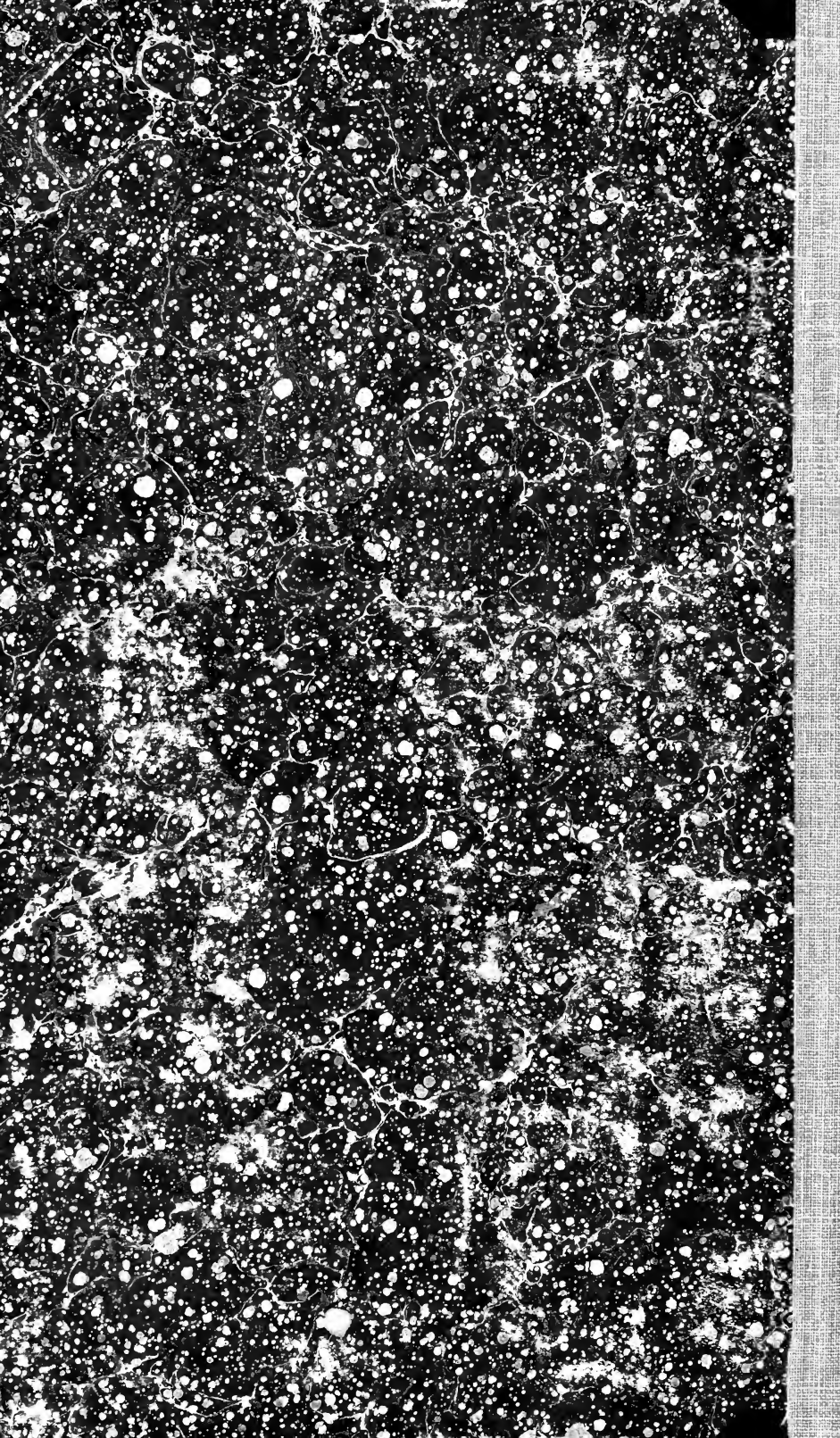
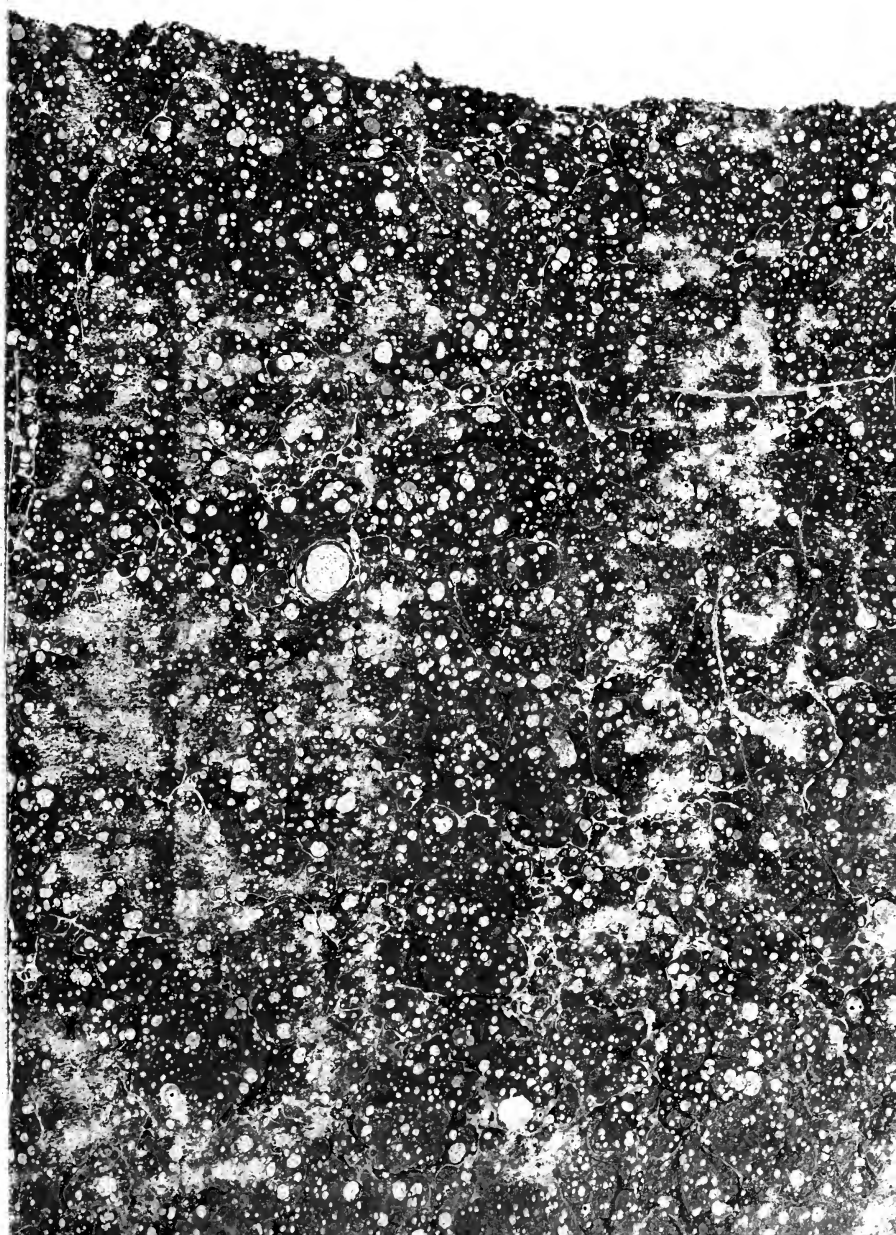


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## THE GENERAL GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC EDUCATION THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY.

W. T. HARRIS.

(A paper read before the Department of Superintendence of the National Educational Association, at New York, February, 1890.)

The question assigned me for discussion depends for its answer on the theory held concerning the function which the National Government is to fulfill. On this question there are two extreme views prevailing, and also a middle ground of compromise. This middle ground of compromise is a practical course actually adopted by the nation. On the one hand, we have the extreme of individualism which proposes to limit the action of the General Government to the police function on a large scale. According to it the Government should secure the blessings of peace, domestic and foreign, but it should do no act to aid the individual or the community in productive industry, or in any of the fields of effort for the welfare of the individual or the public at large. According to it the Government should do nothing to aid agriculture, manufactures, and commerce; it should do nothing for the education and the enlightenment of the people. It should confine its function to the negative acts of punishing crime, deciding cases of trespass, repelling foreign aggression, etc.

The other extreme is that of socialism. It proposes such measures as the Government ownership of land and capital, the establishment of business enterprises, the assignment of careers to individuals. The Government should do all combining, and leave the individual only the narrow prescribed sphere of official servant of the State. If nationalism were to prevail, the faculties in man of direction and combining-power would for the most part rust unused, or remain mere rudiments. The faculties of man which are unfolded by private enterprise would rust unused. The middle ground, which we as a nation have practically followed, leaves the individual vast spheres for private enterprise, but on the other hand undertakes to perform certain general functions of public utility, such as carrying the mails, subsidizing railroads and steam transportation companies, improving rivers and harbors, protecting industries by levying duties on imports, etc. This policy has however been inconsistent and fluctuating. The reason for it is to be found in the fact that American statesmanship has not been able to agree on the definition of what should belong to the General Government, and what should be left to the private individual. Each extreme, therefore, tends toward making its own definition cover the entire ground of practice. One would have all individualism, and the other would have all nationalism.

The individualists would limit the Government to the police function, and

would go so far as to prefer to substitute in many cases lynch-law for the processes of the courts. They tend in fact to the extreme of anarchism. On the other hand, the nationalists tend to the utter abolition of individual self-activity, and would make society a vast machine that feeds, clothes and shelters each man, woman and child in a satisfactory manner, but leaves no scope for individual enterprise. Each person would become a sort of galley-slave for the sake of his board and clothes.

Our actual civilization repudiates both these extremes in practice. It unites them, as we have said, in a middle course which it adopts as a sort of compromise but does not define as a principle.

Let us investigate in a cautious spirit the true sphere of these extreme tendencies, and try to discover what is the ground of their limitation in a higher principle. If we can discover this higher principle, we can by its aid decide on a theory of the scope and function of the General Government, and arrive at some practical conclusions regarding the duties of the General Government toward practical education throughout the whole country.

It is agreed that our national principle is that of local self-government. This principle demands that the individual shall be left free to do that which concerns himself alone. If his deed is indifferent to his fellow-men, he shall have the sole power of direction over it; but if his deed involves a common interest, it is necessary to have a joint direction over it. He shall act in combination with the other parties interested.

If the combined interest extends only to the township, the township shall decide. If it extends to the commonwealth, and no further, then the commonwealth acting as a sovereign State shall determine and execute the deed. But if the proposed action concerns the interest of several States or commonwealths, then the General Government shall have sole jurisdiction over it.

Now this principle of local self-government seems to furnish us a safe and universal criterion by which to decide between individualism and nationalism. The only drawback is found in the difficulty that remains in deciding in the case of a special business whether its interest is a general one or a particular one—whether it is to be performed by the unaided individual, or whether the town, or the State, or the Nation shall direct its doing.

Inasmuch as our democratic formula states the object of all government to be the removal of obstacles to individual self-help, we may say that all governmental action that paralyzes self-help is injurious, and that which stimulates and increases self-help is salutary and legitimate.

With this criterion in view we may see that it is the duty of the town, or the State, or the Nation to remove obstacles in the way of individual activity—obstacles which are so great as to paralyze his endeavors. Man organizes in social combinations in order to overcome obstructions to his freedom which are too great for his individual efforts. If the social combination known as the township will suffice for the removal of this bar to freedom, then its function is all that is required, and the function of the State is not only unneces-



sary, but demoralizing. Again, if the town is not equal to this, the State must intervene; or if the State is not adequate, then the aid of the Nation must be invoked.

It has always been found necessary to make the matter of roads and avenues of intercommunication a public matter. The Government must make possible free intercommunication. How far it must go in the matters of peculiar modes of intercommunication, such as railroads, canals, telegraphs and the like, is to be left to the discretion of the Government, and should be settled by the general principle above mentioned, namely, that of producing a maximum of self-help in the community.

Again, in matters of production, it is legitimate for the town, the State, or the Nation to undertake works that will aid and stimulate self-activity on the part of the individual; but it must be clear that such help does not aid one portion of the community by retarding the self-help of another portion. Thus it has been found that matters of public hygiene should be looked after by the Government, to prevent breeding of pestilence and its spread through the community, the State, or the Nation. The supply of water, the drainage, the removal of garbage, the proper lighting of cities and towns, fire-escapes, fire-preventives, and fire-extinguishing machines—in short, a long series of functions once left to private enterprise, are now assumed by the government of town or city. Left to private enterprise they were performed by thrifty and well-to-do people, but neglected by the unthrifty and untidy. The neglect, however, produced conditions which caused evil to all people, whether thrifty or unthrifty. The pestilence became epidemic, and death came to all classes. The fire that burned the house of the careless tenant spread to the mansion of the rich and to the warehouse of the merchant. The unlighted streets where the laboring classes dwelt and where poverty took refuge, became at night dens of crime and a safe shelter for robbers, murderers, and thieves. When wealth is not taxed for these matters of public welfare it does not escape paying a much heavier assessment in the way of insecurity.

In our time the increase of cities in number and size is the most important factor in our social problem. It occasions constant readjustment of the attitude of public and private effort. Under the old régime of farmers and planters there was a sort of rude but ready local government. The landholder and his managers ruled, by personal influence, each a small circle of laboring people, and secured the blessings of peace and prosperity, such as they were, in their several precincts. People were not brought together in masses, but only in clans and tribes, according to the patriarchal principle. Accordingly, personal influence prevailed. Each influential person of wealth or education knew his immediate environment of persons, and ruled it with his direct will-power.

Under this patriarchal régime each person was very close to another, and the substitution of the one-man power was much more complete than it can possibly be in a city civilization. It was a family government, and personal authority was at its maximum as a social factor.

With our increasing city growth the urban population has arisen from the low status of three per cent. of the entire number, until in 1880 twenty-four per cent. of our people were in cities, and at present date it is safe to say that one-third of all our people live in cities, or large villages so connected by the railroad that they are practically suburbs of cities. The city life breaks up completely the old patriarchal rule in the community. The environment of persons is too large for the strong-willed leader to penetrate and control by the authority of his presence. The patriarchal principle can prevail only where the community is small and isolated, and interdependent. In the city there is no isolation, and very little interdependence. The powerful will of one citizen cannot act on his weak neighbors, for the reason that there is no fulcrum of dependence; or, in other words, the one citizen does not have in his hands the entire interests of his fellows. He goes to his manufactory, or to his warehouse, and his neighbors go to their several tasks, he knows not where. The employés in his factory, or store, are powerfully influenced by him during the few hours of labor, but he knows nothing of their home life, and has no influence over it. There is a citadel of private life at home over which he can have little authority. He feels that his influence and authority are strictly limited. The patriarchal farmer, or planter, knows his obedient clan in their domestic life, and in all their histories and interests, and he can easily stifle tendencies to independence by pulling this or that string of immediate influence. Thus it happens, in all rural communities, wherever they are, there is the dominance of one-man power, and the subordination of individual will—the suppression of manly independence by nipping it in the bud, as it were. With the social change from the rural community to the village and the suburb, and then to the full urban life, there is a progressive emancipation from this thralldom of personal influence to individual sovereignty. The responsibility falls on the individual, and he must decide for himself, without the advice of the head of his clan.

In the family only this patriarchal principle remains, and will remain, though with continually diminishing power. For when the family has a patriarchal environment it has a firm grasp on the individuals composing it. The authority of the parent is something sacred, and the worst sin is disobedience. Let the rural environment change to an urban one, and the father of the family loses his firm hold on the obedience of his children at an early age. For implicit obedience, he can expect only a limited obedience, secured partly by appeals to reason and self-interest. Implicit obedience to personal authority yields to coöperation through intellectual insight into what is reasonable to be done under the circumstances. Instead of one brain, with many pairs of hands, we see many brains, each governing its own pair of hands.

In the rural part of the nation, away from the urbanizing influence of the railroad and daily newspaper, the new status has not arrived, but is arriving. The youth hears of the city and its possibilities of individualism, from the summer visitors, if not from his city cousins, and begins to reflect disparag-

ingly on the net-work of customs and usages and blind obedience to personal authority, which holds him in its meshes. Parental authority is compelled to relax, even in the rural district. The railroad, which brings with it the daily newspaper and other instrumentalities of urban life, is piercing these rural communities, and fast modifying all their conditions.

Still in the rural town meeting may be seen the old-time power of the strong-willed patriarchs of the town. They control the henchmen of their clans still. They browbeat and crush out individual freedom of opinion among their neighbors. Only through their mutual collisions is there left opportunity for some exercise of free individuality on the part of the subordinate clansmen. They may revolt from one leader to another, and thus maintain some degree of self-determination. The old town meeting which Freeman, the historian, celebrates, is not by any means an ideal of free institutions, but even down to this day it is the scene of personal browbeatings and of the tyranny of patriarchal authority to an extent not to be found in any other part of our civilization. It is passing away; but with it local self-government does not wane and nationalism take its place, but the contrary—there is a perpetual growth of individual responsibility and freedom.

But how about this matter of urban growth? Is it not a disease to be cured by social enlightenment? Should not people cease to herd together in towns, and remove into the country once more? Alas! no one can suggest this who once glances at the causes of the increase of city life.

The avatar of natural science has brought along with it an era of mechanic invention, and mere hand-labor is superseded by machinery. The consequent increase of productive power is constantly cheapening the necessary ratio between producers of the raw materials of food, clothing and shelter and the manufacturers and distributors of these. The railroad and steamship connect the agricultural regions of greatest fertility with the regions of great manufacturing facilities, and fewer and fewer persons are needed for farmers and more and more persons are called to the management of machinery for manufacturing, for elaborating, ornamenting and distributing the productions.

The demand for this readjustment of vocations is constant, as is shown by the prevalence of lower agricultural wages as compared with wages for mechanical skill and for the managers of transportation and trade. The farmer averages his \$23 per month, while the other occupations average much more than \$35.

This glance at the cause of urban growth convinces us that it is not a temporary affair. It will go on with increasing perfection of the natural sciences and the increasing fruits of invention that accrue. Agriculture is destined to be done by machinery at an increasing rate of progress. The rural principle of patriarchalism is bound to yield to individual responsibility.

Now what is the effect of urban life? What new strain does it place on the individual, and how does it operate?

This question is a very important one for the consideration of those who

direct education. It is very important to all sociologists, and to all would-be reformers.

The most obvious effects of these great social changes which I have taken so much of my brief space to describe, are the increase of individual responsibility and the phenomena which flow from this extra strain upon the individual. Its negative effects are twofold, seen in the increase of crime and insanity. So long as the individual held a sort of family relation to a clan leader who did his thinking for him, and who made up his mind for him and directed him in matters not purely routine, it is obvious that he was relieved of a great weight of care and anxiety. All this weight comes upon the individual emancipated from patriarchal obedience by change to urban surroundings. The strain acts upon the citizen who has possibilities of strength in such a way as to develop his resources and make more of a man of him. Upon the weakling it has quite another effect. If he be weak in intellect, in nervous power, and executive capacity, and possessed of good moral proclivities, he is liable to become insane under the pressure for constant self-adjustment to the changing outside circumstances. Hence, with the increase of urban life, there is constant increase of insanity observable in all civilized countries.

There is also an increase of crime. The patriarch of his tribe holds a sort of sway within each personality of his clansmen, and this appears as a certain restraint or inhibiting force holding back from crime.

It is obvious enough that this is not a moral force of a high order. It is only a sort of obsession. The clansman is obsessed by the will of his chief. He leaves his own mental house and lets it be tenanted by the will of a master. This is not moral, nor immoral, but unmoral. Without the sense of personal responsibility there is no morality possible.

On emerging from this authority of the clan and entering the city life, our weak moral and intellectual individual gravitates into association with criminals. The close companionship that prevails among confederates in crime allures our moral weakling. He has none of the instincts which grow with the exercise of responsibility. For such exercise leads one quickly to see that freedom of the individual implies moral and statute laws to protect the exercise of free self-determination.

The moral weakling yields to temptation and enters the career of crime, because he is too immature to be endowed with full responsibility, and because he is not looked after by good directive power but allowed to come under the influence of evil directive power. The good men are apt to be rough and repellent towards this class of the community. They have no sympathy with the moral weakling, though they are willing to help the honest struggler. Hence they crush the individual of immoral proclivity and drive him out to seek the recognition of wayward and criminal companions. This is the rationale of the increase of crime incident to the increase of urban life, and it is a very serious matter to consider, because it brings us back to our

doctrine of local self-government. That principle takes for granted intelligent self-direction. It presupposes citizens of moral aims and purposes, together with educated mind enough to not mistake the best means to secure them. In other words, it assures the existence of mature, responsible people, and makes no account of immature intellectual and moral people who cannot direct themselves. To be sure, it meets these immature people at the last end of their career with halters in one hand for those who have yielded to criminal tendencies, and with strait-jackets in the other hand for those who have become insane. It has, moreover, to provide for a large class, neither criminal nor insane, but who have proved unequal to their responsibilities in the way of thrift, and who therefore drift ashore for the pauper asylum.

The principle of "*let alone*," *laissez faire*, does not take hold of this immature class and provide what it needs for it, it does not institute for it a system of nurture. Immature development in responsibility does not need justice, it needs nurture; it needs not the principle of the state so much as the principle of the family, the educative function.

But it needs to correct the family or patriarchal principle, so as not to hold back the development of responsibility by the principle of implicit obedience, but to adopt a treatment that shall kindle self-respect and intelligent self-direction. It must aid the growth of self-help. Educative efforts increase self-help.

Indeed, it is found that the weakling class that comes into jails and insane asylums is disproportionately large from the illiterate classes. While the illiterate criminal class should be about four per cent., it is nearly eight times as large in our States that have developed urban life.

These detailed considerations, I think, furnish us a clew to the main question—what is the function of Government in the matter of education? Undoubtedly a free government depends on the education of all its people. A patriarchal community can get along without education of all its members. Its chiefs must have a sort of education that will enable them to take possession of the brains of their followers.

Urban civilization needs to strengthen the power of self-activity, the power to stand the strain of responsibility, on the part of its citizens. Education increases this power more than anything else.

Our modern philanthropy has not discovered anything that will produce self-help in the criminal and pauper classes except education, intellectual and moral. Such help is all pure gain. All aid to education is well invested. Other kinds of aid to the individual may produce mendicancy, but aid to education cannot and will not do this.

The problems of education in this nation relate to the treatment of immense rural populations in the most of the Southern States, and in many of our Northern States slowly changing into urban populations, and subject to this strain upon their individual directive powers. We need larger State school taxation, which shall use the wealth of the cities to help educate the country

population. We need national aid to swell the funds that shall reach the remotest country districts. Education, in a country where the government is by the majorities and where each citizen must submit to the majority—education is a matter of national importance; it is of State importance and of individual importance. All interests coincide, and all ought to bear a share in it.

Our nation should not assume direction of education as a general government, but it should aid education. Not even the State should assume all directive control over education, but it should aid it and partially supervise it. The local self-direction of towns should administer and for the most part supervise it. Rural education now is the greatest of our interests; it is a national interest of the most colossal kind. Secondary to it, and not much below it, are the education and nurture of the weaklings in will-power and intellectual power that drift to our cities without getting on their feet through self-help. We must take the children of these classes, and compel them to receive intellectual, moral and industrial education, from infancy up to advanced youth.

There is no way of reaching the rural schools except by increasing the money appropriated for them by State and National aid. The States, especially in the regions where rural life is in predominance, are now making their State taxes for education much larger than other sections of the country. This fact shows the importance of National aid to education. It is the only way of reaching the rural districts except by disproportionate State taxation.

The true relation of General Government to public education throughout the country is not one of dictation or direction of it—not one of interference in any manner with the State and township management, but it should be one of aid and encouragement to the educative organizations already established in the several States. Such National aid will not, and cannot “promote mendicancy” as it is called by extreme individualists. It is evident, from the nature of education, that it is the very instrumentality of all that aids self-help—stimulates individuality, creates self-respect, and increases all kinds of individual enterprise.

I have limited myself in this paper to this single phase of the relation of the General Government to public education throughout the land, and have omitted all consideration of the function of the Educational Bureau, the establishment of a National university, Indian education, military education, and any other phases of National educational work, either in operation or proposed as a subject of Congressional legislation in the future. I have omitted these things in order to present the sociological aspects that should be borne in mind in their consideration as preliminary to the reasonable settlement of all other questions bearing on National action in behalf of education.



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