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STATEMENT TO THE
CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND LABOR
GENERAL SUBCOMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
CONGRESSMAN CARL D. PERKINS, CHAIRMAN

The COMMUNITY SCHOOL CENTER DEVELOPMENT ACT and Related Acts

Submitted by

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CONGRESSMAN PERKINS, it is a pleasure to be invited to appear before your esteemed General Education Subcommittee once again. It was just last March 23 in eastern Kentucky that you invited my colleagues and me to testify before this committee on House Bill HR 69 - specifically upon the Adult Education Act and its extension as a part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. One of our major recommendations at that time was for community education and the full utilization of public school facilities and leadership.

I should like to explain my background as it relates to the COMMUNITY SCHOOL CENTER DEVELOPMENT ACT. Early in my career I was employed for twelve years by the Mott Foundation Program of the Flint Board of Education when it began that exemplar community school program. I worked in local, state, and national community school programs and leadership development. During those twelve years there was a monumental change in nearly every facet of community life in Flint, Michigan, which caused me to become a disciple of community education and the related community school concept.

I spent four years in Mexico City charged with the task of developing community education as a successful demonstration for American Overseas schools.

I have for the last seven years been executive director of the Appalachian Adult Education Center, which I shall refer to as the AAEC. The AAEC attempts to improve practices in adult basic education in the

thirteen-state Appalachian region, and has earned for the United States a major UNESCO award for meritorious work in World Literacy.

Most recently, I represented the WORLD EDUCATION COUNCIL in Indonesia in an attempt to encourage the Ministry of Education to adopt philosophies of community education, utilizing the community school in family planning, nutrition, and career education.

Recently the AAEC has developed TWO Rural Community Education Demonstration Projects utilizing rural community schools. As you may know, there are virtually no rural community schools in this country. One of these demonstration sites, Mr. CHAIRMAN, is a part of your new congressional district, in Montgomery County in eastern Kentucky (John Brock, Superintendent). The second site is located in Pike County in Southern Ohio. In isolated Montgomery County, for example, more than 500 people have been involved in education who previously had not had the chance: Twenty-one adults and their families who had given up and would not come out of their homes, forty-five aging persons who were served in cooperation with Meals-On-Wheels, as many as 286 people per month participating in leisure recreational activities, 150 young people in a summer recreational program, and sixteen new educational programs, all planned by the community and involving many other agencies.

We are beginning to show a remarkable impact upon the second generation. Parents can teach better as models--no language is more persuasive than the example of behavior set by parents. Their involvement in educational processes sets a pattern for their children that no amount of teaching can replicate.

The proposed legislation is, in my view, long overdue, but nevertheless, it represents only the infant steps in revitalizing American education and American life. Schools must extricate themselves from many of their old habits. They must avoid merely trying to adapt the young to a world of the past. Presently, we expect schools to be inextricably involved in social change, either because of what they do or because of what they fail to do. American schools, however, because of sheer numbers, have internalized and fractionalized their services and have delimited their populations of service, and those failures are reflected in the loss of community support and in the actions of rebelling students. This legislation offers the mechanism through which schools can change often unuseful educational trivia and bureaucratic organization to urgently needed relevant community education.

The emphasis of the proposed legislation on the "community school," however, rather than on "community education," poses a semantic problem, and requires careful, complete, and descriptive definitions in terms of what kinds of programs are needed and of what processes will be used to implement those programs. The constriction

of school services has led to the development of many other agencies and systems of education. No educational institution, including the school, can singlehandedly serve the total community. The definition of community education, then, must be extended beyond the local school to include a cooperative organization and involvement of all community educational institutions with the school providing leadership if and when appropriate. In some places a community college or a public library might be the appropriate leader.

On the basis of all of our experience, the following parts of the proposed Community School Center Development Act seem the most useful in terms of benefitting American society.

(1) The whole concept and recognition of the need for recurring education of adults and children. I understand that it is the position of the administration that legislation already exists which could implement the concepts put forth in the proposed legislation. However, it is not being implemented widely. The proposed legislation draws attention to and develops a way of implementing the concept of community-wide education.

(2) Leadership development. While the AAEC rural community education projects represent an effort to amalgamate and coordinate all of the educational resources and potentials of a community, and while they have been highly successful in bringing increased educational opportunity, coordination of services for all ages would not have

happened without two preconditions: (a) outside help, in this case the AAEC demonstration project, and (b) the commitment of the school superintendents.

The DHEW regional pattern of adult education staff development presently being used by the Division of Adult Education to implement the Adult Education Act of 1966 has brought gains in improved practices in adult education across the country. The need for a similar pattern of training in community education is apparent. Otherwise, we would have long ago embarked upon the course of action proposed in this legislation. Training is needed--both for specialists available in a certain geographic area who can give technical assistance in community education, and by school or other educational administrators.

(3) Demonstration Centers. A closely related activity expressed through the proposed legislation is the concept of the use of change agents or middlemen to insure that new knowledge is applied and disseminated. One of the more urgent requests of educators is for the synthesizing of available knowledge to meet local program needs. To adopt new practices, most people need more than to simply know about them. They need to understand how to do them, and they need to be able to try them themselves or to see them in operation.

On the basis of all our experience, the following parts of the proposed Community School Center Development Act need expansion.

1. The concept of community education. We in the United States have been highly successful in treating--and sometimes in solving--our problems, but we have been far too slow --and don't do enough--in prevention. In looking carefully at major social problems today, such as understanding of drug usage, of criminal acts, of family life and planning, it seems that if a community is truly to attempt to solve its problems it must energize all its forces and resources in a broad community education program. It just simply isn't enough to apply the local community school forces.

Among many of the institutions and agencies serving educational needs of the community are several with the institutional characteristics and the historical equivalence of the public school. A notable example is the public library. The view of public libraries too often is--but need not be--big buildings containing a collection of books. The whole 1930's concept of the people's university has been lost. Across the United States libraries are becoming information-dispersal agencies linked by program and process to the needs of the community. As an ongoing, ready, major source of information, the public library is constantly improving its services with federal, state, and local funds. The Public Library is just one illustration of major institutions which should have primary roles

in community education in the new bill. Other examples of such institutions include community colleges, technical schools, universities, and all of those informal national and local groups.

2. Need for state and community-wide governing councils.

Because of the essential interrelationships and cooperation necessary among agencies and institutions in advancing concepts of community education, the legislation should provide a mandated mechanism for the identification and development of community education governing or advisory councils--national, state, and local--to act as advocates for program development and improvement. These councils must be representative of the total educational community including the public libraries, proprietary schools...all agencies.

3. Lack of experimental components. The absence of a provision for experimental components is a serious omission in the proposed legislation. While it is true that the Mott Foundation has done impressive experimentation in community schools, past experimentation cannot be relied on in the future. The very nature of community education requires continual new experimentation into ways of being responsive in an educational sense to new community problems. The increasing importance of recurrent education calls for a strong experimental and demonstration component. Planning should include testing effective strategies for change.

4. Need for strong emphasis on rural community education.

The need for community education is probably even more pressing in rural areas than in urban areas, although urgently needed in both places. In many of our rural areas, such as Appalachia, there simply are no resources to extend the educational effort much beyond a minimum foundation for elementary and secondary children and youth. Rural communities lack the tax base for quality education. They lack even the corporate services to which most urban communities are accustomed and take for granted. In many instances the public school is the only employer in the rural area and, as such, represents the only leadership for community education and community improvement. But because of the very nature of this circumstance, the schools cannot initiate new programs. In urban and secondary industrial areas people at least have alternatives-- alternatives for education, recreation, employment, and services. In rural America often there are simply no alternatives but to leave, and when our rural citizens do leave they compound the problems of their former homes and of the urban centers because they lower the educational level of the rural place they leave as well as of the urban center to which they migrate.

If the current legislation is implemented based upon population SMSA's rather than on need, isolation, and deprivation, rural America will be placed at a severe disadvantage in competition for support of

community education, and will continue to be an unclosed tap feeding the urban problems such as welfare rolls.

5. Need for expansion of community education beyond buildings and institutions. In defining populations to be served through adult education programs, the AAEC has identified a large group who for a variety of reasons cannot or will not go to or seek out any public services. They are fatalistic, they are the stationary poor, they are the hard core, they are the unemployable. To be effective, service and programs, both educational and welfare must be taken to this group where they are. We have found that delivery to this group can lead to remarkable change in the reduction of human suffering, in improved life or coping skills, and in the aspirations and achievements of their children. This implies that community education must, indeed, go beyond the school--it must go directly into the homes of the most deprived of our community.

As a practitioner in adult education--community education--I see in the proposed legislation the opportunity to at last institutionalize adult education as part of the continuum of education. Our national adult education programs have been initiated in national crisis, (Americanization, World War I, the Great Depression, the GI bills, and the War on Poverty) often by-passing existing educational institutions and creating new agencies, and as these crises were met or as new national priorities were superimposed, our national adult education programs floundered and were abandoned or allowed to lapse, in spite

of the fact that massive educational disadvantage persisted to the detriment of the national gross product and in spite of human suffering. A national thrust of community education philosophies should be designed to interrelate and coordinate all educational services.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

Proposed legislation draws attention to and develops a way of implementing -Community Education

This legislation (philosophically expressed in most educational legislation) might be the umbrella

over HR 69 (ESEA and AE) BUT ASSIGNED IN HR 69 WITH CATEGORICAL FUNDING.

Adron Doran, President of Morehead State University, will dedicate a memorial to Community

Education in the latter part of the month. A One Room School House has been placed on the Campus

to pay tribute to the the Morehead Normal School to honor American Education and Mrs. Cora Stewart

Wilson's fight against adult illiteracy through the "Moonlight Schoolhouse"

Whether by accident or intent, the conduct of these hearings on the Community School Center Development

Act is a tribute to INTERNATIONAL LITERACY WEEK and International Literacy Day, September 8, 1973.

I hope that the news media make note of this fact, since in my opinion, the concepts of illiteracy refer

to each of us and this Act offers continuing opportunity for literacy for every American.