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EDUCATION AND THE NEXT GENERATION

No progressive nation can "skip a generation in her intellectual leadership" without peril to industry, government, morality, and religion.

IT IS easy in times of depression to sap the sources of our national strength. No one would intentionally betray the future but in our recent hysteria we have advanced programs of economy which threaten the rights of the next generation. There is need that voices be raised in every American community in defense of education and in behalf of the interests of our children. I venture to be one of those voices.

Our histories will soon be giving an account of the "panic of 1929." When the history of that event is finally written no one man, nor any particular group of men, will be held responsible for it. The responsibility is broader than any political party or any particular industrial group. It is increasingly clear to intelligent people that the depression of 1929 was the result of a chain of events which had their beginning in 1914. The great war upset the industrial order of the whole world and plunged us into an era of building, buying, and spending on a colossal scale. The American people were drawn into a vast and foolish credit system and into extravagant and expensive living. No one man led us into it and no one man can lead us out. Recovery is impossible until the people of this nation "right-about-face" and begin the practice of intelligent thrift, payment of their debts, and the productive investment of the money.

The depression has fallen heavily upon education. Our system of education is paralyzed beyond measure. There are 300 colleges in our country faced by complete extinction. That is about 33 1/3 per cent of the total number of our American colleges. The tragedy of it is that most of these 300 colleges are the small colleges of the country which have been extending the advantages of higher education to our youth who are without economic advantage. Our system of primary and secondary education is also seriously crippled. In April of last year one southern state announced 380 schools closed and 100 more on the verge of closing. Another state closed the schools in 35 of her 67 counties and withdrew educational opportunity from three hundred thousand children. These are typical instances. Our educational system is paralyzed throughout the country.

The panic of 1837 is said to have been our most severe. The panic of 1873, of 1893, and of 1907 were all great crises in our history. But without exception our fathers met these crises with an increased emphasis on education. Following the panic of 1837, we organized state departments of education, appointed school superintendents, improved our facilities for training teachers, established educational publications, and above all produced an "educational Moses" in the immortal Horace Mann. In all of these periods of distress our leaders had the vision to see that the forces of growth and strength could not be in abeyance. They had an unwavering faith in the importance and the value of education. They recognized that an illiterate and ignorant citizenship was a peril to the form and principles of government which they had evolved. No progressive nation can "skip

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President Butler, of Columbia University, has recently pointed out that the men who should be guiding the affairs of the world now were murdered in the years 1914 to 1918. At least one cause for the confusion of the present moment and for our inability to find our way out of the morass of political and economic uncertainty is the dearth of brains and vision caused by the loss of ten million young men twenty years ago. From among these should come our leadership now, but they shall never heed the cry of the world for help. What the world war did so ruthlessly we are now in danger of doing so subtly that we are scarcely aware of it. We are in the act of impairing the leadership of twenty and forty years hence through our depleted and paralyzed systems of education. The future cannot pay such a price for the depression of 1929-34.

The college trained man has sometimes been discounted in finance and industry. We shall soon repent of this shallowness of ours. Out of five hundred and seventy commercial bankruptcies recently studied by the Federal Department of Commerce it was found that forty per cent of the leaders in those concerns had not finished the grades in public school; seventy per cent had not completed high school, and less than ten per cent were college trained men. It was found that twenty-five per cent of the leading business men of the country had only eighth grade education. Modern business is complex and the public interest demands competent economic leadership. American business needs brains and character more than it needs inflation and credit.

Our national committee on Child Labor has announced a movement to take two million children out of American industry. What are we going to do with those children? It has been suggested that we can "put them in jail." But it costs more to

keep a man in prison than it does to send him to college. It is further suggested that we could put them in the army and navy. But it costs more to maintain armies and build naval vessels than it does to pay teachers and maintain schools.

Education must bear its part of the economic burden and no doubt would benefit by numerous economies. But when we cut budgets let us be certain that we do not "lose our children and our democracy" in the process. So long as the American people spend two dollars for candy and chewing gum for every one dollar spent on education, there is no serious need for paralyzing education in the name of "necessary economy."

One of the most tragic situations in our educational system is the condition which is forcing out of the teaching profession many of our most capable men and women. When we allow a situation to arise which makes it impossible for a man in education to support his family and lead a life of reasonable social and economic dignity we shall force upon our children in the next generation teachers of superficial training and mediocre ability.

The leadership of the next generation is in our schools now. We shall be traitors to the future if we fail to provide the best potential leadership of which we are capable. Our future civilization is now in our hands and we shall make or mar it as we provide adequately and intelligently for the children of this generation.

PAUL H. BOWMAN

Whoever is satisfied with what he does has reached his culminating point; he will progress no more. Man's destiny is not to be satisfied, but forever unsatisfied—not to succeed, but to labor.

The power and glory of all creatures consists in their obedience, not in their freedom—*Ruskin*.