

**PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION**

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE FIRST LADY'S REMARKS AT
SALZBURG SEMINAR**

Monday, July 14, 1997

Olin Robison, President, Salzburg Seminar: Good morning everyone. It is a very special day in the life of the Salzburg Seminar. Mrs. Clinton, we are honored that you are here. You arrive 50 years to the day from when the first group of young men and women from all over the United States and Europe arrived here for Session # 1. In the intervening years, the Salzburg Seminar has become a global institution, we now have 18,000 alumni in 145 countries and this is Session # 348 on the subject of youth and education. We have fellows here from 44 countries. Mrs. Clinton quite literally needs no introduction. I would simply say that she has used her position in public life to speak out on behalf of those who otherwise would have no voice. The disenfranchised, the poor, the dispossessed and especially on behalf of children. Children and education, the responsibility of each of our societies to provide for the next generation. Mrs. Clinton, we are honored that you are here, we look forward to this very special morning in this very special day in the life of the Seminar.

Mrs. Clinton: Thank you

Applause

Mrs. Clinton: Thank you Olin and thank all of you. I am delighted to be here, especially on an anniversary such as this celebrating 50 years of this Seminar,

and particularly because of the original purpose of the Seminar and the way its goals have been fulfilled and furthered over the last 50 years. As I was thinking of coming here I was trying to imagine what it must have been like 50 years ago, in the year I was born -- 1947, for those optimistic Harvard students to even imagine they could start something like this Seminar. Europe lay in ashes, ideology divided the world into enemy camps, Austria's fate was uncertain, most people measured time in days and hours, fearful of putting any trust in anything more permanent.

Yet the basic premise of this Seminar, which we celebrate and commemorate today, was that a better future would be possible if people came together and in good faith shared ideas, debated and discussed, and believed in the importance of education. So here we are, with the United States as a partner, Europe rebuilt itself on a solid foundation. We have seen the fall of communism and we have seen countries of the world creating their own new narrative of peace and democracy. And the Salzburg Seminar has consistently lived up to the challenge set forth by F. O. Matthiessen during its very first session, that "we come here to enact anew the chief function of culture and humanism, to bring man again into communication with man." And I would add "women" as well, because the first first session included women. Margaret Mead was present and delivered a very detailed report about everything that occurred. And this Seminar has held fast to that commitment.

First in the early days bringing together soldiers who only a short time before had been fighting each other on the battlefields of Europe. Then -- by transforming itself in these beautiful surroundings into a safe place for people to come together across their differences and engage in honest, constructive dialogue: Arabs and Jews, Eastern and Western Europeans, Serbs, Croats, and Bosnians;

by opening its doors to young men and women; by promoting dialogue among people whose views may not yet have hardened; by focusing not on current leaders, but on the next generation of leaders -- the Seminar has helped to sow the seeds of a more peaceful, productive future. So I congratulate the Salzburg Seminar on its anniversary and I am delighted to see so many of you from 44 different countries gathered here today to discuss one of the most important issues facing every country in the world -- the future of education and of our youth.

We know very well that education is essential to the success of an individual, but we are also learning that education is essential to the success of democracy. Without education, citizens cannot make informed choices.

Without education, citizens are subject to the propaganda that demagogues and powerful interests send out into a society attempting to shape public opinion.

Education is essential to building civil society. For civil society depends on

learning to live with, tolerate, and respect those whom we will never agree with and maybe not even understand very well.

So education is essential in so many different ways: to the creation and sustaining of democracy, to the vitality of civil society, and more and more to the success of a country's economy. In developing countries and industrial ones alike, education is the bright line that divides those who are able to navigate through the new global economy and those who are not. In the United States, for example, by the year 2000, we estimate that nearly 90% of the new jobs created will require post-high school education. So what we are talking about today has to do with what will occur in the lives of countless individuals, countries, the global economy, and it is as it was 50 years ago essential to the peace and prosperity of us all.

I want to talk this morning about what we have been attempting to do in the United States to renew and reform public education at the elementary and secondary levels. Education has always been the currency of the American dream. Since the days of our founding of the republic, democracy and education have gone hand in hand. Our first President, George Washington, wrote: "Knowledge is in every country the surest basis for public happiness." Even in the middle of our worst national crisis, our Civil War, the Congress enacted a plan by which each new state would have a public university for the benefit of its citizens. And after the end of the Second World War, a grateful

nation rewarded those who had fought for freedom with the most valuable gift we could think of -- the G.I. Bill -- which sent record numbers of Americans to college and, therefore, enabled them to pursue the American dream.

But it became clear to us, starting as early as the late 1950's, that education was never a finished enterprise. I remember very well when I was in grade school when the Soviet Union launched Sputnik, before most of you were born. And when Sputnik went into the skies, our Government decided we were not doing a very good job preparing our children for math and science education. And I remember very well my teacher telling us as young students we had to study harder because our country and our President needed us to. Now, I was not particularly interested in math and science at the age of ten, but because it kept being told to me that this was something I could do for my country and my President, I tried my best. And through the years, I have seen over and over again how there comes a point in our country's history that we have to pull together to take a hard look at education. That what worked for earlier generations of Americans is no longer adequate for our children and certainly for the children that will come after.

Since my husband entered public life back in the state of Arkansas, he has been convinced that education was the most important priority that he could pay attention to; that if he worked on improving educational opportunity, he would be able to provide the greatest opportunity for personal and public progress that

was possible. And so because of that, he has worked very hard over many years to improve education. First as a governor, he appointed a committee to look at the state of education in Arkansas, asked me to chair that committee, and we worked very hard to improve the standards of education in that relatively poor state.

When my husband became President, he was convinced that it was important for the entire country to reform education, and he set about with a very specific plan as to what he thought would be the elements for a reformed education system. So since he took office back in 1993, he has been working on certain themes for education reform that he has carried through his entire public career.

In the first term as President, there were certain goals that he wanted to establish for the American education system. So something called „Goals 2000“ was introduced and passed by the Congress, and I want to spend just a minute talking about this, because I think it is very important for education systems to have stated goals, not assumed goals, that can be measured. That is something that on the national basis we have never had in the United States. Some of the countries from which you come have had such goals, but our education system is structured in such a way at the federal, state, and local levels that different authority rests in each level of government. But most authority rests at the local level. And the local school district is responsible for setting goals and setting curriculum and most of the money to run our public

schools comes from local taxes and state taxes. The federal government is Washington does not primarily fund public education in the United States, and because it does not fund it, it does not set the goals or the curriculum for what every student should be learning.

Now that is the kind of system we have, which is very different from most of the countries represented here. There are advantages to that kind of approach and there are disadvantages. Among the advantages are that people are responsible at the local level, and there may be reasons why one school district would approach a particular educational issue in a different way from another school district. If you can imagine, a school in the middle of New York City might have very different ideas about how to teach children than a school in the farthest reaches of Alaska's Northern Territory. So because of the vast size of our country and the different kinds of people and ideas that make up America, the local control has always been a very important part of how we provide public education.

At the next level, the state level, they are responsible in our individual fifty states for working with the local school districts and for providing additional funding for them. And they also have authority because they do provide funding, to try to hold schools accountable in different districts. So that, for example, in some of our states, if schools are not functioning well, if they are

not educating children, they have been taken over by the state government, which then sends in teachers to try to do a better job.

At the federal level, we have money that goes for certain programs to the states and to the local districts, and that money is determined in a way that can only be used for certain purposes. So that, for example, the federal government provides money to help districts that have many poor children provide additional instruction for those children, so it adds to the amount of money available from the local and state level.

But when my husband became President, he began to make the argument that it was important for the United States to have goals that every school district and state would try to follow. Because for those of you who have visited the United States, you, I am sure, have noticed that many people move all the time. So that if you go to school one year in California and then you move to Texas, you want your children to be learning basically the same thing. And so by setting goals you can tell local school districts, here is what we hope all American children will learn, and that it doesn't depend only on where you go to school. So that was one of the important accomplishments of the President's first term.

A second important accomplishment was to expand the program known as „Title One“ – that's a description of where it is in the laws of the United States, which provides the extra help for poor children. Because some of our school

districts are very rich. The parents who live in the school districts are professionals, they are corporate executives, they live in very big houses and so they pay a lot of what we call property tax, so that the schools have all the latest computer equipment, they have teachers in the high schools with Masters degrees and Ph.d.'s and the children have many, many opportunities.

Then we have school districts in poorer areas of our country where the parents are working for much lower wages, where they may not even own their own homes, but they pay rent for apartments, and so there is not a lot of money coming in from the local taxes to support the schools. And so many of the children enter school behind and it's a lot of work to try to help them catch up. So the federal government expanded the amount of money that would go to try to help children who are behind in the elementary grades achieve grade level.

The President also in his first term expanded what we call „Head Start.“ Because we believe very strongly that it is important to help prepare children before they get to elementary school, and the Head Start program is designed to provide school preparation for poor children. We do not have enough programs to include every poor child, but the President expanded widely the numbers of children who could come into Head Start. We also worked very hard to create more opportunities for young people who leave high school but do not go to college. We have, as many of you know because I am sure some of you have studied in our university system in the United States, we have a very good

system of higher education – well funded, providing all kinds of programs at every level of degree granting institution. But many of our students don't go on to college and we have not done very much for them, and so the President has worked hard to create more opportunities for young people to go into work-training programs, apprenticeship programs, into what we call the "two-year community college" to get additional education. Not a four-year BA or BS degree, but a two-year experience.

Now while the President was working on those issues in the first term, he also had to work very hard to prevent the Congress in the second half of his first term from cutting funds for education. If you follow American politics, you know that we do not have a parliamentary system, so we elect a president separate from electing members of Congress. And in the first two years of the President's term, the Congress was of the same party as the President. In the second two years, the Congress changed hands to the opposite party. And the opposite party does not believe in federal support for public education. So that we have had some difficult public and political debates about the appropriate role of the federal government. So while the President was pursuing his agenda to try to increase opportunity and set goals, he also had to prevent the Congress from cutting the money that would go to support that program. So it's always interesting in American politics.

Now when the President ran for re-election, he set some very clear priorities for what he wanted to do in education. And I think that you have perhaps been given a copy of this "Call to Education." And the "Call to Education" details many of the specific programs and I will be happy to answer questions about any of them in the question time. In a way, the President's hopes for education in the second term can be summed up as: making it possible for every eight-year old to read. Now that is a problem for us, because on international tests, approximately 40% -- primarily of the poorer children in America -- cannot read at a level that we consider adequate by the time they finish their third grade, which is the eight/nine-year old period. So we are attempting to put in a lot of effort and resources in making it possible for every eight-year old to read.

We want also to connect every classroom in America, particularly in poor areas, through computers to the Internet. We want to use technology to provide opportunities for poor children that children from more wealthy families have on their own. And we see technology, particularly through the Internet, as a way of opening up education to many children who do not have books in their houses, do not go to museums or libraries, whose parents themselves cannot read very well, so that this is one hope that we have for technology, and we want to aim at the 12-year-old level, so that all of our 12-year-olds have access to computers that are hooked up to the Internet and are computer-literate.

Then we also want to make it possible for any graduate of high school to go on to college by providing financial support because, although we have a wonderful system of higher education, many students have difficult financial problems that prevent them either from going to college or from going to the best school that their academic record would suggest, because they cannot afford the costs. I will be sending, with my husband, our daughter to a very fine American university next year, and the cost will be nearly \$30,000 a year. And there are many students who have excellent grades, excellent test scores, who are worthy of attending our finest colleges and universities, but whose families cannot pay that kind of cost and so the President has been trying to increase the amount of financial scholarship and loan money available. And that is something that he believes very strongly in.

Now in the 1997 State of the Union, which the President delivers every year, he made it very clear what he was going to focus on in these next four years to improve education. And they are summarized here in the „Call to Action.“

First, to go along with the goals that were adopted. He wants to set national standards. Now what does that mean. Well, if, for example, we say that American children will be the best in the world in math and science by a certain year – which we always set those kinds of great American goals; you know, that's how you kind of get everybody together. And we know we have a lot of work to be able to do that, because there are many countries such as some of

those represented here, that have children who do much better on math and science than American children. Well how do we do that? I mean if all we do is set a goal, that can just evaporate into thin air. What the President wants to do is to set accountability standards to measure our progress toward that goal and to hold our schools accountable, so that we can look at local school districts and we can say: you can determine how you choose to teach math and science, but we will measure you against other school districts so that we can tell how well you are doing.

Now that is a very radical concept in the United States, because as I explained, if you are a local school district, historically you did not answer to anyone other than the people in your area, who elected the school board and sent their children to your schools. So the President has set as one of his priorities to create national standards that would then be measured by international tests.

And the way he has done that -- because, again, remember we have this different system than many of your countries -- is to persuade states and local school districts to go ahead and agree for their children to take the tests. So over the last several months, he and his education secretary have been persuading governors of states and local school boards to let their children take this test.

Now I will tell you that although six states have signed up for national tests -- including our biggest state, California -- many states have refused to do so. And

why is that? They do not want to be measured against other school districts because they feel that that is a federal violation of their rights to determine what their children learn. Now I have tried very hard to make the point that algebra is the same in California as it is in New York or any other state in America, and so the first test that would be given is a reading test in fourth grade and a mathematics test in eighth grade. Because reading and mathematics are thought to be objective enough that local ideas about history or about what's appropriate literature will not cause the political problems that will inevitably arise. So the national standards are something that if you follow American education, you will hear more and more about.

We are trying also to make sure that we improve teacher preparation, and we provide continuing education for our teachers. This is another problem because we have colleges of education throughout the country that prepare our teachers, and, again, they are free to prepare teachers however they choose to prepare them. There is no standard national curriculum in place. So teacher preparation is very uneven. We have absolutely wonderful, brilliant teachers in elementary and secondary education, and then we have teachers who should not be in the classroom -- they are not capable of teaching either the academic subject or working with the students effectively.

So the President is urging states and local school boards to change the way teachers are prepared and teachers are evaluated, and to that end he has worked

very hard, both of us have since 1983, to create a national teacher board of certification in the United States. Not mandatory, but voluntary, so that individual teachers can better prepare themselves and if they do so, we are encouraging states and local school districts to give them higher pay. That if they go to the extra work to become better teachers, they should be rewarded to be better teachers. So the whole issue about our teaching force is one that is very difficult.

I don't know about the composition of the teaching force in all of your countries, but I know that in many countries, teaching carries both more prestige and more income than it does in the United States. And it is seen as what it is, which is one of the most important jobs in a country. Now in our country that it is not the case, that there is a very big disparity in what teachers are paid depending upon the district in which they teach. In many ways how they are treated in a classroom is very much dependent upon the kind of people who run the school district and so we have a lot of issues that we are trying to deal with to improve the teaching force.

Third in order to realize the President's goals of having every eight-year old read, he has launched something called „America Reads,“ and he's worked to get volunteers to go into the schools to help the teachers. Because in many of our school districts, we have a lot of disciplinary problems, we have a lot of different languages that our children speak, they come from many different

places. In Los Angeles school district, the students come from 150 countries, and many teachers will have a classroom with students from Mexico and Guatemala and Vietnam and Cambodia and Ghana and from all over the world, speaking many different languages as their first language. So part of our problem is to get enough people to help with our teachers to give individual attention to these children. So that we can help every child both learn English and then learn to read.

And then we have a different problem with children who come from generational poverty from families that have not provided the stimulation and support that a child needs to learn how to read. And they, too, need special, individual attention. We are learning more about teaching methods that work, and we are encouraging local school districts to follow some of those teaching methods. There is a method that I am very supportive of that started in New Zealand called „reading recovery,“ which works very well for children who have not had the basic preparation in their first five years to be able to learn to read.

And that brings me to the President's fourth goal, and that is to emphasize early childhood learning. I am sure that many of you have been following the research that neuro-science has provided in the last several years. We now know that the brain is developing in the first three years of life in a way that we did not understand before. Now what does that mean? Well, it means that a parent is not only feeding a child's body with food, but is feeding a child's

brain to create connections between brain cells in the first three years of life. If you read to a child, sing to a child, tell stories to a child, you are literally creating more brain connections. If you stimulate a child in an appropriate way by touching a child, by playing games with a child, you are also creating more brain connections and laying the foundation for verbal learning that will be helpful when a child goes to school.

Now in many home in America, as around the world, parents have done that for years. No one taught them. They were either given that gift when they were children or they saw and learned themselves how important it was. But in many other homes around the world, children are not spoken to, they are not given the kind of attention from both mothers and fathers that stimulate brain development, and so by the time they get to school, they already very far behind. There is also a connection between the income and education level of a parent and how much conversation occurs in a home. There's a very important study that I wrote about it my book in which researchers went into three different levels of education and income homes in one of our cities in the United States. Went into homes like mine, where both the mother and the father went to college, even beyond, earned good incomes, and even where both mothers and fathers were working outside of the home, there was lots of conversation. Lots of reading of books. Lots of talk in the house – some might say too much talk, but there was certainly lots of talk. Then the researchers went into homes that were very stable homes where the parents held jobs that

were lower income jobs, where their education stopped at high school, where they loved their children as much as any of us do, but they did not talk very much to their children. The fathers often had jobs that were not verbal jobs. All of us in this room have verbal jobs. We are well equipped for the global economy – we talk, talk, talk. We couldn't build this building, but we talk, talk, talk. And so the people who do the hard work of our societies are often not people who earn their money by talking. They do it with their hands. They don't know the importance of talking to their children. They want their children to be successful but it never was done for them; they don't know how or why to do it. So there was much less conversation. And a result, when the children were four and five years old, their vocabularies were much smaller.

Then the third group of families, the poor families, in our country, often single mother families, no father in the home, and the single mother often on welfare or holding down a very low-paying, menial job, very little talk. But the talk that occurred, again these mothers love their children as much as we do and they want their children to be successful, but the world has not treated them very well. So what is the kind of talk you will find in such a family – you will find a lot of negative talk. A lot of warnings about the world. A child who goes to explore this microphone – no, no, get away. Why? Because the child could get in trouble. And these families are worried about trouble. They are worried about the authorities getting them in trouble. So there are a lot of negative messages, so little talk, and talk being used negatively. So what is the result?

Low verbal development, much more limited vocabulary, and children who often can't resolve their problems through talking but instead will fight.

So that we now know that what happens in those first three, four, five years of life are very important to what happens in all the rest of schooling. And the more we can help parents know how to help their children succeed, the better our schools and our students will be. And for parents who either cannot or will not help, the more we can have good pre-school programs, like a Head Start program, we could at least try to help those children get the tools that they would otherwise not have. So early childhood learning is one of the important kinds of priorities any country, any society can make. And the best way is to help parents do the best job they can do, by giving them the tools.

Fifth, we have to change the way our public schools function by providing more choice within the public school system. If you live in a school district in America, you go to the school you are assigned, whether it's a good school or a bad school or else you get out of the public school system, if you have enough money, and you go to a private school. One of the goals that the President has to make it possible for you to choose among the public schools. To make it absolutely competitive within the public school system. Recently I did the high school graduation at a high school in Washington, DC, which has some very, very bad school in our nation's capital - it's one of our, in my view, great shames as a country, that we have permitted our schools in our nation's capital

to deteriorate. This, though, is a school of choice. So students choose to go there, they compete to go there, and they have to work very hard – they have to take Latin, they have a very heavy curriculum, and all of the students who graduate from this high school go on to college.

Every year they take 100 students. Three hundred apply. That means they are willing to do the hard work. My question is why don't they create more hard schools so that every one of those 300 students would have a place in a hard school, instead of going to a school where they don't learn. So we have to create more choice in our school system.

Sixth, we have a serious problem in many of our schools with order and discipline. I hope you do not have this problem to the extent that we do in our country, but to be honest with you, it really depends upon where the school is located, and how effective the adults in the community are in protecting our students. We have schools where weapons, drugs, gangs, all threaten the safety of our students. So my husband has worked very hard to change those conditions and he has worked to create laws that will punish students who bring guns to school, as hard as it may be for you to believe, before my husband passed that law, thousands of American children brought guns to school every day. Some to be aggressors, many to protect themselves, but of course, the results often were tragic because of the kind of violence that occurred. To keep

drug dealers and drug houses away from our children and to change some of the values in the school.

We have, as I am sure you have noticed from watching American TV, a very intense consumer culture that is aimed at our young people. You know you are told that you aren't a good or smart person unless you wear a certain kind of tennis shoes, sport shoe. If you don't wear a certain kind of jacket or other piece of clothing, you are somebody who will be respected. And we have a lot of fights who can't afford to wear certain clothing and feel very resentful because of that and there is a lot of violence that is spawned by this culture of youthful consumerism. And one of the things the President has urged is that more students in our public schools wear uniforms. Many of your countries do that and I urge you not to change. It solves a lot of problems. We have found that where uniforms are used in our public schools you see an almost immediate drop in clothing-related violence. You see more discipline in the classroom because students have to wear the same thing to school and if teachers are trying to enforce discipline with students who wear clothes that are too tight, too loose, with hats on their heads, that causes a lot of difficulties for the teachers. So wearing uniforms is something that we wish more of our schools but again, it's up to our local schools. They have the decision to make.

Now the President also thinks that we have to do a better job in making it possible for the students who want to learn to learn. Many of our teachers have

a lot of disciplinary problems in the classroom caused by students who are disruptive and we have a lot of laws that we are trying to modify in the United States that are very good on the surface in terms of giving students a lot of rights, but make it difficult to enforce discipline in the classroom.

Seventh, as I said, the President is working to connect every classroom and public library to the Internet by the year 2000. We have had a public-private partnership created to do this. And I just want to spend a second or two talking about that. Because it may be something that some of your countries also can look to. Our government did not have all the money or the expertise to create this technology linkup. But by working with a lot of our private companies, we have created a fund that now has about \$2 billion to form the kind of connection so that the schools can be wired, the computers can be put into the classrooms, the teachers can be trained. Now why would businesses voluntarily give this kind of money? Because they want well-trained workers. And you can make that argument in every country here. Because every country here has to be moving toward technology use in order for the society to flourish. So I would urge you to think about how you can form partnerships, even where you don't have a tradition of doing that, with businesses, both international businesses doing business in your country and businesses of your nation, so that you can create more resources for technology advancement.

Now there are a few other things that I want to briefly mention that I know are not part of elementary or secondary school but are linked to it. The President has emphasized going to college because he wants children to work harder to improve their skills and that college would be available for them if they did it. So he's creating scholarships that would provide the cost of tuition at our community college, and he wants to give each family a ten thousand dollar credit for education and training that can be used. Because, for example, if you have a child who gets into a school that is expensive that 10,000 dollars could make a difference. You could take it off your taxes and you would be able to encourage your student to go wherever possible. So that the college program that the President has talked about is directly linked if more people think about how the progression goes from being preschool all the way to finishing your education. But also we don't want to leave out the students who don't go to college, so these programs are available for skill training and additional job education as well.

Now if we look at what the United States is doing, some of it is very much a part of our particular culture and the way we have organized our schools; but some of it is more universal. Our youth today have a lot of other stimulation besides education coming at them and the kind of skill that it will take to keep young people's attention focused on education, to help them realize that they have to make a commitment to education despite what the culture is saying or doing around them, is becoming a more and more global problem, not merely

an American problem, so that we all share a concern about how we will raise our next generation, and I think it is very important that we give the priority to education and youth and make it not just a priority of governments but of the entire society, so that businesses and academic institutions and every other institution pull together to try to support young people. I have spoken with people from many of the countries represented here, and I hear often the same concerns: that there are no adults looking after children anymore; that children are in the streets too much; they have too much time to do whatever they want; that the schools are not open long enough hours, there is no other institution to help fill the gap of time; that parents are often working very long hours themselves, they are not able to provide the supervision that their children need; and this work of raising young people cannot be left merely to teachers and schools. That is not the role of what a teacher should be doing but certainly many teachers have the feeling that they must fill the gap that society has left. So we have a lot of work to do in making education a priority, but more than that, in making young people a priority in our fast-paced, technology-driven age, where we become connected with each other anonymously, how do we keep people connected personally, how do we make it possible for adults, whether or not they are parents, to invest in their children so that we do not become a „brave new world“ where there are some people like us who are verbal, who are technologically literate, who live above all the rest of society because we have not given the parents and children of all of our people the chance to have an education and live in a safe, supportive

community that will give them the chance to live up to their own God-given potential. Thank you very much.

(end remarks)