

From:  
The Mayor's Office  
127 City Hall

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A warning that the American school system faces the prospect of widespread collapse unless more adequate revenues are provided was sounded by Hubert H. Humphrey, Mayor of Minneapolis, in an address prepared for delivery before the Northwest Division of the North Dakota Educational Association meeting in Minot, North Dakota.

"The American public school system faces a most crucial test in 1947", Mayor Humphrey said, "Our educational system is suffering from a financial drouth and from a mass movement of teachers away from their occupation because of inadequate compensation."

"School facilities throughout the nation are in need of renovation and repair. It is estimated that a total of five billion dollars is needed at once to modernize existing public school buildings."

"A recent survey made by the NEW YORK TIMES of all public schools points out in clear terms the appalling situation that confronts America in its program of education. Today there are more than 110,000 unqualified teachers in the nation's schools.

"This orisis is accentuated because capable young people are refusing to prepare for the teaching profession. Our teachers' colleges have low enrollment. We are supplying less than one-fifth the number of teachers that are needed.

"Between now and 1950 America will need 500,000 additional teachers. Enrollment in public schools will be increased by approximately 2,000,000. At the present rate of teacher supply from the colleges, we will fall far short of this goal.

"A typical example is revealed by comparative statistics. In 1920, twenty-two percent of all college students attended teachers colleges; today only seven per cent attend.

"Further we find that only fifty per cent of the teachers employed in 1941 are still teaching today. All of this is made more pointed when we recognize that twelve major school strikes have taken place since September because of inadequate income and inadequate facilities.

"The morale of teachers has dropped to a new low in America. The day of economic servitude and insecurity for teachers and school administrators must be brought to a close.

"The National Education Association unanimously recommends that a minimum annual salary of \$2,400 be established for a beginning teacher who is a college graduate. Beginning with the second year of teaching, there should be increases leading to a professional salary level for experienced teachers ranging from \$4,000 to \$6,000 per year.

"The United States dare not forget that nations are only as strong and as great as their people. We can not long neglect our public educational system and expect to maintain our place of leadership in the world; to continue as leaders in science and industry; to free ourselves from ignorance, prejudice, and hate cults; to build a higher standard of living for all; to preserve our way of life as a free people.

"This country is amply able to support its schools. The national income increased 300 per cent from 1932 to 1944 while school expenditures increased only 12 per cent.

"Since the future of this nation depends first of all upon the development of human resources, continued financial neglect of public education can lead only to national disaster."

"Public education can no longer be left to the uncertain and the indefinite ability of local communities to adequately sponsor and finance it. Public education in America is a matter of national defense---of public security. It is the life blood of our democracy. It is the only hope for the preservation of our free political and economic institutions.

"Those who in prior years were opponents of reduced revenues for public education are today champions of an expanded school program. The records of the United States Chamber of Commerce, as well as the records of organized labor, reveal that in the communities which have the best schools there exists the best business; that in communities where public education is well financed, there is a minimum of delinquency and crime; that in communities where progressive and extensive educational opportunities are afforded the people, there is a reduced rate of disease and poverty.

The facts speak for themselves. Public education is good business for democracy and for community stability."

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American education during the past generation has placed its emphasis upon teaching techniques and procedures. In the main, it has minimized the importance of a philosophy of education and a thorough understanding of democratic living. Educators in their struggle to maintain the public school system have failed to sense the revolutionary developments in the political and economic world of which they are a part.

Public education was and is designed for the great mass of the people. It, therefore, is imperative that the range of study and discussion be directed towards the realities of the life of the people in the day and age which they are a part. It is impossible to teach and discuss the development of industry without giving the history and the story of the labor movement. Nevertheless, this has been done until today because of lack of information and understanding of our economic structure. Labor and management find themselves discussing economic problems around which the public is poorly informed. Teachers should remember that the vast majority of their students will not be managers, they will be workers. Whether teachers like it or not, in American industry the bulk of these workers will be members of trade unions. Would it not seem advisable then to acquaint young Americans, not only with the history of unionism, but also the responsibilities that come along with powerful organizations.

The social and economic questions of housing, public health, public works, social welfare and community organization, have been glossed over, when in fact, they should have been the subjects of intensive discussion and study. These are the real problems that face our people and are the issues around which young men and women are eager to direct their thoughts. Does it not stand as a blight and a mark of failure, that during the period following World War I, educators failed to develop a consciousness in the American student of our relationships to the rest of the world? Is it not a sign of weakness that during the generation prior to World War II, we failed in our dramatization of democracy and free institutions to appoint where the

menace of fascism seemed as if it was a problem belonging to Europe and of no danger to ourselves? These are fundamental indications of the weakness of our educational structure, and stand today as a challenge to American educators as they seek to develop a program of education that will meet the complex problems of a postwar world.



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