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Aviation Education - Why?

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**Abraham Lincoln Said, "Ambition and education are the wings of great actions."
Edmund Burke related, "It is well known that ambition can creep as well as soar."**

As Chairman of the National Coalition for Aviation Education, I appreciate this opportunity to address your Issues in Aviation and Space Education cross-talk session of the 1993 National Congress on Aviation and Space Education. I want, on behalf of my NCAE colleagues, to relate to you why aviation can provide the wings that individuals can depend upon to lift them to the heights that will allow them to accomplish their dreams, and why your dedication to aviation education is one of the primary ways that individuals can look above what they presently understand and say "I can soar."

With this in mind, I have entitled my presentation:

AVIATION EDUCATION - WHY?

Tyson W. Whiteside

I will outline four areas which I believe encompass the reasons the industry has formed the National Coalition for Aviation Education (NCAE). I'll talk about the confluence of factors which influenced the aviation industry to establish the NCAE and what the organizing associations see as its mission. I'll speak on some of the special needs that NCAE can assist educators in regarding the training and education of young people as well as the existing aviation workforce. I'll look into the need for all of us involved in aviation education to work together to build effective political constituencies at the local, state, and national levels. We need to influence both the public and our governmental decision-makers so that we can revitalize an industry that once dominated world technology and manufacturing, and the hearts, dreams and ambitions of many young people who looked to the stars as their way to future success.

THE NATIONAL COALITION FOR AVIATION EDUCATION -- WHO ARE WE?

By the text of the NCAE Mission Statement, the National Coalition for Aviation Education "represents industry and labor, united to promote aviation education activities and resources; increase public understanding of the importance of aviation; and support educational initiatives at the local, state and national levels" (p. 2).

There are fourteen founding members of the NCAE. They are the following:

**Aircraft Electronics Association
Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association**

**American Helicopter Society
Aviation Distributors and
Manufacturers Association
Experimental Aircraft Association
Helicopter Association International
International Association of Machinists
and Aerospace Workers
National Aeronautic Association
National Air Transportation
Association
National Association of State Aviation
Officials**

**National Business Aircraft Association
Opportunity Skyway
Professional Aviation Maintenance
Association**

As you can see, the NCAE includes almost every organization which has an active and diverse aviation education program managed as a part of their association's services to their members and their communities.

The National Coalition for Aviation Education had its genesis from four important factors.

First was the innovative initiation of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Partnership Program with industry organizations to utilize the resources of both the FAA and the individual organizations to advance each organization's aviation education programs and encourage public awareness of aviation. This partnership began to sow the seeds of a cooperative spirit within the industry and FAA as it regards the importance of aviation education.

Second, last fall Phil Woodruff, Director of the Office of Aviation Education for FAA, called a meeting of aviation trade associations to discuss aviation education and the programs which the industry supported. I have never seen as many heads of these organizations in the same room at the same time on any issue. This meeting attendance pointed out the high priority which these organizations established for their aviation education programs. But as each organization presented its programs, it also graphically pointed out that many of us were in the same business. We had just put different names on our aviation education efforts. We had common goals. We had common efforts. We had resources. But we weren't talking to each other regarding how we could help one another achieve our common goals and how we could maximize the use of our resources. The "light came on" and we could see a potential need for an industry forum to talk about aviation education and to communicate to each other what we were doing in the education arena. This forum was not to be a group which would control educational programs but a communications forum for industry, government, and educators--a forum where educators could find out what was going on with industry in aviation education and where industry could share ideas.

The third element was the fact that the aviation industry has always recognized that the educational system is a major component in developing the talent we need in the aviation community, both at the skilled trade levels and in managerial positions. We are not necessarily faced with a shortage of mechanics and other workers. But we are faced with individuals entering the industry who do not always have the skill training that the industry needs for them to be immediately productive in the aviation business. Part of the reason is that the industry has not been effective in communicating with the educational community in outlining the types of training that we need in the industry. We need to be more active in developing proper curriculum and providing financially tight educational institutions, where possible, with training equipment that meets modern standards.

We need to work with aviation educators, government officials, and our own industry representatives to upgrade the recognition of the professionalism, which is the hallmark for much of our work force. Through proper educational programs, training for existing work force, and recognition of professional standards, we can work together in aviation education to continue to offer young people careers in aviation which they will be proud of throughout their lifetime.

The final element which spurred the formation of NCAE was the discussions which we held in exploring the concept of the Coalition this past fall and through the spring of this year. It became imminently clear that an important pillar was missing from the aviation education triad. Government spoke through the FAA, NASA, and the Air Force, and articulated its positions and drew interest groups together through effective forums and meetings including the National Congress and International Magnet School Conferences. Aviation educators and institutions spoke through well established organizations such as University Aviation Association (UAA) and American Association of Airport Executives (AAAE). However, the aviation industry didn't have a united voice.

It wasn't that the industry didn't have a full and impressive commitment to aviation education, because we did. What was missing was a vehicle which would bring each of our organizations together to understand what we were doing in the field and how we could assist one

another to accomplish our common goals in aviation education. Therefore, now, the aviation industry can speak through the National Coalition for Aviation Education on education issues and build our education programs, where appropriate, together to maximize our resources and attain the maximum positive impact we can on our targeted goals.

WHY CAN THE NATIONAL COALITION FOR AVIATION EDUCATION MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

As you can see, the NCAE is a unique combination of industry organizations. For the first time, we have joined together to present a united voice on aviation education issues. For the first time we have joined together to marshal the education resources in order to utilize aviation to advance education and social mobility of America's young people as well as to extend valuable technical and business training to those who are already members of our aviation work force. For the first time, the industry's business organizations have formally joined together with labor to present a united front on critical aviation issues involving the future of our aviation industry and the people who are, or will be, the aviation work force.

For the first time, business, labor, educators, and the FAA/NASA/Air Force and other governmental agencies can work together in a true partnership. This partnership was exemplified by the formal signing this morning of the NCAE Charter before the General Session of the National Congress. I believe industry can now say they are indeed the third pillar in the aviation education triad. To further this partnership, NCAE also signed a proclamation establishing a partnership with the FAA in aviation education and public awareness of the role aviation plays in our daily lives.

HOW DO WE AS AN INDUSTRY FULFILL OUR YOUNG PEOPLE'S DREAMS OF SUCCESS THROUGH AVIATION?

To paraphrase an Oriental thought:

*If you are planning for a year,
sow rice.*

*If you are planning for a decade,
plant a forest.*

*If you are planning for a generation,
educate a child.*

I believe aviation has been one of the most motivating forces in the formation of history. Aviation deals with space, which is undefined except by the imagination. People look overhead and say, "if I could only fly, I could accomplish things that today are only in my dreams."

Young people can use, and should use, these dreams as a motivating force in achieving their goals. All of our calendars are based upon space and the stars. Navigation, even in its most advanced functions, is based on what is above us. Unfortunately, weapons of war use airspace as their medium of destruction.

Mathematics, physics, much of great literature, and many more subjects which we strive to learn in school are all based on the airspace above us. Unfortunately, many of our students think that being a pilot, a flight attendant, a mechanic, or even flying for pleasure are beyond their capabilities. Young people look up beyond their foothold on earth or look at the complexity of modern aircraft and think that it is beyond their capabilities to succeed in aviation. We need to teach individuals to reach beyond what they think they can accomplish today and design a regime that can help them succeed in aviation. We need a program that can help them succeed by learning--learning through aviation.

There is often a gap between young students and their dreams. They think that if they are in inner city schools there is no way they can leave the pavement and reach for the stars. That's wrong. Aviation education can keep these students in school. Aviation education can reward the hard working student with avenues of success that, if available, could prevent this student becoming society's prey to drugs, alcohol, or another senseless action of a dead end life. I believe that if you can teach young people to reach for the stars and give them the knowledge to achieve that goal that they will bridge many of the social hurdles that might impede their ability to achieve their dreams.

As long as we have a window that we can see through to something different and better for ourselves, life is exciting. Aviation education can be that window.

WHY DO WE NEED TO BUILD AN AVIATION EDUCATION PUBLIC AND GOVERNMENTAL CONSTITUENCY?

As an industry, civil aviation--and particularly general

and business aviation--is teetering on the economic edge. If our joint efforts in aviation education are to mean anything, we need to educate our governmental decision-makers, whether on Capitol Hill or in the Executive Branch, that aviation is one of the most critical components of the U.S. economy. These leaders need to know that the nation's aviation infrastructure provides millions of jobs and facilitates economic growth through the safe and efficient transportation of people and goods throughout the U.S. and the world.

The economy certainly hasn't been our friend, but the Federal Government's action and inaction have been a heavy contributor to today's problems. Everyone knows that our U.S. commercial aircraft manufacturers and air carriers are in financial trouble. However, if the commercial segment is in trouble, the business and general aviation industry is in the "Critical Care Unit."

Product liability laws and taxing policies have cost general aviation over 70% of its jobs since 1980. Deliveries of U.S. manufactured general aviation aircraft have plummeted from over 18,000 annually in 1978 to under 800 in 1992. It is in general aviation that most of our young people will find aviation jobs and recreational opportunities in their future. Yet aviation does not have an effective constituency in the Congress.

It is time that we, as interested parties in aviation education, step forward and carry our message of industry revitalization to the halls of Congress and, when necessary, to the FAA. It's politics, but educators are some of the sharpest lobbyists at the local, state, and national levels. If we are to give our young people a chance to join the Lindberghs, the Yaegers, or the John and Jane Does who cruise a clear Saturday afternoon in their Cessna 182, or an opportunity to turn a wrench on a B747 or a Piper Cub, we need to develop a more effect-

ive and unified voice between industry and educators to bring our message to the public and government decision-makers.

Aviation is critical to the U.S. economy and both the aviation industry and the U.S. economy must be given the tools necessary to perform its tasks. Each must be relieved of the legislative and regulatory burdens which bring no benefit to the public and which diminish aviation's efficiency.

But this is also a time of new opportunity--an opportunity to advance new initiatives and effective strategies to promote new investment and revitalization, technological innovation and U.S. competitiveness, both at home and abroad. These solutions do not cost the U.S. Treasury a dime, but they can mean thousands of new, high paying, private sector jobs for Americans today and tomorrow.

WHAT IS THE NATIONAL COALITION FOR AVIATION EDUCATION'S FUTURE?

When I first came to Washington after I graduated from college, I came down Constitution Avenue in a taxi to interview on the Hill. I noticed the motto carved on the National Archives building which read, "What is past is prologue."

Since I knew that cab drivers are presumed to be all-knowing about their cities, I asked the driver what the motto meant.

"Oh," said the cabbie, "That's just bureaucratic talk. What it really means is--you ain't seen nothing yet."

The National Coalition for Aviation Education is here to advance aviation education and to offer, through aviation, opportunities to people seeking to improve themselves. We just signed our NCAE Charter today but --"You ain't seen nothing yet."□

Tyson W. Whiteside graduated from the University of Kansas and holds a Juris Doctorate Degree from The National Law School at George Washington University. He is Director for Governmental and Industry Affairs for the Aircraft Electronics Association, and is also the manager of the AEA Educational Foundation. He was recently elected Chairman of the National Coalition for Aviation Education. He has served as a staff assistant and attorney advisor to the Secretary of the Interior and served as a staff assistant to the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee.□