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American Federation of Teachers: Final Draft

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THANK YOU, AL, FOR THAT VERY KIND INTRODUCTION.

LET ME ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR OUTSTANDING PRESIDENT, AL SHANKER, AND YOUR SECRETARY-TREASURER, BOB PORTER.

AND LET ME PICK AT RANDOM A SINGLE STATE FEDERATION TO MENTION, NEW YORK'S OWN UNITED FEDERATION OF TEACHERS, AND ITS LEADER, SANDY FELDMAN.

AS SOME OF YOU KNOW, I USED TO BE A TEACHER IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NEW YORK. BACK THEN -- WHEN THEODORE ROOSEVELT WAS PRESIDENT -- TEACHERS DIDN'T HAVE MANY RIGHTS. WE DIDN'T HAVE THE LEVERAGE TO SHAPE LEGISLATION. WE SOMETIMES BARELY AFFECTED PUBLIC POLICY.

ALL THAT IS CHANGED TODAY -- IN LARGE PART, BECAUSE OF YOU, THIS UNION, AND THE AFL-CIO. I AM A BELIEVER IN UNIONS. UNIONS ARE GOOD FOR TEACHERS. THEY'RE GOOD FOR SCHOOLS. AND THEY'RE GOOD FOR THE COUNTRY. I AGREE WITH THIS ADMINISTRATION THAT WE SHOULD SUPPORT THE UNION MOVEMENT IN POLAND. BUT UNLIKE MR. REAGAN, I BELIEVE WE SHOULD ALSO SUPPORT IT AT HOME.

NORMALLY, I BEGIN A SPEECH BY SAYING I'M DELIGHTED TO BE HERE, BUT TODAY IS DIFFERENT. AFTER THIS PAST WEEK, I AM ABSOLUTELY THRILLED TO BE HERE WITH THE A.F.T.
Today is the first day of the rest of this campaign. We're going to return to discussing the issues. We're going to get back to talking about the future of this country.

Starting today, we're going to take our case to the American people. I have some news for the experts and pollsters: Come November, we're going to win.

The overriding issue in this campaign is the future. And the central question is, which candidate can lead us there. 

I believe that the candidate to strengthen America in the future is the one who believes with all his heart in education. And that candidate is not Ronald Reagan. It's Walter Mondale.

When we need to develop the science and math skills of our children now more than ever, when we have few high school physics teachers in the United States today than our school districts, the Reagan administration eliminates the national science foundation's program to strengthen science and math.

When high interest rates and the recession threaten family's ability to finance a college education for their children, the Reagan administration cuts student aid - and would have gutted it completely if Congress hadn't stood in the way.

As the nation was turning again to the quest for educational excellence, they cut the federal government's share of public and secondary school financing to the lowest levels since the 1960's.
The federal government cannot solve every problem American education faces, nor should it. In our nation, education has always been in the hands of local communities and state governments, and that is where it should remain. But we need leadership. But the challenge to American education is a national problem and its solution requires a national strategy.

Fritz Mondale has set forth that strategy and starting on January 20, 1985, this former school teacher is going to work with him as vice president to rebuild that partnership for excellence that is essential to our country's future. We will:

1. Raise the quality and prestige of teaching with better pay ... less paper work ... better teacher training ...

NEW EMPHASIS ON SCIENCE, MATH AND LANGUAGES ... AND A NATIONAL FUND FOR EXCELLENCE.

2. Invest in science and research in our colleges with adequate support for graduate education ... better laboratories and equipment.

ASSURE EVERY CHILD A FAIR CHANCE WITH STRENGTHENED HANDICAPPED EDUCATION, BILINGUAL, HEAD-START, AND CIVIL RIGHTS ENFORCEMENT.

3. Assure that the children of average working families can afford a college education with increased student aid and work-study programs.
AND STRENGTHEN BASIC RESEARCH. WHEN IT COMES TO RESEARCH
AND TECHNOLOGY. WE WANT AMERICANS TO DISCOVER IT FIRST,
APPLY IT TO THE PRODUCTION LINE FIRST, AND SELL IT FIRST.

THIS IS A BROAD, NEW NATIONAL COMMITMENT TO EDUCATION. IT
IS BASED ON THE IDEA THAT IF WE WANT A STRONGER AMERICA -- WITH
A SURE DEFENSE AND A PROSPEROUS ECONOMY -- EDUCATION IS THE BEST
INVESTMENT WE CAN POSSIBLY MAKE.

EVERY DOLLAR OUR COUNTRY SPENDS ON EDUCATION RETURNS $6 TO
THE GROSS NATIONAL PRODUCT. EVERY $4 WE SPEND TO GET STUDENTS
TO FINISH HIGH SCHOOL RETURNS $7 IN PUBLIC REVENUES.

BUT MORE INVESTMENT ALONE WILL NOT DO THE JOB. STUDENTS MUST
WORK HARDER. PARENTS MUST TURN OFF THE T.V. TEACHERS MUST
HAVE BETTER TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES. AND STANDARDS THROUGHOUT OUR
SYSTEM OF EDUCATION MUST BE RAISED.

THE A.F.T. HAS BEEN A LEADER IN THAT FIGHT FOR EXCELLENCE IN
SCHOOLS. WE WANT TO JOIN THAT FIGHT -- NOT RUN AWAY FROM IT,
LIKE SOME PEOPLE DO TODAY.

THE OTHER DAY, GEORGE BUSH WAS ASKED ON TELEVISION ABOUT
THE FACT THAT PRESIDENT REAGAN APPARENTLY FALLS ASLEEP AT CABINET
MEETINGS. MR. BUSH ANSWERED BY ASKING HIS QUESTIONERS IF THEY
HADN'T EVERY FALLEN ASLEEP AS KIDS IN SCHOOLS.

HE MAY THINK THAT'S AN EFFECTIVE REPLY. BUT LET ME SAY
THIS: WE NOT ONLY NEED PRESIDENTS IN COMMAND OF THEIR CABINET --
WE ALSO NEED SCHOOL CHILDREN ALERT IN SCHOOLS. AND WE NEED LEADERS
IN THE WHITE HOUSE WHO DON'T TRY TO EXCUSE THEIR OWN INATTENTION
BY CONDONING SLEEP IN SCHOOLS.
Learning cannot take place when teachers are physically threatened. We ask a great deal of teachers. We put our future in their hands. And we don't pay them as much as they deserve. The least we can do is protect them. As a former teacher and a mother, I support you all the way in trying to remove violence, drugs, and danger from our classrooms.

These are some of the goals that lie before public education today. How do opponents plan to meet them? Listen to the Reagan platform drafted in Dallas. "The federal role in education," it tells us, "should be limited." So much for active leadership.

Education is primarily a local responsibility, but the problems we face are national. And their solution requires a national role.

When Sputnik spurred us to action in the 1950's and 60's, our response was not a "limited" one. We passed Title I, Head Start, bilingual, more student assistance, and more help for basic research.

Today, in the changing economy, we face all the demands it will place upon our skills, we face a challenge to our talents just as great as then. And we need to respond by declaring that this generation will be the best educated generation in American history. And that takes not a limited role but an all-out commitment to public education, led by Fritz Mondale.

And let me add: even as we achieve excellence, we must never sacrifice equity. A mind is a terrible thing to waste and to stop wasting young minds today in inner-city and low-income areas, I believe we must stop spending so much on the arms race, and start investing more in the human race.
IN THE LIGHT FOR THE FUTURE, EDUCATION IS THE FIRST WEAPON -- BUT NOT THE ONLY ONE. THERE IS MUCH WE MUST DO TO KEEP FAITH WITH THE NEXT GENERATION. TODAY I DON'T WANT TO GO DOWN THE LIGHT. LET ME MENTION JUST THREE ADDITIONAL TASKS, besides BETTER EDUCATING OUR CHILDREN.

FIRST, WE MUST CONTROL THESE RUNAWAY DEFICITS. THIS ADMINISTRATION IS ALL FOR BALANCED BUDGET AMENDMENTS -- BUT SHIRKS FROM THE BOLD ACTIONS THAT LEAD TO A BALANCED BUDGET. IT'S ALL FOR PREACHING OPTIMISM -- BUT IT REFUSES TO GIVE US A PLAN.

NOT LONG AGO, MR. REAGAN SAID THEY WOULDN'T RAISE TAXES. THEN MR. BUSH SAID THEY WOULDA AND THEN MR. REAGAN SAID THAT WHILE HE HAD NO PLANS TO RAISE TAXES, HE MIGHT DO SO ANYWAY.

WHY ALL THE DANCING AROUND? AMERICANS EXPECT STRAIGHT TALK FROM THEIR LEADERS. IF DEFICITS ARE BAD FOR INTEREST RATES, THEN LET'S REDUCE THEM. IF REDUCING DEFICITS TAKES MORE TAXES, THEN LET'S RAISE THEM. AND IF OUR LEADERS WON'T LEVEL WITH US, THEN LET'S REPLACE THEM.

SECOND, WE WON'T BUILD A STRONGER FUTURE UNLESS WE BUILD IT TOGETHER.

IF THERE'S ONE THING ABOVE ALL ELSE WHICH THIS CAMPAIGN STANDS FOR, IT'S THE HOPE THAT OLD BARRIERS ARE COMING DOWN, AND NEW DOORS ARE OPENING UP.

I WANT TO REALIZE THAT HOPE. LET'S ELECT A PRESIDENT WHO WILL ENFORCE OUR CIVIL RIGHTS LAWS. AND LET'S MAKE THE ERA A PART OF THE FUNDAMENTAL LAW OF THE LAND. AND AT THE START OF my second term, when I take my oath of office, I want to swear to uphold a constitution that will include the ERA.
FINALLY, LET'S VOTE. INCREASING REGISTRATION IS ALSO A TOOL FOR BUILDING THE PICTURE. YOU'VE MADE IT THE NUMBER ONE PRIORITY OF THIS CONVENTION, AND YOU'RE RIGHT.

ACROSS THE COUNTRY, I'VE MET PEOPLE WHO TELL ME THAT FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THEIR LIVES, THEY WANT TO VOTE. THERE'S A NEW INTEREST, AN ENERGY, AN ENTHUSIASM COMING TO LIFE IN AMERICA.

PEOPLE WANT TO VOTE BECAUSE THEY WANT TO CHANGE THE DIRECTION OF THIS COUNTRY.

THEY'RE SAYING THE TIME TO BUILD FOR THE FUTURE IS NOT LATER. IT'S NOW.

THE TIME TO REDUCE DEFICIT IS NOT LATER. IT'S NOW.

THE TIME TO RAISE STANDARDS AND EDUCATE CHILDREN IS NOT LATER. IT'S NOW.

THE TIME TO STOP THE ARMS RACE IS NOT LATER. IT IS NOW.

AND THE TIME TO REGISTER NEW VOTERS IS NOT LATER. IT IS NOW.

AND THE TIME TO WAGE THIS CAMPAIGN FOR A BETTER FUTURE IS NOT LATER. IT IS NOW.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ENDORSEMENT. NOW LET'S GO OUT, WIN THIS ELECTION, AND PUT A PEOPLE'S DEMOCRAT IN THE WHITE HOUSE.

nor later - Now