

fund for the education of the poor, and in 1816, chap. 256, an act for the distribution of the same, equally amongst the several counties, was passed, and Commissioners appointed in each, with the exception of Washington, Frederick and Allegany, to carry out the intention and provisions of the act.

By this course of legislation the two extremes of society were in some measure provided for, but a large proportion of the people were left to depend upon the precarious means of private institutions for the instruction of their children.

In 1825, which forms an interesting era in the educational history of our State, a plan, successfully adopted in some of our sister States, was submitted to the Legislature and by it referred to the consideration of the people at their next annual election, of establishing District or Primary Schools. This magnificent scheme contemplated placing the means of instruction within reach of, and open to every child in the State. The general outlines of this plan are to divide each county into districts of convenient size, about five miles square, to organize those districts distinctly and separately from each other, authorising the inhabitants of each to levy a tax upon themselves, and appoint their officers to manage the concerns and carry out the provisions and intention of the act, under the supervision of, and accountable to a board of commissioners and inspectors appointed by their respective county authorities, the whole under the charge of a general superintendent of education, appointed by the State.

We regret that a plan so admirably adapted to the general diffusion of knowledge, though accepted by most of the counties, was not by them carried into practical operation, except in one or two instances. This we cannot doubt for a moment was owing to the insufficiency of the funds of the State for that purpose, and a dread of that amount of taxation which would necessarily be incurred in carrying the system into successful operation.

Although postponed, the project seems not to have been abandoned, but a hope for its ultimate adoption is fondly cherished by every county. With this view each has carefully husbanded its resources, and no opportunity to increase them has been suffered to go unimproved. Still the system languished. The office of general Superintendent was discontinued, and the prospect of its general adoption seemed very remote indeed, while its want was deeply felt and its value duly appreciated. Failing to obtain a division of the public lands from the General