

...ing for the Superintendent, or even the payment of his necessary expenses.

Another provision of this law, equally essential to the successful operation of any system, was that which gave to each county, by a public vote, the privilege of accepting or rejecting it, and of course the power of destroying the uniformity of the system, which was its most valuable feature. These sections with others of an equally prejudicial character, destroyed the general public character of the plan, and made the law, in those counties which accepted it, strictly local, subject merely to local county authorities, and wholly out of the reach of any State supervision or control.

The law thus adopted was from time to time added to, altered and amended, in most of the counties which accepted it, according to the wishes and judgement of the ever changing Boards of School Commissioners, and County authorities; whilst the counties that rejected the law, formed separate systems of their own which likewise received in their turn the legislative sanction. So that we have now an innumerable 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 ignorant 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 ineffectual for any public good. In my opinion you cannot suffer the state of things to continue without neglecting the most important trust committed to your care. The cause of common school instruction should be made sacred and cherished of our public institutions, and should be the distinguishing feature of our political system.