Some 1,000 NEA members were among the 250,000 Americans whose march on Washington in late August brought a message: the dream of jobs, peace, and freedom lives on. NEA President Mary Hatwood Futrell (left, at mike) told the huge crowd that America's "new coalition of conscience" must stand together, back home, stay together, and vote together in 1984.

**Marching To Turn the Dream into Reality**

They came to Washington, D.C., in buses from as far away as Seattle in the blistering heat with their placards and buttons and backpacks, to commemorate the event that was a turning point in U.S. civil rights history.

On Saturday, August 27, at least 1,000 Association members from around the nation joined the crowd of a quarter million Americans reenacting the historic 1963 March on Washington.

Among those invited to address the huge gathering at the Lincoln Memorial was NEA President Mary Hatwood Futrell. She hailed free public education, "our national birthright," as "opening doors closed too long to all of us."

"Education is the key to unlock the doors that keep us and our children from our rightful heritage of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," Futrell said. Speaking as "a woman, a classroom teacher, a descendant of slaves, and a leader of our nation's largest union," she noted that "hungry children cannot learn and fearful children cannot cope."

Marchers listened, joined hands and sang, and reminisced about what they'd been doing 20 years ago. They spoke of why they had come, and what they hoped this new march might accomplish.

One NEA activist, Prennis White, went to jail with Martin Luther King, Jr., and the freedom riders in the 1960's when she was a student at Tennessee State University in Nashville. "I knew we were right then. I know we're right today," said White, now a school bus driver in Southfield, Michigan.

Barbara Schindler, an American history teacher at West Mid High School in Norman, Oklahoma, said she marched on Washington in 1963. "There was a great deal of emotionalism then, a feeling that great social improvements were on the way," she recalled. "This is a pilgrimage for me—to revisit the scene of the march."

Other participants spoke of the need for renewal. "I'm here in memory of Dr. King," declared Carl Lacour, a large High School counselor from Prince George's County, Maryland. "He set an example for people all over the world. This march represents a renewal of faith in the American way and a rededication of all our efforts."

Nathaniel Ingram, an English teacher at Price High School in Atlanta, spoke of the need to declare Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday a national holiday—and recalled that he missed the 1963 march "because the Atlanta school board wouldn't allow teachers to take leave to come. The board knew too many of us would have been here."

Helen Bain of Nashville, Tennessee, a former NEA president, said she feels a responsibility to participate in public actions such as the march. "I hope that this consciousness-raising event will bring to public attention the true picture of this Administration's policies toward the poor, minorities, and women," she said.

The display of unity among marchers—Blacks and whites, Hispanics and Asians, men and women, young and old—brought enthusiastic responses from many of the NEA members present.

Newark, N.J., elementary teacher Barbara Harris remembered being in Canada in 1963, watching the march on television. "I made myself a promise then never again to miss anything as significant as this," she said, adding, "We're making a point today, but the real work begins when we go back home. We have to let our legislators—and our national leadership—know what we want. If they don't respond, then we need to remove them from office."

With the conviction of Harris and other committed NEA members, the dream may yet become reality.

—Marion Clayton

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**WASHINGTON WATCH**

As another school year gets under way, federal funding of education programs is once again Topic A for Association lobbyists on Capitol Hill.

NEA and its allies have been putting together the bipartisan coalition in Congress that traditionally supported education bills—a coalition that seemed to disappear for a while in the early Reagan years. The fiscal 1984 education budget "target" approved by both House and Senate last spring is $16.1 billion—almost three billion dollars over President Reagan's request, and one billion more than this year's education funding.

But the extra money can't be spent unless Congress raises the ceilings in current "authorizing" laws for education programs—ceilings that were imposed by the 1981 budget reconciliation act. A bill that increases funding for Chapter 1 (education of disadvantaged students), impact aid, vocational and adult education, education of the handicapped, and other programs was due for a vote in the House by mid-September.

As we went to press, some 90 NEA Congressional Contact Team members from around the country were poised to come to Washington for an all-out lobbying blitz on this crucial vote.

When Congress returned to work after Labor Day, the NEA-backed Emergency School Aid Act (ESAA) had garnered 178 co-sponsors in the House and 25 in the Senate. A round of back-home "town meetings" on the bill began in August and will continue through the fall as NEA Congressional Contact Team members work to win the 218 supporters necessary to pass this bill in the House. ESAA would provide a solid infusion of federal dollars to help local districts improve school programs in math, science, and other areas.

After a year under block grants, the time has come to restore separate funding for school desegregation programs, NEA told the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee in recent testimony on S 1256—a bill that would authorize $125 million for such programs. Desegregation has dropped way down—or completely off—most school districts' agendas since Congress went along with the Administration and folded the former Emergency School Aid Act and 27 smaller federal aid programs into a single education block grant, cut the total funds, spread them across many more districts, and let each district decide where to spend its grant. Delivering NEA's testimony was Phil Ruff, president of the Association affiliate in Buffalo, New York, where an outstanding magnet schools program faces demise as a result of the sudden loss of federal funding.

Meanwhile, the Administration is proposing to let the Vocational Education Act likewise be swallowed up into a block grant. Testifying against such a move before the House Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary, and Vocational Education, NEA this summer called for properly targeted, fully funded voc ed programs.

At least 3.24 million students and nearly 850,000 school employees are inhaling dangerous asbestos fibers, according to a new study by the Service Employees International Union. SEIU put together data from states that keep accurate records on school asbestos inspections and clean-ups and found that about one in ten school buildings contain crumbly "frangible" asbestos. NEA supports pending legislation that would allocate federal funds to help schools foot the high cost of removing or covering exposed asbestos.

As usual, a number of education-related cases are on the docket for the new Supreme Court term that begins this month. The Reagan Administration is asking the Court to rule that an education institution may not legally discriminate against women in any program directly funded by the federal government, but is free to practice sex discrimination in all other policies and programs. In a friend-of-the-court brief filed jointly with a score of other national organizations, NEA is urging the Court to uphold the long-established interpretation of Title IX as covering all education institutions, not just those programs that receive federal funds. The case is Grove City College vs. Bell.