

REMARKS OF  
THE HONORABLE THOMAS H. KEAN  
GOVERNOR OF NEW JERSEY  
AT THE  
MEETING WITH NEWARK HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT COUNCIL LEADERS  
BARRINGER HIGH SCHOOL  
NEWARK, NEW JERSEY  
JUNE 21, 1985

GOOD MORNING.

LAST YEAR, SAUL COOPERMAN, OUR NEW JERSEY COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION, AND TED HOLLANDER, OUR CHANCELLOR OF HIGHER EDUCATION, PAID A SUPRISE VISIT TO CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL.

IT CAUSED QUITE A STIR.

NEWSPAPERS PLAYED UP THEIR COMMENTS.

A NUMBER OF PEOPLE, PERHAPS INCLUDING SOME OF YOU, WONDERED OUT LOUD WHY THEY HAD COME WITHOUT ANNOUNCING IT FIRST. WHAT THEY WERE TRYING TO PROVE. WHY THEY WERE PICKING ON CENTRAL.

WELL, THEY WEREN'T PICKING ON CENTRAL. THEY, AND I, HAVE VISITED SOME OTHER HIGH SCHOOLS SINCE.

BUT I'D LIKE TO TELL YOU WHY THEY DID IT. IT'S THE SAME REASON WHY I'M HERE TODAY.

THEY DID IT TO SEE WHAT SCHOOL IS REALLY LIKE FOR YOU -- TO THE EXTEND THAT THAT'S POSSIBLE FOR TWO MIDDLE-AGED MEN WHO DON'T GO THERE.

THEY WANTED TO SEE WHAT WAS GOING ON.

TO BE HONEST WITH YOU, THAT'S WHY I'M HERE TODAY. YOU'RE ALL JUST ABOUT OUT OF SCHOOL FOR THE SUMMER.

BUT OLIVER BROWN OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION, AND LEN COLEMAN, OUR COMMISSIONER OF ENERGY, HAD TOLD ME OF THE EXISTENCE OF THE NEWARK HIGH SCHOOLS STUDENT LEADERSHIP GROUP.

AND I DIDN'T WANT TO LET YOU GET A WAY FOR THE SUMMER WITHOUT SITTING DOWN AND TALKING FOR A LITTLE WHILE.

TOO OFTEN, THOSE OF US WITH BIG OFFICE JOBS, PEOPLE LIKE COMMISSIONERS, AND CHANCELLORS, AND GOVERNORS, SPEND TOO MUCH TIME IN THOSE OFFICES.

WE DON'T HEAR ENOUGH FROM THE PEOPLE WHO ARE AFFECTED BY OUR PROGRAMS.

WE DON'T SEE AND HEAR -- FIRST HAND -- WHAT'S REALLY GOING ON OUTSIDE OUR FOUR WALLS -- WHETHER IT BE IN THE CLASSROOMS, ON FARMS, IN SENIOR CITIZENS HOMES, OR IN FACTORIES.

WELL, I'VE TRIED TO CHANGE THAT.

I SPEND A LOT OF MY DAY IN PLACES LIKE THOSE I JUST MENTIONED. YES, I NEED TO SPEND A FEW HOURS IN THE OFFICE OR THE PAPER WILL PILE UP. BUT TO GET A SENSE OF WHAT'S REALLY GOING ON -- AND OF WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE -- THE BEST THING TO DO IS TO GO OUT AND TALK TO PEOPLE.

AND THAT'S WHY I'M HERE TODAY. TO TALK. AND, MORE IMPORTANTLY, TO LISTEN.

YOU'VE JUST FINISHED ANOTHER SCHOOL YEAR.

AND, ALTHOUGH YOU MIGHT NOT BE AWARE OF ALL THE THINGS WE'RE TRYING, YOU PROBABLY KNOW THAT YOU'RE GOING TO SCHOOL AT A TIME OF GREAT CHANGE IN NEW JERSEY EDUCATION.

YOU SEE, I THINK CHANGE WAS NEEDED. SO I PROPOSED A NUMBER OF THINGS.

I THINK THE MOST IMPORTANT, AND ONE OF THE MOST DIFFICULT , IS RAISING STANDARDS.

WE'VE CHANGED THE TEST YOU HAVE TO PASS IN ORDER TO GRADUATE FROM HIGH SCHOOL. YOU ACTUALLY TAKE IT IN NINTH GRADE, BUT THEY CALL IT THE HIGH SCHOOL PROFICIENCY TEST.

IT'S HARDER.

THAT MEANS THAT MORE PEOPLE WILL FAIL.

AND THOSE WHO FAIL WILL HAVE TO KEEP TAKING IT OVER AGAIN UNTIL THEY PASS.

AT FIRST, THAT SEEMS LIKE A DIFFICULT THING TO DO. TO SET MORE PEOPLE BACK BECAUSE THEY FAIL THIS TEST.

BUT ARE WE REALLY SETTING THEM BACK?

THE PURPOSE IN MAKING THE TEST HARDER IS TO MAKE YOUR HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA WORTH MORE. TO MAKE IT MEAN SOMETHING -- WHETHER YOU'RE GOING TO COLLEGE, INTO THE MILITARY, OR APPLYING FOR A JOB.

THAT'S WHAT STANDARDS ARE ALL ABOUT -- AND THAT'S WHAT WE'RE TRYING TO DO: ESTABLISH AND RAISE STANDARDS.

IN DOING THAT, WE'RE PROTECTING THE INTEGRITY OF THAT DIPLOMA YOU'LL RECEIVE WHEN YOU GRADUATE.

I THINK, FRANKLY, IT WOULD BE A HOAX TO ROLL STANDARDS BACK -- TO GIVE OUT DEGREES THAT COULD BECOME WORTHLESS.

YOU TAKE PRIDE IN YOUR ACHIEVEMENTS IN SCHOOL. AND YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO TAKE PRIDE IN YOUR DIPLOMA. YOU DON'T WANT ONE THAT WON'T MEAN ANYTHING.

RAISING STANDARDS IS, OF COURSE, JUST ONE PIECE OF THE PUZZLE.

I'VE MADE A NUMBER OF OTHER PROPOSALS AS WELL.

I'VE TRIED TO HELP ATTRACT NEW TALENT INTO THE CLASSROOM AS TEACHERS.

I'VE PROPOSED OPENING UP THE TEACHING PROFESSION TO PEOPLE FROM A WHOLE VARIETY OF FIELDS WHO CAN PROVE THAT THEY'RE COMPETENT -- THAT THEY KNOW THEIR SUBJECTS AND THAT SHOW THEY CAN TEACH IN A SUPERVISED INTERNSHIP.

I'VE PROPOSED RAISING THE MINIMUM SALARY FOR TEACHERS TO \$18,500 -- SO THAT WE CAN ATTRACT SOME OF OUR MOST TALENTED STUDENTS -- PEOPLE LIKE YOU -- INTO THE TEACHING PROFESSION.

AND, AS YOU PROBABLY KNOW, I'VE PROPOSED A MASTER TEACHER PROGRAM TO REWARD THE BEST TEACHERS.

UNDER THE OLD SYSTEM, TEACHING IS JUST ABOUT THE ONLY PROFESSION UNDER THE SUN IN WHICH YOU AREN'T REWARDED FOR BEING GOOD.

I WAS DISAPPOINTED BY THE FACT THAT MORE SCHOOL DISTRICTS DIDN'T TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE OFFER I MADE TO REWARD THEIR TOP TEACHERS THROUGH THIS MASTER TEACHER PROGRAM.

TWO DISTRICTS IN THE STATE DID. AND ONE OF THEM WAS  
RIGHT HERE, IN NEWARK.

THERE'S BEEN SOME CONTROVERSY ABOUT THE PROGRAM. THAT  
TROUBLES ME TOO.

BECAUSE I BELIEVE IN THE CENTRAL CONCEPT -- THAT THE  
BEST TEACHERS DESERVE TO BE REWARDED, ENCOURAGED.

AND I STRONGLY BELIEVE IN THE MASTER TEACHER PROGRAM.  
AND I'M DETERMINED TO SEE IT SURVIVE AND HOPEFULLY FLOURISH  
IN THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY -- AS IT'S BEGINNING TO IN OTHER  
STATES.

FINALLY, I'VE TAKEN A SPECIAL INTEREST IN THE  
PARTICULAR CHALLENGES FACING CITY SCHOOLS, LIKE THOSE HERE  
IN NEWARK.

WE'VE LAUNCHED SOMETHING WE CALL OUR "URBAN INITIATIVE"  
TO ATTACK THOSE PROBLEMS HEAD ON.

PROBLEM'S LIKE DISRUPTIVE STUDENTS.

YOU KNOW, THE ONE PERSON, WHO BY DISRUPTING THE CLASS,  
CAN MAKE LEARNING ANYTHING JUST ABOUT IMPOSSIBLE FOR  
EVERYONE ELSE.

WE HAVE TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT THEM -- BECAUSE WHEN THEY DISRUPT CLASS, EVERYONE SUFFERS. THAT'S NOT FAIR.

SO I PROPOSED THAT WE START A PROGRAM TO DEVELOP ALTERNATIVE SETTINGS FOR THOSE PARTICULARLY DISRUPTIVE STUDENTS.

THAT WAY, THEY CAN LEARN AT THEIR OWN PACE -- AND GET HELP ON THEIR PARTICULAR PROBLEMS -- AND EVERYONE ELSE CAN HAVE A CLASSROOM THAT'S CONDUCIVE TO LEARNING.

I'M TALKING TO MUCH, WHEN WHAT I REALLY WANT TO DO IS LISTEN TO YOU.

YOU CAN TELL ME HOW SOME OF THE REFORMS WE'RE PUSHING AFFECT YOU IN THE CLASSROOM.

YOU CAN TELL ME WHAT YOU THINK WE OUGHT TO DO TO MAKE THE SCHOOLS IN NEWARK -- AND THROUGHOUT NEW JERSEY -- BETTER.

YOU CAN HELP ME FIGURE OUT HOW TO KEEP SOME OF YOUR FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES WHO AREN'T GOING TO FINISH SCHOOL IN SCHOOL. BECAUSE THE HIGH DROPOUT RATE IN SOME OF OUR CITIES IS A TRAGEDY. AND IT'S ONE OF THE THINGS I WANT TO CHANGE.



YOU HAVE GONE THROUGH SCHOOL IN AN INTERESTING TIME --  
A TIME OF CHANGE -- NOT ONLY IN OUR SCHOOLS, BUT IN NEW  
JERSEY ITSELF.

THIS STATE IS CHANGING. EMERGING. SOME MIGHT EVEN SAY  
EXPLODING.

WE'RE ATTRACTING HIGH TECH FIRMS.

WE'RE GROWING AGAIN, AFTER SOME PRETTY SLOW YEARS IN  
THE 1970'S.

WE'RE EVOLVING INTO A NATIONAL LEADER.

I'M HAPPY TO REPORT THAT THE JOB MARKET FOR YOU IS  
BETTER THAN IT WAS FOR SOME OF YOUR PREDECESSORS. BUT IT'S  
STILL NOT GOOD ENOUGH -- ESPECIALLY IN THE CITIES.

I'D LIKE TO HEAR YOUR IDEAS ON HOW WE CAN BETTER  
PREPARE YOU -- TOMORROW'S LEADERS, TOMMORROW'S HOPE,  
TOMMORROW'S PROMISE -- FOR THE JOB MARKET, FOR COLLEGE, FOR  
THE FUTURE.

THAT'S ENOUGH FROM ME.

THANKS FOR TAKING THE TIME TO MEET WITH ME.

NOW LET'S HEAR YOUR QUESTIONS.