

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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FIFTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE.

SENATE.

No. 37.

MINORITY REPORT.

The undersigned, a member of the Committee on the Reform School, to whom were referred the reports of the Trustees, Superintendent, and other officers of said school, having carefully considered the same in detail, and visited the School, not being able to concur in all the conclusions of the Committee, ask leave to submit his conclusions relative to the same.

The school building appeared quite defective in its construction, and in its arrangements. The farm was represented to be composed mainly of clay, and not well adapted to the production of fruit and vegetables. The management of the stock, and care of implements appeared satisfactory, and the conduct and deportment of the officers and employees every way commendable.

The School, in its educational developements as a primary school, is a success, but, in that light only, quite too expensive; yet as a reformatory institution, the undersigned could not resist the conclusion that it was a failure; and he arrives at this conclusion, not only from an extensive public sentiment variously expressed, but from the whole tone and tenor of the aforesaid reports, as well as from its acknowledged friends.

The Chaplain, in his report to the Trustees, asserts "that it is only by the living and effective christianity of our Lord Jesus Christ, that these boys, entrusted to your oversight for their reformation, can be fitted for life's work and its stern realities." This will be readily admitted, not only by you, but by all who are familiar with their history. To those, not thus acquainted with them, not only their ignorance of all moral and religious matters, but their deep depravity, would appear utterly incredible. To this there are some exceptions.

In recurring to the report of the Superintendent, we find a long chapter of complaints against the tardiness and parsimony of the State, in not furnishing the full measure of funds required "to run the institution without any regard whatever to the earnings of the boys." In short, the State should furnish sufficient means to accomplish the work, and then leave it in the hands of the Trustees and Superintendent. He requires that the State adopt a more liberal policy for this institution, or abandon it altogether; and finally he declares that, "Eternity alone must reveal the amount of good accomplished here."

The Trustees seem to take the same dismal view of the situation, and plainly acknowledge the work there "largely a failure," unless the whole scheme is re-organized; and they "do not hesitate to say that unless a considerable amount is raised this year to put our buildings in order, to pay our teachers better, and to arrange for a complete division of grades in the boys, it would be better to *relinquish the whole affair.*"

Now this school has been established some twenty-two years, involving an outlay by the State of over \$393,000, besides the amount received from towns and individuals, and it is but reasonable to expect that its usefulness and its reformatory results should be unequivocally established.

It is not by exceptional cases that we are to determine the good or ill results of this school. If a very considerable portion of the inmates there does not show reform, or if the reformation made is not clearly attributable to the reformatory influences inculcated there, the conclusion cannot well be resisted that the whole scheme is a failure; experience tells us that a large number of these wayward boys, who grew up without the influence of a reform school grow up and become useful and honorable members of society.

But in order to continue this adventure, we are now called upon to take a new departure, and re-organize the whole thing, as somewhat particularized in the aforesaid report, which I do not here propose to criticise, but freely admit that it shows on paper, and even in prospect, a decided improvement on the practice now in operation, but it must involve a large outlay to put the premises in a suitable condition for the change, and a much larger amount of annual appropriations to run the school.

Now, in view of the past failure and the problematical prospect for the future, would it not seem reasonable that the Legislature

pause, and take its bearings before this new departure is adopted.

The friends of this new departure cannot be more sanguine in their faith or hope of its good results, than were the friends of the old scheme, in the beautiful prospects held out by them.

One of the greatest objections to the old scheme is the herding together so many boys of widely different characteristics, which the new plan proposed will but partially remedy; hence, in a very few years a more radical re-organization will be called for, so as to have two or more separate schools, perhaps on the cottage plan, wherein but few will be herded together, but then a further increased expenditure must follow.

My convictions therefore impel me to submit to this Legislature whether it would not be better to adopt the conclusion of the Trustees, under certain contingencies, and "*relinquish the whole affair.*"

S. LOTHROP.

STATE OF MAINE.

IN SENATE, February 16, 1874.

Reported from the Committee on Reform School, by Mr. LOTHROP, and on his motion laid on the table and ordered printed.

SAMUEL W. LANE, *Secretary.*