

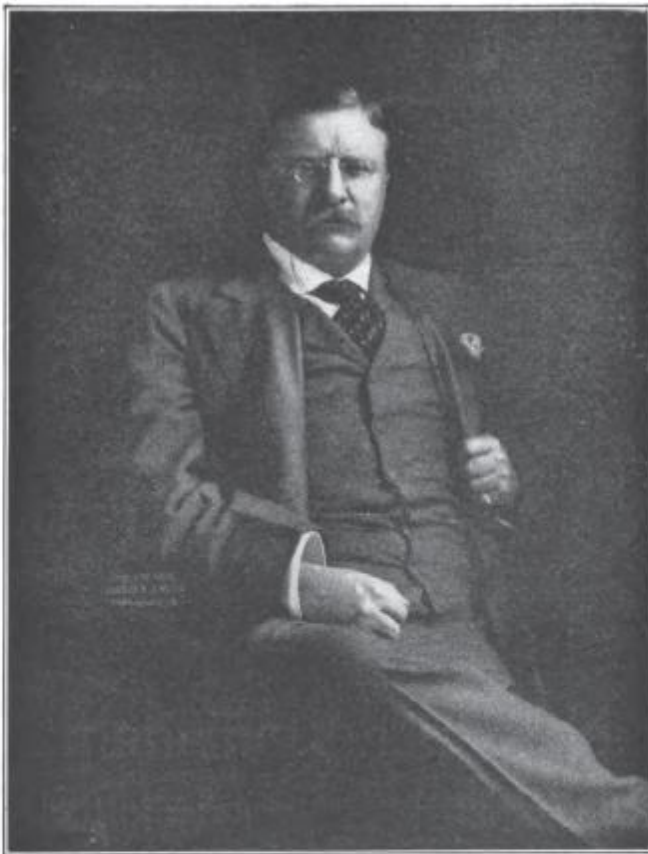
OUR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION BY THEODORE ROOSEVELT

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GOOD HOUSEKEEPING

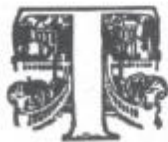




President Roosevelt

The Emancipation of Education

A Remarkable Utterance from Theodore Roosevelt, President of the United States



THE dedication of GOOD HOUSEKEEPING'S vast fireproof building of reinforced concrete at Springfield, Massachusetts, occurred on Thursday, the 12th day of November. The affair assumed the proportions of a veritable national function. A large number of people were present, representing all interests throughout the United States. The people of Springfield joined in preparing for the event and in making it a brilliant success.

It was universally recognized that our building is indeed a national institute for the co-operation of good housekeeping and good citizenship, of education and agriculture, of labor and capital. It is so regarded by the President of the United States, for he prepared a remarkable pronouncement for this occasion, in the form of a letter addressed to the president of our publishing company, Mr Herbert Myrick. President Roosevelt began by paying a tribute to the work of our publications, saying on this point:

"It is a matter of real gratification to

all of us that you should be able now to dedicate your great building, for your periodical has been managed so as to combine intelligent championship of the needs of the home with successful handling of the enterprise itself as a business proposition. You have practically applied the principle of co-operation. Only once has your business been forced to reduce compensation—in the year 1894. I was both pleased and interested to know that on that occasion dividends were first reduced; then salaries, beginning with the head of the concern; and, finally, wages, but that the women were spared when readjustment of wages began. Shortly after, wages were restored, then salaries and, finally, dividends.

"This recognizes the human element, the helpful idea, the principle of doing as one would be done by; the principle of genuine co-operation, a co-operation which in your case included agriculture, labor, capital and domestic economy. Such work can never be done in a merely sentimental spirit. It must represent sound, practical common sense, but it must also represent mutual confidence, helpfulness and service. I am glad to be told that in your case the result has proven profitable, alike to the co-worker and the co-owner. It seems to me peculiarly valuable that a lesson like this should be taught by practical example to those engaged in farm work, as well as to those engaged in other occupations—and also to those whose work is in the homes.

Self-help is the best help and makes the best citizenship; but the highest type of self-help is that which is combined with the right kind of helpfulness to others."

President Roosevelt then launched forth into a powerful argument for national co-operation in technical education. Speaking at first from an agricultural standpoint, the president emphasized the great importance of having the rural schools so reorganized that they should fit their pupils more particularly and thoroughly for country life, its work, duties and pleasures. He advocated a policy that would "insure a continuous progress and uplift, so that the American farmer may not only obtain material prosperity, but on it build a high type of civilization. Important tho the city is, and fortunate tho it is that our cities have grown as they have done, it is still more important that the family farm, where the home making and the outdoor business are combined into a unit, should continue to grow."

"The country school is therefore of even more importance than the higher college, thoroly alive tho we all should be to the vitalizing force which these higher colleges represent."

President Roosevelt then went on to argue for a veritable emancipation of the public schools from slavery to the ideal that their purpose is to fit the few for the university instead of the many for a vocation in life.

The President Further Said :

In all of this we have to grapple with one fact which has made both the strength and the weakness of the American farmer, and that is, his isolation. This isolation implies a lack both of the pleasure and of the inspiration which come from closer contact between people, and from a well-developed organization for social pleasures, for religious life, for education. On the other hand, it is to this isolation more than to anything else that we owe the strength of character so typical of the American farmer, who lives under a peculiarly individualistic system in the management alike of the farm and of the farm home.

The successfully managed family farm gives to the father, the mother, and the children better opportunities for useful work and for a happy life than any other occupation. Our object must be, so far as practicable, to do away with the disadvantages which are due to the isolation of the family farm, while conserving its many and great advantages. We wish to keep at its highest point the peculiarly American quality of individual efficiency, while at the same time bringing about that co-operation which indicates capacity in the mass. Both

qualities can be used to increase the industrial and ethical proficiency of our people, for there is much the individual only can do for himself, and there is much also which must be done by all combined because the individual cannot do it. Our aim must be to supplement individualism on the farm and in the home with an associated effort in those country matters that require organized working together.

Moreover, we must not forget that there is a new phase of the problem of the country, which is the problem of country homes for city workers. Cheap transportation, which has strengthened so much the tendency to city growth, is now helping to scatter the population of large cities for home purposes thru the adjacent country. As we come nearer the healthy ideal of a universal eight-hour day, and a closer association between employer and employee, there will be growth in the opportunity for city people to enjoy suburban homes.

Therefore we have to deal now, and will have to deal in the future, with a nation of families on the land; and our system of public education should be so broadened in its scope as to include not merely the traditional cultural studies, excellent and indispensable in their way, but also instruction relative to the farm, the trades and the home. Our immediate purpose is to take the first steps in providing for the ninety-five per cent who are not now trained for a vocation advantages corresponding to those enjoyed by the relatively few who are trained in the professional and technical schools.

Industrial training, training which will fit a girl to do work in the home, which will fit a boy to work in the shop if in a city, to work on a farm if in the country, is the most important of all training, aside from that which develops character; and it is a grave reproach to us as a nation that we have permitted our training to lead the children away from the farm and shop instead of toward them. We should try to provide the many with training in their professions, just as the few, the doctors, the ministers, the lawyers, are trained for their professions. In other words, the school system should be aimed primarily to fit the scholar for actual life rather than for a university. The exceptional individual, of the highest culture and most efficient training possible, is an important asset for the state. He should be encouraged and his development promoted; but this should not be done at the expense of all the other individuals who can do their work best on the farms and in the workshops; it is for the benefit of these individuals that our school system should be primarily shaped.

I thoroly believe that our people approve of the higher education; but I also believe that they are growing more and more to demand a reform in secondary schools which shall fit the ordinary scholar for the actual work of life. Therefore I believe that the national government should take an active part in securing better educational methods, in accordance with some such system as that outlined in the bill introduced in the last Congress by Mr Davis. It is not my place to speak of the details of such a bill, but in a general way I feel that the nation should, by making appropriations, put a premium upon industrial, and especially agricultural, training in the state schools; the states themselves being required in these schools to contribute what is necessary

for the ordinary training, and the expenditures for the national government to be under the supervision of the Department of Agriculture.

Teachers must be trained, or their teaching will not be adequate; and these teachers must then give vocational training to the scholars in the ordinary schools. The nation would simply co-operate with the state or city or town, and what it thus gives would be applied to industrial, technical, agricultural training. The growth in the consolidated rural school, which has in so many instances supplanted the old-time district school, offers the chance to do the best possible service by means of such a system as that outlined above. Where possible, the secondary agricultural schools should be in farm communities rather than in towns, and the training should be of the most practical character and such as will not only fit the scholars to do their part in farm work, but also fit them to enjoy in the fullest degree the pleasures and opportunities of country life. We should do everything that we can to give well-trained leaders to each country community. The United States Department of Agriculture would preserve an intimate relation to all these proposed agricultural high schools, as well as the branch stations connected with them, for the work that the Department does is steadily becoming of more and more consequence to the farmers.

All this simply means that the Nation ought to co-operate with the state to help the people help themselves thru better educational facilities, the schools being left wholly and directly under the control of the people thru their local authorities, but suggestion and general oversight as well as improvement being supplied by the experts employed by the Nation, so that the children and the young men and girls in the smaller towns and in the country may have the educational facilities now only to be obtained in wealthier communities.

This would merely be putting into effect that cardinal American doctrine of furnishing a reasonable equality of opportunity of education and chance of development to all our children, wherever they live and whatever may be their station in life. Such a federal co-operation in technical education will help in many ways. It will mean much for country life, for the life of the family farm, for the life of those city workers who seek landed homes in the country near the city in which they work. It will mean much along the lines of the great policy of the conservation of the natural resources of our land. Finally, it will mean much to the Nation of the future, because it will represent the effort to give exact justice, and an equal opportunity for development, to each of the boys and girls who in the future are to make up the Nation.

Sincerely yours,

Theodore Roosevelt.