

State Normal School

KIRKSVILLE, MO.

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A STATEMENT OF THE ISSUES NOW CONFRONTING THE NORMAL SCHOOLS OF THE UNITED STATES.

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(At Los Angeles Meeting N. E. A.)

The most far-reaching movement affecting American education is the organization of the universities. Their tremendous energy and well marked progress delight us all; but the men managing these institutions are probably not cognizant of the top heavy condition into which their restless and unreflecting ambition is forcing our school system. They doubtless feel that "education is from the top" and that it should be directed and dominated by those in higher education circles. In many places they have destroyed local initiative. They have reduced many institutions to a state of obsequious servitude. Consciously or unconsciously they undermine the foundations of Democracy. They are becoming mighty monopolies.

Their immediate objective point is the high school. This is the instrument through which to organize and control all other schools. If through natural expansion high schools should come within reach of all children and the universities should gain control of the high schools, then the so-called "small colleges," the Normal Schools and the various independent technical schools would cease to have the means of competition and the universi-

ties would be all powerful. The man is short sighted who does not see that this is the educational trend in our country.

Hopeful young men, fresh from Ph. D. courses, are being installed into those university offices which have to do with the immediate relations of the universities to the public schools. These young fellows are usually bright and honest, burning with zeal to reform the world; but their horizon is circumscribed by their experiences or by their own recent graduating theses. Most of them are visionary. It is bad for education that men of this type are willing to assume suddenly such grave responsibilities and wield at once the weapons of warfare in education.

The attendance at the universities is so great that many of them are unable to control their students. The good hearted, bachelor-like specialists who direct the lecture room and laboratory work in the universities have little or no taste for personal contact with students. Hence their personal influence does not affect the students' conduct.

The administrative department of universities is commonly inaccessible to the student who thus finds himself not only without restraint but lacking access to any advisors and to the wholesome influence of companionship with older persons of the type of teaching professors.

Conditions in our country are rapidly changing. Youthful persons in large numbers are flocking to institutions of higher learning. The popular doctrine of the free and easy way at the university, the absence of surveillance, "the miniature world" and all such doctrines need overhauling. If the university students were nearly all in graduate work and above the age of adolescence, their needs would be different and the current university doctrines and practices might suffice; but the universities are not merely failing to control their armies of semi-responsible or irresponsible under-graduate students; the dominant sentiment of their Faculty men ignores the need of such control. Therefore the direction and control of education by the universities themselves should not be expected to conduce to law and order in the State.

If any one doubts the failure of the large universities properly to control their students at the present time, he has only to inform himself. His doubts will vanish.

In the last dozen years most of the universities have reversed their policy regarding the professional preparation of teachers. For a long time it was not unusual for the university professor to ridicule the Normal School and the content of Normal School education. There were, to be sure, good grounds for criticism. There are yet. But the universities discovered that the people believed in the special preparation of teachers. The change of front came suddenly. Now scarcely any university is without a "school of education" or a "teachers' college" or at least a "department of pedagogy" in actuality or in theory. The institution that can draw to itself the public school teachers even in summer time is the one having access to the heart of the people. Hence Pedagogy, so long ignored and abused, has become a source of popularizing the university.

In some parts of the country the universities have traveling agents called high school inspectors. Some of these inspectors are men of high type, knowing and sympathizing with the public school system in its entirety; but no matter how broad-gauged and fair an inspector so constituted may be at the outset, the nature of the case necessarily tends to reduce him, in spite of himself, to a peripatetic functionary whose business is: (1) So to modify the instruction in the high schools as to serve distinctively the purpose of the university with a view to its enlargement; (2) To control the appointment of high school teachers; (3) To secure direct contact with members of the high school graduating classes.

The universities just mentioned usually support teachers' employment bureaus designated as "committees on positions and recommendations." Through such committees and the inspectors, school boards and superintendents are indoctrinated as to the discrimination which the university would make among teachers. I think no one should doubt the honest purposes of these committees and agents; but I think they and all other

school men should try to discover whither we are drifting and where we are likely to land. I think these men would pattern after foreign countries and I do not believe that European Imperialism or any similar system becomes Democracy when transplanted to America. All these committees and inspectors become propagandists. They can't help it. They are supported financially and otherwise by large resources. They publish extensively their doctrines. With or without definite purpose they are doing what they can to specialize, cramp and devitalize the high school; to suppress and supplant the college; and to hamper, restrict and undermine the Normal School whose chief function they seek to take over into the University. They would leave to the crippled and handicapped Normal School only the routine and so-called training which constitute the lowest and poorest part of the professional preparation of teachers. They are full of fine phrases about setting energy free through training. But training is a term badly over worked and misapplied in educational nomenclature. The dog and pony show illustrates training at its high water mark. Training commonly exhausts energy without setting it free. Training and marking time are too commonly synonymous. Training and education are different processes. Training and the professional preparation of teachers are wide apart.

University men in many quarters proclaim that the Normal Schools should confine themselves to superficial training courses of two years' duration with a view to preparing elementary teachers. They are worried lest the Normal School should advance a few students sufficiently to make of them, according to current ideals, good high school teachers. They claim that this would damage elementary schools by withdrawing the energy of the Normal School from the restricted services through which it is supposed to contribute exclusively to the promotion of elementary education. This university creed is fatally weak. Its effect would be to collect and concentrate the ambitious, capable, resourceful, prospective teachers in the university, there to consume their energies in alleged preparation for teaching in high

schools. This doctrine is directly detrimental to elementary education. It would send the uncalculating, unambitious, immature and unpromising would-be teachers through a brief secondary school course and then through a short cut professional course into elementary schools.

The influence of some city training schools is doubtful if not harmful. These training schools are too largely filled with immature high school girl graduates. The girls have usually had only the child's view of elementary subjects and at best the adolescent view of secondary school subjects. In two years these immature, though well meaning young persons, are made over and officially stamped as professional elementary teachers. In many State Normal Schools the procedure is quite similar and equally indefensible.

Some State Normal Schools advertise themselves as feeders and preparatory schools for the universities. Recently some of the struggling young State Normal Schools vying with one another had gotten themselves "approved" by numerous universities and were able to show that their graduates could enter the universities with a little advanced standing in the freshman year. It was made very clear that these Normal School graduates could enter universities without being conditioned. Is it not ridiculous that a Normal School should be on so low a plane as to bring itself voluntarily into unfavorable comparison with high schools and make itself appear so clearly in the light of an unstable preparatory school?

As for inspection by university inspectors, the independent self respecting Normal School should put the matter on the plane of inter-inspection. The universities need inspection; the inspectors themselves are not beyond some egregious blundering. It looks as if Normal Schools should say to the universities: "You may inspect us at your pleasure and we will inspect you at our pleasure." One has as much authority for inspection as the other. The matter of advanced standing should be a matter of mutual interest, not of solicitation by one institution and dogmatic authorization by another. Each institution should stand

upon an honest and independent basis and say to all the world: "Take our students as we leave them. Start them in subjects at the points where they leave off with us. Test their ability to carry the new or more advanced work. Judge us in this way by our students or we will have our students go where this will be done. In education we are for the open shop."

Several Normal Schools in the middle west prepare both academically and pedagogically teachers for all sorts of public schools from kindergarten to high school inclusive. And why shouldn't they do so? The universities are full to overflowing. These Normal Schools are large. They can offer advanced academic and pedagogical courses without undue expense and without duplication that is in any way harmful to any institution. As to duplication, there is really no subject matter which is sacred to any particular institution. This is a free country; not a monarchy. Several of these Normal Schools have as good laboratories and as good libraries as the best colleges can support. Some of them pay better salaries than the colleges can pay. They have faculty men of the highest attainments, skill and ambition.

Normal Schools of this type are characterized by noticeable masculinity in their student corps. They have teachers' courses and various preparatory courses to which almost any young man with a teacher's certificate can be admitted. They notice that boys who graduate from high schools seldom intend to become teachers either by the Normal School or the university route. They represent the notion that some masculinity is a good thing to have in the teaching corps of our country. They stand for such policies as will attract into the teaching profession as many robust young men as possible. Viewing education as a whole it is discovered that the supply of masculinity in the teaching corps is chiefly through the ambitious, progressive, self-determining Normal Schools that stand firmly and always for the admission to the Normal School of all persons of honest intentions who give undoubted promise of developing into good teachers. These Normal Schools represent the wholesome doctrine that for a long

time to come teachers' certificates in our country should be secured by virtue of reasonable culture, common sense and wholesome personality, regardless of degrees and graduating systems. This doctrine or policy will for some decades at least be practiced in many states and will prove to be the chief means of supplying a reasonable proportion of male teachers for our public schools.

The college courses in Normal Schools of the type here mentioned have the same effect upon students in the ordinary courses of the Normal School that graduate courses in the university have upon the under-graduates of the university. Where such Normal Schools are in operation the people know what is being done and believe in it. They want it just that way. The People and the Legislatures give ample support financially both to the universities and to the ambitious Normal Schools. Those Normal Schools, too, that make the most marked growth and the best impress upon education are the ones that are most ambitious and aggressive.

During the past fifteen years the university of a certain state has quadrupled its facilities and almost doubled the difficulties as to entrance and graduation; but the Normal Schools of this same state have remained almost stationary during the same period. They still offer short courses which are chiefly pedagogical. They content themselves with "preparing teachers for elementary schools." They are over-shadowed by the university and controlled by politicians. They are not known to have made any effective contribution to elementary education. They have learned the popular school room practices and have passed the processes along for use in public schools. They will never materially modify education in their state till they change their policy. From the nature of the case an institution that has limits easily reached and no freedom to rise higher by self effort and no outlook of its own into higher student life of its own, can not make effective contributions to those forms of education which it professes to supply with teachers. An institution that is dead at the top can't be much of a stimulus to life in any other institution.

One fatal obstacle in the pathway of those Normal Schools

that offer exclusively or chiefly pedagogical courses is this: Pedagogy itself is not yet in pedagogical form as a subject to be assigned, illustrated and taught. It doesn't contribute sufficiently to mental virility. It doesn't compare with the organized courses in Mathematics, Latin, History and other subjects. Hence the efficient Normal School applies about two-thirds of its student energy to the strictly academic subjects and about one-third of its student energy to professional subjects. In our discussions it is noticed that those who would restrict American Normal Schools to the exclusively pedagogical courses never mention the procedure of Normal Schools in foreign countries. There is good reason for their silence on this phase of the issue.

The interpretation of the more common creed of the universities is that a half educated person is good enough to teach children up to and including the last day in the eighth grade but a fully educated person is necessary to teach children from and after the first day in the high school. This creed is practically identical with the notion in some rural districts that a cheap teacher will do for small children and that a good teacher is necessary for large children. But the fact is that if we should tolerate anywhere in education a teacher who has taken a short cut to his own education and who has restricted resources, it is in the departmental work of a high school where a settled scheme or plan must be followed and things even in narrow channels are pretty sure to be effectively done. But think of an ignorant, narrow and poorly equipped man or woman pretending to teach in the fifth, sixth, seventh or eighth grade. Think of the varied and immeasurable responsibilities. Who else in the wide world has need of greater resources? Where should scholarship be more thorough or accurate? Is it not clear beyond reasonable doubt that if any man or woman acting in the capacity of a teacher should have a college education it is the teacher in the elementary school?

We advance backwards when we concentrate our best energies and our best culture in the higher parts of the curriculum and leave the lower parts of it to be exploited by poorly educated

people who may have been filled with all the prescriptions, devices and so-called methods of a short course Normal School.

And again, who that has studied education can give a single reason why the salary of an elementary teacher should be lower than the salary of a high school teacher?

I believe we shall all some day agree that if a college atmosphere is necessary to make a good teacher for any school it is necessary to make a good teacher for every school. I believe, too, that the true college atmosphere so much talked of by university men, is now found in several ambitious Normal Schools of the middle west. Should not such atmosphere pervade them all?

The only tenable doctrine seems to be that all Normal Schools should, as soon as conditions will permit, raise their standards until the academic content of Normal School education will include the culture represented in a college education. Then we should have Normal School graduates (and those university graduates who attempt to teach) distributed from high school to kindergarten according to their natural and acquired traits, their adaptability and their special preparation, some teaching in rural schools, some in kindergartens, some in elementary graded schools of villages, some in high schools, and some filling principalships and superintendencies.

The speaker recently had his attention called to the distribution of the graduating classes in the school which he serves. Some of the graduates will enter rural schools; some, graded village schools; some, approved high schools; some will fill superintendencies in different states.

The speaker supports enthusiastically the university of his own state. He went farther than any other man in his state to urge the creation of a teachers' college in the university of his state. He urged the establishment in that teachers' college of a complete Practice School from first grade to high school seniors inclusive. That good teachers' college is now in operation. It is a stimulus to the co-operating State Normal Schools. It compels the Normal Schools to have a progressive, constructive

policy so that they can not cater very much to current demands and fashions or feel satisfied when they have copied, commended and disseminated the practices and ideals of educational theorists past and present. Side by side with this new competition, the Normal Schools seek to create better ideals, to set up higher standards, to conduct more sensible experiments and to exemplify constructively the best attainable practices in school education.

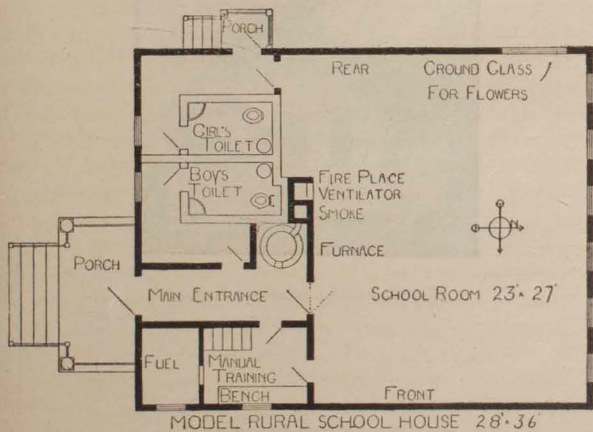
Among other Missouri experiments is a Model Rural School House on the Normal School campus. This School House demonstrates that a rural district can for about \$1400 have a school house offering all the comforts and conveniences to be had in any city school district excepting electric light. During the ensuing year this school house will contain a model rural school with its free text books, transportation of rural children and all the other facilities that can be thought out and secured.

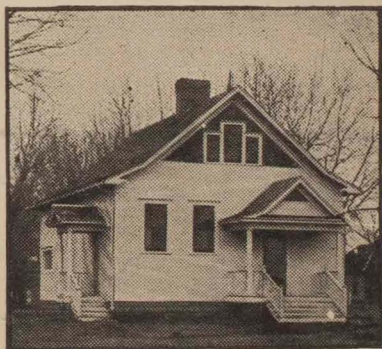
In brief, then, the issues or some of them are: Shall Normal Schools advance or stand still? Shall they be free severally to determine for themselves what they ought to do or shall they be limited in view of the designs, ambitions and interests of other institutions? Shall they be conservative and follow the trail marked out by others or shall they be rationally aggressive and assume leadership to the extent of their capabilities and opportunities? Shall they seek affiliation and approval by other institutions standing between themselves and the people or shall they affiliate themselves directly with their constituents, the people at large whom they are created to serve?

There are things to be done that the people want done, things that ought to be done in the schools of our country, things that only Normal Schools can do. So anxious and responsive are the people in some states that they are easily led to institute and support a variety of superficial but inadequate and spurious substitutes for Normal Schools while the men alleged to be managing the Normal Schools are engaged in somnolent restfulness.

Surely none will say that Normal Schools should all be of one type. It is doubtful whether any two should be just alike.

Surely the best ones differ from one another in many particulars. The greatest issue seems to be whether Normal Schools shall remain contentedly in static condition while all the world moves or assume an attitude of eager and inquisitive expectancy, constantly anticipating a wider horizon, greater difficulties, more responsibilities and higher efficiency. Each Normal School can have whatever it ought to have if only those in charge of it will stand up and honestly contest every inch of the ground with whatever may stand in the way. Finally, the Normal Schools should welcome wise counsel but always and everywhere demand freedom to do and to be whatever from their own point of view is clearly seen to be for the common good in education.





MODEL RURAL SCHOOL HOUSE.