

## **Carroll Bennett's Testimony to the Committee on Education and Labor of the U.S. House of Representatives in 1974**

In 1974, Carroll Bennett was asked to be part of a panel to present to the General Subcommittee on Education of the Committee on Education and Labor of the U.S. House of Representatives. He was part of a panel who testified on behalf of the American Vocational Association, a national education organization that had 55,000 members at the time. Mr. Bennett was serving as one of several vice presidents of the association. The subcommittee was chaired by Representative Carl D. Perkins (Kentucky), Chairman of the Committee on Education and Labor. Members of the panel were Dr. Lowell Burkett, Executive Director, American Vocational Association; Richard Nelson, Chief of Program Operations, Vocational Education Unit, State Department of Education, Sacramento, California; Dr. William Stevenson, Assistant State Director and Head of Research, Planning, and Evaluation, State Department of Vocational-Technical Education, Stillwater, Oklahoma; George Ramey, Director, Mayo State Vocational School, Paintsville, Kentucky; Dr. Melvin L. Barlow, Professor of Education, University of California, Los Angeles; Dr. Eugene Bottoms, Director, Division of Program and Staff Development, State Department of Education, Atlanta, Georgia; and Carroll Bennett, Director of Career Education, Des Moines Area Community College, Ankeny, Iowa.

In 1972-73, Carroll Bennett and his family spent a year in Washington, D.C., where he was one of 30 members of a Ford Foundation Project called "Washington Interns in Education." The purpose of the one-year program was to expand interns' knowledge of the national legislative process while working half-time with a government agency or national association. The other half of the time was focused on participating in discussions, taking field trips throughout the U.S., making presentations to groups, and learning from other interns. Most of the group members were from either the East or the West coast, including a third who had doctorates from prestigious colleges and universities. There was a gender balance and also strong minority representation on the panel.

Speaking of this experience, Mr. Bennett said, "It was a terrific learning experience for me since I had never had exposure to so many intelligent and committed people with a variety of backgrounds and ethnic and racial diversity. The Ford Foundation had the prestige to make it possible for us to meet with cabinet members, leading educators, and political leaders in a variety of settings. It changed my life and gave me increased self-confidence as a leader. It also "opened" many doors for promotions in position at DMACC, consulting with other colleges throughout the U. S., and having a long-term group of very intelligent and skilled friends who were important resources later in my work.

The other positive was the exposure our four sons (ages 6-12) had as a result of living in the "Nation's Capital" for a year. We spent most weekends visiting museums and other places of significance in the area with side trips to a number of Eastern cities. They learned so much from this experience."

**Below is the transcript of Director of Career Education Carroll Bennett's testimony before the General Subcommittee on Education of the Committee on Education and Labor of the U.S. House of Representatives:**

**Mr. Bennett.** Mr. Chairman, it is a real honor for me to meet with your committee today as a representative of the postsecondary vocational educational programs in the United States.

I am certain that as you sit here in Washington, you often wonder if your efforts in the past as reflected in the Vocational Act of 1963 and the Vocational Amendments of 1968 really bear fruit.

Let me assure you that in the State of Iowa and in the Des Moines area, where I am a vocational director in a community college, we are convinced that these two acts have had great impact. Without them, we would not have the number of programs we have available. Our young people and adults are experiencing successful employment as a result of their participation in these programs.

I don't wish to cite extensive statistics about the changes these two acts have brought. Suffice it to say, in 1968 in all of postsecondary public education in the State of Iowa, there were only about 10 programs where our young people could turn for specialized vocational preparation.

Today, I am proud to say, they have 200 different program options in the community colleges and vocational schools in our State.

One other statistic is interesting. There were, last year, about 272,000 people in our State who were involved in full-time or short-term vocational educational programs. That is almost 10 percent of the total people in our State.

Ten years ago, fewer than one-half of 1 percent were involved.

This increase in vocational enrollments is truly impressive, especially when you recognize that this system began 7 short years ago. We have had a seven-fold increase in enrollments, a seven-fold increase in 7 years. It was implemented because of the Vocational Act.

Right now, we are enrolling approximately 16,500 full-time equivalency students in our adult education and preparatory programs in postsecondary vocational education.

I think there is another very interesting trend in our State. It ties in very closely with the testimony of the other gentlemen here this morning.

This is the percent of people who are choosing a vocational education program as opposed to the traditional college education route. Dr. Bottoms has expressed this point eloquently. Let me tell you how this has happened in Iowa.

Back in 1967, 69 percent of the people who were entering our junior colleges were selecting a college transfer option. Only about 22 percent, at that time, were selecting a vocational option, and we had only about 9 percent in adult education programs.

In fiscal 1973, that 69 percent who chose the college route had decreased to 28 percent – which probably is more realistic in terms of the number of jobs available through this option.

The number in vocational education has jumped from 22 percent of the total to almost half – 48 percent of the youngsters in our post-secondary schools. The adult education enrollment growth is equally impressive. It is significant that much of the adult enrollment in this area is supplemental vocational students. The adult area increased from 9 to 24 percent, almost equal to the number the FTE generates in college transfer area

It is obvious that this act has had a vast impact in providing opportunities for people to get into realistic postsecondary vocational education programs. In fact, we found that in 1971, our college transfer enrollment peaked in Iowa and since that time has been decreasing while the vocational enrollment has been increasing.

But I think the most important thing that I see as a director of vocational education would be the students themselves. I think Mr. Ramey made that point very well this morning – that vocational education at the post-secondary level is serving people who probably would not have attended the school 10 years ago.

It is a particular thrill for me to sit at a graduation and observe the audience. I see parents sitting in that crowd who feel very ill at ease because they have probably never attended a graduation ceremony before. I notice the looks of pride on their faces for their child. Frequently, no one in the family has even advanced beyond a high school education. These parents now have children or family members graduating. It's rewarding to view the pride of these parents as they watch their sons and daughters graduate and enter the job market.

We are finding that many of the people who attend our occupational programs are people who have a great need for education. These are the same groups we discussed earlier this morning. We found just a year ago that about 40 percent of our students come from families what have less than \$7,500 family income.

We know that about 60 percent of our students work while they are in school because they have to. Many of them work at full-time jobs at night and go full time to school during the day to get this education. Many of them have families to support.

A large percentage of students live at home and commute. They do everything they can to decrease their total cost.

It is very satisfying for me to know that in the Des Moines community, and certainly in Iowa, it is almost impossible for one to walk the streets or have any contact without encountering some successful graduate of a community college program. In 7 years, we have graduates everywhere.

I have discussed this at length in my prepared remarks. Permit me to illustrate in the health occupations area. If you go to the doctor's office, there is a chance you would be greeted by one of our medical office assistant graduates. If you need some lab tests, probably one of our medical lab assistant graduates will do those tests for you.

If you were ill and needed surgery, chances are very good that an operating room technology graduate will be standing at that operating table. In the recovery room, the chances are excellent that you will be attended by a graduate of our nursing program.

When you get back to the hospital room, it's probable that one of our nurse's aide graduates will assist in the care for you. And, of course, if a person were injured in a highway accident, the chances are excellent that 1 of the 500 graduates of our emergency medical technician program would be there. This list can go on and on indefinitely.

About 95 percent of them are employed in the occupation for which they are prepared. I think that often people question whether vocational education has relevance – is it really leading people into something meaningful? I believe that national statistics indicate that these programs are preparing students well for employment.

A question often arises about the scope of the Vocational Act. Some say that act is too narrow and that you are really limiting what graduates can achieve later.

That hasn't been our experience, Mr. Chairman. We find that only about 2 percent of the students who graduate from our vocational programs go on for further education the first year following graduation. I think most students who come into the post-secondary area want jobs, and they want an education that is going to prepare them for a job.

I think, perhaps later, they may look at further education and continuing education. We know that over the last 7 years, such has not been the case with our graduates. We have designed those programs so they are not set up to transfer to senior colleges.

We feel that creating a program that will transfer weakens in many cases.

This act has helped us to keep our youth in the State. In a rural State like Iowa, this is important. We have long been known as a great exporter of people.

The Long Beach area in Los Angeles, where Dr. Barlow resides, has, I think, almost as many lowans as it has Californians. A great deal of our outward migration has stopped. I think the excellent vocational programs in our community colleges are a factor in the change.

Only 5 percent of our graduates of our vocational programs left the state.

We know this proves there is employment in Iowa if you prepare people to do the jobs. Formerly, we just didn't have the educational programs to prepare people to stay in our State.

There is no question in my mind that all of this would not have happened had it not been for these two Federal acts. We have a long history in vocational education needing someone to encourage the State and local governments to accept the fact that vocational education is important. I would urge you to maintain the identity of vocational education federally and to stimulate the State and local governmental agencies to provide those programs.

Although it is not a great percentage, obviously, nationwide in terms of the money spent for vocational education, I believe, if it were not there as an incentive, much of this money would not be spent in our State.

I think our system in Iowa and the post-secondary systems generally have been successful because they have demonstrated that we can effectively prepare graduate for entrance and advancement.

We have given a second chance to many people who have been casualties of our traditional education system. And we don't have that high school education barrier in our schools. People can come in and, if they want to enter a specific program, they may.

I think we have a good record in the last few years of doing a better job of serving the target groups: the disadvantaged, the minorities. I think there are statistics to show that there are about twice the number of people in these groups that are enrolled in vocational programs as compared to their percentage in the total population.

Another area that is extremely important and one that needs a great deal of added emphasis is the area of supplemental programs to upgrade the employed worker. He frequently has some things he wants to do in redirecting his career. I believe the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges will testify later in terms of specific program options.

From my vantage point, I have several suggestions that I would hope you would consider in any future legislation. The first of these deals with the basic intent of the law. I would hope there would be no basic change in the intent of the act of 1963 and the 1968 amendments.

Let me plead again for retaining vocational education as a categorical program in the Federal law. I feel that this has been a great strength to the program and has allowed us at the State level to do things that would not have otherwise been possible.

I would like to reemphasize Dr. Severson's and Mr. Nelson's comments concerning planning. In our State, I see a real breakdown in comprehensive planning. Secondary schools don't talk to post-secondary schools, and manpower programs frequently don't talk to other groups.

I think we are probably as well off, or perhaps better off, than some States, but I think it is certainly possible, through Federal legislation to encourage planning to make sure that something like the OTIS system does occur in a number of States. I think it is a very excellent model, and one I wish our State would adopt.

I think there is overlap in vocational education in some cases. The real tragedy is the student who starts in a secondary vocational program and wants to go on to a post-secondary program. He frequently must repeat courses. The system creates many barriers to movement between levels that are not necessary at all. Better planning would take care of the problem.

Closely aligned with this is an evaluation system. I think it has to be done on a State level, but it should also occur on some regional level.

A third thing I am very concerned about is the set aside in the present law for post-secondary education. At the present time, I believe it is 15 percent. We know that in the future, the demand for a post-secondary vocational education is going to increase.

In our State, this isn't a great problem because we are already setting aside some 66 percent of the Federal money for post-secondary. But there are, I believe, 13 states, according to the U. S. Office of Education figures, that do not even spend the 15 percent set aside for post-secondary programs.

I submit that the need and demand for this is going to increase, and I would hope the set aside provisions would be increased. I am not certain of the proper percentage, but I think the minimum would be 25 percent of the category. I also feel that there is a need to combine adult and post-secondary into one category. Mr. Burkett spoke to this point yesterday. We are having increasing difficulty in differentiating between just what is a post-secondary student and what is an adult student.

As programs expand and more and more of our students get involved in part-time programs, the difficulty will decrease – I think the economic situation has forced more such students to go to work while they take their education – we are finding an increasing demand for a student who wants to work and go to school part time. That doesn't fit with the traditional full-time program concept.

We have difficulty differentiating between an adult student and a full-time preparatory student. I would like to see those categories combined in some way so we could say that people above the secondary age group are vocational students. Perhaps that is something that could be considered in the law.

Obviously, funding is important. I think there is every indication from the statistics I have seen that there is going to be an increasing demand for specialized vocational educational programs.

In our own case, we have a similar problem that Mr. Ramey expressed. This past year, we turned away about 1,000 students who wanted to enter one of our programs. We just don't have the facilities or the manpower to accept these people.

And, I submit, this is something of which I am not proud. It is a tragedy when you have people asking for an education who cannot be accepted.

I would hope that there would be adequate funding to do this. We know that quality vocational education programs are not inexpensive. I think the whole concept of vocational educational funding at the Federal level has been to recognize this fact and to see that money is there to supplement what the states and local government agencies can do. We recognize it is going to cost a little more to do these programs, but the benefits from the programs are so great that it is a very, very wise expenditure. I have one final concern. In Iowa recently, we did a study of our population trends. In our State, the birth rate is decreasing. As we look down the road 15 years, we know that we are going to have fewer students in the age group that will be entering the work force as well as college.

This concerns me a great deal because of the increase in early retirements. The United Auto Workers, for example, now have a program of 30-year retirement.

Nationally, there is a lowering of the average age of retirement. Down the road, I envision a smaller and smaller percentage of our people in the work force supporting more people. I submit that the practices we have been following in education which permit high dropout rates must be examined. We will need productive people in our work force in the future to support our total population.

I submit we should adopt the concept in education that industry has used for some time. It is called zero defects concept. It states that you just can't tolerate having defects in your product.

Educational production has had quite a few defects. If you look at our dropout rates, particularly with disadvantaged and minority students, that is just more defect than we can tolerate in the future.

I think one good answer to this is sound vocational programs. There is overwhelming evidence to prove that our programs are able to pick up the defects from other programs as well as prevent defects.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I can't emphasize adequately that we feel the efforts of this committee and Congress have stimulated vocational education successfully.

We know there is a good deal yet to be done. We think we have a system that works and that we have been responsive to the needs and ask for your continuing support.

I thank you very much.

**Chairman Perkins:** Let me thank this distinguished panel for a most outstanding presentation. I know the full committee will be interested in reading all your suggestions because they have been most constructive.

I am hopeful that the Congress will follow most of your suggestions.