

THE WISCONSIN CONTINUATION SCHOOLS

H. E. MILES

President, Wisconsin State Board of Industrial Education, Racine, Wisconsin

In considering a new and great social movement we must first find and judge the concepts upon which it is predicated, and then measure the accomplishment by these concepts. For such a movement implies the acceptance of new standards, or a revaluation of old standards with a new emphasis upon their relative importance.

I have reason to think that it was in some such way that gentlemen who had under advisement the modification of the school system of the second city in the world, a system now costing \$40,000,000.00 per year, visited the Milwaukee Continuation Schools in July, 1914, questioned the children, canvassed the situation with the teachers, with employers and representatives of labor, and expressed themselves as follows:

Said Professor Henry Suzzallo, chair of sociology, Columbia University:

Two things struck me with reference to your situation: (1) Your fundamental laws had not hampered you in any way, neither had any preconceived notion of your own. (2) You are doing for every class of people that come to you what they most need, and doing it on a frankly experimental policy which admits the gross adjustment in many cases, but leaves the way open to the determination to refine that adjustment from day to day.

As an educator approaching the whole problem from the standpoint of sociology, I distinctly approve of your whole series of policies.

Said Mr. Arthur Dean, New York state director of vocational education:

The continuation school is a reality. I am tremendously impressed with the progress it has made. It is saving the children from the dead ends of industry. It is making education a continuous process in that there is and need be no set period for leaving school.

It is an absurd idea to expect that just because a child is fourteen he is going to stop going to school and learning, and go on a job to earn and not

learn. I see into that future when everyone, old and young, will go to school, the little ones for the whole day, the older ones for a part of the day or night.

This continuation school is a regular educational, life-saving device for those who work and those who employ.

The demand that a minimum wage shall be paid means that thousands must earn what they are paid, but this efficiency can never be taught by preaching, it must be the result of instruction.

If there is anyone in this state who does not believe in the continuation work, let him talk with the little immatured girls who go to this school.

Said Mr. William G. Wilcox, of the Board of Education, New York City:

I am impressed with the simplicity and economy of the system, and the rational and effective basis it affords for mutual benefit and co-operation between employers and employees. Altogether, it seems to me more adapted to the immediate needs of New York than anything which I saw during our trip.

These expressions are typical. They are not mere opinions, but, like the diagnosis of the physician, they are based on broad and expert knowledge of fundamentals.

THE OLD CONCEPTION

Says Mr. Howell Cheney, in the December *Elementary School Journal*: "The industrial education problem had, previous to 1911 [the enactment of the Wisconsin statute] been largely a work of promoting an idea," through the establishment of all-day trade schools which "were realized to be tentative experiments" by many of their promoters. In the thirty years of effort, from 1880 to 1910, with 30,000,000 child workers entering the occupations meantime, and other millions of older workers, all educationally neglected, there were only about thirteen of these trade schools established, with a regular attendance all told of about 2,000 students, with a few thousand more in night schools which were mostly without vocational content worth while.

Meantime, more than half of all the children in America were leaving school, as they still are, by the end of the sixth grade, and stumbling into industry or into the streets, purblind, unaided, undirected by the educational authorities. The American public school, rightly said by President Eliot to be one of America's five great contributions to civilization, had brought substantially all

of the children to the end of the fifth and sixth grades with some knowledge of the three R's. The country was just beginning to see that a further step is necessary for those who leave school at this point, and that it is as necessary to train each working child to an occupation as to train, at great expense, a favored few for the professions.

By way of illustration, it is said in the *Journal*, p. 202, that Connecticut "instead of accepting failure" in her elementary schools (as Wisconsin is assumed to have done), assured justice to her child workers educationally by refusing employment permits unless the child "had a grasp of the three R's, as expressed by an ability to read intelligently, write legibly, and to perform the simple operations in numbers, including decimal fractions." Was this Connecticut's conception of duty fulfilled to her child workers, her adult citizens of tomorrow, and did other states agree with her? Her streets contain substantially as many little semi-ignorant, hapless, industrial waifs as Wisconsin's did. Children who can only read and write do not read and write well. Wisconsin predicated failure upon that "definite standard" claimed above for other states. She begins with her working people, as such, where other states leave off. Better stated, Wisconsin did not "accept failure" at all; she merely progressed.

Information indicates that under the shadow of Yale University, 50 per cent of the children leave school ill prepared to use effectively the three R's, and without further help to advance by their use or otherwise in the vocations and in citizenship, and so do 65 per cent in the mill towns of Massachusetts, and majorities almost everywhere. The school people in New Haven, Boston, and elsewhere have come to see, with their Wisconsin fellows, the imperative need of the further extension of education for these youngsters, and their intelligent induction into industry by the co-operative effort of teachers, employers, and parents.

It seems inconceivable to many that, after the failure of the trade school to care for the workers generally, anyone should fail to rejoice in the happy development of continuation schools in Wisconsin, into which substantially every working child in cities of over 5,000 population is brought. Nor should her happiness be

misjudged as pride, when she evidently has only adapted and used the experience of centuries in North Continental Europe.

The article which appeared in the *Journal* was written in January, 1914, when the concept of 1911 had not generally been replaced by the new demand that every child shall be made intelligent, efficient, and at home in a well-chosen occupation so far as may be. I had one bitter proof of this when I pleaded with a noted educator, who helped make the condemnatory "expert investigations" referred to in the *Journal* and is partly responsible for the statements there made. This official knew that there were some 50,000 child workers in his own state suffering for this education. His smile hurt as much as his words, as he said concerning them: "Oh! we must always have our hewers of wood and drawers of water"—a concept thousands of years old.

Mr. Cheney is a man of the rarest parts, an economist, a sociologist, and by profession a business man. It is with much regret that I endeavor to correct the exceedingly erroneous impression of the Wisconsin system and my statements concerning it that his article is likely to give. I consider it, however, a duty, as he has written me, to attempt to make fair correction, not for Wisconsin, certainly not for myself, but that the last child in industry may the more quickly come to his rights educationally, and that no one because of the article mentioned may conclude that one method is a mistake which is in fact easy, inexpensive, and universally applicable.

Mr. Cheney summarizes what he understands to be the claims made for the Wisconsin system in thirteen counts, based upon an article by myself in the *World's Work*, of October 1913. One would think that a criticism of those claims would be addressed to the thirteen counts, thus carefully set forth, but no, *mirabile dictu!* the counts are restated with material deflection in five other counts, followed by the words, "Stated as boldly as above, these claims would doubtless now seem as exaggerated to their authors as they here appear." This is evidence that the charges are in part inferential only. They are indeed so "boldly exaggerated" as to appear revolting, but if they were worth publishing, so is their correction.

They are:

MR. MILES'S STATEMENT (p. 668)

The Wisconsin schools were operated in 1912-13 at a yearly cost per pupil of less than half that of the common schools, the expense varying in proportion to the size of the community and the number of pupils—from \$7.00 to \$15.00 a year for every pupil. The average for the entire state for the year was \$10.00 per pupil.

MR. CHENEY'S STATEMENT OF WHAT MR. MILES SAID

1. That a good vocational education could be given for \$10.00 a year.¹

Herein is apparently the crux of what may be called the ill feeling and blind complaint against the *World's Work* article. The promoters of vocational education the country over were dominated by the thought of all-day trade schools and trade high schools, with a cost in the former of from \$171.50 per pupil per year, as named by Mr. Cheney, up to \$250.00; and \$100.00 per pupil per year in the vocational high schools, including 5 per cent for interest and maintenance of plant. The Wisconsin figure is extremely significant. It was first announced by her director of vocational schools.² As said by the state superintendent of schools in Pennsylvania, the all-day method would bankrupt any state. It is a choice, as concerns at least 80 per cent of the million children who now leave school at the end of the sixth grade, whether they shall have no further consideration; or secondly, whether they shall be taken into continuation schools at a cost of \$10.00 per year or thereabouts for the first few years, after which we may be able to spend more; or thirdly, whether they shall be taken into all-day schools at not less than \$100.00 per pupil per year, plus a loss in the latter case of about \$150.00 in wages and family income per child now working.

¹ Publishers write headlines. I fancy they know how. One preceded the *World's Work* article and read "Good Vocational Teaching for \$10.00 a Year." As Mr. Cheney knew I had no knowledge of this headline, I assume he did not refer to that nor misquote it in his article.

² On October 26, 1914. He makes a similar statement for the next year: "In very general terms the per capita cost for the year 1913-14 was \$11.00 and a considerable portion of this was for maintenance and miscellaneous expenditure."

That is \$10.00 versus \$250.00.¹ The first alternative means a wretched, unendurable loss in human values, in happiness, in moral and physical worth. The second means about \$10,000,000.00 in school expenditure. The third means \$100,000,000.00 in expenditure, plus \$150,000,000.00, more or less, in loss of wages. All these figures are to be doubled if we include the fourteenth and fifteenth years, and quadrupled if we add the sixteenth and seventeenth, as we must ultimately for many children. Furthermore, continuation schools must be thoroughly developed in any event for as many of the thirty-odd millions of older workers as will avail themselves of these schools.

New York City wants to know what it will cost to train her 97,000 fourteen- and fifteen-year-old industrial waifs. Answer: multiply \$10.00² by this number = \$970,000.00. This figure has been arrived at approximately by some of her own experts, by other methods. Even this small amount will strain her, and the proportional amount is deterring today many other municipalities. The other alternative, \$9,700,000.00, plus about \$14,000,000.00 wage loss (or any other estimated loss), is palpably impossible.

Wisconsin people never talk cost inside the state. They rest on the knowledge that the cost is minimum, joyously met, and bounteously repaid; however, those who hold to the old conceptions have to talk cost and have to neglect their youth until they get an acceptable cost. Philadelphia must figure for her 30,000, and Chicago for the 37,000, which Mr. Ayres calls a conservative estimate, based upon the federal census.

The assumption by the trade-school man that it is implied that this \$10.00 gives in value or in number of hours what the trade school does, or any other fixed quantity per child, is gratuitous and unfounded. It is a statement of financial fact only, a solution of the money question. Some children come for a very short time because they get their permits just before vacation, or just before they are sixteen. Others come for longer than the maximum statute requirement. No law can be drawn reasonably that will cause permits to be so issued that each child will be in school for

¹ I thought of making the jar less by saying "less than \$15.00" per year; but the contrast would have been about the same, so I stated the fact.

even a six months' period before he is sixteen. Mothers make birthdays not statutes.

Mr. Cheney estimates forty hours' average yearly attendance in 1913-14. I do not know. I do know that thousands of children could not be brought in that first year with legal promptness. The directors did not rent space in anticipation fast enough, etc. The average was one hundred hours for 1913-14, being the second year.

Moreover, the opening of a new school to care for fourteen- and fifteen-year-old children finds necessarily that the majority of these children have been neglected for a considerable time: fully one-fourth are already fifteen and one-half years old, and one-eighth are fifteen and three-quarters. Quality cannot be estimated by averages that year. In the second year, they were evidently caught immediately upon leaving school. This partly accounts for the increase in average attendance from forty hours to one hundred. Nor can quality be measured by a quantitative test.

The first year 12,000 persons were cared for, all told; the second year, 27,000; and an estimate of 35,000 for the third year was made at a legislative hearing recently—I know not with what accuracy. The average hours of attendance should be greatly increased this year, for many are coming four hours or more every day under the statutory requirement that children temporarily unemployed shall so attend. This makes unemployment a blessing instead of a curse.

2. "That the content of this training should not be the practice but the theory and art of a trade." I know of no man in Wisconsin who would subscribe to this statement, which is here ascribed to me. It is inferred from the fact that Wisconsin has emphasized the extent to which the practice of a trade may be and is acquired in the shop. She does not teach much of the practice in night school to men who have been practicing in shops all day. She does, however, insist that practice and theory must go together. Said Dean Schneider, "I have \$15,000,000.00 of machinery in my school," meaning in the shops in which his students work. So has Wisconsin. In addition, her schoolrooms contain much machinery, and more is added right along. The permit children are thoroughly

familiar with the use of fundamental tools, if not expert. Milwaukee teaches twenty trades to men,¹ and as many of them as she well can to permit pupils. She has in one room six or eight power generators. She is publicly pledged to teach any trade to any twelve persons who will apply. Other towns seek to approach this accomplishment, some of them quite ambitiously. It is to be assumed that some schools may be far from admirable in this respect. I speak in terms of the purpose and the measurable accomplishment of the movement.

3. "That good teachers could be found in abundance of this content in the shops." It seems to be generally accepted in Boston, New Haven, Wisconsin, and elsewhere, that for the best technical instruction of the average worker it is best to take carefully picked foremen and workers, men and women, from the millions who are now working in the shops of the country, and either give them some ninety days of instruction in pedagogy before they enter the schools or teach them in connection with their school work. Recently there were fifteen picked mechanics so trained in night classes in Pratt Institute, waiting for employment as teachers. Wisconsin has classes for such mechanics occasionally in the School of Education, University of Wisconsin, in the Milwaukee branch of the University Extension, and is now preparing a summer course at Stout Institute for as many as will come. It is as possible to get hundreds of these teachers as to get a dozen. It only takes a longer and a wider search. There is no reason for waiting on this score. Delight at finding rarely good teachers offsets disappointments, and a free weeding-out brings satisfaction. Nor do we realize the hunger and the ignorance of vast numbers of the pupils, and the ease with which that hunger can be satisfied by an average ability, trained in the occupation taught. Some of these children have never owned a jack-knife or used hammer or saw. It doesn't take a genius to make the world look different to them and better, but

¹ Bakery, bookkeeping, carpentry, cabinet-making, concrete work, drafting, electrical work, mechanical trades, masonry, painting, pattern-making, printing, plumbing, power-plant work, sheet-metal work, steam-fitting, stenography, salesmanship, tinsmithing, the chauffer's trade, the drug business.

it does need someone who is very experienced with simple tools and can instruct simply.

Said Mr. R. L. Cooley, director of the Milwaukee schools, somewhat impatiently, "There ought to be a law passed that no one should speak of these schools until he has seen a thousand of these children gathered together; then there would be nothing to talk about."

It is surprising how many of these new teachers are found in the factories, who have risen high in college or technical school, or have even taught school.

4. "That the leaven of this new education would react upon and revolutionize our common-school systems." It is so reacting. The continuation school may be termed a laboratory for the common school. Courses and methods developed in the former are carried into the latter. A certain type of common-school pupil is allowed part time in the continuation school. Pupils who have rejected the common school are led back to it through the continuation school. It is fair to anticipate that in three or five years more the pedagogy and philosophy of the common school and the workaday vital experiences of the continuation school will bring about changes that philosophers cannot dream of, simple, fundamental, democratic. The 150 superintendents and teachers in charge of these schools had some thought of these reactions when they "unanimously and enthusiastically" declared that the Wisconsin or dual system is advantageous to both kinds of schools.

5. This is the broadside: "That, finally, Wisconsin had a vision which would abolish the blind-alley jobs, lead idle children away from the vices of the street, remove the sting of illiteracy, and give to every person in Wisconsin, from children to gray-haired men and women, 'the special training that he or she needs.'" Think of "abolishing jobs with a vision!" My statement was, "We are saving boys and girls from blind-alley jobs through compulsory attendance at our continuation schools," and that with these schools opened everywhere "there will be no idle children learning the vices of the streets." Says the president of the Racine Board, "There were 150 idle boys on our streets three years ago. There are none now." Says Judge Smeeding of Racine's

Juvenile Court, "We have almost no trouble with boys and girls in this court who are enrolled in your school. In the majority of instances, a delinquent boy or girl who can be induced to enrol in the industrial school ceases almost immediately his or her career of waywardness, and is greatly benefited."¹ This is the natural and general experience. In the present period of extreme unemployment, there are 130 boys and 39 girls in the all-day industrial school in Racine—as many as in the average all-day trade school of the country. Similar testimony comes from many cities. I have seen a ball game abandoned Saturday afternoon while all the youngsters were staring through the school windows at their luckier companions, street boys who were learning trades.

The educational expert of the Chicago Association of Commerce tells me that labor permits pass for twenty-five cents current at "craps" in the Chicago alleys. A permit once secured, the child is lost. A Wisconsin permit goes to the employer only and is returned by him to the authorities the moment the child quits. The child then attends the all-day school.

Wisconsin does not give to every person the training he needs. She offers it, and gives to those who will receive, from the simple fractions, that some folk think it "unvocational" to teach industrial workers, up to university courses through the Extension Division of the State University by correspondence and by traveling teachers, which Division, by the way, helps the continuation work by teaching more than fifty common trades.

The adaptability and flexibility of the continuation school is invaluable; witness classes for janitors of churches and school-houses; of Spanish for the workaday correspondents and stenographers who handle the business of Racine factories with South America; in leather work, including cobbling, in another city; in delivery work, including the care of horses; in dietaries at Wasau for poor wives unused to American markets, not unaccustomed to meals of potatoes and bread only, and to more varied but improperly prepared food; and, of course, the usual trades in wood and metal, electricity, home-making, etc., as the basis of the larger activities.

¹ Says the truancy officer in Milwaukee, Mr. Pestalozzi: "There are today 3,600 children in average attendance in our continuation schools. Without these schools my department would be in touch with less than 50 of these children. The rest would escape us."

It is insistently stated that Wisconsin seeks to raise the age limit to sixteen. Quite the contrary, except as she adds the five-hours-per-week continuation school from fourteen to sixteen. She is better satisfied than before in letting children leave the common schools at fourteen with the educational qualification required by Connecticut and other states upon the child's making a thoroughly good case before a carefully chosen permit officer, the place of employment being fully considered, and upon the new and further condition that the employer excuse the child until sixteen years of age for a half-day's vocational schooling per week, and that the child return without fail to the all-day school immediately upon leaving employment. Two years' experience finds this to be easy, practical, and effective. Simple, isn't it? How much and how intelligently does a state care for her children which fails to do as much as this? ¹

Raising the age limit and prevocationalizing in six trades settle nothing. Whenever children leave school they must be inducted into 47 trades and trained on and on so far as they wish through higher and higher continuation schools; and trained into new trades as old ones disappear, or are modified.

PER HOUR COST

No one can figure better or more considerably than the author of the *Journal's* article, but even he must understand the factors. The "\$10.00 per child" includes rent, equipment, machinery, partitions, etc., purchased that year. This makes his figures entirely meaningless, and further justifies an expression of regret that the article was written without the author's ever seeing the schools, and published eleven months after it was written, evidence accumulating meantime that makes its appearance now an anachronism.

The costs are the lowest possible until the directors can divert their attention from larger considerations to a saving of relatively very petty amounts. Teachers are paid from \$800.00 to \$1,300.00,

¹ A bill is before the Connecticut legislature establishing continuation schools with compulsory attendance, doubtless with the approval of her educators. Many states are about to legislate to this effect.

thereby insuring quality so far as may be (some get less, some get \$2,000.00). They work eight hours a day, five days in the week, from eight months a year to eleven in Milwaukee. With a class of twenty, and a \$1,200.00 salary, the instruction would be under five cents an hour. Rent is minimum, in loft buildings, over stores, with factory conditions, every foot of space used for instruction except the director's office. Nothing for playgrounds, gymnasium, auditorium, great halls, or display. Equipment is simple, including machinery. There is none of the vocational high-school attempt to gratify an expanding imagination or rival a great industry, which is said by some school officers in a great city to have caused many of its children to "dislike their own homes, and hate work"—only the necessary machines simply installed.

Percentages deceive. In one city, the permit cost last November was twice the expected amount because half the children lost their jobs and went over into the all-day school, but the percentage translated into net figures was inconsiderable.

In Milwaukee, two splendid instructors, getting \$2,000.00 each, both experienced in manufacturing, one formerly professor in a college of engineering, are, with two assistants, teaching 400 select, adult students, two nights a week, and providing them with two other nights of hard work at home. Such instruction keeps the average costs low, quality remaining high. So of the cost of instruction of thirty druggists' clerks in compounding and analysis by the proprietor of a drug-store who is a member of the State Pharmaceutical Board, and by a graduate chemist who is superintendent of a drug-manufacturing company.

The \$2,000.00 men follow in a way the correspondence method, but with verbal lessons and personal contact instead of mail. Their value is somewhat indicated by the fact that 2,000 Milwaukee workers, mostly of high quality, have been buying such instruction by mail only, from one correspondence school for about \$80,000.00 a year. These figures are low compared to some cities. In the correspondence courses, most pupils drop out soon. In the Milwaukee course the attendance is 85 per cent in the fifth month and many have petitioned that the course go on through the summer. Again we see how fatally ignorant we have all been of

the opportunities and needs of these new schools. By way of cost contrast, another course could be named with costs of from \$1.00 to \$5.00 an hour, because it is being developed in a field that is new, with startling evidence of its necessity.

“ONLY FIVE HOURS A WEEK”

We shall honor ourselves when we realize that these five hours spent in instruction related and essential to the work of the other forty-three hours in employment makes in a way forty-eight hours of schooling. “These are not the children I sent you,” said a department-store manager of 63 little cash and bundle girls; “you have made them over.” “I can tell a boy in my factory who has been six months in continuation school, and I can distinguish from him a boy who has been twelve months,” says Mr. Schultz, of the State Board. A few minutes’ time has compassed many of life’s great lessons. Let us concentrate our efforts upon the educational possibilities of school and employment tied together and not think of them as disassociated. The latter is as unfair as to over-emphasize the thoughtful estimate of Dr. Claxton, of the federal Bureau of Education, that the children in the elementary schools are affirmatively, actively occupied in recitation and study only about two hours a day or ten hours a week, and in the high schools fifteen hours a week, with, we may add, almost no correlation with the hours out of school.

“MAKING GOOD THE FAULTS OF THE COMMON-SCHOOL SYSTEM”

Might we not better say completing the work of the common schools by this new agency? Have not the common schools done their best up to the sixth grade, escaped fault at least, and do not the continuation schools merely continue in necessary and essential respects the equivalent of the seventh and higher grades? Very largely so, I believe.

APPRENTICESHIP

This is another and collateral movement which it has been impossible apparently even to attempt to develop seriously until now. Under supervision just established and hearty co-operation, the wisdom of the legislation is more than apparent. But the story is too long for this place.

THE CONDEMNATORY EXAMINATIONS

It would seem that a revision of those findings is evidenced in the later findings noted at the beginning of this article, and in the statement by one of the earlier critics to a Milwaukee official recently, after one or two later visits to the city, that Milwaukee is doing the biggest thing in the country, and another, "Your schools are simply great." A third spoke to like effect.

It would be pleasanter to quote the first gentleman in milder terms, but it is necessary to quote as we may as against an earlier and different judgment. So altogether splendid is the work of the Boardman Apprentice School in New Haven, Miss Marshall's School in New York, and many others, that it grieves one to make comparisons. It is only right to measure the Wisconsin movement in terms of its advantage to the great body of the working people, and in that respect it is necessary.

"THE SCHOOLMASTER'S CONTROL"—AND OPPORTUNITY

May we not find an element of satisfaction in the oft-repeated declaration that the schoolmasters are more in control than ever under the new dual or associate board? What better people could be in control? Witness Mr. Glynn and Miss Marshall, for instance. But the point is that the work is, and has to be, so satisfactory to the citizenship at large, to the industries that are brought into the work by compulsion of law, and to the representatives of labor, that each of these other elements may and do know that they are equally and as satisfactorily in control. All this simply indicates that the partnership is perfect. No element is subordinated. No essential element can feel that it is relegated to a mere tiptoeing, inferior, advisory capacity.

Says Mr. R. L. Cooley, director of the Milwaukee continuation schools, voicing the Wisconsin experience:

The provision of the law, making the city superintendent of schools a member of the local Board of Industrial Education has added greatly to the strength and importance of his position in the community and has given the superintendent a new leverage with which to make his ability and personality felt in matters of education. He is usually the executive member of the Industrial Board in fact. His position is established by law and is one which gives him a clearly defined independence of action. He speaks both as a

member of the Board and as an expert on matters of education as questions arise, and in view of the composition of the Board is the element in the mortar which makes for compatibility as occasions require. The superintendent in this position is practically emancipated from many of the restrictions which kill his enthusiasm and bind his hands in his usual status.

Long may our schoolmasters, in the language of our state superintendent, "enthusiastically and unanimously" approve of this plan which makes them men of affairs, a new and big element in the day's work, outside the formal school as well as inside. It is equally fortunate and necessary that men of affairs and working people are joining in an educational development within their understanding and their ability to serve.

The statements in the *World's Work* are now simple and commonplace. Read with a recollection of the shock they gave to those who were grounded in the old conception and effort, they afford an interesting study in psychology.