

ESTABLISHMENT AND TEMPORARY SUPPORT OF COMMON SCHOOLS.

JULY 1, 1890.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union, and ordered to be printed.

Mr. O'DONNELL, from the Committee on Education, submitted the following

REPORT:

[To accompany H. R. 634.]

The Committee on Education, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 634) to aid in the establishment and temporary support of common schools, report favorably as follows:

Bills providing aid in the establishment of common schools and extending temporary assistance in support of the same, have been before Congress for the past ten years. During that time in the Senate the bills have been favorably reported five times and passed on three separate occasions. A measure having the same object as House bill 634 is now pending in that body. Although numerous bills in aid of education have been offered in the House of Representatives and referred to its Committee on Education during the last ten years, not one has ever been reported to the body which referred them. In view of these facts, and as ten million signatures, appended to petitions favorable to the several bills, have been filed in the two houses, your committee, or a majority thereof, in deference to the wishes of said petitioners and realizing the necessity for action, report H. R. 634 favorably to the House of Representatives.

Your committee are impressed with the dangers which beset the country from the lamentable and increasing popular ignorance in many sections of the nation, and earnestly urge the adoption of this bill or some measure looking to the elimination of illiteracy.

The number of school buildings in the United States in use for public schools is 219,063, employing 347,292 teachers, of whom 128,314 are males. The average monthly salaries of the male teachers is \$41.71, and of the female instructors \$34.21. These figures exhibit the injustice of the distinction in remuneration to the two sexes for the same labor.

It is estimated that more than one-fifth of the nation's population is of school age—from six to fourteen years—aggregating 12,000,000 children, of whom 7,800,000 are in daily attendance; about 65 per cent. of those of school age attend daily. The annual expense of the public schools of the United States amounts to \$122,455,252. This outlay is provided by revenue from State and local taxation, and permanent funds. Of this large expenditure, \$82,314,741, is paid for teachers' salaries, \$19,530,077 for general expenses, and \$21,000,000 for sites, buildings, and libraries. The running expense of the free school system of the United States is about \$2 per capita for each inhabitant, \$10.60 for

each child of school age, and \$15.59 for each pupil actually attending school. The value of the property used for public schools is \$297,481,328; If we reckon the interest on this investment, cost of text-books and materials used by the pupils, the total expense of our public schools will be found to aggregate \$153,000,000 annually, about \$2.60 per each inhabitant, or quite 2½ cents per day of daily attendance. The expenditures for colleges, denominational and private schools, will largely augment the educational outlay in this country.

This magnificent dedication of the resources of our citizens for education is cited with much pride by your committee. Notwithstanding the generosity of the people in promoting education among the coming men and women of the nation, the last census revealed the unwelcome and alarming fact that there were 5,000,000 inhabitants over ten years of age who could not read, and 6,000,000 of the same age who were unable to write. It is to be feared that this army of ignorance has not diminished during the past decade, and that the enumeration now being completed will exhibit that the number of the illiterates has been augmented with the increased population of the nation.

These discouraging facts impress upon the majority of the committee the imperative necessity of the Government extending temporary aid to dispel the dark cloud of ignorance that menaces the progress of the country. History repeats its warnings, and of this great mass of the untaught it can be mournfully written, as in old Judea, "my people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." Viewing these facts, the warnings of the Father of his Country come down to us from another century, when, in his farewell address, Washington counseled his countrymen to "promote as a matter of primary importance institutions for the general diffusion of knowledge." The author of the Declaration of Independence, with prescience of the future, declared that "education is the only sure foundation that can be devised for the preservation of freedom and happiness." Jefferson supplemented this wise maxim in his inaugural, upon assuming the duties of executive, when he advised that the excess of national revenue might, by a just repartition among the States, be applied to education and other great objects. Garfield, in his inaugural, eloquently pleaded for statutes to check the "dangerously high tide of illiteracy," and besought the people "to meet this danger by the saving influence of universal education." Grant plead with Congress "to promote and encourage popular education." The words of solicitude and apprehension of the mighty dead over this alarming condition should be pondered and weighed by their countrymen who must of necessity encounter the danger of this menacing situation.

Your committee desire to incorporate in this report the inspiring sentiment of Justice Lamar when he declared that "this measure is fraught with almost unspeakable benefits to the entire population." Ex-Attorney-General Garland voiced the glad fact that a measure such as is reported favorably herewith "might very aptly be styled a bill to extirpate illiteracy in the United States."

Your committee have not deemed it essential to enter upon a discussion of the constitutional right of Congress to thus promote the general welfare; we are content to leave that portion of the question in the hands of the able constitutional jurists above quoted.

Your committee hold to the patriotic declaration of Justice Harlan "that the safety of our institutions depends upon the intelligence of the masses," and so believing, seek to augment that essential to security by a measure which, if enacted, will enlarge the number of schools of the

nation, thereby providing the means of education to those who are denied that blessing.

Congress has in the past dealt generously in laying the foundation for our school system, the buttress of our civilization. The donations and grants for schools amount to 67,983,914 acres of land; for universities, 1,082,880 acres; for agricultural colleges, 4,352,082 acres; deaf and dumb asylums, 44,971 acres, making a total of 73,468,847 acres devoted to educational purposes. In addition, in 1836 there was distributed among twenty-six States in the Union from the surplus the sum of \$28,101,644.91, considerable of which was expended for the benefit of the common schools of the several commonwealths. This apportionment was theoretically a loan, but actually a gift. The total distribution was to aggregate \$37,468,859, to be repaid in four equal installments, three of which were disbursed, but the act was inoperative when the time arrived for the fourth payment. None of the money was ever returned to the National Treasury.

The bill under consideration proposes to distribute among the several States and Territories, on the basis of illiteracy, the sum of \$77,000,000 to be paid in different sums during a period of eight years. This aid to education will not oppress the people. Estimating the population of the country at 65,000,000, the total disbursements under this bill will cost each inhabitant the sum of \$1.18 $\frac{2}{3}$ , divided as follows; the first year, 10 $\frac{1}{3}$  cents per capita; second year, 15 $\frac{1}{3}$  cents; third year, 23 $\frac{1}{3}$  cents; fourth year, 20 cents; fifth year, 16 $\frac{1}{3}$  cents; sixth year 13 $\frac{1}{3}$  cents; seventh year, 10 $\frac{1}{3}$  cents; eighth year, 7 $\frac{1}{3}$  cents. Your committee are of the firm opinion that each inhabitant would cheerfully meet this cost if the same could be paid direct. As the population will be larger each year it will be seen the per capita cost will be lessened proportionally.

Looking to other countries we find that France is very liberal in providing for the education of the masses; Belgium grants large aid; Italy is more generous than this bill provides, if the population of the two countries is considered; the parliamentary grants for popular education in England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales are on a scale which attests the desire to educate the masses; Prussia, with a system of endowed schools, appropriates large sums to improve existing schools and establish new ones. Russia gives aid to schools considerably more than this bill provides; Austria makes education obligatory and enforces the law by adequate appropriations of money. It will be seen that civilized nations realize the necessity of education for their people.

The Committee on Education adduce these facts in advocacy of the necessity for some measure to be enacted by Congress to meet a danger so menacing. In the northern section of this country institutes of learning have flourished; the strength of that portion is in its grand system of common schools. In the southern part of the nation the facilities for education have not been so favorable. The latter States have passed through a fiery ordeal. A quarter of a century since four millions of its inhabitants were raised from servitude to freedom; they and those before them had been in the midnight of ignorance for years; torrents of blood were shed, and from the degradation of bondage they emerged into the sunlight of liberty. Thousands of these were invested with the prerogatives of citizenship, a right demanding education for its basis. The people of that section have done much to meet the requirements of the new conditions, and have broadened the avenues for the seekers after knowledge. Perhaps they might have done more; this is not the place to discuss that matter. They and the race so long in ignorance implore the Congress to grant temporary aid, that the oppor-

tunities for providing rudimentary education may be increased. Simply a "square start and a fair field" is asked for those who are denied the advantages that should be given every child—these so necessary to fit them for citizenship.

The uneducated can not be disfranchised, nor should they be; but governmental safety demands that the enfranchised be educated. Reluctantly, we refer to the official returns of the late registration in Louisiana, which exhibits the fact that the voting population of that State is classified 127,129 literate and 127,673 illiterate. Ten years ago there was 10,923 majority in that State of voters who could read their ballots; this year in the voting population there is a preponderance of those voters who can not read the ballot they deposit in the box. In the past ten years the increase of voters show that of that number 13,274 can read, and twice as many 24,741 can not. This appalling statement is not to be attributed to racial reasons. The number of white voters unable to read increased 7,835. In that State "illiteracy is gaining on intelligence."

The patriot and well wisher of his country can not look with indifference upon the accretion of ignorant citizenship. The danger to the Republic is ignorance, an ever increasing peril. A beginning for the diffusion of knowledge has been made; the Government can not, in the interest of its own preservation and citizenship, neglect to protect its own foundations of intelligence. Experience, the great teacher, has firmly established the fact that ignorance resists the growth of nationality, while intelligence elevates the citizen and aids progress. The functions of Government can not be better exercised than in aiding to extend education, thereby insuring the perpetuity of our institutions. The party now vested with the control of all departments of this Government has in its declarations of principles proclaimed that the system of free schools is the "bulwark of the American Republic." The enactment of a statute to provide that temporary aid necessary, under proper restrictions, to enable the different States to furnish the rudiments of education, can only result in advancement of the nation and improvement of its citizens.

Commendable progress has been made in many sections in the way of educational encouragement. It remains for the nation to give that help needed. To withhold aid now, to use the words of a distinguished thinker of the South, "would be to surrender a well-cultivated field and leave the garnered crop to decay."