

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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DOCUMENTS

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THE LEGISLATURE,

OF THE

STATE OF MAINE,

DURING ITS SESSION

A. D. 1834.

FOURTEENTH LEGISLATURE.

NO. 25.

SENATE.

REPORT of the **Joint Select Committee** on
Primary Schools.

THE Joint Select Committee to whom was referred so much of the **Governor's Message** as relates to primary schools and an institution for the better qualification of instructors, have given their best attention to the subject, and ask leave to report.

Your Committee are deeply impressed with the opinion that the subject of education, particularly as connected with our common schools, is one of vast magnitude and importance, worthy the consideration of the ablest and most patriotic of our citizens. Our free schools in **New England** have been coeval with the settlement of the country, and no feature of our social system is more highly estimated or

fondly cherished by the people. It cannot be doubted that the purity and stability of our political institutions, as well as private reputation and personal happiness, are deeply and closely interwoven with the education of our youth; for if it be true that freedom and national liberty depend upon knowledge, intelligence and virtue, then are our common schools “all important, all essential,” and eminently entitled to the consideration, and fostering care of our Legislators.

It is well that the framers of our State Constitution made it the duty of the Legislature “to require the several towns to make suitable provision, at their own expense, for the support and maintenance of public schools.” And it is creditable to our citizens, that they have borne without complaint, yes, even with satisfaction, an annual tax of near \$160,000 for the support of common town schools. Notwithstanding the sum raised in pursuance of the law requiring a tax of 40 cents per person for this object may seem large, it is worth the while to inquire if it be not too little, and whether more State assistance ought not to be afforded to primary schools. At any rate, it becomes the Legislature, that is the guardian of the dearest interests of the citizens of our State, to inquire whether the moneys appropriated for the promotion of education are applied in the most judicious manner, and so expended as to promote the most beneficial results; and your committee cannot avoid the conclusion, that the benefits

expected to result from the laws relative to our public schools, have neither been so great nor so extensive as was anticipated.

That there are defects in the management of our common schools, will not be denied. The question then arises how may a reform in primary schools be best effected? Your committee coincide with the opinion expressed by the Governor in his late Message, that "perhaps the most profitable aid, that can at this time be extended to the cause of primary education in our State, would be found in the establishment of a seminary for the better qualification of instructors."

There are probably more than 2000 common schools in our State, now in active operation, in which as many instructors are guiding the mental energies and forming the moral principles, of the generation that is to succeed us. Is it not of great consequence that the teachers of children should possess the best qualifications for the discharge of their important duty? The evils resulting from a want of system, from incompetent teachers, and from unsuitable books, are numerous. A large number of primary school teachers is annually needed, and a class of men thoroughly taught, and trained for the special purpose of teaching youth, would find ample and profitable employment. Our schools imperiously require system, uniformity, and the united energies of men of suitable qualifications for school-keeping, to make them what they should be.

Such an institution as suggested by the Governor, seems called for by the spirit of our age and the situation of our State; and would, if properly conducted, supply many deficiencies and correct many evils that now exist, and prove of great general and practical utility. The guardians and guides of our children ought to be themselves persons well informed, of pure characters, and high minded principles.

The establishment of a Teacher's institution, we believe would confer a great good on the present children in our State, and be a lasting and substantial benefit to the remotest posterity. Your Committee would therefore recommend the founding of a new literary institution, the paramount object of which, shall be to suitably qualify persons for instructors of primary schools; and ask leave to present the plan of such a seminary, in the accompanying Bill.

JOSIAH PIERCE, *Chairman.*

STATE OF MAINE.

IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD, ONE THOUSAND EIGHT
HUNDRED AND THIRTY FOUR.

AN ACT to establish an institution for the purpose of promoting the objects of instruction and science, and the better qualifying school teachers who shall be engaged in primary schools.

SECT. 1. *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in Legislature assembled,* That there be and hereby is established in the town of _____ in the _____ County of _____ within this State, an institution, the object of which shall be to inculcate useful learning and science in the elementary departments of education, and especially for the purpose of qualifying school teachers, to properly discharge their duties in the different towns in this State, which shall be called and known by the name of _____ and for governing and direction of said institution, there is hereby established a board of Trustees consisting of _____ members, who shall be selected from the different Coun-

17 ties in this State in proportion to their popula-
 18 tion, not more than _____ of whom shall
 19 be clergymen.

SECT. 2. *Be it further enacted,* That the
 2 time and place of the first meeting shall be de-
 3 signated and fixed by the Governor and Coun-
 4 cil, after which they shall be vested with power
 5 to designate their own times of meeting and a
 6 meeting may be called at any time on applica-
 7 tion of _____ members, and a majority of
 8 the whole number shall form a quorum. They
 9 shall annually elect the presiding officer of said
 10 board by ballot. They shall fill all vacancies
 11 in said board by ballot, which vacancies shall
 12 be determined by death, resignation, removal
 13 from the State, or absence from successive meet-
 14 ings.

SECT. 3. *Be it further enacted,* That each
 2 Trustee shall hold his office for three years, after
 3 the institution has been in operation for that pe-
 4 riod of time, and one third the number shall
 5 vacate their seats annually, and the Governor
 5 and Council shall so direct in the appointment
 7 of the Trustees, that the object of rotation can
 8 be effected.

SECT. 4. *Be it further enacted,* That the
 2 said Trustees are hereby created a body politic,
 3 and have right to hold by gift,
 4 grant or devise, any real or personal estate, the
 5 yearly income of which shall not exceed
 6 thousand Dollars, which shall be for the sole
 7 purpose of effecting the objects of this institu-
 8 tion; and to sell, let, or otherwise dispose of
 9 any property belonging to the same as they may
 10 deem most for the interest of the same. They
 11 shall elect a who shall have
 12 the management of the fiscal concerns of the
 13 institution who shall give such bonds and be sub-
 14 ject to such by-laws as they may establish.
 15 They shall also appoint such instructors, with
 16 such salaries and titles as they may think fit,
 17 who shall at all times be subject to be removed
 18 by the Trustees; and one quarter part of all sala-
 19 ries shall be paid from the fees of tuition and be
 20 dependent thereon.

SECT. 5. *Be it further enacted,* That the
 2 executive government of said institution be and
 3 hereby is authorized to grant such written cer-
 4 tificates to all persons, whom they shall on ex-
 5 amination deem qualified, according to the rules

6 by them established, to be instructors of schools
7 within this State, and every person proposing
8 himself for examination shall be entitled to the
9 same, although he may not have been a student
10 of said institution. And every applicant not a
11 student and a citizen of this State, and who
12 shall on examination be found entitled to a cer-
13 tificate as herein stated, shall be entitled to re-
14 ceive pay for travel and attendance on his ex-
15 amination, in no case to exceed two days pay
16 at one dollar a day, and reasonable travel at the
17 rate of four cents a mile from his home to said
18 institution.

STATE OF MAINE.

IN SENATE, February 14, 1884.

ORDERED, That four hundred copies of the foregoing Report
and Bill be printed for the use of the Legislature.

[Extract from the Journal.]

Attest, WILLIAM TRAFTON, *Secretary.*