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Semi-Weekly Telegraph and The News

ST. JOHN, N. B., JANUARY 25, 1910

PUBLIC UTILITIES

While we are waiting for the New Brunswick Public Utilities Commission to plunge into the labors to which Mr. Hazen assigned it many months ago, let us, by way of whetting our appetites, glance at a few trenchant remarks on the relations between the public and public utility corporations made by Governor Woodrow Wilson, former president of Princeton University, in his inaugural address. He said:

"It is the duty of the public to control these great instrumentalities which nowadays, in so large part, determine the character of society. Wherever we can find what the common interest is in respect of them we shall find a solid enough basis for law, for reform."

"The matter is most obvious when we turn to what we have come to designate public service, or public utility, corporations—those which supply us with the means of transportation and with those common necessities, water, light, heat, and power. Here are corporations exercising peculiar and extraordinary franchises, and bearing such a relation to society in respect of the services they render that it may be said that they are the very medium of life. They render a public and common service of which it is necessary that practically everybody should avail himself."

"We have a Public Utilities Commission in New Jersey (also in New Brunswick), but it has hardly more than powers of inquiry and advice. It could, even as it stands, be made a powerful instrument of publicity and of opinion, but it may also modestly wait until it is asked before expressing a judgment, and in any case it will have the uncomfortable consciousness that its opinion is gratuitous, and carries no weight of effective authority. THIS WILL NOT DO. IT IS UNDERSTOOD BY EVERYBODY WHO KNOWS ANYTHING OF THE COMMON INTEREST THAT IT MUST HAVE COMPLETE REGULATORY POWERS; THE POWER TO LEARN AND MAKE PUBLIC EVERYTHING THAT SHOULD FURNISH A BASIS FOR THE PUBLIC JUDGMENT WITH REGARD TO THE SOUNDNESS, THE EFFICIENCY, THE ECONOMY OF THE BUSINESS—THE POWER, IN BRIEF, TO ADJUST SUCH SERVICE AT EVERY POINT AND IN EVERY RESPECT, WHETHER OR EQUIPMENT OR CHARGES OR METHODS OF FINANCING OR MEANS OF SERVICE, TO THE GENERAL INTEREST OF THE COMMUNITIES AFFECTED. This can be done, as experience elsewhere has demonstrated, not only without destroying the profits of such business, but also with the effect of putting it upon a more satisfactory footing for those who conduct it no less than for those who make use of it day by day."

All of which is sound public doctrine. The public through responsible agents must absolutely control the operation of public utilities, in order that they shall be made to serve, first and foremost, the public. If, perchance, New Brunswick's legislation regarding public utilities does not give the commission power enough, or if the commission, having the power, fails to employ it as was intended by those who sought relief from their legislators, then certainly the question must again be debated in the Legislature and the members of that body required to choose between their constituents on the one hand and the public franchise-holding corporations on the other.

ASSISTING REFORM

The action of a citizens' committee in initiating the proposal for a city government by commission indicates a most important field for civic improvement leagues

and voluntary associations in political reform. Objection is often made to associations of citizens interfering with political or legal matters that are the business of elected and appointed officials. It is said that the people choose those whom they wish to represent them, and that no body of ordinary citizens have a right to interfere, nor to assume any of the functions of government.

No one denies that it is the duty of the elected representatives and officers of the law to make and enforce the law according to their oath of office. Prosecutors should prosecute; mayors should see that the ordinances are enforced, and aldermen do their duty without fear or favor. But suppose there is failure and neglect? Suppose that, as is the case here, the work of civic administration is only an incident in the daily activities of mayor and aldermen; that like the rest of us they must betake themselves to the stern necessity of making a living for themselves and their families in other lines of business? They have no opportunity to become expert in government and to deny them the advantages of suggestions from individual citizens or associations of citizens is absurd. Even if there is no neglect or great failure of government it is the duty of every citizen to address himself to the problems of government. And when there is neglect and failure the duty is still more imperative on each citizen to try by every means to reach the sensitive spot in every official until the right and the neglect are repaired.

But this duty can only be performed in the most effective way by association with others of like mind. Such voluntary associations have the support of custom and of enlightened experience. A united band of good citizens can secure information where a single citizen would fail; can correct the errors of the isolated thinker and agitator; can promote more deliberate and prudent measures; can secure the attention of the public; can guarantee that the movement is not selfish and that it is directed by competent citizens; can persist when the individual alone would grow weary and exhausted, and can supply the necessary funds for incidental expenses. All our institutions call for organizations of this nature. There is hardly an important movement for betterment which has not been started, fostered and watched over by such associations of citizens in the cities of America or Europe. It is a capital defect of our high schools and universities that the young men they graduate are not more alive to their responsibility in this particular. Of whatever elements public spirit is composed, these elements the schools and universities must discover and teach their graduates to apply to civic and governmental problems. But unfortunately these natural leaders of public thought have not regarded it as their particular duty to keep that public spirit from languishing in this democratic country.

We ask much service today of our municipal governments. First of all we demand the preservation of order and protection of person and property by a carefully selected and thoroughly disciplined police force. We ask that the city government should take care that every rented house is in good sanitary condition, and that the poor are not left to the mercy of landlords in such vital matters as plumbing, drainage, ventilation and sanitary conveniences. Streets should be cleaned in all quarters. Schools should be provided for all children and sufficient care exercised to see that children do not dodge the truancy law and grow up enemies to the city. These are but preliminary and primary things that the most primitive organization must provide for, but everyone knows how badly we have accomplished most of these. The other problems that more advanced cities have long been grappling with we have not yet addressed ourselves to.

It used to take the Athenians all day and every day to settle their few political questions by the public and private discussions in the marketplace. And they had to discuss not one in a hundred of the questions which should take the time and attention of our civic fathers. Our citizens have in their hands not only city government, but county, provincial, national, all complicated with huge responsibilities of social life of which the ancient had no inkling. And our government is simply, at a given time, the embodiment of our morality, our intelligence, our will, our character, and it cannot be run without co-operation and sacrifice.

EDUCATION

Butler defines education as a gradual adjustment to the spiritual possessions of the race. How to accomplish this adjustment is the question. There is also much uncertainty among parents and teachers, as well as school boards, as to what society must require of its schools. Children come to the school at the age of six or seven, and to the kindergarten still younger, with a social experience and memory. They have learned by imitation how to walk, talk, make and understand gestures. They have heard music, and are quite familiar with family life. The child has known law and government, and does not arrive at school a mere blank paper to be written over with the egoism of the teacher.

The problem of the teacher is to utilize all his experiences so as to secure an orderly arrangement of them in the child's mind. Each day is a complete chapter of life and should have its full rights. From infancy to the transition from adolescence, life should be presented constantly in its integrity, as a whole, and not as a chaotic mass of unrelated experiences. A child has little power of discrimination. He is omnivorous and not at all fastidious. Like a game fish he will only rise to "live bait," but that he will devour without waiting to taste it. His after life will reproduce just what is stored away in memory, whether it is useful or the reverse.

Every civilized nation has had an educational aim peculiar to itself, and a criterion by which it has judged its educational machinery. With the Spartans it

was the production of the soldier. In Athens a few centuries later the military ideal had been superseded by one which included beauty and the sensuous delights of living. When the Roman arms were supreme there came another ideal, not one radically different, but one that included the idea of physical strength to bear arms and intellectual strength to govern conquered peoples. Educational aims can not be so simply stated since the revival of learning in the sixteenth century. The aims have broadened, and with the broadening they have lost much of their definiteness and in many cases become hopelessly obscure. No doubt these aims might be stated in a general sense as life reaching out into unexplored fields, character that sees beauty in right action, that thinks and makes loftier the noble thoughts of all ages, and that feels that not to leave the world better than it finds it is to be disgraced.

This certainly is no narrow or sordid educational creed, but unfortunately it is most often forgotten in the strenuous devotion of both pupil and teacher to the multitude of different "studies" that have crept into the lowest grades even. These, with the time which must be given to the means of expression—the famous three R's, reading, writing and arithmetic, which are generally but indifferently acquired—leave no room for anything else. Some philosopher has said that an ignorance of means may minister to greatness but an ignorance of aims makes it impossible to be great at all. We are developing the "Band-a-log" type of citizenship as Kipling described it in the Jungle Book: "The Band-a-log called the place their city, and pretended to despise the jungle people because they lived in the forest. And yet they never knew what the buildings were made for, nor how to use them. They would sit in circles in the hall of the King's council-chamber and scratch for fleas and pretend to be men; or they would run in and out of the roofless houses and collect pieces of plaster and old bricks in the corner and forget where they had hidden them, and fight and cry in scuffling crowds, and then break off to play up and down the terraces of the King's garden, where they would shake the cone trees and the oranges in sport to see the fruit and flowers fall. They drifted about telling one another that they were doing as men did or shouting 'There are none in the jungle so wise and good and clever and strong and gentle as the Band-a-log.' But Morgli at once decided that they had no law, no hunting call, and no leader, and he could not help laughing when they cried, 'We are great, we are free, we are wonderful, we all say so, and so it must be true.' Like the Band-a-log people we are often busy to no purpose in our educational methods, imitative and aimless and often when we have purpose it is unwisely guided and we miss the liberal equipment necessary for the ultimate mastery of life. There is nothing inconsistent in giving pupils a broad culture while we give them at the same time discipline in some one subject until perfection is attained. It is an advantage of theloyd and manual training methods that accuracy and finish can be at once measured at every step by the child himself. A boy who has failed twenty times in trying to fashion an accurate foot rule out of a piece of box-wood, and at last succeeds, has a lesson in absolute standards of veracity, justice, sound learning and thoroughness which he will never forget. From that moment he has a standard of completeness which he can apply to all studies and all labors. He becomes intolerant of sham, of half-way knowledge, of hypocrisy in every form. In some small and particular field each child should acquire the capacity of drawing just inference from observed facts, develop a power of accurate observation, and have enough knowledge of the means of expression to convey a descriptive city development.

When the time comes to provide a larger city hall, or general civic building, there is little reason to think it will be placed in Market square, or near the general post office. A model place would have been the south side of King square, where soon a new theatre is to be built. The north side of the square would be equally good. It is time, by the way, that the north side of the square, a block which should be one of the most valuable in the city, began to take on the appearance that it must some day wear. A modern building at either end, or in the centre, would start a movement that would soon make that side of the square one of the most desirable localities in St. John.

The new city building might well go where the court house stands, or the court house might be made over to meet the needs of city legislators as well as of judges and lawyers. The city stable east of the police station, at Carmichael street, occupies a most valuable space, good enough for any sort of public building. Aldermen and business men who are interested in such matters as the new city hall, and who realize that it will not be begun this year or next, should forget Market square and look at sites near King square, remembering that the city, like the individual, must look ahead in these matters if desirable property is to be acquired at reasonable figures.

THE INTENSIVE PLAN
Consideration of the prices of meat, vegetables, poultry, and many other articles of daily consumption in St. John should lend some interest to a scheme just launched in Toronto and backed by three millions of Canadian, English and Scottish capital. These men have bought 3,000 acres of land north of Toronto and have secured options on as much more, all of which they propose to divide into small holdings, which they will rent or sell to Old Country immigrants for gardening and intensive farming, the raising of poultry and hogs, vegetables, and the like. It is said the company's operations may eventually extend over 20,000 acres in the vicinity of Toronto, and already negotiations are afoot for similar areas near Montreal and Hamilton.

This is a matter that should command the attention of those who have to do with securing immigrants for New Brunswick. It has one of the advantages which helped to make the C. P. R.'s ready-made farm scheme successful. Instead of giving a man in England or Scotland an indefinite idea about some section of Canada, and asking him to go there and take the risk of selection and settlement, these promoters propose to set an immigrant down near a certain market, telling him definitely what his expenses will be, and allowing him to decide whether or not he is capable of raising enough produce by intensive farming to make a living or to acquire a competence.

Many of the immigrants in question are acquainted with intensive methods, and many of them, too, regard it as a very great advantage to be settled near the comforts which long-settled districts like our own offer. No doubt there are thousands of acres near this city that could be used for much the same purposes which the Toronto investors have in mind.

ON MOVING CITY HALL

If the tentative proposal to build a new city hall in Market square ever begins to assume serious proportions, there will probably develop a strong and indignant protest from the taxpayers. There is not too much room in Market square at present for traffic purposes, and what is equally important, the blocking up of this much needed open space at the junction of our chief thoroughfares would be a crime from the standpoint of civic beauty and intelligent city development.

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SOMEbody's CHILDREN

A lady once confessed that she never had a happy or even comfortable moment in all her school life excepting three times: "Once when the school house chimney burned out; once when the plaster fell on our heads; and once when one of my schoolmates had an epileptic fit." The dull boys who go with shining morning faces unwillingly to school, have many cases, a hard time of it. They find the methods appropriate for normal children, and it is impossible for them to adapt themselves to these methods. They cannot keep up with ordinary classes in all studies and the effort to push them produces bewilderment, discouragement and positive misery. If they are lads of easy temper, constant failure subdues their spirit and makes them believe that they can never accomplish anything; if they are impetuous, the discipline, for failure to acquire and understand the

multiplication table, makes them rebels and perhaps criminals. Principal Parker of the Chicago Normal School, illustrated the injustice from which slow and defective children suffer. He spoke of a boy who had been brought to him by his mother. Her story was that the boy was fifteen years old, that he had attended school regularly from the age of seven, and that he had reached only the third grade; he was years behind boys of his age. He had no bad habits. He was not imbecile or criminal, but slow just, stupid. Mr. Parker spoke to the boy, and discovered from the way in which he held his head that he was deaf. The mother insisted that it could not be. Parker insisted that he was right. The boy was put in charge of a careful observing teacher, who, at the end of a session announced that the boy was near-sighted—so near-sighted that he could not distinguish letters or figures on the black-board.

It would be entirely practicable to take the dull children and provide the necessary facilities for their development. Boys turn truant because they cannot learn languages, and if the truant officers discover them and bring them back they forget the hateful tasks as quickly as they can after leaving school. But these lads might at once discover their talents in a machine shop, and discovering these talents work out a heritage of usefulness and character.

The whole theory of true education is to set free the "inward perfecting principle within the individual and society," to use Aristotle's words, which when released from interceptions and oppressions can be guided to move to its proper ends. In the true education by which men are to be qualified to serve each other and themselves, to reach their highest, and through their highest to lift society to its highest, the school today is playing quite too unimportant a part. It is true that never before was education so near to life as today, never before were the people being educated into such creative ideals as today. But it is also true that our present method breaks the heart and subdues the spirit of the dull children. The girl who finds history a torment, if introduced into a sewing school or kitchen might make a model housekeeper. In this way she would pass a more happy childhood and be of more benefit to society than if she were driven along in a way that ever afterwards would be associated with humiliation and unintelligent lessons. Most philosophers have pointed out that the state must be built directly upon the school. And children who are not happy and cheerful in their education will not be happy and cheerful in their life. Society needs the service of Martha as well as the contemplative spirit of Mary, and our schools should be ready to encourage the one as the other.

A great many things that pass for culture today will before long be remembered only as forms of self-indulgence and selfishness. The idea of a school is to impart to children a knowledge that will fit them to take part and move in the great world's life. This cannot be accomplished by jockeying the dull, the normal and the bright child together so that they walk in lock-step. There has been a great change in industry since the days of the apprenticeship system, when a boy who desired it would live with a master and learn a trade. But in our schools we have made no provision for that change. The machine has driven out the apprentice, and even the manual training methods we advocate make no adequate provision for the dull lad in the formative period of his life. The best years of a citizen's life are the days of the apprenticeship system, when a boy who desired it would live with a master and learn a trade. But in our schools we have made no provision for that change. 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