

Education and Labor Committee

Augustus F. Hawkins (D-CA), Chairman

News

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TRANSCRIPT OF SEPT. 5TH DEMOCRATIC RADIO ADDRESS

BY EDUCATION AND LABOR COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN AUGUSTUS F. HAWKINS (D-CA)

The following is a transcript of the speech by Rep. Augustus Hawkins (D-CA) to be broadcast on Saturday, Sept 5th as the Democratic response to President Reagan's weekly radio address:

As schools re-open across the country and we prepare to celebrate Labor Day, our national holiday honoring workers, it is appropriate to spend some time talking about the link between good schools and good jobs.

Education is the key to success in economic growth and job creation. For countless generations, education has been the path out of poverty, the glue holding together a diverse nation. The American genius that built this nation and sent man to the moon was born in our educational system.

How well we do in arms control negotiations, in finding peace in Central America or competing in the global marketplace depends on the strength of our schools.

We have the resources, the capability and knowledge to solve our problems, even to excel.

Yet today, we are falling dramatically behind other nations in academic excellence. While some industrialized countries are almost 100 percent literate, one-third of American adults cannot read above the ninth grade level.

If adult illiteracy is today's national shame, the dropout epidemic among our youth is a disaster for the future. In some communities, two thirds of youngsters who enter high school fail to graduate, leading to lives of unemployment and crime.

The dropout class of 1988 alone will cost the nation some \$240 billion in lost income and taxes over their lifetime.

Unfortunately, over the past six years, the Reagan administration has offered the American people style rather than substance. Federal support for education is actually declining. The president has recommended more than \$25 billion in education budget cuts and the elimination of many successful and cost effective programs.

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The key to academic success is investments in such pre-school programs as Headstart, which returns three dollars for every dollar spent. Or, in compensatory education, which helps disadvantaged children read better, and saves three thousand dollars for every five hundred dollars invested.

Congress understands this relationship between education and future success. The House of Representatives has already approved by a vote of 401 to 1 a major initiative that will strengthen our schools well into the 1990's by tailoring federal aid to the children who need it most.

Recent polls show Americans believe education is the nation's highest priority and a wise investment. Business is awakening to the significance of education to economic growth. A report due out next week by the Committee for Economic Development -- comprised of top corporate executives -- supports a massive investment in early childhood education, teacher training and improved vocational education.

The American people deserve more from a president than repeated missed opportunities in national efforts to improve educational quality and equity, strengthen science and math studies, provide greater access to college and improve vocational training.

We must not permit education to become a political football in this or the next administration. Education is too critical to our survival and well-being.

We must ask tough questions of the presidential candidates in the months ahead.

How will they provide training for a changing workforce, link education to a reduction in welfare, and increase job opportunities for all? How will they assure that every American can read and understand the Constitution?

These are difficult questions. But the future depends on the right answers.

Thank you and have a pleasant holiday.

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