nothing in my proposal would violate the constitutional separation of powers between federal and state governments, nor go counter to our tradition of control of schools by the local community. I envisage the rendering of a service, not regulation in any way, shape, or manner. The proposed committee would not usurp the functions of any existing institution.

Its job would be to draw up national examinations going deeply into a candidate's true knowledge and intellectual caliber--not IBM graded multiple choice tests. I suggested to the Appropriations Committee that we might model them on the English national examinations which offer tests in many subjects. Students choose the subject and the level at which they wish to be examined. This is marked on their certificate which will list their so-called "passes."

Our committee might provide one set of examinations at the level appropriate for a high school graduate who aspires to enter a first-rate college; another set of examinations at the level of students who may wish to prepare for a semiprofessional or technician's job not requiring a bachelor degree but still requiring a good secondary schooling. Still another for graduates of various types of colleges, especially those bound for the teaching profession. I stress again that no one would need

to take these examinations; but those who did pass them successfully would obtain national certification; perhaps the notation National Scholar stamped on their regular diplomas or degrees. The seal would clearly indicate what the holder had achieved.

There are many occasions when it is important to know what educational level a person has reached. Admissions officers of higher educational institutions or prospective employers have a valid reason for wanting to know what exactly are the qualifications of an applicant. Think how much time and money would be saved if his diploma or degree indicated this clearly! Everywhere abroad it is taken for granted that diplomas and degrees conform to a specific standard--a standard known to everyone. Setting the standard is not regarded as government intrusion or tyranny but as a welcome service to students, their parents, and the taxpayers who bear the cost of public education.

Everyone benefits when there is a standard. At one stroke it does away with misleading educational labels so that any layman has the means of judging whether a school or college is doing its job properly. By offering the reward of a certified diploma to our children, many who now drift through school would be encouraged to aspire to higher academic goals. You can't expect children to study hard subjects such as mathematics, science, and languages when next door others are effortlessly accumulating equal credits by easy life-adjustment courses in "Family Life." It surely isn't "undemocratic" to reward those who exert themselves with a diploma that takes note of their accomplishments. This is what certification by a National Standards Committee would do.

There is no question in my mind that a large sector of the American

people wants better education. Public interest has grown tremendously. Every time I speak or write on education I receive a large number of letters.

What strikes me in these letters is the sense of individual helplessness they reveal. Individually, my correspondents have long known that education must be drastically reformed but they don't know how to induce the school system to act. The very size of our nation alienates public agencies from the individual and accounts for much of the political apathy for which the people are frequently castigated. Yet all too often they can find no one in public office to supply the leadership that is needed to carry out their wishes. Especially when this requires tackling, on the local and on the national level, so powerful a lobby as our educational establishment. People like myself can try to bring the truth to the public so that it may be able to reach a consensus--and this I believe has now been accomplished. Enough people want school reform to warrant public action.

The Spanish philosopher Ortega y Gasset once wrote a book on the thesis--to quote him--that "the most radical division it is possible to make of humanity is that which splits it into two classes of creatures: those who make great demands on themselves, piling up difficulties and duties; and those who demand nothing special of themselves, but for whom to live is to be every moment what they already are." I read this as a young man and it impressed me deeply. And all my life I have unconsciously judged people and institutions by whether or not they set themselves a standard; whether they measure themselves against a criterion that requires effort because they deem it worthy of effort.

Let us in education as in everything else heed Jefferson's advice, to "dream of an aristocracy of achievement arising out of a democracy of opportunity."