----From a Viewpoint of Lifelong Learning in an Age of Change----

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I. Introduction

What is called "social education" is, broadly speaking, educational activities outside school education. The key word in the title of this article, "American Lyceum" was an agency for the general diffusion of knowledge and intellectual taste. In 1826, the American Lyceum was established, as will be seen later, for the purpose of the advancement of learning. It was the beginning of one of the foremost institutions associated with public address—one of the patterns of rhetorical communication.

In any given society, people in every aspect of social life in such fields as education, politics or businesses have attempted and still attempt, and will continue to attempt to influence others through the act of manipulating words to answer, to remedy, to improve, and/or to avoid the state of things in a given time and occasion. In other words, we seek in any society to influence the mind and behavior of others and we are influenced by others.

The rationale for extending rhetorical communication in our social life is to consider and take some countermeasures against a thing which is other than it should be. The Earth's environmental problems, for instance, are one of our most important issues today and tomorrow. The vital importance of communication in any form in our present-day human society is, needless to say, imperative and indisputable.

At this time and age in a greatly changing society of accelerating societal complexities, social education activities that aim to improve and develop learning outside school education in any society is to be expected. For the purpose of facilitating and improving a lifelong learning society which will lead to our social and human development for a healthy life and our physical survival in the future, the idea and spirit of the American Lyceum movement would suggest to us the importance of engaging in a basic source of our consideration to think broadly and

consider the many possibilities for the expectations of social education in an age of change. This short essay, through a sketchy history, briefly and partially, of the American Lyceum would try to "look backward into the future" in the hope that we can better see where we are going, influenced by the law of succession: the present is deeply rooted in the past. Suggestions for future study include further attempts to extend this line of history in anticipation of a still wider range of social education.

I. Aristotle's Rhetoric and Lyceum

Since Isocrates (436–338 B.C.) Greek education, as is well known, was based on what it called the seven liberal arts taught in the medieval school: the *trivium and quadrivium* (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music). Rhetoric is grouped with the three subjects, or *Trivium* (logic, grammar, and rhetoric). Aristotle (384–322 B.C.) set up a school in the grove of the lyceum, which was the place where he lectured to the youth of Greece. According to tradition, "in the mornings he lectured on a philosophy and on the logic and methodologies of the science, in the afternoons on ethics, politics, and rhetoric"¹⁾. We see, for instance, in his book, *Rhetoric*, such wording as "the man who gave the mat in the Lyceum" (Bk. II, 7), and in Cicero's book, "in the illustrious Academy and Lyceum" (*De Ortore*, Bk. I. xxi. 98). It could be understood that the American Lyceum was named after the lyceum from the place where Aristotle lectured to the youth of Greece.

It was Aristotle, Plato's student and a contemporary of Isocrates, who brought together a systematic, well organized form of rhetoric which was significant in speech education up to his time. He hoped to show that rhetoric was not a sham and snare, but a true art. His approach to rhetoric was the recognition that probability is the base of the persuasive art. Recognition of probability as the essence of the persuasive art lies behind Aristotle's contribution to rhetorical theory. Neither the dialectical argument, nor rhetorical arguments are concerned with absolute Truth. Thus, rhetoric is the counter part of Dialectic. Aristotle considered the speaker and speech in the light of the audience, and he employed enthymeme—rhetorical syllogism—as a tool for reasoning in rhetoric. The basic difference between the theories of his teacher, Plato, and that of Aristotle lies in their conception of "truth." To Aristotle, it is "approximate truth," a very human kind of truth. His *Rhetoric* in the phenomenal world bases on apparent truth, not on the "Truth" in the mind of God, that Plato perceived. To Plato in his metaphysical conception, the philosopher's instrument for the discovering of truth is dialectic. It proceeds by reason and reveals truth.

Aristotle defined rhetoric, as is well known, as "the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion." In other words, rhetoric is persuasive communication, in that it invents, arranges, and expresses idea, be it spoken or written language, in a manner adapted to influence the minds and attitudes of other. It is, in fact, human communication study — the study of the processes involved in sending and receiving of messages— has drawn largely from his rhetoric.

Isocrates tells us in his *Antidosis* (II) that "none of the things which are done with intelligence takes place without the help of speech" and further he says "in all our actions as well as in all our thoughts speech is our guide, and is most employed by those who have the most wisdom." The art of discourse for a popular audience today as in antiquity is indispensable to our social and human development for a full and healthy life. It would be expected in an age of change to facilitate activities of social education just as the case observed in the development of American Lyceum to which many orators of the educators, statesmen, literary men, and scientists of the day came for speaking, discussing, and sharing various social topics of their days.

II. Lyceum Movement as an Element of Popular Education

The beginnings of the lecture movement can trace back to the organization of the American Lyceum. The American Lyceum represented a group of neighbors who met occasionally in the school or the town hall for the purpose of discussing matters of their common interests. Before the Massachusetts branch of the American Lyceum was established in 1826 by Josiah Holbrook, the origin of the lyceum had existed. Kenneth G. Hance tells us about this matter as in the following.

Although the evidence is not clear as to the beginnings of American lecturing as a phase of public address, it is certain that the lecture platform was in existence long before the colonies won their independence. In the early days it probably consisted primarily of evangelists who traveled from one community to another, not only as preachers of the Gospel but as bearers of news. Their function was essentially that of the lecturer of later years — to tell of the latest events, to interpret news, and to stimulate discussions on topics of current interest. Too many communities in the early days they constituted perhaps the only contact with the "outside world" except for that secured by personal correspondence²).

The first official plan made to the public was in the 10th issue of the American Journal of

Education in 1826³⁾. The above mentioned Millbury branch of the American Lyceum was an organization of 30 or 40 farmers and mechanics, which was established by Josiah Holbrook a few weeks after the plan was made public⁴⁾. In the same vicinity, then, town lyceums and a county lyceum were formed as a united organization⁵⁾. Later, in addition to town and county lyceums, there appeared state lyceums and national lyceums. Then, five yeas later in May, 1831, a meeting was held in New York for the purpose of organizing an American lyceum as a national organization, with delegates representing one thousand town lyceums⁶⁾. They met once a year in May to discuss the object and interests of lyceum in general, and to determine the best means *for promoting the universal diffusion of knowledge*. Thus, there were four hierarchical classes of lyceums, town, county, state, and finally the all-encompassing national lyceum to which was entrusted the direction and control of the entire system.

The object of the lyceum was to widely disseminate knowledge. The following are part of the articles:

- **ARTICLE** I. The objects of the Lyceum are the improvement of its members in useful knowledge and advancement Popular Education.
- **ARTICLE** II. To effect these objects, they will hold meetings for reading, conversation, discussions, dissertations, illustrating the sciences, or other exercises which shall be thought expedient, and, as it is found convenient, will procure a cabinet consisting of books, apparatus for illustrating the sciences, plants, minerals, and other natural or artificial productions.
- ARTICLE II. Any person may be a Member of the Lyceum by paying into the treasury annually Two Dollars; and Twenty Dollars paid at any one time will entitle a person, his or her heirs or assigns, to one membership forever. Persons under eighteen years of age will be entitled to all the privileges of the Society, expect voting, for one half the annual sum above named.
- **ARTICLE** N. To raise the standard of common education, and to benefit the juvenile members of the Lyceum, a portion of the books procured shall be fitted to young minds; and teachers of schools may be permitted to use for the benefit of their pupils who are members of the Lyceum the apparatus and minerals under such restrictions as the association shall prescribe⁷.

Holbrook writes in great detail about Lyceum in his article, *The American Lyceum, or Society for the Improvement of Schools and Diffusion of Useful Knowledge*, which, C. Bode says, was the most widely circulated and most influential form of the catalogue of merits and aims of lyceum⁸⁾. Holbrook lists eleven items as in the following, and provides an explanation. The following are those items: ① The Improvement of Conversation, ② Directing Amusements, ③ Saving of Expense, ④ Calling into Use Neglected Libraries and Giving Occasion for Establishing New Ones, ⑤ Providing a Seminary for Teachers, ⑥ Benefiting Academies, ⑦ Increasing the Advantages and Raising the Character of District Schools, ⑧ Compiling of Town Histories, ⑨ Town Maps, ⑩ Agricultural and Geological Surveys, and ⑪ State Collections of Minerals⁹⁾

The town lyceums were voluntary associations of individuals. They were composed of the inhabitants of each town. Any person could be a member of the lyceum by paying a certain amount of money (see article III). The members attempted to increase their knowledge through holding regular meetings, which was suggested in article II of their constitution. By holding their meeting "it is supposed that lyceums may aid in furnishing schools with some simple apparatus, juvenile books or other articles, fitted to awaken an interest and communicate instruction to their members¹⁰.

The county lyceums were a Board of Delegates, consisting of representatives from each town society. They held semiannual meetings and adopted measures to aid the efforts and promote the interest of branches which they represented¹¹⁾. Also, according to Wyse, they engaged in the "formation of a good series of town, county, and state maps, with accompanying illustrations and explanations,...."¹²⁾ On the other hand, the state lyceums were composed of delegates from the county lyceums, as the county lyceums were composed of delegates from the town. Thus, state lyceums acted as a sort of a Board of Education for the state. The introduction of a uniform system of books and instruction into public schools were one of their objectives designed to be effected¹³⁾.

IV. Extended Stream of Lyceum: The Lecture Bureau

"The purpose of the Lyceum," was, as in article I, "the improvement of its members in useful knowledge and the advancement of Popular Education." They relied upon home talent at first to carry out the purpose. Some of the lyceums later could pay traveling fees for speakers from distant places and honoraria as well¹⁴). As the development of the local lyceums expanded, visiting lecturers were increasingly sought, but the system at that time was disorderly. For this reason, the men of thought who wished to speak out on their ideas on a platform before the public faced many difficulties. Because "the lyceum had to be organized and directed wholly by a local volunteer committee; and the work of selling tickets, arranging for accommodations,

securing lecturers, and conducting the voluminous correspondence and negotiations was simply too much to expect of volunteer workers."¹⁵⁾

All these phenomenal matters, according to R. T. Oliver, eventually turned out to be a reason that most of the lyceums had disappeared by 1839. Another reason why the lecture platform disappeared is discussed by K. G. Hance. He points out in his article that "the reason appears not to lie in any weakness of the lyceum system; rather in the fact that the lyceum was created for a specific purpose and having accomplished that purpose, the lyceum system had no further immediate reason for being¹⁶).

Oliver sees the weaknesses of the lyceum system, whereas Hance explains the disappearance of the system being caused by the achievement of the lyceum's original objectives. In relation to these reasons we have to recognize that the lecture-lyceum in the twenty years before the Civil War (1861–1865) still retained some of their original purpose of the universal diffusion of knowledge, but it made the transition soon from an educational institution to the post-Civil War lyceum sponsored by the Lecture Bureau¹⁷⁾. "In 1866 and 67, the platform in no sense could be considered as important and influential as it had become in the 50s. Many there were who said that the public speaker had had his days......"¹⁸⁾ The lyceum was losing its influence and becoming inactive. "If the lyceum were to continue and grow, new methods were necessary, and the finding of a leader who could direct the affairs of the movement was imperative. James Redpath, a newspaper man, was that leader."¹⁹⁾ In 1867, Redpath, having a new idea, an idea of booking engagements for lecturers—"lecture brokerage systems", came out. His first lyceum bureau was organized in cooperation with George L. Fall in the same year in Boston, called The Boston Lyceum and Musical Bureau. Later, in 1870, he changed its name to The American Literary Bureau²⁰⁾.

The establishment of the bureau revived the inactive lyceum lecture system. Major J. B. Pond says :

The bureau, ..., has done more than any other agency to revive the lecture system, which was rapidly dying out all over the country. Since the establishment of the bureau, the number of lectures given in the United States has increased tenfold, chiefly under the impulse which it gave to the system. It has more than quadrupled the number of lectures that were given in New England when it was organized²¹.

His bureau revolutionized the lyceum and lecture system. It brought about professional lecturers and entertainers, and made the management of work a business with skill. Redpath

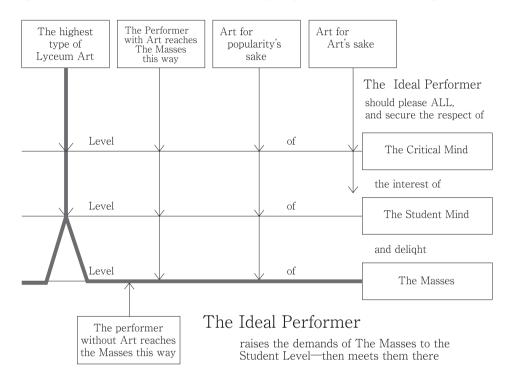
himself, however, was said to be careless of his management in the details of business. He was not a good businessman. Therefore, he needed the help of his friend, George Fall, a man of executive ability. If Redpath had depended upon himself alone, he might have been unsuccessful²²⁾. The art of oratory always interested Redpath. He was interested in "men of individual thought, and men who had something to advocate, ... and more interested in building a Lyceum than in pleasing any gross group of smug, self satisfied critics."²³⁾ It is said that Redpath was corresponding constantly and intentionally with prominent men in England and France, because he did not confine himself to American lecturers. However, he found, as a whole, Englishmen unsatisfactory. Redpath believed, Horner reports that, "this was due to the fact that England, at the time, was ruled by its aristocracy, and that the aristocracy were stupid, and that these aristocrats sought to make their stupidity respected by creating a public opinion that would have nothing with oratory."²⁴

It was the first essential purpose of early American Lyceums for cultured people to educate the common people. And the new idea and essence of the new Lyceum were the impulses of the masses to educate themselves, and provide for their own culture. Redpath, concerning the purpose and scope of the movement, had the idea that platform people should not be dry and uninteresting, even if they were well informed. If the people wanted to gain knowledge or to read books, they could go to their libraries, or secure publications for their needs. Redpath recognized "a universal public impulse for the entertainment and he felt that knowledge imparted by means of the platform should be so expressed that it would appeal to a public desire for entertainment as well as to a need for instruction. He had an earnest wish to preserve a proper balance in these two things."²⁵

Charles F. Horner quotes the words of Redpath, "The Lyceum lecture is a failure, if it succeeds in imparting instruction only. It should afford pleasure as well. A "dry" lecture is not to be tolerated because it is replete with "solid" information. It is impertinence to attempt to "instruct" an audience, unless you can do it pleasantly or eloquently."²⁶⁾ However it was not Redpath's idea to be controlled by the possibilities of startling showmanship. He was protecting the lyceum platform against the over-doing of showmanship. The lyceum idealists, including Redpath, held that "to be truly beneficial, entertainment must require something of effort on the part of those who enjoy it," because "it is easy thing to get into habits of mental laziness."²⁷⁾

As we saw, the origin of American lecture platform can be traced back to the lyceum established by Josia Halbrook in 1826, and its influence was not only on the cause of free public education, but also on American life in general and American public address in particular²⁸. It

was one of the foremost systems associated with public address including almost all kinds of oral presentation: sermons, declamations, dissertations, exhortations, recitations, humorous extravaganzas, narratives of travel, harangue, and lectures themselves. All these kinds of speeches had made the platform symbolic of talent, education, genius, reform, and entertainment, while appealing to public desire and providing a proper balance of instruction and pleasure²⁹⁾. John B. Ratto draws an interesting diagram to describe the ideal performer.



Ratto's Diagram

He says that "telling a story to get a laugh very often cheapens our work. There is a standard of art in the Lyceum and it is high."³⁰⁾ The performer needs to raise the demands of his audience to the degree of the student level, and there the performer should meet his audience.

The development of the lyceum was the development of the public. As America developed and changed, so did the lyceum. The arts presented in the lyceum were the manifestation of the American public. The "natural curiosity" and "eagerness" to learn something new were important factors of management of the lyceum³¹⁾. Pond points out American character and says: the lyceum and lecture platform, outside of its instruction and entertainment features, has always been more or less a field of propaganda. It illustrates the broadness of the American character that the people are willing to pay largely for the best presentation to them of causes and issues, even isms, which are held only by the minority³²⁾.

It was the spirit of the lecture audience to demand a lecture with accurate information and a wealth of illustration. Lecturers were, to meet the broadness of American character, thrown back "not only upon their eloquence of advocacy and sincerity of conviction, but upon comprehensive experiences and the thoroughness of knowledge."³³⁾

V. Free Public Lecture

The system of free public lecture established in June, 1888 in New York was one of the important phases of development in succeeding by lyceum movements³⁴⁾. Public lectures, under the direction of the Department of Education of New York City, were originated through an act of legislature for the benefit of working people. The lectures were on literature, history, sociology, art, descriptive geography, general and applied science.

Leipziger reports that "during 1910–1911 lectures were delivered in 177 lecture centers in the city of New York. A staff of 716 lecturers spoke on 1,827 different topics before 5,411 audiences. The total attendance was 955,074, an average of 176 per lecture."³⁵⁾ What were some of the results of their lectures? The following is what is called feedback from the audience introduced by Leipziger in his "Annual Report."³⁶⁾

*To me the crowd itself, with its good feeling, its contrasts and its enthusiasm, forms no mean part of my enjoyment. I consider such lectures as these the acme of democracy, which should look not only upon the bare needs and the primary education of its people, but upon their finer enjoyments. Such lectures as these rank with the pubic art galleries and museums as forms of democratic service.

*The present series which tells us about our own city and our government are extremely interesting, as they are the things which come to our home life more than foreign countries, but the latter lectures were also very instructive. The benefit to us is that we haven't time to take up a lot of books to study these subjects, and in the lecture we have them in condensed form, and see a good picture of our subject, and have the pleasure of hearing good speakers, and sometimes orators. Thank you for this most instructive course.

These examples are audience's comments on public lectures with regard to instruction and/or enjoyment of the lecture. Fundamentally, these course lectures in the public lecture system had not only changed their attitude toward the manner of study, but also changed their attitude towards life. Leipziger summarized the result that the public lecture system had brought about as follows³⁷:

- 1. The continuation of systematic study.
- 2. Extension of the work of the college and university.
- 3. The Americanizing of immigrants.
- 4. Improvement of the sanitation and health of the city.
- 5. A growing interest in the workings of the city government.
- 6. Wider appreciation of our art and science museums.
- 7. An improved reading taste of the public and cooperation with the public libraries.
- 8. The discussion of social and economic questions.
- 9. A wider and larger interest in the finer things of life.

Especially item 9 alone, he says, would suffice for the institution and its maintenance, because "the more the period of school life is lengthened, the more interesting life becomes; the more we widen the meaning of the word school, the more we broaden of the meaning of life,"³⁸⁾ In this day and age—an age of complexity, of diversity, and of rapid change—these wordings are not essentially far away from the idea of rhetorical self-education which was the heart of the lyceum system. All of us in our social life, through rhetorical communication, can have an opportunity for self-development and hope for a fuller existence in an age of change.

VI. Summary and Inferences

The lyceum as a popular form of education in American society, which started in 1826, has changed as time has passed. It has been supported by the natural curiosity of the American public and/or the American people's desire to be educated. The summer school, adult school and correspondence courses, and many others may be taken as the extended stream of the Lyceum movement as a popular education from its origin. The traditional spirit and idea of American Lyceum as a sort of mutual education and cultural improvement, or you could call it an "educator," is not yet dead. It is still alive and workable, more than ever in our present-day world.

This writer has made an effort to link the present to the future and suggest what might be

hoped for with lifelong learning activities to become better citizens of human society. The day of such public instruction of the American Lyceum has passed with the generation, but honestly speaking, lyceum activities observed in America are still worthwhile and are in consonance with societal public education in our complex society today.

It will be the fruit of the cravings of any citizen to develop his/her personal attributes to a maximum level of potential. This "fruit of cravings" would be vital to one's education for selfdevelopment and adjustment in a rapidly changing and accelerating societal complexities in the present, and also in particular in light of the fact that today's concern with global warming and climate change has become a major topic of discussion, which will hopefully and eventually lead to the sustainable development of the environment in which we live. We needed the cooperation of others for our physical survival in those days as we do in these. The rationale for extending human communication — the act of sharing meaning as citizens of the world in our own day and generation ——is to free us from a culturally conditioned and/or patterned way of thinking. This human effort would make it possible for us to engage in a basic source of cooperative human transaction from the view point of lifelong learning in a wide range of societal public education. The wave of public oral communication and/or discussion over a vital question rises higher and higher around the globe. The age-old subject of rhetoric, Aristotelian rhetoric, as a major form of human communication activity is still very much with us. It surely has become our most important means for ensuring social cooperation of our life-world. The traditions of the Lyceum as a wide variety of rhetorical situation for communication is wide open now in an age of change. As far as the rhetorical situation is concerned, Bitzer's definition exactly and clearly tells us what the rhetorical situation is all about. He defines rhetorical situation as "a complex of persons, events, objects, and relations presenting an actual or potential exigence which can be completely or partially removed if discourse, introduced into the situation, can so constrain human decision or action as to bring about the significant modification of the exigence."39) It has now become imperative to realize the importance and worth of rhetorical public communication and public societal education in meeting the challenge of a need to solve the immediate problems of our time to see where man has been and where he hopes to go in the humanities today and tomorrow.

Notes

- Donald C. Bryamt, Ancient Greek and Roman Rhetoricians (Missouri: Artcraft Press, 1968), p. 14.
- Kenneth G. Hance, "The American Lecture Platform Before 1930, *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, XXX (October, 1944), 274.
- 3) Thomas Wyse, "The Lyceum System in America, with a Consideration of its Applicability to Mechanics' Institutions in England," *Old South Leaflets*, VOL. VI (Boston: Old South Meeting House, n. d.), p. 306.
- 4) Ibid.
- 5) Ibid.
- John S. Noffsinger, Corresponding Schools, Lyceums, Chautauquas (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1926), p. 102.
- 7) See Old South Leaflets (Vol. VI), pp. 303-4 for complete Constitution.
- 8) Carl Bode, *The American Lyceum: Town Meeting of the Mind* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 24.
- 9) See Old South Leaflets (VOL. VI), pp. 295-300 for complete explanation.
- [Josia Holbrook], "The American Lyceum, or Society for the Important of Scholl and Diffusion of Useful Knowledge," *Old South Leaflets*,. Vol. VI (Boston: Old South Meeting House, n. d.), p. 293.
- 11) Wyse, p. 307.
- 12) Ibid.
- 13) Ibid., p. 300.
- 14) Noffsinger, p. 104.
- Robert T. Oliver, *History of Public Speaking in America* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc, 1965), p. 460.
- 16) Hance, p. 274.
- Waldo W. Braden, "The Lecture Movement: 1840–1860," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, XXXIV (April, 1948) 207 and 211.
- Charles F. Horner, "How the First Lyceum Bureau Started," *Lyceum Magazine*, February 1927, p. 4.
- 19) Ibid.
- 20) Oliver, p. 461.

In the same year 1867, 110 local lyceums united to form the Associated Literary Society. They marked the beginning of lecturing as "business." Hance says that it was a distinct innovation in the field of American Public Address. (See Hance, p. 274.)

- 21) Major J. B. Pond, *Eccentricities of Genius* (New York: G. W. Dellingham Company, 1900), pp. 536
 –7.
- 22) Ibid., p. 542.

James Readpath sold the bureau to George H. Hathaway and Major J. B Pond in October 5, 1875. Pond had part ownership in the bureau until he sold it to Hathaway in 1880. George Hathaway was owner of the Redpath Bureau for the next twenty-one years. (See Horner, "Red path Rushes to Aid of the Irish," *Lyceum Magazine*, June, 1927, p. 27.

- 23) Horner, "Talent Made Much, Manager Made Little," Lyceum Magazine, March, 1927, p. 12.
- 24) Ibid. p. 13.
- 25) Horner, "The Public Must be Entertained," Lyceum Magazine, May, 1927, p. 10.
- 26) Horner, "When Mark Twin Dodged Lecture Dates," Lyceum Magazine, April, 1927, p. 13.
- 27) Horner, "The Public Must be Entertained," Lyceum Magazine, May, 1927 p. 11.
- 28) Hance p. 273.
- 29) Braden, p. 210.
- 30) John. B. Ratto, "Reach and Life the Masses," Lyceum Magazine, May, 1914, p. 19.
- 31) Horner, "Talent Made Much, Manager Made Little," Lyceum Magazine, March, 1927, p. 13.
- 32) Pond, p. 550.
- 33) Ibid., p. 552.
- 34) The trend of the developments of the lecture platform in the lyceum movement was toward the Chautauqua, the free public lecture system, the forum, and also the University Extention movement.
- 35) [Henry M. Leipziger], Annual Report of the Supervisor of Lectures to the Board Education: For the year 1910–1911
- 36) Ibid., p. 22.
- 37) Ibid., p. 29.
- 38) Ibid., p. 29.
- Lloyd F. Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation," in *Contemporary Rhetoric* ed. Douglas Ehninger (Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1772), p. 43.

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- ----. "Talent Made Much, Manager Made Little." Lyceum Magazine, March, 1927, pp. 11-13
- -----. "When Mark Twain Dodged." Lyceum Magazine, April, 1927, pp. 10-13,
- -----. "The Public Must be Entertained." Lyceum Magazine, May, 1927, pp. 10-13.
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