

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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DOCUMENTS

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THE LEGISLATURE

OF THE

STATE OF MAINE,

DURING ITS SESSION

A. D. 1850.

Augusta:

WILLIAM T. JOHNSON, PRINTER TO THE STATE.

1850.

THIRTIETH LEGISLATURE.

No. 36.]

[HOUSE.

R E P O R T .

THE joint standing committee appointed to visit the state prison to make an examination into the affairs of the same, have attended to the duty assigned them, and ask leave to submit the following

R E P O R T :

Your committee met at the state prison on the sixth instant, and were cordially received by the warden, who rendered them every facility in his power to accomplish the object of their visit.

They spent the afternoon of the first day in examining the prison, workshops and other buildings, as also various manufactured articles, all of which they found in good condition.

No further appropriations will probably be needed for the prison or hospital for years to come. The fence around the prison grounds and guard house are in bad condition, and must be rebuilt in a few years. This your committee think may be done by an appropriation of one thousand dollars, if the officers' salaries are paid by the state as they have been; and also that the time has now come, if no further repairs are made, when the prison should support itself and pay the officers' salaries.

All the articles manufactured by each department appeared well and were such as would command a fair price in market. Your

committee recommend quick sales, ready pay, or good endorsed paper on short credit, in order that the warden be enabled to make a final settlement and balance all accounts annually, and exhibit the same to the governor and council.

The evening and second day were spent conversing with the prisoners and examining them while at their work and meals; also with the warden, clerk and commissary and inspectors as to finances.

The prisoners appeared well and in good condition as could be reasonably expected, and in each department evinced habits of industry and application as men generally on hire. Each inmate expressed his entire satisfaction with the treatment received from the warden and subordinate officers. So far as your committee were enabled to judge, from their short acquaintance and examination, this was but a just tribute to the officers, to which the committee add their hearty approval.

The warden expressed a strong desire to maintain a strict discipline by suatory measures, an object much to be desired by every friend of humanity, leaving the lash to heathen ages whence it had its origin. To accomplish this and discharge all the other duties of his office requires a kind heart, a sound judgment and a firm mind well trained to business habits, a combination of qualities which but few men possess to an extent to govern such persons as inmates of a prison with ease to themselves, improvement to the prisoners, and pecuniary advantage to the state. Your committee unanimously approve this system of government, believing every convict ought to be considered an object of sympathy. He is too often looked upon merely as an outcast, beyond the reach of all hope of becoming a better man, deeply stained with crime and recreant to every motive which is virtuous and pure. But with many of those unfortunate men it is otherwise; their history is a short one—unrestrained temptation, a brief career of crime, perhaps but a single act—and the prison, such need but to be approached with kindness, and they respond to the language of admonition and entreaty.

Old offenders, who have spent years within the prison walls, can be reached. There is in almost every soul a spirit which when touched, resolutions arise to better things;—they may be but transient, yet they have sometimes led to persevering effort, which has resulted in permanent reformation. Few are hopeless if they can be brought under proper motives.

How fitting are the moments of a convict's life to produce reflection, self-examination and repentance, in which, bidding a long farewell to the world, he passes the gloomy portals of the prison, hears the heavy clang of the doors behind him, and prepares to strip off the citizen's dress and to don the odious uniform of guilt. Often there comes over him at such moments, the sad thought of all that he is leaving behind—the bright world—his pleasant friends—his loving family—his sweet liberty;—and on the other hand, the dark prospect that lowers before him—years of toil by day—a cheerless cell by night—hard fare—sickness, and perhaps death;—all these things crowd upon his mind until his stubborn heart melts within him. At this time and under these circumstances, may not his softened nature be moulded into a new shape?

Your committee are opposed to letting either of the departments on contract. The warden and inspectors have the general supervision, and they, together with the overseers, can manage with less expense than any one man living away from the prison; consequently a saving will be made to the state. Your committee would also recommend that the inspectors, or whoever shall make the financial report, enter the value of the tools in one distinct and separate item, and the value of stock on hand in another separate item. Then the members of the legislature, and all others concerned, would, by adding to the amount of stock the excess of bills receivable above bills payable, have at one view the exact sum of the available means of the prison.

The commissioners appointed by the governor and council estimated the value of stock and tools on hand, March 30, 1850, at	\$13,854 41
The inspectors estimated the same property at the same time, at	12,046 20
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Making a difference of	\$1,808 21
Take the lowest estimate, and the prison would have in stock and tools on hand at that time,	\$12,046 20
Amount due on notes and accounts more than the prison was owing at the same time,	9,768 39
	<hr/>
	\$21,814 59

The inspectors, warden and clerk, informed us that near one-half of the notes and accounts above what the prison was owing, were not collectable. Making this allowance, the prison had \$4,884.19, towards paying the salaries of the officers and other expenses for the present year.

The Bibles and other books for the inmates being much worn, your committee respectfully recommend an appropriation of one hundred dollars for the purchase of books for the prisoners, and report the annexed resolve.

ROBERT MARTIN, *Chairman.*

STATE OF MAINE.

RESOLVE for the purchase of books for the use of
inmates of the state prison.

Resolved, That the sum of one hundred dollars is
2 hereby appropriated, out of any money in the treas-
3 ury not otherwise appropriated, to be expended under
4 the direction of the warden of the state prison, in the
5 purchase of Bibles and other books for the inmates of
6 the prison.

STATE OF MAINE.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, August 22, 1850.

ORDERED, That 500 copies of the foregoing Report and Resolve, be printed.

E. W. FLAGG, *Clerk.*