

AGRICULTURAL BUREAU.

RESOLUTIONS

OF

THE LEGISLATURE OF VERMONT,

RELATIVE TO

The establishment of an Agricultural Bureau.

DECEMBER 31, 1849.

Laid upon the table, and ordered to be printed.

Report of the Joint Committee raised to inquire into the expediency of recommending the establishment of a "bureau of agriculture" in the "Department of the Interior" at Washington.

To the Senate and House of Representatives:

The Joint Committee appointed to inquire into the expediency of a legislative recommendation, on the part of this State, of the establishment, in the national Department of the Interior, of a bureau of agriculture for the promotion of the great interest of agricultural improvement in this Union, respectfully report:

The founders of our government were desirous for the organization of a Home Department, devoted to the fostering and encouragement of agriculture, and other industrial arts; but it seems that for want of proper persons to organize and manage such a department, it was laid aside.

At a later period, Washington recommended an organization, entitled "A Home Department of Agriculture." His conceptions upon this subject—like everything else emanating from his practical, far-seeing mind—are exactly to the purpose, comprehending, more or less directly, about all that need be said in its favor. They are as follows:—

"It will not be doubted that with reference either to individual or national welfare, agriculture is of primary importance. In proportion as nations advance in population, and other circumstances of maturity, this truth becomes more apparent, and renders the cultivation of the soil *more and more an object of public patronage*. Institutions for promoting it grow up, supported by the public purse; *and to what object can it be dedicated with greater propriety?* Among the means which have been employed to this end, none have been attended with greater success than the establishment of boards, composed of proper characters, charged with

collecting and diffusing information, and enabled by premiums and small pecuniary aid to encourage and assist a spirit of discovery and improvement, by stimulating to enterprise and experiment, and by drawing to a *common centre* the results everywhere of individual skill and observation, and by *spreading them thence over the whole nation*. Experience has accordingly shown that they are very cheap instruments of immense national benefits."

The methods of agriculture pursued by our fathers, in a new country, with a virgin soil and sparse population, were, perhaps, necessarily rude and improvident; but with a rapid, an unprecedented increase of population, improvements in tillage have not advanced with corresponding steps, or, generally speaking, been of long standing. By no more than a half century of bad cultivation, the soil of the older States has become either entirely run down, or greatly impoverished of fertility; and insects, blights, noxious weeds, &c., the usual attendants of imperfect tillage, have increased and become accumulated to an alarming extent.

But the evil does not stop here. Too many of our intelligent, enterprising young men—observing the sad condition of the soil, and trained to false impressions—suppose that the agricultural profession, instead of being an open field for the efforts of science to improve, is but an arena, fit only to be occupied by the illiterate and unenterprising, under the guidance of blind tradition. They accordingly press in masses into other callings, filling them to overflowing, and leaving the "art of arts" to its fate.

The same process of deterioration, which has been so nearly completed in the Atlantic States, is now going on at the west. Although nature, by a long and a most liberal process, has endowed the lands of that section with a fertility elsewhere unknown, still they can be impoverished by the hand of man. The gradation to the same climax which has obtained in the older States may be slower, yet, in the nature of things, it must be sure. Many of the occupants of those now generous soils, under the same mistaken impression that they are inexhaustible, which possessed the first settlers of the more fertile tracts of the eastern States, will probably live long enough to find that, under a constantly depleting and careless husbandry, what has been done can be done again. These remarks are of course subject to exceptions; but they are still quite too generally true.

While this rapid destruction of fertility has been going on among us, several of the States of Europe have been as rapidly advancing in productiveness. There, agriculture is fostered and encouraged by government; men of the first attainments, and in the highest walks of life, devote their time and talents to its improvement; the lights of several sciences have been shed upon it; lands, under the cultivation of ages previous, have been so changed within sixty or seventy years past, by a judicious rotation of crops, and a system of manuring adapted to the soil and the crop, as to increase three-fold in productiveness; thousands of acres of wet lands, heretofore of little or no value, have been drained, and are now under profitable cultivation; agricultural schools and colleges have been established; and the breeding of agricultural animals has been carried to so high perfection in England and Scotland, that any other breeds, in the known world, may be improved by a cross with them.

It may be said that such high cultivation cannot be profitable here; neither can we afford to pursue *our* exhausting system of cultivation much further; for the decreased and decreasing crops will not remunerate our labor. If the state of things in our country will not warrant high farming to the extent to which it is now carried in the countries spoken of, we certainly are warranted in the employment of far more enlightened and correct principles of tillage than are now common.

It has been well said, that "a prosperous agricultural district is not without patriots to defend it;" and it is undoubtedly true that a high state of intelligence and scientific knowledge among our farmers would conduce, more than anything else, to the stability and perpetuity of our republic, and to the rapid and full development of its vast agricultural capabilities. We may truly say, in this connexion, that "every accession which man gains to his knowledge is also an accession to his power, and extends the limits of his empire over the world which he inhabits."

About three-fourths of the population of our country are engaged in tilling the soil. Legislation to promote the prosperity of this interest directly benefits the greater portion of the people, and indirectly, but not less surely, the remainder also. Now, our legislators and others have not been wanting, heretofore, in eulogy upon the antiquity, dignity, importance, and pleasures of agriculture; but where has been that fostering care which would seek to encourage and promote it? Where have the farmers been who would demand for the cultivation of the soil that conspicuous place to which it is so justly entitled?

But we are happy to observe that an improved sentiment is becoming prevalent; that "agriculture is of *primary* importance;" that our nation has *already* "advanced in population, and other circumstances of maturity," to that position which "renders the cultivation of the soil an object of public patronage;" that there is no "object to which it can be dedicated with greater propriety." These truths are gradually making their way into the minds of intelligent, thinking men.

We have, at length, a Home Department; and the question presents itself—Can it, and will it, do anything for agriculture? It can, and we trust that it will. The politicians may seek to make it an instrument for the furtherance of party; and, with the bug-bear of "constitutional objections," they *may* tell us that nothing can be done for agriculture under this department. But let the farmers, moving in a mass, call loudly for a bureau of agriculture, with proper and suitable patronage from the government. Let it be managed by "proper characters," selected with reference to their fitness for, and devotion to, the promotion of agriculture. They should be men above political contamination, and having a love for science for its own sake; and keeping constantly in view the one great object which they were placed there to promote, they would not be induced to "give up to party what was meant for mankind."

A board of agriculture, thus "composed of proper characters, charged with collecting and diffusing information, and enabled by premiums and small pecuniary aid to encourage and assist a spirit of discovery and improvement, by stimulating to enterprise and experiment, and by drawing to a common centre the results everywhere of individual skill and observation, and by spreading them thence over the whole nation," would soon be found to be "*a very cheap instrument of immense national benefits.*"

1. This board might be in correspondence with scientific men in all parts of our country, and with boards of agriculture in foreign countries: thus drawing to a common centre, and from thence spreading broadcast over the land, all new facts and improvements of utility, all valuable suggestions derived from the improvements and new lights of the various natural sciences which are intimately allied with agriculture.

2. Proper premiums might perhaps be offered to stimulate ingenuity in the invention and production of the most valuable farm implements and machines; and by awarding to those which, upon proper test, were found best to answer a desired purpose, competition, and an ambition to excel, would be excited to the highest degree.

3. Persons in the employment of our government abroad might be directed to collect and transmit to the department those new or improved seeds, fruits, plants, animals, implements, &c., which were deemed desirable. As it would be a part of the business of this board to institute extensive inquiries into the utility of introducing, for cultivation among us, the various valuable productions of other countries, and as the great range of latitude, of soil and climate, which our country embraces, undoubtedly admits of cultivating the products of almost every other country, we may reasonably suppose that a proper effort in this direction alone would be attended with very important results.

4. Premiums might be offered for the most able essays and the most satisfactory experiments to elucidate vexed questions and undeveloped principles in agriculture, if deemed proper and desirable.

5. Extensive inquiries might be instituted into the habits of insects troublesome to cultivation, and the best methods to exterminate them, or prevent their ravages. As the nation "advances in population, and other circumstances of maturity," it becomes more and more an object, peculiarly, with our cultivators to raise many sorts of fruits and tender plants comparatively unimportant at an earlier period. Now, it is a fair estimate that one-half the productions of man of this description go to feed the insect world. Indeed, of some kinds in some seasons they take the whole. Their depredations upon the various field crops are oftentimes extensive also. The subject of entomology is vast and inexhaustible; it requires such extensive, and yet particularly minute, and often microscopic investigations, that the efforts of ordinary associations of men can avail but little. But it is believed that a national board of agriculture would have resources peculiar to itself, that might effect important results. Its inquiries might be very extensive, drawing in contributions from individuals and societies in every quarter, the sum total of which would be highly useful.

6. The various State and county societies throughout the land might be in correspondence with the department—thus receiving and imparting information upon these and other subjects.

In short, in a hundred ways such an organization might forward the great interests of agriculture. Indeed, we may conclude that no other establishment could parallel this, as a promoter of the interests, not exclusively of either section, but of the whole country.

The advocates for such a movement may, by some, be called enthusiasts. They are so; for the magnitude and importance of the thing very properly awaken them to enthusiasm. It is right that our own State of Vermont should be a foremost, a zealous pioneer in this business. Our

people are an agricultural people; and they are awake to those measures which will foster and promote this commanding interest. Other States will join us in endeavoring to form an organization so desirable—and thus the great sentiment of Washington, that “the power of the nation alone can carry out their high thought,” will be realized.

In view of these considerations, your committee recommend the adoption of the accompanying resolutions:

1. *Resolved*, That the General Assembly of Vermont earnestly recommend the establishment of a Bureau of Agriculture, in the “Department of the Interior,” at Washington, whose province it shall be to superintend and promote the great interest of agricultural improvement in the nation.

2. *Resolved*, That the governor is requested to transmit a copy of the foregoing resolution, and of the accompanying report, to the President of the United States, to the Secretary of the Department of the Interior, to the governor of each State of the Union, and to each of our senators and representatives in Congress, to the end that the attention of Congress, and of the several State legislatures, may be properly invited to the propositions embraced therein.

3. *Resolved*, That the senators and representatives of this State in the Congress of the United States are hereby requested to use their influence to procure the necessary legislation by Congress for the speedy establishment, on a firm and permanent basis, of a Bureau of Agriculture, as suggested in the first foregoing resolution.

FREDERICK HOLBROOK,
HOMER E. ROYCE,
J. W. D. PARKER, } *Committee of Senate.*

CHARLES K. WILLIAMS,
JULIUS CONVERSE,
HOMER E. HUBBELL,
EZRA S. CARR,
BENJAMIN B. NEWTON, } *Committee of House
of Representatives.*

IN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, *October 18, 1849.*

Read three times, and passed.

WILLIAM C. KITTREDGE,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.
CHALON F. DAVEY, *Clerk.*

Attest:

IN SENATE, *October 23, 1849.*

Read the third time and passed.

ROBERT PIERPOINT,
President of the Senate.
D. W. C. CLARKE, *Secretary.*

Attest:

Approved, *October 26, 1849.*

CARLOS COOLIDGE.

STATE OF VERMONT.

SECRETARY OF STATE'S OFFICE,
Montpelier, October 31, 1849.

I certify that the foregoing is a correct copy of the report and resolutions on file in this office.

FERRAND F. MERRILL,
Secretary of State.



