

INDUSTRIAL AND TRADES SCHOOLS

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Industrial and Trades Schools by Anonymous

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New York State Education Department

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ADDRESSES BY THE COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION

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OUR CHILDREN, OUR SCHOOLS, AND OUR INDUSTRIES

It is putting it not a whit too strongly to say that it is quite apparent to all who think about it that we must have much more accurate and up-to-date vital statistics; that we must have public records of what children there are among us, and their ages; that all children of school age must be more completely accounted for in the schools; that the compulsory school age must at least be extended to the completion of the elementary schools; that provision must be made for public vocation or trades schools, and also for schools of a general character which meet the continuing needs of young people in the stores and shops and factories; that these schools for the industrial masses must operate at times which will allow pupils to engage in regular employment, but employers must plan for the regular attendance of young employees upon the schools at certain hours; that the schools must keep hold of all pupils until they have received a training which will fit them for some definite employment; and that the different parts of a more extended school system must balance each other more exactly and support the industrial as well as the professional activities of the country.

The recognition of the need of all this grows out of manifest moral, industrial, and economic conditions that are widely prevalent among us, and out of a growing knowledge of what other peoples, harder pressed and more painstaking than we, have done to meet the conditions which are now asserting themselves here. It grows out of our clearing vision that simple and balanced justice, as well as the progress and happiness of the people, and the strength and poise of the nation, alike make it necessary to give to the wage earning masses, and to the common industries, such equivalent as we can for what the present schools are doing for the wealthier classes and for the professional and managing vocations.

The recognition of the need is opening the door to a decisive educational advance in America; and the time seems ripe for a review of the reasons for it and for a serious discussion of the plans and arrangements for it.

Looking Backward

In the beginning there was no thought that the common schools should do more than teach the "three R's," the mere elements, which would enable one to gain the knowledge vital to citizenship. Farming was the very general employment. Many of the trades

were followed on the farm. There was no thought of leaving the farm. Boys were happy in the thought of having a farm and following their fathers from whom they learned the business of farming. In the towns there was a system of apprenticeship by which boys were bound out to tradesmen and artisans for a term of years to give service in return for instruction in a trade. There was no employment, and little schooling, for girls outside of the home. The girls in every home were made expert in the household arts by their mothers and by the ordinary needs of the home, and they were not unhappy about it. Few boys and no girls went to college. The college was the instrument of the relatively rich, and provided rather exclusive instruction in the higher classical and culturing studies. It can hardly be said to have prepared for the professions and certainly it did not train in professional knowledge and skill. There was no connecting link between the college and the common school, which stood for the masses. The early English system persisted as it persists in England still. They are having a row about it over there now, and seem likely to have a yet larger one. A system of academies which was really a system of fitting schools for the colleges, developed in the better towns. Even the academies connected but very little with the elementary schools. They were half elementary schools themselves; the other half managed to connect with colleges and had to condescend to them. They lived on tuition fees and were patronized by the well-to-do who could afford it and were ambitious to have their children go beyond the elementary branches. They participated in the exclusiveness of the colleges, but the stern need of support obliged them to adjust their work to the needs of all who would send pupils to them. This is not saying that they lacked in excellence. They did not. But they were essentially private institutions and they had an individuality of their own. They were not only wholly apart from the common schools; there was much aloofness. It was an exceptional and a most progressive community that associated an academy with the common or elementary schools. Accordingly there was no educational outlet for the children who completed the elementary schools. If a son of the poor got into an academy there was some shock about it; and if he broke into a profession it was because the fence was low and he had some unusual qualities in his outfit.

This could not long be, and the public high school system came. It came very near supplanting the academies in the older states; and it kept them from ever being in the newer states. It took their place as college feeders; the colleges came to be glad to condescend

to the high schools also; indeed, their work of itself developed many colleges. With it all, the colleges have multiplied and the best of them have become great universities. The public high school system became the strong connecting link between the elementary schools and the colleges. Every effort was made to have the connections close and smooth. The road from "the kindergarten to the university" was made continuous and easy. The colleges and universities were broadened in their work and liberalized and popularized in their character. The scientific interests made a great fight against classical exclusiveness, and slowly got the better of the old Romanlike resistance. At all events, science broke in. Professional expertness came to have a scientific basis and came to require a higher scientific training. The universities came to have professional schools, and got the laws changed so that students headed for the professions found it to their advantage, or were absolutely required, to go to them. Mechanical and agricultural schools and colleges grew up, and often in association with the older literary colleges and universities. The ideal of a university came to be one that could supply the best instruction *in any study*. There was economy in producing stronger all-around scholars, and in training for the professions, for managerial capacity in business, and for leadership in public life, through grouping all manner of schools about the same campus. The aggregations developed marvelous spirit and attractiveness. Then came the days of competition and imitation; of fraternities, and debates; of athletics, of gymnasiums, and tracks, and games, and intercollegiate contests; of ribbons, and songs, and bands, and mascots, and awful yelling. It pretty nearly set states aflame. It would be unfair to imply that the rivalry and the noise were all that attracted youth to high school and college. Far from it. They not only taught more things, and more things in which there was human interest, but they taught them in infinitely better ways. Moreover, they taught them to both sexes. All in all, the multiplicity of actual work, and the glow and enthusiasm of the environment, certainly attracted the ambitious youth. There are very considerable areas in the country now, where every boy and every girl in the elementary schools thinks of the high school, and every one in the high school debates the matter of going to college. The stronger of both sexes feel injured if denied the advanced learning.

That is not all. The influence of the teachers of all grades is exerted to send all of the children to the grade above, along the road that leads to the university. They are told of the equal rights

of every one and of the increased resourcefulness and efficiency, and therefore of the better chance, which is provided by the higher training. Acting upon the American spirit and temperament, the result is quick and strong. On the whole it is well. Sometimes it is pathetic, for it often leads parents to sacrifice more than they ought, and sometimes it directs youth into places already well occupied and for which they have no special adaptation. It is saying nothing against the students most concerned, and nothing against the claims of the universities, to say that there can be no doubt about the fact that many get into them who would be better off in the end if they would put the qualities they have into other work, when they are without the factors which are requisite to success in undertakings which practically exact university training. There is serious question about many going to college who do go.

It ought to be seen that, in view of the spirit, the democracy, the political philosophy, and the temperament of the people of the United States, this is much more likely to be so here than in countries where there is distinct cleavage between industrial and social classes, where families live in the same way for generations, and where all of the political philosophy, and all of the government plans and policies are set against one's getting above the class and the kind of work in which he was born. It is saying nothing against our temperament, and spirit, and political philosophy, to say that it leads a great many youth into places or kinds of work for which they are not best adapted. In American schools, particularly the secondary schools and above, every one is told that he is lacking in every desirable quality if he is not hitching his wagon to a star. That is all right enough if there could be some discrimination about the kind of star that it would be well for the particular individual to try to harness up with. The true standards of value concerning positions and fitness for positions are often but poorly understood. There are many failures through misfits. In the indiscriminate scramble for places which will enable one to wear fine clothes and live in a great house or at the clubs, some get into places they can not fill, many who manage to make a living in such places would be far happier and make a better living in other places, and many more lose their best chances in life by a mistaken race after a fleeting vision when substantial opportunities are actually and easily within their reach.

There would be quite as much of this as we can well afford if the educational system did not lead so exclusively to professional employments and to the quasi professional positions and the man-

aging positions in the business and industrial vocations. As it is, there is so much of it that it is actually making us poor.

Nothing Leads to Craftsmanship

But that is not all. Any hand work that is found in the elementary school—and on the whole it is very little—is sustained on the theory that it is a desirable accomplishment, an intellectual quickener, rather than that all the world must work, and that work with the hands must be much more common and quite as reputable as work with the head. Instead of leading to a trade it prepares for the manual training high school, if there is one, and that leads to the technological college, if it leads anywhere, and that to one of the engineering professions. Nothing in the common schools leads to a trade.

The manual training high schools are too elaborate, too expensive, in a way too dilettante, to lead to anything other than one of the industrial professions; often they do not even prepare for training in one of these. They are much more like schools than shops, whereas they should be more like shops than schools. In buildings that have nothing of the appearance of a shop, they have machinery, tools, equipment, atmosphere, theory, and practice, which differentiate them widely from the shop. They are managed by men who are more teachers than workmen, when they should be managed by men who are at least quite as much workmen as teachers. Often the machinery and tools make an interesting show without being needed or effectually used, because there is not a skilled workman to use them. Many a time a principal or teacher pleads for an appropriation with which to buy machinery, tools, and other equipment, without any definite theory, or plan, or end, in view. If refused, he would feel outraged and become a martyr. If given, he studies the catalogues and sees the agents for the purpose of spending the money in ways that will look well and make an impression upon the people, who always love an object lesson and are often susceptible and superficial about industrial training. Real tradesmen and workmen discriminate; and they are amused by what they see. There is not enough substantial result to it. I know very well that this is not always true, but quite as well that it is often true.

It is true also that the overwhelming influence of American technical schools, from lowest to highest, is quite as much in the direction of turning out men for professional and managing employments as is the influence of the purely literary and sci-