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UA3/3 Society of Discontent

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I AM HONORED TO SPEAK TO YOU TONIGHT.
I AM HONORED TO BE HERE TONIGHT WITH SO MANY OLD FRIENDS.

NO PREACHER

A TEACHER IN MY OFFICE RECENTLY SAID, "I AM SO DISCOURAGED WITH MY WORK; THE THRILL OF ACHIEVEMENT IS PRACTICALLY GONE."

A PRINCIPAL SAID, "IN REGARD TO PLANNING, I'M JUST A GLORIFIED MANAGER. I NOW TAKE IT A DAY AT THE TIME. IF THINGS GET BETTER, I HOPE TO TAKE IT A WEEK AT THE TIME."

A SUPERINTENDENT WITH A FINE REPUTATION TELLS ME, "I AM GOING FOR EARLY RETIREMENT."

THESE COMMENTS WERE NOT MADE FACETIOUSLY THEY WERE MADE, FRIEND TO FRIEND, IN SERIOUSNESS AND ARE INDICATIVE, I THINK, OF THE FRUSTRATIONS WHICH BESET OUR PROFESSION TODAY.
WHY?

THE MOOD OF THE PUBLIC IN GENERAL--A DISILLUSIONMENT GENERATED BY SUCH INFLUENCES AS, TO NAME THREE--

1. THE DEVASTATING VIETNAM WAR WITH ALL OF ITS UNBELIEVABLE RAMIFICATIONS

2. THE TRAUMATIC UNFOLDING OF WATERGATE

3. STAGGERING COURT DECISIONS UPSETTING SO MANY OF THE OLD GUIDELINES FOR LIVING AND DOING AND ALL OF WHICH HAVE HELPED TO BRING ABOUT AN ERA OF PERMISSIVENESS UNEQUALED IN HISTORY

MIX WITH THESE THE CONTINUALLY EMERGING PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH, TO NAME A DOZEN OF SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE TO EDUCATORS,

1. DESEGREGATION THROUGH BUSSING

2. COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

3. EMPHASIS ON CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS, OR INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS
4. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACT WITH ATTENDANT REGULATIONS

5. E.R.A. (TITLE IX); THE WOMAN'S RIGHTS MOVEMENT (ATHLETICS)

6. THE GROWTH AND POWER OF H.E.W., HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE

7. INFLATION, INEXCUSABLY BAD AND GETTING WORSE

8. AN OVERWHELMING PEOPLE APPRAISAL THAT CONGRESS IS INEPT AND OUT OF DATE

9. LACK OF FORCEFUL LEADERSHIP IN THE TOP ECHELONS OF GOVERNMENT

10. A NATIONAL DISENCHANTMENT WITH WHAT CAN ONLY BE DESCRIBED AS "POLITICS, AS USUAL"
    AND

11. INCREASING PARENTAL DISILLUSIONMENT

12. A NATIONAL MALADY OF NERVOUS TENSION FED BY FRUSTRATION AND DISILLUSIONMENT OVER THE WHOLE KIT AND CABOODLE

THERE ARE MORE; BUT I THINK THAT FROM THE
INFLUENCES JUST MENTIONED, IT IS EASY TO UNDERSTAND WHY WE HAVE A SOCIETY OF DISCONTENT.

U. S. NEWS AND WORLD REPORT--MOOD OF AMERICA

STIR ALL OF THIS UP LIKE A CAKE BATTER; ADD TO IT TODAY'S NEW AND THEATRICAL SYSTEM OF NEWS REPORTING, ADVOCACY JOURNALISM AND INTERPRETIVE JOURNALISM, OUR ADDICTION TO MINISCULE TELEVISION NEWS REPORTS FIRED INCESSANTLY LIKE A MACHINE GUN WITH ONE OF THE MAIN OBJECTIVES OSTENSIBLY BEING TO PUT ON A GOOD SHOW--I WON'T MENTION THE COMMERCIALS--AND AS PEANUTS SAID WHEN HIS BASEBALL TEAM WAS BEHIND 47 TO 0, "MAN, WE'VE GOT PROBLEMS."

HOW DOES THE RESULTING SLOUGH OF DESPOND AFFECT US IN WORKING WITH OUR TRADITIONAL PROBLEMS? ONE ANSWER IS THROUGH THE CREATION OF A NEW AND OVERRIDING PROBLEM--THAT OF PROFESSIONAL DISCOURAGEMENT.
IN A SOCIETY OF DISCONTENT--CREDIT, RECOGNITION, APPRECIATION DO NOT COME IN ABUNDANCE.

DISCOURAGEMENT CAN COME QUICKLY, I THINK, WHEN THERE IS A PAUCITY OF CREDIT GIVEN FOR EXTRA EFFORT.

THIS, OF COURSE, CAN LEAD TO AN ATTITUDE OF "SO WHAT," "WHO CARES," "I GIVE UP."

A SUPERINTENDENTS JOB BECOMES MORE DIFFICULT.

A PRINCIPAL'S JOB BECOMES MORE DIFFICULT.

OTHER ADMINISTRATORS' JOBS BECOME MORE DIFFICULT.

THE TEACHER'S JOB BECOMES MORE DIFFICULT.

A UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT'S JOB BECOMES MORE DIFFICULT

(PRESIDENT DOWNING; FINE JOB)

WHAT'S THE ANSWER?

I WISH I KNEW.

I DON'T.

ANSWERS ARE NOT SO EASY AS THEY ONCE WERE.

(DAMN TOAST)
BUT I DO HAVE A FEW SUGGESTIONS--NO, THEY ARE NOT SUGGESTIONS--THEY ARE JUST THOUGHTS.

1. REMEMBER THAT YOUR FRIENDS BELIEVE IN YOU. KEEP THEIR TRUST.

   STUDENT FRIENDS IN THE CLASSROOM
   FRIENDS IN YOUR ORGANIZATION
   FRIENDS IN YOUR COMMUNITY

   "SINCE IT HAS BEEN MY LOT TO FIND AT EVERY PARTING OF THE ROAD,
   THE HELPING HAND OF COMRADE KIND TO HELP ME WITH MY LOAD;
   AND SINCE I HAVE NO GOLD TO GIVE AND LOVE ALONE MUST MAKE AMENDS,
   MY HUMBLE PRAYER IS, WHILE I LIVE,
   'GOD MAKE ME WORTHY OF MY FRIENDS.'"]

2. WORK AT THE PROBLEM (BOB COCHRAN) (NO PROBLEMS, NO NEED)
   TEACHERS, ADMINISTRATORS,
   HIGHER EDUCATION

3. LET US NOT FORGET WHAT THE WORD "DEDICATION" MEANS.
LET US ASPIRE TO IT; SEEK TO ACHIEVE IT. THE WHOLE LIFE OF THE CHILD WILL BE AFFECTED BY IT.

SACRIFICE AND SERVICE

4. TODAY'S CRISIS, NO MATTER WHAT IT MAY BE, CAN QUICKLY BECOME ONLY A MEMORY.

THE POET TILTON WROTE:

ONCE IN PERSIA REIGNED A KING,
WHO UPON HIS SIGNET RING GRAVED A MAXIM TRUE AND WISE,
WHICH, IF HELD BEFORE THE EYES,
GAVE HIM COUNSEL AT A GLANCE
FIT EVERY CHANGE AND CHANCE;
SOLEMN WORDS, AND THESE ARE THEY "EVEN THIS SHALL PASS AWAY."

5. LET US KEEP THE GOOD AND THE BAD IN PERSPECTIVE ABOUT OUR WORK AND OUR PROBLEMS.
MAY I, AT THIS POINT, READ TWO SHORT EDITORIALS WHICH I THINK HAVE SIGNIFICANCE FOR US AS EDUCATORS:

THE FIRST:

"WHEN WE WERE BOYS, BOYS HAD TO DO A LITTLE WORK IN SCHOOL. THEY WERE NOT COAXED; THEY WERE HAMMERED. SPELLING, WRITING, AND ARITHMETIC WERE NOT ELECTIVES; AND YOU HAD TO LEARN.

"IN THESE MORE FORTUNATE TIMES, ELEMENTARY EDUCATION HAS BECOME IN MANY PLACES A SORT OF VALDEVILLE SHOW. THE CHILD MUST BE KEPT AMUSED AND LEARNS WHAT HE PLEASERS. MANY SAGE TEACHERS SCORN THE OLD-FASHIONED RUDIMENTS, AND IT SEEMS TO BE REGARDED AS BETWEEN MISFORTUNE AND A CRIME FOR A CHILD TO READ.
"IT IS A GLOOMY MOMENT IN HISTORY. NOT IN THE LIFETIME OF ANY MAN WHO READS THIS PAPER HAS THERE BEEN SO MUCH GRAVE AND DEEP APPREHENSION; NEVER HAS THE FUTURE SEEMED SO DARK AND INCALCULABLE.

"IN FRANCE, THE POLITICAL CAULDON SEETHES AND BUBBLES WITH UNCERTAINTY.

"ENGLAND THE THE ENGLISH EMPIRE ARE BEING SORELY TRIED AND EXHAUSTED IN A SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC STRUGGLE, WITH TURMOIL AT HOME AND UPRISING OF HER TEEMING MILLIONS IN HER FARFLUNG INDIAN EMPIRE.

"THE UNITED STATES IS BESET WITH RACIAL, INDUSTRIAL, AND COMMERCIAL CHAOS-- DRIFTING WE KNOW NOT WHERE.

"RUSSIA HANGS LIKE A STORM CLOUD ON THE HORIZON OF EUROPE--DARK AND SILENT."
IT IS A SOLEMN MOMENT, AND NO ONE CAN FEEL
INDIFFERENCE, WHICH HAPPILY NO MAN
PRETENDS TO FEEL IN THE ISSUE OF EVENTS.

"OF OUR OWN TROUBLE, NO MAN CAN SEE
THE END."

NOW, THE FIRST OF THESE TWO
EDITORIALS IS TAKEN FROM THE NEW YORK SUN AND
APPEARED IN 1902.

THE LATTER APPEARED IN HARPER'S
MAGAZINE 128 YEARS AGO IN 1847.

IT'S LIKE WILL ROGERS SAID, "THINGS
AIN'T WHAT THEY USED TO BE AND PROBABLY NEVER
WUZ."

6. REMEMBER, WHEN YOU HAVE DONE THE
BEST THAT YOU CAN DO, YOU CAN DO NO MORE.

MAIN POINT

(WITHIN YOUR OWN HEART)
MAY I CLOSE ON A COUPLE OF PERSONAL NOTES.

1. A FEW YEARS AGO 25 COUNTRIES--------

ASCU

2. PEARLS OF WISDOM
Mr. Resch, Dr. Power, President Downing, Mr. Holian,
Distinguished Guests, Fellow Educators:

If I'm blushing a little, I hope that you will understand that I feel that I have just received one of the finest introductions I've ever had in my life. I remember so well when this organization was created. I was present at the first dinner. It has been my pleasure to speak to this group several times since its inception, and I can't help but call to mind a story.

It has to do with this very small rural church where the members couldn't afford a preacher. They were only 36 miles from the seminary, and each week the seminary officials would be asked to send somebody down to preach. Each Sunday a graduate student would arrive, would conduct the services, and preach the sermon. Then he would go back, and that would be the end of that. Then they would call again for someone to come down. When asked if they had any preferences, they never expressed any—"Just send somebody" was the reply. Finally a young fellow was assigned the task. After having prepared himself all week long, he went down to the rural church and preached his very best. Lo and behold for the first time in history, when the next week's call was made, they asked for him to return. He went back the second time; and when they asked for him to return the third time,
he could hardly stand it. He felt so proud that the buttons were about to burst from his shirt; by the time of the fourth visit his hat suddenly was too small. After his last sermon he was talking to one of the elders and couldn't resist saying to him, "You know this is the fourth time I have been invited down here to preach, and as far as I know nobody else was ever invited back the second time. Would you tell me how it happened that you have invited me to come back like this?" The old man looked at him for a few seconds and he said, "Well, son, I'll tell you the way it is. You see the people down here don't rightly want no preacher, and you're the nearest no preacher that we've ever had."

I am greatly honored to speak to you tonight. I'm honored to be here with so many old friends.

A teacher visiting in my office recently said, "I'm so discouraged with my work; the thrill of achievement is gone." A principal said to me, "In regard to planning I'm just a glorified manager. I now take it a day at a time. If things get better, maybe I can take it a week at a time"; and I recently heard a good friend, a very prominent superintendent, say, "I'm going for early retirement." These comments were not made facetiously. They were made friend to friend in seriousness and are indicative, I think, of a certain set of frustrations which beset our profession today.
Why? I want to partially answer that question by discussing with you the mood of the public in general. I would have to start by referring to it as a disillusionment generated by such influences as, to name three of them, the devastating Vietnam War with its almost unbelievable ramifications; the traumatic unfolding of the whole Watergate story; and a succession of staggering court decisions upsetting many of the old guidelines for living and doing, and helping to produce in this country an era of permissiveness previously unequaled in our history. Mix these with the continually emerging problems of special significance to educators. To name a dozen:

1. Desegregation through busing. I don't know how I happened to place that one first, but anyone who has followed the Louisville story would certainly understand.

2. Collective bargaining

3. Emphasis on constitutional rights, or individual rights

4. Environmental Protective Act with its attendant regulations

5. The Equal Rights Amendment—Title IX of the Woman's Rights Movement, especially as it applies in the field of athletics


7. Inflation, inexcusably bad, and getting worse
8. An overwhelming people appraisal that Congress is inept and out of date

9. Lack of forceful leadership in the top echelons of our Government

10. A national disenchantment with what can only be described as "politics as usual." From these ten emerge the last two.

11. Increasing parental disillusionment

12. A national malady of nervous tension fed by frustrations and disillusionment over the whole kit and caboodle

There are more, but I think that from the influences which I have mentioned it is easy to understand why we at this time can say that we live—you and I a part of it—in a Society of Discontent.

Stir all of this up like a cake batter. Add to it today’s new and theatrical system of news reporting—advocacy journalism and interpretive journalism; our addiction to miniscule television news reports fired incessantly like a machine gun with one of the main objectives ostensibly that of putting on a good show—I won’t mention the commercials; and as Peanuts said when his baseball team was behind 47 to 0, "Man, we've got problems."

How does the resulting slough of despond affect us in working with our traditional problems? One answer, I think, is through the creation of a new and overriding problem,
that of professional discouragement. Now, if anyone of you is fortunate enough to have missed this in its entirety, I congratulate you. I think the average educator working in the State of Kentucky today is little by little being overwhelmed by the influence of the discontent which pervades this country and our commonwealth, attributable in the main to some of the influences which I have identified, and to others. This leads me to believe—and I'm not one to remember how it was in the good old days necessarily—that the job of the administrator in the public schools of Kentucky today, as well as the job of the classroom teacher, is set in an era which is the most difficult or at least one of the most difficult periods in the entire history of our commonwealth.

In a society of discontent credit, recognition, and appreciation do not come in abundance. On the other hand we have a society—and again not they, but we—a society hypercritical to the point of nit-picking. You can find it written across the sky today. This, of course, could lead anyone of us to an attitude of "so what," "who cares," or, "I give up."

A superintendent's job, I believe, becomes more difficult. A principal's job, I believe, becomes more difficult. Other administrators' jobs, I believe, become more difficult. I believe that the leaders of our churches today have more difficult jobs than in the past, and I'm positive that the school teacher in the classroom has a more difficult job today.
If I might digress, yes, a university president has a more difficult job today.

I want to tell you something. Henry Resch said that I have been with Western 47 years, and I have. I think I have seasoned perspective about the presidency of this institution, and I think that Dero Downing is doing one of the finest jobs of any college president that I know of anywhere. Stand up, Dero, stand up that we might recognize you. (applause)

What's the answer? What's the answer to the fact that we as educators are working in this malaise? I wish I knew. I don't. Answers also are not as easy to come by as they used to be.

Which reminds me, this mother said to her husband, "I tell you something has to be done about our boys. Their language is just atrocious, and you have to stop it."

He said, "All right. The time has come for me to take drastic action." So, the next morning they gathered at breakfast and after returning thanks, he turned to the seven-year old and he said, "What do you want to start with, son?" The son replied, "I believe I'll have some of that damn toast." When he said that, his father let him have it. He hit him across the face with his open hand so hard that he practically spun his head around on his shoulders, and he really shook up everybody at the table. He then turned to the little five-year old boy and he said, "What do you want to start with?" The son responded, "I'm not
quite sure; but I'll tell you one thing, I don't want any of that damn toast."

I don't have any answers, but I do have a few suggestions—no, they are not really suggestions—they are just thoughts.

1. Remember, you and I, that our friends believe in us and that we are obligated to keep their trust. A teacher has little friends sitting in her class. A principal, or a superintendent, has friends about him in his organization, and he doesn't always realize the depth of the friendship involved. We have the friends in the community in which we live who have faith in us, and who will remain constant no matter how the winds blow.

The poet said:

"Since it has been my lot to find at every parting of the road,
The helping hand of comrade kind to help me with my load;
And since I have no gold to give and love alone must make amends,
My humble prayer is, that while I live, 'God make me worthy
of my friends.' "

2. I think we have to work harder at the problems. As many of you know, I had a great young man working with me for many years who died prematurely—Bob Cochran—a wonderful young person. Once in a committee meeting when the discussion had reached the point where it appeared that the challenge could not be resolved because of the innumerable problems which had emerged, Bob Cochran said to that group, "We won't leave here
till we resolve this. We are all paid salaries to do our jobs. If we don’t have any problems, they don’t need us in the first place.” I think we ought to remember that type of attitude.

I think that wherever there is a serious problem affecting us collectively, we ought to face up to it, attack it, solve it, and go on from there. I mention one. The sad increasing of the chasm between the classroom teacher in our nation today, on the one hand, and the administrator of the school system on the other—fed by a surreptitious propagandizing attitude on the part of some to divide both with higher education. Any educator, any teacher, any principal, any superintendent worth his salt has to know enough history to know that the first primary principle of warfare is to divide and conquer. Let us not allow that problem to go unattended. I think that TDEA could set the pattern, could accept the challenge to become a real model and example in this respect.

3. Let us not forget what the word dedication really means. Let us aspire to it, let us seek to achieve it. The entire life of a child can be affected by how just one person interprets the word dedication and the word sacrifice. Service in the teaching profession must never go out of style.

4. Today’s crisis, no matter what it may be, can quickly become only a memory. I think it’s encouraging to remember that. Quoting the poet Tilton, let me read:
Once in Persia reigned a King,
Who upon his signet ring
Graved a maxim true and wise,
Which, if held before the eyes,
Gave him counsel at a glance
Fit every change and every chance;
Solemn words, and these are they:
"Even this shall pass away."

5. Let us keep the good and the bad in perspective relative to our work
and to our problems.

May I at this point read to you two short editorials which I think have significance
for us as educators and may have some significance in the remarks which I am making:

The first:
"When we were boys, boys had to do a little work in school. They were not coaxed; they were not hammered. Spelling, writing, and arithmetic were not electives; and you had to learn.

"In these more fortunate time, elementary education has become in many
places a sort of valdeville show. The child must be kept amused and learns what
he pleases. Many sage teachers scorn the old-fashioned rudiments, and it seems
to me to be regarded as between misfortune and a crime for a child to learn to
read."
"It is a gloomy moment in history. Not in the lifetime of any man who reads the paper has there been so much grave and deep apprehension; never has the future seemed so dark and incalculable.

"In France, the political cauldron seethes and bubbles with uncertainty.

"England and the English empire are being sorely tried and exhausted in a social and economic struggle, with turmoil at home and uprising throughout her farflung empire.

"The United States is beset with racial, industrial, and commercial chaos—drifting we know not where.

"Russia hangs like a storm cloud on the horizon—dark and silent. It is a solemn moment, and no one can feel indifference, which happily no man pretends to feel in the issue of events.

"Of our own trouble, no man can see the end."

Now the first of these two editorials is taken from the New York Sun and appeared in 1902. The latter appeared in Harper's Magazine 128 years ago in 1847. It's like Will Rogers said, "Things ain't what they used to be and probably never wuz."

6. When you have done the very best that you can do, you can do no more.

I place special emphasis on this thought.

I think that the whole education profession has sort of lived and thrived, received soul food so to speak, got strength for the spirit, from being able to have individuals and
communities and organizations appreciate the extra effort that went with our great profession. I think that many a great man and many a great woman has become great because somewhere along the line he was inspired by somebody who patted him or her on the shoulder, showing appreciation for a job well done. There may not be too much of that around in the future, especially if the mood of America continues.

Yesterday there came to my desk the current issue of the United States News and World Report. Its feature emphasis is quite a coincidence. I didn’t structure these remarks from its lead article, but the similarity is very interesting. "Mood of America—Where Do We Turn?" Then, inside, the captions read: "Relentless inflation creating a new way of life"; "Politics and politicians score low marks from most Americans"; "National leadership seen as mired in stalemate"; "Is the system working? No"; "An absolute outrage"; "Our way of life is changing"; "The prospects are pretty grim"; "Wanted Leadership"; and on and on. Mood of America. Where do we turn, Society of Discontent? I think that we can safely assume that a generosity of compliments, of credit, of approbation, or whatever we call it—when ever we have worked over and beyond the call of duty, when we have given it everything we have—will continue in short supply; and this might indicate that the world doesn’t even seem to care. So then what? I say
again that when you have done the very best that you can do, you can do no more. Do your
very best regardless of any circumstances, for in your own heart you will know. And,
after all, perhaps this is the truly great reward of our profession.