

The Place for Public Education in our Civic Life.

To one interested in the growth of our nation, its constitutional history and its economic history; to one who is willing to give the time and thought necessary to go to the bottom of things, to one who really reads and interprets the meanings of things there is nothing more significant in our institutional growth than the development of our public school systems.

Every nation has the form of Government best suited to the needs of the people; for the form of Government is the out-growth of the consensus of public thought. The voice of the people in every nation is the Government. An absolute monarchy can exist only when the people ruled, believe the power of the ruler should be absolute. A limited monarchy can exist for only those people who believe in that form of Government. A republican form of government can exist for only those people who believe in a ^{Representative} ~~Republican~~ form of Government. The voice of the people is heard in the different forms of government in just the proportion the people want their voice heard. It is a noticeable fact in the history of human civilization that the people have political liberty in proportion to the public intelligence. Educate the masses and you eliminate the classes in government. Governments become more and more democratic as the people become more and more enlightened.

Education is the tyrant's greatest enemy and the people's warmest friend. In a nation like ours where the government rests upon

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the heads of its intelligent citizenship, in a civilization like the one in which we live, not only the form of the government but the civilization itself depends in no small measure upon public education. The nation, or the state in the nation, or the county in the state will prosper in the proportion that public education is fastened. We may believe this or not but it is just as inevitable as fate.

What then is the function of our public schools? Are they to be ^{be} fostered simply to keep alive patriotism and teach government or are they to touch the heart and life of our people? Is education with us to be as it has been in the past for leadership alone or is it to reach itself down to the very foundation of our life, lay hold of the masses of mankind and bring us to a more vivid realization of our obligations and opportunities and thus raise the standard of living and advance our civilization? As I see it, the public school must not only train for leadership but it must touch in a vital way the every day affairs of our people. We must have leaders in church and state, but we must have also an intelligent citizenship and of the two we most need the intelligent citizenship. From the rank and file we will develop intelligent leaders, provided the rank ^{file} is intelligent. It is the substantial yeomanry of England that has preserved that great nation in many a crisis. And the safety of our nation rests with its enlightened citizenship. What then is to be the function of our public schools? As it appears to me they must touch the every day life of our people. The methods of Agriculture to-day are quite different from the methods in vogue ten years ago. The farm

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has suffered from that constant exodus from the country to the towns. That tide must be stemmed and the boy with brains must be kept on the farm. This can be done only by making farm life so profitable and attractive that the boy will see some future in this occupation. The boys on the farms have not seen ~~any~~ ^a future for them in this occupation. Too many of them are like the little boy who was digging potatoes. A neighbor came along and said, "What are you doing?" "Diggin taters". "What do you get for it?" "Gits nothing if I does and gits the devil if I don't". If our schools teach agriculture and show the youth of our state the possibilities of farm life, if they make this life as attractive as city life, if at that tender age when the life is taking to itself those impressions that time cannot efface, the child ^{is} ~~is~~ made to see the possibilities of the soil then and not until then will this exodus from the farm cease. I am pleased to see that our State Superintendent is taking steps to promote this idea.

But we must go a step further and give our girls instruction not only in music and art but in household economics and home-making. They should realize that it is just as much an accomplishment to turn a house into a home as it is to turn a page of notes into sweet music. They need to be instructed in cooking, dress-making, house-cleaning, sanitation and home making just as much as they need poetry and music. The time must soon come when the country boy and girl will have all the educational advantages now offered the city girl or boy.

I hope I make myself clear with these two illustrations. It

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is the business of the schools to touch in a vital way the every day life of our people but on the other hand we must not neglect those great under-lying principles of education and give ourselves over entirely to vocational training. Every child should have his aesthetic nature trained. He should be able to appreciate the beautiful in poetry, painting and literature. The most-to-be-pitied human being I know is the one who has to be entertained all the time. If he does not find in himself something worth while, if he cannot find himself at home with the world's great minds, he has not been properly educated. When his day's duties are over he should be able to find some comfort in his papers, magazines and books.

It is useless for me to say to you that the demands upon the teachers of today are greater than they have ever been before.

They need your constant support. They earn all they get and more too. Often a parent has a boy or girl he cannot control, ^{and yet} but he expects the teacher to make a model out of this kind of material. The parents obligations are not less but greater when the child starts to school. Too often the parent robs the teacher of his home time by giving the child home duties that prevent the child from preparing his school work. The child should be required to study a definite amount at home each day. The parents only can see to this. Do not think because you got along without studying at home your child can; for the requirements of this generation are greater than the requirements of your generation. More is expected of the child of to-day than of the child of the past and more still will be expected of the child of the future. We owe

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more to this generation than our parents owed to our generation. If civilization is to continue to advance, each generation must go further than the past. You owe it to your children to see that only the best teachers are employed and that the school terms are made as long as possible. It is economy to you to employ only good teachers.

Give in figures the economic value of a well trained teacher for twelve years, \$15000.00 - more than the total amount paid the trained teacher.