

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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FIFTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE.

SENATE.

No. 37.

To the Senate and House of Representatives :

The Committee on State Prison, having made an official visit to the institution, beg leave to report :

Ample facilities were offered us by the Warden and other officers for the closest examination of every department of the prison. The prison is in excellent repair, together with the workshops, which are found to be well adapted to the purposes for which they were intended, and no repairs are deemed necessary at the present time. The men are well fed with wholesome food and are in excellent health, but four or five being in the hospital. They go cheerfully to their appointed tasks, and consider it a punishment to be deprived even temporarily of employment. The best of discipline has been secured by the adoption of the mildest and most humane forms of punishment. We regard the various workshops at the prison as entirely indispensable. We are also satisfied that the State cannot afford to let its convict labor out on contract. Designed primarily for the good of the prisoners, the labor should be continuous and without long interruptions. And that can only be while the manufactories of the shops are controlled by the State, as represented by the Warden. This is especially true in times of business depression. Depending upon the fluctuations of the markets and the whims of contractors for the sale of their convict labor, prisoners in many of the States are compelled to idle away their time in narrow cells, and in other States they are kept at work at a nominal price—one cent per day per man.

In the Maine State Prison, all who are able to work are constantly employed. The carriages, boots, shoes and harnesses manufactured in the shops are all first class. As many as three hundred (300) carriages have been sold in a single year, and other articles in the same proportion. But on account of the depression

in business, affecting all branches of trade, the sales have not been so large the past year. The Warden has deemed it for the interest of the mechanics of the State to keep up the prices to a fair valuation. Most of the products of the shops are sold in this State, though a fair trade is now opening in other States.

Although the Warden has been obliged to sell largely on credit, the entire amount of worthless papers accumulated for fourteen years will not exceed \$3,000, the accounts having been closely examined by your committee and found to be against responsible parties, with the above exceptions. At the present time there are 150 carriages of various styles on hand for sale, valued at \$10,000, \$3,000 worth of boots and \$3,000 worth of harnesses, with considerable unmanufactured stock in the different departments. We recommend that the manufactured stock be put as soon as practicable upon the market and disposed of at ruling prices, and the proceeds devoted to carrying on the business of the prison the ensuing year.

We find the prison in a crowded condition, 171 inmates being within its walls, while its entire capacity is but 180. Others have been sentenced and are awaiting removal to the prison as soon as accommodation can be afforded them. We therefore recommend the extension of the western wing sixty feet, as proposed by the Warden in his report, which will afford room for sixty-two additional cells and provide space for a schoolroom, which is much needed, and cells for vicious and disorderly convicts. For this object we recommend an appropriation of fifteen thousand dollars.

The committee were impressed with the importance of the department of instruction, and the necessity of its continuance. We recommend an appropriation of five hundred and sixty-five dollars (\$565) to meet the deficiency in last year's appropriation for teacher and chaplain. Also an appropriation of five hundred and fifty dollars (\$550) for the services of these officers the present year, and one hundred dollars (\$100) for the purchase of books.

We also recommend an appropriation of ten thousand, one hundred and fourteen dollars and sixteen cents to meet the deficiency of 1876, caused principally by the depreciation in the value of stock on hand, including the manufactured and unmanufactured stock.

We are satisfied that the prison is conducted wisely, economically and humanely. We may learn by comparison with other penal institutions the fact that our prison is conducted in a most admirable manner. While at certain periods it has been nearly self-supporting, the prisons of every other State have drawn largely for support upon the public funds. For instance: The Minnesota State Prison, with about the same number of convicts as our own, knocks at the door of her Legislature asking for an appropriation of \$45,000 to meet current expenses and a large sum for improvements. New York, Massachusetts, Michigan, Wisconsin, Rhode Island, and other States might be cited to show the same facts.

All of which is respectfully submitted.

U. B. THOMPSON, *Chairman.*

STATE OF MAINE.

[S. 14.] RESOLVE in favor of the Maine state prison.

Resolved, That there be and hereby is appropriated
2 the sum of ten thousand one hundred fourteen dollars
3 and sixteen cents for the deficiency of eighteen hun-
4 dred and seventy-six ; the sum of five hundred and
5 sixty-five dollars for the services of teacher and chap-
6 lain for the year eighteen hundred and seventy-six ;
7 the sum of five hundred and fifty dollars for salary of
8 chaplain and teacher for the ensuing year ; the sum of
9 one hundred dollars for the purchase of books, and the
10 sum of fifteen thousand dollars for prison extension.

STATE OF MAINE.

IN SENATE, January 31, 1877.

Submitted by Mr. THOMPSON of York, from the Committee on State Prison, and on his motion ordered that it lie on the table and be printed with accompanying resolve.

S. W. LANE, *Secretary.*