

# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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# DOCUMENTS

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# THE LEGISLATURE

OF THE

# STATE OF MAINE,

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# THIRTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE.

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HOUSE.]

[No. 6.

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## MESSAGE OF GOVERNOR MORRILL.

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*To the Senate and House of Representatives :*

I herewith lay before the Legislature the report of the Commissioner, appointed by a resolve, approved March 27th, 1858, to examine into and report the system of disbursements, labor and discipline of the State Prison, and to compare the same, &c., with other prisons, and I ask for it your careful consideration.

The subject embraced in the commission is one of immediate and pressing importance to the State. There will be found, upon slight examination, to exist an absolute present and prospective necessity for more and better prison accommodations and for thorough reform in the system of internal economy of the prison. The first proposition involves the subject of the enlargement of the prison, the repairing of old and the erection of new workshops, or the erection of a new prison, with necessary appurtenances; while the other presents the question whether the large annual deficit in its finances results from the bad construction, unfavorable location or imprudent management of the prison, and whether under favorable circumstances in these respects it may be made self-supporting, or nearly so.

The inadequacy of the present structure to meet the present and probable future wants of a state prison, having regard to the question of economy to the State and the discipline and reform of the inmates, will be found to exist, chiefly, in the unsuitableness of the cells to afford reasonable accommodations for the present number and a deficiency of cells of any description for the constant and cer-

tain increase; the imperfect, inconvenient and unsuitable construction of a portion of the prison and a deficiency of shops and out-buildings.

The inspectors in their late report say, "the fact that one hundred and twenty-eight convicts are now in prison with the number continually increasing, while their actual accommodation for one hundred and eighty prisoners, affords mathematical proof too palpable and potent to be disputed, that an immediate enlargement of the prison is required. The rapid increase of convicts in our prison requires not only its enlargement, but additional workshops and out-buildings for their accommodation. The dilapidated condition of some of these buildings is a public disgrace; and state pride, as well as duty and interest, require that they should be superceded by such buildings as the exigencies of the case demand. Especially is this true in relation to the shoe shop, blacksmith shop and stable.

We think there can be no diversity of sentiment in relation to the *necessity* of the immediate enlargement of the prison."

In his recent report the Warden says, "the necessity of enlarging the prison and rebuilding the shoe-shop, alluded to in my last report, has lost none of its force by another year's experience." He also concurs in the views expressed by the inspectors and these views have been iterated and reiterated in the last few years by those connected with the government and management of the prison when declaring its need and accounting for its disastrous results. Attentive and personal observation during the past year enables me to attest their correctness and fidelity and leads to the conviction that there exists an urgent necessity for a general and thorough reform in its internal economy, and for a reconstruction of the prison and its appurtenances, or a new establishment elsewhere.

There may naturally arise a diversity of opinion upon this last proposition, as a variety of considerations will necessarily enter into its determination, not all of them susceptible of demonstration, at the present time.

There is no longer reasonable doubt that it is practicable, consistent with the best interests of the convict so to treat him during his confinement that he may not be a pecuniary burden to the State. With the growth of humane views in the treatment of the prisoner, the improved methods of discipline and labor, it is now seen that the ordinary results attainable for the productive labor of numbers

of able bodied men, should, to some extent, be realized from the labor of men in prison.

Contrary to what is known and conceded to be attainable, and what is actually realized elsewhere in similar institutions—this prison makes an annual draft upon the treasury of many thousand dollars for its support. The causes assigned for this disastrous pecuniary result, by those having its immediate management now and heretofore, are its unsuitable location, the inconvenient construction and arrangement of the prison and its ill-arranged and scanty workshops and appurtenances. The Report of the Commissioner, giving a minute description of the condition of the prison and buildings connected therewith, and a detailed account of its system of internal economy and contrasting the same with prisons in other States, fully corroborates the views taken by the officers of the prison. These, taken together, would seem to leave no room for doubt as to the causes of the difficulties experienced, and that relief from them must be sought by removing, in whole or in part, these ascertained causes.

It cannot be doubted that all these causes combined are adequate to produce and continue these results, and it is only matter for speculation which of them may have been most efficient and whether a prosperous condition may be hoped for while any of them exists. The united testimony of the officers of the prison and the commissioner, is that the *location* is unfavorable to economical results. The original inducements for its location no longer exist, and the local wants of the community furnish little or no demand for its products while its remoteness from branches of manufactures and mechanic arts afford no competition for the labor of the convicts. Assuming that the location is such as would not be regarded as the most advantageous, as an original question, there is still a consideration connected with the fact that the State has expended large sums of money upon it, its present value for a prison, and the disposition of it for any other use, and whether by a thorough reconstruction of the whole establishment, tolerable results may not be realized, and in this way making a saving to the State.

Upon this point the practical observation of those who have had the immediate management of its concerns will be of value, to which, as stated in their various reports, and referred to in the report herewith transmitted, I invite your attention.

A Committee of the last Legislature visited and examined the prison, with a view to its necessities and under the advice, and with the assistance of an experienced and competent architect, submitted a plan for its reconstruction and enlargement. The Warden and Inspectors, for the time being, approve and recommend the adoption of that plan. It will be seen, by reference to it, that it provided for reconstructing the central part of the prison and the reconstruction and extension of the western wing, providing prison accommodation, and for the convenient management of the inmates but did not provide for the workshops represented on all hands, now to be indispensable.

Charged with the expenditure of the appropriation of \$13,000 of the last Legislature, for the enlargement of the prison, after a personal examination of its condition and wants and consultation with the architect mentioned above, the Council acting and advising in the matter, it was concluded that the enlargement contemplated by that plan could not be made for less than \$60,000 to \$65,000, and that there would need to be added to that sum for workshops sufficient to accommodate a number equal to the capacity of the prison some \$10,000 or \$15,000 more. A comparative estimate of the costs of reconstructing the old and of a new prison in a new locality, is a proper and important element in determining what the best interests of the State require. If it should be regarded doubtful whether the prison at Thomaston, after reconstruction, and under suitable management, would not continue to repeat in the future the experience of the past, the probable difference in the expenditures required, could not properly embarrass a determination in favor of a new prison at a place combining such advantages as would relieve the State from future burden for its ordinary support.

The prison has accommodation for 108 convicts. For that number the workshops now there, with comparatively slight alterations and additions, and a change of the methods or departments of labor, would be sufficient. An enlargement of the prison, by extending the eastern wing, may doubtless be made for a comparatively moderate sum and thereby provide cells for an additional number of convicts; this however would not relieve the difficulty of which the officers of the prison complain, the inconvenient construction of the prison for easy and economical discipline. It would also involve the

necessity of an outlay for additional shops and, when all should be done, would be little better than what has been denominated as, "patching," and which at best, would be wholly inadequate to the prospective wants of the State.

It may be practicable to reduce, materially, the present expenses, by a change in the departments of labor and by such repairs and alterations of the shops as will adapt them to the present capacity of the prison, and thus preserve whatever benefit may be derived from the large expenditures made for its erection. Still, it is apparent that no partial or mere temporary expedient would be what is demanded. The remedy the case requires, to meet the probable future wants of the prison and the State's true interest, seem to be conceded, to lie, either in a thorough reconstruction of the prison with suitable additional appurtenances, or in a new structure at some other place.

Considering the estimated and probable cost of such reconstruction and enlargement, the conceded, unfavorableness of the location for satisfactory financial results and the inherent difficulties in the prison yard for convenient location and erection of work-shops, there can be little doubt that the public interest will be best subserved by the erection of a new prison at some more favorable point.

I would recommend a thorough reformation in the system of internal economy of the prison, repair of the present shops, and erection of such as may be necessary to accommodate the number of prisoners for which there are cells, in the prison, with the view of making the most of the State's property there, and if possible make it exhibit such returns as will allow of its continuance as a prison convenient to a section of the State.

But as it does not seem to me probable that a prison at that place equal to the future wants of the State, can be made self-supporting or so nearly so as it is reasonable to expect elsewhere and as the difference in the cost of reconstruction and a new prison is not likely to be very great, I recommend that the Legislature take measures for the construction of a new prison at some point that shall combine all the desirable elements.

I do not overlook the difficulties attendant upon this enterprise especially in the present condition of the treasury, but think it probable, without increase of the State tax there may be found in the

treasury beyond its ordinary needs during the year, sufficient funds to begin the work under such circumstances that it might be gradually progressed in and finally completed, (other claims less urgent yielding to its demand) without much embarrassment to the finances of the States.

LOT M. MORRILL.



STATE OF MAINE.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, Feb. 18, 1859.

On motion of Mr. PORTER of Lowell, laid on the table and 1,000 copies ordered to be printed for the use of the Legislature.

GEO. W. WILCOX, *Clerk.*