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ADDRESS BY REPRESENTATIVE GERALD R. FORD, REPUBLICAN FLOOR LEADER, U. S.  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, BEFORE MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL  
BOARDS AND MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS,  
DETROIT, MICHIGAN, SEPTEMBER 16, 1965

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I am pleased to be able to discuss "Education -- Whose Responsibility?"  
with a group of Michigan citizens whose task it is to formulate basic educational  
policies for our state.

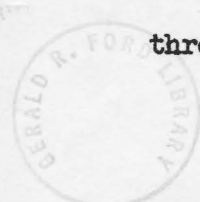
Before I discuss the issues and comment on action by the Congress in  
this session, I want to lay before you my biases and prejudices. They would  
soon be evident anyway, and I want to tell you frankly that I am biased and  
prejudiced.

I am biased to the proposition that our schools are the primary interest  
and responsibility of the people of the local community and that they belong  
primarily to the folks they serve.

My prejudices tell me that the more local interest and control we have,  
the better off we are.

This means the right to experiment with radical new ideas. It also  
means the right to run an old-fashioned school with the major emphasis on the  
three R's. It includes the right to be different and the right to make mistakes.

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I am prejudiced in favor of folks like the Amish who can be different in an age of conformity, and I'd let them live in peace in our state.

I am prejudiced against complete control of education by educationalists -- especially the educationalists in the enormous federal bureaucracy.

I am prejudiced against dictation from Washington on state and local educational policies and on the massive, lump-sum use of funds for education.

I am addicted to the view that the basic task of the school is to teach, that the primary responsibility of education is to educate. I want my youngsters to learn and to learn from competent, responsible teachers who respect the mores of the community they serve.

I have a bias in favor of my country, of the people of America, of the virtues of patriotism -- old-fashioned patriotism -- if you will. I am prejudiced against bearded beatniks, student revolutionaries, and school officials who knuckle down to their demands.

I have a bias in favor of law and order, of respect for authority, and of due process of law. I have a prejudice against the theory that I need to obey only those laws which I think are just.



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Now that I have confessed my prejudices and biases, I want to discuss briefly the two major education bills considered by the House of Representatives this year. The first one I voted against. The second I supported.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, which became law on April 11, authorizes more than \$1.5 billion in federal school aid. I opposed the bill because it was riddled with deficiencies.

We were told that the bill was to broaden and strengthen "public school programs in the schools where there are concentrations of educationally disadvantaged children." This is a worthy thought.

Ignored by sponsors of the bill were the mechanics for spreading the public money among school districts.

Distribution of funds under the program will be extremely wasteful and inequitable. The wealthiest counties will receive millions of dollars in federal aid. Some of the poorest areas will receive relatively little assistance.

Westchester County, New York, is rich. More than 36 per cent of the families there have incomes higher than \$10,000. Less than 8 per cent receive under \$3,000 a year. Only 3 per cent, or 6,210 of all school-age children

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come from families having an income of \$2,000, or less.

At the other end of the economic line is Sunflower County, Mississippi. That southern community has almost as many families as does Westchester County, New York, with less than \$2,000 income. Yet, this group has 42 per cent of all school-age children. Furthermore, more than 68 per cent of Sunflower County's families have an income of less than \$3,000 a year.

How does the new federal aid to education law affect wealthy Westchester and impoverished Sunflower?

Prosperous Westchester gets more than \$2 million. Poor Sunflower receives only \$745,173.

Nationally, the effect of the school aid law is even more tilted in the wrong direction.

Under the formula, the 10 wealthiest counties in America receive more than \$8.9 million during the first year. The 10 poorest counties get only \$4.5 million.

State officials are helpless to correct the situation under the terms of the law. They have no authority to funnel more funds into the areas of their states where there is the greatest need to help educationally disadvantaged children.

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Your experience in education has demonstrated, I'm sure, that it is extremely difficult to make up for a pre-school deficiency.

If this legislation were truly to aid "disadvantaged children", it should have included help in this area.


Yet, the new federal aid law fails to include pre-school training among its provisions.

The law ignores thousands of children living in economically-distressed and socially-deprived areas where studies show that irreparable damage of pre-school retardation is extremely acute.

Among other deficiencies and weaknesses in the law are very dangerous provisions opening the way to direct and far-reaching intrusion of federal authority in local school systems.

The law permits the U.S. Commissioner of Education to establish so-called joint federal and local schools and facilities using all federal funds without the approval of a state education agency. This revolutionary procedure (the iron fist of Washington bureaucracy, if you will) by-passes state authorities and puts the federal officials directly in the local superintendent's office.

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Under this law federal educational authorities stretch their tenacles into the area of purchasing textbooks and library materials. No language in the law guards against subsequent federal controls on what should be a local responsibility and right.

Unfortunately, this law will provide millions of dollars in federal aid without regard to the real need and to where it actually exists.

It seems to me that this law will radically change our historic structure of education by stealthily shifting power to the federal level.

Some of us in the Congress had proposed and endorsed a responsible and workable alternative to the bill which became law.

It was a fair and equitable plan to help all who bear the costs of education.

This bill authorized \$300 million for use by the states to improve education of children 3 to 7 years old from families with incomes of less than \$3,000. States would have used most of the money in areas having most eligible children.

A tax-credit provision was a major part of the bill. Anyone, including renters, paying federal income taxes would have been given a credit up to

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one-half of any state or local school taxes he paid with a ceiling credit of \$100. This plan would ease the burden of school property taxes, and would also include that portion of sales taxes going for schools.

Or, if the individual wished, he could take a tax credit of \$50 for each student listed as a dependent up to a total of \$200.

Also under the alternative proposal which I endorsed, a person paying college expenses for himself or a dependent could have received a tax credit up to \$325 for each student for the cost of tuition, books, and other expenses.

To remove any basis for the allegation that this tax credit plan favors those in the higher income brackets, the bill provided that if the tax credit of a given person is greater than his tax, he would receive a payment from the Treasury equal to the difference between his federal income tax and his tax credit.

All of this points up what all of us know to be a major issue in education today: Who pays? Who foots the bill? And more specifically, who determines what money shall be available in each local community or throughout the state for our educational program?




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In Michigan, education is supported primarily through the local property tax and the state sales tax. If we transfer the cost of education to the federal level, the cost will be met primarily through the graduated income tax. I am not at this point making any comments on or reference to the question of whether Michigan should adopt a state income tax. But I do want to point out certain factors relative to the local property tax and the federal income tax as they bear upon a local educational program.

I hold no special brief for the property tax. I know that it can be unfair and often work a hardship on certain individuals. There is little connection today between the property tax and the individual's ability to pay. But this much can be said in support of property tax: The individual taxpayers in the local community know what they are paying and what they are getting. When you call for a special vote in your district on a bond issue or on operating funds, each taxpayer who goes to the polls will know how much more he is going to have to pay and what he can expect to get. He then can make a sound and personal decision in the voting place. If he votes "yes" and the issue passes, he knows that the community is going to have a new building, or that additional teachers will be hired, but he also knows that his ~~tax~~ bill

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will be higher. As he hands over his money to the treasurer, he is personally involved.

If, on the other hand, these additional funds can be obtained from the federal treasury, collected through the graduated income tax, it is impossible for the individual taxpayer to see the connection between what he pays and what he gets. In fact, in many instances if his income is lowered, he may pay less taxes although his school district may get more money from the federal treasury. There is no personal involvement; there is no direct connection between what he pays and what he gets.

It is much easier to do it this way, but I raise a more fundamental question: Is this the better way? I think that if the schools are really to belong to the people they serve, there must be a cost-benefit relationship which can be noted and felt.

Now because we recognize fully the high cost of modern education and the limitation of the personal property tax, it seems to me that the alternative plan which I described above involving tax credits is a happy solution to the immediate problem. We maintain the cost-benefit relationship and keep local

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control, and at the same time give tax relief to those who bear the burdens of educational expenses.

Turning now to August 26th of this year, I recall that the House of Representatives overwhelmingly and in a bi-partisan atmosphere approved legislation to assist higher education. I voted in favor of that bill.

The major purpose of this legislation is to overcome, or at least to help solve, some of the problems linked with the incredible growth of the American college population.

As existing higher education facilities have become over-crowded, and as new institutions have mushroomed across the country, academic quality has often been sacrificed for the sake of growth.

The bill is designed to:

- \* Encourage institutions of higher learning to help solve urban and suburban problems by establishing a program of federal support for college and university community service projects.
- \* Upgrade college libraries through grants.
- \* Improve library services in general by establishing research and training programs.

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- \* Assist struggling colleges by financing cooperative programs.
- \* Establish a national teaching fellowship program to attract outstanding young scholars to pursue their education.
- \* Provide educational opportunity grants to exceptionally needy students by offering reduced-interest loans, and extending and liberalizing the college work-study program, and to
- \* Ease the pressure of over-crowded facilities.

There is a basic and important difference between providing federal aid to elementary and secondary schools and assisting higher education to meet its growing responsibilities.

The difference is an ominous sounding phrase -- "federal control at the local level."

Unlike secondary schools, institutions of higher education generally enroll students from widely-scattered areas of the country. They represent national, rather than local, interests.

Also, the facts are that a larger proportion of our young people is going to colleges and universities, and this places a special burden on higher education facilities which calls for more than local or state action.

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Federal aid to higher education emphasizes the development of these facilities both in size and in quality. And, I stress the word "quality".

I believe we can agree that higher education is no longer a luxury -- only for the rich -- but rather is a necessity, not to provide degrees, but to develop well-prepared men and women to serve our nation and its people.

By providing federal assistance to higher education, we give thousands of young men and young women the opportunity to develop their talents, skills, and aptitudes fully. Our communities, our country, and the free world will be the beneficiaries.

In a concluding footnote, I want to discuss briefly another important role for strengthening our educational efforts.

First, let me say that the growing lack of respect for law and due process, and the unwillingness of many to resolve differences by established legal means is disquieting.

We are aware of the symptoms, some of which are found among the younger members of our society.

I speak of one symptom which unfortunately has displayed itself on a very small number of college and university campuses. It is the growing use

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of coercion in forms ranging from demonstrations to sit-ins and mobs carrying irresponsible messages on placards. These methods have been used as a means of asserting rights or political views.

The same spirit has invaded certain high schools and even elementary schools. A couple of weeks ago there was a picture on the front page of the WASHINGTON POST showing a group of high school youngsters with placards protesting the high school rules concerning boys' hairdos. My immediate reaction was rather than feature these boys on the front page of a great metropolitan newspaper, someone should have taken them to the proverbial woodshed for the proverbial purpose. But, I suppose we can say these youngsters were simply aping others in exercising their "rights" and the methods which go along with the self-asserted rights.

Although many who use such methods may do so sincerely and in the name of morality and justice, there is one common denominator. This is a disregard of the orderly means of exercising rights, attaining goals, or influencing decisions.

It is frightening when these attitudes and techniques tend to escalate -- spreading geographically and in number.

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Now, we all recognize that the right of dissent is a vital part of our American heritage. So too are the rights to assemble, to protest, to petition, and to test the validity of challenged laws or regulations. But law-abiding citizens also have a right to peace and stability. Properly designated officials have the right to exercise lawful and reasonable authority.

An orderly society cannot exist if every man may determine which laws he will obey, and if the techniques of coercion supplant due processes in the courts and in the legislative halls.

Among the responsibilities of education, it seems to me, is the indoctrination of students with the concept of responsible dissent, with the meaning of responsible citizenship, with a respect for constructive and lawful means for the redress of wrongs.

Our homes, schools, and colleges have the task of helping to produce an earnest, honest, patriotic, kind-spirited multitude for today. Herein lies our hopes to prevent the fanatical, threatening, lawless mob of tomorrow.

Speaking to audiences in more than 35 states since the past January, I have visited college and university campuses. Everywhere I have found among faculties a dedication to high professional standards, a recognition of public responsibility, and a deep pride in the teaching profession.

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I also have found, with only rare exceptions, students seeking to fulfill their capacities for intellectual and personal development with enthusiasm, dedication, mental and moral courage.


Such fulfillment returns an untold contribution to our society in economic, scientific, cultural, and social benefits.

As Benjamin Franklin so well said long ago, "an investment in knowledge pays the best interest."

I am proud of Michigan's schools and colleges. I think the school systems which you folks represent and operate are excelled by none in our country. I want to maintain that record. We have achieved this degree of excellence through the cooperative efforts of our citizens, our boards of education, our school administrators, and classroom teachers. We can continue, and we can improve our system without further federal interference by showing that initiative, ingenuity, and determination of which we in Michigan are capable.

The very nature of federal aid must mean federal control. If we are to be free to operate our schools in our own way, we must look to ourselves

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and to a fair system of tax credits which will ease the burden of the local taxpayer. This will produce the greatest degree of local autonomy while maintaining financial stability and effecting a fair distribution of the tax burden. It will save us from the fatal illness of Potomac Paternalism.

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