

MEMORIAL

TO THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY, ON THE SUBJECT OF SCHOOL ACT—PASSED NOVEMBER SESS., 1847.

TO THE HONORABLE THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY IN PROVINCIAL PARLIAMENT ASSEMBLED:

THE Memorial of the Gore District Municipal Council respectfully Sheweth:—

That from the great dissatisfaction manifested throughout this District with the new School Act, and feeling deeply sensible of the importance of a system of Elementary Instruction, suited to the wants of the people, your Memorialists are induced to bring the subject under the notice of your Honorable Body, with a view to obtain, by Legislative enactment, such modifications of the said Act, as will simplify its provisions, and render it less expensive in its operations, or otherwise the substitution of the Act repealed by the 4th and 5th Victoria, Chap. 18, with such amendments as will, in conformity with the Municipal Act, secure these results.

Your Memorialists believe that the Act in question is too unwieldy and complicated in its machinery to be worked successfully by the parties empowered to carry out and enforce its provisions; and that the monies required to pay the Provincial and District Superintendents, as well as those taken from the Common School Fund, for the establishment and support of Normal and Model Schools, are little less than a waste of so much of the Legislative grant, or other funds raised for the support of Common Schools, which may be applied to those purposes.

With reference to the working of the Act, it may be remarked, that the duties imposed upon Trustees are of too onerous a nature to permit a hope that they will be efficiently, if at all, performed in the rural School Sections; and, indeed, when it is seen from the Chief Superintendent's Report, that about ten different Forms, with numerous explanations of the same, are found necessary for the guidance of this class of officers in the least important part of their functions, it is obvious too much time, trouble, and careful application are exacted, when the whole of their duties are taken into consideration.

Your Memorialists would also beg leave to represent, that the sums required to pay a Provincial Superintendent, as before stated; a Clerk and the contingencies of his office, amounting, as is supposed, to some eight or nine hundred pounds; as well as those paid to twenty District Superintendents, which will, if all are paid in proportion to that officer in this District, amount to three thousand pounds more; making the whole fall little short of four thousand pounds per annum; would, in the opinion of your Memorialists, be more profitably applied in the payment of Common School Teachers.

With reference to a Normal School, containing one or more Elementary Model Schools, established by the 5th clause of the School Act, your Memorialists find, that the sum of fifteen hundred pounds is appropriated to procuring and furnishing the necessary buildings, and a like sum for the payment of Teachers' salaries and other contingent expenses; besides which, it is stated by the Chief Superintendent in the Report already alluded to, that "the experience of other countries, similarly situated to ours, sufficiently shows how much the current expenses of such an establishment must exceed the sum granted to aid in defraying them;" thus showing, that the large sum of three thousand pounds is taken from the Common School Fund for the current year, and the sum of fifteen hundred pounds, with as much more as the current expenses will exceed the latter amount, will be required annually thereafter, for the maintenance of this department of tuition, without, as your Memorialists most seriously believe, any benefit derived by the community from an outlay of such magnitude.

With respect to the necessity of establishing a Normal, with Elementary Model Schools, in this Province, your Memorialists are of opinion, that however well adapted such an Institution might be to the wants of the old and densely populated countries of Europe, where services in almost every vocation will scarcely yield the common necessaries of life, they are, so far as the object expected to be gained is concerned, altogether unsuited to a country like Upper Canada, where a young man of such excellent character, as a candidate is required to be by the National Board of Education in Ireland to enter a Normal School, (page 56 of Report) and having the advantage of a good education besides, need only turn to the right hand or to the left, to make his services much more agreeable and profitable to himself than in the drudgery of teaching a Common School, at a salary of £29 per annum, (which is the average amount paid School Teachers for the year 1845) as set forth in Appendix No. 2, to the said Report;—nor do your Memorialists hope to provide qualified Teachers by any other means, in the present circumstances of the Country, than securing as heretofore, the services of those whose physical disabilities from age, render this mode of obtaining a livelihood the only one suited to their decaying energies, or by employing such of the newly arrived Emigrants as are qualified for Common School Teachers, year by year, as they come amongst us: and who will adopt this as a means of temporary support, until their character and abilities are known, and turned to better account for themselves.

Your Memorialists having now had the experience of the working of several Common School Acts, are of opinion, that notwithstanding the absence of all Legislative provision, the Acts repealed by the 4th and 5th Victoria, Chapter 18, operated more efficiently, and gave more general satisfaction than any since substituted; and your Memorialists believe, that the same might be restored, with such amendments as will make the District Councils Boards of Education, with full powers to tax for School purposes, continuing the Legislative grant, transferring the duties performed by the Superintendents to the District Clerks, under the direction of the District Councils, and making such other amendments as may be found necessary to carry out these and such other alterations as will be required by the Municipal Act. By this means, it is believed a saving will be made for the benefit of the Common School Fund, of about six thousand pounds per annum, and the object obtained of giving to the people a School Act, simple in its provision, cheap in its management, and well understood in its operations.

Your Memorialists would therefore pray your Honorable Body would be graciously pleased to take the premises into consideration, and adopt such mode of relief as to your Honorable Body may seem fit; and your Memorialists, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

SAMUEL CLARKE,

Warden.