

Transcribed Excerpts from George Hosmer Address to the Erie County Common School Education Society, February 3, 1840

Gentlemen of this Society, and Fellow Citizens:

We are assembled to promote Common School Education; to wake up our own minds, and if possible, to rouse the attention of the public to its importance. The object is worthy of all that we can do. It is a noble object; and it is pleasant to see so many drawn together by motives so honorable to them ... we have come for the good of our children, and of the rising generation; for the prosperity of our country and the elevation of humanity...

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Laws and civil institutions clothe the body of society, and protect it from harm, and open ways for its free passage; but education changes the character of that body's soul, and prepares it for the reception of liberty and law. The school then stands paramount to the halls of legislation...

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The common school—and I think it should be free to all—is the grand instrument to elevate the mass of society. It is the people's college; its doors should be open to every child, and care should be taken that every one goes through and obtains his degree ; not perhaps of bachelor, or master of arts, but his qualification for citizenship...

p. 8

Keep open then, the common free schools, and in them let our children acquire a taste for knowledge, let their intelligence and moral sense be awakened...

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Keep open then your Common Free Schools... let man be thoroughly educated and he will find the light of truth at last... Thousands among us have not dreamed of the effects of popular education; they have complained of its expensiveness, not foreseeing that it will diminish vagrancy and pauperism and crime; that it will be an antidote to mobs...

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there is room enough still for improvement in the modes of education, and teachers should be familiar with the principles of science and the laws of mind, so that they may carry on the reform...

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In this country, in which there are so many paths open to honor and usefulness, it is in vain to expect the services of faithful and competent teachers, so long as their average compensation is but little more than we pay to the common day-laborer, who tends masons or mends the highway. Even in our cities, the salaries of teachers are but little if any larger than those which are paid to many intelligent merchant-clerks, who are still in their teens...

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It is true there have been expenses in the outfit, especially for building school-houses, which in these times have fallen heavily upon some districts; but it is to be hoped that our citizens will cheerfully bear the present burden, in view of the immense advantages that will accrue to our children and coming generations. Free Schools are a noble monument to the patriotism and philanthropy of those who establish and maintain them...

But more than this,—I regard this subject in religion's light. Solemn responsibilities have been laid upon us. God has bound all his children together by the ties of humanity. His Son enjoined upon us the command of active love. We must do what we can for the good of each other. The strong must help the weak;-- the wise the ignorant; --the affluent the needy. It is the order of nature. It is the command of God. Oh! how can he appear before that judgment-seat where Omniscience presides, who has withheld his means or personal influence, and suffered the child of his poor neighbor to grow up in ignorance, and thus become prepared for sin and misery!