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ARIZONA CITIZEN.

VOL. II.] TUCSON, PIMA COUNTY, A. T., SATURDAY, AUGUST 17, 1872. [No. 45.

THE ARIZONA CITIZEN
—IS—
PUBLISHED EVERY SATURDAY.

Subscription Rates:

One Copy, one year,	$5 00
One Copy, six months	3 00
Single numbers	25

Advertising Rates:

[Twelve lines in this type, one sq.]

One square, ten lines, one time	$3 00
Each subsequent insertion	1 50
Professional cards, per month	3 00

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EDUCATION IN THE TERRITORIES.

Speech of Hon. Richard C. McCormick, of Arizona, in the House of Representatives, February 6, 1872.

Mr. McCormick, of Arizona. Mr. Speaker, while many gentlemen have discussed the importance of the provisions of a bill of this nature, as applied to the States, no one has yet especially referred to their value to the Territories, and I claim a moment for that purpose.

In the debates upon a measure somewhat similar to this, had in the House two years since, much was said, as there has now been, concerning the right of the General Government to in any way provide for or regulate educational matters in the States, and it was, as it is now, made a plea for opposition to the bill. But no one will question the right of the Government to act in the matter in the Territories over which it has supreme control.

The necessity of some congressional legislation to foster and stimulate education in the Territories has so long been apparent to me that I proposed, after the failure of the educational bill of last winter, chiefly upon the score of its alleged intrusion upon State rights, to prepare a bill exclusively for the Territories, and in order to do so the more intelligently addressed letters to each Territory asking information regarding the precise condition of educational interests; in response to which I received various facts, which, owing to the state of my health, have not been arranged in proper shape for presentation at this time, and in view of the introduction by the Committee on Education and Labor of the bill now before the House, I abandoned the idea of a distinct measure for the Territories.

The bill now under consideration "forever consecrates and sets apart the proceeds of the public lands to the education of the people" as follows:

One half the receipts for lands, after deducting expenditures, is to be distributed among the States, Territories, and District of Columbia; the other half is to be invested and create a fund whose income is in like manner to be distributed.

The distribution for ten years is to be on the basis of illiteracy, that is of need; afterwards according to the population between four and twenty-one. Each State and Territory will be entitled to its share of the first distribution that, before January 1, 1873, or within two months of the first meeting of its Legislature thereafter, shall have engaged that it will provide by law for the free education of all its children between the ages of six and sixteen, and will apply all moneys which it shall receive under this act in accordance with its conditions. After the first distribution each State will receive its share which has complied with the following conditions:

First. It shall have made the provision for the education of its children required as above.

Second. It shall have applied all moneys by it previously received, under this act, in accordance therewith.

Third. It shall, through the proper officer thereof, for the year ending the 30th day of June last preceding such apportionment, make full report of the number of schools free to all the children thereof, the number of teachers employed, the number of school-houses owned, and the number of school-houses hired; the total number of children taught during the year, the daily attendance, and the number of months of the year schools shall have been maintained in each of the several school districts, or divisions of said State, Territory, or District, and the amounts appropriated by the Legislature for the purpose of maintaining a system of free public schools.

These sums are to be distributed by the State or Territory among its school-districts in either of the three prescribed ways, as it shall think fit, and to be applied only to the payment of teachers of common schools, except that a sum not exceeding fifty per cent. the first year, and ten afterwards, may, in the discretion of the State, be applied to the payment of teachers of schools for the education of teachers.

Mr. Speaker, while by this bill the new States and Territories are not put in as good a position as the older States, owing to the fact that the latter have heretofore received large grants of the public land, I think the measure a step in the right direction and one that should be gladly accepted by all friends of education. It is surprising, as gentlemen have already remarked, that a subject so important as the encouragement of national education should have been so long and so entirely neglected by the Government of the United States.

The Territories have been and are particularly destitute of educational advantages. Their situation is a peculiar one. The people are scattered over an immense area in small settlements and many of them are very poor. This is especially true of the two Territories with which I am most familiar, namely: New Mexico and Arizona. In a speech delivered two years since by Mr. Prosser, of Tennessee, then a member of the House, he thus referred to the state of affairs in the first named of these Territories:

I have yet to speak of a still more signal instance of bad policy which might perhaps be characterized as bad faith on the part of the General Government. About 22 years ago we acquired from Mexico a territory possessing one of the most healthy climates in the world, beautiful and picturesque in its snow-capped mountains, plains, valleys, and streams, with exhaustless mineral, agricultural, and pastural resources, two hundred and seven thousand square miles in extent, and having some one hundred thousand people clustered in villages, thus being admirably situated for schools. The people spoke a foreign language, were poor and very ignorant, yet, for a poverty-stricken population abounding in excellent traits of character.

More than two generations of school children have now grown up since they have been under the jurisdiction of Congress; they yet speak a foreign language and they are still poor and ignorant. Had Congress performed its duty in establishing schools among them twenty years ago, New Mexico might to-day have been a flourishing State in this Union, a source of wealth to the nation, and a jewel in the national crown.

Apart from what has been done in that Territory through the earnest efforts of the Roman Catholic church, little progress has been made in the establishment of schools. I do not know that a system of free education would have made the Territory a State by this time, but it can hardly be doubted that it would have been of great benefit to the people and to all their best interests.

In a speech on education by father Truchard delivered in Santa Fé, in August last, that prelate attributed the state of affairs in New Mexico, first, to a deplorable indifference on the part of many parents to the instruction of their children, and secondly to the want of resources; and he spoke even of the church schools as of an inferior character, and exclaimed:

And is the case utterly hopeless? Shall it be said that the people of New Mexico are condemned to live forever in the darkness of ignorance? Can no remedy be found for this lamentable evil?

Ladies and gentlemen, under the present circumstances I see no hope of remedy, except in the Government of the United States. It is altogether necessary that Congress make an appropriation of money for educational purposes. It is the only hope, the only remedy for ameliorating the poor condition of our schools.

Governor Giddings, in his message to the last Legislative Assembly, (December, 1871,) dwells at much length and with much feeling upon the subject. He urges local legislation, intimating that the people must first show a disposition to do something for themselves before expecting congressional aid, and says:

Now, if this first step could be taken and then the Legislature memorialize Congress setting forth the absolute needs of our people—the fact that nearly one hundred thousand people by war and treaty arrangements twenty-five years since fell into the hands of the United States in the most wretched condition conceivable as to obtaining knowledge through the enlightened processes of education by books, the whole population in the most indigent circumstances, and humanity required then and at once that their education should be provided for, but it was not. Twenty-five years have passed away and the people of this Territory are, educationally speaking, in a darker condition than when first brought into our nation. Now, notwithstanding the financial resources of the people are so small, they are yet willing to tax themselves annually to the amount named. And that Congress and the Territory provide for anticipating the sales of school lands—that Congress provide for us by appropriating $100,000 to this Territory for the purposes of common schools—that the sum be loaned to the Territory for twenty years without interest, holding the school lands or so much as shall be necessary as security for the payment of the principal sum.

Governor Safford, of Arizona, which Territory, it will be remembered, was some ten years since formed from New Mexico, in his message to the last Legislative Assembly, (January, 1871,) says:

I believe it to be the duty of the Government to give a helping hand to the infant Territories that are destined soon to become States of the Union, and especially do I believe the Territories acquired from Mexico should receive marked consideration in this direction. The people of these Territories have suddenly been transferred from another government to our own. Speaking a foreign tongue, we call upon them to adopt our customs and obey our laws. They are generally well-disposed, law-abiding citizens, and have but little means; they have and will continue to have an important influence in the governing power of the country, and it is essential that they should be educated in the language of the law that governs them. This question has already been agitated in Congress, and many of our statesmen take a liberal view of it. It is to be hoped that Congress will at an early period adopt such measures as will at least insure education in the Territories.

During my own term of service as Governor of this Territory I was constantly annoyed by the lack of educational facilities and repeatedly advised the Legislatures to devise some measure of relief, but the people were generally without means to warrant taxation. The ravages of the hostile Indians in New Mexico and Arizona, owing to the lack of a fixed and vigorous policy upon the part of the Government, have been so constant and extensive that the people, both American and Mexican, have been well nigh impoverished, and it would seem to be an absolute duty on the part of Congress to grant them assistance in the matter of common schools. The Governor, in the message alluded to, justly compliments the private enterprise which has established schools at one or two points in the Territory, and that of the Sisters of St. Joseph, who have lately founded and brought to considerable perfection a seminary for the education of females, which he pronounces a school creditable to any country, and which already has an attendance of about one hundred and fifty pupils.

I would also bear cheerful testimony to the zealous personal efforts on behalf of education made in new Mexico by Bishop Lamy, and in Arizona by Bishop Sallepointe. With limited means and under many obstacles these worthy prelates of the Catholic church have done much in a field which for some reason has been almost entirely overlooked and neglected by other religious denominations. But they have not been able, nor can it be expected that they or that any private or religious agencies will be to provide free schools, such as are contemplated by the bill now in hand, and such as are necessary to carry education to all classes of the people.

Within the last year, under an act of the last Legislature, an earnest attempt has been made by the territorial authorities of Arizona to establish such schools, and the Governor, who has made the subject one of especial attention, informs me that most gratifying results have already been attained. In each county there is at least one school in successful operation, and both parents and children are deeply interested and gratified, but there will be need of Government aid to steadily maintain these schools until there is a larger population.

Not alone for American and Mexican children have we desired the establishment of common schools in New Mexico and Arizona, but for the children of the friendly Indians have we wished for them. One of my earliest efforts in this House was to procure an allowance of $5,000 for establishing schools among the Pimas and Maricopas of Arizona, in which I was not successful. These Indians have always been peaceably disposed, and they are entitled to Government aid if any Indians are. Their reservations are in a central part of the Territory, and their relations with settlers and travelers are so intimate that it is especially desirable that their intelligence should be in every way advanced. The Governor in the message already quoted from speaks as follows of the desire of these Indians for schools:

I have alluded to the Pima Indians, but in connection with this subject I desire to observe that I was informed by the chief of that tribe, last summer, that what they most desired were schools to educate their children. He said they had means in abundance for their support, but schools were beyond their reach; that they had asked and plead in vain for them.

At this time, I am glad to say, two schools are in operation upon these reservations, under the direction of the Indian agent, and the Commissioner of Indian Affairs has promised an appropriation towards their support, and certain benevolent ladies in New York are soliciting contributions. But other schools will be needed upon these reservations, and upon others throughout the Territory, so that the Indian children may not be permitted, as has too long been the case, to grow up in ignorance, indolence, and vice. In the Territory of New Mexico where the Pueblo or Village Indians are more numerous there is even greater need of liberal provision for schools, and in other Territories having Indian population some provision must be made.

Writing upon this subject, in 1870, Bishop Lamy, of New Mexico, said:

On several occasions we have endeavored to establish schools in some of our Pueblo Indian villages; but unless the Government helps us with some means, and also with some mild regulations obliging the good half-civilized to educate their children, we have very poor hopes of success.

Mr. Speaker, objection has been made to this bill, by some gentlemen, on the ground that it will not give a return sufficiently large to provide an adequate school fund for the various States and Territories. This may be so, but it will furnish sufficient means to give a stimulus to educational movements and an inducement for local action and appropriation.

As the gentleman from Iowa [Mr. Dunnell] has just remarked:

The sum is said to be small. It may prove enough to bring about the needed organization. But £500 were given by Harvard, and out of it has sprung Harvard college. But a small sum may do the work. One, or two, or five, or ten, or twenty, or forty educational people in those States may gather about this sum and persevere in the work of organization, and it will widen and spread, I hope, until we find well developed public school systems. With this hope I support this bill, as voting nationally and not locally. We want universal education in this Republic. We want educated masses. Ignorance is fearful. It is to be dreaded everywhere. Let light go forth. Let education everywhere triumph; free education, universal education.

It is too late in the world's history to need argument in favor of universal education. Under a free government it is a recognized essential. Washington in a letter to Alexander Hamilton, (1796,) expressed the true method of establishing justice to be the education of the people, "the surest means," he says, "of giving just ways of thinking to our citizens." Just ways of thinking must precede the establishment of justice, nor can justice exist divorced from wisdom.

It is too well known to need repetition here that in all nations where the question has been inquired into it has been shown that criminals are generally ignorant; that as school houses increase, in a corresponding ratio do jails and prisons diminish. In other countries it has not been questioned that Government had the right to provide for the education of the people, and it has been considered a first duty.

Said Macaulay in the British Parliament:

Take away education, and what are your means? Military force, prisons, solitary cells, penal colonies, gibbets, all the other apparatus of penal laws. If, then, there be an end to which Government is bound to attain; if there are two ways only of attaining it, if one of these ways is by elevating the moral and intellectual character of the people, and if the other way is by inflicting pain, who can doubt which way every Government ought to take? It seems to me that no proposition can be more strange than this: that the State ought to have the power to punish and is bound to punish its subjects for not knowing their duty, but at the same time is to take no step to let them know what their duty is.

I might cite many facts and illustrations to show why education can not be promptly and generally diffused in the American Territories without the helping hand of the General Government, and certain it is they cannot be settled in the manner best calculated to promote their development until common schools are well established.

Upon every account, so far as the absolute needs and highest interests of the Territories are concerned, should this bill, or a more liberal one, be

[CONTINUED ON FOURTH PAGE.]