



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### BETRAY THE AGE

One of my musical heroes, Bono, the singer for the rock group U2, shares the story of the Irish poet, Brendan Kennelly. He relates that Kennelly has a memorable poem called The Book of Judas, and there's a line in it that says: "If you want to serve the age, betray it."

Then Bono asks: "*What does that mean, to betray the age?*"

Answering the question, Bono says: "Well to me betraying the Age means exposing its conceits, its foibles, its phony moral certitudes. It means telling the secrets of the age and facing harsher truths."

Prevailing wisdom says that it is no measure of mental health to be well adjusted to a profoundly sick society. Every day in Tennessee, educators are challenged by a wide-ranging mixture of social, psychological, and physical problems that impede the improvement of so many students entrusted into their care.

Unfortunately for educators, policymakers worry about the results of a test given at the end of every school the year, used so that we can measure the effectiveness of those teachers educating children. We have made textbook companies and test publishers prosperous, while we engage in a rigorous debate over trivial items.

We eagerly listen to wealthy philanthropists (or organizations representing them) that lack the prerequisite background in the policy areas that they are influencing. By virtue of their wealth, they have gained an unfair advantage, as well as access to policymakers. They then promote public policies by the access of their political donations and may not even understand the problems average people face. In education, they certainly do not understand the challenges confronting public school educators.

For example, Tennessee is the 12th poorest state based on the last US Census figures. Even more startling is that the child poverty rate is 26%. So, when the philanthropist experiences donor fatigue and migrates to their next passing interest, educators will still be here to do what God has gifted them to do — which is to educate and demonstrate compassion for the children of our state.

The late political theorist Hannah Arendt wrote, "No cause is left but the most ancient of all, the one, in fact, that from the beginning of our history, has determined the very existence of politics, the cause of freedom versus tyranny." When political donations replace the contributions of men and women from controlling their own destiny, tyranny will gain a stranglehold in our society.

If we oppose state control of the means of production, it stands to reason that production in the hands of a few would also be undesirable. Politicians understand it is much easier to make laws than repeal them. Too often the extremes on both ends of the political spectrum are heard and the majority of people get silenced.

#### SUMMARY

*Every day in Tennessee, educators are challenged by a wide-ranging mixture of social, psychological, and physical problems that impede the improvement of so many students entrusted into their care. Unfortunately for educators, policymakers worry about the results of a test given at the end of every school the year*

Every age has moral blind spots, with issues such as slavery, discrimination, unequal pay between sexes, and religious intolerance. Still, my Irish heritage compels me to believe in the idea that anything is possible when we embrace freedom.

The question for educators is this: *where are we willing to spend our moral and intellectual capital, our money, or our sweat equity outside of the walls of our classroom or homes?*

In a field as diverse as public education, we must all collaborate together to foster a more constructive dialogue among education stakeholders and policymakers. We share a common destiny. We have the power to create amazing change in this world and be champions for the vulnerable who cannot speak for themselves when they need us the most.

This is the time for **bold measures**. This is Tennessee and we are the generation of Educators to bring change, not only to our profession but to all of our society. Betray the Age.

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