

THE VIRGINIA TEACHER

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EDUCATIONAL COMMENT

RESOLUTIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF SUPERINTENDENCE

Cleveland, Ohio, March 1, 1923

UNANIMOUSLY the Department of Superintendence re-endorsed the Town-er-Sterling bill in a resolution that admits of no doubtful interpretation. This is the fifth successive time that the Educational Bill has been endorsed by the Department. The Bill has also been endorsed by every summer meeting of the Association since it was formulated. There should be no question of the intention of the educational workers of America to continue their fight until the excellent provisions of this Bill have become law.

The resolutions committee was composed of Dr. William M. Davidson, superintendent of schools, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, chairman; M. L. P. Benzet, superintendent of schools, Evansville, Indiana; Mr. J. S. Hoffman, county superintendent of schools, Flemington, New Jersey; Dr. William B. Owen, President of the National Education Association, Chicago, Illinois; Miss Belle M. Ryan, assistant superintendent of schools, Omaha, Nebraska; Mr. Paul C. Stetson, Superintendent of schools, Dayton, Ohio; and Mr. Ernest A. Smith, superintendent of schools, Evanston, Illinois.

We sincerely commend the action of the President of the United States in calling upon the people of the whole country, by special proclamation last December, to set aside a

week to be observed throughout all the states and territories as American Education Week. We likewise commend the governors of the several states and territories and the mayors of all the cities who promptly supplemented the President's proclamation by similar appeals. By this nation-wide observance of American Education Week the people of the entire country have been aroused to a new recognition of the fact that the destiny of America rests upon the adequate and proper education of all the children of all the people.

2. We gratefully acknowledge the enlarged support that has been granted education by state and territorial legislatures, by boards of education, and by a responsive public, which have generously recognized grave educational needs. We earnestly urge the legislatures now in session, in whose hands rests the control of the public schools, to provide for a continuance of the educational advance to the end that there may be an American school good enough for every American child. We believe that money expended for education is the best possible investment and rejoice that every attempt at reaction against a proper and adequate provision of funds for public school purposes, whether made by a single individual or by a backward-looking group, is met in every state and territory in the Union by a wall of men and women who stand insisting that the American dollar shall never be placed above the American child. As administrators of public education, responsible for this investment, we dedicate ourselves anew to the task of directing education with wise economy and exact accounting to the end that the schools may become ever better instruments in the production of an improved citizenry.

3. We note with satisfaction and heartily endorse the expressed intention of Congress to make the school system of Washington the model school system of the country. We pledge to Congress our hearty support of this proposed legislation and of such appropriation of funds as may be necessary to provide in the Nation's capital a system of public education which shall exemplify to the Nation the best in administration, supervision, business management, and teaching service. To this end we urge the immediate passage of the Teachers' Salary Bill now pending before Congress.

4. We recognize that a Department of

Education is necessary in order that the educational activities of our National Government shall be efficiently and economically administered. We believe that National sanction and National leadership can be provided only in the person of a Secretary of Education in the President's Cabinet. Federal aid for the purpose of stimulating the several States to remove illiteracy, Americanize the foreign born, prepare teachers, develop adequate programs of physical education, and equalize educational opportunities, is in accord with our long established practice and is demanded by the present crisis in education. We therefore reaffirm our allegiance to the Towner-Sterling Bill.

5. The welfare of the Nation demands that boys and girls living in the country shall have educational advantages commensurate with those enjoyed by children living in the cities. We endorse the movement which contemplates placing a competent and professionally trained county superintendent of schools, directing a professionally-trained body of teachers genuinely interested in country life, in every county in every State and Territory of the Republic. To this end we urge that the burden of raising funds in locality, State and Nation shall be so justly and equitably distributed between the stronger and the weaker taxing units as to make the opportunity of the boy or girl in a rural school equal to that of the child in the most favored city-school system.

6. We commend the devotion and zeal of the classroom teachers of America who have caught the spirit of the new educational advance and given themselves without reserve to the task of maintaining the ideals and standards of our American system of public education, and who have dedicated themselves to the high purpose of translating the increased funds provided for education into a worthy and upright citizenry, whose faith in the high ideals and the best traditions of America, and whose recognition of the principle of obedience to established law, shall guarantee the security and well-being of the Republic.

7. We record our grateful appreciation of the exceptional hospitality of the people of the city of Cleveland; of the untiring efforts of the local committee; and of the coöperation of the Chamber of Commerce and the public press. We especially thank the members of the board of education, the officers, teachers,

and children of the public schools, and the presidents and faculties of Cleveland's colleges and universities—all of whom have helped to make this convention one of the most successful in the history of the Department.

DISCONCERTING CRITICISM OF AMERICAN EDUCATION

It is in connection with an analysis of the white man's philosophy of life that Nathaniel Peffer writes in the February *Century Magazine* on "The Real Revolt against Civilization." Mr. Peffer undertakes to show the Oriental's reasons for disbelief in western civilization, and of course finds himself immediately under the necessity of defining his own and the Oriental conception of education.

"Where is there universal education? Where has there ever been universal education for the majority, or for more than an infinitesimal minority? I do not mean literacy. I am not confusing the two. There is no more fatuous and common fallacy in our thinking than that illiteracy and ignorance are synonymous and that a man who cannot read and write necessarily cannot have more of wisdom, a surer perception of the relation of fundamentals, and a keener discrimination between truth and error than one who can read and write. No man could know peasant Russia or peasant Italy or China or Japan or India and suffer that delusion. Given a human situation, I should as soon trust a group of illiterate Chinese rustics to find a decent and intelligent solution as a group of Colorado high-school-graduate business men. Or Harvard alumni, for that matter.

"In America . . . neither a science nor a philosophy of education has been worked out. One finds reading, writing, and ciphering, the mechanical stuffing of a vast mass of facts unrelated to one another, and a rigid body of dogma forever indurating the mind against new ideas or a new outlook. Judged not by the complexity of its processes and the number of units it handles, but by the quality of its product, it is as the laboring of mountains. It has borne better bond salesmen, advertising writers, and organizers. It is not too much of an exaggeration to say that the main result in America of the educational

system and of the press and similar means of communication as well has been to make more easy the implanting of prejudice and the recruiting of popular bigotry and to increase the striking power of the mob. If I were a Hindu Machiavelli with sinister designs for the control of my people for my own ends, I should first introduce the Occidental educational system and establish a press. No other machines could so effectively facilitate the regimenting of the nation for my purpose."

ECONOMIZING ON THE KIDS

DR. HENRY PRITCHETT, former president of Technology, in his annual report as the head of the Carnegie Foundation, has made some startling comments upon the high cost of education. His sympathy is all with the taxpayer. His figures, no doubt, will be quoted by more than one citizen rising to speak on town-meeting day. Unless some way of lightening the burden is found, he says, the taxpayer will revolt, and free public education will be endangered.

Dr. Pritchett presents figures to show that the cost of the public schools in the United States has risen from \$140,000,000 in 1890 to about \$1,000,000,000 in 1920. Presumably there has been a further increase in the last two years. Every taxpayer who consults his city or town report will find that schools and roads are the items which show the heaviest increase. In Massachusetts, according to a recent report of the Commissioner of Taxation, 26 1/2 cents of every dollar raised by state and local taxation is spent on the schools. Many of the Middle Western States are more liberal than we are in financing education.

Part of the increased cost of running our schools is easily explained. The cost of operating everything, from a five-room dwelling to a boiler factory, has made prodigious jumps in twenty years. Dr. Pritchett takes note of the rapid growth of population. He thinks that expenditures for larger and better equipped school buildings have been justified and that the increase of teachers' salaries has been necessary. What seems to worry him is that we are spending seven times as much as we used to spend to educate our youth.

Dr. Pritchett condemns the modern notion that we should give the child a smattering of

everything and, in addition, should fit the boy or girl for a trade or a profession. He intimates that in undertaking to do this we are biting off more than we can chew. There is a difference of opinion among educators as to the wisdom of expanding the school curriculum, though there will be general agreement with Dr. Pritchett that "there are certain studies which must be made the intellectual background of any American child who is to become a good citizen." The place which vocational training should occupy in a public-school system is a problem by no means settled.

But when a prominent educator questions the propriety of keeping a child in school as long as possible, a great many good American citizens will sit up and take notice. That is one way to curtail expenditures, but *it is not the American way.*

"The American father," says the president of the Carnegie Foundation, "assumes that the child must be kept in the public school whether he can do the work or not. The overemphasis on education, and in particular on higher education, as the sole opening for the youth of the country, has not only filled the schools with ill-assorted pupils, but has closed the minds of people to the opportunities offered by agencies other than the school."

It can hardly be said that literacy tables which have been presented to the country indicate as yet that we place too much emphasis on education. It might even be submitted that we are still an ill-assorted people.

We have always supposed in America that our hope of making our experiment in self-government a success was through the leaven of popular education, as widely diffused as possible. Dr. Pritchett's reasoning seems to be strangely at variance with that fundamental American doctrine.

Before we start cutting the school budgets, it would be wise, perhaps, to reflect that the heaviest tax charges we are now carrying are due to the failure of our civilization. Our state taxes are modest in comparison with what we pay into the coffers of the Federal taxgatherers. Our annual overhead charge for past and future wars now amounts to about two-and-a-half billions. Most of this expense was entailed in one war, which lasted for us less than two years.

Our criminals and defectives are costing the taxpayers of the country nearly a billion dollars a year.

In other countries, sorely oppressed by taxation, the tendency has been to pinch on education. In America there will be wide spread opposition to economizing at the expense of future generations. We are committed to another policy. A billion dollars spent in improving the capacity of the race to settle its international problems with its heads, instead of with battleships and machine guns, is a measure of economy. No nation alone can solve the problem of avoiding periodical debauches which kill off the manhood of the world and destroy its accumulated capital, but the strongest nation in the world ought to lead the way. A half-billion spent to cut down illiteracy, which breeds crime, is also a measure of economy.

Popular education is the only remedy we have for the defects of our civilization. There probably is waste in school administration. If so, the thing to do is to cut out the waste, not to curtail education.—Editorial in the Boston Globe, February 27, 1923.

A POOR SHOWING FOR VIRGINIA

A report of the United States Department of Agriculture just completed shows that the average amount of state, county and local taxes paid by farmers throughout the whole country was 70.9 cents per acre in 1922 as against 31.4 cents in 1914. This increase of 126 percent in eight years is due especially to the improvements being made in roads and public schools as principal causes. The greatest increase in the eight years apparently is in Tennessee and is 179 percent. The least is in arid Arizona where no increase has been made.

The table below indicates the relative rank of Virginia in regard to the matter of increase of taxes. It should be said that one state, namely Arizona, which has made no increase is the only state ranking below Virginia in this regard. Maryland has made the same percentage increase; but Virginia in 1922 has secured from taxation of farm land 40 per cent as much as Maryland and very much less than Maryland was obtaining in 1914. In addition to this it should be said that Maryland is a small state with one large city, Baltimore, which contributes disproportionately to school funds; and that in Maryland unlike Virginia a method has been devised of aiding communities where tax valuations are low.

State	Farm tax per acre		Percentage increase
	1914	1922	1914-1922
Tennessee	19c	53c	179%
North Carolina	16c	44c	175%
South Carolina	13c	35c	169%
Mississippi	26c	67c	159%
West Virginia	21c	52c	148%
Florida	28c	65c	132%
Kentucky	24c	52c	117%
Alabama	14c	27c	93%
Georgia	16c	30c	88%
Maryland	50c	85c	70%
Virginia	20c	34c	70%

The figures referred to in the report from which the above table is made up show that in only five states in the Union does farm land make less in amount of taxes than in Virginia. These are Montana, New Mexico and Arizona, which have vast expanse of arid land, and Alabama and Georgia which are included in the table above, where the percentage increase in eight years has been considerably larger than in Virginia and where the large proportion of negro population complicates the problem.

On the basis therefore of these figures it would seem that as soon as Virginia recuperates from the effects of frost, drouth and the poor market conditions of the last two or three years, since it is so largely a rural state, that farm land must be expected to render a much larger return than is now the case, or Virginia which was rated forty-first among the states of the Union when Dr. Ayres made a study recently of state systems will slip down to a still lower place in the scale.

THE FIGHT TO THE FINISH

PERSONS familiar with the processes by which great movements are crystallized into legislation will recognize that the fight for the Education Bill is now entering upon a new phase. The aims of the Bill may be realized in the next Congress or it may take longer. It took ten years to obtain the Departments of Commerce and Labor. The Education Bill has been before Congress but half that long and it has already won such an overwhelming National support that *every attack* by its enemies *only adds to its strength* by uniting its friends and making new converts to its cause.

When it was known that a group within the United States Chamber of Commerce would force, under the present abnormal conditions, a vote on the proposals embodied in the Bill, the outcome of the vote was scarcely a matter of question. Business men generally, and especially those engaged in the larger operations known as "big business," have set themselves strongly against two things: (1) further increase in taxation, especially through the levies on incomes and business profits, and (2) further extension of Federal participation in the support of public enterprises that have hitherto been left to the states and the local communities.

With this reactionary attitude so clearly evident, it is gratifying to know that so many of the leading Chambers of Commerce throughout the country voted in favor of the Towner-Sterling Bill after the most thoroughgoing and serious consideration of its proposals and in the face of a majority report against the Bill from the Chamber's committee.

With this action of a strong and influential minority in favor of the Bill, it is only a question of a short time and of the inevitable "reaction against reaction" already setting in, before the Chambers that voted adversely will reverse their decisions.

In the meanwhile the Association and all those who are united with it in the support of the National program will stand four-square against the powerful forces that are attempting to turn the flank of this far-flung forward movement in American education. If anything could be more clearly indicative of the solidarity of sentiment among the public-school workers than the enthusiasm that greeted the resolution at Cleveland re-indorsing the Bill, it is the action of the Department of Superintendence in electing as its president the man who has held the fort so stanchly in the center of the bitterest opposition that has yet been directed against the measure. Those who have prophesied that the professional support of the National program would suffer from the organized efforts to defeat it can now see how sadly they misjudged the integrity of the American teacher. The profession has not been enlisted for a three months' or for a three years' campaign. It has foreseen the battle; it has taken the full measure of its opponents; it will meet every attack with new courage

and with fresh accessions of popular support. When the welfare of the Nation and of the Nation's children is at stake, does any one imagine for a moment that this great movement will halt one inch short of a complete and overwhelming victory?

A PROGRAM FOR CHAMBER OF COMMERCE ACTIVITIES

An Address by President Samuel P. Duke to the Board of Directors of the Harrisonburg Chamber of Commerce, March 12, 1923

Duty of Chamber

It might be well for us in beginning a new year to ask ourselves the question, "What is the function of a Chamber of Commerce?" Manifestly it has been in the past, primarily, the promotion of the welfare of the commercial interests of our City. It is not too much to assume, however, that our Chamber of Commerce should be, and is now, conscious of a bigger and perhaps more unselfish objective, namely, the making of our city a place where all its people can live more completely, satisfying in a more complete manner all of their worthy aspirations.

In the light of this more comprehensive purpose, therefore, it appears that the Board of Directors should map out for the Chamber of Commerce for the current year a definite and attainable program that will enlist the hearty support of not only the entire membership of this organization but the support also of all right thinking and forward looking citizens of our city.

Public Utilities

One of the first tests that we may apply to any city as a place in which to live and work is the test of its public utilities—what of its water supply, its lighting and power facilities, its moral and sanitary conditions, the character and effectiveness of its government, and chief of all its public school system, for any city that does not look first to the welfare of its children is a city without a vision or a city which, though it may have eyes—sees not. We have a school situation in Harrisonburg that cannot long continue without serious and permanent injury to many of the children of our City. There are several hundred school chil-