

burdening it with an illiterate voting populace, whose improvement by general education would then become impossible. This would be true, because universal education cannot be accomplished without governmental processes and public revenues. It has never existed except when furnished by these means.

Happily for us, however, I do not believe that such a death-blow to our public institutions is desired by the white people of this State; nor, under the existing constitution of Florida, can such a thing be done, because article 8, section 1, says: "It is the paramount duty of the State to make ample provision for the education of all the children residing within its borders, without distinction or preference;" and section 2: "The legislature shall provide a uniform system of common schools, and a university, and shall provide for the liberal maintenance of the same."

It is sometimes asked that, aside from all questions of public policy, is it just and equitable that the white people should be taxed to educate the colored, as they are under our present public school system? My answer to this is most positively in the affirmative; and I further assert that the reasons why it should be so, from an equitable standpoint, are stronger by far than any that can be urged in favor of it upon grounds of public policy. It is a settled principle that runs through the entire business transactions of the world, that when a person renders to another something of pecuniary value, he is entitled to a *quid pro quo*, or something of equal value in return. This principle is well founded in law, constitutes a bed rock in equity, and is taught by holy writ in the living language that "the laborer is worthy of his hire."

From 1830 to the close of the war in 1865 there was an average laboring population of 29,000 colored people in this State. In equity and justice they were entitled to their earnings; and if they had been allowed wages during this period at the low rate of 40 cents a day, and board, their earnings would have aggregated the sum of \$145,000,000—a sum equal to more than four times the assessed valuation of property in the entire State of Florida to-day. This amount could have been judiciously invested, and under the present tax law we could have raised an annual sum of \$145,000 for school purposes, \$435,000 for the expenses of the State government, and \$435,000 for interest on the State debt. This Conference should take some steps looking towards a more liberal support for education, and petition the Congress of the United States for national aid for the same.