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English history lessons, that I have just heard from distinguished members of this House. I think there is an important lesson that the good Representative from St. George did not draw from the history of the Queen Mary, Bloody Mary, and it had nothing to do with alcoholic beverages. It had to do with the fact that people will go to the stake, will be burned at the stake for theological principals that may or may not have done something for their eternal soul, but did absolutely nothing for the public policy of England in the 16th Century or for the well being of any of the subjects of Queen Mary's realm. I have also learned something tonight about the good Representative from Lewiston, Representative Mendros, who repeatedly alludes in his addressing this House to Maine's struggle for freedom and independence from colonial tyranny. I now realize that he is, of course, speaking of Maine's struggle to escape from the clutches of those distant colonial tyrants in Boston in, not from an earlier unfortunate event.

Mr. Speaker, I want to implore, on a serious note, the people in this House who are seeking some middle ground here to support this compromise bill. May I respectfully point out that the criticism that we have heard from both sides suggests that we are onto something positive here. The criticism that Maine may become a sanctuary for evil people has been heard and I respectfully submit that criticism has been met by this amended bill. The criticism that we are insulting respected professionals whose integrity should not be challenged has, I respectfully suggest, been met by this amended bill. To the partisans of both sides who cannot compromise your principles, I say, I am sorry that you take that position, but I respect your sincerity. Please respect mine too in trying to find a way forward out of this public policy disaster.

Mr. Speaker, we have now added another hour and a half to the length of time we have debated this. The time has come to move on. I urge those members who can still form an opinion, who have not been bludgeoned into silence or immobility by this debate, to vote with me to Recede and Concur. Thank you.

The SPEAKER PRO TEM: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Windham, Representative Tobin.

Representative TOBIN: Mr. Speaker, Ladies and Gentlemen of the House. This is a very important issue. It is a very emotional issue. Before the false bell for the roll call that we thought we were coming back to, I hope most of the people on the House floor realized that they were preaching to the choir. I don't believe there is any middle ground left. I think people have made up their minds how they are going to vote and I sure do pray that we get a chance to do that very, very shortly.

The SPEAKER PRO TEM: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Penobscot, Representative Perkins.

Representative PERKINS: Mr. Speaker, Men and Women of the House. Over the last half dozen speakers I have heard one of the most beautiful words in the English language several times, the word liberty. In this case it is used by the stalwart teachers that are refusing to submit to this fingerprinting. I understand that perspective, but to put things into a little different perspective, I wish people would go back, when you get a chance, and read the history of compulsory schooling. You hear almost verbatim some of the same quotes about liberty, standing on your principles, standing and holding onto your integrity, not putting your kids out by the mailbox for the government to whisk them away when they are five years old, just to keep things in perspective. Please do that. Compulsory schooling started after the Civil War by Horace Mann and few of his friends in Boston. I wish people would read a little bit from the minutes of the school board meetings when compulsory schooling was being discussed. You hear almost the same discussion. Thank you.

The SPEAKER PRO TEM: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Fort Kent, Representative Michaud.

Representative MICHAUD: Mr. Speaker, Ladies and Gentlemen of the House. If it sounds like it is an emotional issue, it is. Basically what you have done is you have asked people who have prepared to do a job in this society, handing our most precious resource, our young people. If you are going to put a time limit on having someone discuss an issue that attacks the very fiber of the profession that you gave your whole life to and continue to do so, then I seriously question whether or not you ought to be making laws that apply to the citizens of this state. Like a bad dream, some of you wish that you could close your eyes and this thing would go away. After all, we have been at it for four or five years. The problem with it is if we had done it right the first time, we wouldn't be here today.

I have mixed emotions on speaking this evening because, like the good Representative, Representative Skolgrund, I would prefer to see a repeal. I don't think the law has done what it says it intended to do. It has hurt an awful lot of good people. It is divided people on both sides of the issue that really should be spending their time and their energies doing some of the things that we really can do to prevent the very problem that we think fingerprinting has done.

The good Representative from Hodgdon, Representative Sherman, talked about personal choice. Those who made that personal choice and decided to not get fingerprinted. It would seem to me that someone who decides to give up the very thing that they have prepared for all their life, something they enjoy, something they like to do, something that society said is good and they decide that they are going to stop doing it because someone is going to ask them to get fingerprinted, this would be an indication to me that there is something wrong with it. We ought to really take a good hard look at it.

When I first heard of it, and I had made a decision to retire, I searched real hard to find some way to maybe make some of those who were questioning the motives of some of us who said that fingerprinting was a violation of our rights and if you will allow me to maybe come close to some of you, because a lot of you are not teachers, I might present to you an anecdote that might help to give you that feeling in your stomach that I had when I first found out that this was going to have to happen. Picture yourself at Thanksgiving dinner, your family, your children, your grandchildren are sitting around the table. It is a festive occasion. You are going to be thankful and someone in the group says, Mom, Dad, we would like you to have a DNA test, because we want to find out if you are truly our mother and father. We want you to take off and go to Bangor and have it done and pay for it. It hurts. I would hurt you because you would say, haven't all those years that I have been a good parent, do you have to go to that extreme? It wouldn't take long for you to start feeling some of those feelings that we had after giving so much of our time and energy to this profession.

At the same time we say, if we save one kid, if we save one child. What if we put a video camera in every home and monitored their activity, wouldn't we curb domestic violence if we did that? We are putting them on the street corners. We are putting them in our industry's restrooms to monitor the activity of some of our employees. Is it really doing what it is that we intend it to do? I don't think so. I think what it suggests is that this is just symptomatic of that paranoia that we seem to have. We have lost that desire to have people do the work that they can do because they love to do it. Quit pointing the finger at everyone, assuming they are sexual predators, like the person who has had one too many and taking that black cup of coffee before getting into the vehicle and proceeding home. Fingerprinting is giving us a false sense of security. It is like the studded tire underneath
the guys car who speeds down the highway on an icy road thinking that the studs are going to give him the extra measure of safety that you need. Once these things don't work, and they aren't going to work, they are not going to do what you think you intend them to do, what are we going to do next?

Some people have alluded to a hysteria. The good Representative from Bangor wonders who is fueling this hysteria? It isn't us. The hysteria has been fueled by the very people who we entrusted to put that law that was passed into operation. Enough information has been leaked, and continues to be leaked, to make it sound like maybe we all ought to keep our children home and home school them. Where does the answer lie? To me it lies in a cooperative spirit, one where we work together to make our schools and our society a safe place. There are no guarantees. Fingerprinting will only give you a false sense of security because we are human beings and because we are, anything can happen at any time. We don't even have to have a prior record. This evening I would urge you, realizing and being a pragmatic, that to Recede and Concur would probably help in this effort to maybe find some common ground. I would urge you to do that.

The SPEAKER PRO TEM: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Madison, Representative Richard.

Representative RICHARD: Mr. Speaker, Men and Women of the House. At this point I know there isn't much that anybody can say that is going to change your mind one way or the other. You have heard enough, but this is too serious to make light of. It bothers me when somebody makes light of this particular situation. It was said that freedom was precious. Yes, freedom is precious. It is precious for the children in our schools. It has been said that we make an example of teachers. That is not the intent, but neither do we expect that the children are made an example of. If you have ever worked with a child who has been raped by a teacher, you know what it is to be made an example of. I have worked with a child and I have seen her 20 years later and I know what happened to her life. Integrity? Yes. The majority of teachers have integrity. The majority of teachers are dependable. Unfortunately some are not and that is what we are thinking about. It is not a light matter. It is not something to joke about. I urge you to vote against the motion to Recede and Concur.

The SPEAKER PRO TEM: The Chair recognizes the Representative from South Portland, Representative Glynn.

Representative GLYNN: Mr. Speaker, Ladies and Gentlemen of the House. I will be very brief. I have not addressed the teacher fingerprinting issue this legislative session. I rise because I wish to go on record as opposing what I consider to be a very destructive and harmful amendment being considered by this body, particularly the issues that I have with this amendment, the removal of the applicant's fingerprints from the state repository. Additionally, I have serious, serious questions and problems with the clause which reinstates educators who did not participate in the certification process and a background check certifying them as credentialed in the system. I think that it creates a double standard in our system and it compromises all intent of this well-meaning and well-needed legislation, the fingerprinting process.

The background checks are nothing new to our municipality down in South Portland. In fact, in our police department, we have a citizen civil service commission that screens applicants, for instance, for the police department. Not only do we do background checks in our municipality, we actually do lie detector tests of all officer applicants when they are coming in. We don't stop there at protecting public safety in our town. We additionally, when an officer comes up for promotion, we also repeat the background check and we do another lie detector test. We asked hard questions. Do you take drugs? Do you steal? Do I or any member of our committee believe we are questioning the professionalism of South Portland's finest, our officers? Absolutely not. In fact, what we are doing is we are certifying their professionalism and we know that when you look them in the eye, you are looking in the eye of a honest person. No one can do a better job than that.

The same can be said for this piece of legislation that we have had in place that is being tampered with and dismantled by this amendment. I can tell you that there may be a number of people that, for some personal stance, have stood up and stated that they don't wish to participate in certification or background check on a matter of their own personal choice or their own personal principles. That is fine and well to say, but there is additionally, I assure you, individuals that did not participate in the background check because they do, in fact, have something to hide. Before we go around enacting state laws and repealing legislation and certifying people which have had no background check and marking them as trusted individuals in the system, above and beyond reproach, I believe very much compromises, not just the safety of the children, but the professionalism of the fine ladies and gentlemen who have stepped forward and have stood out to the communities that they are employed in as being above reproach. I thank you and I will be voting against this amendment.

The SPEAKER PRO TEM: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Wayne, Representative McKee.

Representative MCKEE: Mr. Speaker, Men and Women of the House. Before we vote, I want to remind you of the rank and file out there, the thousands and thousands and thousands of teachers who have been fingerprinted, have been giving exams this week, talking with students, going about their business, doing what teachers do, trying to protect children, trying to ensure their safety, doing exactly what the good Representative from Kennebunk was saying. The rank and file have not opposed fingerprinting. I count myself among them. I would never leave teaching over fingerprinting. I am not trying to set myself up as any kind of saint here either. I think that tonight we sort of polarized these people here. We are not blind sheets who are along just for the ride each year. I will be printed on Saturday at the Cohen School in Bangor. I won't be skipping blufly toward that fingerprinting. It is a serious day. I am doing it for the students I teach, the students in the state and students all across the country.

I also do not believe that those people who are in favor of repeal are people who would stand on principle to the point that they would be burned at the stake over this either. There are people who may oppose fingerprinting who have been printed and are going about their business today. I challenge you, go home in the next few days and talk to parents, talk to the PTA, talk to the school board, those 285 other school boards, talk to them about what they think, talk to your superintendent about the job he has and your principal, talk to the parents in your community. I have done that. I am here to tell you that rank and file teachers and ordinary citizens are going about their day hoping that we are taking care of their children in schools. They do not oppose fingerprinting.

We have talked about video cameras. We have video cameras on our buses to ensure safety. Occasionally there is a video camera in my classroom to evaluate me and others. We used it. It is being proposed that there be video cameras in this chamber. Tonight I was thinking, it might not be such a bad idea.

The SPEAKER PRO TEM: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Falmouth, Representative Davis for what reason does the Representative rise?