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## STATE SYSTEM OF EDUCATION WITHOUT A STATE SCHOOL FUND.

The Rev. Dr. Yeomans, of Pennsylvania, stated the following important facts and views, in a recent public School Address:—

"The history of Pennsylvania, in respect to the means and methods of general education, is different from that of several of the other old and important States of the northern portion of the Union. This Commonwealth has no fund for the support of a system of Common Schools. The only resource for the support of a scheme of general education by the State has been taxation. In some of the States, the appropriation of public lands to the purposes of education, at an early period, or the creation of a fund in other ways, prepared the way for the early establishment of a system of Common School instruction, which has already conferred inestimable benefits on several generations of the people, and has attained the vigor, stability and completeness of a full maturity. But the circumstances of this State in its early periods did not favor, or at least, did not produce, the establishment of a large and permanent fund for schools, and, as a consequence, the system of State Schools was later in its beginning, and has yielded less fruit in the general intelligence and culture of the people.

The value of a large fund for the support of common schools to the people of a State will of course depend on the prevailing sentiments and habits of the people. For, on the one hand, a fund may not be judiciously managed, and may render a large portion of the people more indifferent towards education than if they should pay for it as they go along; or on the other, the people may appreciate education so highly as to bear ample taxation for its support. In the latter case education will prosper more without a fund than with one; for nothing more engages the interest of the people in any institution than their being called upon steadily by law or otherwise to contribute to its support.

No doubt much more can be expended for education in a community where the avails of a rich fund lie plentifully in the hands of disbursing officers, and where the management is simple and quiet, and agents have only to apply the public means and account for their expenditure, to the government in the appointed way. But we should remember that for the usefulness of public schools there must be not only the necessary expenditures to build houses and supply teachers, but also an interest among the people, alive and watchful, to detect abuses,

suggest or admit improvements, encourage faithfulness and skill among the teachers, punctuality and diligence among the pupils, and diffuse as largely as possible, among themselves, the benefits of the institution.

Now, if our Commonwealth has, as yet, at her disposal no large and productive fund for the support of her system of public instruction, she has whatever of advantage can be derived from the immediate dependence of the system on the tax-payers of the State.—And although we should not go so far in boasting of this advantage, as to imply that this plan is every way better than the other, or better than some sort of union of the two, yet we certainly need not hesitate to admit that the present system has advantages which, in the absence of other causes, are operating powerfully for the cause of general education in our State.

And first it commands, for the most part, an amount sufficient to give the schools of the State a very considerable practical efficiency. It enables all the families of the State to maintain good schools among them a part of every year, with funds partly provided by the State, and partly furnished in due proportion by the families themselves. It induces those communities which set a higher value on general education to add largely by voluntary taxation, to the amount received from the State, and thus to increase among them the benefits of this public instruction. Now, to say nothing of the vast amount of principal which must be placed in charge of the State authorities, and vested by them, at some hazard, and with no small trouble, and expense and responsibility in the management, the people have this valuable inducement to tax themselves the more, in order to secure the greater benefit of the schools for which they are taxed by the State. The State of Connecticut has had a large school fund for several generations. But it was so difficult for the legislature to devise a plan for distributing the avails among the people, so as at the same time to satisfy the people and induce them to raise enough more to keep up good schools, and enliven the general interest in them, that it became a serious question with the enlightened people of the State whether their great fund was any real advantage.

Secondly, this system of regular taxation for schools brings up the subject of general education before the attention of the citizens, and makes them familiar with the cause of common education as a proper matter of public concern in every civilized community. It is suggestive; and reaches, especially in this Commonwealth, a numerous class of minds, which would scarcely be reached in any other way. With a fund of the existence of which half the people would know nothing, while still more would not know how it was managed, it would be far more difficult than it now is, to call the attention of thousands in our State to the duty of educating their children. Taxation is a hint, from high authority, that the education of the young is a sacred duty which the State owes to herself; and when society thus expresses her interest in the knowledge and virtue of its members, and claims the right to compel provision for their education, it takes a deep hold on the attention of many who would otherwise be the last to feel an interest in the subject.

Thirdly, there is this farther advantage in drawing the support of our schools directly from the people according to the present laws of our State, that it keeps the eyes of the people open on the directors, and other officers who are responsible for the application of the money, while it also gives them a personal concern in the wise expenditure of funds which they must contribute their share to supply. In the towns which have become interested in the improvement of the public schools, the larger part of the school tax is to be imposed and collected under the authority of the local directors; upon whose proceedings the presence and watchfulness of the tax-payers will not fail to be an all-sufficient check. There is little danger in such circumstances, of a careless use of funds by directors, and little probability that funds will be supplied in this way by the people, unless they feel an interest in the benefits of the expenditure. Whether this part of the plan works well for the State in general must be seen by its fruits; but all must see that this feature of our present system is not without important advantages."