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## "Speech"

Edith Green

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Edith Green  
"Speech"  
Portland State University  
February 10, 1968

PSU Library Special Collections and University Archives  
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HOST: [recording begins mid-sentence] ...its history goes back to the academic year of 1959 and '60, when two members of the division of education faculty were in discussion about what kinds of ways might benefit secondary teachers in the metropolitan area and hit upon the notion of the secondary lectureship. Like all great ideas, it was dependent upon funding, and when Portland State agreed to underwrite the cost of such a lectureship it was begun.

This is the ninth year of this activity, and during that time, the people at Portland State have—through the assistance and counsel of secondary teachers in the Portland area—provided for teachers, certain kinds of experiences that they felt would be beneficial to them, and to inspire and assist them in their working teaching. There were certain kinds of fundamental guidelines drawn up for the lectureship; they were simple, few in number, but very specific. First of all, that the lectureship be held as close to the date... and as close to the National Convention of School Administrators as possible, feeling that secondary teachers also needed a break in the academic year in which they might refuel themselves. A second kind of criteria that was set up was that while persons from the field of education *might* be selected to come and serve as lecturers, that it would be advisable to include people from other fields of endeavor also. And finally, that the podium should be completely free to the speaker, in order that he might express his ideas openly, that if ideas seem to be debatable—or even controversial—that this too is advisable because it stimulated thought.

Each year, a secondary teacher in the Portland area is asked to act as chairman of the event; some of the past chairmen are with us today. I noticed particularly Nate Berkham and Bill Obertopher who have both served... [audio cuts out briefly] ranged from the first speaker in 1960 who was Dr. Henry M. Gunn from Palo Alto through Dr. Max Rafferty, ex-superintendent of schools in California; and last year Dr. Paul Woodring from Washington was speaker.

This year, we are highly privileged to have with us United States Representative Mrs. Edith Green from Portland, who represents us as the third Congressional district in Oregon. Mrs. Green's qualifications and background read like a highly developed success story—deservedly so. Mrs. Green was born in Trent, South Dakota, attended Willamette University here in Oregon, is a graduate... received her Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Oregon, and has done her graduate study at Stanford University. She is an ex-educator in the sense that she has left the classroom, but very much still an educator in the broader sense of the word. She has two sons, one of whom is a teacher at Gresham High School and who is here this morning. She has served, as I said, as a teacher; she has been involved in commercial radio work; she served as director of public relations for the Oregon Education Association; and her work has been recognized in many different ways. She holds no less than eighteen honorary doctorate degrees in the areas of Humanities, Doctor of Humane Letters, Doctor of Public Affairs, and Doctor of Laws. The institutions which have granted these degrees to her are also varied and many in number, including Linfield College and Reed College in Oregon, Gonzaga University and Seattle University in Washington, Oberlin College, Miami University in Ohio, Regis College and Boston College in Massachusetts, Goucher College and Hood College in Maryland, Eureka College and Saint Xavier College in Illinois, the University of Alaska, Culver-Stockton College in Missouri, Georgetown University, Washington D.C., Keuka College in New York, Bethany College in West Virginia, and Yale University in Connecticut. She has been awarded many, many different kinds of recognition including Woman of the Year from the American Veterans Auxiliary. She has been recognized by B'nai B'rith, by the Organization of Jewish and Christian Women; she's been named Woman of the Year in many instances, and her service in politics has been as varied and as broad as has her recognition and her training.

She served as member of President Kennedy's Commission on the Status of Women, as a member of the United States Commission to Unesco, served as delegate to 1958 Parliamentary Conference in Switzerland, in 1959 the NATO conference in London, in 1964 the Unesco Conference at Paris, France. I could go on and on; I have several pages of information about her, but none of it is as dynamic and as interesting and as worthwhile to hear about as it is to hear the lady herself. It's a very real privilege for me this morning to be able to introduce to you Mrs. Edith S. Green.

[applause]

EDITH GREEN: Thank you very much, Mrs. Buell, for that far too generous introduction. I... after having been introduced in that fashion once before, I said that I thought the only thing that was eliminated was the fact that my blood type was O. [laughter] I really am very pleased to be back here in Portland and at Portland State College, a guest of Portland State College; I was delighted when I received the invitation from Dr. Hummel and my very good friend Dean Anderson, and I probably am more at home in a group such as this than any group that I know of. I feel a bit like I'm carrying coals to Newcastle to come and discuss with secondary people ways in which we could improve instruction in secondary education.

I had really hoped that I would get out here a couple of days ago; we're having a Lincoln Day recess which is at the request of another party than the one to which I belong. And during that period of time the members of both parties leave Washington, because there's a gentlemen's agreement that no official business will be carried on. However, the departure from Washington had to be delayed until late last evening because yesterday, and in fact all of the days during the week, we were holding hearings on the Higher Education Act of 1968, and on Thursday we had a group of very distinguished educators who expressed grave concern about current draft policy and its effect on graduate education. The members of my subcommittee felt this was of such an urgent nature that we should schedule another hearing for Friday, and at that time we had four individuals who described it in terms of being intolerable and devastating to graduate education in the United States, and that if the current policy is continued that most of the graduate schools would have their population decreased by almost sixty percent during the next year.

We were also advised that there were certain inequities as far as the impact of the current draft policy effective in June, on the community colleges: that unless a person was enrolled full-time in a course of study leading to a Baccalaureate degree, that they did not have the same deferment privileges that the other students had. So, as I say, we felt that we had to stay there and get some letters off after the hearings were concluded. For those of you who are interested in vocational education and technical education—and I do intend to discuss that a little more this morning—I might say that as soon as the higher education hearings are completed, as soon as we've marked up that bill, we intend to turn our attention to this, the second big package during this congressional session of Congress.

So... I think it's fair to say that never before has the Congress shown as much interest in education as it has in the post-Sputnik years. And there is good reason for it, because prior to Sputnik, and prior to the time that the Russians jarred us, we had neglected education to a

marked extent. And as I look at the problems now, I've wondered why we could not have seen some of the warning signals. I think it was Luther Burbank who said long ago that if this country paid no more attention to its plants than it did to its children, we'd be living in a jungle of weeds. But, at least now we are beginning to look at education, and I think that not only the Congress but the people in the country are looking at it in a different light. As you well know, education is the number one business of the American people; there are fifty-seven million Americans now in schools either full-time or part-time. There are six and a half million in higher education and about fifty and a half million in elementary and secondary education. There are approximately two and a half million teachers in the country at all levels of education and in public and private, and I think one of the figures that most concerns those of us who serve on the committee is the rapid turnover in the teacher population.

There are about 170,000 teachers who leave the profession each year, and I suppose the reasons are as varied as the number of teachers, but the particular figure that concerns us the most is that 50,000 newly trained teachers—people who have spent at least four and maybe five years in departments of education and colleges and universities—for some reason decide not to go into the teaching profession. And then with our problems in the ghettos, we are having great difficulty in keeping the teachers in those areas where the problems are most critical. The United States also is spending today... this last year the United States spent about 52 billion dollars on education. It amounts to almost seven percent of our gross national product. A half a century ago one out of every twenty high school graduates entered college. Today? One out of two. Americans are beginning to realize, as I suggested a second ago, as they never had before, that there is no hope for democracy unless the average voter can understand what is at stake, and unless there is available to everyone the same kind of knowledge and experience.

Three years ago at the joint session of Congress when the president presented his state of the union message—President Johnson I thought very eloquently stated the case. He said, "Nothing matters more to the future of our country—not our military preparedness, for armed might is worthless if we lack the brainpower to build a world of peace. Not our productive economy, for we cannot sustain growth without trained manpower. And not our democratic system of government, for freedom is fragile if citizens are ignorant." And as I and some of the members of my subcommittee visited the ghetto schools in Washington D.C. and New York and in Chicago and in Philadelphia, and as we have watched over this last year the riots, the unrest, in the Newarks and the Cambridges and the Watts, the Detroits, and to a minor extent even here in Portland, surely these words of President Johnson have added meaning: "Freedom is fragile if citizens are ignorant."

To any observer of the American scene, it must be obvious that the schools of today are caught in the eye of a social hurricane, but at the same time I also believe that we are moving toward a national consensus that says, in effect, the journey and search of this country's true destiny must begin in the elementary and the secondary schools of America. Last November, just about four months ago, the Lou Harris pollsters made a scientific sampling of American opinion, and the question which they asked of these people was, "In what way would you like to see more federal spending?" Now, this is the year of the tight budget and last year was too, and last November was, with a surtax facing us. What area would you like to see more federal spending? Forty-one percent, by far the largest percentage said, aid to schools. And second on the list, twenty-one percent, said juvenile delinquency. Thirteen percent said law enforcement, eleven percent the poverty program, only five percent defense, three percent criminal rehabilitation, three percent highways, and only one percent space. And about one percent on foreign aid, and one percent not sure.

If you added the first and second and third choices together, then the number of Americans who wanted to spend more on education is increased to seventy-one percent. I suggest that with the current budget, our national priorities are out of order. During the last several years, as Mrs. Buell suggested a moment ago, the very distinguished educators and distinguished philosophers and others have been invited as the guest lecturers in this series. And since I am neither, and since I was invited, I presume at least as a politician—and I must say that that's a badge I wear proudly—I am going to speak this morning as a politician. Politics have been defined as the art of the possible, and when I say I am speaking as a politician, I intend to do it in a non-partisan way so that I won't frighten off my Republican friends who might be here, but I would like to discuss this improvement of secondary education in a very pragmatic way. And may I suggest that the improvement of instruction in secondary education must begin with better financing, and giving special attention to other demands that are made on the tax dollar in our biggest cities. While the investment in education that this country is making totals, as I said, fifty-two billion dollars this last year, it also must be measured in terms of the fifty-seven million full-time and part-time students in school. The national average expenditure for education at the elementary and the secondary level throughout the United States is still less than six hundred dollars a year. If society is going to place on the schools more and more the burdens of these years, then I think society must also offer more help, and teachers must use the levers that they have more effectively to bring this about. Inadequate facilities, overcrowded classrooms, shortage of professional teachers and teacher aids, will not be able to stand the social hurricane that might sweep through a crowded, urban area.

Reports from principals and superintendents in various parts of the country indicate at this time that only a holding action is occurring in more and more places, and that they cannot even talk

about improving instruction in secondary schools. They can only provide custodial care. And if I may digress, there was a meeting in New Jersey of superintendents just a few days ago, and this was the unanimous feeling on the part of those superintendents there: that things were deteriorating so quickly, that they only could provide custodial care. Now the technological advances in agriculture removed over three million Americans from the agricultural sector of our economy in the years between 1951 and 1966, and I think that we may as well openly admit that those who left rural America were often the poorest, the least exposed to educational opportunity. That statement, which still does not fully participate in our affluent society and the culture as most of us understand the terms. This migration from rural America goes on at a rate of over 500,000 people per year, and those who are left behind often live in the most abject misery because they can't even scrape the necessary number of dollars in order to move. And during this same period when rural America declined three million in population, the urban service America gained three million more people.

While the transfer of people from agriculture to urban service jobs was not and still is not a strictly one to one phenomenon, it is also true that our displaced, marginal farmers became largely displaced urban poor, who performed those services that the affluent America demands, and they are contributing not many tax dollars, and they are often consuming large welfare payments. Now, the effect of this vast migration on education is crucial. Cities are, in effect, service corporations. They collect the fiscal energy of their inhabitants, and they distribute it to pay for streetlights and streets and museums and police protection and trash collection and schools. And if they cannot provide these services, particularly the schools, then those who can afford better schools move to suburbia, where they can concentrate their money on those better schools because they can avoid many of the built-in expenses of the cities.

A study over a five-year period showed that health and hospital per capita expenditures increased from fifteen to twenty dollars in the central cities, but only from eight to ten dollars in the suburbs; that public welfare expenditures rose in the central cities from thirteen to twenty-one dollars, and only six to nine in the suburbs; that police and fire per capita expenditures grew from twenty-one to twenty-eight dollars in the core areas, and from only eleven to fifteen dollars in the adjacent county areas. Now, to put it another way, in the state of Ohio, out of the total suburban tax dollar: seventy-two cents is available for schools, but in Cleveland only forty percent—or forty cents on the dollar—is available for schools, in spite of the fact that the city has a higher tax assessment ratio. Out of the property tax ratio in Seattle: sixty-one point four percent is available for education, while in the rest of the state seventy-nine point two percent of each tax dollar is available for education. Here in Oregon: what percentage of the tax dollar goes to schools in the cities and in the suburbs? Let me give some

examples. Those of you from Parkrose? Seventy-five point one percent. Lake Oswego? Seventy-seven point one percent. David Douglas? Seventy-four point one percent. Gresham? Sixty-nine point four percent. But in Portland, only forty-three and a half cents out of every dollar is available for education. A similar pattern can be found across the country.

It seems to me that we have no alternative but to make a statewide effort, and I repeat that, a statewide effort to solve these educational problems of our times. As you people probably know, I believe very strongly in the authority resting at the state level, and I offered amendments last year to say that the program should be administered through the state departments of education, but I also must say that federal dollars that the Congress is going to give to the various states will not long continue if the states do not provide an adequate and an equitable distribution taking into consideration the needs of the city, the tax resources, and the demands on the dollars available. If we're going to ask our secondary teachers to combine the functions of the Socrates and the social counselor and the master carpenter, then state governments must undertake to support this request adequately with the substance—the fiscal muscle—to make it feasible.

I want to discuss vocational ed a little later, but I think there is an acute and a short-term financial necessity to make skilled craftsmen of our new immigrants so that they may begin to pay for and benefit from academic education. This is a delicate position, I know, especially for a politician, but about which I have... and I do have moral reservations about recommending training for some members of our society while reserving, quote, “education” for others. Yet it seems to me that it is a self-evident proposition that in this society at this time, the traditional academic secondary course does not fulfill our immediate social ends. Dr. George Parkinson the director of the Milwaukee Vocational and Technical Adult Schools, I think makes my point. He said, "We glorify the route from kindergarten through post-doctoral fellowships. The money and the emphasis are wrong. Eighty percent of the tax money raised for post-high school education is used for the twenty percent who go to college, and only twenty percent of the public tax money goes to the eighty percent who want to learn an employable skill."

Now, I don't quite agree that the eighty-twenty is the ratio that exists across the nation, but at least he makes the point that needs to be made. What I am saying is that a major lever in removing the burdens of secondary education is keyed on the productivity of those who pay the taxes, and those who live in the inner core of our cities. Just as all men might appreciate Ibsen and Twain and Picasso and Toynbee, it is yet nearly impossible if one must spend his waking hours in pursuit of the basic sustenance of life. Now I am not relegating our artisans to cultural Siberia; rather I am attempting to bring them thence by giving them the skills to be effective citizens whose productivity permits and recommends exploration of the world beyond



work, and I will have more to say about that in a moment. But I think that we all must make clear that if the society which you serve does not listen, then they will live and their children will live within the limits they have created: the limits of ignorance and unemployment, the limits of fading hope, and open violence. And this brings me to the second point.

How can we really talk about improving the quality of secondary education unless we have a situation where learning can take place? An editorial in Thursday's *New York Times* is ominously entitled "Chaos in the Schools," and while the editor is writing about the New York City schools, much of what he says I think is appropriate elsewhere as well. Hardly a day goes by as I read the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* that one does not read at least one and sometimes three or four articles describing a new outbreak of disruption in some school around the nation. Three students killed the other night, in a South Carolina school. The accumulated evidence of all these incidents add up to something very foreboding indeed, and which promises like the *New York Times* says: chaos in our schools, and however much we explain or rationalize or sympathize or empathize, the end result is the same. A situation in which it is not possible to teach or to learn. It is not possible for the professionally trained teacher to do what he is capable of doing and what he wants to do in improving instruction.

The New York editorial says, and I quote, "Throughout these battles, the pupils have been the pawns. Those who were already disaffected and potentially disruptive saw the adult communities—sometimes teachers, sometimes parents, sometimes outsiders—vent its disaffection by disrupting the orderly processes of education. The school was the battleground, and despite high-minded slogans of all the warring factions, the school's authority was diminished." It seems to me that if we, and I don't mean just you, but I mean that if society allows this process to continue, if more and more of our schools become battlegrounds, then the same will be the result as from any other field of battle. A wasteland of ruins, destroyed lives, mutilated hopes. This, many would say, and with considerable evidence and justification, is already the condition of many of the ghetto schools. That is a wasteland, and I have seen with my own eyes that this is so, and so have many of you. And where I disagree with many of the critics, is being content to say that the schools have failed. Rather, I think that we—the community—has failed the schools.

They, like any other public institution, will be no better than they are permitted to be, or encouraged to be. And it is more than absurdity or irony; it is utter folly to expect teachers to teach or pupils to learn in classrooms where violence is the order of the day. It is in such conditions as this that we leave the field ripe for the demagogues. To those who, in President Johnson's phrase, indulge in the teaching and preaching of hate, and evil, and violence: we must not permit this to happen. For it seems to me that what is at stake here is more than just

the loss of our schools, and the loss of another generation of American children, as unimaginably disastrous as that would be. What is also being tested is the democratic process itself, and our willingness and our courage to fight for it. To stand up the bullies and the extremists—whether from the far right or the far left—and to have the moral strength to say yes, there are terrible wrongs! To have whatever commitments it takes, moral or monetary, to correct those wrongs, and to summon the resolution in the meanwhile to not be intimidated by the self-appointed spokesmen, for those whose platform is anarchy and destruction, and who have never tested their presumed leadership and authority in a vote.

If we really mean what we say about loving our country, and justice, and honor, then the proof of it will be in our actions, and not in our words. And if we say we believe in justice but turn away when injustice is done, then we will not be believed by those who are injured, and in the end we will not even believe ourselves. If we say that we believe in equal opportunity, but are content while millions of American children and thousands of teachers struggle against unequal odds, then we will not be believed by those children or their parents or their teachers and in the end hypocrisy will sound as loud in our ears as in theirs. Devotion—whether to a person or a principle or a nation—is measurable in what we do and not what we say, and our devotion to democracy will be judged not only in how well or how successfully we defend it from the cynics and the scoffers and the usurpers of power, but most significantly in how we practice it in our communities and in our neighborhoods.

To demand miracles of secondary education is an act of faith that we can conquer the ignorance and the injustices in our society. One need not reject demands for miracles because one disbelieves in miracles, but one must recognize the demand for what it is: a collective ideal by which we measure present practice. And if we make demands on secondary education, if we measure it by ideals that we think appropriate to our society generally, then we as a society also must not forget that the same yardstick applies to all of us.

Let me turn to a third area, which I touched on a moment ago discussing adequate and equitable financing of our schools. Improvement in instruction in secondary schools must mean the meaningful education of all students, and not just the college-bound. In spite of spiraling college enrollments and in spite of the prestige, the mystique—and I think an overrated mystique—of a college diploma, secondary education is still the stopping point in formal education for most Americans. Secondary teachers are thus called upon to be all things to all students, and they must impart occupational competence, but must not neglect to introduce our children into the mystery of what is good and what is beautiful. And in this society which gives men enormous powers over the physical world and demands of them enormous wisdom in shaping that world to their best ends, are we going to pursue general knowledge or specific

occupational competency in our secondary schools? Once we pose that question in these terms, I think that one must immediately add a factor upon which I hope we would all agree: to teach technical competence without wisdom is tantamount to creating machines out of man, but also equally true: wisdom without technical competence goes hungry.

I think expanded vocational training opportunity is the number one need in the secondary schools in the United States today. Expanded technical training and vocational training which will reach that youngster who today is not able to relate to his teacher, to his school, and who finds nothing relevant about the subjects that he is required to take. And I really have wondered for how long the American people will allow the situation to continue where we have a million dropouts from our schools across the country, and then be unwilling to finance education adequately so we can provide the technical education. Everyone knows that vocational training is more expensive than the traditional academic high school. For how long will society allow this condition to exist and then be willing to invest or to pay anywhere from seven to ten to fifteen to seventeen thousand dollars a year in operating expenses for job corps or some modified program of that sort.

Mrs. Buell and I were talking a moment before we came on the platform, and I think we're in agreement that we ought to really look at this whole business of work-study that we have in the high schools, of the job corps, of vocational education, of apprenticeship programs, of manpower training programs, and reevaluate from an educational standpoint. Should we be paying—Mrs. Buell and I asked—youngsters to do these things, or would it give the child more dignity if he worked for it? Now I'm not suggesting and I never have suggested that we abandon the job corps program. I think during this transition period in which we have this large number of dropouts, that we must have some kind of a program. I am suggesting and I do recommend that the whole job corps program be transferred to the state departments of vocational education, but we're going to have to take care of these dropouts, but we ought also at the same time to be looking at the cause and not be treating five percent of the symptom. Out of a million dropouts, if we have sixty to seventy thousand in the job corps, which is about the figure during the year and maybe it'll be less than that this year, this means that we couldn't possibly be treating more than seven or eight percent of the symptom, and I suggest we ought to take a good look at it.

I don't know whether you read the articles that were written by Cynthia Parsons in the *Christian Science Monitor*; she did a study across the country of the best vocational schools, and I was delighted that Benson High was one of the vocationals, the trade schools, the technical schools, that she considered the best in the country. But I think that Cynthia Parsons was absolutely right when she observed that the debate that is now prevalent in our society over separate

vocational and academic schools is not very productive. That there are in existence right now a number of extremely successful comprehensive schools from which all secondary teachers and administrators can learn. These schools consciously avoid the snobbish comparisons between who is most useful to a society and to himself, the productive craftsman, or the Ph.D. And I think there was great wisdom in what Booker T. Washington said a long time ago, "No race can really prosper till it learns there is as much dignity in tilling a field as in writing a poem." However, if our schools ignore the revolution in technology, if they continue to teach for the elite, then they will face year after year increasing numbers of those young people out of school and out of work, whom James B. Conan so accurately described as social dynamite, ready to explode at any moment. One can lead a revolution or be destroyed by it. American secondary educators must, from within the walls of the institution itself, offer the leadership to make this revolution work for all Americans, so that some Americans are not left to fading hopes that become mindless violence. We must make a lever of this burden or be crushed by it.

In considering secondary education for today's and tomorrow's needs, also we must face the question of increased leisure in our society. Increasing capital investment, the automated, the push-button equipment, permits ever increasing inputs of human labor to achieve greater productivity. In considering secondary education, the American of the next generation will not be a man who has only a few hours after work to see his family and to go to bed for the next day's grind. This person will have long hours of leisure. That man and that woman must be educated to enable them to use this leisure, whether they be scientists or artisans. For the first time in human history, we stand in the door going into a period where the ordinary citizen working a full-time job can be possessed of sufficient leisure to avail himself or herself of the tremendous artistic, musical, and philosophical heritage of the ages. That person can travel, can stop and think. Let's give them the most important things to think about.

One final note. As we look at the world of February 10th, 1968, it seems to me, at least from where I sit, that we all might take a lesson from the ancient world. The Romans were the engineers of their time. The world of antiquity was bound together by Roman roads, but those roads were traversed by Greek philosophy and literature, and by Hebrew spiritual thought. The Roman Empire was Roman in its technology, but Greek and Hebrew in its civilization. The technology, the roads, the machines, the military machines, all disappeared. The civilization remained and remains to this day, as the essential basis of our Western world. We can remain strong, at least for a time, if we concentrate on our material strength, but we can remain free and living and meaningful only if we draw upon this heritage and extend it further. Thank you.

[applause]

BUELL: Thank you Mrs. Green. I am certain that all of us who are fortunate enough to be here this morning have received food for thought and courage for the future. I would encourage each of you to think about various aspects of Mrs. Green's address, and then during the question and answer period immediately after lunch today, you would have some points to which you might direct questions to Mrs. Green, who has been gracious enough to grant us some additional time this afternoon in order that we might ask direct questions. We're a little bit ahead of schedule so you can take a nice, leisurely walk over to the College Center, the third floor ballroom area, where luncheon will be served. As you go out the front door here, you would turn to your left, proceed to the College Center, take the elevator to the third floor...

[program ends]