

FOR RELEASE AFTER 2:30 P.M.
TUESDAY, MARCH 14, 1967

Office of the Press Secretary
to Mrs. Johnson

THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF MRS. LYNDON B. JOHNSON AT WESTERN CAROLINA
COLLEGE, ASHEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

It is a pleasure to be here to dedicate one building and to applaud the appearance of several more on your busy and beautiful campus.

I applaud the expansion of your buildings, but I am here to celebrate with you something else and something far more important: the expansion of the educational miracle here and throughout America. For buildings alone do not make education. They are the tools for the teachers.

It was almost a hundred years ago that President James Garfield spoke at a testimonial dinner to a great teacher and said this:

"Give me a log hut, with only a simple bench, Mark Hopkins on one end and I on the other, and you may have all the buildings, apparatus, and libraries without him."

I would agree wholeheartedly with that thought, and would add only one item to place on that bench between me and Mark Hopkins: a book. That would complete the classic educational trinity. For with a teacher, a student, and a book all the elements are present for that almost-mystical, almost-chemical reaction that goes under the name "education."

Accordingly, today we are celebrating something more than an array of bricks and mortar called a library; something greater than an attractive building; we are celebrating the function of both libraries and books: for books are the magic carpet of the mind.

That is our celebration, and it is deserved, I think. But we must do more on an occasion like this. We must ask again, and keep asking, what more can we do? What paths can we explore that will still further enlarge our educational vistas?

There was a time when a library was viewed as a cold storage locker for books; a time when the watchword of the librarian was "Silence Please." There is the story told about John Langdon Sibley, a librarian at Harvard in the 19th Century. One day Sibley was seen walking across Harvard Yard with a jaunty step and a broad smile on his face. An acquaintance asked him the cause of his good spirits, and Sibley said smugly: "All the books are in except two."

Surely no one would accuse your wonderful librarian, Mrs. Buchanan, of such an attitude. She has nurtured the Western Carolina Library for three decades. She has helped it grow from early infancy to early adolescence. Because of her efforts, it is a library whose policy is to get books out, not to get books in; to get students in, not keep them out.

That is the new story of the library today in America. Today's librarian, as someone has said, seeks to get young people "hooked on books."

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In that effort over the past few years, your government has played an important role. The \$88 million we spent five years ago to help libraries has grown to more than \$700 million for this year!

This growing effort has touched a thousand and more communities in America; on campuses like Western Carolina; in public libraries in cities and towns; in isolated communities that are visited by bookmobiles; in the slums, where individual classrooms now have their own libraries of paperback books.

I have just gone with Mrs. Moore -- herself a graduate of Western Carolina -- to the hills above Cullowhee, where the power of this college is at work. In Canada Township, some of your classmates are actively working as interns in the Teacher Corps.

These volunteers are at the cutting edge of the educational process. For a day-and-a-half each week, they are students here; but for four-and-a-half days a week, they work in a little hilltop school.

These teacher corpsmen -- and their 1200 counterparts across the nation -- are the Mark Hopkins of our era. They are transmitting knowledge and feeling and love on a one-to-one basis, to children who need those bright keys to unlock their promise.

And they are not alone in that job. One of the greatest tributes which can be paid to this college is this one fact: that 65% of the teachers in the mountain counties of North Carolina are alumni of your school.

The great strength I have seen today is not just in the landscape; it is in the character of men and women whom this college has touched; teachers whose work has begun and flourished right in these mountain schools.

Over the years, perhaps the sharpest single distinction between America and the other nations of the world has been this: we have regarded education as a right, not a privilege. Through free, public education, we have helped all men to rise to their fullest measure.

But for too long, public education in America provided a good, free education -- if a local school board could raise enough funds for enough teachers; if you lived in the right section of the nation; if you were born into the right race; if there was a good library nearby. Until recently, there were just too many "ifs."

That is why, in the past three years, Congress has enacted eighteen major measures to advance education -- not for some -- but for all Americans.

There is nothing new or radical about that idea. The concept of national help for education is visible in the Land Ordinance of 1785; in the Land Grant College Act of 1862, in the GI Bill of Rights in our own day.

Now the Teacher Corps; Federal funds for Hunter Library; our new student-loan program -- all these new programs, are in an old and honored American tradition.

The grade school students of Canada Township receiving help from the Teacher Corps; the children in remote hill towns sharing the wisdom of a well-trained teacher from Western Carolina College; a child in Harlem who is helped by a Head Start teacher -- these young Americans are not

receiving "Big Government," or a "handout" or "bureaucratic control" from Washington. What they are receiving is a chance: the same chance that many other Americans have had for generations: the chance for self-improvement which made America great.

So what are we celebrating today? A building, yes. Bricks and mortar and books? Yes. But more important than that, we are celebrating the very existence of this place. For Western Carolina College means that books and students come together. It means that somewhere a student and a teacher can come together, the miracle of education can occur where it would not ordinarily have happened; a window can be opened; a citizen can get a chance.

That is good cause for celebration. And so today, I am happy to be among you, who are the teachers of tomorrow -- for it will be you, above all, who will make the old miracle of education happen in a new way -- on a bench with a book and a child.

What will that miracle bring us?

No one knew the answer better than a writer from these very hills -- Thomas Wolfe. He wrote these words: "To every man his chance -- to every man, regardless of his birth, his shining, golden opportunity -- to every man the right to live, to work, to be himself, and to become whatever thing his manhood and his vision can combine to make him -- this . . . is the promise of America."

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