

EDUCATION:

A PUBLIC ROLE FOR THE PRIVATE SECTOR

PRESENTED TO THE
NEW YORK TEACHER
BUSINESS ROUNDTABLE

REMARKS BY

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BUSINESS/ROUNDTABLE

LAST NOVEMBER, ON THE EVE OF THE REAGAN-GORBACHOV SUMMIT MEETING, I SAW A CARTOON IN WHICH THE TWO WORLD LEADERS WERE SHOWN STANDING AT OPPOSITE EDGES OF TWO CLIFFS, A VERY WIDE AND VERY DEEP CHASM SEPARATED THEM. THE DRAWING HAD THREE PANELS,

IN THE FIRST, PRESIDENT REAGAN SHOUTED TO SECRETARY GORBACHOV, "MR, SECRETARY, FOR THE SAKE OF ALL HUMANITY WE MUST WORK MORE CLOSELY TOGETHER."

IN THE SECOND, MR. GORBACHOV RESPONDS, "ABSOLUTELY, MR. PRESIDENT, I CAN THINK OF NOTHING MORE IMPORTANT,"

IN THE THIRD, MR, REAGAN LOOKS DOWN INTO THE ENORMOUS CHASM THAT SEPARATES THEM AND REPLIES, "MR. SECRETARY, I THINK YOU SHOULD TAKE THE FIRST STEP."

LIKE PRESIDENT REAGAN AND SECRETARY GORBACHOV, ALL OF US HAVE TAKEN A FIRST STEP TODAY, AND LIKE THOSE TWO MEN, WE SEEM TO HAVE SURVIVED, THE GULF, IF ANY THAT DIVIDES THOSE OF US ASSOCIATED WITH BUSINESS AND THOSE OF YOU ASSOCIATED WITH PUBLIC SCHOOLS IS NEITHER AS WIDE NOR AS DEEP AS IT MIGHT SOME TIME APPEAR.

BUSINESS/ROUNDTABLE

LET ME BEGIN BY CONGRATULATING THE METROPOLITAN LIFE FOUNDATION AND THE COMMITTEE FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FOR BRINGING US TOGETHER, THIS MEETING, AND THE FOUR ADDITIONAL "TEACHER-BUSINESS ROUNDTABLES" THAT WILL BE HELD DURING THE NEXT YEAR AND A HALF, ARE HELPING TO CHANGE THE WAY THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY AND THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS LOOK. AT EACH OTHER,

THEY ARE REMINDERS THAT WE ARE NOT JUST A PLURALISTIC SOCIETY; WE ARE AN INTERDEPENDENT

SOCIETY, ~~NO~~ NO SOCIETY, NO MATTER HOW STRONG OR SECURE IT FEELS AT A GIVEN MOMENT, CAN SURVIVE IF ITS MAJOR INSTITUTIONS, INCLUDING CORPORATIONS AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS, HAVE NO CONTACT WITH EACH OTHER, IF ITS PEOPLE LIVE AND WORK IN ISOLATION FROM ONE ANOTHER AND FAIL TO SEE THE COMMON GOALS THEY SHARE,

BUSINESS/ROUNDTABLE

A DECADE AGO, THIS MEETING PROBABLY WOULD NOT HAVE OCCURRED,

BACK THEN, YOU MAY RECALL, CORPORATIONS AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS HAD LITTLE CONTACT WITH EACH OTHER, A CORPORATIONS WERE INVOLVED IN EDUCATION, BUT IT WAS HIGHER EDUCATION, THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS WERE NOT OUR CONCERN, BUT SOMEWHERE ALONG THE LINE, IN THE MIDST OF THE NATIONAL CONCERN ABOUT PUBLIC EDUCATION, OUR ECONOMY AND OUR CITIES, THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY GRADUALLY BEGAN TO REALIZE THAT IT DID IN FACT HAVE AN IMPORTANT STAKE IN THE FUTURE OF PUBLIC EDUCATION,

BUSINESS/ROUNDTABLE

THE GROWTH OF SCHOOL-BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY IS A TESTAMENT TO THAT CHANGE, RECORDS ARE NOT VERY COMPLETE, BUT THERE MUST BE AT LEAST SEVERAL HUNDRED CORPORATIONS INVOLVED IN PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS, AND THE NUMBER CONTINUES TO GROW, AND AS THEY GROW OUR OVERALL COMMITMENT DEEPENS AND OUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE ISSUES INVOLVED BECOMES MORE SOPHISTICATED,

EACH SCHOOL-BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP IS IMPORTANT, EACH ONE DEMONSTRATES THAT IN COMMUNITY AFTER COMMUNITY, BUSINESS IS WORKING WITH THE SCHOOLS TO PROVIDE EXTRA ASSISTANCE, OPPORTUNITY AND SUPPORT THAT THE SCHOOLS AND THEIR STUDENTS OTHERWISE MIGHT NOT RECEIVE,

. BUSINESS/ROUNDTABLE

THESE PARTNERSHIPS HAVE BEEN VERY GOOD FOR
THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS THAT ARE INVOLVED, BUT,
TOO OFTEN, I THINK, ACCOUNTS OF SCHOOL BUSINESS
PARTNERSHIPS MAGNIFY THE CORPORATE
CONTRIBUTION TO THE SCHOOL AND UNDERVALUE THE
CONTRIBUTION OF THE SCHOOL TO THE CORPORATE
PARTNER,

THREE AND A HALF YEARS AGO WHEN AMERICAN CAN
JOINED WITH MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR, HIGH
SCHOOL, ALMOST EVERYONE THOUGHT IN TERMS OF
HOW WE COULD HELP THE SCHOOL, WE WERE TOTALLY
UNPREPARED AS A CORPORATION FOR THE IMPACT
THAT SCHOOL HAD ON US,

. BUSINESS/ROUNDTABLE

WE HAVE FOUND TEACHERS WHO ARE DEDICATED TO THEIR PROFESSION AND INVOLVED WITH THEIR STUDENTS, WE HAVE FOUND STUDENTS WHO ARE ABLE, INTERESTED AND AMBITIOUS, WE HAVE LEARNED ONCE AGAIN THAT WHEN YOU APPROACH YOUNG PEOPLE WITH CARE AND RESPECT THEY RESPOND WITH CARE AND RESPECT, WE WERE REMINDED THAT YOUNG PEOPLE CANNOT BE EXPECTED TO GROW AND TO LEARN IF THEY ARE NOT GIVEN A FAIR AND REAL OPPORTUNITY,

PARTNERSHIPS ARE TWO-WAY STREETS AND THE BENEFITS TO THE CORPORATE PARTNER ARE NEITHER INCIDENTAL NOR MINIMAL. THEY ARE IMPORTANT BECAUSE THEY MAKE IT POSSIBLE TO LEARN, ON A FIRSTHAND BASIS, THE PROBLEMS THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS FACE DAY IN AND DAY OUT.

BUSINESS/ROUNDTABLE

AND IF THERE ARE ANY BUSINESSMEN OR
WOMEN HERE TODAY WHO HAVE NOT VISITED A
PUBLIC SCHOOL RECENTLY, I URGE YOU TO
MAKE SUCH A VISIT, INSPECT THE PLANT,
OBSERVE WORKING CONDITIONS, SIT IN ON A
CLASS, GET A SENSE OF HOW MANY DEMANDS
ARE MADE ON THE TIME OF A

TEACHER OR AN ADMINISTRATOR. SPEND AN HOUR
OR TWO IN A TEACHER'S OFFICE - IF THERE IS
ROOM

FOR YOU, ASK SOMEONE TO EXPLAIN THE
BUREAUCRATIC OBSTACLES YOU MUST OVERCOME TO
GET EXTRA TEXTBOOKS OR TO START A SPECIAL
PROJECT, AND THEN ASK YOURSELF IF YOU WOULD
BE WILLING TO

TAKE ON THAT KIND OF JOB AT A SALARY THAT MAY
BE ONE-HALF TO ONE-THIRD₄ OF THE ONE YOU -
CURRENTLY ARE GETTING.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'M. A. R.', located at the bottom left of the page.

I GUARANTEE YOU THAT AFTER MAKING SUCH A VISIT, YOU WILL NEVER AGAIN REGARD PUBLIC EDUCATION AS AN ABSTRACT OR DISTANT CONCEPT - OR AN UNIMPORTANT ISSUE,

I HAVE BEEN AND REMAIN AN ADVOCATE OF PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS, I BELIEVE THEY ARE ESSENTIAL, AND I WANT TO SEE THEM CONTINUE TO GROW AND TO FLOURISH, I AM VERY PROUD OF OUR SUCCESS STORIES SUCH AS THE JOIN-A-SCHOOL PROGRAM INITIATED BY THE NEW YORK CITY BOARD OF EDUCATION AND SO VIGOROUSLY SUPPORTED BY THE NEW YORK CITY PARTNERSHIP.

BUT I WANT TO SPEND JUST A FEW MINUTES DISCUSSING AN ISSUE THAT IS NOT ON THE AGENDA, BUT WHICH I HOPE YOU WILL THINK ABOUT IN THE FUTURE.

BUSINESS/ROUNDTABLE

BASICALLY, WHEN YOU LOOK AT THE EXISTING PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS IN LIGHT OF THE NEEDS OF OUR SCHOOLS, IT IS DIFFICULT NOT TO FEEL THAT THE NUMBERS ARE AGAINST US, LIKE MANY OF YOU, I CAN CITE EXAMPLES WHERE WITH CONSIDERABLE PRIVATE SECTOR INVOLVEMENT WE CAN TURN AROUND ONE SCHOOL, PERHAPS EVEN A COUPLE OF HUNDRED SCHOOLS ACROSS THE COUNTRY, AND MAYBE EVEN A THOUSAND, BUT THERE ARE THOUSANDS OF OTHER PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF CHILDREN WHO WILL NOT BE TOUCHED BY OUR EFFORTS, WHAT ABOUT THEM?

I SUBMIT TO YOU THAT OUR SCHOOLS NEED MORE THAN WHAT ONE CORPORATION CAN PROVIDE, THEY NEED MORE THAN WHAT ALL CORPORATIONS TOGETHER CAN PROVIDE,

. BUSINESS/ROUNDTABLE

THAT IS WHY I BELIEVE THOSE OF US INVOLVED IN
THESE SCHOOL-BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS
NEED TO BROADEN OUR AREA OF CONCERN AND BEGIN
FOCUSING ON ISSUES THAT AFFECT THE EDUCATION
SYSTEM AS A WHOLE.

THAT IS WHY I BELIEVE WE WILL NEED TO FOCUS
INCREASINGLY ON THE POLITICAL ARENA BECAUSE
THAT IS WHERE THE MAJOR DECISIONS ARE GOING
TO BE MADE ABOUT THE FUNDS, PRIORITIES AND
PROGRAMS THAT WILL BE SO CRITICAL TO THE
FUTURE OF OUR SYSTEM OF PUBLIC EDUCATION.

.BUSINESS/ROUNDTABLE

IN SUGGESTING THIS BROADER, MORE ACTIVIST AND PUBLIC POLICY ORIENTED EFFORT ON BEHALF OF PUBLIC EDUCATION, IT IS NOT MY INTENTION TO MINIMIZE WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED IN THE PAST OR TO BE DISRESPECTFUL TO THE EFFORT THAT HAS GONE INTO THE PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS WE HAVE, OR THE ONES WE HOPE TO HAVE IN THE FUTURE, THE ONE-ON-ONE INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS THAT HAVE MARKED OUR CURRENT EFFORTS HAVE PROVIDED US WITH A WINDOW ON THE WORLD OF PUBLIC EDUCATION THAT CAN SERVE AS A STRONG BASE AND FOUNDATION.

.BUSINESS/ROUNDTABLE

OUR PARTNERSHIPS, THOUGH, WILL HAVE LITTLE
MEANING IN THE LONG RUN IF WE ARE UNABLE TO
AFFECT THE OVERALL CONTEXT IN WHICH PUBLIC
EDUCATION OCCURS,

THOSE OF YOU WHO ARE EDUCATORS WILL HAVE TO
DECIDE FOR YOURSELVES WHAT THIS MEANS. BUT
KNOW WHAT IT MEANS FOR CORPORATE AMERICA.

. BUSINESS/ROUNDTABLE

IT MEANS WE CAN'T GET BY ANYMORE WITH TELLING
OUR LOBBYISTS TO PUT IN A GOOD WORD FOR
EDUCATION EVERY NOW AND THEN WHILE THE SPECTER
OF GRAMM-RUDMAN LOOMS MENACINGLY OVER FEDERAL
FUNDS FOR EDUCATION; IT MEANS WE CAN'T JUST

*THIS IS OTHER 100
PROGRAMS*

SEND A CORPORATE EXECUTIVE TO WASHINGTON OR
ALBANY FOR AN OCCASIONAL GOOD WILL VISIT
WITHOUT A SPECIFIC AGENDA OR DETERMINATION TO
FOLLOW THROUGH. IT MEANS, INSTEAD, THAT WE
HAVE TO ORGANIZE OURSELVES INTO AN ACTIVE,
SUSTAINED SUPPORT MECHANISM ON BEHALF OF
PUBLIC EDUCATION, IT MEANS THAT WE HAVE TO
SUPPORT CANDIDATES FOR ELECTIVE OFFICE WHO
SHARE OUR VIEW OF THE IMPORTANCE OF PROVIDING
PUBLIC FUNDS FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION.

THERE ARE MANY PLACES TO START, SO LET ME
SUGGEST TWO,

BUSINESS/ROUNDTABLE

ONE IS THE STATUS OF TEACHERS IN OUR SOCIETY, THEY DESERVE BETTER SALARIES, THEY NEED BETTER WORKING CONDITIONS AND MUCH MORE RESPECT, ALL OF US GIVE LIP SERVICE TO AMERICA'S TEACHERS, BUT TEACHING STILL RANKS NEAR THE BOTTOM OF THE LIST AMONG POTENTIAL CAREER PATHS FOR OUR MOST ABLE COLLEGE GRADUATES, SMALL WONDER, THERE ARE FEW MATERIAL REWARDS FOR GOOD TEACHERS AND NOT MUCH PUBLIC RECOGNITION, EITHER, WE ARE STILL VERY MUCH IN THE SAME POSITION THAT ERNEST BOYER, THE FORMER U,S, COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION, DESCRIBED A FEW YEARS AGO WHEN HE SAID, "YOUNG LAWYERS IF THEY WORK HARD BECOME PARTNERS IN THE FIRM, YOUNG DOCTORS IF THEY WORK HARD GET A SECOND YACHT, YOUNG TEACHERS IF THEY WORK HARD GET OLD."

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THE SECOND IS THE PROPOSAL OFFERED BY SECRETARY OF EDUCATION, WILLIAM BENNETT TO PROVIDE \$600 WORTH OF VOUCHERS SO LOW-INCOME CHILDREN WHO ARE NOT DOING WELL IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS CAN ATTEND PRIVATE SCHOOL.

ON THE SURFACE, THE BENNETT PROPOSAL SOUNDS REASONABLE ENOUGH, ALTHOUGH I AM HARD PRESSED TO THINK OF A PRIVATE SCHOOL EDUCATION THAT COSTS ONLY \$600. SECRETARY BENNETT, HOWEVER, IS NOT PROPOSING THE VOUCHERS AS AN ADDITIONAL ENTICEMENT TO HELP LOW-INCOME CHILDREN, HE PROPOSES TO FINANCE THE VOUCHERS THROUGH EXISTING PROGRAMS, IN OTHER WORDS, THE VOUCHERS ARE REALLY A STEP IN THE DIRECTION OF DISMANTLING OR REDUCING FEDERAL SUPPORT FOR EDUCATION.

BUSINESS/ROUNDTABLE

THE VOUCHER PROPOSAL IS IN MY ESTIMATION A MISGUIDED AND WHOLLY INAPPROPRIATE ATTEMPT TO APPLY THE FREE MARKET MODEL TO PUBLIC EDUCATION.

IF THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION IS SERIOUS ABOUT ITS COMMITMENT TO IMPROVING EDUCATION FOR OUR CHILDREN, IT MIGHT BE BETTER ADVISED TO EVALUATE ONGOING REMEDIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND THEN PROVIDE A \$600 PER CHILD INCENTIVE FOR SCHOOL SYSTEMS TO DEVELOP PROGRAMS BASED ON THE MORE SUCCESSFUL MODELS. IF THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION WANTS TO GIVE POOR CHILDREN A BETTER CHANCE TO MAKE IT IN OUR SOCIETY IT COULD BEGIN BY MAKING AN UNEQUIVOCAL COMMITMENT TO PROVIDE ENOUGH FUNDS FOR THE HEAD START PROGRAM SUCH THAT EVERY CHILD ELIGIBLE CAN BE ENROLLED.

. BUSINESS/ROUNDTABLE

WHEN SO MANY YOUNG CHILDREN ARE LIVING IN
POVERTY IT IS UNCONSCIONABLE THAT WE LET SUCH
MAGNIFICENT PROGRAMS LANGUISH FOR LACK OF
FUNDS,

THROUGHOUT HISTORY, SOCIETIES OFTEN HAVE BEEN
JUDGED BY HOW WELL THEY CARE FOR THEIR YOUNG
AND THEIR OLD, ALL THE EVIDENCE BEFORE US
SUGGESTS THAT WE HAVE DONE A PRETTY GOOD JOB
OF TAKING CARE OF OUR ELDERLY IN RECENT YEARS.
WE HAVE NOT BEEN AS DETERMINED OR AS SUCCESSFUL
WITH RESPECT TO THE NEEDS OF OUR CHILDREN,

SO LET ME CONCLUDE WITH A VERSE BY GABRIELLA
MISTRAL, A CHILEAN POET WHO WON THE NOBEL
PRIZE FOR LITERATURE IN 1945, I HOPE HER
WORDS CAN SERVE AS A GUIDE FOR OUR EFFORTS.

, BUSINESS/ROUNDTABLE

THIS IS WHAT SHE WROTE,

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HIS MIND IS BEING DEVELOPED,

TO HIM

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SAY,

'TOMORRO

W' . HIS

NAME IS

'TODAY' .

"

LADIES AND
GENTLEMEN, THE
TIME FOR PUBLIC
EDUCATION IS
NOW!

THANK YOU VERY MUCH.