

those who have a practical knowledge of the subjects to be discussed or supervised. Why reverse the rule when we come to questions which affect the Free Public Schools? Here, too often, the advice and experience of practical educators are not invoked; every man claims to be a proficient and sits as special judge. Even those who are least educated claim to be competent to select teachers and decide upon educational policy. Thus in many States the whole work of primary School instruction has been impeded by the theories of the ignorant. They who are most proficient in the arts of demagogism have aimed to be leaders in the plans, or rather have proved to be the chief obstacles in the way of sound legislation for the moral and mental welfare of children. School work ought to be submitted to men who are professional teachers, and in all legislation upon this important subject it will be good policy for legislative committees to ask the opinions of experts in education, just as the finance and mechanical and Rail Road Committees seek the opinions of Bankers, Mechanics and Engineers when they devise plans to advance those important interests. Yet, according to my observation, this has not generally been the rule. The professional teacher seldom appears before the Legislative Committee, and School laws are too often enacted, as if the only important questions were, what shall the tax be, and how shall teachers be governed and controlled, lest they become too powerful, instead of how shall they be encouraged that they may be more useful.

Thus far the Legislation of Maryland has proceeded upon the right principle, and there has been a most gratifying readiness, in the discussion of School problems, to ask the advice of School-men, to leave the detail of school work to those who have practical knowledge of the wants of the School room, and of the proper modes of discipline and instruction. This is a wise policy and I venture to suggest to those who are sincere friends of public education, that in all matters concerning Schools, information ought to be sought from those identified with School interests.

In the labors of the State Board of Education, such advice has been sought, and many of the suggestions of this report embody the views of the Association of School Commissioners.

To make the State Free School system eminently practical and to bring to its aid the wise counsel of representative men, professional teachers were selected whenever practicable to act as School superintendents. That the State might profit by their collective as well as individual wisdom, the Commissioners united in an Association for the discussion of School questions, and to aid each other by mutual counsel. As the deliberations of the Association refer chiefly to the administration of the School law, the results of these discussions are appended to this report.