

# CURRENT TOPICS

## THE CHARGE AGAINST PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Does our public school system really give our boys and girls that kind of training and instruction which will send them out into the world with a good start toward their development into moral and efficient citizens? This question is being asked by practical men and women in all walks of life, not in a spirit of adverse criticism, but in an honest belief that, under modern school conditions, instruction in the principles of sound and vital ethics is being subordinated to more material things. Discussing this subject Congressman Samuel W. McCall of Massachusetts, in an interview reported by Alleyne Ireland in the New York World, says:

"The most serious criticism which I would make of our school system is that it does not pay sufficient attention to character training, that it neglects to instill into the youth of the nation, as effectively as it might fairly be expected to do, the broad moral principles upon which alone reliance can be placed for a sane and healthy conduct of life.

"If I had to compress this criticism into a single concrete phrase, I would say that our children are taught a great deal about their rights and relatively little about their duties, that the general tendency of our school instruction is to make American youth very much alive to the opportunities of wresting something from its environment and not so sensible to the claims of gentle and generous living.

"Native and foreign observers have told us again and again that in respect for authority and in regard for the rights of others, our people fall behind the standard set by countries whose general level of civilization is, in our opinion, much lower than our own.

"There is a type of mind which translates contempt for authority into a noble independence of spirit and which interprets indifference to the rights of others as a wholesome symptom of sturdy self-reliance, but it is not by means of such pleasant paraphrases that we can blink the fact that we too often hold laws, rules and regulations in contempt, and that we too commonly regard the power to do something as an all-sufficient justification for doing it.

"These faults of character, to whatever extent they exist, are, in some degree at least, traceable to failure of our schools to meet the responsibility which rests upon them to give a human guidance to our children during their most impressionable years.

"I have found matter for adverse comment in the educational ideal which places too much emphasis upon the acquirement of knowledge and too little upon the teaching of sound principles of ethics and conduct. It remains to consider the other side of the question, that is to say, whether the object of American education being to develop the sense of individual rights and to equip our boys and girls with the means of securing a successful start in life, the results indicate success or failure to attain these objects."

## KANSAS STANDS AS AN EXAMPLE

Kansas was pointed out as the proof that prohibition actually does prohibit, in an address by Arthur Capper, the new governor of Kansas, before the national convention of the Inter-collegiate Prohibition association, recently held in Topeka, Kansas. Mr. Capper asserted that the fact that Kansas is prosperous and at peace with itself is largely due to prohibition, and in his address made some interesting comparisons on conditions in Kansas and its neighbor state, Missouri. The following is taken from a report of his address by the Associated Press:

"Prohibition is not an easy condition to achieve or maintain," he said. "It takes constant vigilance and ceaseless enforcement of law."

"Mr. Capper touched on woman suffrage in Kansas when he asserted that in the state no man can gain office on what is known as a 'wide open' platform; that the women would defeat him if the men should fail.

"Kansas has reduced its per capita consumption of liquor to \$1.25 annually as compared to the \$21 annually per capita consumption of the

average state having saloons, the speaker pointed out. He also asserted Kansas has the lowest percentage of illiteracy in the United States, largely as the result of its thirty-two years of prohibition, and compared conditions in Kansas with those in Missouri, the nearest state with saloons.

"In Missouri one farmer in one hundred owns an automobile," he said, "while in Kansas one farmer in five has a car." Missouri has 4,000 saloons into which its people pay eighty million dollars a year. Missouri has but twenty dollars per capita in the savings banks. Kansas, with two and a quarter million less population, has more than one hundred dollars for every family within its borders in the savings banks.

"Missouri has millions of dollars invested in breweries and saloons, but Kansas lent \$50,000,000 to New York in the panic of 1907, while Missouri declined to send a penny. Missouri wealth has been going to saloons and breweries to an alarming extent. Kansas wealth has been going into silos and banks, into safe homes, into educational institutions, into town improvements."

"In view of these results, Mr. Capper said, 'it is the duty of Kansas people to take the lead in an active propaganda for making this a saloonless nation.'

"On the west," he concluded, "Colorado has joined the elect. On the south is Oklahoma, dry from its birth; on the north, Nebraska is striving for the right, and on the east Missouri is trying to be free."

## WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION LEGISLATION

The passage of laws giving compensation to injured workmen, or to their widows and children when fatal injuries are incurred, is considered as an immense advance over the old system of compelling them to fight for their rights under the common law. There is abundant evidence, however, that legislation on this subject enacted in some states, though a step in the right direction, is as yet pitifully inadequate in its provision for benefits. Joseph A. Parks of the Massachusetts industrial accident board, discussed this point at a recent meeting of the American Association for Labor Legislation in Philadelphia. Mr. Parks declared:

"Statistics show that there are 19,000,000 working people in the United States who earn an average of less than \$500 a year, and who, with their families, represent a population of more than 60,000,000. These are the persons who are affected by the scale of compensation when incapacity or death overtakes the breadwinner.

"With an average wage of less than \$500 prevailing throughout the United States, a 50 per cent scale of compensation is absolutely inadequate, unjust, and intolerable. The New York state conference of charities and corrections decided that \$825 was the necessary income to allow a family of five to maintain a fairly proper standard of living in New York city and vicinity, and Streightoff, in his book, 'The Standard of Living,' adds that it may well be questioned whether \$600 is not too low a minimum for the large majority of the smaller cities of the country. Surely the 50 per cent standard can not be sufficient, if the average wage is too low to permit wage-earners to live properly under normal conditions."

"As a result of two years' experience, Mr. Parks continued, Massachusetts raised its scale from 50 per cent to 66 2-3 per cent, and compensates occupational diseases as well as accidental injuries, with the unanimous consent of both employers and employes."

## A PARK FOR EVERY TOWN

Parks, plazas or public squares, children's playgrounds and recreation parks are recognized by thinking welfare workers as necessary in modern town and city building. This work has too long been neglected by many cities, to their sorrow, and this should serve as a warning to every city and town, no matter how small, to make some provision for future park purposes. Writing on this subject, a writer in the Sacra-

mento (Cal.) Bee, in referring to the smaller towns and cities, says:

"As these towns are growing fast, property is becoming more valuable. Vacant blocks are being subdivided into building lots, and prices are increasing."

"As individuals are buying now to escape higher prices later, so should municipalities acquire sites for parks and plaza improvements, while prices are low. The longer the municipality waits, the farther from the business district must the park site be located.

"Parks cost money, but the expenditure is justified over and over. To the great mass, privileges born of wealth and position are denied. Let not those of common opportunity to breathe the pure air, bask in God's health-giving sunshine, and rest in the refreshing shade of overhanging trees be cut off.

"Play-room for children, a resting place for the weary man or woman, quiet communion with Nature, or a brisk, invigorating walk, are boons to humanity.

"The wealthy can adopt no more laudable manner of handing down benefits to posterity than by giving park sites for public use and enjoyment, free from unreasonable restrictions.

"Playgrounds for children long ago proved their worth. Properly conducted and supervised, they are institutions for any town to be proud of.

"The average small-town park, and city parks as well, are popular only on festive occasions. Frequently they are the haven of the tramp and the down and outer—a haven in truth; for vigilant police and empty pockets, as well as weary feet and souls, make the public square a needed resting place. And often the sprawling figures on benches and the grass tend to keep women and children from enjoyment of hours in the open.

"Adoption of the common-sense plan of reserving certain seats and sections for women and children only, combined with a little police vigilance to enforce the rule, commonly solves the problem."

## IDAHO'S NEW GOVERNOR

Among the new governors chosen at the November elections was Moses Alexander, who was elected as governor of Idaho on the democratic ticket, with the progressive party endorsement. Mr. Alexander is a native of Missouri and, it is stated, is the first co-religionist in America to be elected to a high executive position in the United States. In commenting on Mr. Alexander's career as a stimulus to the active participation of the Jew in American political life, regardless of prejudices against his faith, the Knoxville (Tenn.) Sentinel says:

"Moses Alexander will soon be governor of Idaho, the first governor, it is said, of any American commonwealth of Hebrew parentage. He has been mayor of Boise two terms and gave satisfaction. He was the son of poor immigrants and had to struggle against disadvantages. But Jewish parents, however poor usually strive to give their children the advantages of the schools the public funds support for all alike. Jews have been coming to the United States several hundred years and in ever increasing numbers. It is surprising that so few of them have sought or obtained political office. Undoubtedly there has been a race prejudice, which they were wise enough not to challenge. They have stuck in the main to the fields in which they have been schooled. But this is changing. A Jewish young man has been elected to congress from New York. The newer Jewish immigration is somewhat different from the old. There is splendid fund of idealism among the new-comers, born of the hard school of adversity. Jewish boys in Boston and New York often amaze teachers and other observers with their insight and reflection. They are not remaining in commercial pursuits. The college of the City of New York, Columbia university, the University of New York are crowded with Jews. They are flocking into the professions. Jewish lawyers and doctors, dentists and engineers are becoming not only numerous but are commanding respect. We shall expect to see more Jews in