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A Bill of Rights for the New Age

THERE WILL BE no New Deal in America unless we genuinely desire it, plan for it, sacrifice and labor for it. Fortunately most people today are dissatisfied with conditions. They are eager to cooperate with plans which will pattern our world into a more livable place. They know that none of us has security unless all of us have security; they are beginning to realize the meaning of the old phrase that "No man liveth unto himself."

This desire for security accepts the old doctrines of liberty and equality on which our nation was built, but also recognizes the need to restore those ideals in terms of today's life—in terms of a new and bewildering age of unemployment, uncertainty, rapid change, and dependence on each other.

It is not easy to restate our historic goals in terms of today's needs. Try it for yourself. Let every student and teacher ask himself: *What kind of a country do I want?* What are the principles and purposes around which I would build were it within my power to lead America forward? If I had an opportunity such as the colonists or the pioneers had, to build a society, what kind of a civilization would I pattern?"

It was this question which a committee of the National Education Association was seeking to answer when it formulated ten social economic goals for America. [See THE JOURNAL for January 1934, p5-12.] These goals restate America's historic ideals in terms of ten simple human rights to which every individual is entitled in the New Age.

These goals may well form the basis of civic and economic study in every school in America. Encourage young people to study these goals in relation to their own homes, their neighborhoods, and the industries and enterprises of their communities. Is there security or lack of it? Order or disorder? Fair play or control by a few?

The next question follows logically from the first: *What can we do about it?* Under each goal let the student ask himself what he can do to bring about its realization in his community, state, nation, and world. During American Education Week let parent-teacher associations and other civic groups study the goals in relation to community needs and ideals.

[1] Hereditary strength—everyone has a right to be wellborn and under conditions which will conserve his innate strengths and capacities.

In considering this goal, think of such questions as these: What instruction does your school give in homemaking, choosing a mate, rearing a family? How many young people in your community find it economically impossible to marry and rear a family? What effects will the diminishing birthrate among well-educated people have on American society? Consider this goal in relation to point four of the *Children's Charter* advocating maternal and infant care.

[2] Physical security—everyone has a right to protection from accident and disease.

What proportion of the people in your community live in unsanitary or crowded quarters? Do you think that better housing for the poor should be provided at public expense just as education is? How can your community provide medical care for people with low incomes? What is the chief cause of fatal automobile accidents in your community?

[3] Participation in an evolving culture—everyone has a right to share the skills, standards, values, and knowledge of the race.

Has your community's education budget been reduced in the last four years? If so, how has the reduction affected teachers and the school system in general? Do a large percentage of the boys and girls of your community remain in school until they graduate from high school? What educational activities are provided for unemployed young people? for adults? Are public education and the fine arts considered a regular responsibility of the board of education?

[4] An active, flexible personality—everyone has a right to conditions which foster the development of initiative, ability to weigh facts, resist prejudice, and act cooperatively.

Do the employers of your community invite their employees to share in the solution of mutual problems? Does your community support parks, playfields, and other recreation centers to offset the strain of sedentary and machine work? Is there a citizens' council in your community? Does your school sponsor public forums for the discussion of social-economic problems?

[5] Suitable occupation—everyone has a right to whatever joy the most fitting work can bring.

What are the opportunities for employment of young people in your community? How can your school enlist the support of citizens in a better distribution of work now available? in

expanding established types of work? in creating new types of work? What percent of the last five graduating classes of your high school are now unemployed?

[6] Economic security—everyone has a right to a minimum income that will provide a reasonable standard of living.

How many people in your community are dependent on public relief? Is the amount of unemployment greater or less than in neighboring communities of similar size? Investigate working conditions in your community. Have hours of labor been shortened? Has child labor been abolished? Account for the fact that there is greater interest now than formerly in old-age pensions and other forms of social insurance.

[7] Mental security—everyone has a right to trustworthy information from unprejudiced, unbiased sources.

What advertisements of foods, medicines, or cosmetics over your radio or in newspapers, impress you as probably false? Where can the citizens of your community get information about the merchandise they buy? Does the public taste in your community demand that good films be shown in the local theaters? Are the citizens willing to vote necessary funds to maintain a good library? Is the circulation of low-grade books and magazines contrary to public sentiment?

[8] Equality of opportunity—everyone has a right to the fullest possible development.

How is the wealth in your community distributed? Is there extreme poverty on the one hand and extreme riches on the other? Are political offices in your community awarded for merit rather than thru influence or bribery? Does your state provide equal educational opportunities for every child or are some schools poorly equipped and housed?

[9] Freedom—everyone has a right to the widest sphere of freedom compatible with the equal freedom of others.

How should training for citizenship be different in a democracy from what it is under a dictatorship? Are you taking any studies which help you to understand what your local government is doing? What are you and your school doing to promote better informed citizenship? Has there been an increase or decrease in crime in your community during the last twenty years?

[10] Fair play—everyone has a right to expect others to act in conformity with the highest good of all.

How do rates for utilities, such as water, gas, and electricity in your community compare with rates in other cities of similar size? Are local manufacturers allowed to sell adulterated foods? Are employers in your community willing to arbitrate with their employees?

INDEX TO VOLUME XXIII

A

- ABELS, HELENE ROSE. Art interprets education 220
Academic freedom, Report of the committee on 255
ADAMS, JAMES TRUSLOW (quoted) 222
Adult education
— What progressive communities are doing 62
Age of plenty, This (STUART CHASE) 147
American Education Week
— American Education Week Cartoon 218
— American Education Week 1934 143
— Mass meetings—American Education Week 178
— School programs—American Education Week (LOUISE PAULUS) 175
American Legion
— Legion and the schools, The (RUSSELL COOK) 89
American school, The (Leaflet) 223
Annual roll call, The Journal's 19
Are high schools worthwhile? (RAY BALLOU) 188
Art interprets education (HELENE ROSE ABELS) 220
ASHBY, LYLE W., Our Association at work 179-186
— Schools in the news and why, The 29
— Secondary education for the new day 135-141
Atlantic City convention, The 187

B

- Bad boy and his teacher, The (A. H. LASS) 195
BAKER, NEWTON D. Youth challenges the nation 162
BALLOU, RAY. Are high schools worthwhile? 188
BAYLOR, ADELAIDE S. (quoted) A-16
BEARD, CHARLES A.
— Before schools began 201
— Future Comes, The 94
— Schools of Greece and Rome 230
Before schools began (CHARLES A. BEARD and WILLIAM G. CARR) 201
Bill of rights for the new age, A 205
Books and reading
— Evening with the magazines, An (HAZEL DAVIS) 24, 74, 132, 219
— Invincible Louisa 215
— Reading and literature (EUGENE T. LIES) 69
— Self-preparation for new leadership 128
— Sixty educational books of 1933 121
BORAH, WILLIAM E. (quoted) 134, 227
— War makers, The 134
BOUTWELL, WILLIAM DOW. Going places 79
BRADFORD, MARY D. (quoted) A-59
BRANDEIS, LOUIS D. (quoted) 34
BRYAN, ARTHUR H. School and classroom hygiene 41
Builders of our profession 30, 63, 96, A-38, 158, 190, 226, 259
Business education, The opportunities of (PAUL S. LOMAX) 125

C

- Can democracy survive in the United States? (editorial) 33
Can we rely on business? (ROYCE S. PITKIN) 43
CAPPS, A. G. The fruit basket turns over 54
CARPENTER, W. W. The fruit basket turns over 54
CARR, WILLIAM G.
— Before schools began 201
— Efficient tax administration 146
— Schools of Greece and Rome 230
— Types of taxes: the income tax 75
— Types of taxes: the property tax 53
— Types of taxes: the sales tax 110
— Who pays taxes? 16
Cartoon project (See Projects)
CASTELL, J. STANLEY. A rural highschool's service 144
Charts
— Membership in education associations 86
CHASE, HARRY WOODBURN
— Crime and the school 253
— (Quoted) 127
CHASE, STUART. This age of plenty 147
Checking soil erosion—TVA (WALTER E. MYER) 239
Child labor must go (GEORGIA B. PARSONS) 216
Citizens organizations and schools
— Citizens' organizations and the schools (M. E. HAGGERTY) 36
— Legion and the schools, The (RUSSELL COOK) 89
— Schools doing their job? (Rotarian) 40

- Citizens' organizations and the schools (M. E. HAGGERTY) 36
Cleveland convention, The 99
Committee of NEA on social-economic goals for America, report of 5
Community and schools
— Using the rural community in teaching (C. M. WIETING and M. L. McCoy) 78
— What progressive communities are doing 62
Conclusions of the Cleveland convention (CHARLES H. JUDD) 104
Confidence wins (LESLIE GREGORY) 60
Congress, Testing candidates for (JOHN K. NORTON) 177

Key to Journal Pages

1-32	January
33-64	February
65-96	March
97-126	April
127-158	May
159-190	October
191-226	November
227-262	December

- Conventions and collective action (BELMONT FARLEY) 258
Convention, Atlantic City (Dept. of Supt.)
— Atlantic City convention, The 187
— Schools go on the air, The 214
— Superintendents plan 65th annual meeting 257
Convention, Cleveland (Dept. of Supt.)
— Cleveland convention, The 99
— Conclusions of the Cleveland convention (CHARLES H. JUDD) 104
— Department of Superintendence program 56
— Schools shall forever be encouraged (BELMONT FARLEY) 25
— Superintendents meet at Cleveland, The (PAUL C. STETSON) 27
Convention, Denver (NEA)
— Conventions and collective action (BELMONT FARLEY) 258
— Denver convention, The 225
Convention, Washington (NEA)
— Ideas from the Washington convention 168
— United we stand 111
— Washington convention, The (JESSIE GRAY) 92
— Washington convention, The (BELMONT FARLEY) 154, 165
CONWAY, JAMES F. Science in the elementary schools 208
COOK, RUSSELL. The legion and the schools 89
Corporate trend
— Can we rely on business? (ROYCE S. PITKIN) 43
— Corporation in America, The (editorial) 227
— How big business heads pay themselves 152
— How 1776 has been undone 2
Corporation in America, The (editorial) 227
County parks and rural life (HENRY S. CURTIS) 112
CRABTREE, J. W. Going forward (annual report) 167
Credit union movement, The (AGNES WINN) 148
Crime and the school (HARRY WOODBURN CHASE) 253
Crisis in education, The 46
CUBBERLEY, ELLWOOD P. (quoted) 191
CURTIS, HENRY S. County parks and rural life 112

D

- DAVIS, HAZEL
— An evening with the magazines 24, 74, 132, 219
Dean, What does a do? (DOROTHY C. STRATTON) 211
Democracy, Can it survive in the United States? (editorial) 33

- Dental clinic on wheels, A (HELEN HALL) 91
Denver convention, The 225
Department of superintendence program 56
DOUGLASS, HARL R. Some dangers of the testing movement 17
Dramatics (EUGENE T. LIES) 58
Dynamic program for the profession, A 106

E

- Economic stability, School costs and (JOHN K. NORTON) 133
Editorials
— Can democracy survive in the United States? 33
— Corporation in America, The 227
— Fundamental ideas for tomorrow 160
— Interpreting education within the school 191
— Message to the 1934 graduate, A 127
— Teacher and the people, The (J. B. EDMONSON) 65
— What the teacher can do during 1934 1
EDMONSON, J. B. The teacher and the people (editorial) 65
Educating children for the new deal. (RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER) 97
Educating for tomorrow (HENRY LESTER SMITH) 225
Educational interpretation
— (See Interpretation of education)
Educational recovery and planning (JOHN K. NORTON) 103
Education accepts the challenge (JOHN K. NORTON) 35
Education and national problems 49
Education associations, Membership in 86
Education for a new society (ARTHUR E. MORGAN) 197
Education of national concern 48
Education, the foundation of enduring recovery 45-53
Efficient tax administration (HARLEY L. LUTZ and WILLIAM G. CARR) 146
EGINTON, DANIEL P. Some progressive principles in homemaking 22
Elementary schools, science in the (JAMES F. CONWAY) 208
ELIOT, CHARLES W. (quoted) 1
Emergency commission in action, The (JOHN K. NORTON) 3
Emergency federal aid for education (LYLE W. ASHBY) 181
Emergency in education (See Federal aid to education; also Joint commission on the emergency in education)
— Tragedy of a half principal, The 61
Encouraging electrification—TVA (WALTER E. MYER) 242
ENGELHARDT, FRED. How to save the kindergarten 114
Essay project (See Projects)
Evaluating the public-school program (JOHN K. NORTON) 66
Evening with the magazines, An (HAZEL DAVIS) 24, 74, 132, 219
Experiments in planning—TVA (WALTER E. MYER) 237

F

- Faculty and teacher growth, The 18
FARLEY, BELMONT
— Conventions and collective action 258
— Schools shall forever be encouraged 25
— Washington convention 154
— Washington convention, The 165
FAUNCE, WILLIAM HERBERT PERRY (quoted) 127
Federal aid to education
— Education, the foundation of enduring recovery 45-53
— Emergency federal aid for education 181
— Federal emergency aid for education (JAMES H. RICHMOND) 157
— Fruit basket turns over, The (A. G. CAPPS and W. W. CARPENTER) 54
— Government takes steps to aid schools 93
— Needs of the schools presented to Congress 105
Federal aid to education past and present 50
Federal emergency aid for education (JAMES H. RICHMOND) 157
Federal government's responsibility, The 52
Fences will have to be built (EDWARD E. HOOD) 256
FILER, HENRY. Organizing in the state for better schools 173

ARTICLES and poems are indexed under authors and titles. Photos of individuals, school buildings, and scenes from convention cities, are indexed under the heading photos. There are several general subject headings such as: Federal aid to education, National Education Association, Social-economic goals. Editorials are also listed under the title in the main alphabet. Contents of THE JOURNAL OF THE NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION are listed in the Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature and in the Educational Index.

Financing the schools	
— Confidence wins (LESLIE GREGORY)	60
— School costs and economic stability (JOHN K. NORTON)	133
FINNEY, ROSS L. (quoted)	203
Forests and soil—TVA (WALTER E. MYER)	238
FRANK, GLENN. The world for which we must educate	161
FRANK, LAWRENCE (quoted)	51
FREEMAN, FRANK N. Life insurance is safe	77
Friendship of former teachers, The (LUCY M. SCHWENKER)	254
Fruit basket turns over, The (A. G. CAPPS and W. W. CARPENTER)	54
Fundamental ideas for tomorrow (editorial)	160
Fundamental issues (secondary education)	138
Future comes, The (CHARLES A. BEARD and GEORGE H. E. SMITH)	94
Future of farms and industry, The—TVA (WALTER E. MYER)	244

G

Give youth a chance (JOHN N. PATTERSON)	39
Going forward (Secretary Crabtree's annual report)	167
Going places (WILLIAM DOW BOUTWELL)	79
GOSLING, THOMAS W. (quoted)	168
Government and industry—TVA (WALTER E. MYER)	243
Government and schools (See also Federal aid to education)	
— Government takes steps to aid schools	93
— Organizing in the state for better schools (HENRY FILER)	173
— Testing candidates for Congress (JOHN K. NORTON)	177
Government takes steps to aid schools	93
GRAY, JESSIE	
— (Quoted)	A-5, A-14, 45, 92, 169
— Visions and voyages	164
— Washington convention, The	92
GREEN, ELSIE E. (quoted)	168
GREGORY, LESLIE. Confidence wins	60
Group study and faculty meetings	18, 61, 85, 118, 187, 224, 257

H

HAGGERTY, M. E. Citizens' organizations and the schools	36
HALL, HELEN. A dental clinic on wheels	91
HALL, SIDNEY B. (quoted)	105
Handwashing, Hygienic, in schools (THOMAS D. WOOD)	149
HAYES, EDWARD A. (quoted)	168
Health	
— Dental clinic on wheels, A (HELEN HALL)	91
— Hygienic handwashing in schools (THOMAS D. WOOD)	149
— Save hearing and you save ambition (ANNETTA W. PECK)	55
— School and classroom hygiene (ARTHUR H. BRYAN)	41
— Teaching nutrition to boys and girls (MARY SWARTZ ROSE)	129
HENSEL, GEORGE (quoted)	2
HERZBERG, MAX J. Wasn't that a good speech?	221
HESS, ELWOOD V.	
— Home-visiting: more results	83
— Home-visiting: some results	37
— (Quoted)	A-79
High school (See Secondary education)	
Homemaking, Education for	
— New values in home economics (FRANCES ZUILL)	119
— Some progressive principles (DANIEL P. EGINTON)	22
— Teaching nutrition to boys and girls (MARY SWARTZ ROSE)	129
Home and school working together	223
Home economics, New values in (FRANCES ZUILL)	119
Home-school leaflets	87, 223
Home-school visiting	
— Home visiting: more results (ELWOOD V. HESS)	83
— Home visiting: some results (ELWOOD V. HESS)	37
— Teacher's appraisal of home visiting, A (ELIZABETH C. MACLEARIE)	200
HOOD, EDWARD E. Fences will have to be built	256
How big business heads pay themselves	152
How 1776 has been undone	2
How the new deal came to Dunderland (DONALD R. RICHBERG)	117
How to save the kindergarten (FRED ENGELHARDT)	114
HUTCHINS, ROBERT M. Teacher, school, and national life	163
— Turn high schools into people's colleges	217
Hygienic handwashing in schools (THOMAS D. WOOD)	149
Hygiene, School and classroom (ARTHUR H. BRYAN)	41

I

ICKES, HAROLD L.	
— Most important question of all, The	67
— (Quoted)	35
Ideas from the Washington convention	168
Increasing public appreciation (LYLE W. ASHBY)	185
Innkeeper speaks, The (VICTORIA BEAUDIN JOHNSON)	262
Insurance	
— Life insurance is safe (FRANK N. FREEMAN)	77
Interpreting education within the school (editorial)	191

Interpretation of education	
— (See American Education Week; also Leaflets, Home-school)	
— Art interprets education (HELEN ROSE ABELS)	222
— Before schools began (CHARLES A. BEARD and WILLIAM G. CARR)	201
— Confidence wins (LESLIE GREGORY)	60
— Home and school working together	223
— Increasing public appreciation (LYLE W. ASHBY)	185
— Interpreting education within the school (editorial)	191
— Making friends for the school	87
— Schools in the news and why, The (LYLE W. ASHBY)	29
— Schools of Greece and Rome (CHARLES A. BEARD and WILLIAM G. CARR)	230
— Seven objectives of education, The	87
Invincible Louisa	215

J

Joint commission on the emergency in education, The	
— Education accepts the challenge (JOHN K. NORTON)	35
— Educational recovery and planning (JOHN K. NORTON)	103
— Emergency commission in action, The (JOHN K. NORTON)	3
— Evaluating the public-school program (JOHN K. NORTON)	66
— Longterm educational planning (JOHN K. NORTON)	252
— School costs and economic stability (JOHN K. NORTON)	133
— Shall we enter politics? (JOHN K. NORTON)	207
JONES, HERBERT C. (quoted)	65
Journal's annual roll call, The	19
JUDD, CHARLES H.	
— Conclusions of the Cleveland convention	104
— New standards for secondary schools	141

K

Kindergarten, How to save the (FRED ENGELHARDT)	114
---	-----

L

LANGWORTHY, MRS. B. F. (quoted)	168
LASS, A. H. The bad boy and his teacher	195
Laying out the plans—TVA (WALTER E. MYER)	236
Leaflets, Home-school	
— American school, The	223
— Seven objectives of education, The	87
Legion and the schools, The (RUSSELL COOK)	89
Leisure and schools	
— County parks and rural life (HENRY S. CURTIS)	112
— Dramatics (EUGENE T. LIES)	58
— Going places (WILLIAM DOW BOUTWELL)	79
— New leisure challenges the schools, The (EUGENE T. LIES)	13
— Reading and literature (EUGENE T. LIES)	69
— Vacation time for school children (EUGENE T. LIES)	107
— Whistling girl, A (ANNE NORTON)	72
Letter of an old-timer	85
LIES, EUGENE T.	
— Dramatics	58
— New leisure challenges the schools, The	13
— Reading and literature	69
— Vacation time for school children	107
Life insurance is safe (FRANK N. FREEMAN)	77
Literature, reading and (EUGENE T. LIES)	69
LOMAX, PAUL S. Opportunities of business education, The	125
Longterm educational planning (JOHN K. NORTON)	252
LUCAS, M. GRANT (quoted)	168
LUTZ, HARLEY L.	
— Efficient tax administration	146
— Types of taxes: the income tax	75
— Types of taxes: the property tax	53
— Types of taxes: the sales tax	110
— Who pays taxes?	16

M

MACLEARIE, ELIZABETH C. A. teacher's appraisal of home visiting	200
MAGNA, MRS. RUSSELL WILLIAM (quoted)	168
Making friends for the school	87
Mass meetings—American Education Week	178
Master builders of our profession	30, 63, 95, 259
McCov, M. L. Using the rural community in teaching	78
MELLETT, LOWELL (quoted)	33
Membership in education associations	86
Message to the 1934 graduate, A (editorial)	127
MILAN, CARL H. (quoted)	168
MORGAN, ARTHUR E. Education for a new society	197
MORGAN, JOY ELMER	
— (See also editorials)	
— (Quoted)	10, 142, 202
— Restating our national goals	5
— Study unit, A: suggestions about its use	248
MORT, PAUL R. (quoted)	52
Most important question of all, The (HAROLD L. ICKES)	67
Motion pictures, A national program for	251
MYER, WALTER E.	
— Tennessee Valley looks to the future, The	233-248
— Youth has a chance	196

N

National Education Association (See also Professional organizations)	
— Association at work, Our (LYLE W. ASHBY)	179-86
— Builders of our profession	30, 63, 96, A-38, 158, 190, 226, 259
— Education, the foundation of enduring recovery	45-53
— Master builders of our profession	30, 63, 95, 259
— Membership in education associations	86
— Program of action for 1934-35, Our (HENRY LESTER SMITH)	159
— Platform of the National Education Association	169
— Report of committee on social-economic goals for America	5
— Resolutions for 1934	171
— Schools in the news and why, The (LYLE W. ASHBY)	29
— Strength of a national organization, The (CARMON ROSS)	210
— Visions and voyages (JESSIE GRAY)	164
National leadership in education (LYLE W. ASHBY)	180
National program for motion pictures, A	251
Nationwide school printing project, The	156
NEA contributions to the teachers' economic welfare (LYLE W. ASHBY)	182
Needs of the schools presented to Congress	105
Newbery prize book, Invincible Louisa	215
New deal and schools	
— Educating children for the new deal (RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER)	97
— President Roosevelt's account of progress	193
— How the new deal came to Dunderland (DONALD R. RICHBERG)	117
New leisure challenges the schools, The (EUGENE T. LIES)	13
New industrialism, The—Promise or threat—TVA (WALTER E. MYER)	235
New standards for secondary schools (CHARLES H. JUDD)	141
New values in home economics (FRANCIS ZUILL)	119
NORTON, ANNE A. Whistling girl	72
NORTON, JOHN K.	
— Education accepts the challenge	35
— Educational recovery and planning	103
— Emergency commission in action, The	3
— Evaluating the public-school program	66
— Longterm educational planning	252
— (Quoted)	168
— School costs and economic stability	A-79, 133
— Shall we enter politics?	207
— Testing candidates for Congress	177
Nutrition, Teaching to boys and girls (MARY SWARTZ ROSE)	129

O

Opportunities of business education, The (PAUL S. LOMAX)	125
Organizing in the state for better schools (HENRY FILER)	173
Our Association at work (LYLE W. ASHBY)	179-86
Our program of action for 1934-35 (HENRY LESTER SMITH)	159

P

PARSONS, GEORGIA B.	
— Child labor must go	216
— (Quoted)	168
PATTERSON, JOHN N. Give youth a chance	39
PAULUS, LOUISE. School programs—American Education Week	175
PECK, ANNETTA W. Save hearing and you save ambition	55
Photos	
— ALLEN, A. T.	261
— Back Run school, The	25
— BELGRANO, FRANK N., JR.	260
— CAMMACK, JAMES W., JR.	157
— CLEVELAND, GENERAL MOSES	56
— Cleveland museum of art and fountain of waters	56
— COOK, RUSSELL	89
— CRABTREE, J. W.	December cover
— DEWEY, JOHN	5
— ELLZEY, RUSSELL	93
— FIFE, RAY	63
— FLORA, A. C.	190
— Folger library, The (Washington, D. C.)	154
— FOWLER, B. A.	158
— GEORGE, WILLARD F.	93
— GIVENS, WILLARD E.	5, December cover
— HARRINGTON, F. E.	158
— HAY, JOHN, commercial high school, Cleveland	57
— KELLY, FRED J.	5
— KING, W. P.	158
— LAKE, CHARLES H.	57
— LANGWORTHY, MRS. B. F.	226
— Lincoln memorial, The (Washington, D. C.)	155
— LORD, DAISY	226
— MCGUFFEY, WILLIAM HOLMES	251
— MEIGS, CORNELIA	215
— Modern note in Cleveland, A	57
— MOE, M. P.	158
— MOORE, ROBERT C.	5
— MOUNT VERNON	92
— National capitol, The	92
— OBERHOLZER, E. E.	101, 214
— OFFENHAUER, R. E.	190
— ORCHARD HOUSE, Concord, Massachusetts	215
— Pan American Union, The (Washington, D. C.)	154
— PLENZKE, O. H.	158
— Roosevelt, Theodore, high school, Washington, D. C.	20

— ROSS, EDWARD A.	5
— SAMUELSON, AGNES.	190
— STETSON, PAUL C.	56
— STETSON, PAUL C. and family.	100
— STUDEBAKER, J. W.	226, 257
— TOLLE, VERNON O.	158
— Typical convention of department of superintendence, A.	27
— WALKER, THOMAS J.	190
— Washington cathedral, The (Washington, D. C.)	153
— Washington monument, The (Washington, D. C.)	155
— White House, The (Washington, D. C.)	92
— WHITTENBERG, A. L.	190
— WEBNER, JOHN T.	143
— PITKIN, ROYCE S. Can we rely on business?	43
Planning, social-economic	
— Educational recovery and planning (JOHN K. NORTON)	103
— Experiments in planning (WALTER E. MYER)	237
— Laying out the plans (WALTER E. MYER)	236
— Longterm educational planning (JOHN K. NORTON)	252
Planning the industrial future—TVA (WALTER E. MYER)	246
Platform of the National Education Association,	169
Poetry	
— Innkeeper speaks, The (VICTORIA BEAUDIN JOHNSON)	262
— JOHNSON, VICTORIA BEAUDIN.	262
— RANDS, WILLIAM BRIGHTY.	A-56
— SAGER, PAULINE.	A-88
— Uncherished seed-corn, The (PAULINE SAGER)	A-88
— Wonderful world, The (WILLIAM BRIGHTY RANDS)	A-56
POLING, DANIEL A. (quoted).	168
Politics, Shall we enter? (JOHN K. NORTON)	207
POOLE, MRS. GRACE MORRISON (quoted).	168
Power policy—TVA (WALTER E. MYER)	241
President Roosevelt's account of progress.	193
PREBLE, MRS. F. BLANCHE (quoted).	168
Principal, The tragedy of a half.	61
Printing project (See Projects)	
Production of power, The—TVA (WALTER E. MYER)	240
Professional organizations (See also National Education Association)	
— Dynamic program for the profession, A.	106
— Membership in education associations.	86
— Organizing in the state for better schools (HENRY FILER)	173
Program for federal aid, The.	45
Program of action for 1934-35, Our (HENRY LESTER SMITH).	159
Projects, Division of Publications, NEA	
— American Education Week cartoon.	218
— Essay (What the American school means to me)	116
— Printing.	156
Public-school program, Evaluating the (JOHN K. NORTON)	66
Public utilities (See Tennessee Valley looks to the future)	

Q

Quotations	
— ADAMS, JAMES TRUSLOW	222
— BAYLOR, ADELAIDE S.	A-16
— BORAH, WILLIAM E.	134, 227
— BRADFORD, MARY D.	A-59
— BRANDEIS, LOUIS D.	34
— CHASE, HARRY WOODBURN	127
— CUBBERLEY, ELLWOOD P.	191
— ELIOT, CHARLES W.	1
— FAUNCE, WILLIAM HERBERT PERRY	127
— FINNEY, ROSS L.	203
— FRANK, LAWRENCE	51
— GOSLING, THOMAS W.	92
— GRAY, JESSIE	A-5, A-14, 45, 98, 169
— GREEN, ELSIE E.	168
— HALL, SIDNEY B.	105
— HAYES, EDWARD A.	168
— HENSEL, GEORGE	2
— HESS, ELWOOD V.	A-79
— ICKES, HAROLD L.	35
— JONES, HERBERT C.	65
— LANGWORTHY, MRS. B. F.	168
— LUCAS, M. GRANT	168
— MAGNA, MRS. RUSSELL WILLIAM	168
— MELLETT, LOWELL	33
— MILAM, CARL H.	168
— MORGAN, JOY ELMER	10, 142, 202
— MORT, PAUL R.	52
— NORTON, JOHN K.	A-79, 168
— PARSONS, GEORGIA B.	168
— POLING, DANIEL A.	168
— POOLE, MRS. GRACE MORRISON	168
— PREBLE, MRS. F. BLANCHE	168
— READ, FAYE	168
— RICHMOND, JAMES H.	168
— ROOSEVELT, MRS. FRANKLIN D.	214
— ROOSEVELT, FRANKLIN D.	11, 35, 94, 138
— RUSSELL, WILLIAM F.	50
— RUTLEDGE, ARCHIBALD	74
— SAMUELSON, AGNES.	168
— SELIGMAN, EDWARD ROBERT ANDERSON	53
— SHERRAS, G. FINDLAY	16
— SMITH, HENRY LESTER	221
— STETSON, PAUL C.	100
— SWEET, WILLIAM E.	168
— WELLS, H. G.	134
— ZOOK, GEORGE F.	168

R

Radio	
— Schools go on the air, The.	214
— READ, FAYE (quoted).	108
Reading and literature (EUGENE T. LIES)	69
Report of the committee on academic freedom.	255
Resolutions for 1934 (NEA)	171
Restating our national goals (JOY ELMER MORGAN)	5
Returned delegate speaks up, The (ANNA STEESE RICHARDSON)	251
RICHARDSON ANNA STEESE. The returned delegate speaks up	251
RICHBERG, DONALD R. How the new deal came to Dunderland	117
RICHMOND, JAMES H. Federal emergency aid for education	157
— (Quoted)	168
ROOSEVELT, MRS. FRANKLIN D. (quoted)	214
ROOSEVELT, FRANKLIN D.	
— (Quoted)	11, 35, 94, 138
— President Roosevelt's account of progress.	193
ROSE, MARY SWARTZ. Teaching nutrition to boys and girls	129
ROSS, CARMON. The strength of a national organization	210
Rural high school's service, A. (J. STANLEY CASTELL)	144
Rural Education	
— County parks and rural life (HENRY S. CURTIS)	112
— Rural high school's service, A. (J. STANLEY CASTELL)	144
— Rural problem, The (LYLE W. ASHBY)	139
— Using the rural community in teaching (C. M. WIETING and M. L. MCCOY)	78
Rural problem, The (LYLE W. ASHBY)	139
RUSSELL, WILLIAM F. (quoted)	50
RUTLEDGE, ARCHIBALD (quoted)	74

S

SAMUELSON, AGNES (quoted)	168
SANDISON, MILDRED. Thanksgiving	204
Save hearing and you save ambition (ANNETTA W. W. PECK)	55
School and classroom hygiene (ARTHUR H. BRYAN)	41
School costs and economic stability (JOHN K. NORTON)	133
School programs—American Education Week (LOUISE PAULUS)	175
Schools doing their job? (Rotarian)	40
Schools go on the air, The.	214
Schools in the news and why, The (LYLE W. ASHBY)	29
Schools in the story of culture	
— Before schools began (CHARLES A. BEARD and WILLIAM G. CARR)	201
— Schools of Greece and Rome (CHARLES A. BEARD and WILLIAM G. CARR)	230
Schools shall forever be encouraged (BELMONT FARLEY)	25
SCHWIENHER, LUCY M. The friendship of former teachers	254
Science in the elementary schools (JAMES F. CONWAY)	208
Secondary education	
— A message to the 1934 graduate (editorial)	127
— Are high schools worthwhile? (RAY BALLOU)	188
— Secondary education for the new day (LYLE W. ASHBY)	135-41
— Some tercentenary suggestions.	250
— Three hundred years of American high schools	249
— Turn high schools into peoples colleges (ROBERT M. HUTCHINS)	217
— What does a dean do? (DOROTHY C. STRATTON)	211
Secondary education for the new day (LYLE W. ASHBY)	135-41
Secondary schools of tomorrow (LYLE W. ASHBY)	137
Self-preparation for new leadership	128
SELIGMAN, EDWARD ROBERT ANDERSON (quoted)	53
Service for employers, A.	222
Seven objectives of education, The	87
Shall we enter politics? (JOHN K. NORTON)	207
SHERAS, G. FINDLAY (quoted)	16
SILVER, RABBI ABBA HILLEL. Educating children for the new deal.	97
Sixty educational books of 1933.	121
SMITH, GEORGE H. E. The future comes	94
SMITH, HENRY LESTER	
— Educating for tomorrow	225
— Our program for action for 1934-35.	159
— (Quoted)	221
Social-economic goals of America (NEA committee)	
— Bill of rights for the new age, A.	205
— Toward a better America.	206
— Social-economic goals for America, report of NEA committee	5
Social-economic trends	
— Age of plenty, This (STUART CHASE)	147
— Bill of rights for the new age, A.	205
— Can democracy survive in the United States? (editorial)	33
— Can we rely on business? (ROYCE S. PITKIN)	43
— Education for a new society (ARTHUR E. MORGAN)	197
— Fruit basket turns over, The (A. G. CAPPS and W. W. CARPENTER)	54
— Fundamental ideas for tomorrow (editorial)	160
— How 1776 has been undone	2
— Restating our national goals (NEA committee)	5

— The future comes (CHARLES A. BEARD and GEORGE H. E. SMITH)	94
— Toward a better America.	206
— What are desirable social-economic goals for America? (NEA committee)	6
— World for which we must educate, The (GLENN FRANK)	161
Some dangers of the testing movement (HARL R. DOUGLASS)	17
Some progressive principles in homemaking (DANIEL P. EGINTON)	22
Some tercentenary suggestions.	250
States and the crisis, The.	47
STETSON, PAUL C.	
— (Quoted)	100
— Superintendents meet at Cleveland, The.	27
STRATTON, DOROTHY C. What does a dean do?	211
Strength of a national organization, The (CARMON ROSS)	210
Study unit, A: suggestions about its use—TVA (JOY ELMER MORGAN)	248
Superintendents meet at Cleveland, The (PAUL C. STETSON)	27
Superintendents plan 65th annual meeting	257
SWEET, WILLIAM E. (quoted)	168

T

Taxation	
— Efficient tax administration (HARLEY L. LUTZ and WILLIAM G. CARR)	146
— Types of taxes: the income tax (HARLEY L. LUTZ and WILLIAM G. CARR)	75
— Types of taxes: the property tax (HARLEY L. LUTZ and WILLIAM G. CARR)	53
— Types of taxes: the sales tax (HARLEY L. LUTZ and WILLIAM G. CARR)	110
— Who pays taxes? (HARLEY L. LUTZ and WILLIAM G. CARR)	16
Teacher and the people, The (editorial)—J. B. EDMONSON	65
Teacher, The bad boy and his (A. H. LASS)	195
Teacher's appraisal of home visiting, A (ELIZABETH C. MACLEAIRE)	200
Teachers, Economic welfare of	
— Credit union movement, The	148
— NEA contributions to the teachers' economic welfare (LYLE W. ASHBY)	182
— Teachers' professional growth, The (LYLE W. ASHBY)	140
Teachers, Education of	
— What the teachers can do during 1934 (editorial)	1
Teachers' professional growth, The (LYLE W. ASHBY)	140
Teachers' professional interests (LYLE W. ASHBY)	184
Teacher, school, and national life (ROBERT M. HUTCHINS)	163
Teacher tenure.	194
Teaching nutrition to boys and girls (MARY SWARTZ ROSE)	129
Tennessee Valley looks to the future, The (WALTER E. MYER)	233-48
Tenure, Teacher.	194
Tercentenary of secondary education	
— Some tercentenary suggestions.	250
— Three hundred years of American high schools	249
Testing candidates for Congress (JOHN K. NORTON)	177
Testing movement, Some dangers of the (HARL R. DOUGLASS)	17
Thanksgiving (MILDRED SANDISON)	204
Three hundred years of American high schools	249
Toward a better America	206
Tragedy of a half principal, The.	61
Turn high schools into people's colleges (ROBERT M. HUTCHINS)	217
Types of taxes: the income tax (HARLEY L. LUTZ and WILLIAM G. CARR)	75
Types of taxes: the property tax (HARLEY L. LUTZ and WILLIAM G. CARR)	53
Types of taxes: the sales tax (HARLEY L. LUTZ and WILLIAM G. CARR)	110

U

Uncherished seed-corn, The (PAULINE SAGER)—A-88	
Unemployment	
— Give youth a chance (JOHN N. PATTERSON)	39
United we stand.	111
Using the rural community in teaching (C. M. WIETING and M. L. MCCOY)	78

V

Vacation time for school children (EUGENE T. LIES)	107
Valley as at is, The —TVA (WALTER E. MYER)	234
Visions and voyages (JESSIE GRAY)	164
Visiting, home-school (See Home-school visiting)	
Vocational education (See also Homemaking, Education for)	
— Education for a new society (ARTHUR E. MORGAN)	197

W

War makers, The (WILLIAM E. BORAH)	134
Washington cathedral, The	153
Washington convention (BELMONT FARLEY)	154
Washington convention, The (BELMONT FARLEY)	165
Washington convention, The (JESSIE GRAY)	92
Wasn't that a good speech? (MAX J. HERZBERG)	221
WELLS, H. G. (quoted)	134
What about the nation's future citizens?	51

What are desirable social-economic goals for America? (NEA committee)	6
What does a dean do? (DOROTHY C. STRATTON)	211
What progressive communities are doing	62
What the American school means to me	116
What the teacher can do during 1934 (editorial)	1
What to expect—TVA (WALTER E. MYER)	247
Who pays taxes? (HARLEY L. LUTZ and WILLIAM G. CARR)	16
Whistling girl, A (ANNE NORTON)	72
Widening path of education, The (LYLE W. ASHBY)	136

WIETING, C. M. Using the rural community in teaching	78
WINN, AGNES. The credit union movement	148
Wonderful world, The (WILLIAM BRIGHTY RANDS) A-56	
WOOD, THOMAS D. Hygienic handwashing in schools	149
Working together (LYLE W. ASHBY)	186
Working with the cooperatives—TVA (WALTER E. MYER)	245
World for which we must educate, The (GLENN FRANK)	161

Y	
Youth challenges the nation (NEWTON D. BAKER)	162
Youth has a chance (WALTER E. MYER)	196
Z	
ZOOK, GEORGE F. (quoted)	168
ZUILL, FRANCES. New values in home economics	119

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