6-1933

The Attitude of the Presidents of the United States Toward Education as Revealed in Their Messages to Congress

Kelsey R. Cummins

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.wku.edu/theses

Part of the American Politics Commons, Education Commons, Political History Commons, Social History Commons, and the United States History Commons

Recommended Citation
http://digitalcommons.wku.edu/theses/1675

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by TopSCHOLAR®. It has been accepted for inclusion in Masters Theses & Specialist Projects by an authorized administrator of TopSCHOLAR®. For more information, please contact topscholar@wku.edu.
THE ATTITUDE OF THE PRESIDENTS OF THE UNITED STATES TOWARD EDUCATION AS REVISED IN THEIR MESSAGES TO CONGRESS

BY

KELSEY R. CURRIE

A THESIS
SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

WESTERN KENTUCKY STATE TEACHERS COLLEGE

JUNE, 1937
Approved:

Major Professor

Department of ________

Minor Professor

Graduate Committee

[Signatures]
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**INTRODUCTION**

**CHAPTER** | **PAGE**
--- | ---
I | A NATIONAL UNIVERSITY | 1
II | MILITARY AND NAVAL ACADEMIES | 11
III | NATIONAL AID TO PUBLIC EDUCATION | 31
IV | SPECIAL PHASES OF EDUCATION | 
   A. Astronomical Observatory | 45
   B. Federal Department of Education | 48
   C. Race Education | 52
   D. Smithsonian Institution and the Library of Congress | 60
V | SUMMARY | 63

**BIBLIOGRAPHY** | 65
INTRODUCTION

This thesis is undertaken with the intention of studying the attitude of the Presidents of the United States toward education as revealed in their messages to Congress. The writer chose this subject because he felt that the messages and speeches reflect their attitude toward education and to some extent at least reflect the national attitude. Since this group has included some of America's ablest leaders, education may find in their works arguments of great weight.

Since the study was restricted to the messages of the Presidents, naturally Richardson's "Messages and Papers of the Presidents to 1908" is the most used reference. Not only does this thesis summarize the messages, but it attempts to discern the philosophy of education at the time the message was written, the personal training that might have influenced the President, and the trends of the public thought at the time that might have played a part. For this purpose secondary sources, pamphlets, reports, and newspapers have been used.

The writer has found no other study on this subject, and he has attempted to collect in readable form a summary of the views of our chief officials.
CHAPTER I

A NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

In attempting to arrive at the attitudes of the Presidents of the United States toward education it is natural of course to begin with Washington. From the emphasis he placed upon the establishment of a National University, it is equally natural that that phase of education should be discussed first.

Strictly speaking, the United States has no National University, but the strenuous efforts made by George Washington and numerous other statesmen of his and later times to persuade Congress to establish and support such a great national institution constitute one of the most illuminating chapters in our educational history. This question arises, why were Washington and numerous other statesmen so interested in a National University? Perhaps, no better reasons can be given than the following passages from Washington's last will and testament:

"It has always been a source of serious regret with me, to see the youth of these United States sent to foreign countries for the purpose of education, often before their minds were formed, or they had imbibed any adequate ideas of the happiness of their own, contracting too frequently, not only habits of dissipation and extravagance, but principles unfriendly to republican government.... Looking anxiously forward to the accomplishment of so desirable an object as this is, my mind has not been able to contemplate any plan more likely to effect the measure, than the establishment of a University in a central part of the United States, to which the youths of fortune and talents from all parts thereof may be sent for the completion of their education."


That Washington cherished the idea of a university even before the Revolutionary war may be noted. In a letter to John Adams dated 1794, he stated, "That a National University in this country is a thing to be desired has always been my decided opinion". The story runs in Samuel Blodget's Echomica that Major William Blodget remarked to Washington in October 1775, on seeing the ruinous state of the eldest seminary of Massachusetts, that he hoped a noble National University, at which the youth of all the world might be proud to receive instructions, would be established. Washington immediately replied with that inimitably expressive and truly interesting look for which he was sometimes so remarkable: "Young man, you are a prophet! inspired to speak what I am confident will one day be realized." Washington then detailed his plans for a federal city and university to be built near the falls of the Potomac, speaking with such force that Blodget was thoroughly converted and subsequently copyrighted his Echomica for the "benefit of the free education fund of the university founded by George Washington in his last years."

It was January 5, 1790, that Washington first publicly referred to the National University; however, it is known that for years he had been dreaming, planning, and anticipating it.

In 1785 Washington received fifty shares of the Potomac Navigation Company from the legislature of Virginia, and in October of the same year, he replied to the legislature declin-

---

4 Ibid., pp. 97-98.
ing the gift for his own use but offering to accept it with the idea of appropriating it to some public good. The legislature of Virginia then gave Washington the right to act in accordance with his wishes.

On January 20, 1795, Washington wrote a letter to the commissioners of the Federal City granting the fifty shares of the Potomac Company to the National University. In the same letter he stated:

"The Federal City from its centrality and the advantages, which in other respects it must have over any other place in the United States, ought to be preferred as a proper site for such an University." 5

The National University as conceived by Washington was to be an institution in which the arts, sciences, and belles-lettres could be taught in their fullest extent, thereby embracing all the advantages of European tuition, with the means of acquiring the liberal knowledge, which was necessary to qualify citizens for the exigencies of public as well as private life.

It is interesting to note that several of the earlier presidents were wealthy land-owners, farmers, and students of science, while those of later periods were not wealthy farmers, but they were interested in the development of science.

In Washington's very first message to Congress, January 8, 1790, he began his plea for a National University. In the course of his address he said:

"Knowledge is in every country the surest basis of public happiness.... To the security of a free constitution, it contributes in various ways by convincing those who are interested in the public administration that every valuable end of government is best answered by the enlightened confidence of the people, and by teaching the people themselves to know and value their own rights.... Whether this desirable object will be best promoted by affording aids to seminaries of learning already established, by the institution of a national university will be worthy of a place in the deliberations of the legislature." 6

With the eye of the prophet Washington doubtless saw the remarkable possibilities of the country and the place which it was to take among the nations of the earth. He saw the struggling colleges of that time with their meager curricula and limited equipment. He realized that in a land of such promise there should be leaders equipped with the best training to be found in a true university. Realizing that only a few were likely to go abroad for study in the universities of Europe, he urged that the nation provide, as rapidly as possible, at the national capital for advanced study. He never lost sight of this conviction. His addresses and letters seldom omitted reference to it. 7

In his last annual address to Congress, December 7, 1796, he made a final plea for the institution or institutions which were nearest his heart. In that message he said in part:

"I have heretofore proposed to the consideration of Congress the expedience of establishing a National University and also a Military Academy. The desirability of both these institutions has so constantly increased with every new view I have taken of the subject that I cannot omit the

---

6 Richardson, James D., Messages and Papers of the Presidents (Bureau of National Literature and Art, 1977), I, p. 65.
opportunity of once for all recalling your attention
to them." 8

But also, save for one near approach, Washington never realized
his dream.

In 17-4, there arose an opportunity to import a European
university. The faculty of Geneva, feeling uncomfortable in the
Swiss Republic, proposed to emigrate in a body to the United
States if a place could be found for them. John Adams and
Thomas Jefferson were much impressed with the idea, and urged it
upon Washington in the hope of getting his Potomac shares for
that purpose, but this scheme of wholesale importation did not
fall in with Washington's ideas. He preferred to pick his pro-
fessors from various countries -- for instance, a Scot or
rather than a Frenchman for philosophy -- instead of bringing
over a body of foreigners who would have to teach in French or
Latin. So, what might have proved an interesting experiment in
transplanting education was never tried. 9

Washington and Jefferson worked together on the education-
al problem with as much harmony as could be expected of men of
such different temperaments and philosophies. The dominant
motive of both the statesmen was the same; the difference be-
tween them lay in their philosophy of government. Jefferson
wanted to unify more the mind of the individual state, Wash-
ington to unify the mind of the whole nation by educating the
youth together.

8 Richardson, James B., op. cit., p. 98.
10 Ibid., p. 94.
The Great Leaders, resolution and decision, united

and much other opinions of public improvement, he entered

and such later opinions of public improvement, he entered

and such later opinions of public improvement, he entered

The Great Leaders, resolution and decision, united

and much other opinions of public improvement, he entered
Personally, Madison was a strong believer in education. "Popular government without popular information or the means of acquiring it is the first step toward a farce or a tragedy, or perhaps both," he is quoted as saying. To Congress he declared:

"The present is a favorable season ... for bringing again into view the establishment of a national seminary of learning within the District of Columbia, and means drawn from the property therein, subject to the authority of the General Government. Such an institution claims the patronage of Congress as a monument of their solicitude for the advancement of knowledge." 14

He did not stop at that but said that the institution should serve as a model to be followed in the formation of other seminaries, and that it should serve as a central resort of youth and genius from every part of the country, diffusing liberal sentiments and those congenial manners which contribute cement to the Union.

Monroe called upon Congress to "institute seminaries of learning, for the all-important purpose of diffusing knowledge among our fellow-citizens throughout the United States", but he felt as Jefferson had expressed himself that Congress had no authority to take action thereon unless the constitution was so amended.

John Quincy Adams, ushering in the new Nationalism, did not ask that the constitution be amended so as to permit the establishment of a national university, but viewed education as an activity in which properly constituted governments could participate and properly encourage and support. He gave encouragement

13 Knight, Edward W., Education in the United States (Boston, Ginn & Co., 1922), p. 142.
14 Richardson, James D., op. cit., p. 568.
15 Knight, Edward W., op. cit., p. 186.
to that belief, and made a plea for a university, the like of which, perhaps, had not been given since the days of Washington.

In closing his recommendation to Congress for the establishment of a national university he declared:

"With respect to the latter (meaning the National University) had he (Washington) lived to the present day, in turning his eyes to the institution at West Point he would have enjoyed the gratifications of his most earnest wishes; but in surveying the city which has been honored with his name he would have seen the spot of earth which he had destined and bequeathed to the use and benefit of his country as the site for an university still bare and barren." 16

Thus the new Nationalism had spoken; Washington could hardly have said more, but insofar as presidential messages to Congress were concerned, no further mention was made of a national university until near the close of Grant's administration.

In the interim other issues had occupied the attention of the American people, but due to agitation by several of the learned societies who favored it, notably the National Educational Association, the National University idea was revived. This association, in 1867, appointed a permanent committee, and the subject was agitated vigorously for years following. 17

Grant yielded to the pressure, and in December 1871, included these words in his Congressional message:

"I would suggest to Congress the propriety of promoting the establishment in the District of Columbia an institution of learning, or university of the highest class, by the donation of lands. There is no place better suited for such an institution than the National Capital. There is no

---

16 Richardson, James N., op. cit., II, p. 312.
17 Butter, Samuel Brain and Croomen, David, op. cit., II, 86.
other place in which every citizen is so directly interested." 18

Hayes uttered similar views only four years after Grant had
given his, and in it he struck a chord that John Quincy Adams
had struck fifty years earlier; namely, that the establishment
of a National University would bring about a realization of the
cherished hopes of Washington.

"I here add," quoting from Hayes' 1877 Annual
Message, "that I believe it desirable, not so much
with reference to the local wants of the District
(of Columbia), but to the great and lasting benefit
of the entire country, that this system should be
crowned with a university in all respects in keeping
with the national capital, and thereby realize the
cherished hope of Washington on this subject." 19

It is possible that another reason for the National Univer-
sity idea being revived in the Grant-Hayes period was that dur-
ing that period the National Government was granting huge grants
of land to the states, and was contributing both land and money
to Colleges of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts. The question would
arise then, if the Nation can donate to states and state colleges,
why could it not set up a college or university of its own?
Hayes, himself said, in speaking of the wisdom of legislation
upon the part of Congress, in aid of the states, for the edu-
cation of the whole people, that the intelligent judgment of
the country went still further, to the extent of regarding it
as also both constitutional and expedient for the General Gov-
ernment to extend to technical and higher education such aid as
might be deemed essential to the general welfare and to our due

---
18 Richardson, James D., op. cit., VII, p. 254.
19 Ibid., p. 479.
prominence among the enlightened and cultured nations of the
world.

It rather seems that both Hayes and Grant saw in a Nation-
al University an institution that would help heal the breach
between the North and the South. Students from both sections
coming together in the Nation's Capital, would doubtless become
imbued with an unified spirit of Nationalism.

In conclusion, Washington, Madison, John Quincy Adams, U.S.
Grant, and Rutherford B. Hayes recommended to Congress the es-
tablishment of a National University without regard to an
amendment to Congress, while Jefferson and Monroe made similar
recommendations but contingent upon the National Constitution
being amended.

20
Richardson, James D., op. cit., VII, p. 479.
CHAPTER II

MILITARY AND NAVAL ACADEMIES

The United States is not considered a warring nation, yet since the Declaration of Independence, she has been actively engaged in six definite wars, and that number does not include Indian encounters that were more or less constant from the beginning of the American Nation until Custer’s last fight. It would therefore be expected that the leaders in directing the affairs of the United States government would emphasize military education as well as civil education. In fact, two of the first Academies to be established in America were the Military and Naval Academies, which have received encouragement and support from many of our presidents.

It is not surprising that Washington stressed military education in his message to Congress. A large part of his life had been spent in a military way, and doubtless, he had compared the efficiency of the officer that had been trained in a military school with the inefficiency of the one that had had no technical training. It was Baron Von Steuben, one of the most accomplished professional soldiers of his time, that had given new life to Washington’s army at Valley Forge. It was he, also, that wrote to Washington when the latter was Commander-in-chief of the American forces and said that the establishment of military schools and manufactures would be the best means of providing for our security in the future, and, that a system of this nature would make us more respectable with the powers of
Europe than if we kept a standing army of fifty thousand men.

Washington received Steuben's letter on April 21, 1783, and on May 1 of the same year he forwarded his own Sentiments On A Peace Establishment to the Continental Congress, which was then in session. Only a half dozen years later, Washington returned to this subject and transmitted to the Congress of the United States a message similar in character to the one formerly sent to the Continental Congress. The message was as follows:

"The institution of a military academy is recommended by cogent reasons. However pacific the general policy of a nation may be, it ought never to be without an adequate stock of military knowledge for emergencies...... In proportion as the observance of pacific maxims might exempt a nation from the necessity of practicing the rules of the military art ought to be its care in preserving and transmitting, by proper establishments, the knowledge of that art. Whatever argument may be drawn from particular examples superficially viewed, a thorough examination of the subject will evince that the art of war is at once comprehensive and complicated, that it demands much previous study, and that the possession of it in its most improved and perfect state is always of great moment to the security of the nation. This, therefore, ought to be a serious care of every government, and for this purpose an academy where a regular course of instruction is given is an obvious expedient which different nations have successfully employed."

Further, he said in substance that it was of great importance to preserve the knowledge which had been acquired through the various stages of a long and arduous service, and in view

---

2 Ibid., p. 17.
3 Richardson, James B., Messages and Papers of the Presidents (Bureau of National Literature and Art, 1907), I, pp.201-205.
of that fact, he could not refrain from reemphasizing the impor-
tance of the military academy. It is highly probable, also,
that he had in mind a system of military education through
which America would be able to produce her own Baron Von
Steuben in the future.

Jefferson, as indicated before, was a strict construc-
tionist during Washington's administration, but perhaps so,
because liberal construction was the principal weapon of his
great opponent, Hamilton. It is therefore to be inferred that
he (Jefferson) would be opposed to a National Military Academy
when he became president. Quite the opposite is true. In com-
menting on the Militia Act passed in his administration, he
inquired ......"whether a material feature of an improvement
of it, ought not to be, to afford an opportunity for the study
of those branches of the military art which can scarcely ever
be attained by practice alone."

This passage is highly significant. It reveals Wash-
ton's conception of the primary purpose of a military academy.
Jefferson's language and the context in the excerpt just
quoted indicate that the military academy he had in mind was
to serve the purpose of diffusing theoretical military knowl-
edge in the National Militia.

In a later message to Congress Jefferson stated:

"The scale on which the Military Academy at
West Point was originally established is become
too limited to furnish the number of well-in-
structed subjects in the different branches of
artillery and engineering which the public service

4 Palmer, John McLacle, op. cit., p. 69.
5 Ibid., p. 125.
calls for. The want of such character is already sensibly felt. 6

As was noted in the foregoing, Jefferson stressed the military rather than the academic. Perhaps, his change in attitude grew out of the war clouds that were hovering over Europe. At this juncture Jefferson wrote to Madison a letter in which he stated concisely the underlying principle justifying the establishment of the Military Academy. The letter reads:

"Convinced that a militia of all ages promiscuously are entirely useless for distant service, and that we never have selected corps for a year's distance service at least, the classification of our militia is now the most essential thing for the United States to do." 7

When Madison became president, the danger of war was apparent. England's "right of search" was becoming distinctly pronounced. Madison was a survivor, too, of the original fathers who had created our government; hence, it is natural to expect him to emphasize the military in connection with education. He opposed Washington in many things, but he retained his friendship and confidence and had always understood and accepted his military views. He said in recommending the Military Academy to the early attention of Congress:

"A revision of the law is recommended, principally with a view to a more enlarged cultivation and diffusion of the advantages of such institutions, by providing professorships for all the necessary branches of military instruction, and by the establishment of an additional academy at the seat of government or elsewhere."

7 Palmer, John McAuley, op. cit., p. 127.
It is highly probable just here that Madison was referring to a national University that Washington, Jefferson, and he, himself, had prevailed upon Congress to establish. Continuing with his message:

"The means by which war, as well for defense as for offense, are now carried on render these schools of the more scientific operations an indispensable part of every adequate system.... In no other way probably can a provision of equal efficacy for the public defense be made at so little expense or more consistently with the public liberty." 8

Consistent with his belief in the merits of the institution, he therefore recommended to Congress the enlargement of the Military Academy as established, and the establishment of others in other sections of the Union. This recommendation was made in December, 1815, shortly following the close of the War of 1812, which conflict had only too vividly revealed the weaknesses in the training of the officers of the American forces. Madison discerned that.

Monroe, student and soldier, who had served with gallantry in the army during the Revolution, followed Madison as President of the United States, and was high in office during the progress of the second war with Great Britain, and during the Seminole War. His interest in military affairs had asserted itself when he began his college studies at Williamsburg. It is said that at the signal of rebellion against the British authority three of the professors and between twenty-five and thirty students from Williamsburg College joined the military ranks.

8 Richardson, James D., op. cit., I, pp. 486-487.
Among the volunteers, John Marshall and James Monroe were found.
In alluding to these young patriots, Honorable E.C. Grayson, in his historical discourse on the Virginia Convention of 1776, spoke as follows:

"I see that generous band of students who at the beginning of the Revolution hurried east aside the goal and rallied forth to fight the battles of the United Colonies, .... and when the struggle was past I see two tall gallant youths depart once more to serve their country in the Senate and in the most celebrated courts in Europe, crowning their past career by filling, one the chief magistracy of the Union, and the other the highest of the Federal judiciary."

James Monroe was, of course, the "gallant youth" who attained the chief magistracy of the Union.

Not only was the early training of Monroe conducive to military education, but the period in which he served as President of the United States encouraged it. Even though his administration as president was known as the "Era of Good Feeling," it had only been a few years since the War of 1812, and the memory of the lack of educated and trained officers during that trouble was still extant. Thus in his message to Congress December 3, 1822, he averts:

"The Military Academy forms the basis, in regard to science, on which the military establishment rests. It furnishes annually, after due examination and on the report of the academic staff, many well-informed youths to fill the vacancies which occur in the several corps of the Army, while others who retire to private life carry with them such attainments as, under the right reserved to the several states to appoint the officers and to train the militia, will enable them, by affording a wider field for selection, to promote the great object of the power.

\*Gilman, Daniel C., James Monroe (Boston, Houghton, Mifflin Co., 1907), p. 3.\*
vested in Congress of providing for the organizing, arming, and disciplining the militia." 10

Not only in this message was Monroe giving expression to ideas that he had inbibed in his life throughout his earlier career, but he was giving expression to the states rights theory which his Party was now advancing. That is "the right reserved to the several states to appoint officers and to train the militia." This was brought to the attention of the public as a function of the State.

But why would John Quincy Adams, possessing in many respects divergent views to President Monroe, have much to say with regard to the Military Academy, and why would he advocate the establishment of a Naval Academy? It is true that the United States had recently had trouble with Spain, and it is true that Indian wars were giving some trouble in the South and West, but would those disturbances give rise to suggestions to Congress to give their attention to further supporting the Military Academy, and creating a Naval Academy?

"The Military Academy at West Point," said Adams, "under the restrictions of a severe but paternal superintendence, recommends itself more and more to the patronage of the nation, and the numbers of meritorious officers which it forms and introduces to the public service furnishes the means of multiplying the undertakings of public improvements to which their requirements at that institution are peculiarly adapted." 11

It is here noted that the President was concerned with public improvements, and that training in the Academy was to

10 Richardson, James D., op. cit., II, p. 189.
11 Ibid., pp. 305-306.
serve that end. In fact, the period 1825-1829, is known in
history as the period of public improvements and national ex-
pansion. The year 1825 was a remarkable one in the history of
canal-building in the United States. The Erie Canal opened a
connection between the Great Lakes and the Atlantic Ocean. It
was completed by autumn, never having been interrupted in its
construction since the first spadeful of earth was lifted eight
years earlier, on the Fourth of July. It was pushed on inces-
santly by the governor of New York whose good fortune it was
to supervise both the beginning and the end of the enterprise,
and the success of which was due, most of all, to his fore-
sight and unflagging interest.

It is not strange then, that Adams in 1825, 1827, and
again in 1828, in view of the popularity of public improve-
ments, and of seeking to organize party support, should lay
the foundation of his policy in grand works of public improve-
ment. He is therefore, making mention of it in his reference
to the Military Academy in December 1828:

"It ( the Military Academy ) is the living
armory of the Nation. While the other works of
improvement enumerated in the reports now pre-
ented to the attention of Congress are destined
to ameliorate the face of nature, to multiply
the facilities of communication between the
different parts of the Union, to assist the
labors, increase the comforts, and enhance the
enjoyments of individuals, the instruction ac-
quired at West Point enlarges the dominion and
expands the capacities of the mind." 12

It is not to be construed that President Adams would sac-
rifice the main objective of military education, for in 1829,


12 Ibid., p. 417.
he said to Congress that a naval school of instruction, corresponding with the Military Academy at West Point, for the formation of scientific and accomplished officers, was being felt with daily increased aggravation.

The assumption might be made that Jackson would have nothing or little to say regarding education inasmuch as he was considered comparatively illiterate. Yet in an agricultural community like the one in which he was reared there was a great deal of leisure at certain seasons of the year, and the actual outlay required for an education was small. The standard of attainments was low, and it was easy for a farmer boy of any diligence to acquire, in his winter’s leisure, as much book-learning as the best colleges gave. This, through diligence on his part, Jackson attained. His education, or his attitude toward education was such that he was made a trustee of the Nashville Academy in 1793.

One can easily understand his sympathizing with military education. In 1802 he was elected major-general of the Militia of Tennessee, and from that time until he became President of the United States he figured prominently in army circles. He was of a commanding type, peremptory in his instructions, and exacting in detail. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that he would be interested in his government providing for military education. To Congress he said:

13 Richardson, James D., op. cit., II, p. 510.
"I recommend to your fostering care, as one of the safest means of national defense, the Military Academy. This institution has already exercised the happiest influence upon the moral and intellectual character of our Army; and such of the graduates as from various causes may not pursue the profession of arms will be scarcely less useful as citizens. Their knowledge of the military art will be advantageously employed in the military service, and in a measure secure to that class of troops the advantages which in this respect belong to standing armies." 15

Agreeing with his predecessor that the Military Academy should be supported in order that the men receiving training therefrom might aid to the progress that was then going on, Jackson saw, also, efficiency in the fiscal affairs of the War Department, which is thus indicated:

"The present system of military education has been in operation sufficiently long to test its usefulness, and it has given to the Army a valuable body of officers. It is not alone in the improvement, discipline, and operation of the troops that these officers are employed. They are also extensively engaged in the administrative and fiscal concerns of the various matters confided to the War Department." 16

But regardless of the emphasis he placed upon the Military Academy, its merits, and the good results emanating from it, Jackson recognized its weakness, and asserted that like all other political systems, the then prevailing mode of military education had its imperfections, both of principle and practice, and that these could be improved by rigid inspections and by legislative scrutiny without destroying the institution itself.

Following Jackson so closely, and being a part of the Jackson administration, it would appear that Van Buren would

---

16 Ibid., p. 169.
further Jackson's military education policy.

From the War of 1812 with England, to the election of 1836, the American people had been doing a profound, organic work. In these years Van Buren was one of the chief men in public life. He and his political associates had been profoundly affected by the Jeffersonian philosophy of government; namely, that rights not given to the United States government by the constitution were reserved to the states respectively. Van Buren's philosophy of government in the Congressional session of 1825, took a definite stand against the schemes of internal improvement. On February 11, 1825, differing with Benton, he voted against topographical surveys in anticipation of public works by the Federal Government. On February 23, he voted against an appropriation of $150,000,00 to extend the Cumberland Road, while Jackson voted for it. On other similar bills he discouraged national support.

When he became President he did not discourage appropriations for the Military Academy, but he did not say that the Academy answered all the purposes of its establishment, and that the government should receive commensurate services for the outlay in making those services possible. He said:

"The Military Academy continues to answer all the purposes of its establishment..... At present the cadet is bound..... to remain in service five years from the period of his enlistment, unless sooner discharged, thus exacting only one year's service in the Army after his education is completed. This does not appear to be sufficient."

Government ought to command for a longer period the services of those who are educated at the public expense, and I recommend that the time of enlistment be extended to seven years, and the term of the engagement strictly enforced."

As to Fillmore, his philosophy toward military education is easily discerned from his laconic message to Congress which reads:

"The reorganization of the Naval Academy, I recommend to your attention as a project worthy of your encouragement and support. The valuable services already rendered by this institution entitles it to the continuance of your fostering care."

Also from his early public career days he was a believer in preparedness. Then he was in the legislature he felt the necessity in time of peace of being prepared for war, and making such arrangements for public defense as would be necessary to protect the national honor and prosperity against any sudden or unforeseen attack or outrage.

At the time his administration came into power, many changes had just taken place of no ordinary nature, and numerous discordant elements were present, trapping the political horizon in a blaze of fire. It was on the eve of the fierce struggle relative to the balance of power, between the slaveholding states of the South, and the non-slaveholding states of the North. Secession conventions were being held in the South, and anti-slavery meetings in the North. It is no

---

10 Richardson, James D., op. cit., III, p. 390.
11 Ibid., V, p. 177.
21 Ibid., p. 314.
wonder then that Fillmore made mention of military education, but it is surprising that he did not treat the subject at greater length, as did Lincoln nine years later.

But war was actually going on when Lincoln said to Congress that the large addition to the Regular Army, in connection with the defection that had so considerably diminished the number of its officers, gave peculiar importance to the recommendation for increasing the corps of cadets to the greatest capacity of the Military Academy.

The above recommendation given in 1861, called for increased enrollment in the Academy; in the 1863 message the President made a plea for a maximum enrollment in order that the country might not be deprived of the proper quota of educated officers to which it was entitled.

The reason for the emphasis being placed on educated officers was doubtless due to the fact that the world had many lessons to learn from the great Civil War; the naval fight in Hampton Roads opened a new era in maritime warfare; the marches of Sherman disturbed all previous axioms of logistics; the system of instantaneous entrenchments, adopted by the soldiers of both sides in the war, changed the whole character of modern field tactics. And, also, Lincoln himself was a military strategist. In speaking of Lincoln's remarkable correctness of military views, General E.F. Smith said:

22 Richardson, James D., op. cit., VI, p. 40.
"I have long held to the opinion that at the close of the war Mr. Lincoln was the superior of his generals in his comprehension of the effect of strategest movements and the proper method of following up victories to their legitimate conclusions." 24

General J.M. Wilson held the same opinion; and Colonel Robert E. Scott frequently called Mr. Lincoln, "The ablest strategist of the war". From the foregoing it is safe to infer that Lincoln knew what he was talking about when he was asking that the country be provided with the "proper quota of educated officers".

Lincoln's successor, Johnson, if for no other reason than living in the wake of the Civil war would sanction military and naval training. His call for "more ample grounds for the Naval Academy" shows his interest. His own life experience had had much to do with army life. In fact he had been a part of the military organization during the war, having served as military governor of the State of Tennessee, which experience may have enabled him to make distinction between the educated and untutored officer.

"What was Grant's concern toward an institution that made it possible for an army officer to be trained? One would think that inasmuch as he had spent a large part of his life in the army, to say nothing of the four years spent as student at West Point, that he would be over-zealous for giving support to military institutions. The opposite is evident if the length of his recommendations to Congress regarding military

25 Richardson, James D., op. cit., VI, p. 117.
schools is an index. Note his thoughts:

"There should be a modification in the mode of the selection of cadets for the Military Academy, in order to enhance the usefulness of the Academy, which is impaired by reason of the large amount of time necessarily expended in giving new cadets a thorough knowledge of the more elementary branches of learning, which they should acquire before entering the Academy." 26

It is interesting to know how Grant got his appointment to the Academy. It was not made on a basis of merit, but was procured through the influence of his father. Grant realized that his own elementary education had been deficient, and that his appointment to the Academy had been made through political maneuvering; hence, he felt keenly the importance of adopting a new mode for selecting cadets. He felt, perhaps, even more keenly the importance of a prerequisite education to appointment.

Although civil service was not hinted at in the message quoted, it may be that Grant was thinking along civil service lines. To say the least of it, he was suggesting definite prerequisites to higher learning. In another message to Congress, along the line of education, President Grant urged the establishment of a professorship of rhetoric and English literature in the Academy at West Point. This further emphasized the idea that the President was anxious to have the academic precede the military. He was politician enough to know that cadets

would continue to be appointed through political strategy, but his own experience led him to believe that military training could be greatly enhanced by a sufficient academic background.

Grant's term of office closed in 1869, then followed the period of uncertainty over the contest between Hayes and Tilden, which resulted in Hayes' election. Excitement ran high, and the statement was rife that Hayes would never take the oath of office of President of the United States. The controversy between Hayes and Tilden tended to revive the sectional strife of the 60's.

Although Tilden was a New Yorker, he was a democrat, and thus received support from the Southern States. Reconstruction had not yet been consummated. Much needed yet to be done in the Southern States relative to protecting the rights of the freedmen. It would therefore be expected that a message to Congress from a President governing at such a time would at least recognize the military in connection with anything he might have to say about education.

At this particular period professors from military schools were taken from their charges to do much detailed work pertaining to drilling in the regular army. To lessen this drain on the teaching staff, President Hayes recommended:

"With a view of lessening this drain to some extent, it is recommended that the law authorizing the detail of officers from the active list as professors of tactics and military science at at certain colleges and universities be so amended as to provide that all such details be made from

---

the retired list of the Army." 30

Since the Garfield-Arthur administration apparently ig-
nored military education, Cleveland found the War and Navy
Departments woefully neglected. The United States did not have
a war vessel which could have kept the seas for a week, while
the country was dependent upon foreign manufactures for gun
forging, armor and secondary batteries. The President and his
Navel Secretary determined to encourage the home manufacture
of armor. The management of the department in all its details
was revolutionized until, by the close of Cleveland's adminis-
tration, a high state of efficiency in both the Navy and Mili-
tary Departments had been reached. 31

The foreign policy of the United States had given the
Cleveland administration much concern. As early as 1883, Austria
had threatened to expel the American Foreign Minister; in 1886
trouble existed in diplomatic circles between England and
America. These two episodes coupled with Cleveland's idea of
proficiency led to improvements of all branches of the Military
and Naval Departments, which improvement gave rise to this refer-
cence in President Cleveland's message to Congress relating
to the status of the Military Academy:

"The Military Academy at West Point is reported
as being in a high state of efficiency and well
equipped for the satisfactory accomplishment of the
purposes of its maintenance.... The fact that the

30 Richardson, James D., op. cit., VII, p. 618.
31 Parker, George F., Recollections of Grover Cleveland ( New
32 Ibid.
class which graduates next year is an unusually large one has constrained me to make appointments to second lieutenancies in the army from civil life, so that much vacancies as exist in these places may be reserved for such graduates; and yet it is not probable that there will be enough vacancies to provide positions for them when they leave the military school."

Roosevelt’s utterances were the first since Cleveland’s regarding Naval and Military preparatory training. He was wholly consistent with his public utterances and practices when he said to Congress December 2, that there was needed a thousand additional officers in order to properly man the ships then provided for and under construction, and the classes at the Naval School at Annapolis should be greatly enlarged.

To illustrate his consistency, in June, 1897, Roosevelt had delivered a carefully prepared address before the Naval War College at Newport, Rhode Island, in which he said:

"A century has passed since Washington wrote 'To be prepared for war is the most effectual means to promote peace'. We pay to this maxim the lip-loyalty we so often pay to Washington’s words; but it has sunk deep into our hearts.... In this country there is not the slightest danger of an over-development of warlike spirit.... In all our history there has never been a time when preparedness for war was any menace to peace. On the contrary, again and again we have owed peace to the fact that we were prepared for war. ....Preparation for war is the surest guarantee for peace." 35

These excerpts from President Roosevelt’s speech were given to show that his recommendation for larger classes in the

33 Richardson, James D., op. cit., VIII, p. 549.
34 Ibid., X, p. 541.
35 Bishop, Joseph Bucklin, Roosevelt and his Times ( New York, Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1920), 1, pp. 74-76.
Naval School at West Point were in full keeping with his philo-
osophy of preparedness.

In a later message to Congress with regard to the academ-
ies at West Point and Annapolis, he further stresses prepared-
ness and would have the academic in those schools lessened for
the sake of military training. For, says he:

"We do not need to have these schools made
more scholastic. On the contrary we should never
lose sight of the fact that the aims of each
school is to turn out a man who shall be above
everything else a fighting man. In the Army in
particular it is not necessary that either the
cavalry or infantry officer should have any
special mathematical ability.... The fact should
be kept in mind that the Naval Academy is not
a university but a school, the primary object
of which is to educate boys to be efficient
naval officers." 56

As is generally known without comment, Roosevelt was a
practical man who believed in continuing a task that was once
begun until it was finished. Thus he says further, in refer-
ing to the Naval Academy, that changes in curriculum should
be in the direction of making the course of instruction less
theoretical and more practical, that no portion of any future
class should be graduated in advance of the full four years' course, and under no circumstances should the standard of
instruction be lowered. 57

As a natural sequence to the emphasis placed upon mil-
tary and naval education, the attitude of Woodrow Wilson is

56 Richardson, James D., op. cit., XI, p. 1226.
57 Ibid., p. 1295.
approached. In 1914, shortly following the outbreak of the World War, but before the United States had any idea of entering the conflict, Wilson said to Congress:

"We must depend in every time of national peril, in the future as in the past not upon a standing army, nor yet upon the reserve army, but upon a citizenry trained and accustomed to arms." 38

During the war that followed he saw and realized the advantage a nation had in being trained and prepared for war. It is not to be expected that he would change his attitude at the close of the war toward the training of officers for military service. Hence, it is not strange to read from his message to Congress these words:

"It is also necessary that the number of midshipmen at the Naval Academy at Annapolis should be increased by at least three hundred in order that the force of officers should be more rapidly added to; and authority is asked to appoint for engineering duties only, approved graduates of engineering colleges." 39

Being a college man holding several degrees, it is clear that President Wilson would call for college graduates for any sort of responsible work.

In summarizing, it is only necessary to say that all of the Presidents from Washington to the present time made some sort of reference to military education except John Adams, Franklin Pierce, Chester A. Arthur, Benjamin Harrison, William Howard Taft, Warren G. Harding, Calvin Coolidge, and Herbert Hoover.

39 Ibid., p. 142.
CHAPTER III

NATIONAL AID TO PUBLIC EDUCATION

When we see today the aid that the national government is giving our state schools, and hear the growing demand for a Federal Department of Education, we wonder how it came to pass that the Federal Government came to take part in education and what the various Presidents had to do with directing that part. Since it is in the material aid that the Presidents recommended for the schools we can find what they really thought of education, this chapter is important.

None of the early Presidents except Jefferson spoke of national aid. This can probably be explained by the fact that there was little surplus revenue to be devoted to education, and there was not the same interest in education then as later. There were few state institutions to ask for aid, as most of the work was done in private schools.

It was quite like Jefferson to mention aid for schools, because he thought his part in building the University of Virginia was one of the things that entitled him to be remembered. Therefore we are not surprised to see him favoring national aid. Through the efforts of the Secretary of Treasury, Gallatin, the public debt was being speedily reduced, and a surplus revenue was in sight. Therefore Jefferson sent a message to Congress saying that the probable accumulation of the surpluses of revenue beyond what could be applied to the payment of the public debt whenever the freedom and safety of our commerce should have been restored merited the considera-
tion of Congress. He asked if the surplus was to lie in the
vaults, if revenue was to be reduced, or if it should be spent
on education, roads, rivers, and other great foundations of
prosperity.

Although there had been a surplus of $6,000,000 in 1806,
Gallatin felt it best to use economy for two years more, promis-
ing that by that time there would be at least $5,000,000 at
that time to be spent. The surplus in 1807 was greater, but
soon after Jefferson had made the above statement, the embargo
went into effect, and the decreased revenues made it impossi-
ble for Congress to act on Jefferson's suggestions. 2

The ordinance of 1785 provided that lot 16 in each of the
townships organized under the ordinance would go to the schools.
In 1836, the provision of the ordinance was extended to include
the Mississippi Territory, and since 1835, each state admit-
ted to the Union, except Illinois, Texas, and West Virginia, received
two or more townships for the purpose of founding a university.
Of the surplus funds distributed by Congress in 1836, three-
fourths of the states assigned the greater part to education. 3

With these precedents established Congress voted in the
latter part of 1838 a bill donating public land to the several
states and territories which provided colleges for the benefit

1 Richardson, James D., Messages and Papers of the Presidents
(Bureau of National Literature and Art, 1907), I, p. 456.
2 Basset, J. C., Short History of the United States (Chicago,
3 Dutton, Samuel Train and Snedden, David, The Administration
of Public Education in the United States (New York, The
felt that it would be better to establish professorships of agriculture in existing institutions. Coming to the question of constitutionality President Buchanan said that he did not believe Congress had a right to appropriate money from the Federal Treasury for state schools. Soon the Federal Treasury would be collecting taxes for the state as well as for the Federal Government. "This would be an actual consolidation of the Federal and State Governments, so far as the great taxing and money power is concerned, and constitute a sort of partnership between the two in the Treasury of the United States, equally ruinous to both." As to the former grants he felt them constitutional, for the grant was an inducement to the settler. However, he felt that he could not sign the bill and he returned it with his veto.

Buchanan's veto stopped for a time this movement to give national aid to state schools, but July 2, 1862, the Morrill Act, which was in substance the same as the one vetoed by Buchanan, was signed by Lincoln. Instead of 20,000 acres for each senator and representative it provided 30,000 acres. This was signed by Lincoln, but pressure of war duties probably kept him from a discussion of its merits. We may believe that it met with his complete approval. An amendment in 1866, to the Morrill Act extended the time for establishment of state acceptance to three and eight years from the date rather than two and

---

five years as it was at first.

Since Garfield died before making any statement on education as President we can study his speech on June 8, 1866, in the House of Representatives, on a bill "to establish a National Bureau of Education". The future President began by pointing out that no one had full statistics on the schools of that time. He felt that "there never has been a time when all our educational forces should be in such perfect activity as at the present day". He continued, "ignorance -- stolid ignorance--is our most dangerous enemy". If the citizen of today is not educated in virtue and integrity, then he will be in vice and iniquity. He pointed to the high degree of illiteracy. The uneducated from the old world and the 4,000,000 slaves now citizens were an "immense force" that confronted American institutions. He declared, "We must pour on them all the light of our public schools. We must make them intelligent, industrious, patriotic citizens or they will drag us and our children down to their level".

As to the cost of a Bureau of Education, he showed how much the government had spent for a Coast Survey Bureau, an astronomical observatory, a light-house board, expeditions to foreign countries, a survey for a Pacific railroad, and a Patent Office. Could those people who voted for these bills refuse to vote $15,000 for a bureau "to collect and record the intellectual resources of the country "?

---

He said that, in his own state, the things to which he would point with pride were steps toward progress in education. He told of the fight for education in Pennsylvania and other states. Briefly Garfield traced the history of education in Europe, and then quoted many statements which showed the need of education. In his concluding paragraphs he said:

"Shall this government do nothing to foster and strengthen those educational agencies which alone can shield the coming generation from ignorance and vice, and make it the impregnable bulwark of liberty and law? I know that this measure presents few attractions to those whose chief work is to watch the political movements that relate only to nominating conventions and elections. The mere politician will see in it nothing valuable, for the millions of children to be benefitted by it can give him no votes. But I appeal to those who care more for the future safety and glory of this nation than for any mere temporary advantage, to aid in giving to education the public recognition and active support of the Federal Government." 7

This speech probably played a large part in the passage of an act to establish a "Department of Education". This was passed in the House June 19, 1866, by a vote of 30-44, and in the Senate without a roll call after changing the title from a Department to a Bureau. The bill was signed by President Johnson March 2, and Henry Bernard was immediately appointed commissioner. We can find Johnson's attitude in his prompt action on this bill. His only communication concerning education was a message stating that Georgia had accepted the donation made by Congress.

8 Ibid., p. 63.
9 Richardson, James D., op. cit., VI, p. 538.
President Grant, in his messages, makes numerous references to public education, all of a nature that show his interest in the welfare of schools. As new states were admitted, he pointed out that "Good faith requires us to give full effect to existing governments. The time-honored and beneficent policy of setting apart certain sections of public land for educational purposes in the new states should be continued". In the same message to Congress, he praised the work of the Bureau of Education and asked for liberal legislation to secure its efficiency. In 1871, in regard to the granting of the proceeds of the sale of public lands to settlers, he declared that educational interest would be well served by such a grant, and that his recommendation in no wise aimed at a curtailment of educational work.

The Bureau of Education again received the President's praise in his annual message of December 2, 1872, when he declared that a rapidly increasing interest in education was no doubt due in large part to the work of the Bureau of Education. He further declared that:

"The bill now pending before Congress, providing for the appropriation of the net proceeds of the sales of public land for educational purposes, to aid the states in the education of their rising generation, is a measure of such great importance to our real progress and is so unanimously approved by the leading friends of education that I commend it to the favorable attention of Congress." 12

10 Richardson, James D., op. cit., VII, p. 111.
11 Ibid., p. 153.
12 Ibid., p. 205.
The message of December 1, 1873, also called favorable attention to the Bureau of Education, pointing out that it was attempting to give proper direction to "new appliances and increased facilities". These various allusions to the Bureau shows that Grant was in sympathy with its program and that he was cooperating with it.

Following his predecessor's views on education, President Hayes sounded a note of support of education. His message shows how completely the country had gotten away from Buchanan's views on the idea of the constitutionality of the grants when he declared:

"The intelligent judgment of the country goes still further, regarding it as also both constitutional and expedient for the General Government to extend to technical and higher education such aid as is deemed essential to the general welfare and to our due prominence among the enlightened and cultured nations of the world. The ultimate settlement of all questions in the future --- depends upon the virtue and intelligence of the people ---. No less than one-seventh of the entire voting population of our country are yet unable to read and write." 14

Not only did Hayes favor the work that had been done in the past toward helping the states, but he went further in his message of 1873, when he declared:

"To education more than to any other agency we are to look as the resource for the advancement of the people in the requisite knowledge and appreciation of their rights and responsibilities as citizens, and I desire to repeat the suggestion contained in my former message in behalf of the enactment of appropriate measures by Congress for the purpose of supplementing with national aid the local systems of education in the several states." 15

13 Richardson, James D., op. cit., VII, p. 252.
14 Ibid., p. 477.
15 Ibid., p. 506.
His message in 1879, showed him still urging on Congress the advisability of continued national aid to education. He declared that no more fundamental responsibility rests upon Congress than that of devising appropriate measures of financial aid to education. He praised the "forethought" of the founders of the government, who not only furnished the basis for a common school system for the new states, but universities and colleges as well. He recommended measures in accordance with this traditional policy for the further benefit for the extension of these privileges to all parts of the country.

We find the President still asking Congress for aid for states without revenue for good schools in 1880. He explained that it was not to be forgotten that "the best and surest guaranty of the primary rights of citizenship is to be found in that capacity of self-protection which can belong only to a people whose right to universal suffrage is supported by universal education". The means at the disposal of many states for school purposes were inadequate for a system of free instruction, he said. This problem had been made more serious by the slave population that had now become citizens. Therefore,

"I respectfully recommend that Congress, by suitable legislation and with proper safeguards, supplement the local educational funds in the several states where the grave duties -- of citizenship have been devolved on uneducated people by devoting to the purpose grants of the public lands, and if necessary, by appropriations from the Treasury of the United States".

President Hayes quoted the report of the Commissioner of

[Richardson, James E., op. cit., VII, p. 579.]
Education to the effect that there was an increase of public interest in schools, that industrial training was gaining proper attention, and that the Government schools were gaining steadily in "public estimation". The Commissioner had pointed to "the very great need of help from the nation for schools in the territories and in the Southern States". For this reason he repeated his former recommendation that,

"An educational fund be set apart from the net proceeds of the sales of public lands annually, the income of which and the remainder of the net annual proceeds to be distributed on some satisfactory plan to the states and 17 the territories and the District of Columbia".

As we have seen in the messages of Grant and Hayes, the question of a group of illiterate slaves now suddenly become voters was becoming serious. The messages of both Grant and Hayes are filled with references to need for schools for the decrease of illiteracy. We see the same thought in Arthur's first message. He declared that the educational problem had become more serious since many of those who had become citizens could not read the ballot. He had been pleased to learn that there was an increase of interest in their instruction, but that local and state funds were not sufficient for the purpose of education. Therefore,

"I would suggest that if any fund be dedicated to this purpose it may be wisely distributed in the different states according to the ratio of illiteracy, as by this means these localities which are most in need of such assistance will reap its special benefits". 18

17 Richardson, James D., op. cit., VII, pp. 626-627.
18 Ibid., VIII, p. 53.
He repeats the same proposal two years later in his message of 1885, saying that the rate of illiteracy was alarming.

March 2, 1887, there was passed the Hatch Act which provided for experiment stations under the control of the land grant colleges and universities. It provided for scientific investigation and experimentation. This is mentioned by President Cleveland in his message December 3, 1888. He declares:

"The Department seeks a progressive development. It would combine the discoveries of science with the economics and ameliorations of rural practice. A supervision of the endowed experimental station system recently provided for is a proper function of the Department, and is now in operation. This supervision is very important, and should be wisely directed to the end that pecuniary aid of the government in favor of intelligent agriculture should be so applied as to result in the general good and to the benefit of all our people, thus justifying the appropriations made from the public treasury." 20

The desire to curb the growing rate of illiteracy has already been discussed in this chapter. As some of the Southern States were struggling to regain their feet industrially or agriculturally, there was little money to be spent for the operation of schools, either for white children or for negroes. Recognizing the situation, President Harrison did more than suggest action. He recommended a plan which would aid temporarily the states. He, like the other Presidents since the Civil War, could see nothing unconstitutional in direct grants from the Treasury to states. He declared that the freedom of slaves who got citizenship, and the states that were unable to provide

---

19 Richardson, James B., op. cit., VIII, p. 104.
20 Ibid., p. 799.
instruction were a special circumstance. He suggested aid, and advocated that along general lines the aid should be applied for the need of the group who made aid necessary. It was essential, he declared, that the plan have the support of the states, and that they supplement the governmental aid, and not depend on it. He recommended that the appropriation be for a short time, so that the Congresses that followed might not be bound by their action.

In accordance with Harrison's suggestion the second Morrill Act became law August 30, 1890. Congress provided a sum which later became $50,000 a year which came from the sale of lands. No money was to be given states which discriminated against negroes, but the bill provided that separate schools could be maintained for negroes. The curricula were restricted to instruction in agriculture, mechanic arts, the related sciences, and the English language.

Just as the freed slaves affected the messages of Presidents and the legislation of Congress in the period between 1870-1890, so did the growing industrialism of the nation affect the messages of the Presidents after that period. The effect may be seen in the message of Theodore Roosevelt December 3, 1906. A full quotation of his message is helpful to an understanding of the new attitude. In beginning he declares:

"It is probable that a thoroughly efficient system of education comes next to the influence of patriotism in bringing about national success

21 Richardson, James B., op. cit., IX, pp. 54-55.
of this kind. Our Federal form of government, so fruitful of advantage to our people in certain ways, in other ways undoubtedly limits our national effectiveness. It is not possible, for instance, for the National Government to take the lead in technical industrial education, to see that the public school system of the country develops on all its technical, industrial, scientific, and commercial sides."

The work must be left in the hands of the states. Yet the National Government, Roosevelt continues, can promote the scientific work in the schools of the District of Columbia.

"It should be one of our prime objects as a nation, so far as feasible, constantly to work toward putting the mechanic, the wage-earner who works with his hands, on a higher plane of efficiency and reward, so as to increase his effectiveness in the economic world, and the dignity, the remuneration, and the power of his position in the social world. Unfortunately, at present, the effect of some of the work in the public schools is in the opposite direction. If boys and girls are trained merely in literary accomplishments -- the tendency is to unfit them for industrial work and to make them reluctant to go into it--. This-- should be strenuously combated." 23

President Roosevelt continued in a similar vein, showing that engineering and mechanical trades should be recognized for their true worth. He declared that this country need not fear pauper labor of other countries, but that it should fear the well trained labor of other countries. He felt that the school system was defective that failed to train the boy for the farm or workshop, and he believed that "the calling of the skilled tiller of the soil, the calling of the skilled mechanic, should alike be recognized as professions, just as emphatically as the calling of lawyer, doctor, merchant or clerk". 24

23 Richardson, James B., op. cit., XI, pp. 1202-1203.
24 Ibid., p. 1250.
After the passage of the second Morrill Act, there were passed others giving the states more aid, but the messages of the Presidents fail to reveal their attitudes. However, the fact that they signed these acts usually indicates their stand. With the close of the World War there was a problem of what to do in regard to those men whose education had been hampered as a result of war, or those who lacked opportunity. In regard to these, President Wilson asked in December, 1920, that plans for vocational training for these men be placed under the Board for Vocational Education and that the whole plan be considered with the legislation for medical care and rehabilitation.

We have briefly considered the attitudes of the Presidents toward national aid to the states. While only two, before the Civil War, mentioned such aid, and not all of those afterward, we can get a survey of the general attitude. Jefferson was the first to mention aid. The next President who spoke of aid was Buchanan who thought the proposals were unconstitutional, and who vetoed a bill to give national aid. He was the only President to take such a view, as the later Presidents not only approved similar legislation, but recommended that Congress go even further.

CHAPTER IV
SPECIAL PHASES OF EDUCATION
Astronomical Observatory

Although not classed as an educational institution, but approaching the realm of pure science, it may be well to mention the attitude of our Presidents toward the Naval Observatory in Washington. In so far as the writer's research has revealed, only two of the nation's chief executives made mention of it; namely, John Quincy Adams and William Howard Taft.

Aided at the time of its origin by the clear vision and persistent legislative efforts of Adams, the Observatory came into being as a result of expanding needs of the navy depot of charts and instruments. It quickly developed functions that were directed toward determining the positions of the sun, the moon, the planets, and the stars; its experts tested chronometers and helped to standardize time over the country; and very recently it has had much to do with promoting our knowledge of the new science of aeronautics.

As has been noted in a previous chapter, Adam's administration was much concerned with efforts toward public improvements, and he himself was not slow in taking the lead. He stated in his first message to Congress that in assuming her station among the civilized nations of the earth that it would seem that America had contracted the engagement to contribute

her share of mind, of labor, and of expense to the improvement of those parts of knowledge which lie beyond the reach of individual acquisition, and, particularly to geographical and astronomical science. Then after reciting the contributions to this type of science by the governments of France, Great Britain, and Russia, he propounded the query, "Is it not incumbent upon us to inquire whether we are not bound by obligations of a high and honorable character to contribute our portion of energy and exertion to the common stock?"

Further revealing his attitude toward the development of science and even demonstrating his trend in nationalistic belief, Adams recites in his December message, above quoted in part:

"Connected with the establishment of an university, or separate from it, might be under-taken the erection of an astronomical observatory, with provision for the support of an astronomer, to be in constant attendance of ob- servation upon the phenomena of the heavens, and for the periodical publication of his observations." 2

Although his recommendations were unheeded by the Con- gresses of 1825-1829, President Adams lived to see the estab- lishment of the Naval Observatory in Washington, in 1842 when he was a member of Congress.

The Observatory must have functioned well or some presi- dential mention would have been made of it over a period of fifty-seven years. President Taft did not, in 1909, openly criticise the Institution but he did say to Congress that the

2 Richardson, James D., Messages and Papers of the Presidents (Bureau of National Literature and Art, 1907), II, pp. 313-314.
Observatory could be adequately subserved by a small division of the Navy Department at only a fraction of the cost of the present Naval Observatory. He also stated that the official head of the Observatory should be an eminent astronomer appointed by the President by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, holding his place by a tenure at least as permanent as that of the Superintendent of the Coast Survey or the head of the Geological Survey, and not merely by a detail of two or three years' duration.

It is evident from the President's remarks that the terms of the officials of the Observatory were of short duration, and that their appointments were made with but little regard to their ability. Being highly proficient in many things, and living in an age that was calling for specialists, it is perfectly in accord with sound reasoning to assume that President Taft's attitude toward the Observatory was consistent and logical.

---

When Warren G. Harding assumed office, he came in contact with a movement calling for greater centralization in national education. A movement held by many to be of the foremost importance to the cause of education throughout the country was the effort made in recent years to reorganize and enlarge the representation of education in the national government by providing for its inclusion in a National Department of Education instead of, as at present, a Bureau.

The immediate impulse of this movement may be considered an outcome of the test imposed upon our social structures during and directly following the period of our participation in the World War. The searchlight was played then, as never before, upon certain results of our educational system; we were shaken out of decades of complacency; and from the discussion there arose, at the same time, a vision of new heights to be scaled in an educational way, and of what such scaling might contribute to future social progress.

The defects in our educational system became apparent first through the report on the draft, and shortly after, through the statistics of the 1920 census, the resulting studies in educational and other circles, and nation-wide discussion. It was felt that education in the United States was failing to reach many of the problems co-extensive with a national field. The Bureau of Education, in spite of invaluable services, was held to be too limited in power and financial support to be capable of giving the full extent of the
needed inspiration to educational problems that was called for.

Ever since the establishment of the Bureau of Education in 1869, there had been a constant demand and much agitation for a Commissioner of Education to be a member of the President's cabinet. Beginning with a series of intensive attempts, the Goulier bill was introduced in 1910, but failed in passage; similar bills, the Abercrombie, December, 1915; the Owen, April, 1914; the Smith, October, 1918; the Baer, January, 1919; Smith-Towner, July, 1919; Towne-Sterling, April, 1921; and Owen, April, 1921 were introduced. Such activities demonstrate clearly that the President would necessarily have to incorporate the idea of a National Department of Education in his first message to Congress.

The friends of the movement were not disappointed. After mentioning the different ways in which the United States aided education, President Harding said:

"Many subjects of the greatest importance are handled by bureaus within Government departments, which logically have no apparent relations to them. Other subjects which might well have the earnest consideration of Federal Authorities have been neglected or inadequately provided for. To bring these various activities together in a single department whole fields could be surveyed and when interrelationships could be properly appraised, would make for increased effectiveness, economy, and intelligence of direction."

Endeavoring to satisfy those who opposed a National Department of Education, and who were fearful of over-central-

---

4 Johnson, Julia E., op. cit., pp. lxxix-lxx.
5 Ibid., pp. 8-10.
In creating such a department it should be made plain that there is no purpose to invade fields which the states have occupied. There need be no fear of undue centralization or of creating a Federal bureaucracy to dominate affairs, better to be left to state control. We must, of course, avoid overlapping the activities by the several states, and we must ever resist the growing demand on the Federal Treasury for the performance of service for which the state is obligated to its citizenship.

Following the foregoing message, the Fess-Kenyon bill was introduced in both Houses of Congress, but in its provisions, education was given a subordinate place in connection with a Department of Public Welfare. Friends of education opposed its passage, and it died before coming to a vote. However, the Sterling-Reed bill was introduced, which met with popular approval. From every section of the United States, telegrams containing strong statements of support of the bill came in every hour during the days of the hearings from people everywhere interested in the Sterling-Reed bill. From February 20, to June 4, 1924, hearings were held practically every week on the measure before the Committee on Education. This bill also failed to pass. Then followed the introduction of the Smoot-Haples bill only to be killed; and it was followed by the Dallinger bill which again failed of passage. Such were the contentions for National educational legislation when Coolidge fell heir to the Presidency.

7 Johnson, Julia E., op. cit., pp. 11-12.
President Coolidge sent his message to Congress December 8, 1925. Much of his message was given to a discussion of a National Department of Education.

"Our National Government", he said, "is not doing as much as it legitimately can do to promote the welfare of the people. Our enormous material wealth, our institutions, our whole form of society, can not be considered fully successful until their benefits reach the merit of every individual..... There is an inescapable personal responsibility for the development of character, of industry, of thrift, and of self control. These do not come from the government, but from the people themselves. But the government can and should always be expressive of steadfast determination, always vigilant, to maintain conditions under which these virtues are most likely to develop and secure recognition and reward. This is the American policy.... Having in mind that education is purely a local problem, and that it should always be pursued with the largest freedom of choice by students and parents, nevertheless, the Federal Government might well give the benefit of its council and encouragement carefully in this direction."

So far in the message, it is evident that President Coolidge was trying to approach tactfully the subject that had been before the minds of the people since 1889; but now he strikes straight ahead and declares:

"If anyone doubts the need of concerted action by the States of the Nation for this purpose, it is only necessary to consider the appalling figure of illiteracy representing a condition which does not vary much in all parts of the Union. I do not favor the making of appropriations from the National Treasury to be expended directly on local education, but I do consider it a fundamental requirement of national activity, which, accompanied by all allied subjects of welfare, is worthy of a separate department and a place in the Cabinet. The humanitarian side of government should not be repressed, but should be cultivated." 8

8 Coolidge, Calvin, Annual Message to Congress (Bowling Green, Kentucky, The Park City Daily News, December 8, 1925).
Thus, Presidents Harding and Coolidge spoke, but as yet, their recommendations have not been heeded, and the cry for a National Department of Education goes on.

**Race Education**

Indian education was brought to the front by Arthur. As to the reason why, we may safely conjecture. During Grant's second administration an investigation by a House of Representative's committee, uncovered the fact that since 1870 an employee in the Indian service had paid $12,000 for the privilege of retaining his office. The retention in office meant the exploitation of funds placed in his hands for service to the Indians who were unlearned and illiterate. "Land-sharks" were preying upon the ignorance of the Indian and purchasing his lands at only a nominal price. So great was the sympathy for the Indian that Congress passed the Dawes Act of 1887 which provided protection for the land that was allotted to the Indian by Congress.

It may also be noted that attempts to deal with the Indians in tribes was a failure, thus the government determined to break up tribal holdings of lands and give each individual a small portion for his private property, and to open the remainder to settlement by the whites. At any rate, pacific colonization of the Indians, protection of their interests, and promotion of their future welfare was one of

---

10 Ibid., p. 97.
the leading questions of the day. In response to the situation as it had developed, President Arthur communicated to Congress the following:

"I advise a liberal appropriation for the support of Indian schools, because of my confident belief that such a course is consistent with the wisest economy. Even among the most uncultivated Indian tribes there is reported to be a general urgent desire on the part of the chiefs and older members for the education of their children. It is unfortunate, in view of this fact that during the past year the means which have been at the command of the Interior department for the purpose of Indian instruction have proved to be utterly inadequate. The success of the schools which are in operation at Hampton, Carlisle, and Forest Grove should not only encourage a more generous provision for the support of those institutions but should prompt the establishment of others of a similar character." 11

Cleveland in his first administration made bare mention of Indian education, and then only to commend the work of some private forces that were fostering some Indian Schools. 12 Harrison, however, made a definite recommendation that lent itself to the general welfare of the Indians. For years it had been the policy of the government to maintain what was known as contract Indian schools, the contracts being made with churches to educate the Indian children. All churches had an equal opportunity but the Catholics outstripped the others. Harrison took up the matter of abolishing contract schools with vigor. Priests and nuns as teachers were sent away from

11 Richardson, James D., op. cit., VIII, p. 56.
12 Ibid., p. 795.
the reservations under conditions that caused severe criticisms. Nevertheless, Harrison stuck to his idea and recommended to Congress:

"The Indian schools can be transferred and merged into the common school systems of the States when the Indian has fully assumed his new relation to the organized civil community in which he resides and the new States are able to assume the burden."

As a result Indian school attendance increased and methods employed in teaching were improved upon.

Cleveland noted the improvement, and to Congress he remarked:

"The progress which has attended recent efforts to extend Indian school facilities and the anticipation of continued liberal appropriations to that end can not fail to afford the utmost satisfaction to those who believe that the education of Indian children is a prime factor in the accomplishment of Indian civilization." 14

In 1893 the Methodist Episcopal church withdrew from participation in government aid without, however abandoning its schools. In 1895 this example was followed by the Presbyterians and Congregationalists; in 1896 by the Friends, and in 1897 by the remaining Protestants. These withdrawals of leadership placed more responsibility and initiative on the United States Government, if the education of the Indian was to be continued.

14 Richardson, James B., op. cit., IX, p. 326.
Initiative was not lacking, for in Theodore Roosevelt there was a man of action, and one who believed in the equality of opportunities for mankind. He took a man for what he was without regard to race, creed, or color. In his earlier days he had spent a part of his time in the West, and had become familiar in no small way with the customs and needs of the Indian. In speaking of Indian education to Congress he said:

"In the schools the education should be elementary and largely industrial. The need of higher education among the Indians is very, very limited. On the reservations care should be taken to try to suit the teaching to the needs of the particular Indian.... The first and most important step toward the absorption of the Indian is to teach him to earn his living; yet it is not necessarily to be assumed that in each community all Indians must become either tillers of the soil or stock raisers. Their industries may properly be diversified, and those who show special desire or adaptability for industrial or even commercial pursuits should be encouraged as far as practicable to follow out each his own bent.... Every effort should be made to develop the Indian along the lines of natural aptitude, and to encourage the existing native industries peculiar to certain tribes, such as the various kinds of basket weaving, canoe building, smith work, and blanket work. Above all, the Indian boys and girls should be given confident command of colloquial English, and should ordinarily be prepared for a vigorous struggle with the conditions under which their people live, rather than for immediate absorption into some more highly developed community." 17

Later in his administration in one of his messages he said in part:

17 Richardson, James D., op. cit., I, pp. 450-544-545.
"Among the crying present needs of the Indians are more day schools, situated in the midst of their settlement, more effective instruction in the industries pursued on their farms, and a more liberal extension of the field matron service, which means the education of the Indian women in the arts of homemaking. Until the mothers are well started in the right direction we cannot reasonably expect much from the children who are soon to form an integral part of our American citizenship. Moreover, the excuse continually advanced by male adult Indians for refusing offers of remunerative employment at a distance from their home is that they dare not leave their families too long out of their sight.... I trust that the Congress will make its appropriations for Indian day schools and field matrons as generous as may consist with the other pressing demands upon its providence."

Continuing, but having reference to the Negro, Mr. Roosevelt said: "No more short sighted policy can be imagined than, in the fancied interest of one class, to prevent the education of another class".

Roosevelt was alluding to the discrimination between the educational opportunities afforded the white and colored races. Being a Republican, he was cognizant of their support to the Republican Party as voters. He was aware, also, of the servile conditions out of which the Negro was trying to emerge. Further, he was doubtless moved to action in behalf of Negro education on account of the many efforts put forth by individuals and organizations then fostering Negro welfare.

In 1906, the General Education Board had contributed liberally to Negro education by appointing and supporting State supervisors of Negro schools; Homemakers' Clubs for Negro

Richardson, James D., op. cit., XI, p. 1190.
girls had been formed in nine Southern States; the Slater Fund for "uplifting the ... emancipated population of the Southern States and their prosperity" was being utilized; and at the time Roosevelt was delivering an extended discourse, which will hereinafter be quoted, Miss Anna T. Jeans, of Philadelphia was donating $1,000,000.00 for the purpose of aiding rural schools for Negroes. Roosevelt evidently fell into this philosophy, which was extant relative to the education of the Negro, as is thus revealed:

"The free public school, the chance for each boy and girl to get a good elementary education, lies at the foundation of our whole political situation. In every community the poorest citizens, those who need the schools most, would be deprived of them if they only received school facilities proportioned to the taxes they paid. This is as true for the Negro as for the white man. The white man, if he is wise, will decline to allow the Negroes in a mass to grow to manhood and womanhood without education. Unquestionably education such as is obtained in our public schools does not do everything toward making a man a good citizen; but it does much. The lowest and most brutal criminals, those for instance who commit the crime of rape, are in the very great majority men who have had either no education or very little; just as they are almost invariably men who own no property; for the man who puts money by out of his earnings, like the man who acquires education, is usually lifted above mere brutal criminality." 21

Here the President was doubtless striking at lynching, which was more or less rampant in the South then, and, which would be lessened according to his philosophy, if the Negro

20 Ibid., pp. 165-165.
21 Richardson, James D., op. cit.; XI, p. 1190.
were educated above brutal criminality which prompted lynching. Continuing, and evidently thinking of the education of the Negro as a means of lifting him out of criminality he said:

"Of course the best type of education for the colored man, taken as a whole, is such education as is conferred in schools like Hampton and Tuskegee; where the boys and girls, the young men and young women, are trained industrially as well as in the ordinary public school branches. The graduates of these schools turn out well in the great majority of cases, and hardly any of them become criminals, while what little criminality there is never takes the form of that brutal violence which invites the lynch law." 22

Shortly following the World War, the race question was renewed. This time, not so much by the South as by the North. During and after the war, thousands of colored people migrated to the great industrial centers, to Chicago, Detroit, and to Cleveland, there to become a part of an already complex civilization; there to compete with thousands of native and foreign born whites. Racial and labor difficulties naturally arose, and even though minor in their scope they provoked discussion.

When Congress met in December, 1923, President Coolidge called the attention of that body to the fact that there were 12,000,000 colored people living in the United States. Whether he was prompted to make mention of the Negro in view of the influx of the Negro into the North, or whether he wanted to further endear the colored people to his political party, is a matter of conjecture. At any rate he declared that under our constitution their rights were just as sacred as those of any

22 Richardson, James D., op. cit., II, p. 1190.
other citizen, and that it was both a public and private duty to protect those rights. He stated that about half a million dollars was recommended for medical courses at Howard University to help contribute to the education of five hundred colored doctors needed each year. Following which, he said:

"On account of migration of large numbers into industrial centers, it has been proposed that a commission be created, composed of members of both races, to formulate a better policy for mutual understanding and confidence." 23

In closing he made a plea for mutual forbearance and human kindness to be extended the Negro in each community. "Such a method" he said, "gives much more promise of a real remedy than outside interference". 24

In conclusion, it is noted that Arthur, Cleveland, and Roosevelt recommended that Federal aid be extended the Indians, and that their schools eventually become a part of the public school system. Roosevelt and Coolidge urged support for Negro education; the former, that the education of the colored people would lessen their tendencies at criminality, the latter that the Negroes' constitutional rights commanded educational support. Grant urged Congress to give attention to the illiterate condition of the Negro, as was stated above.

24 Ibid.
Smithsonian Institution
and
The Library of Congress

Since mention was made of the Smithsonian Institution and the Library of Congress by the same Presidents, and since the two institutions were treated collaterally by them, the two sub-chapter heads will be treated collectively.

Both Hayes and Roosevelt dwelt at length on the merits of the institutions. Said Hayes in his first message to Congress, December 3, 1877:

"I earnestly commend the request of the Regents of the Smithsonian Institution that an adequate appropriation be made for the establishment and conduct of a national museum under their supervision."

In the very next paragraph in his message he affirmed:

"The question of providing for the preservation and growth of the Library of Congress is also one of national importance."

One year from the above date Hayes again addressed Congress and in part said:

"To preserve and perpetuate the national literature should be among the foremost cares of the National Legislature. The library gathered at the Capitol still remains unprovided with any suitable accommodation for its rapidly increasing stores. The magnitude and importance of the collection, increased as it is by the deposits made under the law of copyright, by domestic and foreign exchanges, and by the scientific library of the Smithsonian Institution, call for building accommodations which shall be at once adequate and fireproof." 26

To arrive at the reasons why Hayes was so interested in

26 Ibid., p. 572.
preserving and perpetuating national literature, it is
necessary to go back to his activities as a member of
Congress a decade prior to his presidency. In the House he was
a member of the Committee on Library, of which he was chairman.
In this period, and largely through the efforts of Mr. Hayes,
the Library space was vastly expanded, the Smithsonian Institu-
tion's collection of books and papers was transferred to
the Library of Congress, and the valuable Peter Force collec-
tion of Americana was purchased by the government.

To further reveal President Hayes' interest in the subject
we quote from the following letter:

"In January, 1895, Mr. Ainsworth R. Spofford,
long Librarian of Congress, wrote: 'As Chairman
of the Committee on the Library of Congress on the
part of the House, Mr. Hayes took a lively interest
in its affairs. When the great historical collection
of Peter Force, the Washington printer and journal-
list, was offered to the Government in 1866, his
keen appreciation of the value of its stores was
evident in the committee, which unanimously rec-
ommended its purchase, and this rich library of
books, pamphlets, manuscripts, and newspaper files
was secured to the nation.'" 27

The quotation just referred to certainly reveals the
consistency of President Hayes' recommendations to Congress
relating to the preservation of books and knowledge.

Roosevelt mentioned both institutions, but hardly placed
the emphasis Hayes did on them in so far as the length of
references to them was concerned. As is generally known,

26 Ibid., p. 282.
Roosevelt was interested in books, both the reading and the writing of them. His hunting expedition into the wilds of Africa was scientific in its scope and was under the auspices of the Smithsonian Institution.

In referring to the Library of Congress he said:

"Resources are now being provided which will develop the collection properly, equip it with the apparatus and service necessary to its effective use, render its bibliographic work widely available, and enable it to become, not merely a center of research, but the chief factor in great cooperative efforts for the diffusion of knowledge and the advancement of learning." 29

Equally interested was he in the Smithsonian Institution, about which he affirmed:

"In furtherance of its declared purpose— for the 'increase and diffusion of knowledge among men'— the Congress has from time to time given it other important functions.... There should be no halt in the work of the institution, in accordance with the plans which its Secretary has presented, for the preservation of the vanishing races of great North American animals in the National Zoological Park." 30

Presidents Harrison and Roosevelt were both learned men. In books, they had a common interest, and although living in different generations, their attitudes toward education were strikingly similar.

29 Richardson, James D., op. cit., I, p. 452.
30 Ibid.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY

The attempt of Washington and others to found a National University has been traced. Their messages reveal their interest in educational progress in this respect but their efforts were not successful.

Military and Naval Academies have been studied and it was found that the attitude of the Presidents was determined by their previous army training, or their realization of the necessity for well trained officers.

There has been a change in national opinion in regard to National aid to state schools. Buchanan's veto of National aid on the ground that it was unconstitutional was followed by the Presidents after the Civil War who changed their opinions and worked in the opposite direction.

Numerous subjects have been given attention under "Special Phases of Education". The Astronomical Observatory, Federal Department of Education, Race Education, and the Smithsonian Institution and the Library of Congress have been mentioned by a few Presidents who were influenced by reasons of interest or by trends of the time.

It may be seen that education was of great importance in the beginning of the country, that Washington and Jefferson gave special attention to things educational. A little later when the country's interest was in expansion there were fewer references to education by the Presidents. The struggle over
slavery may have been responsible for the lack of presidential concern on education in the period before the Civil War. The war which freed the slaves brought the problem of education to the nation's attention. In the effort to aid the new freedmen, agriculture and industry, Federal aid was given for state education. It has been shown that the growing tendency of Presidents is to urge that aid be increased. In the message of Roosevelt is found a demand that more useful subjects be taught.

This paper indicates changed views on education, but the messages show throughout that all who expressed views on the subject to Congress felt the necessity for education, and explained its value to Congress and the Nation.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


