

Communication Unlocks Educational Progress

Effective communications between educators and the power holders or decision makers in society is the key to progress in public education in this country, a former governor and specialist in state planning maintains.

"Political action is intrinsically involved in public education and effective political action starts with effective communications," says Jack M. Campbell, former governor of New Mexico.

Campbell is chairman of the Institute on State Programming for the 70's, established recently at UNC. The Institute is surveying the status and scope of planning and policy making in all 50 states and is assisting state officials in strengthening state governments to ensure continuance of a workable partnership with the federal government.

The ex-governor is one of the featured speakers and discussion leaders here this week at the National School Boards Association's executive secretaries' workshop.

He is advising the educators on methods of obtaining effective communications with state government.

"Education is the child of politics and survives only by political action. Educators must learn to speak the politician's language, for the politician feels

many pressures and his decisions will be based as much on who best communicates their needs as on absolute need and meritorious goals," he explains.

Pertinent dialogue between educators and key members of the political process such as politicians, lobbyists, state agency personnel and the general public is essential to educational progress, he insists.

"Without a candid personal exchange of views between state agency personnel and lay leaders," he warns, "all the lofty planning, research and programs our education experts can devise will have little effect on desired disposition of public finances and on faith in our public school system."

In addition to public officials, educators also must communicate with local unorganized power-holders, private organizations or special interest groups, and a new voting public.

"Local social power and decision making often resides in a few, seldom-publicized leaders, largely drawn from the industrial, commercial and financial interests of the area," Campbell observes.

"It's up to the educational leadership to know who these people are and how to reach them to discuss long-range plans and proposed changes and their

economic meaning for the community and the state."

He advises educators not to underestimate the political power and usefulness of special interest groups or lobby associations, especially with regard to taxation legislation.

"When conflict occurs between educational interest and other special interests, it's often up to the executive public official to act as the broker to work out a compromise or to tip the political scales in favor of one side or the other," he says.

In appealing to the general public, educators must deal with a new breed of "young, affluent, educated and middle class" voters.

"This new crowd will not be apathetic," Campbell reports. "Recent political movements and the civil rights revolution

have demonstrated that these young people are an outspoken contrast to the silent generation of the 1950's."

By the end of this decade, he adds, the center of political power will be found in a generation that knows of the Great Depression and World War II only out of books and which will be attracted to non-economic interests such as the quality of education.

"This new power group—products of our educational and financial affluence—is going to determine the character of American politics and the direction of education in the next generation," Campbell says.

"Educators must advance beyond generalities of 'education is a good thing' to specifics of what better schools mean in

economic and humanistic terms to the state and community and to the individual citizen who is paying the bills."

Campbell thinks governors, legislators, professional educators and lay citizens should be brought together to exchange views and to make education recommendations on a national scale to be applied locally in accordance with specific needs of each state.

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scratch." He asked, "What's the point of taking \$50,000 to hold a conference on pot?" Why don't they use that money to get the pot users out of jail? Why doesn't the NSA say 'get out of Vietnam,? Why aren't there any blacks around here? Look at the stress conference where the T-groups (training groups) sit around and empathize with each other. These things are all irrelevant. You all come out of the universities, totalitarian institutions. You have to devise a means where students and teachers can meet and learn."

He said he doubted that a change in NSA funding would change those policies.

Then a NSA member asked Ridgeway if he was aware of the experimental college.

"There's a lot of talk about revolution in this organization," he replied, "but the fact is the structure's the same."

"Do you not consider the experimental college relevant?" the student asked, and added "Students in the experimental college are merely groovin' in something they really like. I

don't think students groovin' with their professors cause a kind of change."

A proponent of the experimental college explained the relevance of it by saying that it is a radicalizing experience for the students and that it really frightens the people in power—it challenges the institution.

Then UNC delegate and student body vice president Jed Dietz rebutted Ridgeway's stand.

"You've come here and told us that because you have a personal feeling about being uncomfortable in institutions, everyone else must be. You've implied that we must disband because you feel uncomfortable about it."

NSA and SDS agreed at the end of the session that "the tragedy is the way we've taken things that divide up and used them as a club, and things that unite us we use to be holier-than-thou."

The meeting disbanded with both groups resolving to meet again without organizational hangups.

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