

influence the education of the citizens of the State has upon its natural wealth. I think they overlook the fact that more substantial increase comes to a State, in manufactories, in commerce, in trade, in agriculture, in every department of labor by the application to those departments of labor of intelligence, than from any other single thing or institution that the State can possess.

The whole object of your committee was to necessitate that the very next session of your legislature after the adoption of this constitution, should in spite of the legislature, give you a uniform system of free common schools. I ask you, gentlemen, to look at the past and say if your legislature has ever yet given you such a system. I ask you to take a lesson from the past, and by its light read the probable results of the future. I ask you what probability there is that in any ordinary session of your legislature you will find a uniform system of free public education passed through?

I think it merely resolves itself with the question, whether this convention does desire for the citizens of this State, poor and rich, a system of free common school education. I think it resolves itself simply into the question if they do believe that the prosperity of this State requires it; and if they believe that this, when the State has cast off the trammel that has bound it for many years, is the auspicious time to inaugurate a new era in our State.

It has come into the mind of some members, by what process I know not, that all power in this report is given to one man. It is simply made obligatory upon your legislature that at its first session it shall provide a uniform system of free public education. That you might have reiterated in the ears of this legislature until the judgment trump should sound, without any effect. Therefore your committee did not stop there, but proceeded to say that in case of a failure upon the part of the general assembly so to provide, the system reported to it—under the first section which you have passed—by the State superintendent should become a law and have full effect as if enacted by the general assembly. Is that one-man power? If your general assembly do not provide another system of free common school education it takes the responsibility before the people of accepting the one offered. It leaves on record that it found in that report of the State superintendent no single provision with which it could disagree, and that the report of the State superintendent, in every particular, met the requirements of the representatives of the people of Maryland through the legislature. That is all it does.

It is not likely that there will be found no man in all that legislature with enough interest in the whole subject of common school education to attempt to improve and perfect the

system, and in case the legislature do not touch it, it is the same as saying to the people of the State that upon consideration they are perfectly content with the system presented by the State superintendent.

That is all. Yet that one thing secures to the State of Maryland at its next session of the legislature a uniform system of public instruction. It becomes a law like any other law of the general assembly of Maryland, subject to modification at subsequent sessions of the legislature to meet the wants of the community. Therefore, to the amendment of my colleague of Baltimore city, I had not the slightest objection. I did not suppose it became indeed a law, but was to have full effect as if enacted by the general assembly; and I thought it would be manifest to every member of the convention that the system would be subject to such alteration and amendment and modification at subsequent sessions of the legislature as may seem expedient to that body. Your committee believed that a general outline would both guide the State superintendent and the legislature; that it would be well to leave to the State superintendent the duty of reporting to the legislature a skeleton system; and let the legislature take the responsibility of either accepting the system presented by the superintendent or improving it.

This question was fully discussed in the committee. They did not adopt the board of education, of one from each election district, because experience has shown that upon such boards the work is done by two or three only of the boards of school commissioners in the various counties. Nay, more; I have been told that in some counties in many cases their full board of school commissioners met together would not be competent by a majority vote to decide upon the qualifications of a teacher, and that the whole work is done by two or three men; and in case the other business of these gentlemen does not permit them to attend, the work is not done at all.

The board of education was constituted by the committee and reported to the convention in the hope of taking away this whole school question from the sphere of politics—in the hope that appointments made under it might not be decided by the question whether a man is a democrat or a whig, but whether he was capable of performing the duties for which he was appointed. If five good school commissioners can be found in one election district, take them all from the one, and let them examine the teachers of the various districts to see if they are competent. Let us not, as we have had in some cases, have persons to examine the teachers under a system of common school education that have not known how to read or write. The whole detail of the system is left to the legislature—of the salary and the duties of the assistant