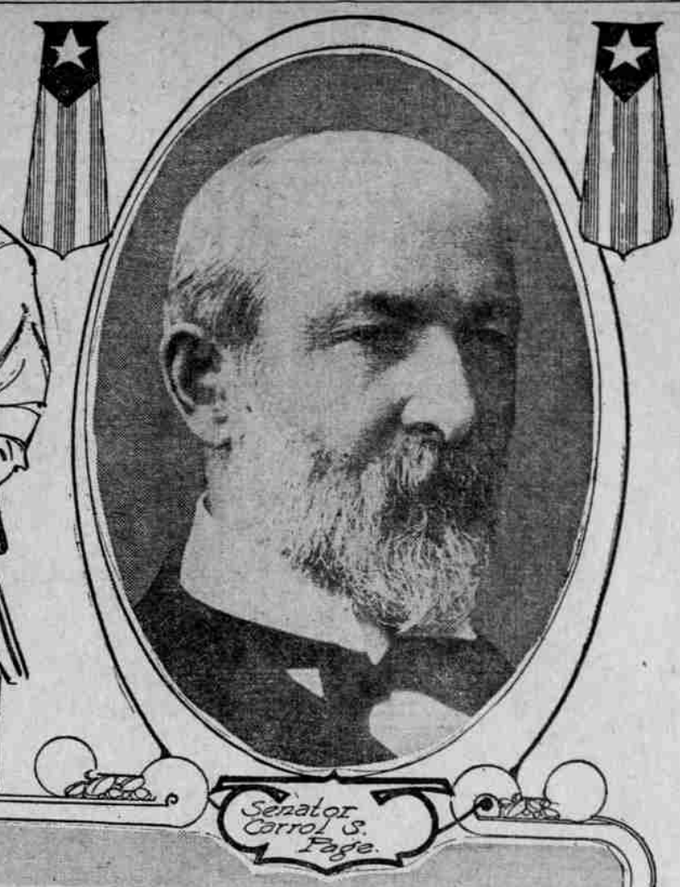
Cooking Courses to Cure Divorce

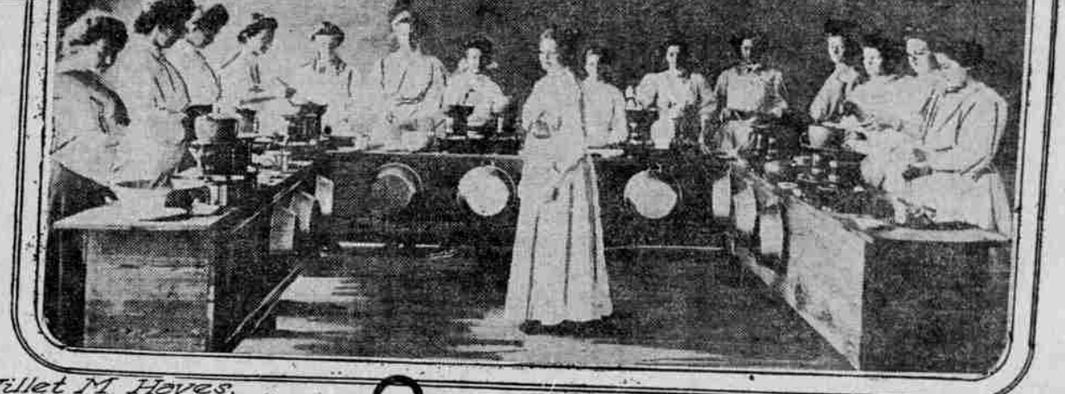
And The Government Will Take The Initiative

System of Vocational Training in Public Schools Will Be Established—and Girls Will Be Taught Art of Home-making—Boys Will, in Turn, Be Given Thorough Training in Trades and Mechanical Arts —Outline of New Idea.



Senator Carrol S. Page.

Philander P. Claxton, U.S. Commissioner of Education.

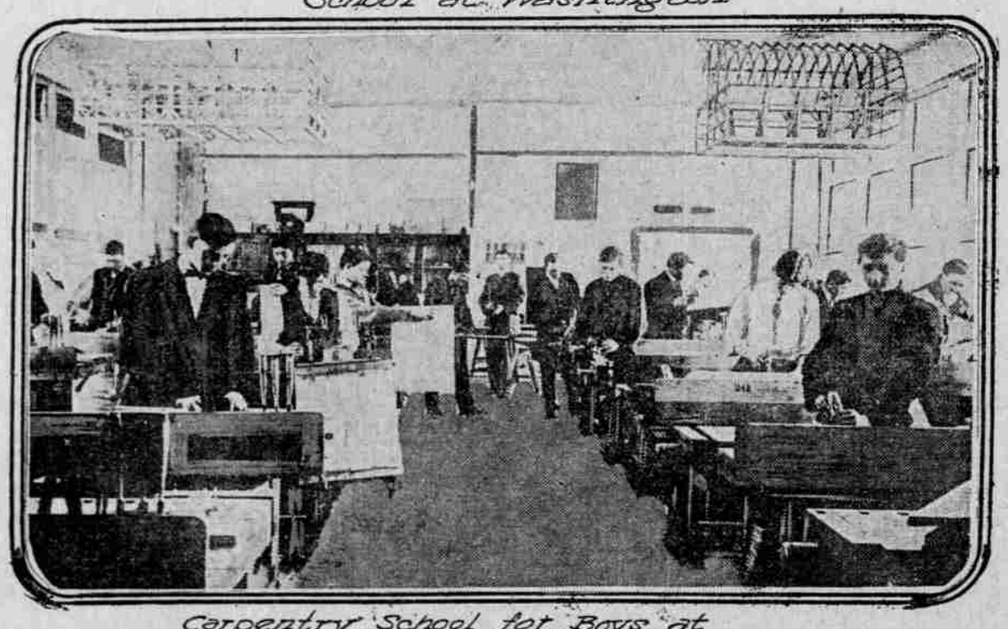


Willet M. Hayes, Asst Secy of Agriculture

Uncle Sam's Sewing School at Washington

The Art of Pressing Shirtwaists.

How Girls are Taught To Be Good Homemakers By Uncle Sam at Washington D.C



Carpentry School for Boys at Washington

BY WILLIAM L. ALTDORFER.

THE wrecking of homes and the grind of the divorce court in America, sociologists say, has reached the point of a National calamity. As in most cases of the kind, the blame is laid on the Government. Because there does not seem to be any other way to correct the growing evil, Uncle Sam intends to assume the position of schoolmaster and teach his people the correct way of living through the youth of the country. A system of vocational or industrial training in every school throughout the United States will be inaugurated, so that all the boys may be trained in some useful occupation, and every girl be taught the art of home-making.

"It has been the custom for many years for girls to leave school at the age of 14 or 15 years and enter the commercial world as department store clerks, cash girls, and factory workers, with the result that when they reach the marrying age they know nothing of the art of home-making."

This is the statement of a man who has been a close student of social conditions in this country for many years. "It is the mistaken notion of many parents that a child should be taught first of all how to make a living. The direct result of this idea has been an increasing number of deserted homes, with a corresponding increase in the output of the divorce courts. All of this may be traced directly to the fact that our girls are not fitted to become wives and know little about the care of a home and the many things that go to make home life the happiest existence on earth."

This same authority says that "thousands of boys leave school when they reach the sixth or seventh grades. With the elementary education they enter the eternal struggle for existence handicapped by lack of training. In many cases, under recent conditions, they may be forced to do this because the father is not able to earn sufficient to support the family and the mite contributed by the child helps pay the rent. But the father is laying up future trouble for his child.

When the boy reaches manhood, he must compete with skilled artisans in every branch of trade and if not trained he must accept a laborer's job. He must spend his life working for a pitifully small wage, all because he did not receive proper training in his boyhood."

A plan has been evolved by the officials at Washington that will aid every school in the country to inaugurate a comprehensive system of vocational or industrial training. It includes primarily the teaching of the art of home-making in the high schools and colleges all over the United States, with a thorough course in cooking, dressmaking and the thousand and one things that enter into home life. The boys of the intermediate grades extending up to the high school, and the colleges will be given a course in industrial training—the mechanical arts, such as carpentry, blacksmithing, the building trades, etc., the idea being to stimulate every child in the land to become a useful member of the community and to teach them how this may be done.

Senator Carroll S. Page, of Vermont, Dr. P. P. Claxton, United States Commissioner of Education, and Willet H. Hayes, Assistant Secretary of Agriculture, and the three men who have worked hardest to bring about action by the Federal Government. Senator Page proposes to have the Federal Government spend $12,000,000 each year, with the states contributing an equal amount, for the working out of the plan and he is confident that Congress will furnish the funds necessary to help the youth of America.

"I believe the country is fast awakening to the fact that more than 50 per cent of all divorces could have been avoided had the girls been good cooks good home-makers and good mothers. We must give our girls a training different from that they are receiving now, for if we do not and race suicide and divorce continue to increase in the future as in the past, 25 years from now our social conditions will become unbearable." This was the startling statement made by Senator Page when asked to give his views on the subject.

"It is unquestionably true," continued the Senator, "that too many of our American girls are not good housekeepers and are lamentably ignorant of the duties of motherhood. Thousands of homes are wrecked, tens of thousands of lives ruined and hundreds of thousands are made unhappy because the homekeepers of our country have no training in that greatest of professions, the profession of home-making and motherhood.

"Fifty years ago every girl believed her proper calling in life was to become a good home-maker, wife and mother. Today she looks forward to a position in some trade or industry or perhaps to office work, as stenographer, typewriter or telephone girl, and when, as is usually the case, they find themselves brought face to face with married life and the home, they fail to bring to the discharge of the wifely and motherly duties that experience, skill and knowledge so absolutely essential to a good home-maker.

"Any plan which involves the betterment and uplift of the sons and daughters of the men of our Nation who toil can no more be stopped than we can dam the waters of the Niagara. In order that the great wrong to the chief asset of this country—the American boy and girl—may be righted and the American people started upward on a proper and better educational highway, it is necessary that Congress blaze the way of an educational trail along the lines of the industries, agriculture and home economics, and this trail, I believe, will be followed by every state in the Union very shortly after active steps are taken by the Federal Government.

"There is no more serious problem before the American people today than that of maintaining the equilibrium of population between rural and urban life, involving as it does that other twin problem, food production and food consumption. Take for instance the case of boys and girls who are leaving the farms and going to the cities. Last June the authorities made a canvas of the lodging-houses in Chicago and found about 20,000 young men under the age of 25 who were sleeping in basements where the water would ooze up through the floors and where they would lie down to sleep with nothing but a newspaper between them and the floor. These young men were from the farms, looking for jobs in the city. Twenty years ago it used to be the practice for one or two girls from a large family to go to the city. Now the farmer sells his farm and the whole family moves there—very often he is the best farmer in the community.

"The science of all curative processes is to first start with a diagnosis. If you have anything the matter with you, you want your physician first to make a proper diagnosis. Down near Egypt in the southern part of Illinois where the land is poor the Agriculture Department started a demonstration farm. A Doctor Hopkins was in charge and he made an analysis of the soil which showed it was lacking in phosphate and other things.

"An old gray haired man came up to the Doctor and said with tears in his eyes; 'Doctor, I want to thank you for what I have seen today, but God help me! If I only knew that thing 40 years ago, I have six boys in my family and I have labored night and day to keep the family together, but what have I got on my farm? Fifteen to sixteen bushels of corn to the acre is all I could make. I wanted to give my children an education, but I could not raise crops enough on that piece of land so I have worked hard all my life and have barely enough to support my family. If a man had only come to me when I was a young man and told me the things you have told me today I could have sent my children to the high school, but' he said with tears running down his face, 'I am now at the end with nothing in the future for either myself or family.'

"The untrained man is not necessarily a day laborer. He is such a man, however, when thrown off his present employment and upon his own resources he becomes a menace to society and to himself. Something must be done for this man and for men like him. There are many young men wasting their lives along more or less profitable lines of endeavor who would be valuable members of society if they could have had the advantage of a special training. Vocational education helps the boy to find himself, so to speak, especially if we link his vocational education with the seventh and eighth grades before compulsory education ceases. My idea would be the modern application of education to practical life which contemplates not only assistance to the boy to find himself, but also aids him in finding a place where he can get employment afterwards.

"Raymond Robins, who is known as a 'social expert' in what is called the 'men and religion movement,' gives expression to the following thought, which it would be well for all thinking people to let sink deep into their minds. He says 'the old vertical lines of social division—by income, profession and family—are gone. The new line is horizontal. Above it are all those who live by dividends and below all those who live by labor.

"'But it is more than a line, it is a crack, a cleavage. And I tell you that unless that cleavage is bridged in the next ten years it never will be bridged in our time.' In this thought Raymond Robins has given expression to no threat and he may be wrong in regard to the future of the American people, but it does behoove all thinking people to take cognizance of the claims of a man like Raymond Robins. If we can lift some of those below the horizontal line and give them a portion of those above the line we should do it.

"Home economics or the science of homemaking is a much more comprehensive term than one would believe who has not given the matter some thought. Broadly speaking it refers to the improvement of conditions of home life. Primarily it includes cooking, sewing, making articles of household use, vegetable gardening, home nursing, care of children, etc. These are only the elementary studies for the girl who would fit herself to be a true home maker, who understands, among other things, for instance, the value of foods that enter into daily consumption and how to buy them so as to prevent waste. She should understand ventilation, hygiene, the prevention of diseases, serving of dinners, laundry work, house planning, millinery, making her own clothing, art needle work, household decoration, household bookkeeping, indeed her studies should cover that broad field which will fit the girl to economically manage household affairs when she becomes a wife and mother and to have such an understanding as will enable her to prevent waste and plan intelligently as one must do who provides for and presides over the household and has to do largely with the family living expenses."

"The difference between the girl who leaves school on the completion of the seventh or eigth grade without any knowledge of these practical affairs of life, and the one whose school life has been prolonged for an added year or two in the study of home economics, is very often the difference between success and failure as a wife and mother. A good, well-kept home, presided over by an intelligent woman educated along general and practical lines means health, happiness and prosperity, with healthy children and all those essentials which make life worth living.

"Take for instance the great waste in home management. More than ten billion dollars are expended annually in the United States for food, clothing and shelter, when with greater knowledge and efficiency better satisfaction could be obtained and more than a billion dollars saved for higher things. One-half million lives are cut short and five million people are made ill by preventable diseases every year. With universal knowledge of hygiene and sanitation, nearly all deaths and illness from such causes could be prevented. Six hundred thousand infants under 2 years of age end their little span of life yearly, while millions of children fail to reach their best physical development because their fathers and mothers do not understand how to care for them. With more knowledge at least one-half these babies could be saved.

"A group of philanthropists in New York found upon investigation, that the wages of the unskilled female laborer were declining, while those of the skilled laborer were advancing and that the supply of the skilled laborer was inadequate to meet the demand. Now it is not expected that immature girls of 14 and 15 years of age would immediately upon entering the labor market make large salaries, but the purpose is to educate these girls for situations for which their qualifications best fit them, better wages and a better life. To illustrate my point. In dressmaking the unskilled girl in New York starts at $3 a week, but after training in an industrial school they earn $5 to $12. In millinery the girls start at $3, but after training receive $12 per week. In operating machines, unskilled girls received $4. After training they are paid something like $20 to $25 per week. This all goes to prove what I said in the first place, that the trained workers are far more valuable to themselves as well as to the community than the untrained worker.

"Then we come to the boys' side of the question. As it is today, he looks from the elementary school to the first year of the high school, and there he discovers Latin, French, geometry, algebra. He goes to his father and mother and lays his trouble before them. He says to them, 'I don't want to learn French, I don't want to learn Latin, I don't want to study algebra. They will never do me any good.' Five times out of ten the father believes with the child, and opportunities are too often given him by parents to avoid school life, even during the last or eighth year of compulsory attendance, and as soon as he has completed the eighth grade, he takes his final leave of school.

"The father then says to his son: 'John, you must this year earn enough to pay for your own clothing, and provide your own spending money, and you must pay your mother a dollar or two a week towards your board.' With this injunction the boy starts out, and, following the lines of least resistance, he is fortunate indeed if he does not find himself in that class in which statistics tell us that more than 40 per cent of the American boys in our large cities land, viz., in the class of errand boys, bootblacks and newspaper vendors.

"What is the result? Evil associates surround and control the boy during the two or more years of the more impressionable period of his life. On arrival at the age when he is permitted to enter upon an apprenticeship or take up some employment he finds that his environment has been such as to weaken every higher moral quality. Instead of there being a growth for the better from the 14th to the 17th year, he has actually been allowed to degenerate, whereas had these years been spent in college or some vocational school where he was learning the fundamentals of that trade or calling which he elected to pursue, he would not have found himself where he must on entering the workshop take his place alongside the cheapest, lowest illiterate from some foreign land.

"Men like to do that which they can do well. Place a boy in a position where he must work in the lowest grade of the establishment and work to him is drudgery. Give him such work as a year or two of education along vocational lines would have permitted him to do and all is changed. He sees not only a higher wage, but he sees promotion, preferment and honors. The boy who has been drifting downward from the 14th to the 17th year soon comes to know that he has not had a square deal in the race of life and he joins the order of malcontents and anarchists.

"I do not believe I am mistaken in regard to the duty of the country with reference to the better education of our boys and girls along agricultural and industrial lines. I know there is intense interest in the movement throughout every section of the country East and West, North and South. It is not confined to any one section nor to any class of people, but has taken deep hold upon the entire agricultural, commercial and manufacturing population. There is not an important organization in the country which has for its object the uplift and betterment of our people, that has not approved the plan. And all educational organizations of the country have approved it enthusiastically."

Willet M. Hayes, Assistant Secretary of Agriculture, has been identified with the agricultural school movement for many years. It is practically the same as that outlined by Senator Page and includes the training of the youth of both sexes, but it is confined principally to the farming or rural population, and takes in all the phases of life peculiar to agriculture. Mr. Hays is an enthusiastic supporter of the plan and the idea of the Government officials is to combine the two plans—to extend aid to city and country schools in vocational training of all kinds. He assisted in the establishment of the first agricultural high school in the United States, which was organized by the University of Minnesota in 1883. From a very small beginning this school has now about 1000 students, while the state recently established two other agricultural high schools. The movement has extended to many other states and there are altogether 25 agricultural schools scattered throughout the country.

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