

The original documents are located in Box D32, folder “Dedication of Kent Skill Center, Grand Rapids, MI, November 7, 1971” of the Ford Congressional Papers: Press Secretary and Speech File at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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DEDICATION OF THE NEW KENT SKILL CENTER,
1655 E. BELTLINE, N.E., GRAND RAPIDS,
MICHIGAN, 2 PM NOVEMBER 7, 1971.

HENRY ADAMS ONCE WROTE:

"NOTHING IN EDUCATION IS SO ASTONISHING
AS THE AMOUNT OF IGNORANCE IT ACCUMULATES
IN THE FORM OF INERT FACTS."

WHATEVER PROMPTED ADAMS'
REMARK, HE COULD NOT HAVE BEEN TALKING
ABOUT VOCATIONAL EDUCATION OR A SKILL
CENTER BECAUSE THE TOOLS OF VOCATIONAL
EDUCATION ARE LIVELY FACTS, FACTS THAT
CAN BE PUT TO GOOD USE.

I HAVE LONG FELT THAT OUR
NATION'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS SHOULD BROADEN
THEIR HORIZONS AND SEEK NEW SUMMITS--STRIVE
TO PROVIDE GREATER EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES



FOR ALL OF OUR YOUNG PEOPLE. I HAVE FELT THAT WAY / BECAUSE OF THE LACK OF THE VERY KIND OF BUILDING WE ARE DEDICATING HERE TODAY -- THE SKILL CENTER.

I DEPLORE THE PHILOSOPHY OF SOME EDUCATORS WHO INSIST UPON TREATING EVERY STUDENT AS THOUGH HE WERE COLLEGE MATERIAL.

I AM HAPPY TO SEE THE GROWTH OF SKILL CENTERS IN THIS COUNTRY, ^{and more + more are being built very} I AM ^{long} TREMENDOUSLY PLEASED TO SEE THIS MAGNIFICENT SKILL CENTER HERE IN KENT COUNTY. I AM PARTICULARLY PLEASED THAT THIS SKILL CENTER AND SKILL CENTER NO. 2 WHICH IS UNDER CONSTRUCTION NEXT TO CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL SYMBOLIZE THE BEST IN LOCAL, STATE AND FEDERAL COOPERATION.

THE FACT THAT THE VOTERS OF KENT INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL DISTRICT



WOULD APPROVE A \$6 MILLION BOND ISSUE TO FINANCE THE TWO SKILL CENTERS IS A TRIBUTE TO THEIR FAITH IN OUR KENT COUNTY SCHOOLS AND OUR YOUNG PEOPLE. THE FACT THAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT CONTRIBUTED \$2 MILLION IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION FUNDS TO THE FINANCING OF THE TWO SKILL CENTERS POINTS UP THE WISDOM OF THE LOCAL-FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP IN THE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AREA. FROM ITS INCEPTION, VOCATIONAL EDUCATION HAS BEEN A SHINING EXAMPLE OF THE GREAT BENEFIT THAT CAN ACCRUE TO THIS NATION FROM COOPERATION AT THE LOCAL, STATE AND FEDERAL LEVELS.



TODAY WE DEDICATE A SKILL CENTER WHICH IS A RESPONSE TO A DEFINITE NEED, NOT SOME BUREAUCRAT'S DREAM. THIS SKILL CENTER WILL FILL A VOID WHICH HAS LONG EXISTED IN THE GRAND RAPIDS AREA.

To give specialized technical training to our youth and to provide a reserve of skill for our society.

DAVIS TECK

A SKILL CENTER OF THIS KIND IS A NATURAL DEVELOPMENT IN A PRIVATE ENTERPRISE ECONOMY WHICH IS DEMANDING THE PERSONNEL NEEDED TO FILL CERTAIN JOBS IN GROWTH FIELDS AND IS INSISTING UPON EXCELLENCE.

IT WAS A FORMER HEALTH-EDUCATION-AND-WELFARE DEPARTMENT SECRETARY WHO SAID: "THE SOCIETY WHICH SCORNS EXCELLENCE IN PLUMBING BECAUSE PLUMBING IS A HUMBLE ACTIVITY AND TOLERATES SHODDINESS IN PHILOSOPHY BECAUSE IT IS AN EXALTED ACTIVITY WILL HAVE NEITHER GOOD PLUMBING NOR GOOD PHILOSOPHY. NEITHER ITS PIPES NOR ITS THEORIES WILL HOLD WATER."

ONE THEORY THAT WILL HOLD WATER IS THAT SKILL CENTERS LIKE THIS ONE ARE HELPING US APPROACH EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION AND MAKE PROGRESS TOWARD OUR NATIONAL GOAL OF EQUALITY OF EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY.



IT IS AN INERT FACT OF THE KIND HENRY ADAMS SPOKE OF THAT 75 PER CENT OF AMERICA'S YOUNG PEOPLE DO NOT GRADUATE FROM A FOUR-YEAR COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY. FROM THAT INERT FACT WE MUST PROCEED TO THE INEVITABLE CONCLUSION THAT FAR MORE EMPHASIS SHOULD BE PLACED UPON VOCATIONAL EDUCATION THAN IS NOW THE CASE.

INSTEAD OF AN ALMOST EXCLUSIVE CONCENTRATION ON COLLEGE PREPARATORY PROGRAMS IN HIGH SCHOOLS, THE GOAL SHOULD BE TO MEET EVERY STUDENT'S NEEDS. THAT GOAL SHOULD TRANSLATE ITSELF INTO JUST ONE OBJECTIVE -- EXCELLENCE -- WHETHER THE INDIVIDUAL INVOLVED IS DESTINED TO BECOME A DOCTOR OF MEDICINE OR A PLUMBER.

THIS NEW SKILL CENTER, I FEEL SURE, IS DEDICATED TO EXCELLENCE. IT WILL TURN OUT HIGHLY SKILLED AND EFFICIENT



WORKERS OF ALL DESCRIPTIONS. IT WILL FILL
THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE. IT WILL FILL THE
NEEDS OF KENT COUNTY STUDENTS. I
CONGRATULATE EVERY ONE OF YOU HERE ON THIS
SPLENDID ACHIEVEMENT, AND I AM MOST PROUD
THAT YOUR FEDERAL GOVERNMENT *is joined hands with*
to contribute GONTRIBUTING \$2 MILLION TOWARD THE OVERALL
local educators & citizens
COST OF THE TWO SKILL CENTERS PLANNED FOR
OUR FINE CITY AND ITS PROGRESSIVE NEIGHBORS.

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REMARKS BY REP. GERALD R. FORD, R-MICH.
REPUBLICAN LEADER, U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

UPON DEDICATION OF THE NEW KENT SKILL CENTER
1655 E. BELTLINE, N.E.
GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

2 P.M. NOVEMBER 7, 1971

FOR RELEASE ON DELIVERY

Henry Adams once wrote: "Nothing in education is so astonishing as the amount of ignorance it accumulates in the form of inert facts."

Whatever prompted Adams' remark, he could not have been talking about vocational education or a skill center because the tools of vocational education are lively facts, facts that can be put to good use.

I have long felt that our nation's public schools should broaden their horizons and seek new summits--strive to provide greater educational opportunities for all of our young people. I have felt that way because of the lack of the very kind of building we are dedicating here today--the skill center.

I deplore the philosophy of some educators who insist upon treating every student as though he were college material.

I am happy to see the growth of skill centers in this country. I am tremendously pleased to see this magnificent skill center here in Kent County. I am particularly pleased that this skill center and skill center No. 2 which is under construction next to Central High School symbolize the best in local, State and Federal cooperation.

The fact that the voters of Kent Intermediate School District would approve a \$6 million bond issue to finance the two skill centers is a tribute to their faith in our Kent County schools and our young people. The fact that the Federal Government contributed \$2 million in vocational education funds to the financing of the two skill centers points up the wisdom of the local-Federal partnership in the vocational education area. From its inception, vocational education has been a shining example of the great benefit that can accrue to this Nation from cooperation at the local, State and Federal levels.

Today we dedicate a skill center which is a response to a definite need, not some bureaucrat's dream. This skill center will fill a void which has long existed in the Grand Rapids area. A skill center of this kind is a natural development in a private enterprise economy which is demanding the personnel

(more)

needed to fill certain jobs in growth fields and is insisting upon excellence.

It was a former Health-Education-and-Welfare Department secretary who said: "The society which scorns excellence in plumbing because plumbing is a humble activity and tolerates shoddiness in philosophy because it is an exalted activity will have neither good plumbing nor good philosophy. Neither its pipes nor its theories will hold water."

One theory that will hold water is that skill centers like this one are helping us approach excellence in education and make progress toward our national goal of equality of educational opportunity.

It is an inert fact of the kind Henry Adams spoke of that 75 per cent of America's young people do not graduate from a four-year college or university. From that inert fact we must proceed to the inevitable conclusion that far more emphasis should be placed upon vocational education than is now the case.

Instead of an almost exclusive concentration on college preparatory programs in high schools, the goal should be to meet every student's needs. That goal should translate itself into just one objective--excellence--whether the individual involved is destined to become a doctor of medicine or a plumber.

This new skill center, I feel sure, is dedicated to excellence. It will turn out highly skilled and efficient workers of all descriptions. It will fill the needs of people. It will fill the needs of Kent County students. I congratulate every one of you here on this splendid achievement, and I am most proud that your Federal Government is contributing \$2 million toward the overall cost of the two skill centers planned for our fine city and its progressive neighbors.

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