

SPEECH BY ATTORNEY GENERAL ROBERT MORGAN  
KAPPA DELTA PI  
DUKE UNIVERSITY  
DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA  
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### THE CRISIS IN AMERICAN EDUCATION

A few months ago, the Panel on Campus Unrest issued a report that began, "The crisis on American Campuses has no parallel in the history of the nation." Just two weeks ago, a Presidential Commission on Education called for wide reforms in America's educational system, and the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education has put out a study called "Change in Educational Policy." The effect these reports have had on many people is that something is drastically wrong with education in America today. So I am flattered, to have been asked by you, who are members of an honor society dedicated to education, to be your speaker, and I am grateful for this chance to share some thoughts with you.

As you know Americans became concerned with the "Crisis in American Education" when students on our college and university campuses began to demonstrate against the system. If my memory is correct, it was during the late 50's and the early 60's that students began to stir against the academic community. At that time, it dawned on students throughout the nation that they had been caught up in an impersonalized society.

They felt lost among thousands of other students. They felt abandoned by the many faculty members who are too interested in their professional careers, to take teaching seriously. They felt isolated from college and university administrators who are often more concerned for the reputations

of their institutions and efficient administrative policies than they are for the problems and concerns of students.

During these years, students ceased to be individuals but became ID numbers, personalities were reduced to holes in IBM data cards. It was because of this that students first began to react and, quite frankly, I can appreciate the concern which prompted them to do so.

Not long ago I experienced what I believe was the same sort of thing these students were rebelling against. Let me share my experience with you.

I was invited to take a course related to my duties as a public administrator. The topic was one in which I had a great deal of interest and about which I needed as much information as possible. I was told that the instructor had a Ph.D. in this area, that he had a great deal of practical experience, and that he was one of the best qualified persons in the country to teach the course.

I could hardly wait for it to start, and after it started I could hardly wait for it to end. In fact, I didn't--I quit.

This man who had so much to share with us came in each morning and read to us--actually read to us--from a dissertation he had prepared on the subject. This Ph.D., this "teacher," not only could not teach, he also could not read very well.

Though my interest was high in the beginning, I ended up being bored to death. In an attempt to salvage something, I asked one of my assistants to go to class for me and tape the lectures. He went one or two times and then he began to find ways to be somewhere else when the class

was being held. I sent a second assistant and the same thing happened. Finally I just gave up.

I had a similar experience just a few months ago. A national expert on personnel relations held a one-day seminar for high-ranking state governmental administrators. He showed up totally unprepared, without notes or, apparently, previous thought. He rambled and rambled until one-by-one the participants found excuses to leave. I left before lunch because my time was being wasted. (The Governor, who also attended, left before I did.)

I can imagine how distressed the students on our campuses must be when they run into this same thing in the classroom. It is easy for me to see how they become alienated from the system when this occurs.

This unhappiness with the way things are however has now spread from the campus to much of America. It has spread from mere disenchantment with the campus to disenchantment with the Indo-China war, the military industrial complex, our system of justice, and even our political system. This is a serious problem. Now the value of traditional American institutions is being called into question and America as we know it may not survive.

Many Americans, especially older ones, do not understand the cause of this disenchantment. Yet a conservative English philosopher of the nineteenth century [Samuel Taylor Coleridge] who was sometimes said to have been "a better Liberal than Liberals themselves" has given us an analysis of times similar to ours that is perhaps instructive. When the stable governments of Europe began to panic in the aftermath of the French Revo-

lution, this philosopher wrote that in order to make and keep a nation stable, a government had to fulfill three basic conditions:

First, a system of education had to exist which included the "one main and incessant ingredient" of restraining discipline. The object of this was to train human beings to put the goals of society before their own personal impulses and aims; to do things to fulfill those goals of society; to control any of their own feelings that were liable to work against those goals, and to nourish all those feelings that tended to promote them. His claim was that in a stable nation, education had to be more than merely the acquisition of information and the techniques of a vocation.

Second, the state had to have a Constitution that was settled; permanent, not constantly called into question, something which, by general agreement, had a right to be where it is, and to be secure against change, whatever else may change. His claim was that in a stable nation, something had to exist toward which the people could have a feeling of allegiance or loyalty.

Third, the people had to have feelings of sympathy rather than hostility for each other, of union rather than division, for only then could citizens feel themselves to be part of the same country.

If we Americans today measure our own nation by these three conditions, we will find ourselves wanting.

Although we have a system of education which is very extensive and extremely effective in training people for professions and in the dissemination of information, it lacks to a great extent the "one main and in-

cessant ingredient" of restraining discipline. Our students are not taught the importance of putting the goals of society first; they are not taught to stick to those goals in the face of all temptation, and they are not taught to put the general good before their own desires.

Although we have a fixed and relatively permanent Constitution, many of our citizens do not know what it says and are therefore unable to have a true feeling of loyalty to it. Many of our people do not know the goals of our society which the founding documents of this nation promulgated.

So when it comes to having taught our citizens the fundamental principles of American Society, our educational system has been a dismal failure. The one thing the American educational system cannot be said to have done is to have formed a national character, nor to have fostered feelings of friendship between us. And tonight, I would like to ask you whether an educational system can escape criticism that does not sow the seeds of discipline, teach its students the goals and fundamental principles of American life, mould a national character, and foster feelings of sympathy rather than hostility for one citizen to another? Surely, our educational system must share the blame for the attitudes--from one extreme to the other--of our people.

Since most of you here today will enter the teaching profession, it may be worthwhile to ask what you can do to help pull America through these difficult times. Unless we know where our educational system has failed us, we will not be able to correct it. So let us ask just what you as teachers can do.

First, when you become teachers or members of the teaching community

as administrators, take teaching seriously. Remember that it is the primary task your profession has to perform. The way in which you teach your students will not only affect their lives, it will affect the course of this nation's history.

Second, when you become teachers, teach your students the great ideals upon which our nation is founded. Teach them over and over again that we believe that all men are created equal and that they deserve to be treated equally. Teach your students how Americans have failed to fulfill this promise of equal treatment in the past. You know, a historian has recently noted, that more space is devoted in our textbooks to Poncho Villa's small invasion of New Mexico than to all the social injustice in American history. Is it a wonder, then, that so many Americans deny that social injustice exists? Many books have been written about battles in the Civil War, but how many have been written about the injustice of slavery in the land of the free? You must tell your students about this injustice. Many biographies of rich and successful men have been written, but only novelists tell the story of our impoverished masses. You, as teachers, must tell your students of America's impoverished people. In other words, when you teach, tell your students the truth, so that they may devote their lives to fulfilling the great promise of America, and not assume that it has already been fulfilled.

Third, when you become teachers or public school administrators try to teach your students the value of discipline, especially restraining discipline. You will learn that you can never effectively discipline a student unless you teach him the value of discipline. By teaching students