

REFORM IN INTERMEDIATE STAGE OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION.

MESSAGE

FROM THE

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,

TRANSMITTING

A REPORT BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE CONCERNING PARTICIPATION BY THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES IN AN INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS FOR REFORM IN THE INTERMEDIATE STAGE OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION CALLED BY THE HUNGARIAN GOVERNMENT, 1909.

JANUARY 4, 1909.—Read; referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs and ordered to be printed.

To the Senate and House of Representatives:

I transmit herewith for the consideration of Congress a report by the Secretary of State, with an inclosure, concerning participation by the Government of the United States in an international congress for the purpose of reform in the intermediate stage of public instruction, which is to be called by the Hungarian Government to meet during the year 1909.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT.

THE WHITE HOUSE, *January 4, 1909.*

The PRESIDENT:

The Hungarian Government intends to call during the year 1909 an international school conference for the purpose of reform in the intermediate stage of public instruction, and inquiry has been made of the Department of State by the ambassador of Austria-Hungary whether the Government of the United States would be disposed to accept an invitation to participate in the conference. The inquiry, together with a memorandum giving the Hungarian Government's views on the scope and task of the conference, was communicated to the Secretary of the Interior, whose department has replied that "the purposes of the conference as presented in the memorandum would, it is believed,

commend themselves to educational authorities in this country and insure the participation of this Government in the conference," and that "the Commissioner of Education fully concurs in this opinion, especially in view of the fact that the subject to be considered in the conference is one of the most prominent in the current discussions of education in the United States."

The undersigned, the Secretary of State, has the honor therefore to recommend that the matter be submitted to the Congress for that body's consideration whether the conference will not be of sufficient importance to the educational interests of the United States to warrant an appropriation to enable this Government to be represented thereat by expert delegates. It is thought that the sum of \$10,000 would suffice for the purpose.

A translation of the memorandum mentioned is inclosed herewith.
Respectfully submitted.

ELIHU ROOT.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
Washington, December 19, 1908.

[Translation.]

MEMORANDUM REGARDING THE CONVOCATION OF AN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL CONFERENCE FOR THE PURPOSE OF REFORM IN THE INTERMEDIATE STAGE OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION.

For a long time, and especially since the great economical and social changes of the last century in public life have become fully effective, the difficulties and complications of intermediate education have been actively engaging the public mind as well as the government educational authorities in the capitals of Europe, intermediate education being understood to comprise all the general instruction and special technical training imparted between the time when compulsory elementary instruction ceases and the real collegiate course begins; in other words, all the schooling of a youth from the twelfth to the eighteenth year. It has become very obvious in the course of time that the actual results of instruction in the various public institutions of learning by no means meet the general and practical educational requirements of our time, and a certain dissatisfaction with the work of these schools has gradually arisen on the part of the people who send their children to them. Moreover, a conflict of opposing tendencies is becoming manifest among professional men themselves, there being on one side the representatives of the elder class of people and teachers, who adhere faithfully to tradition in matters of education and who could not so easily resign themselves to the omission of certain subjects of study, the educational value of which they can appreciate from their own experience; on the other side, however, are the representatives of modern progressive social circles, who attach greater importance to the requirements of economic and social progress and are accordingly in favor of devoting more time to the acquisition of new and, in their opinion, more useful and applicable knowledge. The frequent attempts to do justice to both these ideas by means of a compromise have all failed, and after the introduction of new and constantly varying systems the complaints continue in

increasing numbers, either that there is a deplorable overburdening of scholars and teachers in both ordinary and special schools, or else that the results are exceedingly poor, or that both these conditions exist. Thus far it has not been possible anywhere, either by repeated change of curricula or by thorough methodical instructions, to remedy this evil state of affairs and bring about sound conditions, and instead a condition of helpless uncertainty prevails everywhere.

Inasmuch as the evil is felt universally, and since, as I shall have the honor to explain below, the remedy depends to a certain extent on uniformity in the system of instruction in the various civilized nations, I deem it advisable that representatives of these nations, especially those of middle Europe, should hold a joint conference for the purpose of considering and discussing the principal problems of international education.

The international conference should by no means confine itself to the elucidation of certain details of a technical nature. Its object can not consist in an international continuation of the experiments hitherto made. Upon it will rather devolve the higher task in investigating the real causes of the existing evils, applying the too much neglected principle that the object of all instruction and training is man himself; that is, the harmonious development of the human powers, so that the pupil may be enabled to adequately fulfill his individual and social calling and functions. All knowledge that a school has to furnish is but a means to this end, and its value depends entirely upon the extent to which it serves this main purpose.

The first and most important task of the conference would therefore be to give an opinion regarding the selection and arrangement of the subjects of study in accordance with the foregoing idea, giving special regard to the principle that every public educational institute or technical or training school should only insist on the amount of discipline and the character and amount of study which each pupil is capable of receiving, even if he has a moderate capacity, and provided it is to his interest and that of the community that he should receive intermediate instruction. Particular attention should be paid in this connection to the harmonious development of the individual, physically and mentally, so that his bodily powers may be preserved, exercised, and properly developed along with his intellectual progress.

The discussion of this main question or set of questions would naturally involve a determination as to how the intermediate stage of public instruction should be organized, and to what extent the various existing kinds of intermediate schools should be maintained or appropriately combined or at any rate brought into proper relations to each other. In my opinion the aforementioned principle should serve as a guide in this matter also, and I prefer to designate it briefly as the supremacy of the anthropological principle in the system of education.

The explanation and discussion of ideas and opinions on this subject in an international conference seems to be appropriate and even necessary, especially in order to obtain the complete set of data so essential for the purpose. It may be presumed that every sort of scheme for the improvement of intermediate instruction has been put to a test somewhere, so that an authentic report on the successful or unsuccessful result of each test could be made at the conference. The representatives of the various nations would naturally make due allowance for the influence of diversified racial peculiarities and historical traditions when examining the abundant and important material thus presented.

Nevertheless, as regards the question involved, it would be discovered during the course of the discussions that, alongside these discrepancies, there is also a similarity in the essential characteristics of human nature which outweigh the other factors, so that an agreement and a uniform resolution might and must necessarily be reached concerning certain fundamental features. It is almost impossible to calculate beforehand how much light and knowledge would be derived from a comparison and joint consideration of the theoretical views and practical experience of the whole civilized world, especially if this initial conference were to lead to a permanent organization of the system of education in the various nations, which I do not consider impossible and rather deem desirable.

At the same time it is to be hoped that international agreements would not only result in furnishing more enlightenment, even though they had but an academic value, but that they would have a great moral power in overcoming deep-seated prejudices, in eliminating an excessive amount of so-called "professionalism," and in immediately realizing national requirements. Each government would perceive how many difficulties there are to be combated in this regard, and a complete and successful victory, preparing the way for permanent reforms, can probably only be expected from the moral force of the combined wisdom of the civilized world.

Besides all these prospective advantages, practical desires and considerations also commend an international agreement on the questions connected with intermediate instruction. The intellectual intercourse among the various nations is becoming daily more extensive and intimate, so that educational work in Europe is even now laying the foundations of a great community. Student life already feels the logical effect of this community, and the more distinguished minds endeavor to broaden their intellectual horizon by attending the colleges and universities of foreign nations, to the not inconsiderable advantage of their own nation. In order to maintain and foster this wholesome habit of free intellectual intercourse, it is necessary to secure a certain uniformity in the methods of the intermediate course of public instruction, and even from this standpoint radical reforms can only be accomplished by unanimous agreement.

The magnificent development of the intellectual community of mankind has brought about this mutual dependency, and as a natural consequence thereof a mutual agreement should be reached concerning those main points of the system of instruction which are of importance in determining the subjects of study, in acquiring permission to pursue them, and in connection with the conditions and results of public examinations. In all these matters it is necessary to determine the conditions, methods, and effects of mutual action. The determination of these points would constitute the secondary task of the conference, though it would be intimately connected with the primary task.

It is my firm belief that an international conference devoted to intermediate school matters would, by bringing about an agreement among the civilized nations on these subjects, result in inestimable benefits and advantages to each of the several nations, and that it would operate in behalf of human progress and tend to strengthen human solidarity while at the same time conferring a great blessing on many millions of youthful students and their families.