

Citizenship in a Republic

[Abstract of an address delivered by William Jennings Bryan at New York, July 4, 1916, before the National Educational Association.]

It is worth crossing half the continent to be able to join with the teachers of the United States in celebrating this, the one hundred and fortieth anniversary of our nation's independence, and I appreciate the honor done me by President Johnson in extending the invitation that brings me here. Your association represents 600,000 teachers, the instructors of the great majority of our twenty-five million school children. You stand next to the nation's spiritual advisers in the importance of your work—the head being second only to the heart in the influence which it exerts on human destiny and happiness.

"Out of the heart are the issues of life," says the wise man, but the heart needs a trained mind to assist it if the life is to be largely fruitful. The heart directs but education multiplies the individuals' power and capacity for service. As educators you deal with morals as well as with mind and manners, and you share with the clergy the distinction of being the most poorly paid of all public servants, if payment is measured by salary alone. This injustice may be remedied in part, and should be remedied as far as possible, but there is one factor in the equation which can not be eliminated. The preacher and the teacher find a satisfaction in the consciousness of being helpful to others, and this satisfaction is, in itself, no small compensation. It is a great privilege to be able to enter into the life of the young, to lead their thoughts into right channels, to mold their opinions on vital questions and to implant in them the ideals which control their lives. This opportunity, and the joy which comes with it, must be taken into account in estimating relative success. What educator, approaching the end of his career, would exchange his place in the hearts of his pupils for all the money collected by one who has absorbed from the world without contributing in like proportion to society's progress?

While the teacher is primarily concerned with the development of mind and character, he can not be indifferent to that which affects the body's welfare. Physical exercise is so essential that the gymnasium has come to be a part of every well equipped school, and the teacher is expected to share in the enthusiasm which athletics excite.

Just now an effort is being made to substitute military training for the games of the playground. I hope the teachers in our public schools will not yield to the clamor for militarism; it is not the voice of the people but an echo from the battlefields of Europe. The temporary excitement of a world war should not be allowed to disturb our permanent educational system. The school is not a transient institution; it will still abide with us "when the battle flags are furled."

PEACE and not war is the normal state of man, and the teacher may well insist upon the postponement of any proposed changes in school methods until such changes can be considered with calmness and deliberation. It is unreasonable to ask the school authorities to act in hot blood or in fright. The people are not likely to favor frontier precautions unless they are convinced that we must again face frontier dangers; and they can hardly be convinced of this so long as the leading political parties decline to endorse such a program. The "adequate" reserves asked for by one party and the "ample" reserves favored by the other party can be adequately and amply supplied without robbing the cradle or recruiting in the graded schools.

If it is thought wise to give more attention to the physical development of our youth, the means can be found in a closer imitation of the Greeks, who by their national games provided contests which contributed to physical development. This association might with propriety consider the wisdom of encouraging such a system. State and national prizes would stimulate an honorable rivalry which would be immensely valuable to our boys and girls, measured by progress towards physical perfection. Ten million students contending for the honors awarded for skill and endurance in athletics would materially raise the average of health and strength.

As the teacher deals not only with students but with embryo voters—a term which will soon be applied to women as well as to men—it is in

keeping with this day that I submit for your consideration a few fundamental propositions in connection with our government. I am led to do so by the conviction that we delay too long the teaching of the science of government. A majority of our voters do not go beyond the eighth grade of the common school and, therefore, assume the responsibilities of citizenship without a clear and comprehensive understanding of the principles and methods of the government under which they live. I am sure I voice your sentiments when I plead for greater simplicity in the treatment of this subject, that it may be brought to the attention of the students at an earlier period in their school life.

I venture to present ten propositions.

1. The social ideal towards which the world is moving requires that human institutions shall approximate towards the divine measure of rewards and this can only be realized when each individual is able to draw from society a reward proportionate to his contribution to society.

2. The form of government which gives the best assurance of attaining this ideal is the form in which the people rule—a government deriving its just powers from the consent of the governed—the form described by Lincoln as "A government of the people, by the people and for the people." This being the people's government, it is their duty to live for it in time of peace and to die for it, if necessary, in time of war.

3. The chief duty of governments, in so far as they are coercive, is to restrain those who would interfere with the inalienable rights of the individual, among which are the right to life, the right to liberty, the right to the pursuit of happiness, and the right to worship God according to the dictates of one's conscience.

4. In so far as governments are co-operative, they approach perfection in proportion as they adjust with justice the joint burdens which it is necessary to impose and distribute with equity the incidental benefits which come from the disbursement of the money raised by taxation.

5. Competition is so necessary a force in business that public ownership is imperative wherever competition is impossible. A private monopoly is indefensible and intolerable.

6. "Absolute acquiescence in the decision of the majority" is, as Jefferson declares, "the vital principle of republics, from which is no appeal but to force, the vital principle and immediate parent of despotism."

7. As acquiescence in the permanent existence of a wrong is not to be expected, it is the duty of every citizen to assist in securing a free expression of the will of the people, to the end that all abuses may be remedied as soon as possible. No one can claim to be a good citizen who is indifferent. Civic duty requires attendance at primaries and conventions as at the polls.

8. The government being the people's business, it necessarily follows that its operations should be at all times open to the public view. Freedom of speech is essential to representative government, and publicity is as essential to honest administration. "Equal rights to all and special privileges to none" is the maxim which should control all departments of government.

9. Each individual finds his greatest security in the intelligence and happiness of his fellows—the welfare of each being the concern of all—and he should therefore exert himself to the utmost to improve conditions for all and to elevate the level upon which all stand.

10. While scrupulously careful to live up to his civic responsibilities, the citizen should never forget that the larger part of every human life is lived outside of the domain of government, and that he renders the largest service to others when he brings himself into harmony with the law of God, who has made service the measure of greatness.

Mr. George W. Perkins knows what he wants. He says he is willing to take the republican candidates since the republicans gave him the platform he desired. But it may be, of course, that the sort of a platform that satisfies Mr. Perkins may not satisfy those progressives whose interests are not those of Wall street.

Candidate Hughes' efforts to assume a genial and cheery demeanor with the newspaper boys was an earnest effort, as the dramatic critics say when kindly disposed, but that is about the best that can be said for the performance.

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In a recent issue The Commoner announced that it would make a nominal charge of 2½ cents per copy where a number of copies were desired for free distribution. This special rate was made in response to numerous requests from readers who desired to use a number of copies for distribution among friends and neighbors. This rate will be continued throughout the campaign, and will make it possible to use The Commoner widely in the pending campaign for distribution among the voters. The Commoner will make a valuable campaign document to place in the hands of the voters. Campaign committees may take advantage of this rate, but should place their orders as far in advance as possible. Copies of The Commoner will be sent in bulk or mailed to separate addresses if desired.

Below will be found a number of letters from Commoner friends who have taken advantage of this rate and are doing their part to spread the gospel of progressive democracy:

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A Commoner subscriber at Ottawa, Kans., writes: "Please send me forty copies of the last issue of The Commoner for free distribution; I enclose \$1.00 to pay for them."

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C. U. Jervis, Woodbine, Ky.: Enclosed find remittance for extra copies of the last issue of The Commoner. It is the best paper I have ever read. We are looking forward to a great victory this fall.

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