

He loves speaking to students. "I tell them the story of the Pilgrims and the Mayflower Compact, a great document, which had one defect, that everyone should work for the good of all and pool their work product. They were starving to death. Gov. (William) Bradford then gave each man his own parcel of land for a year. At the end of that year, we had two great institutions, Thanksgiving and free enterprise."

He leans forward in a chair in his modest office as he gives this history lesson.

Surrounding him are hundreds of plaques, resolutions, statuettes and photographs, tokens of his life in service to the community.

There on the walls are the Florida Chamber Economic Education Leadership Award, Commissioner's Award for Excellence, Liberty Bell Award, National Conference of Christians and Jews Silver Medallion Award, United Way Award for Leadership, Friends of the Arts Award, and on and on.

There he is as Mr. Sun, the most prestigious civic award in St. Petersburg, and as Mr. Clearwater; he is the only person ever awarded both honors. There he is at the dedication of the Gus A. Stavros Center for the Advancement of Free Enterprise and Economic Education at Florida State University in 1988, and a year later at USF to dedicate a second center.

But he doesn't want to talk about any of those on this day. He wants to return to the story of his lunch at Wendy's.

"We had the program for the Enterprise Village II ground-breaking in our hands as we pick up our food," he said. "And our server saw it and said, 'Do you know about Enterprise Village? I want you to know I took off work so I could volunteer there for both of my children. It's one of the most wonderful things that ever happened to my kids.'"

Gus and Frances Stavros turned to each other and smiled.

They can't remember having a better meal.

---

## NOT ENOUGH LIFEBOATS

### HON. NEWT GINGRICH

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, March 11, 1998*

Mr. GINGRICH. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to submit into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD this editorial by William Raspberry from the Washington Post of March 9, 1998. Parents should have the ability to rescue their children from the schools in which they are trapped

when those schools fail to meet minimum standards of performance and safety. If you cannot save every child from these schools, should you refuse to save a few? I don't think so, and neither does Mr. Raspberry.

[From the Washington Post, March 9, 1998]

#### NOT ENOUGH LIFEBOATS

(By William Raspberry)

Before you dismiss his voucher proposal for D.C. schools as too conservative, too insensitive to the poor or too destructive of public education, House Majority Leader Dick Armeo wants to remind you of this fact:

When Ted Forstmann and John Walton put up \$6 million of their own money to provide 1,000 scholarships for low-income parents who wanted their children out of D.C. public schools, there were 7,573 applications—about a tenth of the total public school enrollment. These parents, Armeo told me in a recent interview, constitute 7,573 rebuttals to whatever anti-voucher case you care to make. They believe that choice—represented in this case by privately funded vouchers—offers their children a better chance, and they want it.

The Texas Republican has been joined by Rep. William Lipinski (D-Ill.), Sen. Joe Lieberman (D-Conn.) and Sen. Dan Coats (R-Ind.) in introducing a bill to fund tuition scholarships for some 2,000 additional poor children here.

The D.C. Student Opportunity Scholarship Act would provide means-tested tuition supplements that could be used in public or private schools, either in the District or in neighboring counties in Maryland and Virginia. Students whose family incomes fall below the official poverty line would be eligible for the maximum yearly grant of \$3,200. Those whose family incomes are above, but less than 185 percent of, the poverty line would get three-quarter scholarships of \$2,400.

Question: Does the scheme represent a noble rescue effort, or does it amount to the abandonment of a sinking school system?

As far as Armeo is concerned, it's like asking whether no one aboard the Titanic should have been permitted to use lifeboats because there weren't enough lifeboats for everybody.

Armeo, who has been involved in a few local schools through a program he started called Tools for Tomorrow, says he has "seen the lights go on in their eyes" when children get additional tutorial help or scholarships to better schools. "They start telling you about how their favorite classes are math and science. And I wonder why we can't provide this sort of opportunity—in private or

parochial schools or in public schools—for more children whose parents can't afford it."

The most frequently offered answer is that such schemes—almost always too limited to serve all the children who need help—amount to a turning away from public education. The parents most likely to seize the opportunities offered are those who have the means to supplement the vouchers and those who already take an active interest in their children's education. The result is a sort of skimming—of children and their parents—that can leave the public schools significantly worse off.

It's undeniable. But look at it from the viewpoint of parents who grab at the chance to get their children into better schools: Should they be required to keep their children in bad schools to keep those schools from growing worse? Should they be made to wait until we get around to improving *all* the public schools?

"The District of Columbia is interesting, in the sense that it has some really outstanding public schools, and one of the highest per-pupil outlays in the country," Armeo said. "But, in candor, it also has some truly awful schools. How can this be? In our visits [with Tools for Tomorrow] the parents keep coming back to one word: discipline. They are talking about discipline in the sense of expecting a certain standard of behavior and discipline in the sense of the rigor with which [private and parochial schools] teach the curriculum.

"I don't know if you can make all the schools exercise that kind of discipline. But if it's possible, maybe the best way to make it happen is to put them on notice that they may be about to lose their children."

That notion that competition will force the worst schools to improve drives much of the advocacy for vouchers. Does it make sense? I don't know. When New York philanthropist Virginia Gilder offered \$2,000 scholarships to every child in Albany's worst-performing school, a sixth of the parents grabbed the offer and took their kids elsewhere. The school board fired the principal, brought in new teachers and undertook a range of improvements. But to expect most poor-performing schools to improve with the introduction of vouchers is to believe their poor performance is willful. I'm not sure even the voucher advocates believe that. But surely opponents cannot believe the logic of their counter-argument: that if you can't save everybody—whether from a burning apartment house, a sinking ship or a dreadful school system—it's better not to save anybody.