Labor, Education, and Politics in the 1830's

The stimulation of educational thought and action that accompanied the rise of labor in the 1830's has been noted so often as to be almost a commonplace. Thanks to the efforts of Carlton, Commons, and Curoe,¹ it has become clear that the protest movement based largely on the urban craftsmen contributed substantially to the common school revival. These studies, however, have not taken full account of all the relevant details. Not enough attention has been paid to the precise chronology of the movement, to its attitudes toward education and other contemporary issues, or to the views of other social groups. The discussion below is offered as a partial clarification of the problem. Owing to the fact that the sources are scattered and incomplete, it will deal principally with affairs in New York City and only touch upon those in the rest of the state and in New England.

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The installation of the Border Captain in the White House on March 4, 1829, was pleasing to the democracy that had elected him. But it was not "The Key of Libberty."² In truth, the victory helped reveal the fact that there were fields still to be conquered. First, economic problems called for solution. Millworkers and cityfolk generally did not like the long hours familiar to the farmer, or low and uncertain wages. To some extent they reacted by organizing trades unions and conducting strikes; through them or some other channel they made their demands known: the ten-hour day, higher wages, mechanics' lien law, hard money, no monopolies—especially

¹ F. T. Carlton, Economic Influences Upon Educational Progress in the United States 1820-1850 (Madison, 1908); J. R. Commons and others, History of Labour in the United States (New York, 1918); P. R. V. Curoe, Educational Attitudes and Policies of Organized Labor in the United States (New York, 1926).
² As defined by William Manning in 1798. See the 1922 reprint.
in banking. The skilled workers had an additional concern. The specialization of function to the point where no skill was required, and the increasing use of child and woman labor at machinery, undermined the position of the craftsmen. The latter sought protection against “apprentices”—i.e., cheap labor—by demanding that employers maintain a certain ratio between those “apprentices” and bona-fide learners of the crafts.

Organization, naturally, did not go unchallenged. The employers responded with argument, court action, and physical force. The labor movement, in turn, produced spokesmen who could carry the struggle beyond the shops and the streets into the realm of ideas. To those who fulminated against “combinations,” Seth Luther replied:

The Declaration of Independence was the work of a combination, and was as hateful to the traitors and tories of those days as combinations among working men are now to the avaricious monopolist and purse proud aristocrat.

Then, lest anyone should suppose that working conditions were really so good that no protest was justified, he painted grimly the life in the mills and cited the reports of the British factory inspectors as a warning of what was in store. Had foreign visitors borne witness to the charms of New England industrialism? They were being led around by the nose, said Luther. They ought to do a little snooping incognito—they would get an eyeful. As for those who proclaimed the necessity of transitory sacrifice in the name of the American System, he insisted that manufactures were necessary and desirable but that the accompanying misery was not. The very men who shouted the loudest about the virtues of the American System were importing cheap foreign labor and cutting the wages of American workers. It was all a fraud, and an old one at that:

It has always been the policy in imperial and kingly governments, to talk much about National glory, National wealth, and National improvements... This course is pursued by men in power, to keep the ‘common people,’ the ‘lower orders,’ from thinking, from reasoning, from watching the movements of Emperors, Kings, Dukes, Lords, and other villains, who are fleecing the

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3 This process had not as yet gone very far. But the menace threw a long shadow, partly because its implications were already apparent in England and men like Seth Luther frequently drew attention to them. Commons, op. cit., I, 169-471 passim; Douglas, American Apprenticeship and Industrial Education (New York, 1921), 60-62.
poor... Notwithstanding all our boasted liberty and freedom,... there are many men in our own country who, in their way, are pursuing the same course.4

But the movement was concerned with far more than narrow economic problems; institutional and social discrimination were equally galling. It was demanded, therefore, that imprisonment for debt be abolished, the militia purged of its compulsory features, the courts reformed. Nor was that all. The removal of tangible obstacles to equality would not of itself remold attitudes, and there were some attitudes that were considered intolerable. In reply to the contention of the millowners that the girls they employed were lovely and virtuous, Seth Luther observed that

notwithstanding this, ... the wives and daughters of the rich manufacturers would no more associate with a ‘factory girl’ than they would with a negro slave. So much for equality in a republican country.5

Not that condescension in social relations, or “mercy” in economic relations was wanted. Nothing of the sort. The existence of such attitudes, argued Luther, proved that our Revolution had not been thorough, that it had not established complete equality. Those attitudes must be erased from all minds just as the trappings of royalty had been swept from hall and flagstaff. Until they were, he concluded, the Bunker Hill monument might well “stand unfinished... a most excellent emblem of our unfinished independence.”6

Indeed, the very essence of American life as the common man saw it was at stake. Opportunity for improving one’s lot seemed to be farthest away at the very moment one reached out for it. Education, self-culture, and the like were held forth by the schoolmen and many of their friends of pulpit and editorial office as veritable Aladdin’s lamps that would make men the masters of their destinies and their souls. Armed with knowledge, even the poorest worker—it was said—could achieve economic security and appreciate the glory of God as expressed in this New World. But large numbers of ordinary Americans—workingmen, farmers, shopkeepers—found in their path to the good life substantial economic and cultural ob-

5 Ibid., 19.
6 Ibid., 26.
stacles. They objected. The factory system was condemned for a poverty which often forced the workingman's child into industry, or barred him from school for lack of decent clothes. Colleges and private academies were assailed as the preserve of the aristocracy: rarely could the father pay the fees, or the child benefit from the curriculum. Only the "common" (free and tax-supported) schools offered any promise of better times to come.\textsuperscript{7}

This promise, however, was not taken on faith. Workingmen interested at all probably looked the gift horse in the mouth very carefully, for the more articulate among them made specific suggestions and demands for change. They did not like the school atmosphere: discipline was too strict and the child's growing body too cramped. The curriculum was unsatisfactory: workingmen wanted more than words without meaning and "histories superannuated." They asked "instruction in the laws of our country," and in the art of speaking one's mind about them. Furthermore, it was considered a waste of time when teachers simply placed material before their pupils without calling into action "a single faculty of the mind, except the memory"; and the monitorial system was thought acceptable only as a last resort, in a crowded, urban situation. The teachers were not to be blamed for this, "for few of them know how to think themselves." Nevertheless, there was some room for choice—school committees ought to be more careful in what they offered workingmen's children. It was pointed out that conditions were particularly bad in country towns.\textsuperscript{8}

Better teachers, a more suitable curriculum, and improved classroom conditions could perhaps be arranged for with a little effort. But the need for thorough-going reform must be faced, too. The people had to put up with poorly equipped teachers because there were "but few others." Teacher-training would help.\textsuperscript{9} Still, those "few others" might not become "many" without inducements of the

\textsuperscript{7} Commons, loc. cit.; Curoe, op. cit., 34-36.

\textsuperscript{8} The Working Man's Advocate, Feb. 20, Jan. 30, 1830; Free Enquirer, May 27, 22, 1829; John Commerford's article in the National Trades Union, reprinted in A Documentary History of American Industrial Society, ed. J. R. Commons and others, (Cleveland, 1910), VI, 255-56; The Man, June 12, 1834.

\textsuperscript{9} On this point, and for more evidence on those raised in the previous paragraph, see Curoe, op. cit., 34-45 passim.
sort that attracted their fellow citizens. No one enjoyed being a door mat. "Are teachers estimated in proportion to their skill and experience, or to their servility to the Trustees?" Nor could they exist on dignity alone. It was outrageous, wrote George Henry Evans, that teachers toiled "early and late, six days out of seven, for two or three hundred dollars a year"—far from a living wage; while preachers were rarely "known to get less than five hundred, and few less than a thousand dollars a year, for laboring one, two, or three days out of the seven." Again, he asked:

Does the TEACHER of things necessary to be done and to be avoided here, get as well compensated for the six days' labor which he is required to perform each week, as the PREACHER about hereafter does for the one day's labor required of him? Clerical influence, indeed, was regarded as a nuisance by many left-wing observers. Fanny Wright never minced words on the subject; Robert Dale Owen and Evans were not far behind. And, Commons and Curroe to the contrary notwithstanding, anti-church agitation was not confined to these three—though its importance was probably exaggerated by opposition politicians. Among the resolutions passed at a meeting of the Lyme (Connecticut) Farmers and Mechanics Association on March 25, 1830, there was one condemning legislative aid to colleges and churches at a time when the whole people needed it—the plain implication being that those institutions did not benefit the whole people. On March 9, 1833, Evans published in his Working Man's Advocate a letter from a correspondent in Troy, offering him cooperation in his campaign against bad re-

10 Question addressed to the Public School Society of New York by The Working Man's Advocate, Sept. 20, 1834.
11 Ibid., Jan. 5, 1833.
12 The Man, Feb. 18, 1834.
13 See for example the tirade in Fanny's "Third Lecture," Course of Popular Lectures . . . (New York, 1830), 74; Owen's charge that "the Christian party in politics" had ruined the infant school idea (Free Enquirer, Jan. 30, 1830); the sardonic toast to the clergy at a dinner of the Society of Free Enquirers (The Working Man's Advocate, Feb. 6, 1830); the same journal on Dec. 18, 1830; and the material cited in the previous paragraph.
14 Commons (History . . . , I, 272) and Curroe (op. cit., 42) conclude that this agitation was never prominent and ceased after 1830.
15 Reported in the Connecticut Sentinel and reprinted in The Working Man's Advocate, April 17, 1830.
igious and political influences. And, two years later, he reprinted "with pleasure" some comment by the Providence Daily News. When the oppressed try to better their condition, it was noted, their oppressors always cry, "Agitators," "Levellers," "Agrarians." "The ministers of the gospel, so called, generally belong to this class," added the writer, and serve the same end by persuading workingmen that the status quo is what God and Nature intended, that it must therefore be accepted. 16 Seth Luther, meanwhile, was calling attention to the millowners' pious practice of "docking" the workers for the support of a minister—whether of the same denomination or not—and then boasting of their aid to religion; it was a plain violation of the Constitutional right of free worship. 17

These difficulties, however, did not stifle the desire for knowledge. Though, curiously, education was sometimes advertised by left-wingers as a good investment for those who feared social change, 18 it was more generally considered "the only sure foundation of freedom and public safety," the "palladium of our liberties." 19 The way to improve conditions was to press for more and better secular schools; and, no matter how rival plans differed on the proper degree of state control and compulsory attendance, they agreed on the principles of state responsibility and support by regular public taxation. 20

16 The Man, March 9, 1835.
17 Luther, op. cit., 28.
18 See for example the Free Enquirer, Aug. 26, Nov. 28, 1829; The Working Man's Advocate, June 5, 12, 19, Sept. 11, 1830; Frances Wright, Course..., 55-56, 81, 168.
19 Luther, op. cit., 6; Robert Walker, Oration delivered...to the Journeymen Stone Cutters' Association...July 4, 1833 (New York), 15. See also Robert Rantoul, Jr., An Address to the Workingmen of the United States of America printed in the Workingmen's Library, I, No. 2, (1833), 85; and R. D. Owen, Moral Physiology (London, 1841), 19.
20 The state guardianship plan was advocated by the Evans-Owen-Wright minority of the Workingmen's Party of New York. In their opinion, the opposition attacked it as "visionary, exotic, and unnatural" because the plan struck "at the root of the aristocracy." They insisted that without the public provision of rent, board, and clothes for pupils—which they regarded as essential to counteract the economic advantages enjoyed by the aristocracy, public schools would change matters very little. As evidence, they offered the common schools of New England, which had not in their eyes created a democracy. From this point of view, then, they condemned the majority group's plan for ordinary public day schools as a fraud. (The Working Man's Advocate, May 29, 1830.) Currie remarks (p. 18) that the repudiation of the minority report by the committee's majority showed "sound judgment" on the part of the workingmen. Neverthe-
Manual labor schools were regarded with sympathy at first, as being "essentially republican." But a few years' observation produced differences of opinion. In August, 1834, the resolutions of the National Trades' Union convention favored state supported manual labor institutions. On the other hand, there was some suspicion aroused because of the "conspicuous part" played by "the clergy" in the promotion of these schools. And since there seemed to be a class division between "intellectual cultivation" and manual labor training, it was pointed out that workingmen could use some of the former, students the latter.

But there was more involved. If the common and manual labor schools had many shortcomings and the religious question caused much trouble, the field of adult education and the reading matter offered for public consumption also demanded close scrutiny. That "a portion of the periodical press" was "conducted with little regard to moderation, truth, consistency, or even decency"—especially in politics, was of course no radical judgment. It was equally one of the principal worries of conservatives. Nevertheless, the antidote was not to be found by substituting materials of a "proper moral nature"—like, for example, the tracts of the societies for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge. Nor could the press be "reformed," while "fear palsies its force; or, worse, interest perverts it." And there, far below the surface, lay the nub of the question. Fanny Wright warned the thousands who heard her lectures:

So long as the mental and moral instruction of man is left solely in the hands of hired servants of the public—let them be teachers of religion, professors of colleges, authors of books, or editors of journals or periodical publications, dependent upon their literary labours for their daily bread, so long shall we hear but half the truth; and well if we hear so much. Our teachers, political, scientific, moral, or religious; our writers, grave or gay, are compelled to administer to our prejudices and to perpetuate our ignorance. They dare not speak that which, by endangering their popularity, would endanger their fortunes. They have to discover not what is true, but what is palatable.

less, he admits that it "had been rejected without being read." The contradiction is then resolved by assuming that "the workingmen" were "no doubt . . . familiar with Owen's views from his editorials in the Daily Sentinel." In view of the absence of evidence on this crucial point, the opinion seems unduly definite.


22 The Working Man's Advocate, Sept. 18, 1830.


24 "Lecture I," in Course . . . , 33.
The mechanics' contribution was not confined to debates and school propaganda. In many ways, as a few examples will show, they built and built well. With the farmers at Millbury, Massachusetts, they founded in 1826 the first lyceum of the period—there had previously been organizations fundamentally similar. Seven years later, the Danbury Mechanics' Library Association took over the disintegrating local library, revived it, and maintained it until 1856—turning it over then to the new Young Men's Library Association. In Lowell, a "Mechanics' Association" made so fine a name for itself in social and intellectual affairs that the local historian called particular attention to it.25

As a rule, workingmen participated in the activities of the Young Men's Mutual Improvement associations. The benefits were presumably appreciated, but the mental stimulus afforded led to criticism of the associations that cut deeply into contemporary social problems. Evans was probably not speaking for himself alone when he asked why such associations must be confined to males, or to "young mechanics," or to "moral improvement."26

In addition to all these direct efforts on behalf of popular education, there were two indirect contributions arising from specific trades-union objectives. A ten-hour day would provide some leisure for self-culture. And it was, if economically motivated, none the less valuable to education, when craftsmen struggled against the use of "apprentices." For these were really child laborers receiving none of the instruction which, under a mode of production now dying, had been imparted by masters to true apprentices.27

Most of this agitation for the diffusion of useful knowledge was concentrated in the years 1829-31. It then petered out rapidly, and was revived—so far as the common schools are concerned—only when the Catholic controversy flared up in 1840-42.28 One reason for this decline of interest was the progress already made in democ-

26 The Working Man's Advocate, Feb. 20, 1830.
27 Douglas, op. cit., 54-56.
28 Carlton, Economic Influences . . ., 74; The Working Man's Advocate for this period.
ratizing education. Moreover, the appeal had been associated with
independent political action—the programs, particularly, of the
Workingmen's Party of New York (1829-31) and of the New Eng-
land Association (1830-34). The early decline of these movements
was paralleled to some extent by a lapse in the demand for educa-
tion, and the two drives tended to part company. Even the Locofoocos
of 1836-37—who still advocated independent political action
after most workingmen had apparently soured on it—practically
dropped education from their program. Robert Dale Owen and
Frances Wright, who had supplied much of the initial stimulus,
were no longer active in Eastern circles; for several years Miss
Wright was not in the country at all. Evans maintained his interest
in independent politics, but in his thinking education gave way to
preoccupation with free homesteads. John Commerford, the
trades-unionist, went from strikes to free homesteads and then to
independent party politics without excess baggage. The manual
labor schools were being abandoned as impracticable, the lyceum
movement was ebbing, and the urban mutual improvement associa-
tions were under the control of conservative businessmen, publicists,
preachers, and professors. In short, organized education was losing
momentum in many sectors, and making but slow progress in others.

Under these circumstances came the sharp crisis of 1837. Stark
economic necessity set the context for thinking; and the need for a
more democratic educational program, so far as the evidence shows,
hardly entered anyone's head. Education had not averted a wild
boom and catastrophic crash—if, indeed, any workingman or radical
reformer had ever thought it would. And now that the urban masses

29 In October, 1836, all candidates were asked seven questions. The fifth dealt with
"a more extended, equal, and convenient system of public school instruction." But by
the following February, the guiding Committee had its eye on other matters: the
Manifesto read at the Park meeting of February 13, and the resolutions passed, had
not a word on education. See F. Byrdsall, The History of the Loco-Foco or Equal Rights
Party . . . (New York, 1842), 88, 101-103.
30 D.A.B., VI, 201-202; The Working Man's Advocate, 1833-36; The Man, 1834-35.
31 See below.
32 For detailed evidence, see the writer's America's Struggle for Free Schools (Wash-
ington, D. C., 1941), Part Three.
33 There is very little evidence. Most of the poor and humble were probably think-
ing about food and rent and currency. See for instance S. Rezneck, "The Depression
had to live through a depression, they were perhaps more concerned
with tangible and prompt material relief than with the benefits to
be derived from increased opportunity for self-improvement. Even
if education could supply the means of advancement for the energetic
but untrained man, it would take too long before it could become
effective.\footnote{Interest in free public schools did appear to be aroused once more in the Catholic
controversy of 1840-42. The materials of the debate were furnished by the failure of
school facilities in New York City to keep pace with the growth of population. But,
in all likelihood, neither that basic fact nor the real problem of minority rights for the
considerable Irish Catholic community was as important in the public eye as the ques-
tion—who would get the Irish Catholic vote in the current elections, Democrats
or Whigs?}

However necessary education might be to the realization of
“finished independence,” it was at no time considered sufficient in
itself. Skidmore and Commerford found limitations on theoretical
grounds. The former believed that in the press, a literate public,
and the suffrage, lay the basic prerequisites for social change.
Writers need only advance the proper views, and there would be
“no power adequate to stay their adoption.” Opponents might retard
the process, but under American conditions the delay would be
short. It was true, nevertheless, that literacy had long been relatively
widespread in this country, and its failure to secure results called
for explanation. “The chief cause . . . ,” Skidmore suggested, was
“the general, nay, universal want of readers.” Men were creatures
of habit, and clever tyrants had accustomed them to suffering by
adding burdens very gradually. It was only when life took a sharp
turn for the worse that people were provoked into clearing away
some of the fog enveloping their minds. Consequently, though he
would not “over-rate the importance” of the people’s literacy—
their training in the three R’s, the only way out of the vicious circle
was to make use of it and to hammer away at the idea of a periodic
redistribution of property. Material conditions must be improved,
he insisted, before education could be of great value to the people.\footnote{The Rights of Man to Property . . . (New York, 1829), passim, especially 10-19 and
369; correspondence between Skidmore and Alexander Ming, Jr., and R. D. Owen,
in the Free Enquirer, Jan. 23, March 6, 1830, and June 11, 1831.}
strikers. Since this draining off process was to be arranged by opening the public lands to free settlement, those who wished them sold for school support were causing unnecessary trouble. Both ends could be served, he argued, by obligating settlers on free land to pay some sort of tax towards a school fund.36

Debates on the theoretical plane were not, however, very popular. Although "Bombastes Furioso" wrote to The Working Man's Advocate, "We have the experience, but we want the theory,"37 he seems to have been representative of only a few. The more impressive arguments had, rather, an empirical stamp. Thus Seth Luther reminded his audiences that all the schools and lyceums in the land meant nothing if there was no time to make use of them.38 And Evans, in an article on the struggle for the cheap publications market in England, drew his readers' attention to an important aspect of the relation between education and politics:

The fact is, that the Whig Aristocracy took alarm at the rapid and extensive circulation of cheap penny publications of a political character among the Useful Classes in England, well knowing what it would lead to. And they formed the "Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge," thinking to absorb the spare means of the Working Man by presenting him with attractive and interesting publications not political . . . But notwithstanding this immense effort of the Whig Aristocracy, the circulation of Useful Political Knowledge (which is of far more consequence to the people of England at the present time than knowledge of any other kind,) appears to have steadily increased . . .

Again, answering those who chided him for his preoccupation with the Bank and Politics, Evans stated that he valued "Universal Education" as highly as ever but that it could not be obtained until the aristocracy was removed. And that, of course, meant defeating this group politically and financially.39

The financial part of the left-wing program, though interesting, is not significant here. On the other hand, for a consideration of labor's views on education, the implications of its approach to

37 Issue of April 3, 1830.
39 The Man, June 11, Aug. 2, 1834.
politics are quite important. Thus, before concluding with an examination of those implications, we must touch briefly on the approach itself. Those who wanted independent action, through the "workingmen's" parties, proclaimed that the old machines had betrayed the people. They insisted that, owing to the wiles of the aristocracy, the reforms desired could not be obtained except by political action on the part of an independent party. However, the trades-unions, on the whole, concluded from the decline and fall of the first venture of that sort that "playing ball" with professional politicians would be a great deal more effective and comfortable; and they did not encourage independent parties. Between these two extremes, at least one group—the "Workingmen of Charlestown, Mass."—found what they thought a workable compromise: Laborers should have their own independent position and platform; and with that as a basis, should bargain with the major party politicians, bearing in mind always the fundamental differences in interest between their own supporters—the workingmen—and the politicians' supporters—the employers. What the urban masses in general thought we do not know, but most of their votes were registered in the major party columns. Even in Rhode Island, where a narrowly restricted franchise concentrated attention on politics almost to the exclusion of everything else, the reform movement developed apart from and in large measure against both Whigs and Democrats and never seriously attempted to implement its independent action with an independent political organization.

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The program examined reflects the youthful nature of the urban craft unions and the political protest movement that depended heavily on them. The mass of the people wanted certain rights and privileges which in their eyes were the elementary attributes of American citizenship. Some few were more exercised about those rights and privileges than others. These few came from all strata of society—craftsmen, middle class folk, and even of wealth. The status quo was condemned for its meanness, the Whigs for their open service to the aristocracy, and the Democrats for their machine

41 A. M. Mowry, The Dorr War . . . (Providence, 1901).
and the relative moderation of their liberals. The independents ran up their own flag and preached an uncompromising equal rights doctrine. But the details of this doctrine, by and large, differed only in degree from the program offered by the major parties. Thus the professional politicians, bending with the wind, made some concessions and forestalled thereby any serious loss of mass support.

Consequently, the independents failed except as a stimulus. A small party, to survive defeat at the polls, must offer something the big parties do not, something that strikes deep roots in social needs and desires. Circumstances did not yet permit this. Both the independents who would lead, and the mass which would not be led by them, were bound by the level of production. The population had not been differentiated enough to permit a true working class to emerge. For the most part, the organized journeymen who were the backbone of the protest movement owned their tools and worked in small shops. Those who did not own their tools, the “operatives” in the textile mills, were close to the land—from which a majority of them had come—and were practically unorganized. Nor, despite the larger scale of production associated with the mills, was there yet any concentration of a labor force comparable to that which became familiar a generation later. The leadership of the protest movement, moreover, was composed largely of non-labor elements—lawyers, doctors, professional politicians, editors, philanthropists. It was therefore unlikely that any program would appear that set forth something basically different—a release beyond the limits of contemporary property relationships. And if it had, it would have found no objective social basis—let alone a favorable subjective response.

Within the same nexus, necessarily, fell the agitation for popular education. Like the other reform movements of the day—antislavery agitation, temperance, peace, women's rights—its center of gravity was the fulfillment of promises regarded as implicit in the accepted order.) Like them also, it created considerable interest.

42 Stephen Simpson, son of a Philadelphia bank official, and candidate for Congress in 1830 on the workingmen's ticket, came very close to the Marxist concept of surplus value. D.A.B., XVII, 183-84; The Workingman's Manual (Phila., 1831), 10-11, 14-16. Nevertheless, he traced society's troubles basically to "ignorance and inferiority of mind," since ignorance was the "invariable cause" of poverty; and regarded legislative reform as the solution for social problems. (Manual, 210-11, 48.)
There is no doubt but that, as Curoe correctly concludes, the independent political leaders and the trades-unions contributed substantially to that atmosphere. How far the surface froth indicated real stirring down below is another matter. The evidence is so fragmentary that the story of whatever "stirring down below" there was can barely be pieced together even in outline. At any rate, the direct demand for education was of secondary importance.

Much more significant was the movement's success as a stimulus. The rise of the common man gave the whole era a tone that made the atmosphere crackle. One sharp struggle followed another—over the Bank, tariffs and nullification, Catholicism, Abolitionism, speculation, job control, and the standard of living. Perhaps most important, the years 1834-37 were a high point in trades-union history. These circumstances produced a state of severe social tension. Amongst the intellectual and professional leaders of the Northeast, who had throughout Jackson's administrations been fulminating against "majority rule" and "universal" (white manhood) suffrage, it now became fashionable to attack the theoretical bases of democracy as it was then understood. They denounced the "right of instruction" of a representative by his constituents, the idea of equality, the social compact, and the right of revolution. Wary of education unless religion accompanied it, they yielded under the pressure of events to the educators' argument that there was no time to waste: the common school program of the 3 R's and the Bible would quiet the militancy of the masses.

That education should serve as a means of social control was the design, apparently, of those who most vigorously promoted it at the time of the "Revival" (1837)—the "Right" rather than the "Left." In this strategy they were much influenced by the example of the British Whigs and liberal churchmen who, led by Lord Brougham and the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, had for several years been debating with the Tories and High Churchmen on the same issue. The latter group warned that the greater danger lay in distributing the tools of learning to the populace before control of its will had been secured. Subversive use might be made of these tools. Their opponents retorted that the greater danger arose, on the contrary, from the delay in the whole process occa-

sioned by sectarian competition over the "proper" interpretation of the Scriptures and the mass tendencies toward materialism and atheism. Outright ignorance had the more subversive potentialities. This debate was of course a product of the industrial revolution. The Baconian aphorism, "Knowledge is Power," had been framed in the seventeenth century in the struggle of the *bourgeoisie* against feudalism. Its significance was considerably altered by the subsequent appearance of the factory system and the proletariat. A spectre haunted Europe; education and religion were to exorcise it.

The educationists in this country won a far greater victory over the "religionists" than did their English friends. Yet, the extent to which they accomplished their larger social purpose is an open question. As the nation expanded and industry grew, the labor movement rose again and again, led sometimes by men brought up in our public schools and at other times by men with quite different backgrounds. In the evolution of capital-labor relations, therefore, these schools have played a part. How weighty a part we do not know. And to isolate one factor from its matrix is extremely difficult and often unsound. There can be little doubt, however, that studies calculated to assay the role of the common or public school in industrial society would prove valuable as well as interesting.44

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44 For details of the subjects touched on in the concluding section, see the writer's book, referred to above (note 32).