

**Grand Lodge  
Free & Accepted Masons  
Of California  
Grand Oration 1929**

**Grand Orator  
Reverend Tully C. Knoles  
"Education from a Masonic Standpoint"**

Brethren of the Grand Lodge

It is with unusual pleasure that I address you upon this occasion. The past year in association with my fellow Grand Lodge officers, it has been a delight to assist our Most Worshipful Grand Master Hutaff in several communications of the Grand Lodge for various services, and also to be with him and the Very Worshipful Grand Lecturer upon several occasions for Installations and other visitations.

Upon one occasion the friendliness and charm of our Grand Master was shown in a remarkable degree. A brother approached him in the anteroom, and exhibiting his apron said, "Brother Hutaff, you raised me twenty-two years ago," and in token of that he showed the signature of Gus A. Hutaff. Instantly the Grand Master said, "Let me have the apron," and he resigned it "Gus A. Hutaff, Grand Master of the Jurisdiction of California." You may be sure that such an exhibition of friendship will be treasured not only by the brothers, but by all who have come under the charm of our presiding officer.

In addressing you today, I am mindful of the old adage, "Shoemaker, stick to your last," and the subject of "Education from a Masonic Standpoint" is enjoined upon me.

Naturally, the first consideration of this theme must have to do with education concerning the history, customs, work and ritual, interfraternal relationships, national affiliations, and the international coordinations necessary and desirable for the securing of a worldwide fellowship of Masonic adherents.

There is required a great deal of research to present to the craft adequate information in these fields. Our usual instruction contains such a mixture of fact and fancy, of history and tradition, of reality and of symbolism, that a serious attempt should be made to acquaint all of our initiates with the areas of these various fields as well as an evaluation of their comparative worth. Much of this instruction of necessity may be given only in the sacred precincts of a just and legally constituted Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons, and much of it can only be given in periodicals, devoted to the interest of Masonry, in books of accredited standing written by those whose training and ability are such as to give them a note of authority. The form and attractiveness of both books and periodicals should be such as to command the attention and respect not only of the members of the order, but of the profane as well. Impossible and fantastic claims should be eliminated and substantial facts substituted in all cases.

In our interfraternal relations particularly there is a need for a full and free discussion of all orders and institutions whose members are drawn from Master Masons. Their advantages and disadvantages should be clearly set forth by competent authorities, and their attractiveness should never consist in their mysteriousness to a member of a Blue Lodge.

We plead also for a closer union among the various Grand Lodge jurisdictions in the United States. There has been too much particularism in Masonry in America. It is a splendid thing that the most Worshipful Grand Masters meet in unofficial groups from time to time, but in these days of rapid growth in national organizations there should be the strength of unity in our vast institution whose impact for good citizenship and high morality would be greatly increased by a more closely knit regular organization among the American Grand Lodges.

And in particular should there be Masonic education concerning foreign jurisdictions. The similarities as well as the differences should be carefully explained, and when there is sufficient information to warrant action World Wide Masonry may be united and toleration and brotherhood become facts of relationship and not words in a ritual.

Recently in a Masonic Lodge, I clasped hands with a member of a Lodge in British India, and his Indian countenance lighted with sympathetic interest in our common service, and many of us have rejoiced in the inspiration and fellowship of Chinese as well as of European Masons — should not the process of unification be accelerated by education until by knowing the Masons of

the world our prejudices should be eliminated?

In the field of education which does not have to do primarily with history and ritual, there is a wide range for the development of theories of moral values and relationships, not only for Masonic relationships within the body of the institution, but in the dealing of the individual Mason with the outsider, not only that the outsider may thereby conceive a good opinion of Masonry, but for the personal moral growth of the members.

Again, there is a vast field for the cultivation of the philosophy of our order. So much of Masonic philosophy to which we have listened or which we have read is stilted and unreal, is based upon far-fetched symbolism or seeks mystical confirmation through appeal to strange signs or numerical symmetries. Masonic philosophy should be interested in life and in problems of human living, much more than in esoteric speculation.

My personal feeling is that the average Lodge is too satisfied, and perhaps too busy with the work of the conferring of the degrees to spare time for the consideration of the real problems of human living in this most complex human age.

The modern American world is materialistic, mechanistic, and selfish. It needs spirituality, personality, and altruism. Where can it secure solid teaching to develop these ideals better than within Masonic Lodges? You may answer—That is the function of the church. True, but Masonry gathers round an altar upon which is an open Bible, every Mason has declared in writing his belief in God and in immortality, and every Mason has sworn not only to be just in his dealings but to limit his passions with due regard for all mankind.

There is no question about the ideality or the sublimity of the declared tenets of Masonry, but there is a vast field for Masonic education in the illustration of and inspiration to the applications of these elements of philosophical disquisition to practical living. And it is my humble opinion that the average Mason hungers in vain for the food of such teaching. Brethren, our membership has not culled all of the best of American life, but it has much of it, and it will respond nobly to intelligent appeal, and its response will be of such a nature as to enhance the power of the Order ever the noblest impulses of unselfish lives.

My second consideration has to do with the traditional and present relationship of Masonry to education in general. Masonry has always fostered education and has been foremost in its support of the public schools of the countries in which it is established. This is particularly true in the case of the United States of America, where the public schools hold a unique position.

Originally all schools in the American colonies were under religious auspices, and it was not until 1821 that a free public high school was founded in our land, and with one exception, all of our original colleges and universities were founded under religious guidance, and many of them retain that leadership until this day.

Masonry in America has always and rightly so, lined itself on the side of public school as opposed to sectarian school development. It is necessary for modern minded Masons to keep three factors of this problem in mind. Sectarian education for, by, and of a religious denomination is one thing; religious schools open to students of all faiths upon an equal footing, but with distinctively theological training either restricted to separately organized schools of theology, or made wholly elective is another thing; while public education in the American Democracy of necessity must eliminate all but the most formal of religious exercises and indeed all religious instruction of all sorts. Unless we are exceedingly careful this promises to be a very serious problem. There are many strict adherents of this ideal of public education, who do not stop to realize that the United States of America, Mexico, Russia and China are the only great nations that do not have the sanction of an established religion, and that of this list the United States is the only government which has never had the sanction of religion. With these exceptions, the public schools of other nations have religious curricula as surely as they have curricula in any other field.

Unless we as Masons are very careful of our phraseology, we may force ourselves to take positions on the matter of Masonry's attitude to public education neither in harmony with our traditional attitude nor our actual desires. Our traditional attitude has been opposition to sectarian education, not religious education; to the use of public funds for the support of sectarian education, not to the honest development of moral values and concepts.

In our earnest and rightful desire to protect ourselves and people from sectarian education, we should not sanction and indeed demand an atheistic education. Let me make my meaning clear. In our American democracy we do not have a unified type of people and therefore we have no national religion, formal or otherwise. But we have not yet forgotten that in the beginning our

forefathers demanded that every man should have the right to "worship God according to the dictates of his conscience," and we must not forget that the separation of church and state was not in a spirit of antagonism to religion, but in not only a spirit of toleration, but in a spirit of appreciation of the fact that organized religion could and would care not only for the distinctive religious needs of the people, but also for the total function of higher education. This tremendous fact is too frequently overlooked by the over-zealous partisan of our modern school system. Not many who frankly and rather quickly respond to the tocsin to protect our public school system are willing to follow the call to establish state and federal monopoly of all education from the kindergarten to and through the University.

Rigid conformity to the highest educational standards should be enforced upon all schools of all grades operating in America. Let us note that the secularization of schools has now reached approximately nine-tenths of completeness in the elementary and secondary fields and is increasing in the collegiate and university fields, but has not yet reached fifty per cent of completeness, in spite of the size and influence of our great and growing State Universities.

There is here a vital consideration. Our democracy is very inclusive, as to peoples, creeds, economic theories, and social practices, and the more inclusive our school system becomes the greater the number of areas of silences mapped out, and the fewer and more conventional and the more materialistic the fields of untrammelled research. We are not permitted even to attempt to solve our religious, social and political relationships with our intelligence, we must use our traditions and our prejudices.

Masonry in California can point with just pride to the interest created and sustained in public education as the result of a decade of observances of Public Schools Week. Too much praise cannot be given to the Committee which originated the plan, and to the successive groups which have carried it forward. It has been my great privilege since the formal recognition of the week to have spent many days and nights in travel and in speaking in the interest of our California school system. I have only words of praise for the idea. But I also have a great deal of sympathy for local committees which try to do successfully what is desired. There are two extremes, both bad. Somewhere in between lies the ideal. One extreme is to have an interesting program put on by the children in the schools, a varied program which calls for the participation of a great number of children. This calling out of a great number of children will mean of course a large audience, for the parents and friends of the pupils are out in great force. As a demonstration it is highly successful, but it gives no opportunity for the stressing of the whole program, and I have learned by bitter experience that a speaker on such an occasion, who usually gets the floor about nine forty-five, is roundly scored if he takes time to deliver the address which he has prepared, and is considered ridiculous if he accepts the situation and passes it by with "a few well-chosen words." The other extreme is where no program has been arranged, save the address of the speaker. Very few occupants of the seats of the Auditorium are present. The chairman deplores the lack of interest, and the speaker loses confidence in his "drawing" power. As I said before, somewhere between these extremes is the ideal situation. It can be arranged so as to balance the program between the speaker and the school production.

Our schools today are doing so much more than they did a few years ago, and a good, well-produced opening program, given by students, supplemented by an informational address by some one thoroughly interested in education, followed by an hour given over to the viewing of an exhibition of the handiwork of the children, will make a program attractive enough to call out an adequate crowd, definite enough to be of real educational value, and informative enough to be stimulating. I have seen this plan successfully followed.

Nowhere else on the face of the earth are the citizens of a great Commonwealth doing more in a material way to educate its young people than in California. Far-reaching experiments are being tried. Particularly in the secondary field is California the leader. Here the total adolescent population, representing every economic, social, financial, moral and religious stratum in society is required to be present in a unified school system. Problems of administration, and of economic adjustment are very serious, but they are being attacked in a sane, whole-hearted way. Masonry has undertaken through its Committee on Public Schools Week to sanction, explain and popularize the great experiment in our beloved state. May we not give the Committee our most whole-hearted support.

Then again, Masonry is committed to the ideal of a federal department of education with a secretary in the President's Cabinet. It is startling that America has left the education of her young so fully to the care of states and local units. There are of course historical reasons for this. When

the Constitution was written, public education was in its infancy, and in fact all education, as before mentioned, was looked upon more as a local social and religious function than as a political one. Then again in the controversy between nationalism and particularism the matter of the control of schools in our diverse situation seemed more logical in local hands.

Such scientific study as has been given by various groups seem to indicate a need now not for federal control, but for national guidance. The tremendous increase in the facilities for the intercommunication of ideas, including the latest one, the radio, calls for national minimum requirements, and not local ones. The differences which have emphasized local standards no longer exist, and our schools should reflect at least approximate unanimity of standards. Illiteracy is today criminal in the United States, and a costly criminality at that.

There are three general attitudes of opposition to a federal department of education: The first is in the field of an increase of federal control and interference. The successive bills that have been introduced have carefully and consistently guarded the local interests at that point. Federal aid and guidance, but not control, is designed.

In the second place there is fear for democracy itself in a government-controlled system of schools dovetailed into a federal system of education. An autocracy must control education in order to perpetuate itself; an aristocracy must crumble if an aristocratic system of education does not sustain it. Democracy can only live where there is freedom of thought, of speech, of publication, of teaching, and of research. Democratic control of education by many is looked upon as a misnomer. But in our opinion, a Federal Department of Education would foster all of these freedoms rather than restrain them.

Then there is a group of ultra-conservative churchmen, not at all confined to the Roman Catholic Church. This group fears the continued secularization of education until the state, federal and individual, should gain a monopoly on education. There is little to fear in this field, though the opposition thus far has been able to combine enough votes representing these various attitudes to defeat each successive bill advanced. But victory will come for education is now and always will be the most important factor in our social and political world, and its guidance cannot be left to local interest, temporary caprice or super induced hysteria; the steadying continuous influence of national stability is essential.

It is also the writer's personal belief that Masonry should support the proposition that at Washington, D. C., there should be located and adequately supported by the Federal Government a great National Graduate University, when all the resources of the Congressional Library, and all of the opportunities of Congressional and of International Conferences should be at the disposal of students of America and of the world. This is feasible and most desirable. What a capstone to the great structure of democratic schools in our forward-looking nation! Here could be gathered the most eminent scholars of the world in every field. Here adequate facilities could be provided them by the nation. Laboratories in which experiments fraught with good to humanity might be performed in every conceivable field. Here the library facilities and artistic opportunities beyond compare might be developed for the utilitarian and cultural good of mankind. What a dream to stir the heart of a patriot!

My brethren, these are my convictions: Masonry needs education in her own life and history. Masonry needs education in her own philosophy and ethics; and the world needs the power of her leadership in stimulating interest in public education and in the education of the public from the kindergarten to a Federal Department of Education and a National University.