

REMARKS OF GOVERNOR THOMAS H. KEAN

PRESS CONFERENCE

MASTER TEACHER PROGRAM REPORT

STATE HOUSE

TRENTON, NEW JERSEY

MONDAY, JULY 9, 1984

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I'M VERY EXCITED TO RECEIVE THE FINAL REPORT OF MY COMMISSION ON MASTER TEACHERS. BEFORE I SAY ANYTHING ELSE, I THANK EACH MEMBER OF THE GROUP --- FOR YOUR WORK YOUR COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION, AND YOUR LIVELY INTEREST IN MAKING REAL, LASTING EDUCATIONAL REFORMS.

LAST SEPTEMBER, I CALLED TOGETHER BOTH HOUSES OF NEW JERSEY'S LEGISLATURE TO SPEAK ON A VITAL ISSUE, WHICH MATTERS GREATLY TO ME --- AS AN INDIVIDUAL, AND TO EVERYONE LIVING IN NEW JERSEY --- AS A CITIZEN.

I SPOKE ABOUT OUR URGENT NEED TO RAISE STANDARDS IN OUR SCHOOLS --- FOR STUDENTS, FOR TEACHERS, FOR ADMINISTRATORS --- AND FOR OURSELVES, AS THE CITIZENS RESPONSIBLE FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

TODAY, WE WILL TALK ESPECIALLY ABOUT TEACHERS --- AND ABOUT SPECIAL TEACHERS. BUT WE CANNOT FORGET THAT WE ARE ALL RESPONSIBLE FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION --- FOR ITS SUCCESS OR FAILURE.

TEACHERS ARE THE PEOPLE WHO MAKE THINGS HAPPEN IN EDUCATION. THEY ARE OUR MOST IMPORTANT CLASSROOM RESOURCES. WE ARE BLESSED IN NEW JERSEY WITH MANY GOOD AND TALENTED TEACHERS. THEY SHOULD HAVE OUR RESPECT, OUR ADMIRATION AND OUR SUPPORT.

I BELIEVE THAT THE TEACHER IS AT THE BASIS OF ALL EDUCATION. THAT IS WHY I AM SO TROUBLED BY EVIDENCE THAT THE CLASSROOM IS NO LONGER ATTRACTING THE BRIGHTEST AND THE BEST; THAT MEN AND WOMEN OF LEARNING AND COMPETENCE ARE TURNING IN EVEN GREATER NUMBERS TO OTHER PROFESSIONS.

IN RAISING STANDARDS, WE MUST CONSIDER ALL ASPECT OF THE ISSUE: PAY, JOB SECURITY, AND CONTINUED DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS WHICH ENHANCE PROFESSIONALISM AND SELF-ESTEEM. IN ALL THESE AREAS, WE MUST RAISE THE BAR FOR OUR TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS.

WE HAVE QUESTIONED HOW WE CERTIFY AND COMPENSATE OUR TEACHERS. TOO MANY OF OUR BEST TEACHERS ARE LEAVING THE PROFESSION FOR JOBS IN BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY. THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT WE HAVE SUFFERED A CRISIS OF QUALITY IN THE TEACHING PROFESSION.

THERE ARE SEVERAL REASONS FOR THE SHORTAGE OF TALENT IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND IN TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAMS. MANY OF OUR MOST QUALIFIED TEACHERS ARE LEAVING. MANY OF OUR MOST QUALIFIED CITIZENS ARE NOT EVEN ENTERING. WE MUST SEEK WAYS TO DRAW OUR MOST INTELLIGENT CITIZENS BACK TO THE SCHOOLS.

THE MOST KNOWLEDGEABLE STUDENTS WILL NOT BECOME TEACHERS WHEN THEY ARE OFFERED SALARIES WHICH ARE THREE-FIFTHS, IN SOME CASES, WHAT THEY CAN EARN IN PRIVATE INDUSTRY. THERE ARE SOME OUTSTANDING CANDIDATES WHO CAN MAKE THAT SACRIFICE --- NOT MANY, WE SHOULD NOT FINANCIALLY PENALIZE THOSE WHO ARE WILLING TO SHARE THEIR KNOWLEDGE WITH OUR STATE'S CHILDREN.

IF WE ARE TO BRING BRIGHT YOUNG PEOPLE INTO THE TEACHING PROFESSION, WE MUST INCREASE STARTING SALARIES. WE MUST ALSO CREATE THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADVANCEMENT AND RECOGNITION WHICH TALENTED PEOPLE NEED.

I ALSO PROPOSED THAT WE ESTABLISH IN NEW JERSEY A MASTER TEACHER PROGRAM, TO BEGIN SEPTEMBER 1, 1984. TO DESIGN A PILOT PROGRAM WAS THE CHARGE OF THIS ABLE COMMISSION.

IN THE FIRST YEAR, FIVE SCHOOL DISTRICTS WILL BE ELIGIBLE TO NOMINATE UP TO 5 PERCENT OF THEIR TEACHERS FOR AN AWARD OF \$5,000. THE TEACHERS WHO WIN THESE AWARDS WILL HAVE TO MEET THE MOST STRINGENT CRITERIA OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION. THEY MUST NOT ONLY EXCEED ALL COMMON STANDARDS OF THE TEACHER PROFESSION, BUT THEY MUST ALSO BE ABLE TO ACT AS MENTORS TO THEIR COLLEAGUES, HELPING TO TRAIN NEWER MEMBERS OF THE STAFF AND INSPIRING OTHERS TO FOLLOW THEIR LEAD.

I PROPOSED THIS, BECAUSE EXTRAORDINARY TEACHERS DESERVE EXTRAORDINARY COMPENSATION AND RECOGNITION. TO ATTAIN SUCH STATUS WILL BE A WORTHY OBJECTIVE FOR ALL ACHIEVERS IN THE PROFESSION.

IN APPOINTING ITS MEMBERS, WE DREW FROM ALL THE COMMUNITIES WHICH I FEEL MUST TAKE AN ACTIVE ROLE IN PUBLIC EDUCATION. THIS INCLUDES ALMOST EVERY SECTOR OF SOCIETY: MEMBERS OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION, WHO MORE THAN ANYBODY ELSE KNOW THE QUALITIES OF A GREAT TEACHER; MEMBERS OF LOCAL SCHOOL BOARDS; PARENTS; ADMINISTRATORS; MEMBERS OF THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY.

THIS COMMISSION WAS CHARGED WITH FOUR IMPORTANT RESPONSIBILITIES:

FIRST, TO ESTABLISH THE CRITERIA FOR CHOOSING THE MASTER TEACHERS. WHAT ARE THE SKILLS, ABILITIES AND CHARACTERISTICS THAT WE MOST PRIZE IN A TEACHER?

SECOND, TO SET UP A PROCEDURE FOR SELECTING MASTER TEACHERS. THIS IS A DELICATE PROCESS, WHICH MUST INCLUDE PEER REVIEW.

THIRD, TO DEFINE THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF OUR MASTER TEACHERS --- HOW THEY CAN HELP THEIR COLLEAGUES UPGRADE THEIR SKILLS AND HOW THEY CAN RAISE STANDARDS FOR THE SCHOOLS. MOST IMPORTANTLY: HOW THEY CAN SHARE THEIR SKILLS WITH FELLOW TEACHERS --- WITHOUT TAKING THEM OUT OF THE CLASSROOM WHERE THEY ARE MOST NEEDED.

FOURTH, TO DETERMINE THE CRITERIA BY WHICH THE INITIAL DISTRICTS WILL BE SELECTED.

THE INITIAL PROGRAM WILL BE A PILOT AND PARTICIPATION WILL BE STRICTLY VOLUNTARY. I HOPE TO INCREASE IT DURING THE SECOND YEAR TO INCLUDE AS MANY AS 20 DISTRICTS.



THIS PARTICULAR PROGRAM REFLECTS MY VERY STRONG BELIEF THAT WHILE STARTING COMPENSATION IS A CRUCIAL FIRST STEP IN ATTRACTING HIGHLY QUALIFIED TEACHERS, IT TAKES MORE THAN MONEY TO KEEP ENERGETIC AND TALENTED PEOPLE IN A PROFESSION. THERE ARE MANY REWARDS IN TEACHING WHICH HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH MONEY.

THE OUTSTANDING INDIVIDUALS WHOM WE NEED IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS NEED GOALS, NEED INCENTIVES, NEED RECOGNITION FOR WHICH TO AIM, AS DO ALL OTHER PROFESSIONALS.

THIS COMMISSION HAS ABLY ADDRESSED THESE CONCERNS, AND I THANK ITS MEMBERS FOR THEIR STAND TO UPGRADE THE TEACHING PROFESSION. WE MUST ALL TAKE A STAND --- ON EDUCATION AND ITS IMPORTANCE AS A CORNERSTONE OF OUR SOCIETY AND ECONOMY. THE COMMISSION ON MASTER TEACHERS JOINS OTHER COMMISSIONS --- OTHER OFFICIALS --- IN LAYING THE GROUNDWORK.

IT HAS REQUIRED THEIR COURAGE, PATIENCE AND CAREFUL THOUGHT; THEY HAVE GIVEN THEIR DEDICATION, THEIR INTEREST, AND AN OUTSTANDING LEVEL OF GROUP COOPERATION.

I GREATLY APPRECIATE THE SUPPORT THEY GIVE TO EXCELLENT PUBLIC EDUCATION --- AND I AM DETERMINED THAT THIS GROUNDWORK WILL BE THE FIRM FOUNDATION ON WHICH WE WALK FORWARD, TOGETHER AS A STATE.

WE MUST ALL SUPPORT EACH OTHER --- AND MOST OF ALL OUR CHILDREN --- IN DEFINING THE PRIORITIES OF PUBLIC EDUCATION; ITS PIVOTAL ROLE IN BRINGING OUR CHILDREN SAFE, REWARDING JOBS; ITS VITAL ROLE IN OPENING TO THEM THE GATES TO WORTHY, FULFILLING LIVES. THEIR FUTURE DEPENDS ON IT, AND OUR FUTURE DEPENDS ON THEM.

THANK YOU.