

Tricentennial Speech, 2076: Two Versions

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Alternative Scenario One

Fellow citizens, how can we best sum up developments in education during the three centuries since 1776? In the first century we established the American democratic principle of universal free public education. In the second century we sought equal educational opportunity for all, and we began to adapt our schools to meet human needs, illuminate social realities, and clarify values in a pluralistic society. In the third century, 1976-2076, education came of age in the United States as we learned to educate all the people through life experiences.

Our predecessors who summoned the People's Congresses initiated in 2000 were scoffed at as Utopians because of their ideas and beliefs, even as were the men who wrote the Declaration of Independence. But the proposals of the assemblages of thinkers in the Twenty-One Fields and the follow-up discussions by the world's people in the many meetings we call the Considerations may well have saved humankind. Particularly crucial were the proposals of three People's Congresses, those on Environment, Energy, and Population, and the subsequent Considerations. Yes, the ratification of the work of the Peoples Congresses and Considerations proceeded slowly: The first ratification by a sovereign government was by New Zealand in 2038, and the final ratification by all nations of the world came in 2069. Yes, the recommendations of the People's Congresses had to be continually updated. But the fundamental principles established in the early twenty-first century People's Congresses and modified in the Considerations have endured, even as have the principles of our U.S. Constitution established at the beginning of the nation. The die was cast for the Planet Earth, our new world state.

Before the year 2000, American education was divided on many issues. The People's Congress on Education in the first decade of the twenty-first century was one of the most quarrelsome and even rancorous of the Congresses in the Twenty-One Fields.

What turned the tide in education? Not the early agreements in the People's Congress on Education; those agreements were highly general and, indeed, quite tentative. What accounts for our achievement of lifelong continuous education through life itself is the experience people had in the subsequent Considerations. For the first time in history, the people had the opportunity to study, discuss, and act on problems vital to their lives. Leadership was expert and humane; every medium of communication was utilized; every social institution was employed in the extensive Considerations.

Children and youth in elementary and secondary schools were also deeply engaged in the Considerations of the Twenty-One Fields. During the decades of the Considerations, teachers learned that the skills needed for modern life could best be taught through study and action on life's problems, that academic disciplines could be drawn on in study of the interdisciplinary Twenty-One Fields, that both the school and the community must educate. Basically it was the experience of the Considerations which reformed the schools.

The Tricentennial challenge before us as educators of the Planet Earth in 2076 is to achieve equal educational opportunity for all infants, children,. youth, and adults throughout the world, even as we achieved equal educational opportunity in the U.S.A. during the past century.

Alternative Scenario Two

Fellow citizens, how can we best sum up developments in education during the three centuries since 1776? Beguiled by the Jeffersonian ideal, we attempted at first to institute universal free public education. We ignored Hamilton's wisdom: "The- people are turbulent and changing; they seldom judge or determine right." During the second century we managed to maintain a program of academic education despite progressive education proposals. In the last century, 1976-2076, we recognized that education should be a privilege of the meritocracy alone, for the masses require only training. The movement away from the sentimentalism of democratic education dates from 1984 when we made education after the age of 12 voluntary. The culmination came in 2067 when the social class structure was replaced by our present hereditary caste system.

Confronted by worldwide population expansion, the dwindling of world energy supplies, the threats of the Communists, and the demands of the Third World, our leaders established Fort America. Through our technological ingenuity and our military-industrial complex, we became independent of the rest of the world before the mid-twenty-first century. Education made a valiant contribution to Fort America. We trained the masses to carry out their simple tasks, closely defined through our behavioral objectives and accompanied by strict accountability. We educated the meritorious and scheduled them for the tasks demanded by national needs.

Without our highly specialized education, we would never have invented the perfect nuclear bomb, which effectively destroyed The Enemy without fallout within the continental United States. Our surprise attack on The Enemy resulted in the destruction of all industrialized areas in Europe, South America, Asia, and Africa. Years of secret planning preceded that historic Fourth of July weekend in 2055 when we totally destroyed The Enemy.

Since the successful War Against Mankind, we have made strides in our educational sorting and categorization. A century ago our sorting instruments, such as intelligence tests, were pitifully crude. But by strengthening and tightening social class categories, we have made our sorting system more effective. Then our value-free researchers and scientists developed genetic breeding processes and subservience drugs. Our magnificent caste system was achieved.

Now that we are importing slaves from the rural areas of the world in which the survivors among The Enemy live, we face a new challenge to our educational ingenuity. Can we institute programs which will train them to labor in the building of monuments to the memory of our leaders? Can we make sure that, no subversive thoughts of revolution or democracy ever enter their dim minds? This is the great challenge to American education in this Tricentennial Year.

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