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EDUCATION IN THE PRESENT CRISIS

THIS open letter to members of state legislatures has been prepared for distribution by the editors of the *School Executives Magazine*, in the January issue of which it first appeared. For its sensible and logical statement of the situation it may be commended to Virginia legislators.

"Dear Legislator:

"We are taking this liberty of writing to you briefly on the important subject of education. You will be called upon to vote on many educational measures which will be brought before the coming session of your legislature. Decisions will be difficult, especially with regard to those measures that affect the support of education. We all recognize the seriousness of the present economic situation and the necessity for rigid economy in all public expenditures. Economy is essential, but if we lose sight of the welfare of the state and the welfare of the people in effecting these economies, it will be a matter which will have the most serious consequences for our children.

"It cannot be too emphatically asserted that education is the foundation of the democratic state. The Fathers of the Republic saw that. President Madison said, 'A popular government without popular information or the means of acquiring it is but a prologue to a farce or a tragedy, or, perhaps, both . . . people who mean to be their own governors must arm themselves with the power which Knowledge gives.' In this faith, the American system of education has been created and developed. The social stability which has characterized America in this period of depression would have been impossible without our system of education. The social well-being of tomorrow is in a large measure dependent upon the school of today. Madison's words are

more significant for the industrial age in which we live than they were for his own time.

"Three considerations are basic to the educational bills which you will consider during the present session:

"1. An orderly solution of our economic, political, and social problems is dependent upon a high level of social intelligence among all the people. The alternative to this is mob psychology and mob rule. *Ignorant citizenship exploited by the demagogue will certainly lead to social disintegration.* The conditions of the present time demand leaders with far-seeing vision. The ignorant, it must be remembered, cannot follow the wise leader wisely. Every school in this country should be an institution for the education of children, youth, and adults with regard to the economic, political, and social problems of our day. The narrow curriculum—reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic—which so many well-meaning persons are advocating today, constitutes nothing less than a *social menace*. These persons forget the long hours of leisure of the machine age and the complexity of the society in which we live.

"2. Educational opportunity denied to the children of the state today is taken away from them forever. *New roads as well as other improvements may be postponed without irreparable damage to individuals, but the education of a child cannot be postponed without irreparable damage to that child.* This would constitute an injustice to the individual child by robbing him of his rightful American heritage, and it would be a menace to the state, for in so doing we of today would be contributing to the ignorance of tomorrow. Our system of education is not perfect. It has many defects, but it is the only instrument which has been

created to serve this most important function of democracy. Let us strengthen, not weaken, our schools in this moment of national calamity!

"3. Budgetary problems and the support of education cannot be considered apart from other problems of taxation. Many of our present difficulties are due to antiquated tax laws. A tax system that denies education to children in one community while making good schools possible in another (because of the concentration of population, or wealth, or both) should no longer be tolerated in America. There is sufficient wealth in America and sufficient national income, even in this time of most serious depression, to provide educational necessities for all our youth. Under our present system of taxation, unjust burdens are imposed upon many taxpayers, especially upon farmers and small house owners. The educational crisis demands a reform of our tax laws. *It demands state systems of school finance, under which all the wealth of the state will be drawn upon for the education of all the children of the state.*

"Recently, Mr. A. F. Harman, State Superintendent of Education in the State of Alabama, stated the educational issue most clearly when he said, 'We are indeed put to it to solve the financial problems of the state, but there is no excuse for ignorance. We cannot afford to balance the budget with the ignorance of children.'

"In writing to you, we wish to make it clear that we are animated solely by our desire to protect this generation of boys and girls who, through no fault of their own, find themselves the victims of this depression. We, who are ready to bear the burdens and make the necessary sacrifices, are looking to you to protect the rights of your children and our children."

Twenty-one of every 1,000 gainfully employed persons are engaged in passing on the torch of civilization by teaching.

THE LIBRARY'S PART IN EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS

DR. SIDNEY B. HALL, Superintendent of Public Instruction of Virginia, in a recent letter to division superintendents and members of school boards, says: "When the school board provides a balanced collection of good books and magazines, necessary supplies and equipment, a suitable room, and a trained librarian, the library soon becomes the heart of the school."

Dr. Wm. John Cooper, U. S. Commissioner of Education, in a letter of transmittal in Bulletin 1930, No. 6—*State Direction of Rural School Library Service*, states that "schools were never so dependent upon adequate library facilities as they are at the present time. This condition has come about largely through modern school curricula which demand for their execution large collections of books, magazines, and other reading matter relating to many subjects. At the present time much stress is being placed upon the necessity for well-trained teachers and supervisors of instruction. It is poor economy to provide a highly trained teaching personnel and withhold the tools necessary for good instruction. Libraries, like maps, globes, blackboards, and laboratory equipment, are tools of instruction. The need for better library facilities for children living in the rural areas of our country is very great."

C. C. Certain, in the Foreword of his bulletin on *Elementary School Library Standards* which was prepared under the supervision of a joint committee of the National Education Association and the American Library Association, says "modern demands upon the public school presuppose adequate library service. Significant changes in methods of teaching require that the school library supplement the single textbook course of instruction and provide for the enrichment of the school curriculum. Children in the school are actively engaged