

## THE ELON COLLEGE WEEKLY.

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## IMPORTANT.

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WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 7, 1910.

**RESOLVED, THAT THE NEXT LEGISLATURE SHOULD PASS A COMPULSORY EDUCATIONAL LAW FOR NORTH CAROLINA.**

The above query was debated by the Freshman English class of upwards of forty young men and women Nov. 30th, while studying Argumentation in a course of rhetoric and composition. The speeches were required to be brief—two minutes. The six given below were delivered as printed here with the exception of those by Messrs. Holland and McCauley of which a two-minute extract from each was given.

**Argument for the affirmative, that, since the State has an educational qualification for the ballot franchise, then the same State should require, by law, attendance in the schools.**

By Miss Verna Garrett.

In considering all questions which our State has to deal with, we should ever keep in mind the welfare of our State and its people. There has been a law enacted in North Carolina which disfranchises all who cannot read and write. Thus we have a law which deprives a man of his citizenship, but we have no law that tends to qualify him for citizenship. Then is it right for the State to say what qualifications a citizen must have and at the same time have no law compelling her children to prepare themselves and qualify themselves for citizenship? It's like killing a dog and then whipping him because he bled. Every child in North Carolina is entitled to a common-school education and that child who is deprived of his share of the schooling offered by the State, is deprived of a part of his natural rights. Some parents are even so cruel as to make their little children work to support the family while they (the parents) loaf about the streets; others are so negligent as to allow their children to idle on the streets, smoke cigarettes, curse, and prepare themselves for the county workhouse, the State penitentiary, or the electric chair.

rather than to send them to the public schools, and prepare them for future usefulness. Such cases as these are remedied by a compulsory school law.

Doubtless my opponents will say that some poor widow depends upon her children's work for a living, but I can say in reply, that "a way is always provided," and, further, I can say, that the poor man without education is in a poor position to better his condition. So why not let North Carolina's next legislature pass a law that will make it a man's duty as a citizen to prepare his children to be a blessing to themselves and to their State? We need better and more thorough education of the masses than we now have, such as has been obtained by other States through a compulsory educational law. It is up to you, my opponents, to show why it will not do the same thing for North Carolina.

**An argument for the negative in which the rapid strides the State is making in general intelligence and the heavy expense of a compulsory attendance law, are urged as reasons against a compulsory education.**

By Mr. I. J. Kellum.

In discussing the question of the enactment of a compulsory school attendance law, by the legislature, we naturally ask, Would such a law help conditions in North Carolina? Let us see. About fifty per cent. of all children dislike school. Why is it that fifty per cent. of the children dislike school, while the other fifty per cent. like it? Children differ from each other in their make-up. What will appeal to one child will not appeal to another. Some children delight in books, while others have no desire for them whatever. Our common-school curriculum, as now constituted, appeals only to that class of children who take a delight in books. It is for this reason that so many children do not like school.

Which, then, is the proper course for the State to pursue in this matter; enact a compulsory attendance law, compelling all children to go to school and force on them something for which they have no desire, or revise our course of study so that it will appeal to children of all classes and aptitudes?

Let us suppose, for a moment, that the enactment of such a law is just. The expense of instituting such a system of education is so great that the public has not yet been able to make provisions for it. In 1907 in New York City, which claims to have the best educational system in the world, with a compulsory attendance law in force, 12,000 children were denied school privileges for lack of suitable accommodations. What is the advantage of a compulsory attendance law in that city?

Could North Carolina at the present time, with our people already overburdened with taxes, safely undergo the vast mass of debt that would be heaped upon her by the instituting such a system of schools? There is in our State a school population of more than 700,000. We have a school enrollment of about 500,000 and a yearly school expenditure of more than \$3,000,000. With the enrollment of this law accommodations would have to be made for the 200,000 children not in school, thus raising our school expenditure to the \$5,000,000 mark. This would

place a yearly school tax of more than \$2.50 on every man, woman, and child in North Carolina.

After all, is there not a better way to do away with non-attendance than the passage of this law? The latest report of the Supt. of Public Instruction shows that in those districts having modern up-to-date school houses, longer terms, and better teachers non-attendance has materially decreased.

It seems to me that the advancement North Carolina has made along educational lines during the past ten years should be progressive enough for the most progressive. In 1905 she ranked as number 42 in the scale of illiteracy. Today she ranks high in the column of intelligence. Why not progress as we have been progressing rather than jump to a new and more burdensome method in the State's educational system, a method that is opposed to the free, conservative, and democratic spirit of our people?

A compulsory attendance law cannot be enforced in North Carolina because public sentiment is not in sympathy with such a law. A North Carolinian detests compulsion in anything. Non-attendance cannot be overcome by the enactment of such a law. But on the other hand, may be materially decreased, as shown by the Supt's report, if the State will continue to spend its money in the improvement and betterment of school conditions all over the State.

**An argument for the affirmative in which the evils of child labor in factories are cited as a cause in favor of compulsory education.**

By Miss Mabel Pritchette.

I come before you to debate the solemn question that the next legislature of North Carolina should pass a compulsory educational law. We all know that there is indeed a great need for compulsory education as many parents are unwilling to secure educational advantages for their children. For this reason the power of the State should procure to neglected children the rights of unprotected childhood. However, the principal cause of the campaign for child protection, through education, should be to keep children from labor under the factory system and wage system. These systems have been the cause of the destruction of many children's physical, moral and intellectual well-being. This form of labor takes children from their homes the entire day and robs them of the happiness of childhood.

Compulsory attendance at school is not merely for the purpose of education, but to preserve a more favorable environment during childhood.

Honorable judges, I think you will agree with me when you think for a moment of the many children who spend their time in idleness on the streets studying in the school of crime because of lack of proper educational laws.

My opponents may say that a widow is not able to keep her children in school as she needs them to earn wages for their scanty living, but we know that there is always a way provided for the poor in compulsory educational laws. If the many children that are now living in ignorance, only had the advantage of a good education, they might become the leading men of the nation. Take, for

example, Henry Clay or Benjamin Franklin, who were once poor boys, and by means of an education though largely obtained by private study they became leading men of the nation.

Honorable judges, I am sure you will agree with me when I say this State of ours is a great one, but it would be still greater if we had compulsory education. I think the Legislature will see the need of compulsory education and will soon pass a law to that effect.

**In which an argument for the negative is made on the score of personal liberty.**

By Miss Grace Rollings.

I maintain that the theory of compulsory education is inconsistent with the American social and political institutions, that it teaches a violation of the rights of personal liberty, that it denies freedom and justice and that its teaching would tend to turn our American Democracy into a despotism. North Carolina cannot now accommodate her total school population, and if education was made compulsory the effort to accommodate all children of school age, which the act would necessitate, would involve an increase in taxation which the tax payers could not, and would not, bear.

It would prejudice them against the State's school system and consequently it would be a hindrance rather than a help to the cause of education.

In some rural districts it is impossible for small children to attend school. Where there is but little school tax collected, and hence very few school facilities can be supplied, under a compulsory system of education, the children would be forced off to some distant school in all kinds of weather thereby endangering their health.

By compelling all children of school age to attend school we would deprive them of the advantages of parental training at home. Under the compulsory system, the parent is compelled to send his children to school where the child comes in contact with all kinds of children, and, as a result, often rude and disobedient. Under our present school system the parents can use their own choice as to whether they will send their children to the schools. They can also remove them from school when conditions render it advisable.

In large cities compulsory education laws could not be carried out because the public has not provided sufficient accommodation for the schooling of all children.

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