

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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SIXTIETH LEGISLATURE.

SENATE.

No. 88.

*To the President of the Senate and
Speaker of the House of Representatives:*

The Joint Standing Committee on State Prison submit the following report:

The Committee, accompanied by his Excellency, Governor Plaisted, and members of the Council, together with the Inspectors of the Prison, visited that institution on the 9th and 10th of February, and made as thorough an examination as the limited time at their command would permit.

The general condition of the prison proper, together with the various departments, were found in good condition. The work, to all appearances, seemed to be progressing in a systematic manner under the direction of competent overseers. The prison building as well as the workshops, were clean and apparently well kept. This was found especially true of the cells and the interior of the prison—excepting the nuisance caused by the cess-pool in the rear of the prison, which your committee are of the opinion should be filled and drained at once.

Some of the buildings belonging to the prison were found out of repair, and your committee feel that the State can not well afford to disregard the rule that every thrifty citizen adopts in regard to protecting his property, and accordingly recommend an appropriation of two thousand dollars for repairs for the years 1881 and 1882.

The Prison Library is also sadly in need of additions, and we recommend an appropriation of two hundred dollars for this purpose, as an abundance of good reading matter not

only contributes towards good discipline but in many cases tends to improve the mind of the unfortunate inmate and encourage him to lead an honest and moral life after the expiration of his sentence.

It could not be expected that a visiting committee could make such an examination of the books and financial condition of the prison in the time usually devoted to such purposes as would give them a personal knowledge of their true condition, and in this case, while we devoted a large portion of our time to such an examination, we make the report of the Inspectors, which has already been submitted to the Legislature, the basis of our report on financial matters.

Regarding the state of the prison finances as of great importance, as we feel certain that every member of the Legislature, as well as every thoughtful citizen, wishes, not only to know that every dollar of money, either by direct appropriation or from the earnings of the different departments, that passes through the Warden's hands, is honestly and judiciously used, but that the management of such institution is such as will not only reflect credit upon the State, but will be approved by every good business man; and your committee would frankly say that, either through the past management of the prison or lack of proper appropriations by the State, there has been serious trouble in this respect, as a large debt has been allowed to accumulate, whereby the State has not only been called upon to pay large sums as interest, but the credit of the institution has suffered more or less.

By an examination of the Inspectors' report, your committee find that the old indebtedness of the prison amounts to \$51,493.63, upon which interest is due at six per cent., and while the State has been enabled to hire money at less than four per cent., one of her institutions has actually been paying two per cent. more than the State itself. This is not the only loss to the State, as, in order to sell the products of the prison at a profit, the stock should be purchased for cash

only, and no agent of any institution belonging to the State should be allowed to follow a ruinous credit system. Your committee feel that the Legislature should meet the matter squarely on business principles, and decide whether this old indebtedness, with accumulating interest at six per cent., should be allowed to continue two years, or till the Legislature meets again, or whether a reasonable sum should at once be appropriated for this purpose.

While the notes and accounts due the prison amounts to \$47,920.53, and are somewhat enhanced in value by the fact that the statute of limitations does not fairly apply to accounts due the State, your committee are of the opinion that the value placed upon them by the Inspectors, viz: $33\frac{1}{3}$ per cent., is full as much as can be realized. This reduction reduces that class of assets to \$15,973.51, and even this amount could not be called "quick assets," as no small amount of time will be required in their collection, and your committee accordingly estimate that no more than \$5,000 of this amount could be collected in season to be available early in the present year; deducting this amount from the old indebtedness, there would then remain some \$46,000 exclusive of interest now due on the same. Some members of the committee have decided convictions that at least \$55,000 should be appropriated, exclusive of amount appropriated for repairs and library, believing that this sum would not only pay all old indebtedness but would give the prison a small working capital, and thus enable the cash system to be inaugurated. But it has been unanimously agreed to recommend an appropriation of \$42,000, to be expended under the direction of the Governor and Council, in payment of the old indebtedness with accrued interest, and a resolve covering this amount in addition to sums recommended for repairs and library, is herewith submitted. Trusting that this sum, taken in connection with such sums as may be realized from the prison assets, will fully discharge all old claims against the prison, your committee ask the careful and favorable consid-

eration of every member of the Legislature in furtherance of this object.

In regard to the past management of the prison, your committee are in doubt whether it is proper for them to pass judgment; yet our sense of duty prompts us to say that the system of keeping the books of the prison, as well as the cost of manufacturing, branding and recording the various articles manufactured and sold, inaugurated by the present Inspectors and now being faithfully carried out by the present Warden, must lead to better results in the future.

In conclusion, your committee do not hesitate to say that they are well pleased with the management of the present warden, and while they have doubts whether the prison can be made fully self-sustaining, they hope and trust that when the old indebtedness has been paid to the last cent, all questionable assets reduced to cash, and the business of the prison (both purchases and sales), made strictly on a cash basis, that the next visiting committee will find the affairs of the prison in a much better condition.

All of which is respectfully submitted.

GEORGE D. BISBEE, }
HENRY C. BREWER, } On the part of
the Senate.

REUEL S. MAXCY,
DAVID WENTWORTH,
S. LELAND,
ELIPHALET S. MEANS,
L. R. HERSOM, } On part of the
House.

STATE OF MAINE.

RESOLVE in favor of the State Prison.

Resolved, That the sum of forty-four thousand
2 two hundred dollars be and is hereby appropriated
3 for the benefit of the state prison, to be divided as
4 follows: forty thousand dollars for the payment of
5 the old indebtedness of the prison, two thousand
6 dollars for the payment of interest on the same,
7 both sums to be expended and paid out under the
8 direction of the governor and council; two thou-
9 sand dollars for repairs on prison buildings for the
10 years eighteen hundred and eighty-one and eighty-
11 two, and two hundred dollars for the prison library,
12 both of the latter sums to be expended under the
13 direction of the warden of the prison.

STATE OF MAINE.

IN SENATE, March 7, 1881.

Reported by Mr. BISBEE, from the Committee on State Prison,
and on his motion laid on the table to be printed.

C. W. TILDEN, *Secretary.*