

**EDUCATION IN A
DEMOCRACY,
PP. 1-152**

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Education in a Democracy, pp. 1-152 by Dallas Lore Sharp

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DALLAS LORE SHARP

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EDUCATION IN A DEMOCRACY

BY
DALLAS LORE SHARP



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NOTE

I wish to thank the Editors of the *Atlantic* particularly for allowing me to use in this book the chapter entitled "EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRACY," which not only appeared first in the *Atlantic*, but which was later reprinted in book form by the Atlantic Press under the title of "PATRONS OF DEMOCRACY."

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EDUCATION IN A DEMOCRACY



CHAPTER I THE NATIONAL SCHOOL

I

WE must sell the public school to the American people," said the speaker, as if the public school were somebody's chewing gum, or a yellow dog, or a new idea, and foreign to Americans.

"We must sell the Stars and Stripes to the American people," he will say next, as if the flag were somebody's cheese cloth, or a mining stock, or a new idea out of Russia.

"Hats off!
Along the street there comes
A blare of bugles, a ruffle of drums,
A flash of color beneath the sky;
Hats off!
The flag is passing by!"

Sell their flag to the American people? They have already bought it and paid for it with their

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blood. So, too, the American people have bought the American public school, and over it flung the American flag, and upon it, as the head of the corner, builded the American Nation. I never knew until yesterday that we have yet to sell (how I loathe the term!) the public school to the American public.

The American public school is as truly national as the American flag. It came into being before the flag. It is the earliest and outermost breastwork of American defense over which the flag flies. In 1647 (only twenty-seven years after the landing at Plymouth), Massachusetts Bay Colony passed a law ordering every town of fifty householders to provide a public school by public tax, if need be, for all the people; the law further ordering that every town of one hundred families should set up a grammar school in order to prepare students for the University, for Harvard University, founded by the General Court in 1638, the original State University! Public education supported and supervised by the State was the original American educational programme.

This act of 1647, embodying the principle of

THE NATIONAL SCHOOL 3

universal compulsory education in Massachusetts, became the policy of the Nation when on the 13th of July, 1787, there was passed the "Ordinance for the Government of the Territory of the United States Northwest of the River Ohio," wherein the Nation went on record, uttering its educational creed in the famous words: "Religion, morality and knowledge being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged." And the Nation backed this faith up with works in the shape of land grants — public lands set aside to sell and to lease for the purpose of maintaining the schools; these national land grants by the year 1900, reaching the grand total of 86,138,433 acres, an area as great as Prussia, as great as the six New England States with New York, New Jersey, Maryland, and Delaware added. This is an impressive figure and national in its application; just as the utterance explaining it was impressive and national in its bearing. Word and deed are ample proof of our national faith in the public school, and of our purpose to render it national support. And they are more