Education

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EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT


THE PRESIDENT'S CONFERENCE OF CITIZENS ON THE EDUCATIONAL CRISIS

President Hoover issued a call in December, 1932, at the request of a number of interested organizations, for a Citizens' Conference on the Crisis in Education. The organizations concerned were: the American Council on Education, the American Farm Bureau Federation, the American Federation of Labor, the National Association of Manufacturers, and the National Grange. The conference convened on January 5 and 6, 1933. President Hoover’s address in opening the first meeting was in part as follows:

This conference is unusual, in that it invites the co-operation of men of widely different points of view in the consideration of our school and tax system from the standpoint of maintaining the welfare of the children of today.

Our governmental forces have grown unevenly and along with our astounding national development. We are now forced to make decisions on the merits of the various expenditures. But in the rigid governmental economies that are requisite everywhere we must not encroach upon the schools or reduce the opportunity of the child through the school to develop adequate citizenship. There is no safety for our republic without the education of our youth. That is the first charge upon all citizens and local governments.

I have confidence that with adequate reduction of expenditures there can be ample amounts obtained from reasonable taxation to keep our school system intact and functioning satisfactorily. Those in charge of the schools must be willing to face conditions as they are, to co-operate in discarding all unnecessary expenditure, to analyze all procedures, and to carry forward on a solid basis of economy. But the schools must be carried on.
The conference adopted statements prepared by its committees. Several of the most important of these actions are as follows:

WHEREAS, The conference is informed that additional drastic cuts in budgets and salaries have been made during recent months, amounting in many localities to as much as 25 to 40 per cent, and that schools in a number of states and localities have been closed completely, thus depriving children of all educational opportunities; and

WHEREAS, Education is an important public function; and

WHEREAS, The loss of educational opportunity by youth is irreplaceable;

Therefore, Be it Resolved, That the educational service should be accorded a high degree of priority in determining the purposes and services which shall be supported by the states during a depression.

The major wastes in education should be eliminated through the elimination of control and interference by politicians, of political appointments and of political corruption.

Local governments and local school districts should be reorganized and consolidated.

Administrative control of the schools must be centralized in the superintendent.

State administrative organization of education must be reorganized through the creation of a non-political and professional agency for the administration of the educational policies of the state.

The state must assume the responsibility within its means of assuring adequate public education to all local communities, irrespective of their financial condition.

All governments, local, state and national, must direct attention to the immediate reformation of the system of taxation.

Immediate efforts should be made through the raising of the general level of commodity prices, the correction of serious economic maladjustments, and otherwise, to increase the volume of income and purchasing power; and thus to provide the moneys necessary for a proper educational program. If this is not done, widespread injury will result, not only to the cause of education, but to the value of all obligations, public and private.

It is the judgment of this committee that it is possible, through such a financial system as will render all the wealth and income of the nation equitably liable to taxation, to provide for the proper support of the American plan of education in each of the states of the Union. This American plan is based upon the principle of an equality of opportunity for all youth to secure a complete education, and upon the continuance of appropriate instruction of those adult indi-
individuals and classes in need of effective adjustment to the changing economic and social conditions.

Resolved That we urge the Congress to provide for federal assistance through emergency loans for a limited period to such states as may make an adequate showing of their inability to maintain reasonable standards of support for public-school education.

CRIPPLING OF THE FEDERAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION

Among the retrenchments which have been made in educational budgets, none is more serious than that which Congress approved as a part of the economy campaign of 1932 when it reduced the resources of the United States Office of Education by 36 per cent, that is, in a ratio far greater than the ratio by which it reduced other governmental services. The Office of Education has been compelled to abandon its national survey of educational finance, to reduce the scope of its survey of teacher training in the United States, and to give up its publication of lists of current writings in the field of education. The funds available for the publication of bulletins is reduced to the point where the preparation and distribution of information on national developments in education will be limited to the commissioner's reports and to a vanishingly small number of other documents.

The withdrawal of federal services at a time when the educational problems which confront the communities of the United States are more difficult of solution than they have ever been in the history of the nation shows how short-sighted is the American policy of dealing with schools. The fact is that schools are overcrowded with a rapidly increasing pupil population because children are excluded from industry; local school budgets are drastically reduced; legislatures are at a loss to devise wise legislation for public education. In spite of the urgent need of intelligence, the one source of comprehensive information regarding education is dried up for the reason that Congress is influenced by political considerations to maintain in full force other public services which have far less social significance than education.

The legislatures which convene in 1933 should have been supplied with the guidance which would have come from a national survey of
school finance. Fortunately, the General Education Board provided $25,000 to continue certain parts of the finance survey, but the main undertaking which depended on federal support had to be abandoned. Local school systems are in constant need of guidance. The policy of this country has been to leave the control of education almost entirely to local authorities. There is no such centralization of educational control as there is in other great civilizations. The United States Office of Education has rendered a national service which is indispensable if the scattered local authorities are to organize schools as they should. The curtailment of this essential service will have serious consequences.

THE CALIFORNIA SURVEY OF HIGHER EDUCATION

A notable document enunciating general principles in regard to the organization of state systems of public education was issued by the commission which carried on the survey of the university, teachers' colleges, and junior colleges of California under the chairmanship of Henry Suzzallo, president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. This document recognizes the fact that the primary function of a state system of public education is to provide a universal training for all the people of the state. It goes beyond many earlier pronouncements, however, and sets forth the contention that under modern conditions universal public education cannot stop with the elementary school. It states explicitly that provision for education through the junior college is a public obligation.

With respect to the curriculum of secondary schools, the report makes the following statement:

The most significant body of psychological fact concerning human nature that has recently influenced our thinking or our action is that which reveals the astounding range of individual differences in a social or school population. People are not all alike. To believe they are and to treat them as though they were is to commit a grave human injustice to many individuals, and to deprive society of the use of their full powers. Social and educational justice is far more nearly realized by treating students differently than by treating them identically. Differentiated treatment is necessary the moment individual differences begin to assert themselves in such a manner as to make inadequate the traditional curriculum and method of common schools. It may first express itself in allow-
ing or providing a different mode of approach to the study of the world and civilization.

Inability or lack of interest exhibited by a pupil demands a redirection of intellectual interest and provision for a shift of educational emphasis. A change of emphasis from the academic to other domains of arts, letters, or science, on the part of a student, often salvages a school career and acts as a spur to continuous learning. After some years of common schooling a considerable portion of students in compulsory attendance show a lapse of interest. The fact that such persons display limited ability in liberal studies may indicate that their chief powers lie in other directions than the purely literary or mathematical. Here arises the necessity for providing vocational courses of a quality and value equal to, and co-ordinate with, those of an academic nature. This situation involves growing numbers of cases as larger and larger groups of the population move through the school system toward the upper levels of common schooling. New intellectual opportunities and new opportunities for specialized, vocational training are then plainly indicated, the more so because little by little the school has been forced to assume responsibilities that the home and industry cannot or will not longer perform. But in all such cases the trade or industrial teacher still has the responsibility of socializing or civilizing the student through connecting in the fullest possible extent his vocational activity with the rest of civilized life. Sometimes late, sometimes early, the readjustment just implied takes place for every student.

The report advocates for the university above the junior college a curriculum designed to train for specialized professional callings, thus recognizing a distinction between general education and the lower forms of vocational education, on the one hand, and higher specialized professional education, on the other hand. A quotation which sets forth this contrast is as follows:

_The main function of the university system._—_It is the main function of the university system, which includes the upper divisions of colleges, the graduate schools, and the professional schools, to educate specialists for the strategically important social services which modern civilization requires, and to do this with full regard to the number of such specialists that society can utilize. Among the specialized callings for which the university system educates are research, teaching, the ministry, the law, medicine and surgery, engineering, and similar professions._

Provision for general education in the United States commonly closes at the end of the second college year, or at the end of the lower division or junior college. Certainly, it is a very general practice throughout the United States, particularly in most institutions west of the Appalachian Mountains, to begin scholarly concentration in the arts, sciences, and letters with the third (or junior) college year; that is, with the senior college proper, and to begin either
A committee created by the Progressive Education Association has during the past year held a number of conferences with representatives of colleges in different parts of the United States at which a plan has been proposed for relaxation of college-entrance requirements. The plan contemplates the selection of a number of schools which shall be permitted, under the supervision of a committee including representatives of the schools and colleges, to undertake radical revisions of their curricula. The schools are to be allowed to recommend their graduates to the colleges, and the colleges are to receive these graduates even though their records do not include the courses which the colleges ordinarily require for admission.

The purposes which the Progressive Education Association wishes to promote by this plan are stated as follows:

To this end we should like to provide, more fully than the present organization of the secondary school permits, for: (1) more continuity in learning; greater mastery in whatever fields of learning are undertaken; this includes: acquisition of effective techniques of study and of expression, capacity to see facts in their relationships, power to organize knowledge for a valid purpose, power and impetus to pursue learning beyond the limits of the "assignment"; (2) more chance for the release of creative energies; (3) more time and scope for pupils, with guidance, to develop their varied types of power and talent with the highest possible skill and seriously to pursue their special interests; and (4) more definite plans to help children: to realize the interdependence and the interrelationships of human life and to develop a feeling for social responsibility.

We want to work toward a type of secondary education which will be flexible, responsive to changing needs, clearly based upon an understanding of characteristics of children between the ages of twelve and eighteen, as well as upon an understanding of the qualities needed in adult life.

A number of colleges have agreed to accept the plan, and a committee is now engaged in selecting the schools where experiments are to be organized.

SOCIAL STUDIES AND THE CURRICULUM

The American Historical Association has a Commission on Social Studies which is devising a program for schools which will make
pupils more intelligent on social problems than do the present school curricula. A first pronouncement has been issued by this commission indicating the kind of program which it will propose. This program is to take advantage of the ripest scholarship of the social sciences, is to recognize fully the rapidly changing character of modern civilization, and is to adapt its contents to the various stages of maturity of pupils at different levels in the schools.

The American Council on Education has a Committee on Materials of Instruction which has issued, with the co-operation of the Subcommittee on Political Education of the American Political Science Association, a series of brochures dealing with such fundamental social inventions as the alphabet, the number system, weights and measures, the calendar, telling time, and the rules of the road. These brochures do not aim so much at an exposition of changing civilization as they do at the cultivation on the part of young people of a recognition of the meaning of social co-operation. The great staples of civilization came into existence through long ages of human endeavor, and every school which teaches reading and the use of number takes advantage of the centuries of effort which went into the creation of the fundamentals of intellectual life. The American Council on Education will continue to issue material which is directly available for use in schools.

Other efforts are being made by individuals and school systems to bring into the curriculum what has been largely lacking in the past, namely, lessons on social problems. Some of the suggestions are radical, recommending to teachers that they direct the influence of the schools toward the setting-up of a new social order. Perhaps the most vigorous advocacy of reform of society through the schools is a publication by Professor George S. Counts which bears the title *Dare the School Build a New Social Order?*

Many school systems are publishing syllabi outlining studies in social institutions for all grades in the elementary school and the high school. There is promise in these various lines of activity that the school programs of American schools will very soon be reconstructed in such a way as to give social studies a central position rather than the marginal position which they have occupied up to this time.
EDUCATION IN FRANCE AND CHINA

France has taken another step in the direction of making secondary education free. Until 1930, the lycées required a payment of tuition from all students attending its classes. After a bitter political struggle in the Chamber of Deputies, the first year of the lycée was made free in 1930. In 1931, after a similar struggle, the second year was made free. In enacting the budget for 1932, the Chamber of Deputies made the third year free. This they did with little debate and almost as a matter of course. There are three more years to be considered and acted on before the whole lycée becomes in this respect fully democratized.

The League of Nations sent to China, at the request of the government of that country, a commission to recommend reorganizations to be undertaken in the educational system. The commission consisted of four members, all from European countries which are organized under highly centralized federal control of schools. The commission found that China has been greatly influenced in its recent efforts to develop a public-school system by the example of America. The commission expresses disapproval of this imitation of America. It argues that China should devise a system closely related to its own social history. In the course of its report, the commission gives expression to the curious contention that since China has an old civilization and Europe has an old civilization, the Chinese should study carefully the European pattern of education and should be influenced more by that pattern than by the institutions of youthful America. The commission urgently recommends that leading Chinese educators be sent to Europe at once to gain the benefit of contact with European schools and universities. The Chinese government has acted on this suggestion and has sent a group of educators to Europe. Whether they will be stimulated by this visit to adapt the schools of China to the peculiar demands of Chinese history remains to be seen.

A second source of great distress to the commission is the fact that Chinese students who have attended American universities and those who in their own country have heard lectures by American professors have shown a disposition to cultivate the science of education. The members of the commission evidently believe in organiz-
ing schools under strict supervision of governmental authorities rather than under the guidance of scientific studies. It is probably impossible for anyone who has not participated in studies of the kind now fortunately common in the United States to understand how federal authority can be dispensed with in favor of the principles derived from systematic studies of educational problems.

ADULT EDUCATION

The financial depression with its unemployment has affected adult education unfavorably in some communities because lack of funds has made it necessary to abandon night schools and other centers where educational opportunities were formerly offered to adults.

On the other hand, there are a number of places where efforts to provide education for older people have been redoubled and courses of various kinds have been provided, especially for the unemployed.

The following reports are from three sections of the country.

From Seattle:

On the theory that conditions of unemployment such as exist and may continue to exist through part or all of the coming winter present a challenge to education, plans have been devised for afternoon classes for unemployed citizens, to be taught by public-school teachers who volunteer their services for this work. The courses to be offered range from practical courses like gardening, home economics, and shop work, to courses in literature, history, government, music, and art.

The work is only made possible, according to Superintendent McClure, through the generous giving by teachers and principals of their time and their services.

From Wisconsin:

The jobless young man just out of high school, without means of going on to college, is having his needs met by Wisconsin's public-education system, which is making it possible for him to continue his studies in his home town. Thousands of recent graduates of both sexes are being absorbed in the high schools, vocational schools, and the university-extension division. One consequence seen is the minimizing of the number who take to the highways or endeavor to find work in the big cities.

From New York City:

That the twenty-two New York City evening high schools, despite the curtailments introduced in the interests of economy, are accommodating a record enrollment of 55,077 students this fall was disclosed in figures made public today by Morris E. Siegel, director of evening schools. This, Mr. Siegel said, represents an increase of 15,000 over last year, which is about twice the increase of any previous year.