

# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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# SEVENTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE

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SENATE.

No. 155

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## STATE OF MAINE.

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The Committee on Education to which was referred the order of the legislature relating to an investigation of the office of State Superintendent of Public Schools have had the same under consideration and ask leave to submit the following report.

### STATE OF MAINE.

EDUCATIONAL DEPARTMENT,

AUGUSTA, December 31, 1906.

*Hon. William T. Cobb, Governor of Maine:*

DEAR SIR:—I beg to say that I am a candidate for the position of State Superintendent of Public Schools.

It has been charged that the bills I have rendered, under oath, as my personal expenses incurred in the discharge of my official duties have not been made in accordance with actual expenditures.

I, therefore, request and respectfully insist that an investigation be made at once and that the facts be given to the public.

Very respectfully,

W. W. STETSON.

## STATE OF MAINE.

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT,

AUGUSTA, January 3, 1907.

*To the Honorable President of the Senate:*

I beg to transmit herewith a letter from Hon. W. W. Stetson, State Superintendent of Schools, requesting an investigation of his department by the legislature. Will you please take such action upon this as in your judgment the circumstances require?

Very truly yours,

W. T. COBB,

*Governor of Maine.*

## STATE OF MAINE,

In Senate, January 3, 1907.

*Ordered,* That the Committee on Education be authorized and directed to investigate the office of State Superintendent of Public Schools, with power to send for persons and papers and report by bill or otherwise.

In Senate Chamber, January 3, 1907. Read and passed.  
F. G. Farrington, Secretary.

House of Representatives, January 9, 1907. Read and passed.  
E. M. Thompson, Clerk.

In accordance with the foregoing order, the Committee on Education has made a thorough investigation into the office of State Superintendent of Schools, and beg leave to report:

Due notice of hearing on the order was published in all the daily papers of the State fourteen days prior to the date set for the hearing, in at least three successive issues, and in some of the papers the publication was continued down to the day of the hearing itself. On the 24th day of January, in accordance with the notice, the committee examined Mr. Edward Wiggin, assistant in the office of State Superintendent of Schools, and Mr. W. W. Stetson, the State Superintendent himself. The scope of the order imposed upon the committee the duty of investigating

the conduct of the office of State Superintendent of Schools, and, in pursuance thereof, we have endeavored to perform the duties as we saw them. The principal charges against the office related, first, to the traveling expenses of the State Superintendent of Schools; second, to his clerk hire, and third, to his manner of performing the duties of his office. The committee introduced lines of inquiry concerning all of these charges and criticisms. The State Superintendent himself, Mr. W. W. Stetson, was the principal witness.

1. Mr. Stetson stated that he began a new system of charging the State for his traveling expenses on the 11th day of March, 1905. His bills for that period likewise draw a sharp line at that date, being enclosed in separate envelopes and labeled respectively, "Bills before March 11th" and "Bills after March 11th." This is the date of the approval by the Governor of chapter 49 of the Public Laws of 1905, requiring the State and county officials to make oath that their bill of expenses included only "actual cash outlay" while in the performance of their official duties." We find that prior to that date Mr. Stetson regularly, while traveling on the Maine Central and Bangor and Aroostook Railroads, made use of a free railroad pass and collected of the State bills of expense for railroad fares which he had not incurred. Mr. Stetson was almost constantly on the road and though several points were visited during a continuous trip, yet he regularly charged and collected expenses as though a separate trip from Augusta and return had been made to each point visited, explaining this by stating that if he did not actually return to Augusta he did travel the equivalent of the distance somewhere. On the 11th day of March, 1905, Mr. Stetson adopted his new plan. He drew a sharp line in the use of a free pass between W. W. Stetson as a private citizen and W. W. Stetson as a public official. He continued to ride on a pass while traveling in his private capacity, but began to use mileage books while traveling in the capacity of State Superintendent of Schools. Expenses were still charged as though from Augusta to each point and return, but they are charged at mileage rates instead of local fare. The saving to the State therefore, was merely the difference between local fare and two cent mileage. Why Mr. Stetson began the purchase of mileage books after the passage of the act men-

tioned was a question that he could not explain. (Testimony of January 24th, page 34). Mr. Stetson lives in Auburn and regularly started on his official trips from thence. On these trips he combined the use of the free pass with the mileage book, and charged from Augusta by a complex and confusing system, which he explains as follows:

“On January 11th I was in Auburn and I started and went to Portland, and it shows on my slip, Augusta to Portland, short 68 miles. On the following day I went from Brunswick to Augusta, and back, ‘Ret.’ returned, 68 miles. That completes my trip to Portland. The next trip to Shapleigh is precisely the same. Now, supposing I am starting from home and going to Bangor. When I get within twenty miles of Waterville, I take out my mileage and I say to the conductor, ‘I want you to take out twenty miles.’ He says, ‘What for?’ He says, ‘That doesn’t take you from anywhere to anywhere.’ I say, ‘I am traveling from Augusta to Waterville.’ He says, ‘This isn’t the train running from Augusta to Waterville.’ I say, ‘Officially, I am travelling from Augusta to Waterville,’ and he takes out the twenty miles. Then I go to Waterville and take the regular train and go to Bangor and charge up 74 miles.”

2. The committee examined all bills that they could discover which had been rendered by the State Superintendent of Schools for his expenditures in the performance of his official duties. The appropriation for “Expenses of the State Superintendent,” appropriation for “Teachers’ Meetings” and appropriation for “Summer Schools and distribution of educational documents.” We found that clerk hire for the State Superintendent and his office had been regularly paid out of three separate appropriations for specific purposes, namely, that for “stenographer and extra clerk hire for the Superintendent of Schools,” that for “Teachers’ Meetings,” and that for “Summer Schools and distribution of educational documents.”

3. In the inquiry into the general conduct of the office we found the State Superintendent without proper knowledge of the details, and even the routine of his office. All of the routine appears to have been done by Mr. Wiggin, the head clerk in the office at the State House. The conduct of schools in unorganized townships devolved wholly upon Mr. N. A. Luce, (Testimony of January 24th, page 6), and the preparation and distribu-

tion of educational documents largely upon Mrs. R. J. Stetson, the State Superintendent's wife, at her home in Auburn, (Testimony of January 31st, page 23). Mr. Stetson appears to have spent a large portion of his time on railroad trains traveling, as he states, a distance of twenty-eight to thirty-three thousand miles, (Testimony of January 24th, page 32) on "more than three hundred days in the year," (Testimony of January 31st, page 31-2) and spending in his office at Augusta "on an average a day a week."

We found it exceedingly difficult, almost impossible, to learn the actual cost of any particular branch of the department. The appropriations were expended, but there seemed to be no way of discovering how, without scrutinizing each separate voucher and bill. We tried to discover the cost of some things to the State, notably certain teachers' meetings and summer schools, but there seemed to be no way to find out without preparing a whole new set of books. We tried to learn what the Superintendent's personal expenses were, but they were scattered through at least four different appropriations, and we didn't get them at all.

#### CRITICISM.

The legislature makes one appropriation for the expenses of the State Superintendent of Schools, another for teachers' meetings, another for stenographer and extra clerk hire, and another for summer schools and distribution of educational documents. We think that these appropriations ought not to overlap or commingle, and if the amount appropriated for expenses of the State Superintendent is not large enough without cutting into the others, we think that the appropriation ought to be increased and the others to the extent that they have to be encroached upon to pay the Superintendent's expenses ought to be diminished. We think that the cost of a stenographer and extra clerk hire for the State Superintendent of Schools is no proper charge against the appropriations for teachers' meetings, or for summer schools, but that, if the specific appropriation for that purpose is not sufficient, it ought to be increased and the others correspondingly diminished. We think, further, that the holding of summer schools and the distribution of educational documents are so different and separate in their nature and methods

that they bear no direct relation to each other, and ought to be separated. We question the economy of two offices and two sets of clerks. We believe that if the State Superintendent and his assistants or those whom he delegates are able to prepare educational documents away from the State House, their mailing and distribution at least is a function for clerks at the seat of government, under the direction of the proper official.

It seemed to be the view of the State Superintendent that he had no initiative to institute reform in his department. If the power does not exist in the Superintendent, then the legislature ought immediately to begin any necessary reform or else confer that power upon the Superintendent. It further seemed to be the view of the Superintendent that he was under no obligation until the act of March 11th, 1905, to render true accounts of his actual expenditures, merely because, as he says, the custom of rendering false accounts was "so old that the memory of man runneth not to the contrary thereto." (Testimony of January 24th, page 28).

SUMMARY.

Without expressing any opinion as to the legality of charging to the State traveling expenses not actually incurred, we feel that the practice is wholly repugnant to the moral sense of the people and should be condemned whenever and wherever found.

Per order,

STEARNS,  
*For the Committee.*





STATE OF MAINE.

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IN SENATE, February 27, 1907.

Reported by Mr. STEARNS from the Committee on Education, and on motion by the same Senator laid on table for printing, pending acceptance of report.

F. G. FARRINGTON, *Secretary*.