

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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SEVENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE

HOUSE

NO. 127

STATE OF MAINE

IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD ONE THOUSAND
NINE HUNDRED AND NINETEEN

House of Representatives, Feb. 7, 1919.
By Mr. Barnes of Houlton tabled for printing.
CLYDE R. CHAPMAN, Clerk.

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives:

It is necessary to lay before you frankly and in some detail a situation which is delaying the preparation of the Budget and threatens to prevent the formulation of any orderly financial program and to interfere seriously with constructive legislation in general.

This condition arises out of a controversy as to whether the so-called equalization fund, or special aid by the state, to towns for road construction, shall continue to be distributed by the State Highway Commission as provided in the existing law or whether any money available for that purpose shall be apportioned by the committee on ways and bridges during the legislative session with no opportunity to foresee the road emergencies that may arise in the various towns during the next two years and with no chance even

to inspect any particular road while the snow is on the ground. Another matter in controversy is the question whether the committee on ways and bridges shall distribute appropriations for special bridge projects in view of the fact that the general bridge law passed some years ago specifies the proportion which the state shall contribute to bridge construction. It is well to note that the matters in dispute do not include ferries, toll bridges, international bridges nor interstate bridges as none of these are within the scope of the act mentioned. Note also that the controversy does not include the Portsmouth-Kittery project relating to an interstate toll bridge.

I have told the committee that I cannot approve special resolves for roads in view of the large expenditures for the general road program and the fact that the equalization fund is provided by law to take care of the emergencies which these special resolves seek to relieve, also that I cannot approve special resolves for bridges which are within the scope of the general bridge act.

The committee has nevertheless proceeded with its hearings and the members have notified me that they are seeking sufficient support to assure the passage in spite of an executive veto of such appropriations as the committee may see fit to approve. The House chairman who has been canvassing this subject since the very opening of the session is reported as feeling assured of a two-thirds vote.

How many of the total number of special resolves now

before that committee would be included in this program, I am not informed. If it includes them all, the amount directly involved would be up towards a million dollars in addition to the program already provided by law. In this connection it is well to note that the law already authorizes joint expenditures by the state, the federal government and the cities and towns of about five million dollars for road and bridge purposes in 1919-1920, in addition to the large amounts now raised by the cities and towns themselves for those purposes, and with the further prospect that within the years 1919-1920 the state may have to find additional funds to match on a fifty-fifty basis appropriations by the federal government amounting to \$1,924,925 for road purposes.

As soon as it becomes evident what form the federal bill is to take, I shall probably have to request you to consider proposing to the people of Maine, a constitutional amendment authorizing a considerable increase in the limit of bonds that may be issued for road and bridge purposes, in order that sufficient bonds may be issued to meet the federal appropriation. It is proper also to note in this connection that the terms of the new federal bill will be so liberal that this large joint expenditure of nearly four million dollars can be added to our present road building program and distributed widely over the state, not concentrated along comparatively few routes as at present. I have gone into this matter in some detail in order to make it plain that the probable proposed

joint construction and maintenance program of the federal government, the state and the towns will total about nine million dollars, reaching into every city and town in the state. The resolves proposed by the committee would be in addition to this amount.

The effect of the committee's proposal by directly increasing appropriations for roads, is, however, the least serious financial aspect of the situation. The total requests for appropriations amount to a staggering sum, beyond the utmost limit reached in any previous session. If all the projects now being urged should be approved and provided for by direct taxation, the increase in state tax for the various counties of the state for 1919-1920 over 1917-1918 would not be less than the following sums:

Androscoggin,	\$716,982 60
Aroostook,	826,998 54
Cumberland,	1,802,476 71
Franklin,	241,419 44
Hancock,	349,830 50
Kennebec,	623,756 55
Knox,	245,584 16
Lincoln,	155,640 90
Oxford,	415,182 55
Penobscot,	990,930 61
Piscataquis,	366,296 10
Sagadahoc,	260,163 76
Somerset,	509,190 84

Waldo,	185,022 48
Washington,	305,656 83
York,	748,385 02

The increase for the classes of towns represented by the House members of the Committee on Ways and Bridges would be :

Lisbon, represented by Mr. Clason,	\$51,478 92
Gray, New Gloucester and Raymond, represented by Mr. Jordan,	31,102 42
Boothbay, Alna, Edgecomb, New- castle, Southport and Westport, represented by Mr. Love,	41,156 21
Dixfield, Hartford, Canton, Peru, Buckfield and Sumner, repre- sented by Mr. Stanley,	42,805 38
Harmony, St. Albans, Ripley, Hart- land, Cambridge and Canaan, rep- resented by Mr. Pattee,	31,993 02
Perry, Pembroke, Meddybemps, Cooper, Alexander, Robbinston and Charlotte, represented by Mr. Washburn,	16,575 34
Wells and York, represented by Mr. Williams,	83,755 66

Nobody supposes, of course, that all these projects would be approved by the legislature but the serious point to consider is that any such program as that proposed by the com-

mittee must of necessity involve various trades of the time-honored give-and-take variety. In other words it is the entering wedge for an old-fashioned log-rolling program. The total result of which would be somewhere inside the figures mentioned above, but how far inside no one could now foresee.

While such a program is in progress, careful consideration of important general legislation is difficult, if not impossible, and such projects if considered at all are sure to stand or fall, not on their own merits but according to the relation which they chance to bear towards various private and special resolves carrying appropriations.

I am slow to believe that the impulse expressed in promises made by members of the legislature in advance of opportunity for full study of the facts will finely represent their mature judgment, but if the program of the committee is sanctioned by you, and that committee, with the assent of a sufficient number of members, has assumed the task of proposing the financial program of the state for the next two years, then it is manifestly superfluous and a waste of time for myself and the Budget Committee, in consultation with other committees who have to do with appropriations, to continue the intricate and laborious task of trying to frame a budget which will meet the most urgent necessities of the various departments and institutions without unduly increasing the tax rate. I shall therefore defer presentation of any budget proposal until it becomes apparent whether the legis-

lature definitely wishes to return to the old method of making appropriations. In the latter event, there would of course be no purpose in presenting the budget at all, except later in the session as a matter of form to comply with the statute. It would then become my duty merely to fulfill my constitutional responsibility of approving or disapproving every individual proposal as circumstances seem to indicate, and I should be compelled to confine myself to the strict necessities of government and decline to approve appropriations not strictly necessary, no matter how meritorious they might be.

This course would be plainly imposed upon me by a due regard for the public treasury, in view of the possible total of appropriations secured by the process which the committee proposes to follow.

The unfortunate result of this procedure would be the failure of most of the new proposals involving the health and welfare of the people, the condition of workers, better care of dependents and unfortunates, progress in education, and relief of crowded conditions at state institutions. Most of these projects require money beyond the actual minimum upon which the business of the state could be run. The various committees concerned have devoted a great deal of time to the study of the problem of meeting as many of these needs as possible within a reasonable tax rate, but it is impossible to approve in advance those not actually indispensable without some assurance regarding the total amount

of appropriations likely to be authorized. Without the budget, no such advance estimate is possible.

In short, gentlemen, the plain fact is that the pork barrel and the budget cannot live together in the same legislative program. Whether you wish to continue the budget method or return to the old haphazard way of making appropriations, is for you to determine. I shall do my best to adjust myself to either plan you see fit to select, but I see no advantage in proceeding with any budget-making plan while there is any uncertainty about your wishes, especially in the face of the avowed purpose of the Ways and Bridges Committee to abolish the budget in advance of its presentation.

Executive Chambers

February 7, 1919.

CARL E. MILLIKEN,

Governor.