

that we have now an incongruous collection of local and inefficient systems with no controlling head, either in the State Government, or in any of the counties, no responsibility to the Government for the manner in which the children of the State are reared, or its funds disbursed, and subject for their support to the caprice of tax payers, and too frequently to the fraud or folly of incompetent and itinerant teachers, strangers to our people, and hostile to our institutions.

Through this mode of Legislation it has happened that a multitude of inconsistent and conflicting statutes, on the subject of common schools crowd our statute Books, constituting a labyrinth which it is difficult for even the learned to comprehend and explain.

Whilst these local laws exist, it is manifest that any attempt at improvement is utterly precluded, and the system will remain inefficient or inoperative for any public good. In my opinion you cannot suffer this state of things to continue without neglecting the most important trust committed to your care. The cause of common school instruction should be the most sacred and cherished of our public institutions, and should be the distinguished feature of our political system.

To repeal all these laws, and to embody into one perfect enactment, whatever of value may be gathered from them and all other sources, foreign and domestic, within your reach, to give such a law universal operation within the State, to place its administration into the hands of an able, energetic and responsible superintendent, with competent subordinates and ample powers, to provide the necessary means by State authority, to be paid into the public Treasury and thence to be disbursed for the support of education, in every county, according to its population, the number of its established schools and the pupils belonging to each, is the course which in my judgment it becomes the Legislative wisdom to adopt, if they desire fully and permanently to promote the cause of public education within the State.

That the Act of 1825, for the establishment of primary schools, with its supplements, have been greatly inoperative, is fearfully confirmed by the fact, that although since that period thirty years have elapsed, the Census of 1850 discloses the humiliating truth, that even within the last ten years, next preceding the year, in which that Census was taken, the number of our white adults who can neither read nor write, has been doubled, whilst the increase of our population during the same period had not exceeded one-fifth. I have no doubt there are at this time, within the limits of our State not less than twenty-five thousand white adults, who have never been taught their alphabet, and of whom therefore it may with truth be said, that the discovery of the art of printing remains to them a barren and useless invention. Within this period thousands