

BROOKINGS PRESENTATION

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Congratulate Brookings
- B. Focus of your speech is elementary and secondary schools
- C. Two main themes
 - 1. Importance of a broad based education
 - 2. Need for more public support for public education

II. WELL ROUNDED, WELL GROUNDED BASIC EDUCATION

- A. Not all jobs will be in high technology
- B. Literacy and numeracy will continue to be the vocational skills of a service economy
- C. Reservations about vocational training which forces students to make career choices: too early
 - 1. Education should expand options not limit them
 - 2. People will change jobs more frequently
 - 3. Schools should not do business' bidding)

III. PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION

- A. More fundamentally important issue - public schools are every bit as important as national defense

- B. Case for public support can be made in traditional economic terms
 - 1. Efficiency is not the answer to insufficient resources
 - 2. Treat school reforms as investments
- C. A stronger case for public support can be made on moral grounds and social principals
 - 1. For many poor children public schools are critical avenue of opportunity
 - 2. Public schools are disproportionately populated by minority children
 - 3. At same time because of changing demographics public support for public education has eroded

IV. CONCLUSIONS

To prepare the work force of the 1990's we need\ more emphasis on broad based public education and more resources for our public schools.

BROOKINGS INSTITUTION CONFERENCE - June 12, 1985

EDUCATING THE WORKFORCE FOR THE 1990'S

I. INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS

A. Applaud Brookings for holding this conference and getting educators, economists and public policy makers to focus on an issue of such critical importance.

B. My remarks this morning are directed to the role of elementary and secondary schools in educating the work force for 1990's.

C. There are two points I wish to drive home in

my comments:

1. In the past several years, I have become more and more convinced of the importance of a broad based education emphasizing what you might call a well rounded, well grounded, basic pre-collegiate education.

C. There are two points I wish to drive home in

2. The paramount challenge in developing any set of recommendations linking education and future employment is the development of greater public support for public education. Until we are ready to make a greater collective commitment of money and public policy for public education, all else is of limited potential.

II. WELL ROUNDED, WELL GROUNDED BASIC EDUCATION

- A. It would be in my opinion a mistake to overreact to predictions about the dramatic impact of technology on future job patterns.

Not all jobs will be high technology; in fact most future jobs will be in the services

of hi-tech. as a sector. While the need for improved academic "inixdolde
tgid'
skills in the work force is likely to increase, the economy will need a range of workers just as it has in the past.

B. The economy is going to evolve rather than change suddenly. This evolution will require higher levels of functional literacy, and an ability to do problem solving and higher order thinking. Literacy and numeracy are and will continue to be the vocational skills of a service economy. This pattern suggests that the educational system will simply have to do a better job of preparing students in the basic, well rounded educational program that has been the mainstay of the public schools.

C. I have serious reservations about educational programs that stress vocational training to such an overwhelming extent that students are pressured to make career or job choices much sooner than they need to and which foreclose their educational options and opportunities for personal growth and development. I question these programs for a number of reasons:

1. Purpose of education is to expand options available to young people, not to limit them.

2. Employment patterns and job requirements

are not static. Very few people work

in the same job all their lives anymore.

Most people change jobs three, four,

five or even more times during their

work career. Moreover, as we have all

learned in recent years, even technically

oriented jobs can be rendered useless

in a short time.

3. School officials are making a mistake if they feel the need to emphasize job training and vocationalism because they think this is what business wants them to do. In the first place, schools have a more important role in American society than simply to do business' bidding.

Second, I am not convinced that business does not appreciate the value of the liberal arts and humanities. (reference Charles Brawn, AT&T, 'There is a place - and a central place - for the humanities and liberal arts graduates in business. That is the good news. The bad news is that the good news is not better known."

Also reference IBM advertisement which concludes, "Retraining has shown us how a company and its employees can change together in a changing world . . . it has shown us that jobs may come and go. But people shouldn't."

21.1615.1
06/10/85

III. THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION

A. In terms of the direction and outcome this conference takes I can't think of a more important issue to address. I say this in just about every speech I give - a first rate system of public school education is every bit as important to our future as our national defense systems. There is no more valuable down payment

It will be a long and important struggle to get the American public to reaffirm its support for our system of public education and to reinvest in it in a way sufficient to restore it quality.

B. The case for greater taxpayer support for public education can be made in classic hard nosed economic terms if you wish:

1. There is always room for greater efficiency, etc., but we should not presume that we can easily improve schooling without more funds.

Efficiency does not pay teachers an adequate salary; efficiency does not buy enough books for the school library.

21.1615.1
06/10/85

2. We should treat school reforms as investments. Treating reforms this way focuses attention on the benefits, costs and the time pattern of reforms and their returns.

3. Historically our investments in education have yielded superb results for American society.

C. A far more compelling case for strengthening our public schools can be made on moral grounds and social principals.

1. Twenty-five percent of all children in U.S. live in a household below the poverty level; fifty percent of black children under the age of six live in poverty. For the children this is an American tragedy. For the rest of us this is an American embarrassment. The public schools are a critical avenue of opportunity for disadvantaged youngsters.

2. Public schools are also essential to Black, Hispanic, Asian American and Native American children.

(a) In the 1982-83 school year, 46 percent of the public school enrollment in Texas was minority; 43 percent in California; 32 percent in Florida and New York; 28 percent in New Jersey.

(b) Twenty-three of the 25 largest school systems already are "majority minority".

3. At the same time that the public schools are needed to play such an important role in the lives of disadvantaged and minority children, support for them is waning.

(a) The number of households with school aged children is generally declining.

(b) In 1983, there were more people aged 65 and older than there were teenagers.

(c) By 1990, the number of youngsters
under age 20 will fall below 30
percent of the nation's population
for the first time in history.

As a result, there is an unwillingness
to commit more resources for public
education.

D. There is a need to develop the political support for our public schools. Unless we undertake strenuous efforts to improve the quality of education - indeed the quality of life - for these massive cohorts of minority and disadvantaged youngsters, the social fabric of our society may well be in peril.

IV. CONCLUSION

- A. The work force for the
1990's is receiving its
education now.

- B. We are letting the quality
of our public schools slip,
because we are unwilling
to commit the needed
resources.

- C. The best way to prepare
the work force of the
1990's for its
responsibilities is to give
them a well rounded, well

grounded pre-collegiate
education.

D. If we commit ourselves

to public school

improvement, we will

get a better

future work force and a better
society.