

*Admitted to S. A. Repub.*

STATEMENT BY JAMES A. HARRIS  
Immediate Past President  
National Education Association

Monday, September 20, 1976

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Principal  
Van Ness Elementary School  
5th & M Streets, S.E.  
Washington, D. C.

The announcement of the NEA endorsement of Mr. Carter was a very significant step as teachers venture into the federal campaign arena. The action was based on a vote that was not a random sampling of the back home membership. There are 1.8 million members and ballots were sent to the 9 thousand delegates to the NEA annual convention. At least one state association's executive board, has already voted to ignore the action. This could trigger similar activities from other state boards.

I would hope that the teachers would not sell out for campaign rhetoric. I am much more impressed with positive achievements that indicate what the candidates are really all about. Most impressive among these are President Ford's open door policy. This permitted me to be a participant in national conferences, special White House briefings, face to face talks with the President and it allowed me to take the NEA board of directors to the White House for discussions with President Ford and other top staff persons. Such a policy makes possible an exchange of ideas that would inevitably have a positive impact on our mutual concerns. No other president in our life time has been available to ordinary people as has President Ford and no other candidate has a similar demonstrated record of performance. My visits with the President and his staff did not end when I was no longer the President of the National Education Association.

The bicentennial committee of the NEA recently presented President Ford a bicentennial award. The presentation was made by a former president of the NEA, Dr. Helen Wise and myself. The presentation was made because our organization appreciated the kind of support that he was giving to the entire bicentennial effort in which we played a major role.

There are sound educational positions such as increased revenue sharing and block grants and the upgrading of existing categorical aid which Mr. Ford supports. These place the control of educational spending on the local level where it belongs. If Congress would move on these they would have a far greater positive impact on education than would a thousand campaign promises.

Mr. Carter stated that if he were president, he would send his daughter to a District of Columbia School. I am not sure as to the point of that remark. If it were to happen, this could cause thousands of dollars to be spent on her school that would be taken from schools where children are with far greater needs. This is more of what I call the retarded Robin Hood syndrome where the poor are denied to benefit the wealthy.

Mr. Carter should not find it necessary to announce where his daughter might attend school if he were elected. Rather, he should discuss plans to make education what it should be everywhere. So that no matter where his daughter went to school, she and all other children would be receiving the quality education they so deserve. I would like to hear specifics about what he did for education while Governor of Georgia

because I have heard very little. And, I would welcome some comments from some of those million plus teachers who have not had an opportunity to express themselves on this matter.

Mr. Carter indicated on Saturday that if elected, he would place a far greater portion of the tax burden on the category of income that covers the majority of the teachers. In my opinion, it is significant that he stated this one day after he received the endorsement of NEA. This appears to be one more example of campaign rhetoric designed for a special audience.

I would hope that the accomplishments of all candidates became paramount as we form our opinions of the candidates and that promises are viewed for no more than they really are.