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THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN *CS*

THE WHITE HOUSE

ACTION

WASHINGTON

October 14, 1974

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT

FROM: KEN COLE

SUBJECT: Career Education Proposal

Ken Smith has transmitted the attached proposal through the Domestic Council for your consideration.

Briefly, he recommends a new national effort toward career education spearheaded by your leadership. He assumes correctly that the knowledge, need and government organization is established and awaiting legislative emphasis and adequate funding. To begin implementation of a new initiative he proposes the following:

- (A) Conference of youth focusing on this subject.
- (B) Series of meetings with educators and businessmen.
- (C) Development of a legislative package.
- (D) Emphasis in your State of the Union message.

We should have the recommendations of the HEW/Labor/Commerce Interagency Task Force on Education and Work which you announced at Ohio State later this month. Your Ohio State commencement address has generated considerable support for this redirection of educational priorities.

Ken Smith presents an excellent brief for this new initiative and we will encourage him to further develop his approach. We asked Anne Armstrong to review Ken's proposal since she works with youth. She agrees with all of his recommendations with the exception of a White House conference.

RECOMMENDATION

That we wait until the Interagency Task Force reports before committing to a specific plan of action. At that time we can utilize his dedication and ideas.

MR AGREE _____ DISAGREE

BUT / How soon will we have the Task Force Report? I want NO delay.

September 24, 1974

MEMORANDUM FOR: The President

THROUGH: Roger Semerad

FROM: Ken Smith *KAS*

SUBJECT: A Proposal for the Implementation of Career Education

In my work with DECA, Project 70,001, the National Advisory Council on the Education of Disadvantaged Children, and vocational education I have been increasingly confronted with some basic problems of public education at all levels. The views of those young people you met with early in the month about the failings of their education summarize the situation as seen by parents, concerned teachers, administrators and Members of Congress. Those young people said it all -- and if education isn't working for them, some of the best young people in the country, then one can imagine its effect on the rest.

What follows is, I believe, a balanced appraisal of the situation we're in and a program that will, at no additional cost, provide a fundamental answer to the atrophy of public education, as well as provide a highlight to your domestic program. Its essence was contained in your speech at Ohio State -- we need to find the proper relationship between education and work.

THE BACKGROUND

American public education is widely believed to be falling slowly apart. It is, I believe, an accurate judgement. Unresponsive and incredibly bureaucratic to the point of openly stifling initiative while across the nation the Scholastic Aptitude Test results fall lower and lower each year, the dropout rate holds steady and growing numbers of pupils defect to private schools. Of those who do graduate, fully 40% have no marketable skill or any prospects of higher education. Of those who do go on to higher education, 40% drop out without a marketable skill and 35% of those who get their degree are prepared for jobs which do not exist or have (like teachers) 15 competing for each available job.

September 24, 1974

The Queen Mary of Education is dead on course for the docks with no one on the bridge evincing great concern. The only answer we get from the "leaders" of education is to cry for more fuel and to increase the speed.

Meanwhile, in perhaps two dozen local school districts, new educational programs are meeting with great success in stimulating student interest, training students so that everyone who graduates from high school will have a marketable skill and expanding the horizons of students at each level (K-12) of the opportunities available in the world of work.

Career education (a skill, a job, motivation to a worthwhile career), properly applied, is a basic answer to the pervasive illness infecting public education -- but the will to take the medicine, to effect basic change, just cannot overcome the ancient inertia of bureaucracy. The Queen Mary just won't respond to the new currents. Unless someone on the bridge takes firm control of the wheel to shift to a new course, the ship will be literally plowing into the docks in a relatively short time.

THE "NEW" COURSE

Much like the "new politics", career education is essentially a return to basics. How we ever got so far away from the basics of education -- skill training, vocational and social development directed at qualifying for a job and a productive career -- is for the historians to determine. All that can be said for sure is that we are nearly 180° away.

The concept of career education has been extensively modeled and tested -- and the models have been remarkably successful. One of the ignored tragedies of Watergate is that precisely when the political and societal realities were in concert for implementing the career concept throughout public education, the will of the previous Administration to pursue it was lost and/or diverted.

I propose, through your active involvement, to press forward the implementation of career education.

THE REQUIREMENTS

The staff for researching the necessary legislative action in the White House and the Office of Education are waiting for direction. An Associate Commissioner, Ken Hoyt, for Career Education already exists -- yet he is hamstrung from doing much more than give speeches by the combination of apathy and hostility to such wholesale change that is endemic to any old, large bureaucracy.

September 24, 1974

The key ingredient for change is top level commitment -- you -- and some determination to do the job instilled throughout the bureaucracy -- again by you.

Our efforts to track down the obstacles to career ed show that the major problems of national implementation are that the Office of Education 1) can't agree on a definition of "Career Ed" or "Work" and 2) simply doesn't want to change. The real testing and evaluation has been done and a general concensus reached among participating teachers and students that career education works and can be one of the most effective, challenging and "relevant" educational approaches yet attempted.

The implementation of career ed could also be the vehicle for expanding the revenue sharing concept to education. Large scale block grants from consolidated programs under the general title of career education with broad guidelines would help to break the near stranglehold the red tape of regulation has at all levels on education. I am ever more convinced that the school board in Grand Rapids will do a better job of providing "relevant" education to its children if it is given the means and the opportunity to be free of the long arm of Washington.

CONCLUSION

The problems, of course, would be many. The forces of bureaucratic inertia aligned with philosophical opponents would be a tough combination. I have, however, no doubt that the job could be done. The American people are truly fed up with their educational system and are more than ready to try something new.

This would be a major fight and would certainly not be won at once. However, the visible leadership of the President would galvanize the groups willing to change and place you on the side of the angels. (It will be difficult to attack a President fighting hard for "relevancy" in education -- the first one to pay special attention to the problem in memory, which is part of the problem.) It is the right course and the one that is already evolving in some areas.

Even if we fail at first, a sense of purpose and top level determination would do everyone involved a world of good. Furthermore, the groundwork for making the change will be laid for us to build on over the next two years. I have already reviewed with a dozen members of Congress, on both sides of the aisle, the potential of reworking the legislative thrust of education to a career education orientation and they were, to a man, excited about it.

September 24, 1974

The beauty of it is that the studies all show a minimal, if any, additional cost to rearrange their structure for career education. Those same studies show a sharp upturn in student interest, attendance and teacher satisfaction.

It is also worth noting the old political axiom that the strongest political impact is that action which personally affects the greatest number of people. A positive fundamental change in public education would have the most far-reaching impact of any domestic program yet attempted by the Administration. It would be at once conservative, progressive, moderate and liberal!

If you are interested, I will follow up with a timetable and some specifics on a suggested plan of how to proceed. It would include:

1. a conference with consumers of education (perhaps incorporating it within the conference of youth leaders we've discussed),
2. meetings with key educational and related groups (business, etc.),
3. preparation of a full scale legislative proposal -- and the recruitment of Congressional support at each step,
4. placement in the State of the Union Message with follow up speeches and appearances in behalf of the proposal -- the judicious use of Teddy Roosevelt's "bully pulpit".

I am sending this through Roger because of his support for such an initiative and his position on the Domestic Council handling this area.

Finally, my gut instinct tells me that Plato and Ev Dirksen would agree that career education is another of those ideas whose time has come -- and, therefore, will eventually mount the most effective political army in the field.

You should lead the army -- and to do that you must get out in front as soon as possible.

How should we proceed?

KMS

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

October 17, 1974

ADMINISTRATIVELY CONFIDENTIAL

MEMORANDUM FOR: KENNETH R. COLE, JR.
FROM: JERRY H. JONES
SUBJECT: Career Education Proposal

Your memorandum to the President of October 14 on the above subject has been reviewed and your recommendation was approved with the following notation:

-- BUT/How soon will we have the Task Force Report? I want no delay.

Please follow-up with the appropriate action.

Thank you.

cc: Don Rumsfeld