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SPEECH, DECA-VICA CO-OP PROGRAM BANQUET
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VOCATIONAL EDUCATION -- MORE RELIANCE
ON STATE AND LOCAL EFFORTS NEEDED

I am pleased to be able to appear at this banquet honoring your vocational education cooperative.

I am going to say a few words tonight on the subject of vocational education and its interaction with the federal budget and federal-state relations generally.

The federal and state efforts in vocational education clearly have wide public support, support which in my opinion is strongly deserved. In 1977, vocational education received \$582 million from the federal government. During the present fiscal year, the appropriation for vocational education is \$775 million, which amounts to an increase of 33 percent in just three years.

And, while federal support of vocational education is impressive, it does not tell the entire story. For every dollar of federal money going into vocational education, the state and local governments are providing eight dollars, which means that state and local governments, as a group, are spending well over \$6 billion.

The states are not required, as a condition of receiving federal support, to spend the large amounts of money they have. In fact, the Federal Vocational Education Act will support between 50 and 100 percent of a given program, depending on the exact section of the law under which the funds are appropriated and which state is getting the money.

So, vocational education clearly enjoys widespread support in the state legislatures, among the county commissioners and other local governments, and most important, among the people. Considering this, it is unlikely that vocational education efforts in this country would collapse if the federal support were ended.

This is not the case with many other federal programs where the efforts at the state and local levels would wither away if federal dollars stopped flowing.

Considering that support for vocational education is so widespread, and considering the relatively small proportion of federal support, one cannot help but wonder what the people are actually getting from the federal government and what would actually be lost if the federal effort was halted.

How much of the \$19 million received by North Carolina during the last fiscal year was eaten up by the numerous federal requirements that come with the money? Is it possible, even, that North Carolina would be better off if it were left to its

own devices and allowed to operate the vocational education programs in a manner it thought was best.

First, \$64,000 of the money received by North Carolina goes to something called the State Advisory Council on Vocational Education. The council's minimum size, the term of its members, the composition of the council, how members are appointed, and their powers and duties are all mandated by federal law. And, if the state does not comply with these mandates the entire \$19 million of federal support is lost.

I am confident that this council would not exist but for the federal requirement, and I am not at all convinced that it serves any useful purpose. I say this with all due respect to those who serve on the council, people who are spending some of their own time to improve vocational education. It is just that my experience with the thousands of boards, councils, and coordinating bodies that exist has not been one to inspire confidence in their cost effectiveness.

Many of the other federal requirements are more onerous and more costly to comply with.

The state is required to produce a five-year plan periodically, as well as an annual plan each year, as a condition of getting the federal funds. These plans must be produced by the state

agency responsible for administering the vocational education programs, and the state agency is told how to go about drawing up the plans, who must be consulted and in what manner, and what must be in the plans. Furthermore, if the final plans are not approved by the Secretary of Education funding to the states is cut off.

To show how silly the federal government can sometimes be, one of the requirements in the state plan is that incentives be provided to recipients of this money who will encourage the enrollment of men and women in "nontraditional" courses of study.

I do not support sex discrimination, which is also prohibited under this law, but it does seem a little silly to spend tax money in order to increase the number of men enrolled in a home economics course.

The state is required to follow certain guidelines on how to distribute funds between the various types of vocational education. One of these guidelines is that at least 20 percent must be used for bilingual vocational education or for grants to students who have "acute economic needs" which cannot be met through the work-study portion of the law. I hope I am not asked how these two categories were lumped together, because I just do not know.

These are just some examples of what the state must go through in order to receive less than 15 percent of the money it spends in this area. There are plenty of additional examples for the Vocational Education Act is 82 pages long.

To administer all these requirements both the state and local governments have to hire lawyers, education experts, clerks, and secretaries. Money has to be spent drawing up plans, negotiating with the federal government, and lobbying Congress for continued appropriations. These additional expenditures come straight out of the money available for services to those, such as yourself, who want them and can use them.

In addition, the federal government has to spend money hiring bureaucrats to draw up the regulations, to review and monitor each state's activities, and so forth. This is all money out of the taxpayer's pocket or that should be going for needed services, depending on one's point of view.

Finally, a great deal of money gets spent on things which are mandated by federal law but not strictly necessary, at least in some parts of the country.

Last Sunday, The Washington Post printed a first-hand account of a town meeting where the local residents voted to build a side road off a highway that everyone recognized was totally useless. Nevertheless, the local residents voted to

build this road, for which the federal government was going to pay part of the bill, in order to qualify the main highway for the federal program that provides repair and reconstruction funds.

The people at this town meeting were acting logically by spending a little of their own money to qualify for a larger pot of federal money. And, there is some logic to limiting federal highway repair funds to those highways which the federal government has had a hand in building. But, these two logical actions, taken together, produced an illogical and wasteful result -- a useless road built with the taxpayer's money.

I am sure most of you are aware that the federal government underwrites a portion of the cost of school lunches. Fewer of you are aware of the complicated way in which the amount of federal funds that go into a county's school lunch program is calculated, with reimbursement levels determined on a child-by-child basis depending on family income.

But what is hardly known at all is that two counties in this state, Edgecombe in the northeast and Hoke on the other side of Fayetteville, decided to throw out all the paperwork and just provide everyone with a free lunch, and have saved money doing this. And even though the total cost of those counties' school lunch program has dropped and the service is better, both have had trouble with the U.S. Department of Agriculture in getting their share of federal funds because they are ignoring the

federal regulations.

To get back to vocational education, it may be that the amount of federal funds you are now getting makes it worth complying with the federal mandates. But, this might not always be true.

The Administration has proposed the same level of funding for vocational education for 1981 as you are getting this year, and it is unlikely that Congress will go above the President's request. So, after taking into account inflation, vocational education will be getting about 13 percent less next year.

Yet, the same number of federal regulations and bureaucrats will have to be dealt with.

This situation is likely to get worse in the next couple of years. I have a copy of a letter in my office written by the Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, a Senator who has always been very supportive of federal funding for education programs, which says that "significant increases in funding for education will be impossible for the next several years."

Education is not being singled out by this Senator; many federal programs are going to be reduced or held at present levels for some time.

The federal regulations that are and seem so burdensome now are going to seem a lot worse when the amount of federal support starts to decline. So, it seems to me that this is a good time to start thinking about relying less on the federal government and more on local and state efforts, always remembering that if you keep responsibility for supporting the program at the local and state levels then you can keep control over it, and then you can be sure that the program will be operated in a manner that best meets the needs of the local community.