

It will not meddle with speculative opinions; neither with religion, nor with irreligion. These are matters between each man and his own conscience. He who has faith, let him have it to himself; he who is religious, let him be religious in his closet when the door is shut, but not in public—not in an Association whose object is to discuss and reform temporal concerns. Plans for this world, and hopes of another, are two distinct things, that had better be kept separate; for men may agree about the one, while they will probably quarrel about the other.

State religion and monied ascendancy have done much harm to the people in every age and in every nation. It behoves an Association, therefore, which has in view the benefit of the people, to watch the political movements of the clergy and the rich. If the clergy, forgetting that they profess to be the servants of one whose kingdom is not of this world, intermeddle with temporal matters, a popular Association ought to thwart all such mischievous and unrepugnant intermeddling. If the rich, presuming on their riches, attempt to carry measures *for* themselves and *against* the laboring classes, a popular Association ought to thwart all such mischievous and unrepugnant attempts. But, though it be hard for a rich man, or for a clergyman, honestly to espouse the cause of the people against monied and clerical oppression, the Association will exclude neither. Let both join it, if they see fit. Let both speak, if they will. If they speak well and advise aright, the people will be the gainers. If otherwise, the people are neither blind nor asleep; their eyes are open and their tongues are free: they can judge what is said, and they can reply to it.

The character of the Association, then, is *not exclusive and not sectarian*. It is NATIONAL.

THE WORKING MAN'S PARTY OF PHILADELPHIA CALLS FOR FREE, EQUAL EDUCATION FOR ALL (1831) From Stephen Simpson, *The Working Man's Manual*, . . . (Philadelphia, 1831), pp. 119-21, 126.

Nothing is so essentially connected with the wealth of nations, and the happiness of the people, as the proper cultivation, expansion, and discipline of the popular mind. Upon this depends not only the amount of public virtue and happiness—but the aggregate of industry, ingenuity, temperance, economy, and vigour.

When we look back to the small states of GREECE, so diminutive in extent, so trivial in *physical* resources, yet so colossal in all the moral grandeur of nations; so happy in peace, so blessed with abundance, so invincible in war, so inimitable in letters, so exquisite in taste, so unparalleled in the arts, so splendid in all things—we are compelled to refer all her transcendent excellences to her mind—her *education*, her literature, her science, and her philosophy. The example of ROME, not more extended in physical limits, and not less renowned in imperishable glory—extorts the judgment to the same acknowledgment of the supremacy of intellect over matter; and the all-powerful influence of public intelligence, in forming the national character, deciding its destiny, and moulding its people. In fine, the history of the world is but a repetition of the same truth illustrated by the same renown, tracking

the career of intellect in the path of glory, and showing, that kingdoms, the most insignificant in magnitude, have, by the force of knowledge, eclipsed all their gigantic rivals in wealth, resources, and fame. We might contrast England with Russia—France with China—and Greece and Rome with all!

When history glares her blaze of truth in our eyes, let us not close them to its lessons. When the intellect of Rome was quenched by a barbarian deluge, what was the condition of the world?—To what era of all those blackened by crime, and debased by ignorance, do we look back, with the greatest horror? To the DARK AGES, to the midnight of mind that overspread the world, and permitted depravity to wage an unrestricted warfare upon virtue, knowledge, science, industry, and happiness. Sufficiently admonitory, then, is the lesson of the past, to urge us to the improvement of the present, and the perfection of the future. Cast upon the stage of existence in a *new era*, let us not disgrace our destiny by failing to make our advancement conform to our opportunities.

The spirit of the age, which now points to the universal education of the people, is an unavoidable effect of that law of our nature, which ordains that means must be adapted to ends, and that causes must conform to their consequences;—that as time rolls on, and reflection lights the torch of intellect, prejudice, bigotry, and superstition, must give place to reason, and humanity maintain her rights in defiance of prejudice or interest, riches or ambition. When, as a people, we inscribed the holy precepts of justice and of truth on our declaration of independence—proclaiming that all men were created free and equal—with the same rights to the pursuit and enjoyment of happiness; we commenced the foundation, because we created the necessity of universal education, by adopting a form of government, whose existence and purity depended on the exercise of reason, and the preservation of public virtue. Where every man is an *elector*, and bound to judge and to choose those who may make laws, and administer the government;—every one ought to receive an education, commensurate to his duties, as such; and where individual opulence does not furnish the means, the public are bound to impart the blessing in the fullest measure, and to the widest extent, at the common cost of society; not, however, as a *bounty*, or a *charity*, but as a *right*; that as *all* contribute their share of labour to the expense and support of government, so *all* are equally entitled to the great benefits of popular instruction. In the same manner, that the *constitution* protects our liberties, and that the law secures our rights of person and of property, without becoming a charity to the poor; so ought *education* to be dispensed to all who desire to receive its vivifying beams, and investigating spirit. Indeed, to conceive of a *popular government* devoid of a system of *popular education*, is as difficult as to conceive of a civilized society destitute of a *system of industry*. This truth has been generally received in this country, and never, I believe, directly denied; although its force has been attempted to be evaded by the *rich* and *opposed by the aristocracy*, who have heretofore, unfortunately, been our sole *law makers*, through the odious system of *charity schools*—the bare idea of which impresses a consciousness of degradation, and leads to results the very reverse of those that ought to be produced by popular instruction. I will not, however, enlarge upon this subject, which must be familiar to all; yet all may not have remarked, that the scanty pittance of education termed *charitable*, has never realized the *equal benefits of instruction*, to which the working people have been entitled as the producers of all the wealth of society. When it is solemnly inscribed upon our constitution, that education is an essential preliminary of government, its diffusive dispensation becomes a duty and a right of the first importance and magnitude: we are bound to consider it, not as an *accidental* but as an *integral* part of government, which, when

we neglect or overlook, we violate the most sacred obligations, which, as good citizens, we have sworn to discharge.

* * *

The influence of education on the manners, is not less important than its operation on the mind; between which there exists so close an intimacy—so powerful a sympathy. Civility, politeness, deference, and all the amiable and softer virtues, are generally found to be residents of minds refined and educated; while ignorance assumes manners of corresponding rudeness, and imperious insolence. As it is the tendency of knowledge to inspire diffidence, the more the mind imbibes, the less it presumes to trespass upon the feelings or challenge the opinions of others. Besides that, in educated people there exists a natural assimilation, the general result of which is good breeding; hence one of the most salutary consequences of popular instruction—that those who labour, and have heretofore been rude and insolent, will gradually become polite and civil: and thus remove one of the most serious difficulties that prevents the working people emerging from that debasing condition in which they are now held by the customs of intellect and power. It is to *education*, therefore, that we must mainly look for a redress of that perverted system of society, which dooms the producer to ignorance, to toil, and to penury, to moral degradation, physical want, and social barbarism.

The power of the ballot boxes will do little, without the auxiliary help of our moral and intellectual energies. How can it be a marvel, that wealth practises oppression, when it holds as its allies, all the riches of knowledge, and the exterior semblances of virtue and truth? Moving in the high orbit of science, government and laws; ordaining justice and morality after their own images, how shall we ever counteract the principles of vassalage that now prevail, unless we procure EDUCATION for our offspring, and diffuse SCIENCE among our brethren? It is through this door that we must at last enter into the temple of justice, to consecrate on the altar of reason the true rights of man. Knowledge is *power*, in respect to the procurement of equity to the great mass of the sons of labour. It is the light of intelligence that abashes despotism—it is the fire of intellect that dissolves and melts the chains that enthrall seven eighths of mankind to the caprice and luxury of the other few. "*In what way shall this evil be attacked and removed?*" I have answered, by giving our children equal or superior knowledge, virtue and intelligence, to the rich—by EDUCATION to direct and qualify us for government and laws; and by concentrating our SUFFRAGE to enable us to reach that point of influence, at which we shall be able to make the laws conform to the spirit of justice, and the government congenial to the equality of human rights.

THE "PHILADELPHIA NATIONAL GAZETTE" ON COMMON SCHOOLS

(1830) From Editorials in the *Philadelphia National Gazette*, July 10, 12, August 19, 1830, as quoted in John R. Commons et al., eds., *A Documentary History of American Industrial Society* (Cleveland, 1910-11), vol. V, pp. 107-12.

We remark the following toast in one of the lists which nearly fill the papers at this season.

"Education and general information—these must indeed constitute our only true National Bulwark. May the day soon come when in point of literary acquirements the poorest peasant shall stand on a level with his more wealthy neighbours."

It is our strong inclination and our obvious interest that literary acquirements should be universal; but we should be guilty of imposture, if we professed to believe in the possibility of that consummation. Literature cannot be acquired without leisure, and wealth gives leisure. Universal opulence, or even competency, is a chimera, as man and society are constituted. There will ever be distinctions of condition, of capacity, of knowledge and ignorance, in spite of all the fond conceits which may be indulged, or the wild projects which may be tried, to the contrary. The "peasant" must labor during those hours of the day, which his wealthy neighbor can give to the abstract culture of his mind; otherwise, the earth would not yield enough for the subsistence of all: the mechanic cannot abandon the operations of his trade, for general studies; if he should, most of the conveniences of life and objects of exchange would be wanting; langour, decay, poverty, discontent would soon be visible among all classes. No government, no statesman, no philanthropist, can furnish what is incompatible with the very organization and being of civil society. Education, the most comprehensive, should be, and is, open to the whole community; but it must cost to every one, time and money; and those are means which every one cannot possess simultaneously. Doubtless, more of education and of information is attainable for all in this republic, than can be had any where else by the poor or the operatives, so called.

It is an old and sound remark, that government cannot provide for the necessities of the People; that it is they who maintain the government, and not the latter the People. Education may be among their necessities; but it is one of that description which the state or national councils cannot supply, except partially and in a limited degree. They may endow public schools for the indigent, and colleges for the most comprehensive and costly scheme of instruction. To create or sustain seminaries for the tuition of all classes—to digest and regulate systems; to adjust and manage details, to render a multitude of schools effective, is beyond their province and power. Education in general must be the work of the intelligence, need, and enterprise of individuals and associations. At present, in nearly all the most populous parts of the United States, it is attainable for nearly all the inhabitants; it is comparatively cheap, and if not the best possible, it is susceptible of improvement and likely to be advanced. Its progress and wider diffusion will depend, not upon government, but on the public spirit, information, liberality and training of the citizens themselves, who may appreciate duly the value of the object as a national good, and as a personal benefit for their children. Some of the writers about universal public instruction and discipline, seem to forget the constitution of modern society, and declaim as if our communities could receive institutions or habits like those of Sparta. The dream embraces grand Republican female academies, to make Roman matrons!

We can readily pardon the editor of the *United States Gazette* for not perceiving that the scheme of Universal Equal Education at the expense of the State, is virtually "Agrarianism." It would be a compulsory application of the means of the richer, for the direct use of the poorer classes; and so far an arbitrary division of property among them. The declared object is, to procure the opportunity of instruction for the child or children of every citizen; to elevate the standard of the education of the working classes, or equalize the standard for all classes; which would, doubtless, be to lower or narrow that which the rich may now compass. But the most sensible and reflecting possessors of property sufficient to enable them to educate their children in the most liberal and efficacious way, and upon the broadest scale, would prefer to share their means for any other purpose, or in any other mode, than such as would injuriously affect or circumscribe the proficiency of their offspring. A public meeting of "the Mechanics and other Working Men of the City and County of New York," was held in the city, on the 17th inst., and among the principles for which they have "resolved" to contend, we find the following:

"In Education—The adoption of a general system of instruction, at the expense of the State, which shall afford to children, however rich or poor, equal means to obtain useful learning. To effect this, it is believed that a system of direct taxation will not be necessary, as the surplus revenue of the State and United States Governments will, in a very few years, afford ample means—but even if it were necessary to resort to direct taxation to accomplish this all-important object, and the amount paid by the wealthy should be far greater than that paid by our less eligibly situated fellow-citizens, an equivalent to them would be found in the increased ability and usefulness of the educated citizen to serve and to promote the best interests of the State; in the increased permanency of our institutions—and in the superior protection of liberty, person and property."

Thus, a direct tax for "the equal means of obtaining useful learning" is not deemed improbable, and it is admitted that the amount which would be paid by the wealthy would be "far greater" than that paid by their "less eligibly situated fellow citizens." Here, we contend, would be the action, if not the name, of the Agrarian system. Authority—that is, the State—is to force the more eligibly situated citizens to contribute a part (which might be very considerable) of their means, for the accommodation of the rest; and this is equivalent to the idea of an actual, compulsory partition of their substance. The more thriving members of the "mechanical and other working classes" would themselves feel the evil of the direct taxation; they would find that they had toiled for the benefit of other families than their own. One of the chief excitements to industry, among those classes, is the hope of earning the means of educating their children respectably or liberally: that incentive would be removed, and the scheme of State and equal education be thus a premium for comparative idleness . . .

PLATFORM OF THE BOSTON WORKING MEN'S PARTY (1830) From
Boston Courier, August 28, 1830, as quoted in John R. Commons et al., eds., *A
Documentary History of American Industrial Society* (Cleveland, 1910-11), vol. V, pp.
188-89.

1. That we are determined by all fair and honorable means, to exalt the character, and promote the cause, of those who, by their productive industry, add riches to the state, and strength to our political institutions.

2. That we exclude from our association none, who, by their honest industry, render an equivalent to society for the means of subsistence which they draw therefrom.

3. That we regard all attempts to degrade the working classes as so many blows aimed at the destruction of popular virtue—without which no human government can long subsist.

4. That we view with abhorrence every attempt to disturb the public peace by uniting with political doctrines any question of religion or antireligion.

5. That the establishment of a liberal system of education, attainable by all, should be among the first efforts of every lawgiver who desires the continuance of our national independence.

6. That provision ought to be made by law for the more extensive diffusion of knowledge, particularly in the elements of those sciences which pertain to mechanical employments, and to the politics of our common country.

7. That, as we hold to the natural and political equality of all men, we have a right to ask for laws which shall protect every good citizen from oppression, contumely and degradation.

8. That we are opposed to monopolies, under whatever guise they may be imposed on the community—whether in the shape of chartered institutions for private gain; or in that of taxes, levied, nominally for the public good, on the many for the advantage of the few.

9. That we regard the multiplication of statutes, and the mysterious phraseology in which they are ordinarily involved, as actual evils, loudly demanding correction.

10. That the people have a right to understand every law made for their government, without paying enormous fees for having them expounded by attorneys—by those perhaps who were instrumental in their construction, and in rendering them incomprehensible, even to themselves.

11. That every representative chosen to declare the sentiments of the people, is bound to obey the popular voice, and to express it, or resign his trust forthwith.

12. That we are resolved to advocate, as one of our leading objects, the entire abrogation of all laws authorizing the imprisonment of the body for debt—at least until poverty shall be rendered criminal by law.

13. That we will endeavor by all practicable means to obtain a reform in our militia system.

14. That for the purpose of securing these objects, we will adopt a system of social discipline: hereby organizing ourselves under the title of Working Men of Boston.

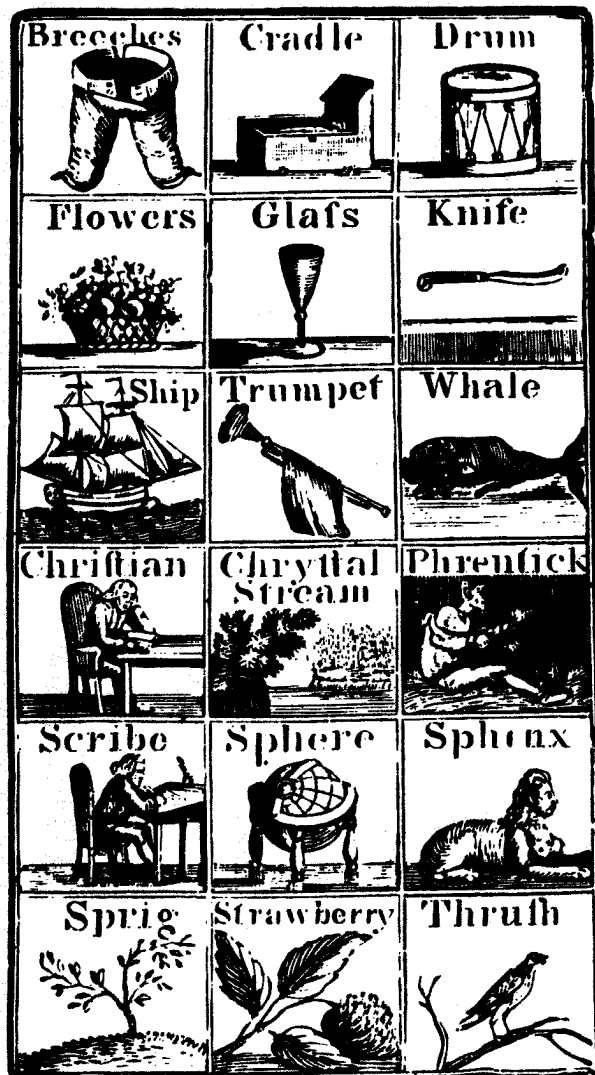
15. That, for the furtherance of this plan, we recommend that a general meeting of our brethren and friends in the city, be held at an early day, for the purpose of selecting two delegates from each Ward, and two from South Boston, in order to constitute a General Executive Committee.

SETH LUTHER ON THE EVILS OF CHILD LABOR (1832) From Seth Luther, *An Address to the Working Men of New England on the State of Education and on the Condition of the Producing Classes in Europe and America* . . . (Boston, 1832), pp. 35-36.

. . . Our wish is to show that education is neglected, and that as a matter of course, because if 13 hours actual labour, is required each day, it is *impossible* to attend to education among children, or improvement among adults. With regard to hours of labour in cotton mills, there is a difference here as well as in England. In Manchester 12 hours *only* is the rule, while in some other towns in England many more are required. The mills *generally* in New England, run 13 hours the year round, that is, actual labour for all hands; to which add one hour for two meals, making 14 hours actual labour—for a man, or woman, or child, must labour hard to go a quarter, and sometimes half a mile, and eat his dinner or breakfast in 30 minutes and get back to the mill. At the Eagle mills, Griswold, Connecticut, 15 hours and 10 minutes actual labour in the mill are required; at another mill in the vicinity, 14 hours of actual labour are required. It needs no argument, to prove that education *must* be, and is almost entirely neglected. Facts speak in a voice not to be misunderstood, or misinterpreted. In 8 mills all on one stream, within a distance of two miles, we have 168 persons who can neither read nor write. This is in Rhode Island. A committee of working men in Providence, report “that in Pawtucket there are at least *five hundred children*, who scarcely know what a school is. These facts, say they, are adduced to show the blighting influence of the manufacturing system as at present conducted, on the progress of education; and to add to the darkness of the picture, if blacker shades are necessary to rouse the spirit of indignation, which should glow within our breasts at such disclosures, in all the mills which the enquiries of the committee have been able to reach, books, pamphlets, and newspapers are *absolutely prohibited*. This may serve as a tolerable example for every manufacturing village in Rhode Island.” In 12 of the United States, there are 57,000 persons, male and female, employed in cotton and woolen mills, and other establishments connected with them; about two-fifths of this number, or 31,044 are under 16 years of age, and 6,000 are under the age of 12 years. Of this 31,044, there are in Rhode Island *alone* 3,472 under 16 years of age. The school fund is, in that State, raised in considerable part by lottery. Now we all know, that the poor are generally the persons who support this legalized gambling; for the rich as a general rule, seldom buy tickets. This fund then, said to be raised by the rich, for the education of the poor, is actually drawn from the pockets of the *poor*, to be expended by the rich, on *their own children*, while this large number of children (3,472) are entirely, and totally deprived of all benefit of the school fund, by what is called the *American System*. Actually *robbed* of what is *emphatically* their own, by being *compelled* to labour in these “*principalities of the destitute*” and these “*palaces of the poor*,” for 13 hours per diem, the year round. *What must be*, the result of this state of things? “We cannot regard even in anticipation, the contamination of moral and political degradation spreading its baleful influence throughout the community, through the medium of the uneducated part of the present generation, promulgated and enhanced in the future, by the increase of posterity, without starting with horror from the scene, as from the clankings of a TYRANT’S chain.”

* * *

"If education and intelligence is the *only sure* FOUNDATION of public safety," and if we are convinced that there are causes in active operation sapping and mining that foundation, can any man say, "It is nothing to me?" "If the children of the poor ought to be instructed as well as the rich," ought we not to see that it is done? If it depends on education whether we "live in a peaceable, orderly community, free from excess, outrage and crime, can we say it is nothing to us?" Who knows but in the course of events his son or daughter, or sister or brother, will not be driven into a cotton mill by the hard hand of adverse fortune, and be made to suffer the evils we have described. If "without the assistance of the common people a free government cannot exist," and we find that the capability to govern depends on intelligence and learning; is it not a fearful reflection that so many thousands of children are deprived of education, and so many adults of every opportunity for mental improvement? Let us no longer be deceived. Let us not think we are free until working-men no longer trust their affairs in the hands of designing demagogues.



THE COMMON
SCHOOL
MOVEMENT

EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES A DOCUMENTARY HISTORY

Edited by
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