

EDUCATION: THE CORNERSTONE OF SELF-GOVERNMENT

FOR almost a century and a half the Fourth of July has been marked as Independence Day. It has been given over to the contemplation of those principles and those institutions which America peculiarly represents. In times gone by the exuberance of youth and the consciousness of power recently gained has often made it an occasion for boastfulness. Long orations have been made, which consisted for the most part of a reassurance to ourselves and a notice to the world that we were a great Nation. Those days are past. Our own people need no reassurance, the world needs no notice, of this long self-evident conclusion. Our country has not ceased to glory in its strength, but it has come to a realization that it must have something more than numbers and wealth, something more than a fleet and an army, to satisfy the longing of the soul. It knows that to power must be added wisdom, and to greatness must be added morality. It is no longer so solicitous to catalogue the powers which it possesses, as to direct those great forces for the spiritual advancement of the American people at home and the discharge of the obligations to humanity abroad. America is turning from the things that are seen to the things that are unseen.

By this I do not mean that there is in contemplation, or required, any change in our fundamental institutions. I mean, rather, that we are beginning to reap the rewards which accrue from the existence of those institutions and

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our devotion and loyalty to them. Some principles are so constant and so obvious that we do not need to change them, but we need rather to observe them. The world is fairly well agreed on the probable permanence of the first four tables of the arithmetic with which I struggled when I attended the district school. It is not thought that they need to be changed, or that we can make any progress by refusing to apply them. Those who seek to evade them in the ordinary business and procedure of life would undoubtedly find that such action would work either to the ruin of any commercial enterprise, or if it did not, the beneficiaries of such a disregard of the commonly accepted rules of addition would undoubtedly find that a very large majority of people would be old-fashioned enough to charge them with fraud. The institutions of the Government and society may not always be susceptible of a demonstration which is as exact as those of mathematics, but nevertheless political relationship is a very old science which has been set out in theory and wrought out in practice through very many centuries. Its fundamental principles are fairly well established. That there could have been gathered together a body of men so learned in that science, so experienced in its application, so talented and so wise in its statement and demonstration, as those who prepared, formulated, and secured the adoption of the American Constitution, will never cease to be the wonder and admiration of the profoundest students of Government. After making every allowance for a fortunate combination of circumstances and the accomplishments of human ingenuity, they have been nearly all forced to come to the belief that it can be accounted for only by the addition of another element, which we must recognize as the guiding hand of Providence. As we can make progress in science not by the disregard, but by the application of the laws of mathematics, so in my firm conviction we can make progress politically and socially, not

by a disregard of those fundamental principles which are the recognized, ratified and established American institutions, but by their scrupulous support and observance. American ideals do not require to be changed so much as they require to be understood and applied.

The return of this day quite naturally invites us to a reconsideration of those principles set out in the Declaration of Independence, which were for the first time fully established in a form of government by the adoption of the American Constitution. Such a consideration presents many angles, for it touches the entire life of the Nation. To deal with so large a subject adequately, it is obvious would require extensive treatment. On this occasion it is possible only to touch on one phase of it.

It can not be too often pointed out that the fundamental conception of American institutions is regard for the individual. The rights which are so clearly asserted in the Declaration of Independence are the rights of the individual. The wrongs of which that instrument complains, and which it asserts it is the purpose of its signers to redress, are the wrongs of the individual. Through it all runs the recognition of the dignity and worth of the individual, because of his possession of those qualities which are revealed to us by religion. It is this conception alone which warrants the assertion of the universal right to freedom. America has been the working out of the modern effort to provide a system of government and society which would give to the individual that freedom which his nature requires.

It is easy to appreciate both the soundness and the grandeur of such a vision. Its magnitude implies that it was a conception not to be accomplished in a day or a year, but by the slow and toilsome experience of generations. The foundations of the structure have been laid, the rules of action have been stated. It is for us to make such contri-

bution as we are able toward its completion and adoption. The end sought has been to create a nation wherein the individual might rise to the full stature of manhood and womanhood.

It needed but little contemplation to determine that the greatest obstacle to freedom was ignorance. If there was to be self-government, if there was to be popular sovereignty, if there was to be an almost unlimited privilege to vote and hold office, if the people were going to maintain themselves and administer their own political and social affairs, it was necessary as a purely practical matter that they should have a sufficiently trained and enlightened intelligence to accomplish that end. Popular government could only be predicated on popular education. In addition to this, the very conception of the value and responsibility of the individual, which made him worthy to be entrusted with this high estate, required that he should be furnished the opportunity to develop the spiritual nature, with which he was endowed, through adequate education.

Merely to state the American ideal is to perceive not only how far we still are from its realization, but to comprehend with what patience we must view many seeming failures, while we contemplate with great satisfaction much assured success.

We can see the early beginnings of our country and understand the situation in those days better than it was understood by its own contemporaries. It was a time of great toil and hardship. The entire settled area could be described as little more than a frontier. Everything in the way of modern convenience was wanting, and save where a sea-going commerce was beginning, there was an entire absence of wealth. The America which we know had yet to be made. But the land was blessed with a great people and with great leaders. Washington and Jefferson, Franklin and Mason, Hamilton and Madison, Adams and Mar-

shall, suggest a type of citizenship and leadership, of scholarship and statesmanship, of wisdom and character, of ability and patriotism, unsurpassed by any group of men ever brought together to direct the political destinies of a nation. They did what they could in their time for the advancement of the public welfare, and they were not discontented because they could not immediately secure perfection. They had a vision and they worked toward it. They knew that in their day it was not to be fully realized. They did not lack the courage to have faith in the future.

They started the country on that long road of stupendous achievement with which you are all so familiar. To provide for that human welfare which was the cherished hope of the Declaration of Independence and the well-wrought-out plan of the Federal Constitution, it was necessary to develop the material resources of our country. There had to be created the instruments with which to minister to the well-being of the people. National poverty had to be replaced with national possessions. Transportation had to be provided by land and water. Manufacturing plants had to be erected. Great agricultural resources had to be brought under cultivation. The news service of the press had to be established. The schoolhouse, the university, the place of religious worship, all had to be built. All of these mighty agencies had to be created, that they might contribute to a unified national life where freedom might reign and where the citizen might be his own sovereign.

It was only as this work was accomplished, as these instruments were provided, these properties built, and these possessions accumulated, that there could be a reduction in the hours of labor, an increase in the rewards of employment, and a general betterment in those material conditions which result in a higher standard of living. The leisure for culture had to be secured in this way. Servitude of all kinds is scarcely ever abolished unless there is created eco-

conomic opportunity for freedom. We are beginning to see that the economic development of our country was not only necessary for advancing the welfare of the people, but that we must maintain an expanding power of production if that welfare is to be increased. Business makes a most valuable contribution to human progress.

As we look back upon all this development, while we know that it was absolutely dependent upon a reign of law, nevertheless some of us can not help thinking how little of it has been dependent on acts of legislation. Given their institutions, the people themselves have in the past, as they must in the future, to a very large degree worked out their own salvation without the interposition of the Government. It is always possible to regulate and supervise by legislation what has already been created, but while legislation can stimulate and encourage, the real creative ability which builds up and develops the country, and in general makes human existence more tolerable and life more complete, has to be supplied by the genius of the people themselves. The Government can supply no substitute for enterprise.

As a result of the activity of all these forces, our country has developed enormous resources. It has likewise to be admitted that its requirements are very large, but the fact remains that it has come into a position where it has the accumulations of wealth and means of production more adequately to provide for the welfare of its people, and more securely to establish their physical, mental, and moral well-being. You are making your contribution to this great work in the field of education. It is here especially that the growth and progress of our country can be most easily understood. You can realize what an opportunity for securing the higher things of life they have provided when you recall that it is claimed that one out of every four persons in this Nation, either as pupil, administrator, or teacher, is now in some capacity directly concerned in education.

In the year 1921-22, the latest time for which complete statistics have been compiled, the students in the elementary and secondary schools, in the colleges and universities, had reached the unprecedented number of 26,206,756, and the total number of teachers and administrators approximately 882,500. If to this number one should add the parents, the members of school boards, and the taxpayers who maintain them, it becomes clear at once how universal is the direct or indirect concern of our citizens with the schools.

Another indication, both of our increasing resources and of the tremendous importance of education in the life of the Nation, is the great amount of money which we are able to spend for it. Twelve years ago the total money expended for all educational purposes amounted approximate to \$705,781,900. In 10 years this had increased to \$2,144,651,000. Even when one takes into account the depreciation of the dollar, due to the economic changes caused by the World War, it becomes clear that the American people have demonstrated their faith in education and their determination to use the wealth of the Nation for the creation of the highest type of manhood and womanhood.

While I believe that educators are under obligation to expend public funds economically, it seems obvious that the recent increase in expenses for this purpose is a most wise investment. It is impossible to conceive that there should be any increase in agricultural products, in the production of manufactures, or any other increase in our material wealth, through ignorance. The reaction to using the resources of the country to develop the brains of the country through education has always been greatly to stimulate and increase the power of the people to produce.

As already indicated, America is turning from the mere thought of the material advantage to a greater appreciation of the cultural advantage of learning. It is coming to be

valued more and more for its own sake. People desire not only the intelligence to comprehend economic and social problems, but they are finding increased leisure is little more than time wasted in indulgence, unless an opportunity for self-development and self-expression has been provided in youth by the cultivation of a taste for literature, history, and the fine arts.

It is necessary also that education should be the handmaid of citizenship. Our institutions are constantly and very properly the subject of critical inquiry. Unless their nature is comprehended, and their origin is understood, unless their value be properly assessed, the citizen falls ready prey to those selfish agitators who would exploit his prejudices to promote their own advantage. On this day, of all days, it ought to be made clear that America has had its revolution and placed the power of Government squarely, securely, and entirely in the hands of the people. For all changes which they may desire, for all grievances which they may suffer, the ballot box furnishes a complete method and remedy. Into their hands has been committed complete jurisdiction and control over all the functions of Government. For the most part our institutions are attacked in the name of social and economic reform. Unless there be some teaching of sound economics in the schools, the voter and taxpayer are in danger of accepting vague theories which lead only to social discontent and public disaster. The body politic has little chance of choosing patriotic officials who can administer its financial affairs with wisdom and safety, unless there is a general diffusion of knowledge and information on elementary economic subjects sufficient to create and adequately to support public opinion. Everyone ought to realize that the sole source of national wealth is thrift and industry, and that the sole supply of the public treasury is the toil of the people. Of course, patriotism is always to be taught. National defense is a necessity and

a virtue, but peace with honor is the normal, natural condition of mankind, and must be made the chief end to be sought in human relationship.

Another element must be secured in the training of citizenship, or all else will be in vain. All of our learning and science, our culture and our arts, will be of little avail, unless they are supported by high character, unless there be honor, truth, and justice. Unless our material resources are supported by moral and spiritual resources, there is no foundation for progress. A trained intelligence can do much, but there is no substitute for morality, character, and religious convictions. Unless these abide, American citizenship will be found unequal to its task.

It is with some diffidence that I speak of the required facilities of the school in this presence. We are able to give more attention to the schoolhouse than formerly. It ought to be not only convenient, commodious, and sanitary, but it ought to be a work of art which would appeal to the love of the beautiful. The schoolhouse itself ought to impress the scholar with an ideal, it ought to serve as an inspiration.

But the main factor of every school is the teacher. Teaching is one of the noblest of professions. It requires an adequate preparation and training, patience, devotion, and a deep sense of responsibility. Those who mold the human mind have wrought not for time, but for eternity. The obligation which we all owe to those devoted men and women who have given of their lives to the education of the youth of our country that they might have freedom through coming into a knowledge of the truth is one which can never be discharged. They are entitled not only to adequate rewards for their service, but to the veneration and honor of a grateful people.

It is not alone the youth of the land which needs and seeks education, but we have a large adult population re-

quiring assistance in this direction. Our last census showed nearly 14,000,000 foreign-born white persons residing among us, made up largely of those beyond school age, many of whom nevertheless need the opportunity to learn to read and write the English language, that they may come into more direct contact with the ideals and standards of our life, political and social. There are likewise over 3,000,000 native illiterates. When it is remembered that ignorance is the most fruitful source of poverty, vice, and crime, it is easy to realize the necessity for removing what is a menace, not only to our social well-being, but to the very existence of the Republic. A failure to meet this obligation registers a serious and inexcusable defect in our Government. Such a condition not only works to a national disadvantage, but directly contradicts all our assertions regarding human rights. One of the chief rights of an American citizen is the right to an education. The opportunity to secure it must not only be provided, but if necessary made compulsory.

It is in this connection that we are coming to give more attention to rural and small village schools, which serve 47 per cent of the children of the Nation. It is significant that less than 70 per cent of these children average to be in attendance on any school day, and that there is a tendency to leave them in charge of undertrained and underpaid teachers. The advent of good roads should do much to improve these conditions. The old one-room country school, such as I attended, ought to give way to the consolidated school, with a modern building, and an adequate teaching force, commensurate with the best advantages that are provided for our urban population. While life in the open country has many advantages that are denied to those reared on the pavements and among crowded buildings, it ought no longer to be handicapped by poor school facilities. The re-

sources exist with which they can be provided, if they are but adequately marshalled and employed.

The encouragement and support of education is peculiarly the function of the several States. While the political units of the district, the township, and the county should not fail to make whatever contribution they are able, nevertheless since the wealth and resources of the different communities vary, while the needs of the youth for education in the rich city and in the poor country are exactly the same, and the obligations of society toward them are exactly the same, it is proper that the State treasury should be called on to supply the needed deficiency. The State must contribute, set the standard, and provide supervision if society is to discharge its full duty not only to the youth of the country, but even to itself.

The cause of education has long had the thoughtful solicitude of the National Government. While it is realized that it is a State affair, rather than a national affair, nevertheless it has provided by law a Bureau of Education. It has not been thought wise to undertake to collect money from the various States into the National Treasury and distribute it again among the various States for the direct support of education. It has seemed a better policy to leave their taxable resources to the States, and permit them to make their own assessments for the support of their own schools in their own way. But for a long time the cause of education has been regarded as so important and so preëminently an American cause, that the National Government has sought to encourage it, scientifically to investigate its needs, and furnish information and advice for its constant advancement. Pending before the Congress is the report of a committee which proposes to establish a Department of Education and Relief, to be presided over by a Cabinet officer. Bearing in mind that this does not mean any interference with the local control, but is rather an attempt

to recognize and dignify the importance of educational effort, such proposal has my hearty indorsement and support.

It is thus that our educational system has been and is ministering to our national life. Our country is in process of development. Its physical elements are incomplete. Its institutions have been declared, but they are very far from being adopted and applied. We have not yet arrived at perfection. A scientific investigation of child life has been begun, but yet remains to be finished. There is a vast amount of ignorance and misunderstanding, of envy, hatred, and jealousy, with their attendant train of vice and crime. We are not yet free, but we are struggling to become free economically, socially, politically, spiritually. We have limited our amount of immigration in order that the people who live here, whether of native or foreign origin, might continue to enjoy the economic advantages of our country, and that there might not be any lowering of the standards of our existence, that America might remain American. We have submitted an amendment to the national Constitution designed to protect the child life of the Nation from the unwarranted imposition of toil, that it might have greater opportunity for enlightenment. All of these movements are in the direction of increased national freedom, and an advance toward the realization of the vision of Washington and Lincoln.

A new importance is attaching to the cause of education. A new realization of its urgent necessity is taking hold of the Nation. A new comprehension that the problem is only beginning to be solved is upon the people. A new determination to meet the requirements of the situation is everywhere apparent. The economic and moral waste of ignorance will little longer be tolerated. This awakening is one of the most significant developments of the times. It indicates that our national spirit is reasserting itself. It is a most reassuring evidence that the country is recover-

ing from the natural exhaustion of the war, and that it is rising to a new life and starting on a new course. It is intent, as never before, upon listening to the word of the teacher, whether it comes from the platform, the school-house, or the pulpit. The power of evil is being broken. The power of the truth is reasserting itself. The Declaration of Independence is continuing to justify itself.