

12pt bf/// Excerpts from the March 22, 1980 Address by Albert Shanker, President, American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO, at the Rutgers Labor Center

ON PUBLIC v. PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION [B6]

"...To relieve pressure from taxpayers and Proposition 13-type groups, legislators around the country are feeling that they should figure out ways of pushing students from public higher education into private higher education. Their reasoning is that students will pay higher tuitions and remove the need for additional support from government. This is the type of thing we have to watch very carefully, after a 204-year history in this country in which the improved standard of living, better opportunities, and public education, have been part of our spirit."

ON INFLATION AND QUALITY EDUCATION [BF]

"...We are now facing a declining standard of living in America. Not simply does the American have to choose between one car or two, or a larger house in the suburbs next year versus the present home, but whether or not they will have to give up their homes and possessions. More and more Americans faced with rising inflation are asking, "What am I going to have to give up next?" And, for many of them it will be easy to suggest that they give up a piece of someone else's education."

ON POLITICAL CLOUT [BF]

"...Who are the voters in America? Well, declining from the 1960s we are down to just 24% of the population with school-aged children. Before the end of this decade the figure will drop to 19%. People are living longer, so we are not just losing the actual numbers of voters with children in school, but the proportion of the population in this category. If we construct a graph from our research, on voting patterns, we find a linear graph where 65% of those over age 55 vote, while only 45% of those under age 55 vote. Who do you think politicians are likely to heed? This is why we must organize, form coalitions, political action committees, and inform the public and the lawmakers about the problems facing education. . ."

ON CARTER'S BUDGET [B6]

"We are all going to be hit very hard by President Carter's plan, because if you take out welfare programs, revenue sharing, counter-cyclical aid, CETA programs, and all of the other cuts, there will be millions and millions of dollars which will have to be made up by the State of New Jersey. In some cases the State will have to pass along costs to municipalities, counties, and school districts. If programs simply are eliminated, we will find New Jersey taxpayers paying even more for social services to cover the people thrown out of work. As far as Carter's higher interest rates, I just can't figure out how you stop inflation by charging more interest, since interest is part of everything we buy. In New York State alone, it is going to cost the state 10 per cent of its budget on interest for loans. Every school district and county in New Jersey will face the same thing. Add to this higher gasoline prices, and we are in deep trouble. In short,

the purpose of this ~~to~~ 'balanced budget' is to increase unemployment. Carter admits this. But our researchers in Washington tell us that for each 1 per cent added unemployment, the federal government loses \$20 Billion in both lost tax revenue and increased welfare programs. So, I'm still trying to figure out how you balance the budget by cutting \$13 Billion in programs, if by adding 1 per cent unemployment you're losing \$20 Billion in revenues?"

} WHAT WE HAVE TO DO [BB

"The situation may look hopeless, but it is not dismal. Just in the past two weeks the work of lobbyists, education groups, labor unions, minority advocates, and many, many, others, have invaded Washington to let Congress know exactly what devastating effects Carter's budget will have on America. You must consider yourself a special interest group. Let's face it, government will want to invest less time, money, and effort in education when faced with competition for funds, unless we act.

BB { "First of all, we--meaning AFT, AAUP, and NEA--have to pull ourselves together in this battle. If we spend most of our money in collective bargaining campaigns in the next 10 years, I think AFT will come out all right, but I don't know how much will be left of our system of higher education. It's about time that those of ~~I~~ us involved in higher education understand that we are facing problems so grave, so severe, and so dangerous, that if we cannot find a way to unite into one strong union--spending most of its money in defending our mission in Washington and elsewhere instead of fighting each other--well, we might as well pack up and forget about it."

"Next, we have to reduce the conflicts between labor and management. No one likes to see people threatened with loss ~~of~~ ^{of} their jobs, but maybe the kind of crisis which forced Chrysler to appear together with the UAW is an example of the cooperation we need--the same way in which the unions and the bankers met in New York to bail out the city. We must concentrate on cooperative efforts in education to solve our problems in the face of a common external enemy. . .

BB { "The third thing is to reach those groups which have a great interest in higher education, and particularly in public higher education. You have the parents and students, and then you have the minority groups. Both groups have an interest in protecting high quality in education at a relatively low cost. In the case of minority group members, they have only recently been able to take advantage of public higher education, and for them to have the doors slammed precisely at the time it looked like they were opening, is a disaster of historic proportions. But there's another group we much reach out to, the labor movement. It is the American labor movement which has fought consistently for public education and equal opportunity, and it is the American worker who wants a better future through education for sons and daughters. . .

"So, this is the future we face, and I suppose this is the commercial for AFT-AAUP affiliation. It can't be a one-way street, and frankly, you all

need the help of organized labor in New Jersey to achieve your political goals for funding, growth, and facing tomorrow. People in New Jersey who earn one half or one third of what you earn are not going to be automatically sympathetic to college faculty and staff. The best way to get them to care about your needs is to be supportive of them when they are in trouble. It's a funny thing about people, but they're not going to ask you lots of questions when you need help, if, and only if you have been around to assist them in the past. For the labor movement in New Jersey to naturally respond to all of our needs, Rutgers-AAUP must come into the labor movement early enough to work with other labor groups. You're going to need a lot of labor support, and it's very, very, bad to take out your insurance when you're on your death bed. Most agents will look twice!"

#####