

## COSTLY "ECONOMY"

**B**UILD schools today or more jails tomorrow." Such is the conviction of those who know the social values of education; such was the declaration echoed by the state educators as they recently assembled in Washington on the call of the U. S. Commissioner of Education.

U. S. Commissioner Zook said:

It is estimated 100,000 children have been thrown back on the streets by the recovery codes, and the schools must find a way to handle them.

Dr. Lee, a prominent educator, said:

It costs \$300 a year to keep a criminal. A good educational program can be provided at \$50 a year per pupil. The Government ought to be able to choose the better of these two possibilities.

Miss Charl O. Williams, former president of the National Education Association, present Field Secretary of that organization, a vice-president of the Parent-Teachers Association, has stated in her recent addresses to various bodies:

School doors were closed to over a half million children before the end of last March and over 250,000 children before the end of last March and over 250,000 children attend school on a part-time basis; 150,000 were housed in temporary buildings.

While public school enrolments have increased at a faster than normal rate during the last three years, additional school buildings to take care of that enrolment have not been built. Needed equipment is not being bought; additional teachers are not being hired. In short, the schools have suffered from the depression to a degree entirely incompatible with their importance to the country and it seems certain that unless substantial aid is forthcoming the school term will be shortened for more children this year than last, that curtailments throughout the school systems will be even more severe.

In commenting on this situation the *Omaha Bee-News* stated in an editorial September 20:

Having abated child labor, Uncle Sam must keep the idle children off the streets and away from the breeding spots of crime.

The only way to accomplish that purpose is to provide adequate schools—and the public works program provides a medium.

Schools, built now, will increase employment when more jobs are a national objective.

Jails built in the years to come will signify a great national disaster.

The *Washington Daily News* commented in part as follows:

Thirty thousand teachers are being sent to the breadlines.

Why? The depression, of course, is chiefly to blame. But so are the antiquated local tax systems and the senseless duplications of small governmental units that President Roosevelt says belong to the ox-cart days. Finally there is a shallow and dangerous propaganda against "over-education," a covert attack on the very foundation of the public school system.

The educators are organizing to demand federal aid. This means not only relief money for needy teachers, public works funds for school buildings, grants for adult and vocational education. It means a substantial grant by the next Congress to carry the schools over the crisis and probably a permanent federal subsidy on the state-aid plan.

The *Washington Herald*, a Hearst paper, made this comment in a recent issue:

How much are the American people spending on education? How much on other things?

Speaking as president of the National Education Association at its recent Chicago convention, Joseph Rosier presented these facts:

"Official estimates of the U. S. Office of Education place expenditures for public elementary and secondary schools for the school year just concluded at approximately \$1,900,000,000.

"At the same time, our annual expenditures for gasoline were approximately \$1,982,000,000. We spent as much to propel our automobiles as we did to educate our children.

"The annual income of a single chewing-gum company in 1930 was larger than the income for public schools in any one of twenty-six states.

"Our expenditures for admission to moving pictures, theaters, prize fights, cabarets and the like amounted to \$1,240,000,000.

"The nation that will close kindergartens and night schools while it continues to spend these huge sums on amusements, often of doubtful value, is pursuing a dangerous policy."

Surveys have shown distinctly the fact that one defect in the educational system of the nation is in the distribution of funds.

The state has, to a large degree, kept education going by its supervisory functions. Areas which for temporary or economic reasons would let their schoolhouses close have been assisted as a matter of state policy.

The depression has had the effect of closing many such schools. It has also emphasized the inherent weakness in the system.

Just as some areas in certain states must have help in school maintenance, so are there also states which are handicapped. The cure for this would seem to be a system of federal aid, supplementing that of the states.

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Following the line of least resistance is what makes rivers and men crooked.