

BIENNIAL MESSAGE

OF

JOHN P. ALTGELD,

GOVERNOR OF ILLINOIS,

TO THE

39TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

JANUARY 9, 1895.

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BIENNIAL MESSAGE.

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT,
SPRINGFIELD ILL., Jan. 9, 1895.

Gentlemen of the Senate and House of Representatives:

In compliance with the requirements of the Constitution, I respectfully submit the following information in regard to the condition of the State, and also such recommendations as seem to me to be expedient:

As the affairs of the State had been continuously controlled by one political party for thirty-six years, both the reasonable expectation of the public and the existing political conditions called for great changes in the personnel of the administration. In consequence of this, so large a number of new men became connected with the management of public affairs that it was deemed wise to lay down the general principles which this administration aimed to carry out, and also such definite rules as would facilitate the carrying out of these principles.

As there was great pressure for place all along the line of the public service, the following specific instructions were given to all of the trustees and superintendents of public institutions:

First—Do not put a man upon the pay-roll who is not absolutely needed.

Second—Do not pay higher salaries in an institution than the service or ability which you get would command outside.

Third—Do not keep a man an hour after it is discovered that he is not just the right man for the place, no matter who recommended him, or what political influence he may possess.

Fourth—Require vigilance and careful attention of every employé, and promptly discharge any appointee who is guilty of brutality toward patients, or who is guilty of any serious neglect of duty.

These instructions have been reiterated at various times with emphasis, and, I believe, have, in general, been observed.

CARE OF PATIENTS.

The trustees and superintendents were instructed that our great institutions were not founded to make comfortable homes for officials, but to take care of the unfortunate, and that the energies of the management must be directed toward giving the inmates the very highest degree of care and comfort that is possible. Further, that the people of this State are liberal and want all who are thrown upon public charity to be properly fed and clothed and that therefore the standard of diet and of clothing must in

no case fall below that of the average self-supporting citizen of this State, and I will say here that I believe the standard in most of our institutions is higher than this.

PURCHASE OF SUPPLIES.

The system prevailed in this State, which is still found in most other states, of having in each institution an officer who was known to the public as a purchasing agent. This man went into the market and bought where and of whom he pleased, and no matter how honest he may have been, he was still under suspicion. It was observed a number of years ago that the great corporations which have to buy large quantities of supplies had entirely abolished this system, and had introduced in its stead a system of buying on bids of the lowest bidder. Good economy and the highest moral consideration, as well as public policy, required that the State should purchase its supplies in the same way, and thus reduce the possibility of favoritism, corruption and scandal to the minimum. Therefore the following instructions to govern all institutions in this State were given:

First—Make out a list of articles that will be needed for a given time, describing each article fully, and have the typewritist make ten or twelve copies of this.

Second—Send these copies to as many different business houses dealing in the line of goods required for bids, to be accompanied by samples where necessary. Then accept the lowest and best bid, reserving in each case the right to reject any goods that may be deemed unsatisfactory.

Third—File these bids, together with the list upon which they were based, for a reasonable time, so that they can be inspected by any State officer, if desired.

In a number of institutions the old superintendents remained in charge until the expiration of the quarter ending July 1, 1893, and, as the other officers were new, no general effort was made to carry out these rules until after that time, and in some cases the new officers were reluctant to introduce them, but they were told that this was the policy of the administration, and that if they were not in harmony with it a new set of men would have to be appointed who would be in harmony. By degrees the new methods were generally adopted and are now fully grounded and established in every public institution in this State. We have been running for nearly a year and a half under the new system, and the result has been a surprise to all, and a gratification to every one favoring business methods. It was soon found that the bids from the most responsible houses, upon articles that were considered staple, varied from 10 per cent. to 25 per cent.

This difference was, in nearly all cases, a net gain to the institution, and I have to report the following general results of the new method:

First—The office of purchasing agent has been abolished in every institution in the State, thus effecting a saving in salaries of nearly \$25,000 a year.

Second—The appropriations made by the last legislature for current expenses of all of the State charitable institutions was only \$3,800 in excess of the appropriation made for the same purpose two years before. But owing to the hard times or to other causes there was an average increase of 1,114 in the population of all these institutions over the average of the prior two years, and the cost of maintaining these 1,114 for eighteen months was \$237,282. Yet, notwithstanding the cost of maintaining the increased number of persons, there was on January 1, 1895, a surplus in the treasuries of the various institutions amounting to \$243,000. This sum added to the cost of caring for the increased number makes a total comparative saving of \$476,482. Several of the treasurers have been directed to retain a small amount of the surplus for possible contingencies, and all of the remainder, amounting to \$233,482, has been turned back into the State treasury. The physical condition of the various institutions is better than it ever was, while the standard of living is not excelled anywhere. It is apparent that no matter what the State may desire to buy in the future, whether cheap goods or expensive goods, the new system of purchasing, if adhered to, is going to make an annual saving to the State for all time to come of nearly half a million of dollars, and I respectfully recommend that this money be expended in providing for our people the means of higher education, a subject to be referred to later.

SCIENTIFIC METHODS.

After the new business methods were fully established, early in December, 1893, the superintendent of each institution was requested to make a thorough examination of the methods, the most advanced theories, and the results of the experiments in similar institutions in this country and in Europe, and to see wherein such institutions differed from ours, and if anything was found elsewhere that was thought to be an improvement upon the methods pursued here, to at once adopt it; also to submit a full report of such investigation on or before April 1st, 1894. Accordingly, last spring each superintendent submitted his report, giving the result of his investigations. These reports have been printed in a separate volume, and I herewith submit a copy of them. A number of them are very able, and contain valuable suggestions which

have been, so far as possible, acted upon. It is confidently believed that our institutions are conducted on as high a scientific plane as any in the world, and that, while some of the European institutions have the advantage of more elaborate and expensive buildings and equipments, yet in other important particulars, relating to the care of inmates, ours are superior.

There was also established at Kankakee a laboratory, and a pathologist was employed, who gives all of his time to making microscopical and other scientific investigations, and who devotes at least one hour a day to a general discussion with the physicians of that institution. The result has been to arouse a new interest and create the highest aspirations throughout that great institution. There is every reason why Illinois should lead in this line of scientific work. I believe this pathological work to be of such importance that the trustees of each of the other insane asylums have been requested to establish a laboratory and employ a pathologist for the benefit of said institutions.

SOLDIERS' AND SAILORS' HOME.

In this Home there has been friction between the superintendent and the trustees, due, in part, to the discipline which the superintendent enforced and which the trustees regarded as being too severe. In consequence of these differences, the superintendent resigned early in November, and the trustees appointed a successor. The business affairs of the Home, however, as well as the physical condition of the Home, are practically perfect, and it should be said, that prior to taking charge of the institution by the outgoing superintendent, more than 160 of the inmates of the Home had been expelled for insubordination, for persistent violation of the rules of the institution and for bad conduct. After being thus expelled they found themselves penniless by the wayside and nearly all drifted into the almshouses of the country. Believing that this condition of affairs ought not to continue, the superintendent re-admitted all of the men who had been so expelled and nearly all of them are still in the Home. Many of them have been a constant source of annoyance and trouble and made discipline a necessity, yet I believe that the act of taking them back was humane and right. The trustees have shown the greatest vigilance and care in watching over this institution, and have done everything in their power for the relief and comfort of the old soldiers. I recommend a liberal policy toward the Home. This great State owes these unfortunate veterans a debt of gratitude and we must see to it that their declining years are not only peaceful but comfortable.

INDUSTRIAL HOME FOR THE BLIND.

The last General Assembly made an appropriation to found an Industrial Home for the Blind, in which these unfortunate people could earn a living and thus cease to be beggars on the street or inmates of almshouses. In pursuance of this object, ground was secured near Douglas Park in Chicago, and a four-story shop with a steam plant attached has been erected, and near it a large four-story brick building, arranged for residence purposes, has been completed and opened. This will enable many of the blind of the State to become self-supporting.

REFORMATORY FOR GIRLS.

The last General Assembly also made appropriations to establish a Reformatory for Girls. To carry out this provision a board was appointed, a building was rented, and a reform school, in harmony with the act, was opened, and steps were taken to erect a new building. A charming site for this purpose was secured on the banks of Fox river, near Geneva, in Kane county, and the new building is now under roof and will be ready to be opened in the spring.

FIRE AT ANNA.

On the night of Jan. 3, 1895, a fire destroyed a large part of the main building of the Southern Hospital for the Insane. No lives were lost and all the patients have been properly housed and cared for. I have not the exact data at hand, but recommend that the necessary appropriation be made at once to rebuild the part destroyed.

REPORTS OF TRUSTEES, ETC.

It would make this message entirely too long for me to refer in detail to the salient features of each State institution, and I am, therefore, obliged to refer you to the reports made by the trustees, and also to the report of the State Board of Charities, all of which are herewith submitted. I must, however, direct your attention to the fact that, with the exception of the school for the education of the deaf and dumb, at Jacksonville, every State institution is over-crowded. I am informed that there are several thousand insane persons in the almshouses of the State. The institution for the feeble-minded at Lincoln, has between 600 and 700 inmates and there are now that many applications for admission by people for whom no room can be found.

We need, at once, more room for the feeble-minded and a new asylum for the insane. Those who have given the matter most consideration advise an asylum for epileptics and the hopelessly insane, to which this class of patients from the other four institutions should be removed, their places being filled by those for

whom there may yet be hope—that is, make the new institution an asylum and have the existing institutions do the work of the hospitals.

In the fall of 1893, and again in the spring of 1894, all of the superintendents and trustees were convened in convention at Springfield, for the purpose of being more fully advised as to the policy of the administration, but more especially for the purpose of discussion and interchange of ideas. While this was a new departure, it was a pronounced success, the discussions in particular being of great benefit and assistance to all present, both in the dissemination of new ideas and the creation of higher aspirations.

STATE BOARD OF CHARITIES.

The last General Assembly passed an act for the appointment of three local visitors in each county, to serve without fee, but having power to inspect both the jails and the almshouses in the county. The State Board of Charities made these appointments and already the condition of many of these places has been greatly improved. It is found that there can not be too much light thrown into the almshouses and jails; while many of them are kept in the very best condition, others are sickening in their filth and wretchedness. In one of the almshouses a member of the State Board of Charities found a number of children that were not sent to school and were growing up in utter neglect. In another, this member found a number of insane men and women practically living in one apartment—and that filthy. It is believed that with the added machinery for inspection, those conditions will soon disappear from our fair State.

STATE BOARD OF HEALTH.

This board has held two conventions of the local health officers of the State with a view of getting in touch with every neighborhood, so as to be in the best position possible to arrest the spread of any epidemic or contagious diseases. These conventions have been very instructive and beneficial. The board has also raised the standard of education necessary before beginning the study of medicine. The State has, for a number of years, been laboring to raise the standard of the medical profession, and now it is regarded as the highest in the Union.

PRINTER EXPERT.

The State Printer Expert has revised the methods of estimating the amount to be paid the printing contractor so as to make them conform to the law, and has thereby saved to the State about \$10,000. I call your attention especially to his recommendations as to the revisions of the law governing State printing.

INSURANCE DEPARTMENT.

The Insurance Superintendent has at the cost of a great deal of labor prepared a revision of the laws relating to both fire and life insurance, and I commend this for your consideration. He has also collected as fees, since taking charge of his office, about \$15,000 during the balance of the year 1893, and \$135,000 for 1894, making \$150,000—which has just been turned into the State Treasury.

FACTORY INSPECTION.

As our population increased and new machinery was added, a great many thousands of children were employed in certain factories of large cities to do the work formerly done by adults. They received only a pittance; and while the work in some cases was light, they all worked long hours and it was soon found that they became dwarfed in both body and mind, often being already old before reaching the age of maturity. In some factories there were no safeguards against accidents, and employes were being crippled and sometimes killed. In others the sanitary conditions were such as not only to breed disease but to foster immorality, boys and girls being often obliged to use the same filthy closets. Again it was found that the working of long hours in a factory by women, in the end unfitted them for the duties of home and of motherhood, in consequence of which their children were weak and often deformed and there was growing up a generation of young men and women who were inferior both physically and mentally, and the standard of American womanhood and manhood was being lowered. These conditions called for a remedy. The question was not new. All civilized countries have had to deal with it. England found all these conditions seventy-five years ago and Parliament passed acts to remedy them. Those acts were based on the ground that it is the duty of government to prevent degeneration of its people, that the law of self preservation alone requires this, for an inferior people must go down before a superior, both on the field and in civil life. These acts of Parliament were resisted by nearly all the wealth and by the Church of England. It was claimed they would ruin the British Empire, but Parliament made new investigations and passed still more stringent measures, until after a struggle of fifty years it had perfected the most comprehensive system of factory legislation in the world. Some of her greatest statesmen now consider this one of the grandest achievements of the empire. All the civilized countries of the old world, and the older and more advanced states of our country have adopted similar legislation.