

the New England States mainly to the training of the popular mind given by their noble system of free schools. Such views rebuke the ignorance of many persons in this country, who speak of American industrial prosperity as if it rested on protection, peculiarities of political institutions and other causes, altogether secondary and subordinate to the training of an intelligent, practical and thoughtful people.

The main difficulties are in the adjustment of details; and to obviate these, the following plan, proposed last winter to the committee on Education, as the *lowest amount that could produce useful results*, is now published for the information of the public, and with the view of inducing the friends of popular education to make up their minds as to the mode and extent in which assessment could be introduced into the next Educational Law; and to express their views and those of the people generally to the Legislature in its next session by returns, as numerous signed as possible.

*Principles on which assessment for the support of Schools should be levied in the Province of Nova Scotia, as submitted by the Superintendent to the Committee on Education, for the consideration of the Legislature and the country.*

1. That, in order to secure the blessing of a good common school education to all the children of this Province, and especially to the children of the poor, it is necessary that the public schools should be made free to all persons between the ages of four and fifteen years.

2. That Assessment for the support of schools should be made compulsory to the extent of at least one Pound for each pound of the Provincial Grant, or of about five shillings for each person between the ages of four and fifteen. It seems, however, to admit of doubt whether the assessment should be made in Counties or in separate districts. The former of these methods would be the more equitable, but the latter might at present be more acceptable in some parts of the Province. The following outline of a plan is proposed.

Assessment of each County in an amount equal to that of its provincial grant for the support of Common and Grammar Schools.

The whole amount of the Provincial grant to be drawn from the Treasury and distributed by the Commissioners at the close of the winter half year, on their certifying that an equal sum had been assessed and was in process of collection. The sum assessed and collected from the County or Commissioners' District, to be distributed by the Commissioners at the close of the summer half year.

Both sums to be distributed among the schools taught according to law, in proportion to the number of pupils actually in attendance, for a period of not less than four months in each half year, regard being also had to the class or grade of each school, and to the amount of additional salary voluntarily contributed by the people.

The additional amount required for the salaries of teachers, to be contributed vo-

luntarily in the separate school districts, either by assessment agreed to at meetings held for that purpose, or by subscription,—the Trustees to call such meetings, and to act as assessors and collectors, and to receive a commission on all sums collected by them, either from persons assessed or from subscribers.

3. It seems desirable that inquiries should be conducted into the best mode of assessment, and if any alteration can be made in the present system, so as to raise the requisite funds in a more easy and equitable manner. It seems also desirable that, in the collection of that part of the fund raised in the separate districts, a method should be adopted for receiving payment in farm produce, &c., according to the practice in Upper Canada, and that the Teacher's receipt be accepted by the collector in proof thereof.

4. Ministers of religion, public and private teachers, and widows having property below a certain amount, should be exempted from this compulsory assessment.

It will be observed that the above plan is proposed as the minimum amount of assessment that would be of service, and would justify the establishment of free schools. Various modifications of it have been proposed at the public meetings of the present year, to meet the circumstances of particular sections of the Province. These cannot be discussed here, but will as far as possible be attended to in preparing a proposal for the coming session.

Should it prove impracticable to carry even the limited assessment above proposed, the Superintendent is prepared to recommend that district assessment should be encouraged, by requiring the commissioners to give an extra share of the public grant to districts which may assess themselves, and to withhold in proportion from those which do not assess, unless they can truly plead the excuse of poverty. That this would be perfectly just, can be easily shown. At present the average attendance for the whole Province is about twenty-four children per school, while the average number of children per district is fifty-three. But in the New England States where assessment prevails, the attendance is about seventy-five per cent. of the whole children, and often more; and in Upper Canada assessment is said to have raised the attendance in some cases fifty per cent., and in others as much as three hundred per cent. Take for illustration the lowest increase, and suppose that a district, by assessing itself, and keeping a free school, brings in twelve additional pupils from among the more neglected children of the district, thus raising the average attendance to thirty-six, does it not thereby entitle itself to a much larger share of provincial aid than a neighboring district in which, though an equal sum be raised for the teacher, a selfish system of support narrows the benefit to twenty-four pupils only. In addition to this, the teacher in the district in which assessment prevails, will by the influx of additional pupils have his labour much increased. It is true that our law at present would sanction the commissioners in increasing the allowance in such

circumstances; but this is not always done, and it is not generally understood. District assessment would therefore be much promoted by the introduction of an express enactment to this effect; and the Legislature should be prepared to give this bounty on free schools, or rather this just remuneration for the additional work that they perform, if assessment cannot be introduced on a more general basis.

The above illustration of the effect of assessment, shows how absurd are the apprehensions entertained by some that assessment may be made a pretext for withholding the Provincial aid, when in truth a school supported by assessment has a far stronger claim on the public funds than one supported on the improper and selfish method of subscription per scholar. It also shows that the working of assessment is eminently in favor of the children of the poor and ignorant, and not by any means, as some would insinuate, a method of relieving parents who can easily furnish education for their children. It also shows how unjust is the imputation cast upon teachers, that in advocating assessment they seek only their own benefit, whereas if assessment gives them sure or better pay, it also gives them increased work. Yet any good teacher would rather be the master of a good and respectable school, than of a small and comparatively inefficient one.

It is evident, however, that an assessment levied over whole counties, or all accounts to be preferred to one limited to districts. This is proved not only by such general considerations as its more equitable bearing on all, its advantages in relation to poor districts, and its more general and constant application, but also by the experience of all countries in which schools are supported by assessment. A general assessment, for counties or commissioners' districts, on fair and equitable principles, should be the first aim of the friends of education.

A wide diffusion of sound views on this important subject, and a powerful pressure on the Legislature at its next session, are urgently required; and commissioners, teachers, trustees and parents should consider, that a special weight of responsibility in reference to those great interests of the rising generation, that are involved in the institution of free schools, rests on them.

If the proper exertions be used, there seems reason to hope that this great end may be at least partially attained; but if there be inaction at the present juncture on the part of the friends of popular education, we may be assured that the activity of the selfish and the prejudices of the ignorant, acting on the timidity of the representatives of the more unenlightened constituencies, will take away every hope of success.

INSTITUTES IN CONNECTICUT.—Fourteen Institutes, attended by twelve hundred teachers in all, were held in this state in the year ending May 1851: