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SCHOLARSHIPS FOR CHILDREN

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SCHOLARSHIPS FOR CHILDREN

THE VALUE AND PURPOSE OF SCHOOL SCHOLARSHIPS.

Scholarships for school children are increasingly recognized as a means by which the community can give its children a fair chance. The public schools are for all children; but often children are unable to attend them because of financial pressure at home. Scholarships are the result of common effort to give children a square deal. They make it possible to keep in school exceptionally bright children who would like to continue their education but without financial aid would have to earn their livelihood; they offer an immediate, practicable plan for helping the situation described by the economist Alfred Marshall, who points out that "A large proportion of genius is lost to society because it is born among the children of the poor where it perishes for want of opportunity."

Most children who must leave school for work at the age of 14, whether they are gifted or ungifted, are doomed to perform unskilled labor which offers little opportunity for development and slight prospect of increased wages. These children, already handicapped by poverty, are further handicapped by lack of training when they enter the labor world. It is the responsibility of the individual community to minimize these handicaps, until it becomes generally recognized that a child is not fit to take his fortune in his own hands at 14, and until all children up to 16, or better, 18 years of age, are permitted to enjoy that equality of opportunity for which our public schools stand. The only real solution of the problem lies in higher incomes, sufficient in every case to meet family needs. Scholarships for children are merely a palliative measure to be offered only until all parents are financially able to educate their children.

The scholarship plan has been developed in a number of cities. A certain sum of money is given to the child at the end of each week or month to take the place, in part at least, of the money he would earn if he were working.

The purpose of such scholarships is to enable children whose parents can not afford to send them to school after they become of legal working age to secure better preparation for their future employment than they otherwise could, in order that they may develop into more efficient workers and more useful citizens.

The giving of scholarships in colleges and universities to young men and women who could not continue their education without such assistance has long been favored and practised. It is much more important that scholarships should be given to elementary school children, for they are less able to meet the demands of the world than men and women who are ready for college.

College scholarships are given in recognition of unusual merit. Scholarships to elementary school children should be awarded on the same basis; they should be granted to children who have done well in school and who will profit by further education.

A scholarship given to a child of 14 is not charity and should not be looked upon as such. It is an investment which increases in value as the boy or girl reaches adult age and becomes a trained and efficient worker.

SCHOLARSHIPS IN SCOTLAND AND ENGLAND.

So far, scholarship funds in this country have been made up of private contributions and have been privately administered. Scotland, however, has for some years been giving scholarships or bursaries from public funds to keep in school children whose parents have not sufficient means to educate them beyond a certain age.

England is recommending that educational authorities bestow scholarships from the public funds upon children whose parents can not afford to keep them in school. In the report of the Departmental Committee on Juvenile Education in Relation to Employment after the War, Mr. J. H. Reynolds, Director of Higher Education, Manchester, states: "There is a large amount of talent among the poorer classes which should be made use of for the sake of the Nation." He would, therefore, establish in all areas a system of free maintenance scholarships for children in elementary schools who at 11 or 12 show strong evidence of unusual capacity. These scholarships would make it possible for them to pursue a course of secondary education, up to 16 at least, and would provide facilities in suitable cases for more advanced training. In special cases, an additional grant would be given in lieu of earnings to children over 14. The selection of the children would be made by the teacher.

Mr. Sidney Webb, in discussing the problems of juvenile employment after the war, says: "Any young person under 18 for whom the Labor Exchange and the Advisory Committee can not find a situation and whose earnings are needed will be given a bursary awarded and paid by the educational authority in order that he may attend school." This form of provision for education of young persons after the war is of pressing importance. At present such bursaries are not in the mind of educational authorities. What seems desirable is

(1) their prompt legislation if this is required; (2) a circular suggesting them to education authorities for adoption after the war if unemployment occurs; (3) a grant in aid equal to 75 per cent of their cost.

SUGGESTIONS FOR ESTABLISHING SCHOLARSHIP FUNDS.

Any community wishing to inaugurate scholarships should begin by appointing a committee representing schools, women's clubs, employers, social workers, and others interested in child welfare. The duties of this committee would be:

1. To raise money for scholarships.
2. To administer the scholarship fund.
3. To hold meetings to interest people in the scholarship work.

The work at first can be done entirely by volunteers. As the work develops, a paid worker will probably be needed.

ADMINISTRATION OF SCHOLARSHIPS.

The method of administering scholarship funds is very important. The work should be done in close cooperation with the schools. The superintendent of schools might be able to provide an office in one of the school buildings from which the funds could be administered and where the applicants for scholarships could be interviewed by the person in charge of the work. In one city where the scholarship work is financed by a private organization and is administered from an office in a public school, it has been found that parents who ordinarily refuse to accept any financial assistance are glad to secure scholarships for their children because these are given through the school and do not come directly from a private organization or an individual.

The teachers should be asked to refer to the committee any exceptionally bright child who is leaving school because his earnings are needed at home. Before making a decision in any individual case as to the need for assistance, a thorough investigation should be made by a person experienced in this kind of work. This investigation would include the following:

1. A visit to the home to find out whether the child's earnings are needed and whether the parents are willing to have the child continue in school if a scholarship is provided. The amount of the scholarship would depend upon the family income. The average scholarship in most cities usually amounts to \$3 a week.

2. A visit to the school to find out from the teacher whether the child has done good work in school and along what line his ability seems to lie. Scholarships should be given to children of promise and to children who are physically handicapped and need special training in order to become independent wage earners.

3. An interview with the child to find out whether he is really ambitious to continue his schooling and what plans he has for the future.

A record card should be kept for each child who applies for a scholarship, recording all information concerning the child, the home, and the child's progress in school. All later interviews with the child should be noted on this card and the reports of his progress in school recorded.

The scholarship money should be sent to the child at the end of each week or month, whichever seems more desirable. In return, the child should report regularly at the office of the scholarship committee with his school report card.

AN INSTANCE OF CITY SCHOLARSHIP ADMINISTRATION.

In one city where the scholarship work is carried on successfully the following methods are used:

Schools, settlements, and social agencies refer children to the scholarship committee. In each case the home is visited, the conditions noted, and a complete social history of the home obtained. The school is visited and the child's aptitudes, interests, and ability are talked over with the teacher. Most important of all is the evidence given by the applicant in a sympathetic talk with him.

After ascertaining all that can be learned about the child, the facts are presented to the scholarship committee, which decides whether or not a scholarship shall be given.

Each child who is granted a scholarship reports at stated intervals to the person in charge. Together they talk over the child's work in school—the studies that are particularly difficult and those that are most enjoyed. The child's physical condition is watched and his physical defects corrected. Frequent visits to the home and school are necessary to insure proper supervision, for it must be remembered that these boys and girls come from homes where financial pressure is constant and reacts upon the child's school work. He sometimes becomes discouraged and is occasionally tempted to leave school for a temporary financial advantage. An effort is made to steer the child into the school where he will secure the training that will best fit him for his future work. After he has received that training he is placed in a position where he can make use of it, and where he will have an opportunity to advance.

WAGES, EDUCATION, AND SCHOLARSHIPS.

One of the cities where scholarships are given compared the wages of 51 children who left school at 14 to go to work with the wages of the same number of children who were given scholarships and had two additional years of training. The following table shows that

after three years of wage earning the average wage of the child who stayed in school until he was 16 was two and one-third times that of the child who left school at 14 years of age:

Time at work.	Average weekly wage of children who left school at 14.	Average weekly wage of children who remained in school until 16.
6 months or less.....	\$4. 30	\$6. 85
1 year.....	5. 10	9. 50
2 years.....	5. 85	10. 24
3 years.....	6. 85	16. 00

Thus the scholarship experiments have shown that education through the 16th or 18th year really pays. By giving scholarships to children, the community is training them to fill the better paid positions that require some skill and is thereby raising industrial standards with benefit to the children, to industry, and to the Nation.

By interesting large numbers of persons in scholarship work the public is stimulated to a realization of the need for more ample protection and help to children at the bottom rung in order that all children may be able to avail themselves of the existing opportunities for education and training.

The Children's Bureau will, upon request, put the committees in correspondence with the persons conducting scholarship work in the United States.

The Child Welfare Committees have an opportunity to develop scholarship work in every community. One city has reported that the Child Welfare Committee of the Council of National Defense has already begun to give scholarships to unusually bright children to permit them to remain in school. In this city last year 15 such scholarships were awarded. Another city reports that a Child Conservation Scholarship Fund has been secured through the Council of National Defense. During the first five months after the institution of this fund 19 children were given scholarships and returned to school.

There are 281,000 schoolhouses in the United States. A committee will be appointed in connection with the Back-to-School Drive for each schoolhouse. If each committee will provide a scholarship to keep 1 child in school this year, it will mean that 281,000 children will be kept from premature entry into industry. It will cost a committee just \$120 to keep a child in school for one year, a small amount in comparison with the value of an educated man or woman to the community and the Nation.

