

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Mr. Chairman, members of the Platform Committee:

I'm Jo Ann Cullen. I'm 19 years old, and as a member of The National Advisory Council on Vocational Education, I'm the youngest person appointed by President Nixon to any advisory post in the government.

This morning I would like to speak with you a moment about a subject very important to millions of young men and women in America: vocational education.

In recent years, more and more young people have gone to college--and this is good--but at the same fewer have gained any real experience with the world of work. Many young people have gone jobless for lack of skills and many jobs have gone unfilled for lack of skilled workers. A recent Department of Labor survey shows that this trend of skill-anemia, if you will, is not just going to continue but is going to grow worse--by 1980 four out of five jobs will not require a college education, but will require some kind of special training or skills.

It is this prospect which makes a new approach to vocational education fostered by President Nixon, called career education, so important. It is as relevant to the student as it is to the real world. And it is as important to our Nation as it is to the student--because as sure as I am that skill built America I am equally sure that only through skill and hard work will America continue to prosper and grow.

This plan blends vocational, general, and college-preparatory education into a new curriculum. All students would be equipped upon leaving school to choose between entering the job market with a salable skill and continuing their education at a higher level. In elementary school pupils would be made aware of the world of work, in junior high school students would experience more intensive study on selected areas within fifteen occupation areas; in senior high school, students would focus on at least one of those areas, developing skills to qualify for a job. At the same time, students would acquire the academic skills needed for further education. Students would not be limited to a particular field, but would have the opportunity to re-enter the system to gain new skills or pursue a completely different career direction. This flexibility would be equally available to the adult, long separated from the education system, who could also enter the system to improve his skills or to seek a new field.

While the fundamental delivery mechanism for Career Education would be a revised curriculum in the school system, the more universal approach of Career Education includes the incorporation of more far-reaching devices. For instance, business and industry would be asked to cooperate in developing the work as a 'school,' simultaneously providing skill development with academic exposure. The support and incentives offered to the vocational youth organizations by business and government is a crucial factor in this regard. Their spectacular growth over the past decades indicated the interest and worth to young people in fostering 'leadership development, social intelligence, civic consciousness and vocational understanding.' At the same time,

television and other technological methods would deliver Career Education to the home to those who cannot "go" to school.

During 1971, 53 experimental projects incorporated parts of this plan. And full-scale career education concept is being tested this year in six public school districts. Already the educational community, taxpayers, business, industry and students themselves are becoming involved to help develop Career Education systems that will work. This would not be an inflexible program dictated by Washington, but an imaginative system, tailored to local needs by those who must administer it, those who must teach it, those who must pay for it, and most importantly, those who would benefit it.