

# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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DOCUMENTS

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THE LEGISLATURE

OF THE

STATE OF MAINE,

DURING ITS SESSION

A. D. 1853.

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**Augusta:**  
WILLIAM T. JOHNSON, PRINTER TO THE STATE.

1853.

REPORT

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION,

RELATIVE TO THE

ENDOWMENT OF ACADEMIES.

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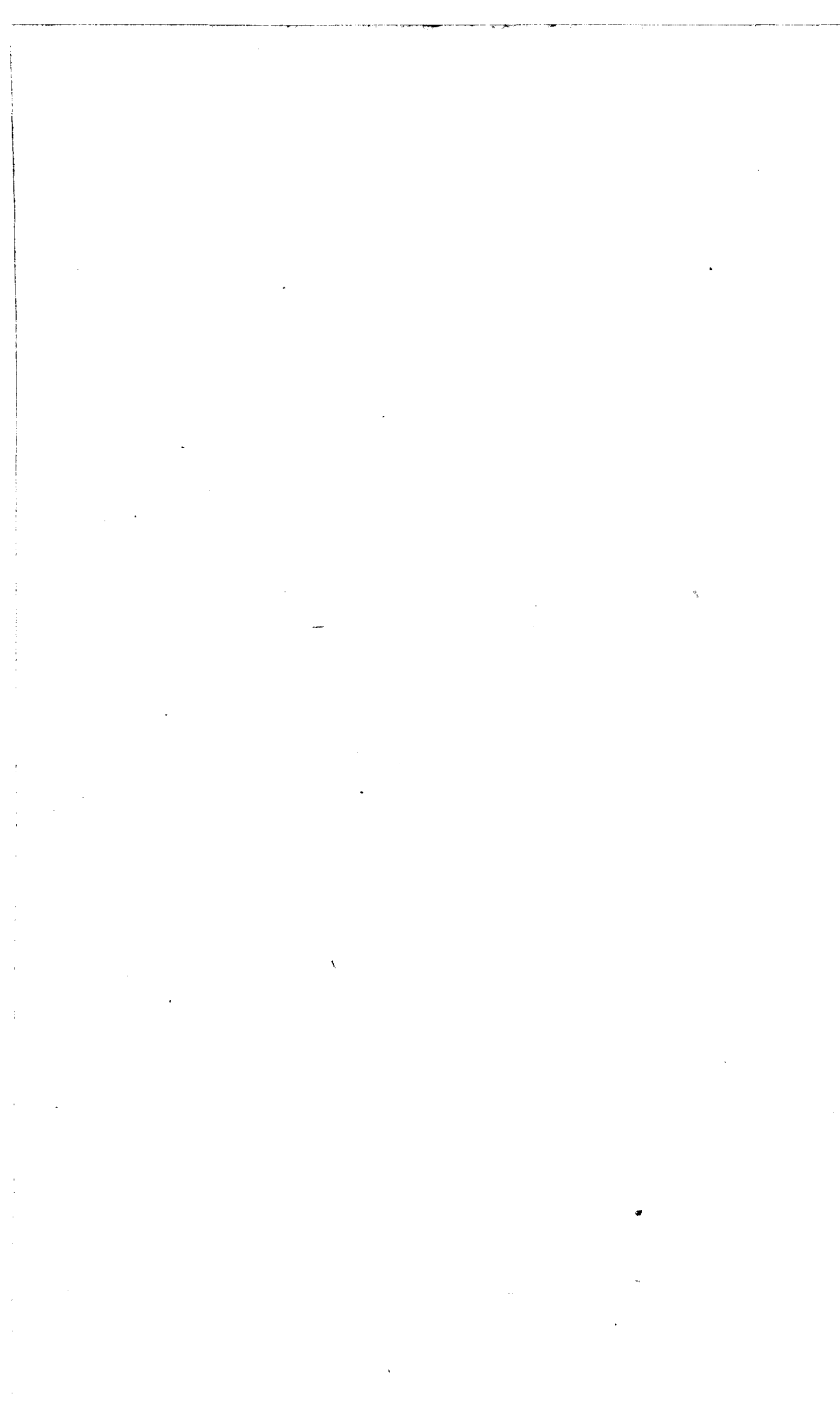
TO THE THIRTY-SECOND LEGISLATURE.

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AUGUSTA:

WHEELER AND SIMPSON, PRINTERS.

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# REPORT.

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*To the honorable the Senate  
and House of Representatives :*

The Joint Standing Committee on Education, to whom was referred the following order, to wit: "Ordered, That the Joint Standing Committee on Education, be hereby directed to inquire into the policy of making any further appropriations for the support of Academies, and other select Schools for private instruction, and to report thereon," having had the same under consideration, respectfully ask leave to submit the following

## REPORT:

The Committee agree that the policy of this State, from the Separation, has been of the most liberal character, as regards the endowment of Academies and other Seminaries of learning. This policy was adopted from the practice of the mother State, and has until recently, been regarded as the settled policy of our State. Your Committee do not regard it as coming within their range of duty, to find fault with those who have preceded us in the legislation of the State. We find in the widely different circumstances of their times, abundant justification of their practice ; and we may cheerfully commend as patriotic and just, in their day, measures which in ours are not only short-sighted and impolitic, but manifestly unjust and injurious. All legislation, in order to be

truly beneficial, and to answer the demands of the times, must be progressive. The age in which we live is wonderfully distinguished by this pre-eminent feature—progressiveness. We mark with amazement the operations of this natural law in the wide-extended fields of Science and of Art—embracing within their ample range, all that is valuable, great, and glorious, as within the range of human intellect.

In the early condition of our country, and particularly of our own State, with an immense territory and but a small population, our system of academic instruction was perhaps wisely established, and truly subserved the then existing demands of the people. In this view, the original framers of our Constitution made it the duty of the Legislature “to encourage and suitably endow, from time to time, *as the circumstances of the people may authorize*, all academies, colleges, and seminaries of learning, within the State”—retaining the power to “alter, limit, or restrain, any of the powers vested in any such literary institutions, as shall be judged necessary to promote the best interests thereof.” These provisions, so beneficent and just at the time, and doubtless intended to apply to but a comparatively small number of high grade seminaries in suitable portions of the State, can only be regarded as but the shadowing forth—the ante-type of a still more perfect system of *public* instruction, which a then future condition of our people would inevitably require. But, as we have advanced in population, and so rapidly approximated a more perfect condition of society, the fact has become more and more apparent, that the system, so wise and beneficent in its original application and influence, has become totally obsolete, and positively injurious as a component part of our system of *public* instruction. Indeed, if we examine into the studies pursued in most of our academies, we find that a large proportion of the pupils are pursuing such branches of learning as legitimately belong to our *public* Grammar Schools, and in many instances, to those of a lower grade. The inquiry then, very naturally presents itself—why do all patronize the Academy? Shall we be answered that our public Schools do not afford even *these* facilities? If this be the true answer—does not every friend

of universal education behold an absolute necessity for a potent remedy to the evil? And may we not inquire, if in the *present* condition of society, our system of academic instruction, is not mainly chargeable with these deplorable results? May we not safely appeal to the history of the past—to our own observation—if it be not the fact, that very generally—nay almost without exception—where the Academy is in a flourishing condition, the *public* Schools languish and decline! We cannot better illustrate our position, than by quoting the remarks of the able Secretary of the Board of Education in Connecticut, now Principal of the Normal School in that State. He says of Academies and private Seminaries, “They are (have been) instrumental in imparting a higher and better grade of instruction to the children who resort to them, than is now (in 1840) commanded in most district schools; *but no higher or better than they are capable of giving to every child of the community.* As a general truth the flourishing condition of this class of private schools, is the most alarming evidence which can be given of the low condition of the public schools in their vicinity, and the most powerful cause to keep them in that condition, if not to sink them lower and lower.” The same writer goes on to remark, very justly, in reference to *private* instruction, as adopted by some parents—“For awhile they (the parents) attend the district school meeting, propose to improve the school-house, furniture, and apparatus, to employ a *competent* teacher, and to continue the school longer than is usual. Failing in this, or finding that a district school meeting cannot be moved fast, or beyond the general average of intelligence or interest, and without making the necessary efforts to enlighten the one or excite the other, they take the shorter, although more expensive course, of providing for their own children, in their own way. They build a new school-house by association or by subscription, employ a teacher at the highest rate of wages, or induce one to open a school, on the guarantee of a certain number of scholars. If they fail in this arrangement, they send their children out of the district to some flourishing academy or boarding school. For awhile, their interest in education, leads them to sustain the movement they

may have commenced in the district. Although they may not attend the school meeting, they profess and exhibit a readiness to second any effort to improve the schools. But ere long their interest is entirely withdrawn. The heart and the treasure are with *their own children in their own schools*. If they go to the district meeting again, it is to vote against a school tax for any purpose, and they now co-operate with those into whose hearts the rust of avarice has eaten, to keep the expenses of the district school within the means of support afforded by the public money, or a tax on the children who attend."

"Thus," continues the same able writer, "*the very principle of PROGRESSION*, is taken from the PUBLIC SCHOOL. The superior intelligence, and abundant means, which would have introduced, and sustained improvements, are withdrawn, and not unfrequently *enlisted against them*. The tone and impulse which the children of this class of parents would have given to the district school, are not only *lost*, but are working out widely different, and wholly unhappy issues. Instead of meeting each other in the school-room, or on the play-ground, under the common sympathies of age, studies, and pursuit,—without knowing or caring for each other's birth or expectations, thus forming friendships to survive the stormy struggles of after life, the children of a district or society start off into different paths, which are likely to diverge more and more from each other. The children who attend the *private* school at home, or go abroad to the academy or boarding school, associate almost of necessity together, and thus, with the enjoyment of superior advantages, and the influence of *exclusive* association, they grow up with a feeling of superiority every way at war with their own usefulness, and the peace of society. On the other hand, the children of the district school feel more or less the depressing influences of their inferior advantages, and imbibe feelings of jealousy, if not of hostility, towards their more fortunate neighbors. It does not always happen, to be sure, that the former are better educated, or escape being ruined by exposure to temptation, away from the advice and supervision of parents; or that the latter, in the more hardy training of the district school, do not sometimes



make up for all deficiencies by self-training, and rank themselves with the Shermans, the Franklins, the Fultons, and other common school men of this or a former age. But, whatever may be the result, children of the same district, owing to the accidents of parentage and wealth, are not educated together, or under equal advantages,—do not associate together, or form those youthful friendships which would be the surest pledge of future fellowship and harmony. Hence, when they grow up to be men and women, they will have different sources of happiness, different degrees of success, different views of social and civil policy.”

The evils resulting from the system of academic and other private instruction, heretofore almost invariably encouraged and endowed by the State, so appropriately and justly set forth in the remarks we have quoted, are of almost universal observation. What is applicable to Connecticut, is equally and pre-eminently true of Maine. It is not contended but that in many instances academies may exert a very salutary and useful influence; and in some localities, may justly, under our present condition, be regarded as almost indispensable. But it is contended, that they are becoming less so than formerly, and that the State should at once, by the perfecting of her system of public instruction, so elevate the character of her common schools, by the force of such legislative enactments, and by her treasure, liberally expended in such channels as the development of the times shall indicate, render her system of free schools entirely adequate to the thorough education of all her sons and daughters, giving to all the children of the State, whether rich or poor, an education so comprehensive and practical that they may be prepared, and adequately prepared, to enter at once upon the varied duties of active life as enterprising citizens, or if such be their choice, to pursue understandingly and with the entire consciousness of the possession of every preparatory qualification, the peculiar studies of the learned professions.

As bearing upon this topic, and corroborative of our views, we quote from a report to the Teachers and friends of Education, assembled at the State House, in Rhode Island, in 1845. That report contains the following startling language—“Literature and

Science may flourish where only the *wealthy few* are highly educated. It is possible that *the few*, by monopolizing the emoluments and privileges which superior knowledge confers, may, while *the many* are toiling in agriculture or the mechanic arts, rise to higher attainments, and cause science and literature to take deeper root and bring forth maturer fruit. Though such fruits might bring blessings with them, the genius of our institutions requires rather the *diffusion*, than the ACCUMULATION of knowledge. It should be the care of *our country* that *every child should be educated.*”

We denominated the above as startling language. It is so; for while it admits all that can be claimed, it also indicates in the strongest terms, what must be perfectly plain to every intelligent friend of universal education—that no well-grounded hope for the *education of the masses*, can be founded on the continuance of any system of academic or private instruction. It may be regarded as an axiom of general application, and safe to be relied upon, that no *private* enterprise, however protected or endowed as such, by the State, can be of universal utility. Indeed we may regard, as a general rule, the protections thrown around, and the endowments bestowed upon, the few, in the light of so many discouragements and embarrassments thrown in the way of the masses, not thus protected or endowed. And, most unfortunately for the masses, when these privileges and endowments grasp hold on the fountains of knowledge, their political and civil rights are jeopardized in proportion to the munificence of such endowments.

It is also true that academic or private instruction is the most expensive. In 1837, in the city of Cincinnati, Ohio, fifteen hundred children were taught in private schools, at an expense of twenty-seven thousand dollars, annually, while in the public schools at the same time, about three thousand were taught at a yearly expense of only twenty-five thousand dollars. And it is stated that the public schools furnished the best teachers, and were fast gaining, by their superior advantages and influences, the affections of the people. In our own State, for the year ending April 1st, 1852, as we learn from the able report of the late Secretary of the Board of Education, the expenditure per scholar in all our public schools

amounted to only \$1,41—whilst for 3000 pupils at select private schools, and 3678 pupils at Academies, the average was about \$10,70—to which if we add the interest on endowments from the State and individuals, we find the average \$15,14 for each pupil attending our Academies. It may be said that the Academies are in operation twice the number of weeks. This we admit; but on the other hand, the private or select schools, the expenses of which make half the aggregate sum, are not kept on the average more than half as long; so that the statement may not be materially varied. Indeed, if we double the sum raised per scholar for public instruction, which would bring the number of weeks equal to the academic terms, we should still observe no material variation of this overwhelming disparity, in favor of public instruction. From the same source, we learn that there are in this State sixty-four incorporated Academies; “that more than half a million acres of land, and \$20,800 in money, have been granted by the State; and \$80,647 by individuals. Six per cent. interest on the sum furnished by the State amounts to \$12,648; and on the sum furnished by private subscription to \$4,838.”

The question then is, not whether the State shall cease to encourage the education of her youth, but in what manner shall that encouragement be bestowed. We have seen by the evidence and from the figures and facts adduced, that our practice of endowments in favor of private institutions accomplishes but little in view of the great whole, and that at a very expensive outlay; and that, worse than all, notwithstanding—and even by reason of these benefits—partial though they be, they hang like an incubus upon our public schools, paralyzing their energies and destroying their vitality, in deadlier proportion, as they live and flourish. A distinguished English writer, in arguing this subject relative to his own country says: “Never was this truth more clearly displayed than in the state of our popular education. Behold our numberless charities sown through the land. What is their fruit? What better meant, or what more abused? In no country has the education of the poor been more largely endowed by individuals—it fails, and why? *Because in no country has it been less regarded by the Government!*”

This brings us to consider, very briefly, what we regard as the imperative duty of the State in reference to our public instruction. Our own observation is sustained by the facts and experience of ages, and of all countries; that the great cause of universal education, in order to general prevalence and success, must be fostered by the State. Private munificence may, in isolated cases, in periodical or spasmodic efforts, accomplish much. But this is not a state of things to be desired. The history of such efforts, from the fact of their *unusual* character, and being necessarily but the offspring of the few, almost invariably show, sooner or later, a corresponding reaction—generally leaving the object of their solicitude and care in a more hopeless condition than it previously enjoyed. What we want is action, based upon some **PERMANENT AND EFFICIENT SYSTEM!** And this system should be permanently supported, and vigorously enforced by the State, for all coming generations—subject only to such alterations and amendments, as a just and wise regard for the progressive spirit of the times shall demand. **PERMANENCY AND EFFICIENCY** are absolutely indispensable to any well-constructed system, and should be regarded as the *sine qua non*.

As connected almost inseparably with our subject, although not specified in the order on which we frame this report, we would name a few brief propositions for the consideration of your honorable bodies.

First. The existing common-school funds should be augmented so far as may be compatible with the ability of the State; and such enactments should be made from time to time, and such liberal aid bestowed on unfortunate or sparsely settled localities, as will speedily secure the establishment and continuance of appropriately graded schools during the entire year, with suitable vacations.

Second. A Board of Supervisors, (or Superintendent of Public Instruction) should be created forthwith, to whom shall be entrusted, under the most efficient regulations, our entire system of public instruction, who should report their doings, and all matters or plans affecting the interests of popular education, to the Legislature, at its annual session. It should also be the duty of each member of this Board to spend a large portion of time in

counselling the parents, teachers, and pupils, in each district within his jurisdiction, and by public lectures on the improvements in education and its concomitants, as the true interests of the people in respect to the subject, may require. Thus will be accomplished most effectually, one of the most important prerequisites in order to the general diffusion of public education, to wit.; *the education of the public mind!*

Third. Our public schools can never take the high position to which they are entitled, and which the wants of the people demand, until they are supplied with competent teachers. Says Guizot, "All of the provisions hitherto described would be of none effect, if we took no pains to procure for the public school thus constituted, an able master, and worthy of the high vocation of instructing the people. It cannot be too often repeated that it is the *master that makes the school.*"

We might multiply quotations and arguments on this point, but the proposition is plain and self-evident—we believe the public mind is already keenly alive to the importance of this fact, and we will not presume that your honorable bodies need argumentation in respect to the matter. We would therefore suggest that the period has fully arrived, when NORMAL SCHOOLS for the instruction of teachers—to make them fully competent to their great and responsible work—should form a fundamental and constituent part of our system of public instruction. Says Cousin, "I attach the greatest importance to Normal and Primary Schools, and consider that all future success in the education of the people depends upon them."

We say, then, a supply of *competent* teachers must be regarded as the foundation stone of all real improvement in public instruction; this is the testimony of all who have devoted themselves to a study of the subject. The want of this grand desideratum meets us on every hand, and mars all efforts at progression. The chief defect of ours, or of any system, may be said to consist in this want. Education is both a science and an art; and he who would excel, or become profound as well as useful—truly so, as a teacher, must have thoroughly investigated and *mastered* his pro-

fession. In what consists the greatness of Greece? It is, pre-eminently, that in her palmy days of intellectual greatness and glory, the teachers of her youth were Socrates and Plato, Aristotle and Zeno. If we would truly elevate our schools, we must lay the sure foundation by *elevating* the character and capabilities of our teachers as a profession, and honor them as we honor the members of other learned professions.

Finally, in view of the whole matter, and from the most mature deliberation, we unanimously recommend that hereafter no endowment, in any form, be granted, either to Academies or select private schools of any sort; but that a more generous policy be adopted at once, and firmly carried forward, in favor of our public schools in every section of the State. And, as an expression of the sense of this Legislature, in reference to the subject, we submit the annexed Resolve.

All which is respectfully submitted.

ELISHA CLARKE, *Chairman.*

## RESOLVE.

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RESOLVED, That, in the opinion of this Legislature the policy of endowing Academies and select Schools, from the public funds, is a measure in direct hostility to the prosperity of our system of public schools, and should be no longer tolerated; and that hereafter all endowments or donations of money or land, for the benefit of Education, must be confined directly to the legitimate channels of public instruction.

STATE OF MAINE.

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IN SENATE, March 3, 1853.

ORDERED, That the printing of 1000 copies of the foregoing Report of the Committee on Education be procured for the use of the Legislature.

LOUIS O. COWAN, *Secretary.*