

**The original documents are located in Box D23, folder “Michigan Association for Health, Physical Education and Recreation, Grand Rapids, MI, November 2, 1967” of the Ford Congressional Papers: Press Secretary and Speech File at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.**

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Remarks by Rep. Gerald R. Ford, delivered by telephone Nov. 2, 1967, to delegates attending the annual convention of the Michigan Association for Health, Physical Education and Recreation, a department of the Michigan Education Association, meeting at the Pantlind Hotel, Grand Rapids, Mich.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am sorry I can't be with you this evening. Face to face is best, isn't it, but I simply was unable to make the trip from Washington to Grand Rapids to be physically present for your convention. *Under the circumstances* ~~So~~ I am afraid this telephone chat with you will have to do. *(1) Vote on air - pollster*  
*(2) Betty.*

As you know, I am the Republican leader in the House of Representatives. But I would like you to forget that, because I certainly am not going to talk politics to you. Some of you may know that I played some football at South High in Grand Rapids and at the University of Michigan and coached at Yale. Now I am fighting the battle of the *expanding* ~~wandering~~ waistline.

So I have always had a keen interest in the field which engrosses all of you--health, physical education and recreation. And my interest goes far beyond trying to keep myself in shape by swimming a few laps whenever I get a chance, shooting an occasional game of golf, and skiing during the winter.

*much more*  
I am/concerned about the physical well-being of my children and all of America's children. You look at them and the world they are growing up in and it scares you. The world is in ferment, and the problems the kids face today are a lot bigger than those you and I wrestled with.

We're living in a pretty wild world--the world of the H-bomb, the hippies, LSD, popular protest, and a technology that is advancing on all fronts.

*from head to foot, inside + out*  
What must children have, to cope with that kind of a world? Well, for one thing, they need love, guidance and discipline--and in even bigger doses than *perhaps.*



you and I received. They also need a sense of accomplishment--not only in the classroom but in the gymnasium and the pool, on the play lot and on the hiking trail. They need training, not only in the physical sciences and other academic fields but in how to live--how to keep physically fit, how to throw off tensions and feelings of hostility through exercise, how to make good use of their leisure time.

We have to be concerned both with the potential dropout and with the child who will grow up to live the affluent life. We have to try to meet the needs of both.

*it forces upon our society a complete educational system*

That is quite a job--and that makes all of you Very Important People. The teacher finally is coming to be recognized in American society for the Very Important Person he or she is. This goes for all teachers in the American school system ~~from~~ kindergarten on up, ~~from~~ physics teachers to physical education instructors and recreation directors.

It has been said time and again, but it bears repeating--as the twig is bent so is the tree inclined. ~~You~~ teachers have hundreds of young lives in your hands, *on a daily basis* and you are helping to mold those lives. The teenagers now in high school will be the products of the values and culture and schooling they are exposed to in their formative years.

You can't control what happens in the home, but you certainly can do your darnedest to teach every one of the young people in your classes to live a clean life, to practice good personal hygiene, to exercise regularly and to make good use of their leisure time.

For the poor, you junior and senior high instructors and the school



administration can do much, with the backing of your school boards and trustees.

Your goal should be the lighted schoolhouse if you have not already achieved it. The school should be a community center, a place that youngsters can come to in the evening for healthful recreation, a place that gives them an opportunity to work off steam and keeps them off the streets. Don't worry about the gym floors and whether they're nice and shiny. Sure, they should be kept up, but <sup>well maintained</sup> the important thing is that the gym gets used as much as possible. The more kids there are who use it, the more successful ~~you~~ physical education and recreation directors will be--and the healthier the community.

<sup>as far as</sup> Where physical education and recreation are concerned, there should be school 12 months a year. Many communities have popular, well-attended summer recreation programs. This should be true of every community in America, with inspirational leadership that will attract even the hostile, socially maladjusted youth who particularly needs attention and a feeling of accomplishment.

*Bob Jones  
Walt Chamberlain  
Al Kaline  
Willie Mays*

I am thoroughly convinced that nearly all the young people who go wrong do so to spite their parents in particular and society in general. They need to feel loved. And they want to feel important, at least a little bit important. Maybe just being able to do five or 10 pushups would help. Anyway, they desperately need a sense of accomplishment and a feeling of belonging. You in your profession can help to give it to them.

Work with the kid who is all arms and legs or who is spindly and weak. It's really more important to help him than the natural athlete who simply needs improvement.



This probably points up a need for more physical education instructors and health and recreation specialists. Junior and senior high schools may well need to expand their staffs in this direction. I think it makes just as much sense to reduce the pupil-to-teacher ratio in gym and swimming classes as in the New Math classroom.

I think all of this is important. In fact, it is vital if we are to help make today's children competent to deal with their world.

You are experts in your field. And we are depending on you, just as we look to other experts to repair our television sets and our ~~livers~~ <sup>livers.</sup>

We have to tune in to this new world of the teenager. If their parents are sometimes inadequate in guiding them, then an even larger burden falls on you.

We need your help. We need you to help teach the creative use of leisure time to those of our young people who will be living the affluent life as adults. If our children don't learn this now, they will probably encounter more friction in their married lives as a result of it. ~~We know that~~ <sup>As</sup> spare time increases, so too does the problem of living compatibly with your spouse.

As the wife of a retiring congressman said: "I married my man for better or for worse, but not for lunch."

In sports, we should bring up our children to participate and not just watch. That means we should give more attention to the carryover sports like tennis, golf, swimming and biking instead of putting all the emphasis on football, basketball and baseball.



The desire to do things is almost universal among young people, and so we have that going for us.

We parents need your help--and you need ours.

I want you to know that your horizons are expanding as far as the Congress is concerned.

You may be acquainted with the fact that many members of the House are determined to liberalize federal aid to schools by expanding state and local options for use of the money and loosening federal controls.

This is an objective I have strongly supported. It has been carried out in a number of instances in the 90th Congress.

Let me cite a piece of legislation which has been enacted into law and directly affects you.

Under existing federal aid programs, teacher training institutes operated by colleges and universities with federal funds are available only for certain categories of educational personnel. But under the Education Professions Development Act enacted this year and due to become effective next July 1, the offerings of such institutes may be broadened to train or retrain teachers in any subject generally taught in the schools eligible for support. This would include health and physical education, as well as such subjects as English, the social and physical sciences, foreign languages and the arts.

I would add a word of caution, however, <sup>T</sup>he U.S. Office of Education has no intention of substituting institutes for physical education instructors for other teacher training institutes now authorized. This probably means that



*those in your field*  
whether institutes are offered to ~~you~~ *people* will depend upon the extent to which funds are available for the overall program in fiscal 1969.

To me, this points up a need for a clear-cut setting of national priorities.

Let's determine just what is important to America and what programs best serve the needs of <sup>the</sup> American people.

My own view is that physical fitness and an ample supply of highly qualified people in the fields of health, physical education and recreation are matters of great importance to our Nation.

That is why I cannot understand, for instance, why the Department of Health, Education and Welfare spends research dollars to study the behavior of people at cocktail parties but allocates hardly a dime to physical fitness research. I say our federal research program needs a thoroughgoing reappraisal and subsequent redirection.

The United States of America should be pre-eminent in its physical fitness program. The rate of rejections of our young men for military service is truly shocking, for instance.

For contrast, take a look at Capt. Bill Carpenter, Army's famous Lonely End. Here is an American who <sup>had</sup> ~~possesses the kind of qualities built into a man on the playing field,~~ the courage to call for fire on his own position in

Vietnam when that position was overrun by the enemy.

*Why? I think it is because certain qualities were built into him on the playing field.*  
Let's build strong men and women in America--physically fit men and women--

for it is only on that basis that our country can truly move ahead. To allow



a generally low level of physical fitness to continue in this country is to indulge in a shocking waste of human resources. This, indeed, makes for an empty society. Merely to create a President's Council on Physical Fitness and then do little or nothing to advance the cause is simply to pay lip service to an ideal.

*personally*  
I feel myself allied with Teddy Roosevelt, who not only preached but lived the strenuous life. For instance, I never walk when I can run. I agree wholeheartedly with those medical men who say, "Run for your life."

Teddy Roosevelt declared: "I wish to preach, not the doctrine of ignoble ease, but the doctrine of the strenuous life."

TR was constantly concerned that America was going soft, so much so that he warned:

"If we seek merely swollen, slothful ease and ignoble peace, if we shrink from the hard contests where men must win at the hazard of their lives and at the risk of all they hold dear, then bolder and stronger peoples will pass us by, and will win for themselves the domination of the world."

This is why I say the United States must be preeminent in the world in physical fitness. And this is why we must inspire our youth to believe that they are capable of any task if only they will gird themselves for the struggle and declare in their hearts, "I will and I can." Thank you.

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*Last line  
this page*

-4-

(For the peer, you junior and senior high instructors and the school)

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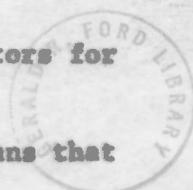
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