

PATHFINDER

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What Price Education?

Difference of Opinion as to Whether Our Higher Education is Beneficial or Detrimental to Economic Solvency

THE summer recess offers an opportunity to speculate on the role played by education in this era of depression. There is sharply divided sentiment on this subject. One faction holds that a costly "overproduction of brains" has contributed to our plight, while the opposition reasons that any curtailment in educational expenditure would be "false economy" and that only from the best minds will come our economic salvation.

Among those who see waste in teaching Young America too much "fancy stuff" is Professor Thomas H. Briggs of Columbia University Teachers' College. Addressing a convention of the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, he declared that a complete reorganization of our educational structure is necessary and recommended that the work be done by a national commission of picked educators who would be able to "purge the schools of unnecessary studies." He argues that the cost of such an undertaking would not amount to as much "as is now wasted in misdirected effort."

Former Secretary of War Baker admits that he has "sometimes been a bit discouraged as to what happens to the intellect of America after it leaves college" and particularly decries "the lack of intellectual leadership in these periods of stress and strain." At a recent Yale alumni luncheon he asked:

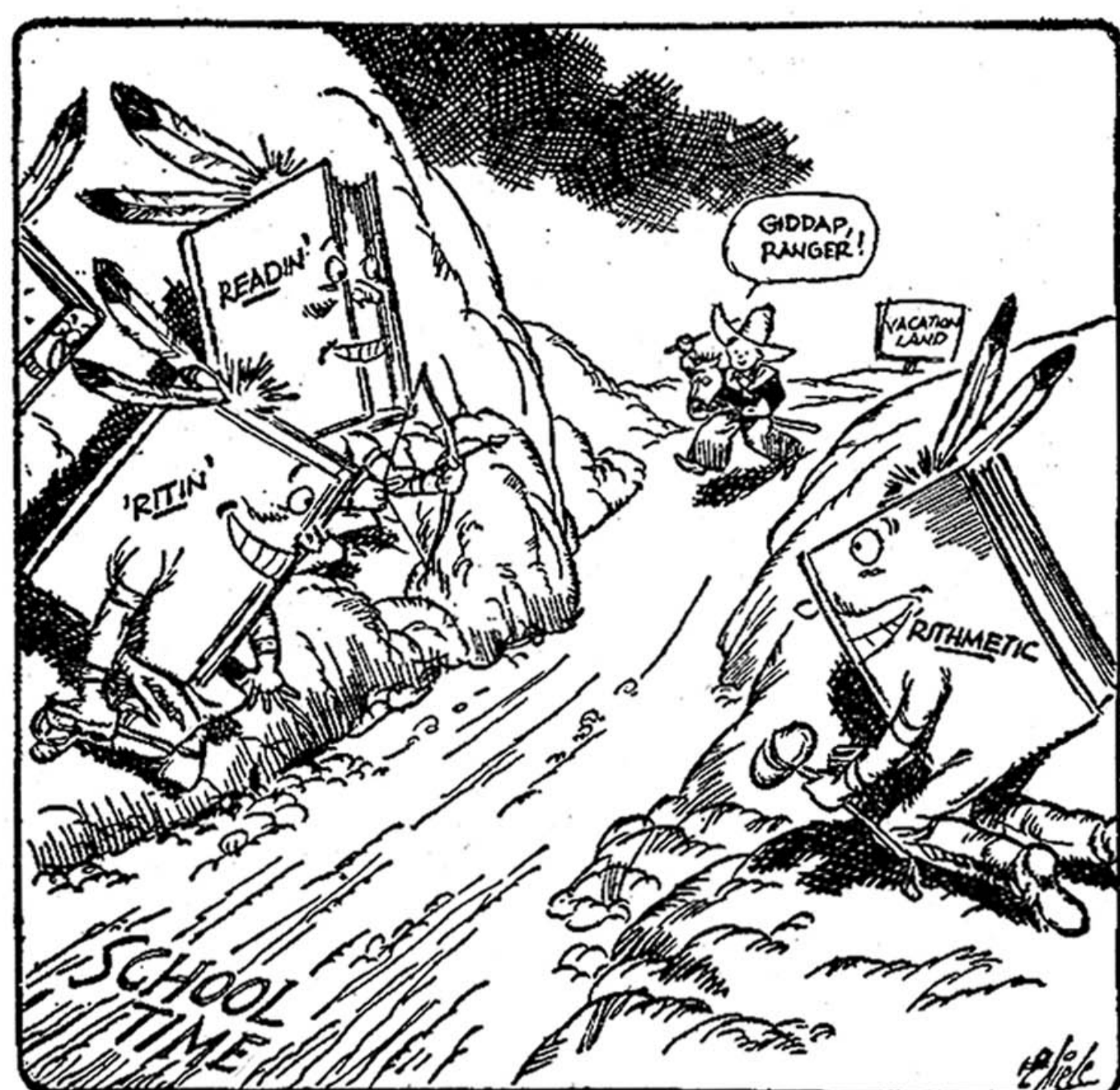
Why, in this period of bewilderment and doubt; why, when the nation is afraid, has there not come from the academically trained masses of America, men and women who know the courage which a knowledge of history and the experience of academic halls ought to produce; and why has there not been the great concurrence of intellectual leadership upon which the people could have safely relied?

"I do not quite know why it is," he commented. "Perhaps our parties and distinctions have had much to do with it. Perhaps the rewards that have been offered in the business of the world in modern times have swept aside too much of the intellect, and too much of the spirit bred in colleges and left them unfit for public service." He went on:

Out in the byways and hedges, in the humble places of America, in the hearts of men whose words are perhaps illiterate and tones halting, there are great virtues that have been bred in the hundred or more years of our national life, and all they need is the kind of leadership which comes from the academic tradition of a place like this.

Then, too, there has been considerable complaint of the tendency of our higher institutions of learning to breed atheists, agnostics, rationalists, internationalists and communists. "It is time we should break with all the nonsense in vogue today." Archbishop

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Young America Riding for a Fall

McNicholas told the Catholic Educational Association, adding: "It is our duty to combat the false philosophy of education that is influencing the teachers of the country." Meanwhile heavily burdened taxpayers attack appropriations for education on the ground that the country has leaned too far in this direction and that it is time to call a halt.

On the other hand, we have Dr. Robert L. Kelly, executive secretary of the Association of American Colleges, saying that our present-day college system "typifies the American spirit at its best" and Bishop G. Ashton Oldham (Episcopal) of Albany declaring that "it is in the larger vision of mankind and the world as one that must form the background of any realistic thinking and constructive planning for the days to come" and "for such vision and such thinking we look to our colleges and universities."

Calling attention to President Hoover's statement, "Education is our biggest business; it is our only indispensable business," the American Federation of Teachers wages war on curtailed school expenditures in 13,000 localities which make children "the innocent victims of the depression" and opposes further salary cuts for teachers as "economically suicidal." This is the same organization that favors a pardon for Mooney and indorses compulsory unemployment insurance.

Meanwhile the Interior Department is spending \$200,000 on a nation-wide school-teachers' survey. It is estimated that there are 848,500 school-teachers in 254,000 schoolhouses in the United States. The Office of Education is authority for the statement that if all the teachers of our 153,000 one-room rural schools stood side by side their ranks would extend in an unbroken line 87 1-10 miles. Elementary schools alone enroll 21,370,000 pupils while the public high schools have more than 4,000,000 students and private and parochial schools an additional 2,700,000. The fact that one-fourth of our population goes to school means an annual expenditure of about \$2,300,000,000.

So many people out of work kill time by patronizing public play grounds that it has become necessary in the larger cities to install games for grown-ups along with pastimes for the kiddies.

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