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Karl Marx, *[On Education in Modern Society]*⁵⁷

Citizen Marx said there was a peculiar difficulty connected with this question. On the one hand a change of social circumstances was required to establish a proper system of education, on the other hand a proper system of education was required to bring about a change of social circumstances; we must therefore commence where we were.

The question treated at the congresses was whether education was to be national or private.⁵⁸ National education had been looked upon as governmental, but that was not necessarily the case. In Massachusetts every township was bound to provide schools for primary education for all the children. In towns of more than 5,000 inhabitants higher schools for technical education had to be provided, in larger towns still higher. The state contributed something but not much. In Massachusetts one eighth of the local taxes went for education, in New York one-fifth. The school committees who administered the schools were local, they appointed the schoolmasters and selected the books. The fault of the American system was that it was too much localized, the education given depended upon the state of culture prevailing in each district. There was a cry for a central supervision. The taxation for schools was compulsory, but the attendance of children was not. Property had to pay the taxes and the people who paid the taxes wanted that the money was usefully applied.

Education might be national without being governmental. Government might appoint inspectors whose duty it was to see that the laws were obeyed,

⁵⁷ This text partially reproduces two speeches on the issue of education given by Karl Marx (see note 1) at the GC on 10 August and 17 August 1869. A short summary of the first was released on August 14, in the weekly *The Bee-Hive*. The full versions are in GC, III: 140–1 and GC, III: 146–7.

⁵⁸ The question of general education was discussed at the previous congresses of the IWMA, in Geneva (1866), Lausanne (1867) and Brussels (1868).

just as the factory inspectors looked after the observance of the factory acts, without any power of interfering with the course of education itself.

The Congress might without hesitation adopt that education was to be compulsory. [...]

[...] As to Mrs Law's Church budget⁵⁹ it would be good policy for the Congress to declare against the Church. [...] Nothing could be introduced either in primary, or higher schools that admitted of party and class interpretation. Only, subjects such as the physical sciences, grammar, etc., were fit matter for schools. The rules of grammar, for instance, could not differ, whether explained by a religious Tory or a free thinker. Subjects that admitted of different conclusions must be excluded and left for the adults to such teachers as Mrs Law, who gave instruction in religion.

⁵⁹ The proposition that Harriet Law (see note 16) moved at the General Council meeting of 17 August 1869 called for the transfer of the Church's property and income to schools.