

Remarks

Lyndon B. Johnson
President of the United States

When Secretary Gardner told me that he was planning to visit with you, I asked him if I could come along.

I have a very brief message to bring: No group anywhere in this Nation is charged with a problem more urgent than yours.

You are at work on the bedrock foundations of all we ever hope to build in America.

You work along a lonely frontier—as exposed and, in some ways, as hazardous as the soldiers' outpost in Vietnam. On both battlefronts the future of free men will get its toughest testing.

To reach the disadvantaged child's mind—to tear away the awful shrouds that dim the light of learning—to break barriers built by poverty and fear and racial injustice—this is the most exciting task of our times.

We have not asked you to come to Washington because the Federal Government has the *answers*.

But we have the *questions* and we like to believe that is the beginning of wisdom.

Our Federal program is based on a simple proposition: that it costs *more* not *less* to educate a disadvantaged child. It takes the *best* not the *mediocre* teachers. It calls for the three I's of education—inspiration and innovation and ideas—if we are going to get anywhere with the three R's.

That is why we made Title I the granddaddy of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act—over *five* times larger than all the other titles combined.

That is why we have fought so hard to found and to fund the Teacher Corps.

I believe the school bill now on the books is the most creative legislation passed by Congress since I came to Washington.

But it will be a sterile piece of paper unless you breathe life into the programs that flow from it.

Since I became President, we have increased the total funds for education and training from just under \$5 billion to over \$10 billion.

But these billions will be wasted unless you have the vigor and the vision to spend them wisely.

That is why we have invited you to Washington.

We hope you will have an opportunity to review your plans, exchange your ideas, describe your problems—and then go back home and work double time on your programs.

I would like to add one word of caution: Some enthusiasts argue that if a \$10 billion education program is good this year, \$20 billion would be better.

Your President cannot leap to easy conclusions like that.

He must ask certain questions.

He must ask his advisers whether a sudden, large increase of funds makes good sense in educational terms. Their answer is that it definitely does not. On the contrary, they argue that it could lead to waste and mismanagement which would bring discredit to the program.

Your President must ask his advisers what would be the effect of a large deficit in the Federal budget. They reply that it could trigger inflationary pressures and undermine all that you are attempting to accomplish.

And your President must ask his advisers whether he could justify such an increase by cutting back on other programs—for health, for Head Start, for making our cities a decent place to live. But our schools do not operate in a vacuum. And I don't believe educators want us to cripple these other programs that are vital to their communities.

Your President must get answers to all these questions when he makes a judgment. But of one thing you can be sure: So long as I hold this office, education will continue to be the "first work of our time." And educators will occupy a place of honor at the banquet table.

When you go back home, I hope you will pass the word to all your associates. Your President cares deeply about what you are doing. He has a lot of money and a lot of hope riding on you.