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OUR STAKE IN PUBLIC EDUCATION

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for the

Minnesota Citizens Committee on Public Education

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(The Visitor regrets that limitation of space necessitated omitting six paragraphs)

Our stake in public education is a big one—it is the survival of our democracy.

To be a citizen of a democracy may be treasured as a privilege, but it is not a simple assignment. It is an obligation full of complexities. It is a demand on the individual for the exercise of intelligence, comprehension, wisdom, self-discipline, brotherly love. It is a challenge of a high order, and it cannot be met with mediocrity, with apathy, or with ignorance.

The founding fathers of this nation were men of great spiritual and intellectual attainment. They manifested a wisdom which has afforded a unique protection to this country and the multitude of citizens who have followed them through the years. They did their work nobly and as their descendants we can be grateful to them for their discernment and good judgment. But they did not do our work for us. American democracy is a living thing and we mold and shape it as we citizens live it.

Sometimes these last few years it has seemed perilously near to being stifled through fear, suspicion and distrust. Recently for a period of three or four years responding to the sickly, fearful thinking we citizens were indulging in, our democracy was not so vigorous and vital as we have known it. It was halting and furtive and frightened. It is hard to believe that it could happen to us, but it did. Happily that period is receding and we again feel the quickened pulse of courage and high resolve which must be sustained and fostered if we are to fulfil our destiny.

One of the responsibilities of a demo-

cracy is to develop men who are capable of guiding the nation and coping with its many complicated problems even though a final solution to many of them is not yet in sight. Yes, leaders are vitally important—but who chooses the leaders?

In the operation of a democracy every citizen from the most highly-educated to the most illiterate has a voice in that job. This brings us right up against the subject with which we here today are deeply concerned—public education.

How do we educate boys and girls so that they are fit to live in a democracy? How can we prepare them for a useful life in an age of scientific development? What training can we provide to equip them with the understanding necessary for harmonious human relations not only with the family and the next door neighbor but the black race, the yellow race, and people of different ideologies? What new skills must they master to fit them for a place in government, in industry, in the professions? And most important of all—how do we develop citizens who are capable of self-discipline?

The newspaper headlines would seem to indicate that our grade on the last point is sub-zero.

The destruction of school property which is so hard to come by—the vandalism in other fields—the teen age gang wars—the violence expressed in many ways by our youngsters is a terrible indictment against us oldsters—against the schools, the parents, the churches, the citizenry as a whole, for in the last analysis we are responsible. The constant display of violence and lawlessness in the movies, on the radio and television, pro-

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THE STAFF

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duces the very results we deplore, and it is quite unnecessary. We need only wake up to our responsibilities—and an organization like this one can exert great influence. There is a wealth of material which could be used in place of the unfortunate fare now being provided. What a constructive piece of educational work this would be.

As thought expands, new wonders are coming to light daily. In many cases they render worthless former knowledge and techniques. You have all heard the observation of the aviator who was discussing the speed of jet planes and said, "If you can see it, it's obsolete." It is a significant statement and points up the necessity for modern education.

You who are here today know, through the studies you have made, of the rapidly increasing school enrollment, the extended period of schooling for many pupils, the shortage of classrooms, the lack of teachers, the seeming apathy of some segments of the citizenry, the acute need for more money for education. Dr. Forrest Conner in his speech to you last year gave you a complete picture of the situation in the State of Minnesota and this can be multiplied 48 times.

While there are many aspects to the knotty questions I have mentioned and many ramifications, isn't the financial problem really the basic problem? We have great educators who can train more educators; we have renowned scientists who can teach others; we have builders who can provide modern, efficient school buildings; we have media which were completely unknown 50 years ago—films, radio, television; we have modern equipment for the school rooms and for labora-

tories. All these valuable tools for educating children and producing competent citizens are at hand—they are here now.

Then why are we not making full use of them? Isn't the answer always—lack of money, inadequate financing? But haven't you heard, too, that there's more money in circulation now in this country than ever before?

In this connection I should like to give you some figures I saw a few days ago in the *Christian Science Monitor*.

In 1950 the total expenditures in this country reached the staggering figure of \$235,000,000,000. I don't know how much money that is, and I doubt if anyone can actually comprehend such a vast sum, but a partial breakdown of the figures gives us some interesting information. Of that sum:

1½% went for charitable and religious work,
2% went for tobacco,
4% went for alcohol.

Here is something that is faintly encouraging—

4½% went for education.

We actually spent one-half per cent more for education than we spent for liquor.

Do you think maybe it's a trend? If it is, we can thank the work of this citizens committee and others like it all over the country. I am sure you will agree that in the richest nation in the world, the money is here for all the education we need, just as those other necessities I enumerated are already here. However, there seems to be an obstruction somewhere. The additional teachers, the new class rooms, the modern equipment, and the money are coming through in a trickle instead of the broad and generous flow which is much more characteristic of American life and philosophy.

I believe that the obstruction can be removed with one thing—proper emphasis. You in this organization have made a good start, but it is only a start.

Do you remember back in 1939 and 1940 when the greatest military threat to our country in its entire history found us without guns, without ships, without planes? Do you remember the apathy, the opposition, the actual resentment that

was expressed toward any effort to prepare us for what, to many of our leaders, was obviously inevitable?

As I look back it is interesting to recall the change that took place in my own thinking, because I believe it is typical of thousands of others. I was asked to serve on the committee to defend America through aid to Britain. This committee was sometimes called the William Allen White Committee. The distinguished editor from Emporia, Kansas was a Republican and had little time for many of President Roosevelt's new deal measures, but he supported his foreign policy 100%. He organized local committees all over the country to influence public opinion.

At our first meeting the committee was polled to see just how far we were willing to go in a public statement. I said certainly we ought to help England with money and supplies, but we must not endanger the lives of our own men getting the supplies there; so Britain should pick them up on our doorstep. The others agreed.

At the next meeting we were asked about the outmoded destroyers which the President wanted to send to Britain, and after threshing that out we decided to endorse it, but we did have a few reservations.

The gigantic war effort which followed the Pearl Harbor attack and the billions spent to protect this country from external military threat are matters of history. Where there were no planes, thousands were provided, also, ships and guns and tanks and men and money in abundance.

Yet we did not want to go to war, and, by and large, most of us had to be convinced that it was necessary. When we understood, our nation came through magnificently.

Now we are faced with another threat to our democracy from the inside, and it is indeed basic. To make a democracy live, its citizens must be educated and well-educated. The studies you are making in your various committees on the purposes, the qualitative factors, facilities, teachers, and financing are wonderfully informative, but they must be presented more strikingly and more widely.

There is a tremendous wall of ignorance and apathy and indifference to be leveled, and only a few chinks have been made in it.

It is not as spectacular nor as big as the war effort, but in many ways it is comparable. It touches every home; it intrudes in every business; it needs the patriotic and fervent help of every citizen. It calls for strong leadership on the part of dedicated people like you. Failure to meet this challenge can pose as deadly a threat to our democracy as we have ever had.

You have many of the facts now. They must be given to every member of the community in such a way that they cannot escape their significance. This calls for a competent and persuasive selling job.

We are fortunate to have such men as Sam Gale and Roy Larsen who know from long experience how to sell ideas as well as merchandise. We have a powerful protagonist in President Eisenhower whose closest adviser is a distinguished educator.

Well, what is a mere \$250,000 after the billions we have been talking about? Seriously, this is something that can be sold to the people of America. In this story are romance, pluck, adventure, achievement, heroism, encouragement and gallantry, qualities that are America's own and that America loves.

One of the largest advertising agencies in the country (B.B.D.&O.) has set forth the idea that, even in a country as big as the United States, opinion is largely controlled by a handful of people, maybe 250,000 out of 165,000,000.

Let us use the talents of America to do this job—talents at hand, here and now. There are those among us who can translate the stirring facts you have brought to light into pulsating, vivid, warm, and colorful phrases which will open the hearts and the purses of all our people.

Let us stop thinking that the promised land of abundant education is way over there and recognize that it is at hand now for the claiming. As this conviction grows on us, we will no longer need to talk about the survival of our democracy, but rather its full flowering and fruition.

IF YOU CHANGE POSITIONS

It has been interesting, and quite revealing, to note the condition in which departments are left when teachers change. In some, the new teacher is able to take over with little loss in the effectiveness of the program. The records are complete and properly filed. The pupils and parents have been prepared for the change, and plans for the FFA, Young Farmer, and Adult Farmer phases of the program are available.

Unfortunately, in other departments, the new teacher finds little in the form of records and plans. In some instances, the departing teachers have told the boys they needn't worry too much about keeping up their farming program records. This certainly is to be regretted. This cannot reflect favorably upon the man who is leaving, whether he is remaining in teaching or entering into other work. Furthermore, it isn't fair to the boys or the new teacher.

If you plan to leave your present position, keep these points in mind:

1. Advise your administrator, and your supervisor, as early as possible. This will be regarded as confidential, if that is advisable.
2. Be sure that your files are organized so that the Preliminary and Final Farming Program Records, your grade book, Adult and Young Farmer programs, FFA records, and teaching plans are readily available and understood.
3. Check the Farming Program records to see that the entries are up-to-date.
4. Clear your financial records with the superintendent. Have a bank statement to substantiate FFA or other funds.
5. Arrange to spend some time with the incoming teacher to orient him.
6. Check your departmental inventory and have the forms available for the new teacher to inventory the departmental facilities before you leave.
7. Inform key personnel in the community of your change and introduce your successor, if possible.
8. Arrange a conference with your advisory committee to help them to work

most effectively with your successor during the period of transition.

9. If unable to spend time with your successor, leave a series of notes to orient the new teacher. Prepare a "Who's Who and What's What" to list officers or leaders, their addresses and phone numbers, a list of cooperative (and even non-cooperative) parents and individuals, places where you purchase supplies, take classes for field trips, secure livestock or seed stock for student farming programs, traditions such as FFA banquet, Young Farmer fishing trip, Adult Farmer tour of experiment station.

Adapted from Ohio Agricultural Education News, Vol. IV, No. 3, May, 1953.

OH, FOR THE LIFE OF A FARMER!

What a snap. All he has to know is enough to be:

A combination engineer-blacksmith-inventor who keeps \$15,000 worth of intricate farm and home machinery in top working order.

A meteorologist who assembles and evaluates weather reports, signs, and omens with enough accuracy to assure his family of a livelihood.

A chemist who knows the ingredients with which to feed his soil, kill the bugs, dip the sheep, and clean the stable.

A lumberjack who's a foreman, sawyer, and carpenter all in one.

A veterinarian who sits up all night nursing a bunch of sick pigs, attending a cow, cradling a sick horse's head, spoon-feeding young turkeys with the croup.

A financial genius who figures out for Uncle Sam the tax he's going to pay on chicks which aren't hatched, corn that's still seed, and wheat still in the field.

A livestock market expert who knows exactly when to sell what and to whom.

A jack-of-all trades and a master-of-all, too.

And a man who not only feeds his own family, his own nation, but over half the world. . . .

Oh, for the life of a farmer!

by PAUL LIGHT