

**HOLIDAY PAPERS  
1910-11, PP. 9-91**

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**ANDREW S. DRAPER**

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New York State Education Department

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1910-11



BY

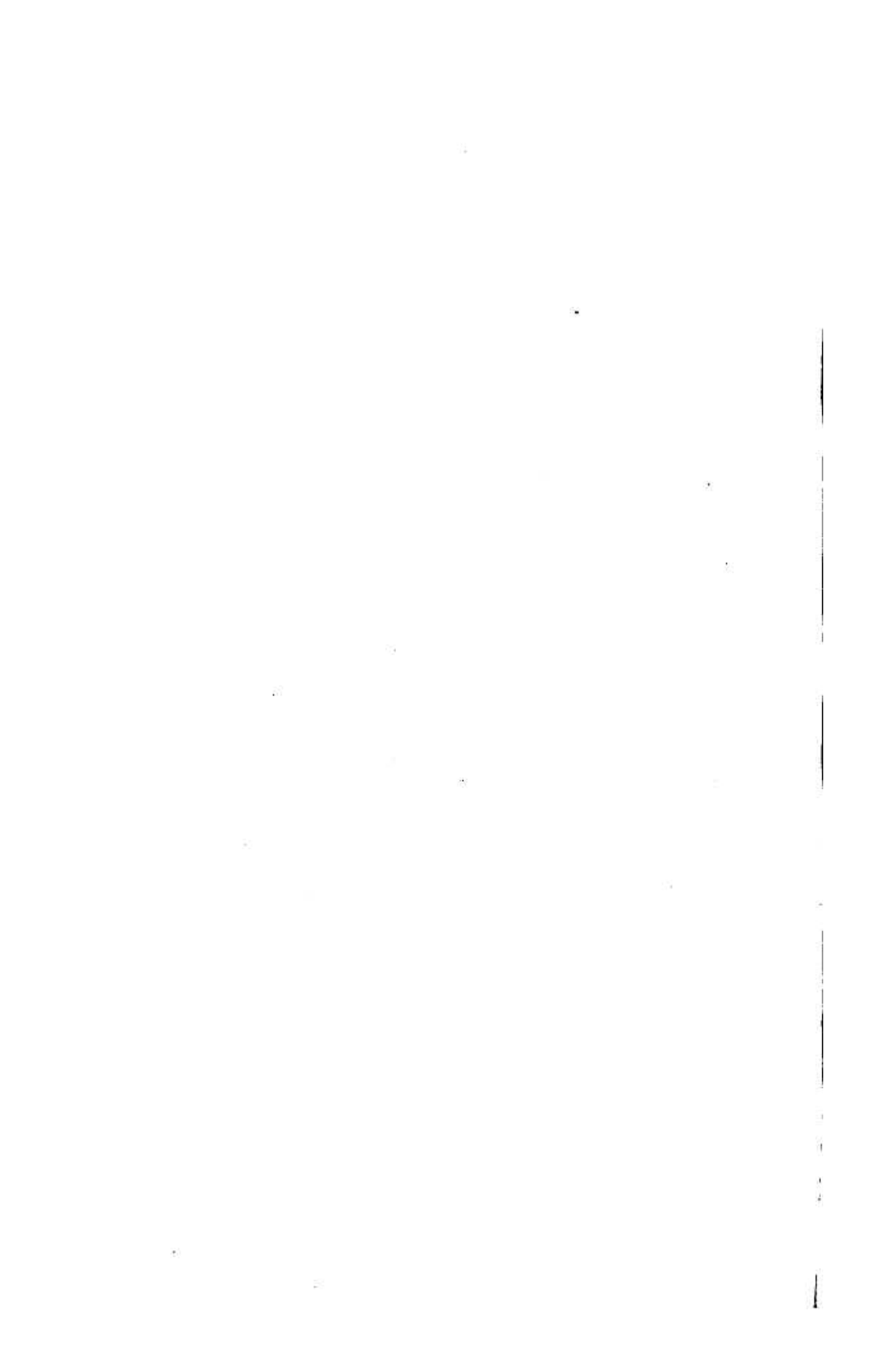
: THE COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION

ALBANY, N. Y.

1911

**THE EDUCATION THAT CONCERNS  
NEW YORK**

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## THE EDUCATION THAT CONCERNS NEW YORK

Ordinarily we discuss schools. There is reason enough for it. The Constitution requires the maintenance of a State system of schools. The Education Law alone covers three hundred pages in our consolidated laws. The people of the State have \$345,009,101 invested in school property. In the last school year we raised by public tax \$44,421,231.08 for school purposes, and the total expenditure of the people of the State for education mounted up to \$74,423,825.14. No other money for public uses is paid so cheerfully. It must be a very deep concern, a universal enthusiasm, that is so nobly expressed. Eagerness and idealism must be bent upon some great end. For once, at least, let us discuss that.

It is a large mass of people that is at work at this thing. The federal census figures for 1910, just announced, show that we have 9,113,614 people. That is just about one-tenth of all the people in the forty-eight states and territories and the District of Columbia. It equals the population of nineteen of these states and territories taken together. It exceeds the population of every one of thirty-two independent sovereignties of the world. The mass of people is not only large, but it is rapidly growing larger. Since the year 1900 there have been 1,844,720 people added to our numbers. The number added is about equal to the entire population of Maine and Connecticut together, and it exceeds by 85,000 the entire population of Delaware, Maine, Nevada, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Wyoming, all taken together. The increase is greater than the population of any one of twenty-nine states in 1900, or of any one of twenty-six now. It was an increase of more than 25 per cent in the ten years. The increase in the whole country is less than 21 per cent. New York is growing even more rapidly than the central western states. It is a steady growth. We have more than doubled our numbers in the last forty years. So we did in the forty years before that. Doubtless we will do so again in the next forty years. Great numbers from other states and other countries are continually casting their lot with us. We have more Jerseyites

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Address before the New York State Teachers Association at Rochester, Wednesday evening, December 28, 1910.



than there are in Trenton, and more of the sons and daughters of Connecticut than there are in Hartford. More Massachusetts people than there are in Springfield and Worcester together, have climbed the fences and trudged the trails towards the lights that they have seen over the Berkshires. We have more Irishmen than there are in Dublin, more Germans than there are in Hamburg, more Scandinavians than there are in Stockholm, and more from beyond the Baltic and the Adriatic than there are in St Petersburg. New York has about as many people as all Canada and Cuba together. Great nations are troubled about the numbers of their people going to America. Every nation under the sun is making its contribution. More than a million people cross the sea every year to find a home in this land of opportunity, and millions upon millions more are dreaming of the possibility of doing so. New York has had, and will continue to have, the brunt, the benefit, and the burden of it.

All this we must have whether we will or no. So far we have been able to turn it to our advantage. The mixing of blood, and the mingling of brains, and the bringing together of the noblest accomplishments and the highest hopes of all the peoples of the earth have warmed, and quickened, and uplifted us. First of all, our State has many and great churches; and they work together in fine contrast with the conditions, of which Champlain tells us, when Catholic and Calvinist "fell to with their fists on questions of faith," and when they buried a priest and minister in the same grave "to see if they could be quiet together there." With early and constant insistence upon religious toleration and peace, we have kept in the lead of American commerce and manufactures. New York has twice as many corporations as any other state. In the first year of the federal corporation tax, New York paid one-fifth of all the corporation taxes of the country and twice as much as any other state. She is very close to the heart of the monetary world, and sometimes has reason to suspect that she is the heart. She has built up the greatest publishing business in the world; she is doing and writing enough to publish; she is turning out artists who put attractive faces upon her affairs, poets who sing her praises, and scholars who are letting her rivals see that she no longer concedes to them the exclusive privilege of writing her history and fixing her status. She is at least contributing quite as much as any other state to the scientific research and the professional progress which, associated

with moral character, is the vital basis of improved living. She has no serious rival in the magnitude of her public works and utilities, in the extent of her organized benefactions, in the scientific discrimination with which she cares for her criminal and dependent classes. No other society in America has so many dead weights; no other political organization has such strains upon its disposition to do and its power to resist. But New York is carrying her burden in a brave and sane way, and fighting the subtle enemies of her moral life with a heroism that gives her new strength and confidence day by day. And, quite as important as all the rest, the greater number is coming to have a better appreciation of the toleration, industry, sense, and heroism which have made our history; a surer understanding of the basis of our culture; a keener sense of the value of our opportunities; and a fuller realization of the obligations which each owes to all the others in our present society, and to all who may come after.

With all these factors in the compelling cause; with full knowledge that a great free state has legal competency to do whatsoever it sees fit to do for the uplifting of its people; and in the light of the always enlarging necessities, resources, and political independence, we may interpret without difficulty the concern about education which the people of the State have somewhat expressed in their Constitution and their laws.

*Foremost of all it is the solemn decree of the people of the State of New York that every normal child in the State, without any exception whatever, shall have an elementary education.* The purpose of the people of the State of New York in this behalf has steadily grown more and yet more determined. It has repeatedly been thwarted and the common schools have many times been menaced. The effort to found them upon the Constitution had been made more than once before 1894, and had failed. When the first Constitution was made, popular education had made little headway in America, and in New York the English government had persistently blocked all efforts in its behalf. Nevertheless, and notwithstanding the fact that the convention finished its work in great haste because of the advance of the British army, it is probable that there would have been some recognition of its importance in the first Constitution had not John Jay been called from the convention by the sudden death of his mother. He was the principal author of the instrument, and nine days after the Sunday upon which it was adopted he wrote to Gouv-

erneur Morris and Robert R. Livingston, expressing his regret that he could not have remained to insert a clause "for the support and encouragement of literature." It is worth noting that the omission of all reference to education in the original Constitution left the Legislature free to set up the dual system of educational administration which continued till 1904. The constitutional convention of 1801 had but limited powers and they were wholly apart from education. The convention of 1821 was fully occupied by politics and the canals, and satisfied such educational enthusiasm as it had with a provision that the common school fund already established "shall be inviolably appropriated and applied to the support of common schools throughout this State." Of course the State, like all the states, had got no further than the encouragement of the people to sustain common schools. The convention of 1846 had education thrust upon it, and met the subject in a muddled way. Rejecting many propositions for putting education in the Constitution, it finally adopted these two sections:

The Legislature shall provide for the free education and instruction of every child of the State in the common schools now established or which shall hereafter be established therein.

The Legislature shall, at the same time, provide for raising the necessary taxes in each school district to carry into effect the provisions contained in the preceding section.

This was rather weak. It left popular education to school districts and only empowered the Legislature to authorize such taxation for education as the people of the districts should think well to impose upon themselves. Weak as it was, the convention, for some reason which is not now known, just before adjournment reconsidered and struck out even so much.

The convention of 1867 considered the whole subject seriously, for Mr George William Curtis, afterward a Regent and Chancellor of the University of the State of New York, was chairman of the committee on education. The committee recommended three propositions: the first related to educational funds and Cornell University, and was adopted; the second abolished the Board of Regents and unified the educational activities under the Superintendent of Public Instruction and a State Board of Education, and was defeated; the third provided that "instruction in the common schools and union schools of this State shall