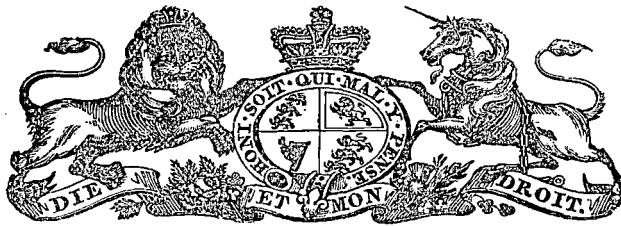


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1875.

T A S M A N I A.

H O U S E O F A S S E M B L Y.

PUBLIC EDUCATION.

LETTER TO HIS EXCELLENCY IN COUNCIL FROM THE
RIGHT REV. BISHOP MURPHY.

Laid upon the Table by the Colonial Treasurer, and ordered by the House to be
printed, 24 August, 1875,



Hobart Town, 26th July, 1875.

To His Excellency the Governor in Council.

I HAVE the honor to inform Your Excellency in Council that a large and influential meeting of the Catholic laity of Hobart Town was held in September, 1872, in St. Joseph's Church of this City, for the purpose of giving public expression to their opinion on the system of Public Education in Tasmania. The proceedings of that meeting were marked throughout by perfect unanimity, and there was manifested an earnestness and depth of feeling which none but a subject of extreme importance could call forth. A Petition to Parliament was adopted, and numerously signed by the Catholics of Hobart Town and those of the Colony. The Petition stated that the system of Public Education which existed in Tasmania is of such a nature that they cannot under its provisions bring up their children according to the tenets and teaching of their Church in the all important question of education; that they consider it a hardship that while they are compelled by law to contribute their share to the support of Education, they cannot avail themselves of it without contravening those principles of Religion on which they conscientiously believe education should be based; and that this hardship is aggravated by the fact that it is rendered compulsory in certain cases by law on parents to send their children to the Public Schools of the Colony, conducted as they are on a system opposed to their religious convictions. And the Petitioners, who according to the census of 1870 represent 22·24 per cent. of the population, prayed both Houses of Parliament to enact such measures as would enable the Roman Catholics of the Colony to benefit by the provisions made for Public Education, and to bring up their children as their Church so strictly inculcates as good Christians and useful members of the State.

The Petition in question was presented to Parliament during the Session of 1873, and beyond being read to the House, and supported by two or three Members, up to the present time it has not been considered by the Legislature. Under these circumstances, and as spiritual head of the Roman Catholic community of Tasmania, and formally requested by a resolution of the Tasmanian Catholic Association, passed at a recent meeting of that body, I beg to bring the matter under the kind consideration of Your Excellency in Council, with the hope that the coming Session of Parliament will not be allowed to pass over without the just prayer of the above-mentioned Petitioners being granted.

They are urged the more strongly to adopt this course because they have learned, and it is their belief, that a system of education that is not based on and guided by religion, such as that which is established by law in Tasmania, is opposed to the teaching of their Church, is dangerous to the faith and morals of those subjected to its influence, and tends to lead them into indifference to religion.

His Holiness Pius IX. speaking of Primary Schools lays down in the following words the principles on which education should be grounded:—"It is in those Schools above all that the children of the people ought to be carefully taught from their tender years the mysteries and precepts of religion, and to be trained up with diligence to piety, good morals, religion, and civilization. In such Schools religious teaching ought to have so leading a place in all that concerns education and instruction, that whatever the children may learn may appear subsidiary to it. The young, therefore, are exposed to the greatest perils whenever in the Schools education is not closely united with religion."

This is confirmed by numerous Catholic and Protestant writers of note, of the latter of whom I shall quote only the illustrious French statesman and historian, M. Guizot, who states that, "in order to make popular education truly good and socially useful, it must be fundamentally religious. Religion is not a study or an exercise to be restricted to a certain place or a certain hour: it is a faith and a law which ought to be felt everywhere, and which, after this manner alone, can exercise all its beneficial influence on our minds and on our lives."

As to the pernicious tendency of education without religion, Cardinal M'Closky of New York, writing on the system as it is carried out in the United States of America, says—"I can answer that, so far as our Catholic children are concerned, the workings of our public schools system have proved, and do prove, highly detrimental to their faith and morals."

Cardinal Manning in his pamphlet on National Teaching on the same system says:—"We have it on the testimony of Americans, of Protestants, of clergymen, of physicians, of judges, of statesmen, that both crime and immorality have increased notwithstanding the spread of education."

A recent number of the *New York Times* contains the following from a high and influential Protestant gentleman on the same subject:—"Whence come our sharpest rogues? our nimblest thieves? our greatest swindlers? our murderers defying detection? Are they men of the lowest grade who thus defeat the object and end of the law? Far from it; they are men of education obtained in the public schools, where their natural instincts of evil are sharpened by knowledge—their impulses to good overlooked, allowed to lie dormant until, in the accomplished villain, they seem scarcely to exist—the mind everything, the heart nothing. . . . We Protestants might well learn occasionally from the Roman Catholics, and in this instance imitate with good effect their system of parish schools. Each religious body could have its share of the public money apportioned according to its numbers, and thus might be laid the foundation of our becoming not a nation of highly educated scamps, but a wise, law-abiding people."

Like causes produce like effects. Nor do the circumstances of the juvenile condition of Tasmania present any reason which may justify a hope for an exception, in their regard, to the general rule. On the contrary, the indications which they display of a disposition to shake off all control, a disregard for authority, and indifference for religious practices, lead us to expect consequences of the worst description. Their disorderly conduct in Hobart Town and other parts of the colony is become a subject of continual comment in our public journals and of increasing alarm to the community, necessitating strong legal measures for their suppression.

To ward against the danger which appears imminent, the axe ought to be laid to the root by effecting a substantial change in the existing system of education, and establishing schools in which religion should be allowed to exercise its full influence on the minds and the hearts of the rising generation.

May I, therefore, respectfully suggest the introduction amongst us of the denominational system of education; a system which would meet the requirements of Catholics, whilst it would not interfere with the religious convictions of other denominations; a system which is recognised in England, Scotland, and Canada, and other countries, and which is calculated to diffuse the blessings of education in its true sense throughout this Colony.

I have the honor to be,

Your Excellency's obedient Servant,

+ DANIEL MURPHY, *Bishop of Hobart Town.*

Mayfield, New Town, 24th July, 1873.

SIR,

ALLOW me to call your kind attention to the following observations on the state of Public Education in Tasmania.

1. The system under the Public Schools Act of this Colony was adopted as an experiment, and has been sufficiently long in operation to test its results. Worked by a Board of Education and supported by the public Treasury, it undertook to supply the youth of Tasmania with primary education. Let us see how far it has accomplished the important work allotted to it.

2. The Statistics for 1870 set down the number of the juvenile population as follows:—

Under 15 years of age.....	7,928
12	5,621
10	14,592
5	8,797
	<hr/>
	36,938
	<hr/>

On reference to the Report of the Board of Education (No. 16, 1872), Appendix E, it will be seen that the ages and classification of scholars on the rolls of Public Schools at the end of the year 1872, under 4 years of age and to 14 years and over, are set down at 6781, and the average daily attendance 5209. This shows that not a fifth of the

children of school age may be said to benefit by State Education; and allowing for 2000 children who are supposed to attend private schools, there remain upwards of 28,000, the great majority of whom are unprovided for. From which it follows that the present system of Public Education does not reach the bulk of the juvenile population, and is numerically a failure.

3. One of the causes that may be assigned for this failure is this. The number of Public Schools is insufficient for the demand; for in order to provide adequate accommodation for our youth there ought to be at least 500 schools, whilst there are actually only 139 in operation, a number which the state of the public finances will not admit of being increased to any appreciable extent. Another cause of the failure of the present system is, that it lacks the religious element, which eminent divines, statesmen, and writers of the day deem an essential component of education,—that, practically, it is a secular system, which tends to lead those who avail themselves of it to indifference to religion, and ultimately into infidelity, as has been well expressed in their petition to Parliament by the Roman Catholic community, with whom members of other denominations agree in opinion. So powerful a reason as this, is of itself sufficient to shake the confidence of parents in the Public Schools, and to prove detrimental to their success. Moreover, seeing that there is not a sufficient number of Public Schools in the colony, and that a large section of the entire population protest against the system adopted in them, it is difficult to see how the compulsory clause attached to the Schools Act can with justice be carried into effect.

4. Owing then to those two causes, there are at the present moment in Tasmania upwards of 28,000 children who are absolutely not being educated, and who, if allowed to grow up in ignorance and vice, will ultimately become the bane of society,—a consideration that will not fail to impress on thoughtful men the necessity of devising a timely remedy.

5. This remedy can in my opinion be supplied by the introduction of the denominational system of education,—a system which is not new, which prevails in England, Scotland, and Canada, and in several parts of Europe; and which, whilst adapting itself to every shade of religious belief, is capable of meeting all those requirements which a Government needs as to the collection and distribution of money, the construction of schools, the competency of masters, amount of secular knowledge, inspection, and the like.

6. The great advantage of such a system in the present very depressed state of colonial finances would be to relieve the public Treasury, to vastly increase the number of schools, and to extend the blessings of education to thousands who are now perishing for want of it; and what is of paramount importance to a State is, that the denominational system, and that only, is calculated to produce a religious and moral people; and I may venture to add, that if the inhabitants of Tasmania were polled on the question, the vast majority of them would vote in favor of it. For a people who enjoy and feel the blessings of Christianity would be anxious to transmit it to their children, and I am confident they are patriotic enough to come forward to assist their country in its present difficulty.

7. As an illustration of the denominational system, and of the anxious desire of the Catholic community to educate their children in accordance with their religious convictions, I submit for consideration the following report, furnished me by the Very Rev. Archdeacon Marum, of the working of a school in the District of Brighton, established in February, 1870.

MEMORANDUM for His Lordship the Right Rev. BISHOP MURPHY, D.D., regarding St. Bridget's Denominational School at Brighton, 24th June, 1873.

1. The facts to be brought under the notice of your Lordship regarding the organisation, working, and results of St. Bridget's denominational school at Brighton, may be conveniently stated in memorandum form, and with your permission I will therefore adopt that mode of communication.

2. A Catholic school for boys and girls, under the patronage of St. Bridget of Ireland, was opened at Brighton 15th February, 1870, and since then has been in regular operation.

3. The school has been from the beginning in charge of a young lady, who was educated at the Presentation Convent, Hobart Town, and has been efficiently conducted. The teacher receives £40 per annum as salary, and is paid quarterly, by the Treasurer of the School Committee from receipts of school-fees.

4. The school has been and continues to be self-supporting, and is managed by the Pastor, assisted by a Committee chosen from the parents of the pupils.

5. The Pastor and Committee being acquainted with the pecuniary circumstances of parents or guardians residing within a practical school-radius determine in Committee the terms on which children shall be admitted to the school,—namely, what school-fees shall be charged to each family, or whether any fees shall be charged.

6. The scale of fees thus determined upon ranges from 9d. to 6d. per week. The rule followed by the Committee in fixing the charge that shall be made is, that all who can pay school-fees shall pay *is.* 6d. per week, or 9d. per head for two children, and 6d. per head per week for the other children of the same family; that when a parent cannot manage to pay for more than one child, he shall be charged 9d. per week for one, and *all* the other children of that family shall be received as *free scholars*; that if a parent cannot afford to pay *Ninepence per week for one*, or if he cannot afford to pay *anything*, all of his children shall be admitted *free*.

7. The Teacher is informed of the decision of the Committee, as to who shall pay school-fees and how much, and who shall be received as free-scholars. She is not to demand fees, but is to receive such as may be offered in accordance with the scale fixed by Committee, and to refer objectors, if any, to the School Committee: she is also to pay over to the Treasurer of the Committee, on Saturdays, any fees she may have received during the week.

8. The attendance of pupils has ranged from 50 to over 60, the average daily attendance being very high.

9. The number of free-scholars has been great,—rather more than half of the whole number attending.

10. The subjects taught in the school are—Catechism and Prayers; the method of preparing for the Sacraments of Confession and Holy Communion; Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, (full course); Entries, Dictation; Transcription from Books; Letter-writing (social and commercial); Object Lessons, Grammar, Geography, History, and Singing; also, Needlework, both plain and ornamental.

11. In imparting direct Religious Instruction there is comparatively but a small portion of time occupied, only three quarters of an hour daily; but from the habits and surroundings of our school-day and its occasional prayers, Religion is made to permeate every duty throughout the day; and the children almost imperceptibly come to realize that Religion is not a mere accessory and peculiarity, and instruction in secular knowledge the grand essential of life. In our school, to use those famous words of our illustrious Holy Father, Pius IX, "the children of the people are diligently instructed in the mysteries and principles of our most holy religion, and are with great care formed to piety, to propriety of manner, to religion, and to the duties of good subjects and citizens."

12. The Catholic community are aware that an efficient secular education for their children can still be had at Brighton at the Public School, and at less cost than at their own self-supporting Denominational school; but, taught by experience and observation that the public system of education is a secular system practically, and that its ordinary outcome is *at least indifferentism in religion, that uprising of the spirit of Antichrist, as the Australian Bishops so happily describe it*, they sought safety for their children in their Denominational school. Here, whilst their children receive a secular education which is in no respect inferior to that imparted at the Public School, religion and morality are so provided for as to make the pupils good Christians and good citizens.

13. The self-sacrifice on the part of this very poor community to secure the blessing of Denominational education has been very great indeed, and has been cheerfully made, for now over three years. The community has thus demonstrated its preference in the manner of educating its children in a way to command the respect of its neighbours, and of all who value high principle, and should be entitled to the special consideration of the Legislature, by proving, as it has done, that the Colony can secure an efficient education; even whilst lessening the present annual grant for Public Education very considerably.

14. Should it be necessary to continue the self-sacrifice of the past three years to secure Denominational education to their children, this community will, with God's blessing, be equal to that sacred duty; but they feel that the Legislature should come to their aid, by so modifying the present distribution of the Education grant as to assist deserving Denominational schools.

15. This community considers that your Lordship regards its efforts to secure a sound and safe education for their children with far more than approval, and is satisfied that you will take energetic steps to press its claims for assistance for its school upon the attention of Parliament which is now in session.

The Brighton school is only an instance of several other schools, such as the Presentation Convent schools, in Hobart Town and Launceston, St. Mary's Parochial schools, and St. Luke's, Hobart Town, and the schools at New Town and Richmond, &c., &c., in which hundreds of Catholic children are receiving a sound religious and secular education unsupported by the State.

I remain,
Sir,

Yours faithfully,

+ DANIEL MURPHY,
Bishop of Hobart Town.