

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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SIXTY-FIRST LEGISLATURE.

SENATE.

No. 55.

To the President of the Senate and

Speaker of the House of Representatives :

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

The Committee, accompanied by Hon. C. C. Cornish and Hon. J. P. Swazey of the Executive Council, and Hon. D. G. Bean, one of the Prison Inspectors, visited that institution on the 29th and 30th days of January, and made as thorough examination as the limited time set apart for that duty would permit.

The general condition of the prison appeared to be excellent; the work in all the various departments progressing systematically under the direction of apparently watchful and competent overseers. The appearance of the buildings and workshops, and especially of the interior of the prison proper and the cells, at the time we inspected them, indicated that they are generally kept in an orderly and cleanly condition.

Some of the buildings belonging to the prison were found to be somewhat out of repair, and we are of the opinion that the State cannot afford to disregard the rule that all thrifty citizens adopt concerning the protection and preservation of their property. We therefore recommend an appropriation of two thousand dollars for repairs for the years 1883 and 1884.

The subject of introducing steam as a motive power at the prison has been presented by the Legislature to the committee for consideration. After having carefully examined and

considered the matter in all its bearings, your committee have come to the conclusion that it would be impracticable to expend any considerable amount of money to put machinery into the buildings as they now are, they being old, disconnected, and some of them in such condition as to make it very probable that they would require to be replaced by new buildings in the near future.

The prison library also needs replenishing; and as we believe that an abundance of good reading matter not only contributes towards good discipline, but tends to improve the mind of the unfortunate inmate and to encourage him to lead an honest and upright life after the expiration of his sentence, we recommend an appropriation of two hundred dollars (\$200) for the prison library.

The committee, feeling that an examination of the finances of the prison was the most important duty connected with **their** visit, devoted all the attention possible to this subject, but of course could not make the examination as exhaustive as they would have done, if more time had been at their command, and they have been obliged in consequence to base their report to some extent upon that of the Inspectors.

The Visiting Committee of the Legislature of 1881 reported what has been designated as the "old indebtedness" of the prison at \$51,493.63, which amount had been incurred previous to April 1st, 1880, and much of which was a number of years old; but it seems that this was only approximately correct, and subsequent investigation has discovered additional debts not shown by the books at that time. Upon all this debt interest was charged at six per cent., which has since been allowed by the Governor and Council, who have audited these accounts, so that after adding interest and additional debts, the "old indebtedness" at that time was in round numbers \$62,000. The last Legislature appropriated \$42,000 for the liquidation of this debt, \$41,484.60 of which has been paid under the direction of the Governor and Council. Besides this, \$3,296.08 of this debt has been paid

by the Warden from collections of old accounts due the prison. It was hoped that more might be realized from these accounts, which could be applied in this way, but when the present Warden assumed his duties, it was at once discovered that in consequence of its failure to meet promptly its bills incurred in buying stock at the prison, the State could no longer go into the market and buy such stock at "bottom prices," but in fact was paying from six to fifteen per cent. more than was paid by private individuals whose purchases did not aggregate as much.

In order to correct this most unsatisfactory condition of things, the Warden has, by advice of the Governor and Council and Inspectors, used the funds realized from collections to promptly cash maturing bills, thereby re-establishing for the present the credit of the prison and enabling him to compete with other buyers of the same lines of goods. This plan has, of course, resulted in a material saving to the State, and reduced the net expenses of the prison, but leaves a larger amount of the old debt to be provided for, the aggregate in June last being \$ (\$23,115.00 of this amount has been included in the general appropriation bill reported by the Finance Committee,) all of which accumulated prior to the administration of the present Warden.

The Governor, in that part of his inaugural address which was referred to this committee, recommends that this "be paid with the least possible delay," which recommendation we *unanimously and earnestly indorse*. We can see no possible argument in favor of delaying to make provision for this at the present time, and it is certainly an exhibition of bad business management for the State to continue to pay six per cent. interest on this indebtedness, when there are funds in the treasury, or it can hire money at a much lower rate of interest.

The net expense of the prison to the State, for the year ending Nov. 30th, 1881, was \$16,754.42, and for the year ending Nov. 30th, 1882, \$14,742.26, which is a marked

reduction on the expense of the previous year (1880), when it reached \$24,551.31. In consequence of this failure of the prison to be self supporting, which is much to be regretted, but hardly possible to be prevented under such adverse circumstances as exist, the Warden finds himself again short of funds, unable to meet stock and subsistence bills promptly and secure cash discounts. In order to enable him to do this, it will be necessary to make an appropriation to cover a part of the deficiency, or cost of running the prison, over and above its earnings for the past two years.

It may be well to explain here, that a part of this deficiency was caused by the failure of the Legislature to appropriate what was absolutely required to pay subordinate officers' salaries. To illustrate: the law provides that ten guards shall be employed at the prison at salaries of \$500 each per annum, or an aggregate of \$10,000 for two years; but the Finance Committee of two years ago recommended, and the Legislature appropriated only \$7,200 with which to pay these salaries. These guards are required to perform fourteen hours of day duty and ten hours duty when employed by night, and it seems to us that the remuneration fixed by statute is by no means extravagant.

The committee would hardly feel that they were excusable, if they failed to say a word commendatory of the officers of the prison, in the selection of all of which we were impressed that the State had been fortunate. The thorough and systematic manner in which the books of the institution are kept by Mr. Wentworth, enabled us to easily discover the condition of the business of the prison; and the methods of Warden Bean, who seems to combine the very essential qualifications of a good disciplinarian and a careful business manager, convinced the committee that he is well suited to the responsible position which he occupies; and in this connection we would call the attention of the Legislature to what we consider the inadequacy of the salaries of these two officers. The law provides that the clerk shall receive \$600 per annum, but the

present incumbent, or any occupant of that position who can be safely intrusted with the responsibilities of the place, a small part of which are his simply clerical duties, will easily command a salary of from \$800 to \$1,000.

The present Warden receives a salary of \$1,500 per annum, while the average salary paid for the past seventeen years is a little over \$2,560; and an examination of the provisions of other States shows that in sixteen of the northern prisons the average salary of the Warden is something over \$2,350, and in the most of them, including New Hampshire and Rhode Island, the provisions for the Warden's table are furnished, which is not the case at our prison. In many of these States the convicts' labor is contracted out, which very much lessens the duties of the Wardens.

We are aware that there is a disposition on the part of this Legislature to make no advances in the salaries of public officers, and we fully endorse this as a rule, but feel that it would be unwise to make it so arbitrary as to prevent a careful investigation of each case which presents itself, and we believe if this is carefully considered by the Legislature it will agree with us that the salary of the Warden should be increased \$500, and that of the Clerk \$150 per annum, and we shall submit for your consideration an amendment to the statute providing for this increase.

The Committee have not felt it to be a part of their duty to examine and criticise the past financial management of the prison, or to ascertain who should be blamed for the accumulation of debt, but to examine its present condition and base our conclusions upon simple business principles, and in so doing we are forced to make the following recommendations: That \$7,750 be appropriated to pay old indebtedness and interest on same, in addition to the appropriation recommended by the Committee on Financial Affairs; \$13,700, to cover the deficiency in 1881 and 1882; \$2,000 for repairs of prison buildings, and \$200 for the prison library, and we

(6)

submit a Resolve covering these amounts, aggregating \$23,650.

Respectfully submitted.

G. W. McALISTER,
ORIN S. HASKELL,
WILLIAM D. ROAK,

On the part of the Senate.

ELIAS THOMAS,
C. M. KIMBALL,
C. S. NEWELL,
B. F. ELDRIDGE,
DAVID WENTWORTH,
WILLIAM DOBSON,
ALEXIS CYR,

On the part of the House.

STATE OF MAINE.

RESOLVE in favor of the State Prison.

Resolved, That the sum of twenty-three thousand
2 six hundred and fifty dollars (\$23,650,) be and is
3 hereby appropriated for the benefit of the state
4 prison, to be divided as follows: Seven thousand
5 seven hundred and fifty dollars (\$7,750,) for the
6 payment of the balance of the old indebtedness of
7 the prison and interest on same, to be expended and
8 paid out under the direction of the governor and
9 council; thirteen thousand seven hundred dollars
10 (\$13,700,) for the payment of the deficiency in
11 eighteen hundred and eighty-one, and eighteen
12 hundred and eighty-two; two thousand dollars
13 (\$2,000,) for repairs on prison buildings for the
14 years eighteen hundred and eighty-three, and
15 eighteen hundred and eighty-four, and two hun-
16 dred dollars (\$200,) for the prison library, the three
17 latter sums to be expended and paid out under the
18 direction of the warden of the prison.

STATE OF MAINE.

IN SENATE, February 21, 1883.

Reported by Mr. HASKELL of Somerset, from the Committee on the State Prison, laid on the table to be printed, with the report, under the Joint Rule.

C. W. TILDEN, *Secretary.*