

REMARKS OF  
THE HONORABLE THOMAS H. KEAN  
GOVERNOR OF NEW JERSEY  
AT THE  
ANNUAL DINNER OF THE JEWISH EDUCATIONAL CENTER  
ELIZABETH, NEW JERSEY  
JUNE 18, 1985

THANK YOU, DAVID (MANDELBAUM).

I UNDERSTAND THAT THE TALMUD SAYS THAT YOU SHOULD NOT  
PRAISE A MAN IN HIS PRESENCE. YOU CAN HONOR HIM, BUT YOU  
SHOULD NOT PRAISE HIM.

I DO UNDERSTAND THE RATIONALE FOR THAT; AND I WOULD NOT  
QUESTION IT.

SO I AM NOT GOING TO PRAISE THE MAN WHO IS RESPONSIBLE  
FOR BRINGING SO MANY OF US HERE TONIGHT. BUT IF I MAY, I  
WOULD LIKE TO TALK ABOUT HIS WORK. THAT WORK HAS BEEN  
IMPORTANT. AND IT HAS BEEN MEANINGFUL TO ALL OF US HERE  
TONIGHT.

THAT WORK STARTED NOT HERE IN AMERICA, BUT IN LATVIA,  
WHERE RABBI PINCHAS MORDECAI TEITZ WAS BORN, AND WHERE HE WAS  
ORDAINED.

BUT IT IS HERE, IN AMERICA -- IN ELIZABETH -- THAT HIS  
WORK HAS REACHED ITS FULLEST FLOWER. IT IS HERE, IN  
ELIZABETH, THAT RABBI TEITZ HAS TOILED, HAS STUDIED, HAS  
TAUGHT, AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, HAS LED FOR ALMOST FIFTY YEARS.

IT WAS HERE, IN ELIZABETH -- IN NEW JERSEY -- THAT  
ALMOST 50 YEARS AGO, RABBI TEITZ ESTABLISHED THE JEWISH  
EDUCATIONAL CENTER.

THIS CENTER, IN A VERY REAL SENSE, HAS BEEN A PIONEER IN  
THE HEBREW DAY SCHOOL MOVEMENT. IT WAS THE FIRST OF ITS KIND  
-- NOT ONLY IN NEW JERSEY, BUT IN THE ENTIRE UNITED STATES.

IT HAS NOT ONLY SERVED THIS COMMUNITY, AS A TOP FLIGHT  
SCHOOL, AS A LEADER IN EDUCATION, AS A CENTER FOR THE STUDY  
OF JEWISH HISTORY -- IT HAS SERVED ALL OTHER COMMUNITIES AS A  
MODEL. IT HAS CHARTED THE PATH -- AND OTHERS HAVE FOLLOWED.

THE SAGES IN ETHICS OF THE FATHERS SAID, "MAKE FOR YOURSELF A RABBI AND ACQUIRE A FRIEND."

FOR ELIZABETH, FOR THIS COMMUNITY, RABBI TEITZ HAS BEEN MORE THAN THE RABBI. HE HAS, INDEED, BEEN A FRIEND.

THROUGH HIS WORK, RABBI TEITZ HAS BEEN A LIVING EXAMPLE OF WHAT THOSE WORDS FROM THE SAGES MEAN.

HE HAS DEMONSTRATED A DEEP, BROAD MEANING OF THE WORD FRIEND IN ALL OF THAT WORK.

HE HAS BEEN A LEADER IN WORKING TO WIN HUMAN RIGHTS AND TO WIN THE FREEDOM TO EMIGRATE FOR SOVIET JEWS.

WHAT BETTER FRIEND THAN HE WHO HELPS THOSE IN THEIR DARKEST HOURS -- THOSE MOST IN NEED?

WHAT BETTER FRIEND THAN HE WHO EXTENDS A HAND WHEN IT IS NEEDED MOST. AND AS ALL OF YOU KNOW, OUR HANDS ARE SO NEEDED BY THOSE WHO LANGUISH IN THE SOVIET GULAG.

ANDREI SAKHAROV ONCE SAID THAT "OUR ONLY PROTECTION IS THE SPOTLIGHT OF PUBLIC ATTENTION ON OUR FATE BY FRIENDS AROUND THE WORLD."

HE USED THE WORD "FRIENDS." AND HIS COMMENTS BEAR SOME REFLECTION.

NOT LONG AGO, I ADOPTED A SOVIET REFUSENIK. HIS NAME IS BORIS KLOTZ. PERIODICALLY, I CALL BORIS KLOTZ. I WRITE HIM. SEND HIM TELEGRAMS.

WHY? CAN A TELEGRAM MAKE A DIFFERENCE? MANY OF MY PHONE CALLS DO NOT EVEN GET THROUGH. THOSE THAT DO, I AM SURE, ARE BUGGED BY THE KGB.

BUT THEY DO MAKE A DIFFERENCE. BECAUSE THEY TELL THE SOVIET AUTHORITIES. THEY TELL THEM THAT WE ARE WATCHING. THAT WE ARE AWARE OF THE PLIGHT OF OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS. THAT WE CARE.

RABBI TEITZ' WORK BEARS THAT TRADEMARK OF CARING IN SO MANY OTHER WAYS.

HE CARED ENOUGH TO HELP US WORK -- AS SO MANY OF YOU HERE TONIGHT DID -- ON ESTABLISHING THE FIRST CURRICULUM ON HOLOCAUST EDUCATION HERE IN NEW JERSEY.

HE CARED ENOUGH TO WORK TIRELESSLY -- TO THIS DAY -- ON  
THE KOSHER FOOD LEGISLATION.

AND, BEFORE I GO ANY FURTHER, LET ME SAY A WORD ABOUT  
THAT.

RECENTLY THERE HAVE BEEN ARTICLES IN THE PRESS REGARDING  
THE ENFORCEMENT OF THAT LEGISLATION.

SOME HAVE CRITICIZED THE ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL IN THE  
DIVISION OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS.

RABBI TEITZ, OTHER RABBIS, FRIENDS, LET ME SAY SOMETHING  
VERY DIRECT ABOUT THAT LEGISLATION. RIGHT HERE. RIGHT NOW.  
TONIGHT.

I SIGNED THAT LEGISLATION OUT OF RESPECT% FOR THE  
HOLDERS OF VERY SPECIAL RELIGIOUS BELIEFS. I HAVE BEEN TOLD  
HOW IMPORTANT THOSE BELIEFS ARE TO THE PEOPLE WHO HOLD THEM;  
AND I UNDERSTAND THAT THEIR ORIGINS ARE IN THE EARLY TEXT OF  
THE FIRST FIVE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE.

LET ME TELL YOU WHY I SIGNED THAT LAW.

I SIGNED THAT LAW BECAUSE I BELIEVE IT IS AN OBLIGATION OF STATE GOVERNMENT TO HAVE SUCH LAWS IN PLACE. THEY ARE AN INTEGRAL PART OF OUR FREE SOCIETY -- WHICH PERMITS ALL RELIGIONS AND ALL BELIEFS TO LIVE TOGETHER AND AMONG ONE ANOTHER. AND THAT BELIEF COMES FROM THE BOTTOM OF MY HEART. IT IS THE ESSENCE OF OUR DEMOCRACY.

I SIGNED THAT LAW FOR ANOTHER REASON. I SIGNED IT BECAUSE I AM DETERMINED TO PREVENT CONSUMER FRAUD IN THIS STATE. THAT DETERMINATION HAS NOT WANED.

I HAVE SPOKEN TO THE ATTORNEY GENERAL AND TO THE DIRECTOR OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS ABOUT THIS -- AND I WILL NOT YIELD IN MY COMMITMENT. WE SIMPLY WILL NOT PANDER TO SPECIAL INTERESTS. IN NEW JERSEY, WHEN A FOOD IS REPRESENTED TO BE KOSHER -- IT SHOULD BE KOSHER!

THE PROBLEM THAT STATE GOVERNMENT HAS IS IN KNOWING WHEN NON-KOSHER FOOD IS BEING SOLD IS KOSHER. AND THAT'S WHERE I NEED YOUR HELP.

IT IS DIFFICULT SOMETIMES, FROM WHERE I SIT, TO MONITOR THE WHOLE STATE IN THE WAY I WOULD LIKE TO. I'M ONE GOVERNOR -- AND I DON'T KNOW ABOUT A VIOLATION OR A SUSPECTED VIOLATION OF THIS LAW UNTIL IT IS REPORTED.

YOU CAN HELP ENFORCE THIS LAW. IF YOU SUSPECT SOMETHING, LET ME KNOW. CALL ME. WRITE MY OFFICE.

AT LEAST, GET IN TOUCH WITH THE DIVISION OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS IN THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE. HERE'S THE PHONE NUMBER: 201-648-3622.

AND IF THEY DON'T ANSWER YOUR CALL, YOU WRITE TO ME. WE WILL RESPOND. WE WILL CHECK INTO IT. AND WE WILL ENFORCE THE LAW.

BY THE WAY, I HAVE IT ON VERY GOOD AUTHORITY THAT THE FOOD SERVED HERE TONIGHT IS KOSHER!

PAUSE

THE HALLMARK OF RABBI TEITZ' WORK, OF COURSE, IS THE WORK OF THE JEWISH EDUCATIONAL CENTER ITSELF.

AS I SAID, THE J.E.C. HAS BEEN A LEADER, AND IT HAS ESTABLISHED THAT LEADERSHIP WITH YOUR HELP -- AND THROUGH YOUR SUPPORT.

TONIGHT, I WANT TO PARTICULARLY CONGRATULATE YOUR HONOREE, MR. ALEX GOTTDIENER, FOR HIS EFFORTS NOT ONLY AS A VICE PRESIDENT OF THE CENTER'S BOARD, BUT AS ONE WHO HAS CONTRIBUTED SO MUCH TO THIS COMMUNITY AND TO OTHER WORTHWHILE ORGANIZATIONS.

JUDAISM HAS BEEN A BEACON TO THE WORLD IN SETTING MORAL AND ETHICAL STANDARDS -- IN TEACHING AND UPHOLDING VALUES.

THE EDUCATION THAT THE J.E.C. PROVIDES HAS STRESSED THOSE SAME VALUES. THE 800 STUDENTS WHO STUDY HERE RECEIVE MORE THAN AN EDUCATION. THEY LEARN TO APPRECIATE ETERNAL VALUES -- NOT THE MERE PASSING FADS THAT SEEM TO TAKE OUR SOCIETY SO OFTEN.

AND, AS MANY OF YOU CAN TESTIFY, THEY CARRY THOSE LESSONS IN VALUES WITH THEM FOR THE REST OF THEIR LIVES.

AS A RESULT, YOUR COMMUNITY HAS BEEN A MODEL FOR OTHER NEIGHBORHOODS, OTHER CITIES -- JEW AND GENTILE ALIKE.

YOU HAVE COMBINED -- HERE AT THIS CENTER -- THINGS THAT ARE SO IMPORTANT TO ALL COMMUNITIES -- A COMMITMENT TO EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE, A SENSE OF COMMUNITY, AND AN UNDERSTANDING OF MORAL AND ETHICAL STANDARDS.

IN THESE, YOUR LEADERSHIP IS RECOGNIZED.

YOUR LEADERSHIP IS RECOGNIZED MOST PARTICULARLY IN PRIVATE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION.

I HAVE A LOT OF CONFIDENCE IN SUCH EDUCATION. IN ITS QUALITY. IN THE CARE WITH WHICH IT IS DELIVERED.

IN FACT, I HAVE A GREAT DEAL OF CONFIDENCE IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR. I HAVE TRIED TO BRING PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS TOGETHER IN NEW JERSEY IN MANY AREAS. AND WE HAVE TRIED TO FOLLOW THE LESSONS OF PRIVATE SECTOR MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY IN OUR OWN GOVERNMENT.

I HAVE NO DOUBT -- INDEED I HAVE GREAT CONFIDENCE -- IN THE ABILITY OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO EDUCATE OUR CHILDREN. BY THIS I MEAN PRIVATE SCHOOLS, WHETHER RELIGIOUS OR SECULAR. THIS CENTER IS BUT ONE EXAMPLE, AND A SHINING ONE, OF AN OUTSTANDING PRIVATE APPROACH TO THE INSTITUTION OF EDUCATION -- OF HOW TO DELIVER THIS GREATEST OF ALL GIFTS TO OUR CHILDREN.

THE TALMUD SAYS THAT THE WORLD EXISTS ONLY THROUGH THE BREATH OF SCHOOL CHILDREN. THEY ARE OUR TOMORROW. AND IF WE CARE ABOUT THE WORLD -- IF WE CARE ABOUT THAT TOMMORROW -- WE OWE THEM THE VERY BEST EDUCATION THAT WE CAN GIVE.

FRANKLY, I HAVE FAITH IN THE WAY THAT PRIVATE AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IS PROVIDING THAT GIFT.

BUT I AM CONCERNED -- VERY DEEPLY -- ABOUT THE EDUCATION THAT IS BEING DELIVERED TO THE CHILDREN IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

THERE MORE THAN ONE MILLION CHILDREN IN NEW JERSEY'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

I KNOW THAT YOU WILL MAKE SURE THAT THE PRIVATE EDUCATION HERE MEETS THE STANDARDS OF QUALITY THAT YOU INSIST UPON.

BUT WHEN IT COMES TO PUBLIC EDUCATION, THAT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF STATE GOVERNMENT.

THAT IS MY RESPONSIBILITY, AS GOVERNOR.

AND THERE IS VIRTUALLY NO RESPONSIBILITY I TAKE MORE SERIOUSLY THAN EDUCATION. ONE NEWSPAPER EVEN SUGGESTED THAT I MIGHT BE CALLED NEW JERSEY'S "EDUCATION GOVERNOR". I PRAY THAT IT BE SO. I CAN THINK OF NO EPITAPH THAT WOULD BE A GREATER HONOR.

AT A TIME OF COMPETING PRIORITIES, WE HAVE MADE EDUCATION A PRIORITY. AT A TIME WHEN OUR BUDGET WAS TIGHT, DURING THE RECESSION, WE INCREASED THE BUDGET FOR EDUCATION. AT A TIME WHEN NEW JERSEY IS CALLED UPON TO LOOK TO THE FUTURE, WE ARE FOCUSING ON OUR SCHOOLS. FOR THAT IS WHERE THE FUTURE LIES.

THAT FUTURE IS GOING TO BE COMPETITIVE. AT TIMES --  
LIKE THE STRUGGLES IN OUR OWN GENERATION -- DIFFICULT.

AND WE MUST PREPARE THE NEXT GENERATION FOR THOSE TIMES.  
WE MUST PREPARE THEM TO BE EQUAL TO THE TASK.

HOW CAN WE DO THAT?

WE CAN RAISE STANDARDS -- AND WE HAVE DONE THAT.  
RAISING STANDARDS MEANS RAISING THE EXPECTATIONS WE HAVE OF  
OUR CHILDREN. IT MEANS, BY DEFINITION, HOLDING THEM UP TO A  
HIGHER STANDARD.

THAT CAN BE DIFFICULT. BECAUSE RAISING STANDARDS BRINGS  
WITH IT THE RISK OF FAILURE. BUT THAT IS WHAT STANDARDS  
THEMSELVES ARE ALL ABOUT. AND IF WE WANT THEM TO HAVE  
MEANING, THEN WE MUST BE PREPARED TO FACE FAILURE. AND WE  
MUST BE PREPARED TO WORK TO OVERCOME IT.

WE'VE PURSUED ANOTHER DIFFICULT COURSE. WE'VE TRIED TO  
BRING DISCIPLINE BACK INTO THE CLASSROOM. WHEN DISCIPLINE  
BREAKS DOWN, THE WHOLE ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH LEARNING CAN TAKE  
PLACE IS DESTROYED.

WHEN ONE STUDENT IS DISRUPTIVE, ALL STUDENTS SUFFER. SO WE ARE STRESSING DISCIPLINE IN OUR SCHOOLS. AND WE HAVE INSTITUTED A NEW PROGRAM TO TAKE DISRUPTIVE STUDENTS OUT OF THE CLASSROOM AND PLACE THEM IN ALTERNATIVE SETTINGS.

FINALLY, THERE IS PERHAPS THE MOST IMPORTANT WAY TO IMPROVE EDUCATION. ALL OF YOU WHO HAVE BENEFITTED FROM THE FINE TEACHING AT THE JEWISH EDUCATIONAL CENTER KNOW WHAT IT IS.

THAT MOST IMPORTANT WAY IS THROUGH THE TEACHERS THEMSELVES.

YOU SEE, THE TALMUD ALSO SAYS THAT WE MAY NOT SUSPEND THE INSTRUCTION OF THE CHILDREN EVEN FOR THE REBUILDING OF THE TEMPLE.

THAT SAYS SOMETHING ABOUT THE HIGH PLACE THAT TEACHING SHOULD OCCUPY IN OUR SOCIETY.

BUT IN RECENT YEARS, TEACHING HAS NOT HELD THAT HIGH PLACE.

TEACHERS HAVE NOT ENJOYED THE RESPECT IN THE COMMUNITY THAT THEY DESERVE. THE PROFESSION OF TEACHING HAS NOT BEEN REVERED.

I BELIEVE WE NEED TO RESTORE THE POSITION OF THE TEACHER IN OUR COMMUNITIES TO ONE OF THE HIGHEST RESPECT. AND I BELIEVE THAT WE MUST ATTRACT THOSE WHO COMMAND RESPECT TO THE TEACHING PROFESSION.

AND I'VE WORKED TO DO THIS AS WELL -- BY OPENING UP THE TEACHING PROFESSION TO TALENT FROM ALL FIELDS; BY REWARDING THE VERY BEST TEACHERS; BY TRAINING TEACHERS BETTER; AND BY HOLDING TEACHERS -- AS WELL AS STUDENTS -- UP TO HIGHER STANDARDS.

THAT IS THE WAY TO RESTORE OUR SCHOOLS. TO GIVE OUR TEACHERS THE STATURE THAT THEY DESERVE. AND TO GIVE OUR STUDENTS THE QUALITY THAT THEY DESERVE.

I TAKE THAT MANDATE -- THAT RESPONSIBILITY TO THOSE ONE MILLION CHILDREN -- VERY SERIOUSLY. AND I WILL CONTINUE TO PURSUE IT FOR AS LONG AS I AM GOVERNOR.

FOR ALMOST FIFTY YEARS, THE JEWISH EDUCATIONAL CENTER HAS BEEN A MODEL IN EDUCATION. IT'S LEGACY HAS NOW BEEN PASSED ON TO NEW GENERATIONS.

I WOULD LIKE TO MAKE NEW JERSEY A MODEL IN EDUCATION. THAT IS THE LEGACY THAT I WOULD LIKE TO PASS ON TO GENERATIONS TO FOLLOW.

RABBI TEITZ, FRIENDS, YOU HAVE HONORED ME BY ASKING ME TO JOIN YOU TONIGHT.

AND YOU HAVE HONORED THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY WITH YOUR LEADERSHIP AND YOUR PRESENCE.

TONIGHT, I WANT TO CONGRATULATE YOU FOR ALL THAT YOU HAVE DONE IN THESE PAST FOUR AND ONE-HALF DECADES. I AM CONFIDENT THAT YOUR SERVICE, YOUR LEADERSHIP, AND INDEED YOUR LEGACY WILL LIVE ON IN THE DECADES TO COME.

THANK YOU.