Dedication of new Reidville school

Strom Thurmond

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ADDRESS BY J. STROM THURMOND, GOVERNOR OF SOUTH CAROLINA, AT DEDICATION OF NEW REIDVILLE SCHOOL, FRIDAY, APRIL 29, 1949, 4:00 P.M.

Every citizen of South Carolina who is interested in the welfare of his State should be proud of the accomplishment represented by the beautiful new school building we are privileged to dedicate here today. With the opening of this building, we have passed another milestone in the long uphill road toward improving the educational standards and opportunities of our people. In travelling that road, we cannot fail to recognize the primary importance of the school building itself, as a tool for the training of our young people, and as an influence in the community.

The citizens of Reidville and of Spartanburg county deserve congratulations for their achievement in the construction of this building. It is of the most modern design, perhaps the most modern in South Carolina today. No one may doubt that it will serve the educational needs of the community in an efficient, healthful, safe, and attractive manner. The building which it replaces had a long and honored history and a splendid record for the high quality of its graduates. But it had served its time, and
had become inadequate to meet the needs of a progressive, growing community.

One of the secrets of America's greatness has been the fact that our nation's leaders have recognized the importance of a sound educational program in the making of a democracy. Thomas Jefferson said: "Above all things, I hope the education of the common people will be attended to--convinced that on this good sense we may rely with most security for the preservation of a due sense of liberty."

We have been able to preserve the Republic of which Jefferson dreamed, because we have followed his counsel by seeking to train and enlighten our citizens. We have made education a necessity for all, rather than a privilege of the few.

A modern school building is costly -- that is true. But the investment represented in this building is the most sensible and the most practical investment possible. A dollar invested in education yields the highest returns possible, for a dollar invested in the head of a child is worth $1,000 in his pocket. The value of stocks and bonds may depreciate, and fortunes may be lost, but the values gained by education remain forever.
On the other hand, it cannot be denied that education has a direct bearing on personal success in a financial way. Among those who have reached the upper income brackets in this country, 50% are college graduates, 40% of the remainder have high school diplomas. Only 8% never got further than grammar school, and 2% had no formal education at all. The high school graduate's income through life averages 65% more than that of the elementary school graduate. The college graduate's income averages 250% more than that of the elementary school graduate.

A recent study of persons listed by Who's Who in America showed that out of 7,044 who made the grade, 5,768 were college graduates, 1,245 were high school graduates, and only 31 had received no educational training.

Here in South Carolina we have a twin problem: we must raise the educational standards of our people on the one hand, and on the other we must increase their average per capita income. The two problems are dependent one upon the other. Our economic situation will improve when we raise our educational standards, and our ability to raise those standards depends on increasing our income. We are attacking the two problems together, and we are making encouraging progress.
One of the first qualifications of a good school is an adequate building which is properly equipped. A sound educational program is facilitated and encouraged by a good school plant and modern school equipment. Without them, educational activities are restricted and results are limited. The child who is fortunate enough to spend his school years in an attractive, wholesome atmosphere, has had a good start in life. His mental abilities, his physical development, and his moral attitude are all greatly influenced by his school environment.

A good school building is important for another reason: it should be the heart and the axis of community life. It should stand ready to serve the community in countless ways — 24 hours a day if necessary. By providing facilities for club meetings, for public gatherings, for recreation, and for adult educational activities, it can become a tremendous influence for good in the community.

If a school is to serve young people to the fullest extent, it should offer a well-rounded curriculum, including courses for the practical side of life as well as for cultural development. To meet the changing needs of modern life, a school should place growing emphasis on education
in health, safety, physical development, homemaking, vocational training, reading, character building, human relations, and public affairs. Some of these subjects receive little or no attention in some schools. Others are recognizing their importance to the citizen of today.

Practical courses which fit directly into the needs of every-day living will do much to encourage regular attendance at school. The recently completed survey of our school system showed that every day, 25% of our boys and girls are either absent from school or not enrolled. This means that 100,000 young people in South Carolina miss the advantages of education each day. And the most common reason given for absence is that the student is "not interested in school." The only effective way to solve the attendance problem is to make our schools so interesting and so helpful that our boys and girls will want to attend.

The same methods will serve to encourage young people to remain in school until their formal education is completed. Today in South Carolina only one out of seven students complete their high school courses. And of those entering college only one in three graduates. We must improve this record by making
our schools more interesting and more efficient.

One of the best ways of achieving this purpose is the development of a well-rounded recreational program, both inside and outside the school building. Recreation activities should be broad enough to attract the attention and interest of every boy and girl in some manner, and the facilities offered should be sufficient for a variety of activities. Recreation is a first-aid to good health, and a healthy body is the first necessity for the development of a healthy mind.

One of the primary steps in building a good school is that of maintaining a good library. Only about half of our schools have adequate libraries today. A third of them are struggling under the handicap of poor library facilities. This condition must be corrected if our educational system is to become the important instrument in the life of our people that it should be. The school library is not only essential to a well-rounded formal education, but in many communities it can also serve the public at large, if the service is made available for general use. The circulation of books in South Carolina
today is only approximately one-tenth of the national average, and about 40% of our citizens have no library service at all. Our mobile library units are beginning to reach many of these, but they cannot serve them all. The school library is one of the best means we have of solving this problem.

In any consideration of a good school program, we cannot overlook the importance of the school lunch service. School administrators have learned in recent years that the child who has a good hot lunch at mid-day is a healthier, happier, more alert and more energetic child. In nearly every case, the quality of his work improves when lunch is made available. In the past few years our State has remarkable progress in this field. Last year approximately 24,000,000 meals were served to our school children.

Perhaps the most important of all qualifications of a good school is that of good teachers. A corps of teachers who are both capable and devoted will inspire their students with the desire to learn and the will to achieve. The work of every teacher in the State has a direct
bearing on the future of our citizens, and the painstaking, daily efforts of our teachers may be found in the unmistakable marks they leave on our people. Woodrow Wilson said of teachers: "I think that no one long associated with the profession of teaching can have failed to see how great a power may be exercised through the classroom in directing the thinking and the ambition of the generations coming on."

As Governor I have constantly recommended that steps be taken to attract more qualified teachers, principally by raising teacher salaries. Already, we have accomplished a great deal, and teacher salaries have been increased by 50% in the last two years, the average salary being increased by $610. Nevertheless, further increases should be made if we are to raise our educational standards.

All these things I have mentioned go into the building of a good school, and we must concentrate on each of them to make the school the heart of the community, along with the church and the home. Each of these three institutions has a direct influence on the others, and none must be neglected.

Your community and your county may well be proud of the new Reidville school, and you may look forward
with enthusiasm to the role it can play in the upbuilding
of our State.

A good school builds a good community, and
good communities build a great nation.

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