

Education in Russia

Official Document of People's Commissaire of Education A. V. Lunacharsky

THE Commissaire of Education Lunacharsky issued the following appeal to the teachers of Russia when the intelligentsia refused all help to the proletariat, and "rejoiced in every conspiracy against it":

"You, teachers—men and women—show them the example. Down with the boycott! Let us build a new school of the people. I, the people's commissary of education, do not want to force anything on you or on the schools. I say to you—away with the power of the bureaucracy! Conquer the bureaucracy! From now on the ministry (of education) is an executive organ. Let us build together a parliament of enlightenment, a vast government committee for the people. With friendly efforts let us build together a commission instead of a minister—a commission which will not hinder and command, but which will make the work easier and aid all healthy initiative. Let us finish the process of decentralization of schools and the transfer of their management to self-governing bodies. Can we even take count of the many problems which confront us? But they must all be decided by conference of teachers directly with the representatives of the organized working people. I published a series of statements dealing with the basic problems of education in Russia, and lately I issued a decree of the Central Executive Committee creating a Commission of Public Education. It is possible, and very probable, that these do not meet with everybody's approval. But the statements contain my own personal views, which I intend to apply not as a leader but as a collaborator. The decree has merely a preliminary character, for some sort of an apparatus had to be created to commence the work.

"I picture to myself a perspective of the following sort: The Government Committee of Public Education will meet in an extraordinary session to work out the broad democratic basis for the call of an Educational Convention of Teachers and direct representatives of the organized working masses. At this convention, in a friendly and open discussion, we will elaborate the underlying principles of a new people's school in Russia. I will submit these for confirmation to the constitutional convention.

"We will create in the sphere of education an atmosphere of true co-operation. Here class differences do not frighten us. A sincere and true teacher yearns for that perfect school which would transform the greatest number of citizens into completely developed men. The proletariat yearns for the same.

"If engineers and workers were to take up the creation of productive machines, apart from any calculations of an entrepreneur character, and guided only by the objective sign of the greatest productivity, they could, no doubt, co-operate without the least friction. Likewise with the schools. The people has gained its freedom. It wants more light for itself and its children. I have been called by the Congress of Soviets, which represented 15 millions of the foremost citizens, to be the People's Commissary of Education. I undertake this task without any pretense of pomp, but with a clear sense of responsibility, and with a readiness at the first signal from the people to give up my post and join the ranks again, and I address myself to you—you men and women teachers of Russia, to put aside the unworthy boycott, and while waiting for the day when the Constitutional Convention will establish a definite order in the matter of public education, to begin our work now.

"I appeal to you for the fulfillment of the following program: The immediate preparation for an educational congress on the most democratic lines; the realization of such congress at the very earliest opportunity; the friendly co-operation of the proletariat and the best part of the "intelligentsia" in the creation of a united and free public school in the broadest sense of these words.

"When I am writing this call to you, teachers, a new master of the land is guiding my hand—young, inexperienced, but mighty, the very same worker whom

you wanted to serve. Go to his aid. He has conquered but he is alone. He is full of strength but surrounded with trouble. Glory to the one who in the heavy hour of trial by fire, will be on the side of the people—such as it is, and shame on those who forsake it.

"And remember, if the ugly revolt of the intelligentsia against the workers were to continue, it would sow his path of sufferings with only new thorns, but it will not stop the wheels of his chariot. The people are calling on you to work together to build a new school in common. If you decline it will undertake its task alone together with its true adherents and well-wishers.

"There is no return to the past."

A. V. LUNACHARSKY,

Commissaire of Education.

The All-Russian Teachers Congress

According to "Isvestia" and "The Weekly People," the all-Russian teachers' congress was held at Moscow and dealt with the question of a uniform school system. "The Commissaire of Public Education, Lunacharsky, developed the program and defined the mission of Russia's future school system. The Soviet Government is confronted with the task of a radical transformation of the schools. They must have teachers to be enabled to accomplish this colossal task, and new institutions must be founded for the training of teachers. The mission of the working school consists in that the school impart to the pupil necessary and thorough knowledge to enable him to enter upon life free and with confidence. The teacher is to give to the child a universal education. For this purpose he must be the possessor of comprehensive knowledge.

"In order to introduce universal education into Russia, the congress considered a doubling of the number of teachers an absolute necessity. As against that there are today within the realm of Soviet Russia 30 teachers' institutes, 140 teachers' seminaries, 6 higher teachers' courses and about 120 lower teachers' courses. For these reasons it was decided to open a number of new institutions and to organize teachers' courses. During the ensuing year about 200 pedagogic courses will be formed which will have to prepare the teaching personnel for the working schools. For the first semester 1918-19 over three million rubles have been appropriated for this purpose; for the following semester five million roubles. Concurrently with the teachers' courses pedagogic academies will be opened in Petrograd and Moscow.

"At the session of the Government Commission for Public Education, in connection with a petition of the church meeting, the question of parochial schools was taken up. The Government Commission decided that the educational institutions of the church shall pass over to the administration of the local Soviets for public education. Private initiative may be permitted to found courses for religious instruction, but these shall have no right to include in their programs general educational subjects.

"At the Commissariat for Agriculture a new division was formed for educational work outside of the schools. It is divided into two branches: (a) Courses, Lectures and Addresses; (b) Means of Education, People's Houses and Museums.

"The Commissariat formed at different places courses for soil-study and practical work in model establishments in order to disseminate agricultural information amongst the population. These courses have a temporary character and are divided into short-time and periodic kinds. The latter will be formed in every province as necessity may demand. These courses will take up principally such matters as are of particular interest at the point of location. Besides, permanent courses will be organized.

"The Division for Agricultural Education Outside of Schools already has held a number of lectures bearing upon questions within the realm of systematic farming and has also arranged for excursions to inspect model agricultural establishments. In the libraries of the People's Houses special branches are being formed with collections of objects to serve for demonstration lessons bearing upon agricultural questions. Also, for the dissemination of agricultural information amongst the population, permanent and travelling museums have been organized."

"Considering the present lack of employment in the printing trades, considering also the shortage of books from which Russia is suffering, the commission on public education will undertake immediately the publication of books on a large scale, through its committee on literature and publications, with the co-operation of the committee on sciences and arts, and with the assistance of representatives of the printers' union and other interested trade organizations.

"The first books to be printed will be reprints of works by Russian writers on which the authors' copyright has expired. In the case of copyrighted works passing from private to public ownership, royalties will be granted by the commission on public education for varying periods, not to exceed five years.

"Two editions will be printed of each work—an unabridged edition, prepared by the section of Russian languages and literature of the Academy of Sciences, and a one-volume edition of selected works in compact form. In its selection of works, the editorial committee shall be guided by the fact that this edition is especially designed for the working classes.

"Complete or unabridged editions shall be supplied with prefaces by literary authorities. [The news has just come that Maxim Gorky, who previously had been hostile to the Bolsheviks, has accepted a commission of this nature.]

"Editions of the classics will be offered for sale at the lowest possible price, and widely distributed free of charge through the libraries for the benefit of the working classes.

"The national publishing establishment shall prepare large editions of textbooks. The task of correcting the old ones and of preparing new shall be supervised by a special commission on textbooks, consisting of delegates from pedagogical and scientific societies with the collaboration of specialists.

"A committee shall be organized for the publication of popular periodicals and shall consist of representatives of pedagogical and literary societies, specialists, and delegates from labor organizations.

"The committee on publication has full authority to subsidize the publications of periodicals and books put forth by private societies or individuals whenever those publications are of national usefulness; the first moneys received from the sale of such publications, however, shall be applied to reimbursing the government for the subsidy received.

"For the purpose of financing this important governmental enterprise, the council of people's commissaries shall open to the commission on public education a credit of one and one-half million rubles.

"The technical part of the work shall be done exclusively through the typographical union, which shall distribute the works among the various typographical plants."

A. V. LUNACHARSKY,

Commissaire of Education.

Educational Activities

"The Central Committee of the Proletarian Educational Organizations have opened the following sections in Petrograd:

1. Theatrical; 2. Literature; 3. Clubs; 4. Education Outside the Schools; 5. School Instruction; 6,

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