

Upon you, men and women of the National Education Association, rests the ultimate responsibility of making effective the policy of Pan-Americanism formulated by our President in a series of addresses which have resounded thruout the entire Western Hemisphere; upon you rests the task of developing in the youth of the country a broader understanding of the forces that have shaped American history, a keener appreciation of the significance of the development of free institutions on the American continent, and a deeper sympathy with the aspirations of sister nations who, like ourselves, are endeavoring to translate into realities the ideals of American democracy.

THE AMERICAN SCHOOL AND THE WORKING MAN

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In coming before this great assembly of teachers from all over the United States, I do so in part as the representative of the masses of the people—the representative of those who by their physical labor put the natural resources of the country into a shape that will make them serviceable to all; who gather together the materials and build our homes, our factories, our stores, and our public buildings; of those who operate our railroads, our telegraphs, our telephones, our steamboats and vessels; of those who work in the factories, in the stores and shops; of those who make and operate our marvelous intricate machinery—in short, of those who do the actual work that makes our present civilization possible. These are the people who know the meaning of labor; who accomplish concrete results; whose problems grow out of the urgency of physical necessity; who live in a world of facts, and whose environment is the smoke and grime and whirl of industry and commerce. They are first by necessity to maintain a practical attitude toward life, and their philosophy is genuine and simple.

The toilers are people who are vitally concerned in the nation's public schools, of which in every true sense you are a constituent part. Public schools and the working people cannot be separated. In fact, without the working people public schools would not exist. It follows then that the needs and the ideals of the working people should have determining force in directing educational policies.

Probably very few of you here realize that to the organized labor movement is due the inauguration of the public-school system in this country. In the early days what schools there were were private pay-schools. The children of many poor people were denied all opportunities for education because of their poverty. The unfairness of this inequality appealed to the citizens of the country when they had sufficiently controlled the natural

forces of this new country to give thought to other things. Then arrangements were made whereby the tuition of the poorer children was paid, but this arrangement carried with it the humiliation that is always associated with charity. It was not in keeping with the spirit of true Americanism that children, in no way responsible, should be denied life-opportunities because of their parents' poverty. The injustice was felt most keenly by those upon whom it was inflicted. The workers never shift their problems upon others, they try to find a way to bring about justice. Whatever justice and betterment the workers have secured has been thru their associated effort exprest in the labor movement.

In order to secure for their children free education, parents had to avow their inability to pay tuition and thus place upon themselves and children the stigma of pauperism. It was Massachusetts that first remedied this injustice. At the instance of the early organized labor movement, demands were made for the legal enactment necessary for the removal of that stigma, and then was born to the world the first free public-school system.

It was in Massachusetts, the state which has been so intimately associated with many efforts for liberty, that the labor movement first made its demands that the state should maintain schools, open without charge to the children of all those who lived within its domain. Thus in a real way the children of that state were assured equal opportunities regardless of station in life.

What was accomplisht in Massachusetts was extended to the other states; but the agency that called attention to the need and the way of solving the problem was the organized labor movement. It is the same agency that is now calling attention to defects in present-day educational methods and institutions and is doing so much to show how those problems can be solved.

The purposes of the labor movement are very closely akin to the purposes for which educational institutions have been establishd. It is true that some have lookt upon the labor movement as an instrumentality concerned only with strikes, industrial disturbances, and those things which interrupt the normal course of the machinery of common life; and which therefore cause inconveniences. It is a great pleasure, therefore, to have this opportunity of meeting face to face so many of the teachers of this country and to tell to you something of the real nature of the labor movement.

The labor movement was born out of suffering and injustice. It is a great hope and a yearning for more complete life, for opportunities to realize ideals, and the means to take advantage of those opportunities. The labor movement deals with the raw stuff of human life. It has no power except the power of human character, determination, and purpose. In other words, it is a great human living force that is part of the lives and hopes of men, that has practical value and function in the affairs of every-

day life and work, and is an instrumentality operating in and thru human beings, helping them to lift themselves up to a larger and a better life, and revealing new possibilities and new purposes.

This interpretation of the labor movement reveals how it is related in nature to the schools of our country. The undeveloped children of our nation are the material with which our schools deal. If the school succeeds in its work, the teachers direct and assist in the unfolding of the mental, physical, and spiritual powers of the children intrusted to their care. Their whole work is to enable the children to find themselves, to discover their abilities and to develop and use them, to understand the world in which they live, to know the people among whom they live, to use the opportunities and the forces in their environment for the common good, to be prepared to appreciate the meaning of life and work, and to live a life in which the doing of all duties and the performance of all work shall be with understanding, inspiration, and purpose.

The school is concerned with early life and development. If it succeeds, it lays a foundation for the labor movement which is the most potential force operating in the lives of men and women for justice, common uplift, and betterment. The labor movement, therefore, has an immediate interest in the ideals, methods, and results of our nation's schools. We welcome all movements for closer relations between the teachers and the labor movement. We are fully appreciative of the power intrusted to teachers. To you has been intrusted the opportunity to shape and mold the minds, the ideals, the characters of the future citizens of our country. It is a responsibility that must appeal to the best and noblest in your nature and call forth the highest effort.

The labor movement is a practical movement. From its ideals it gets the inspiration and the vigor necessary to deal with the problems of human need and human justice that develop in the daily tasks of those who for wages do the world's work. The labor movement knows that ideals alone are powerless—ideals must be made real practical forces. The workers must understand their problems, call things by their right names, protect themselves against that deterrent which is the most insidious of all self-deception.

You need not be told that society is divided into two groups, unequal in numbers. One group, thru adventitious power gained in some manner, exercises power of control over the lives of those in the other group. The degree and extent of this domination depend upon the intelligent resistance and insistence of the other group and their ability to marshal and direct their own inherent personal power. The strategic power exercised by the more numerous group is unequal to that of the dominant group; but their personal power to produce is of vastly more importance fundamentally and potentially, and may be so utilized as to become, in fact, greater than the power of those who exploit.

The problem of the labor movement is to protect those who work against those who desire to exploit, and to give them constantly better opportunities for life and work. This discloses how vital is the interest of the labor movement in the maintenance of public educational institutions and in securing in these institutions training and education of a nature that will develop in boys and girls those qualities that make for energy, initiative, and intelligent independence, coupled with economic interdependence and solidarity.

As indicated in the beginning, the labor movement was instrumental in establishing free public schools. The wage-earners are more vitally interested in securing the right kind of instruction in public schools than any other group of citizens. The public schools are the only educational institutions available for their children and for them.

It is not necessary to tell this audience that the old ideals and methods of education have been proved inadequate; the old academic education for mind-culture alone was founded upon false principles; that education failed because it did not avail itself of methods and means to cultivate the senses and the muscles of the individual. The individual consists not only of psychic activity, but there must be coordination of both the physical and the mental. All information is built up from impressions brought into the mind by way of the senses. An education, therefore, that deals entirely with abstract materials fails to appeal to the whole individual and fails to take advantage of all agencies for education. Mere abstract information and cultural learning do not always constitute practical preparation for the problems of life and work.

The majority of the children of our nation go immediately from the public schools into the factories, and the shops, and the mines; into the industrial and transportation agencies of our country. Under the old educational methods which made no effort to correlate theory with practical problems, the boys and girls went from school totally unprepared to deal with those things which were of immediate necessity to them. Their first problem was to obtain an opportunity that would secure them the where-with-all to buy food, clothing, and pay for shelter. No protecting father nor benevolent institution stood between them and the grim necessities of the life-struggle. The school that failed to prepare them for what awaited them in life was guilty of a crime against humanity.

You know what the organized labor movement has done in this country to inject real-life problems among the problems that must be solved by the public schools. You know what the movement has done to call attention to the necessity for industrial education and vocational training. You know how the organized labor movement has stood like adamant against all efforts to pervert industrial education and vocational training along lines and tendencies that would make education of this nature only another opportunity to exploit the workers.

The labor movement has insistently and persistently demanded that education shall mean opportunity for freedom, opportunity for larger and better lives for all. Opportunity for freedom and opportunity for larger and better lives can only result when man has control over his environment, when he has control over his own personal faculties and his power to produce, and is able to use and adjust these to the best advantage.

In order to be consistent with democratic ideals, public schools must meet the needs of all. They must fit not only for the administrative, directive positions in life and for the professions, but they also must meet the needs of those who by their creative labor powers and the coordination of their minds and muscles give existence to the ideals and purposes that are in the minds of those who control industry and commerce.

Industrial education and vocational training promote utilitarian purposes, making possible industrial and commercial developments; they give inspiration and make possible intelligent cooperation among all of those who are associated in the practical work of production. But this is not enough to bring betterment into the lives of all citizens. It is necessary that those who contribute to the progress of industry and commerce should share in the improvements they create. No amount of education in itself will automatically bring this to pass. Here again the organized labor movement carries to greater perfection and toward wider ideals the work begun in the schools, that is, to make the common life of the people wider and deeper and quickened by idealism.

The wage-earners first of all know that the value of their life-work must be recognized by establishing a normal workday and by the payment of just wages. This ideal can be approached or realized only thru organized economic power. Because wage-earners with unblinded, unafraid eyes have faced problems as they really are and have found a practical solution for these problems, they have afforded better protection and better opportunities for many wage-earners than are enjoyed by some of the so-called professions, which have refused to face their real difficulties, to call things by their right names, and to attack their problems in a spirit of sincerity and enlightened determination.

The organized labor movement realizes that education is not an arbitrary thing that automatically ends with a certain year of life, but that it must continue thruout life if the individual is really to live and make progress. An appreciation of this fact has resulted in the demand on the part of organized labor for wider use of the schools in order that fuller and better opportunities for learning, culture, and sociability may be brought into the common life. They realize that education is an attitude toward life—an ability to see and understand problems and to utilize information and forces for the best solution of those problems. New information and wider knowledge make possible the maintenance of this attitude as long as life shall last.

It is not necessary to go into the other side of this demand for the wider use of the schools, but only to indicate that it has a business side also. The schools represent a public investment. It is common sense and national economy to secure the greatest amount of service from school buildings. Those whose money goes into a building have a right to determine the use that is to be made of it. The building does not belong to any board of directors or school system. The people reserve the right to exercise the prerogative of ownership.

A man's or a woman's desires are not necessarily limited by his or her vocation in life. Those who work for wages have all of the aspirations and all of the desires and all of the needs that anyone has who has inherited millions or has secured a position of domination in the financial world. Among those in the labor movement, those who work for wages, are some of the rarest characters that can be found in any place in the world, men to whom the word "humanity" has a genuine meaning and who have respect for the value and sacredness of human life. These great, grand souls realize that there is no greater crime against humanity and against conscience than exploitation of human lives or human labor power. The labor movement is that agency by which they realize their ideals and the vision that they see of human possibilities. The organized labor movement has come into the lives of the burden-bearers, the despairing, and the oppressed. It has brought them hope and has been the means of lifting them up to better things, making it possible for them to realize their greater selves. The labor movement is a constructive force; it never aims at the destruction or lowering of present conditions or ideals. It is not a selfish agency existing for a few, but it is a flexible, adjustable movement that is as wide and as broad as human need wherever that may be found.

Some among you teachers have turned to the labor movement for help and protection in your work as teachers. There are some who would make you think that, by casting your lot with the labor movement and solving your economic problems thru economic agencies, you are losing dignity and that you will lose your standing as a profession. Quite the opposite is true. By recognizing that you have economic problems and by trying to secure remuneration that is in keeping with the character and importance of the work that you perform, you will be placing yourselves in a position whereby you can maintain your dignity, for it is idle to deny that means, wages, salaries, enable the individual to secure independence and opportunities for freedom. Higher salaries will enable you to secure untold opportunities. The organized labor movement does not seek to make any profession less exalted than its character justifies, but it endeavors to lift every vocation into the spirit, the purpose, and the understanding of a true profession. It seeks to make plain that anyone who performs a necessary service to humanity is entitled to respect and consideration and adequate reward.

The noblest mission of the schools is to teach the worth of a man or a woman, to teach the value of the individual and his life. This teaching must be supplemented with practical knowledge that enables each to realize his fullest possibilities. Education must be founded upon truths that break down insidious and unjustified distinctions between the kinds of work by which individuals express themselves.

The labor power of wage-earners expressed in their work is applied mentality, applied personality. The labor of a human being cannot be a commodity or an article of commerce; it cannot be the property of anyone. It is inseparable from the mind and the body of the human being. An education that glorifies the creative ability of the individual—his labor—is injecting a revolutionary idea into all our philosophy of life. Such a plan of education will bring into the spirit of our nation a force that will make for larger freedom, for greater progress and effectiveness. It will be in direct opposition to that education which promotes docility, submissiveness, conformity. It will give each individual the power to stamp his life-work with all of the artistic imagery of which his nature is capable.

Education must respond to the call of life. It must perform its work with the understanding necessary to progress in every relation of life, necessary to democracy and to freedom. As there is no separation between the world of thought and the world of action outside of the schools, there must be no artificial separation within the schools.

In addition to the schools being a preparation for life, they are life itself to the children who must attend them. The children must learn from the world itself their life and work. Books are an agency, helpful in the degree that they assist to attain the larger purpose. They are not the ends of education.

Because of the great power which has been intrusted to educational institutions, there are necessarily many efforts made to dominate these institutions. These efforts are subversive to the best interests of the children, of the teachers, and of all society; and are at variance with those purposes for which public schools were established.

Your organization has officially gone on record as opposed to all such efforts to dominate the public schools of this country, whether exercised by so-called philanthropic organizations, foundations, or any other agency. The organized labor movement is with you in that purpose. Our experiences with the exploiting forces in the industrial and commercial field make us keen to detect them when exercised in other relations of life. We have opposed from the beginning efforts of these "foundations" to secure legislation granting them the right to incorporate under federal laws and thus dominate our whole educational system. We have called attention to efforts of these foundations to lay corrupting hands upon the fountain heads of information, knowledge, and education. We have disclosed where they have laid violent hands upon government institutions and have

attempted to form an insidious alliance nominally with government agencies but in reality to exploit the work done.

The labor movement realizes that the workers dare not intrust to irresponsible hands, their relations of work, nor their lives. It has indicated the danger and has helped to avert conditions that could only result in the destruction of our free institutions.

The organized labor movement has this message for the teachers who are the agents by which all educational ideals must be realized:

If you wish to be free, if you wish to be independent to perform the great work intrusted to you nobly and for the best interests of the citizenship of this country, join with us for your and our common protection and betterment. The organized labor movement has nothing to offer you but opportunities for freedom. In turn, affiliation with the labor movement of this country will bring to you no burdens or responsibilities except those which you voluntarily place upon yourselves, and the responsibilities and duties that are inseparable from democracy and free service to humanity.

The organized labor movement makes this demand upon educational ideals: Give to the masses of the people, those who perform mechanical work, which of its very nature is monotonous and may become also stultifying, an imaginative understanding and such a wide comprehension of the wholeness of life that no vocation need be to them a rut. Enable each to see up and beyond with a vivifying mental grasp that shall interpret labor in values of human service, and to do the day's work with the joy of creative labor.

May I be permitted a personal reference? My school years ended at the age of ten when I became a factory boy. Never have I lost that sense of the deep injustice of society that denied me opportunities for child life and study. Whatever I have learned since has been under adverse conditions and because of my insatiable desire to know. It is my earnest desire that others may be protected against similar injustice.

Let me give you this warning: Men and women now have a better understanding of their rights. They resent denial of opportunities. They demand for those who shall later be miners, clerks, machinists, bakers, tailors, factory workers, printers, sailors, cigarmakers, builders, railroad men—those employed in all the trades—an education that shall enable them to be independent men and women, to live full, rich lives, expressing the best that is in them.

As teachers you can do much for the realization of this ideal. I urge upon you your great responsibility and ask your cooperation for the common cause of freedom, justice, and humanity.