

cause it is a question pressing for solution. I trust you will give the views presented your careful and earnest attention.

STATE PENITENTIARY.

An act was passed at the last regular session prohibiting the lessees of the Penitentiary from employing or permitting the employment of convicts outside the walls of the Penitentiary. An attempt to enforce the law developed the fact that there was no appropriation for the support of the convicts within the walls of the Penitentiary, and that the machinery and other appliances for manufactures previously provided with a view of rendering the Penitentiary in whole or in part self-supporting, could not be made available in their existing condition without a large outlay of money for which there was no authority of law, and even with such an outlay, would in all probability fail to render the institution self-sustaining for some years to come. The State was thus confronted with the danger of five or six hundred convicts being thrown upon its hands without any provision for their maintenance or custody. This emergency, unless provided against, may arise, and the State be put to an expense which in the three years preceding the adoption of the existing lease of the Penitentiary, I am informed, averaged \$200,000 per annum for the maintenance of prisoners. It seems to me that the objections which may properly be urged against the leasing out of convict labor to private individuals without proper restrictions with regard to discipline and treatment can not be urged against the employment of convict labor upon the public works of the State under strict discipline and under the direct control of State officers. The convicts are now nearly all working on the line of the New Orleans Pacific railroad, a work of great importance to the State. I believe they are as well provided for and as humanely treated as is practicable under the circumstances. Unless the State should make some arrangements otherwise to utilize their labor and make it self-sustaining, I am convinced, all things considered, that it is better to permit the present lessees to continue working the convicts under their existing lease. Some provision should be made, however, to meet an exigency that might be presented in the future by reason of the convicts being thrown upon the State.

RAILROADS.

I regret exceedingly that the railroad interests of the State still remain in a most unsatisfactory condition. The chief reliance of the State in years past for the supplying of the great desideratum of railroad communication with Texas, has been placed upon the corporation formerly known as the New Orleans, Mobile and Chattanooga railroad, now as the New Orleans, Mobile and Texas railroad. To that company subsidies have been granted with a lavish hand. Had any earnest effort been made by that company to carry out in good faith the promises it held out to the State, the people might have viewed with more indulgence the injury which the company, by barring the way to other enterprises, has inflicted upon the State, and the serious damage which the large issue of bonds by the State to this company has inflicted upon our credit at home and abroad. While it is true that the general financial stringency prevailing for the last few years all over the country has affected more or less every railroad enterprise, this fact is entirely insufficient to account for the utter failure which the New Orleans, Mobile and Texas railroad has made to comply with any of its obligations to the State. As elsewhere mentioned, most of the bonds issued to the company are contested by the State, and are now before the courts awaiting decision. I deemed it more than justice to the taxpayers of the State to put in litigation the validity of all the obligations issued to the company which still remained open to contest.

During the summer of 1875 a number of prominent citizens of New Orleans represented to me that if the parties in interest in a suit then pending in the United States Circuit Court between the State and the Mobile and Texas Railroad Company, which suit it was stated could in no event inure to the benefit of the State, but which, while pending, retarded the efforts of those interested in the completion of the road, were submitted to the court, so that it could be promptly decided, a company could be formed in the State itself which would be able to push the road to completion. Upon the advice of eminent counsel thoroughly informed on the merits of the case that there were no legal rights possessed by the State which could in any manner be concluded, the case was submitted on briefs. A decision was subsequently rendered vesting the title to the road in the first mortgage bondholders, and affirming the advice given by the counsel for the State, that the State had no rights which could have been enforced by this suit. Negotiations are still pending with a view to an early resumption of work upon the road, but I am informed that much difficulty is experienced by reason of the impracticable demands which those controlling the road present. I recommend that you authorize an investigation into all matters connected with this railroad, to the end that the exact status of the road may be known.

THE TEXAS PACIFIC LAND GRANT.

When serving the State in the United States Senate I introduced Senate bill No. 647, to aid in the construction of a railroad and telegraph line from Marshall, Texas, to San Diego, on the Pacific coast, with a branch to New Orleans. During the following session this bill passed the committee and subsequently on a report of a committee of conference passed the House, providing for a branch road to New Orleans, and was approved March 3, 1872. There was at that time in apparently active existence in the State a corporation known as the New Orleans, Baton Rouge and Vicksburg railroad. This road was originally intended to be constructed to Vicksburg, but the charter authorized the building of a road from New Orleans to Shreveport. The company had, in fact, made a survey of a projected line of road from New Orleans, via Baton Rouge and Alexandria, to Shreveport. This route being in accord with the projected collateral branch of the Texas Pacific railroad, that bill granted to the New Orleans, Baton Rouge and Vicksburg Railroad Company ten sections of land on each side of their projected route, designated by odd numbers, and provided that the company should complete their road within five years from the date of the passage of the act. The lands thus granted, amounting, according to the report of the Secretary of the Interior, to over 1,500,000 acres, were

subsequently withdrawn from the market, and still remain withdrawn from entry or sale.

I regret to say that, like other companies, the company to whom this grant was accorded—a grant which, in any Western State, would be sufficient of itself to build the whole road—has remained inactive. Those in charge of its affairs have not had the ability or the financial capacity to utilize the resources placed at their disposal.

The Texas Pacific Company have completed their road to Fort Worth, Texas, thus giving an uninterrupted communication of over 300 miles west from Shreveport, connecting with the interior of Texas by other lateral railroads. It may safely be assumed that the wants of commerce will compel the construction of this road, at an early day, at least to El Paso. The question now is, by what means can a direct communication be established by railroad between New Orleans and some point at or near the eastern terminus of the Texas Pacific road.

The Senator, and a member of Congress, from this State, have recently introduced into each house of Congress, bills which I understand provide for aid in securing the payment of interest on bonds to be issued by the company to the amount of \$40,000 a mile upon the incomplete main line of the Texas Pacific railroad, and to the amount of \$35,000 per mile for the projected lateral lines, one of which connects with New Orleans. The lower house of Congress appears to be composed of members, a majority of whom are, on principle, opposed to national aid to works of this nature. It is particularly unfortunate that at this juncture, when the State is beginning to recuperate from its long prostration, that there should be so little prospect of receiving that assistance which has heretofore been given with a lavish hand to enterprises of like nature, and which I think we have the right to ask from the general government, both for our railroads and our levees.

While hoping that the efforts in behalf of the existing Western railroad connection with Southern Texas will be successful, it is incumbent upon us in the meantime to use all possible efforts to help ourselves. In my judgment the most vital connection in the interests of the city and of the entire State is that by the way of Baton Rouge, Alexandria and Shreveport to some point on the line of the Texas Pacific. Such a connection would open up the whole Red River valley, which is now closed to navigation during a large portion of the year, and which comprises some of the finest and most productive lands of the State.

During the summer of last year the New Orleans and Pacific Railroad Company was incorporated under the general laws of the State. This company has thus far manifested an energy, enterprise and vitality in commendable contrast with the impotence of other companies heretofore incorporated by act of the General Assembly with great powers and subsidies. The present Southern terminus of this company is near Alexandria, and its Northwestern terminus will connect with the Texas Pacific railroad at some point not yet determined upon. The road, I am informed, has been graded from Alexandria to Cottle, a distance of fifteen miles through the swamps. The open fields and higher grounds have now been reached, and the work will consequently progress more rapidly. No aid has been asked nor can any be given by the State to this company, and no combined effort has been made to secure aid from the parishes through which its route passes. One or two parishes have, however, subscribed liberally to the stock of the company. The completion of this line with a terminus below the falls of Alexandria would open up deep water and railroad communication between New Orleans and the Texas Pacific Railroad all the year round, and would be of incalculable benefit to the city and State. I have great confidence in the early completion of this road.

The present running terminus of the New Orleans, Mobile and Texas railroad is at Donaldsonville, but the road has been completed some ten miles further, nearly to Bayou Goula. If a road were completed from this point to connect with the New Orleans and Texas railroad at Alexandria, the problem of direct railroad connection with Northern Texas would be measurably solved. If any company or combination of companies could be formed to complete railroad connection between New Orleans and the Texas Pacific, I feel sure that Congress, while it may not be disposed to grant any new money subsidies, would not turn a deaf ear to a properly presented request to transfer to such companies the grant of 1,000,000 acres of public land, originally made for the express purpose of building a railroad from New Orleans to the Texas Pacific. Much the greater part of the land thus granted lies between Donaldsonville and Shreveport. The value of these lands, as I have already said, will, in a few years, nearly or quite repay the cost of constructing the road.

FINANCES OF NEW ORLEANS.

The financial condition of the city of New Orleans is such as to render some legislative action imperatively necessary. The present city administrators, as far as I am able to judge, appear to have labored to the best of their ability to establish economy in the different departments of the government, but notwithstanding they have very largely reduced expenditures, the financial embarrassments of the city have increased. I had hoped that the General Assembly, comprising as it does many gentlemen thoroughly conversant with city affairs, and some who have held responsible positions in the city government would have been able at its last session to inaugurate some effective measure of city reform. If during your present session you can devise any proper mean of lifting the city out of its embarrassments and equalizing and relieving the burdens of taxation, I will co-operate with you to the full extent of my power.

A popular opinion seems to be that the interests of the taxpayers would be advanced if unlimited power of incurring and controlling expenditures were vested in the municipal corporation. However correct this idea may appear in theory, New York downward, does not practically justify the assumption. Ordinarily city councils, from the very circumstances which surround their election, are less amenable to the people at large than members of the General Assembly. If intrusted with unrestricted powers of taxation and expenditures, they often find the temptation to use those powers for personal purposes to the detriment of the public interest too strong to be resisted. The heavy load of improvidently incurred debt which incumbents nearly all our chief cities would seem

to indicate the problem of honest and economical municipal government has not yet been solved in this country, and that the solution certainly does not lie in the increase of debt incurring and tax assessing power now possessed by municipalities.

In this connection I am impelled to notice a recent mention in the city of New Orleans to which many worthy citizens have lent thence, I think without due consideration which seeks to divert attention from that cause of the embarrassments of the city by an attack upon the taxes levied school and police purposes. I do not think this movement is honest in purpose or fitted by facts. The real object of many of the originators appears to me to be to give under this plausible guise the old tax sting agitation, which in the past has done so much injury upon the law-abiding payers of the city, and to which in its attributable a very large proportion of the city's difficulties.

For many years past the annual expenses of the city exceeded the annual income. This providence of expenditure has not been confined to any one political party. I believe I am correct in stating that the existing city charter was drafted by citizens in any manner identified with the dominant party in the State, for the express purpose of removing from the control of affairs a Council elected by the people, and not belonging to the dominant party one extravagant expenditure had been the city to the verge of bankruptcy at that time.

It was the new system inaugurated would prove a more efficient and economical form of government. The expectations based upon the new charter have been realized. Four Councils have held office since its adoption in 1870—one elected and three elected; two belonging to political party, two to the other. The it has been the same in each case—excess of debt, differing only in degree a constitutional amendment, adopted by the last Legislature and ratified by people, prohibiting any city Councils hereafter increasing the debt of the city removed this element of danger. The question now is, how to surmount the present embarrassments and how to carry on the government in the future in their economical and efficient manner.

The total debt floating debt of the city of New Orleans on June 30, 1875, was \$23,288,900.

The taxable real and personal property in the city is \$124,582,000.

The delinquent taxes now due the city for the last six years:

Table with columns: Year, Amount. 1870: \$178,391.29; 1871: \$87,152.65; 1872: \$32,678.59; 1873: \$1,007.89; 1874: \$61,097.89; 1875: \$91,855.24. Total: \$322,375.66.

The estimated revenues of the city from all sources, during a direct tax of one and a half cent, for the current year are \$2,349,184.

The adoptives of expenditures for the year the amount of receipts, and leave unaided for:

Table with columns: Item, Amount. Past due interest coupons on city bonds, Dec 31, 1875: \$1,205,067; Current int on city bonds: \$1,150,000; Less amount appropriated under act of 'city debt and redon' preambled on 307,500; Net deficit cent interest: \$1,112,500; Deficiency appropriation of Metropolitan: 149,000; Deficiency estimated cost of public ed: 107,220.

Total due for 1876 to be provided: \$1,398,770. Making a testing deficiency for 1875 of: \$2,693,777. Such an act carries with it its own moral. It is insolvent, and in my judgment by course open is to address itself with necessary delay to some adjustments obligations to its creditors, and to take for a more economical administration the government in future.

AMT OF THE CHARTER.

The chief of the present bureaucratic city government was early made manifest. In presenting his objectionable first budget made under the charter, Mayor Flanders pointed out there were virtually seven Councils of one, each Administrator expending assuming to control affairs with his own department, and only relying interfering with the jurisdiction of others. Through the duties of some Administrators are merely nominal has a full staff of secretaries and deputies. The appropriate salaries for the last month a \$20,629.13, or nearly \$250,000. This does not include the labor act hire rolls of the Department Improvements, Commerce and Buildings, which for the same month up \$18,643.41 additional. Appropriations are below the average city situated as is New Orleans and such a costly system of government suggest that the charter of the city of New Orleans be amended. The Councils of a Mayor to be elected by the large, and seventeen aldermen, to be elected from each ward city. The Mayor to nominate and appoint the Council, a Contreras and City Surveyor, to have general supervision over the city. Mayor, Controller, Treasurer and Surveyor to be paid adequate but not excessive salaries; the aldermen to serve pay. All street improvements and works to be done by contract, and adjudicated, not by sealed proposals and outery. The elections for mayoralty to be held at a different place than the general election, so as to be as far as possible from the excitement of political contests.

LEGISLATIVE RELIEF. Many items of city expenditure which you power largely to reduce. To a few, the Parish Prison and Cisthose should be consolidated, an maintenance of the prisoners entrusted to the city. The excessive fees of the should be largely diminished. The and park taxes should be modified cheap. These and other reforms would reduce in salaries which effected by a change of charter, would reduce the necessary expenditures of the city to a point in the power of the taxpayers to bear without hardship. With re-

gard to the interest, it may be advisable to authorize the levy of a small tax, sufficient to pay, say, one quarter of the present rate of interest, or more, pending negotiations for the liquidation of the bonds.

LIQUIDATION OF THE DEBT.

For the adjustment of the debt of the city, I recommend the appointment of a board of five persons, who should be clothed, by legislative enactment, with full power to negotiate with the creditors of the city, and to agree, on behalf of the city, to any equitable plan of compromise, either by the premium bond plan or any other mode that may be determined upon, after full conference with the representatives of the bondholders; which agreement, when ratified by the City Council, should be binding upon the city. In view of the magnitude of the interests involved, it seems to me that the persons to be chosen under this act should be as widely representative as possible. I suggest that two might be elected by the City Council, to represent the city; two by the Board of Underwriters and the banking associations, forming the New Orleans Clearing House, to represent the bondholders, and the fifth be appointed by the Governor or elected by the Legislature. Without going more into details, it seems to me that some such method, as I have indicated, is the best course open for the city. Of course it is of the first importance that these commissioners should be able to make an exhibit to the bondholders that everything has been done that consistently could be done by the city to diminish its expenditures and to collect its revenues. In other words the city, before entering upon this negotiation, should be in a position to show clearly that its failure to continue the payment of the interest on its bonded debt is the result of want of ability and not of inclination.

THE POLICE.

The question of the control and management of the Metropolitan Police is one upon which your body, constituted as it is, will probably not agree. In the present condition of public sentiment, and with the present relation of parties in the General Assembly, it is scarcely probable that the one party will be willing to yield entirely what the other party may insist to be right and equitable. The Metropolitan system is doubtless open to many objections, but it is by no means a new plan, nor is it peculiar to this State. The questions that most affect the taxpayer are, whether the present police system is as economical as it would probably be under different management, and whether it is equally efficient. The record will establish both. The estimate of police expenses for the year 1875 was \$600,000, but the amount of taxes collected by the city and turned over to the treasurer of the Police Board was much less, being only \$403,081. The estimate of police expenses for the year 1876 is \$499,000; the probable amount that will be collected not more than \$335,000. In the city of Chicago the number of men employed upon the police force is 500, and the expense amounts to \$700,000. The city of St. Louis pays \$522,000 per annum for its police. In the city of Boston in 1874 the police appropriation was \$865,000; the actual cost \$797,620. That city is, besides, the headquarters of the State constabulary, comprising over 100 men, at a cost of \$132,755 per annum, and who when necessary do police duty. In New Orleans during the same year the police appropriation was \$400,000, and the actual cost \$399,813. The last report of the Boston police shows a difference of over \$22,000 in favor of New Orleans. The number of arrests made by the Boston police during the last year was 29,799; during the New Orleans police 32,486.

The immense area over which the city of New Orleans extends (over forty-seven square miles), increases the difficulty and expense of the police system. In the other cities referred to the police are promptly paid their wages in cash. In those cities taxation is not rendered unequal and oppressive, as in New Orleans, by wealthy delinquent taxpayers. If the taxes were collected closely, and the police were paid promptly, as in other cities, the police appropriation need not much exceed \$400,000, which would be less in proportion than is paid for the police service of any city similarly situated.

The cost of the police at present is not as great as it was in 1867, when the police force was controlled by the City Council. As compared with the expenditure of 1869, it is less by \$343,191.15. As compared with the expenses of 1873, it is less by \$231,653.50, and as compared with the expenses of 1875, it is less by \$76,000. The estimated expenses of the police just rendered to the City Council for the year 1876 amount to \$499,000, which is \$427,425 less than the appropriation made by the Council, and allowed by them in 1869, less than the appropriation made by the Council in 1872, by \$251,232.96, and less than the appropriation made by the Council in 1875 by \$101,000.

From these facts, it will be seen that the expenses of the police department have been steadily reduced; that they are proportionately lower for the current year than the cost of the police of other cities, and very much less than the cost of previous years in this city.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

I transmit herewith the report of the State Superintendent of Education, giving full details of the workings of our public school system throughout the State. The agitation of various questions, not only financial, but affecting the administration of the schools generally, has awakened considerable public interest in the school question, State and city, during the past year. The slowness of the payment of city and parish taxes and the enormous delinquent lists of the city, amounting to over \$1,500,000 for the last two years, have caused irregularity in the payment of teachers. This cause and the frequent changes of teachers by election have led to dissatisfaction. The selection of the city School Board is strictly appointive in its character and is confined solely to the department of the State Superintendent of Education. For a time, owing to the agitation involved, many appointments that would have been very suitable have been declined. But more recently the acceptance by several prominent citizens of the duties imposed upon the school directors will tend to the benefit and strength of the system. Whether some provision should not be made tending to greater permanence and less frequent changes in the selection of teachers, is suggested, also the propriety of giving municipal bodies a representation in the composition of local boards of directors, in city and country. Also, whether the powers of the Board of

School Directors of the city of New Orleans should not be subdivided. It is almost asking impossibilities to expect a central board to undertake the proper supervision of so many schools, and to set carefully and intelligently in the selection of so many teachers. A more local administration would probably result in greater watchfulness over the schools, and increased efficiency. Although there may have been too frequent changes of teachers in the city, I think a careful inspection of the lists will show that, with few exceptions, political considerations have had little or no influence in the appointments made.

The main question for the taxpayer to consider is whether the present school system is economically administered. The answer is a matter of figures. During the school years from 1865 to 1868, during which time the City Council had control of the schools of New Orleans, and during which period no colored children were admitted to the schools, the expenses were as follows: For 1865-6, number of pupils, 11,093; total expenditures \$263,337, or per capita \$23.74. For 1866-7, number of pupils 12,570; total expenditures \$269,043, or per capita \$21.40. For 1867-8, number of pupils 14,597; total expenditures \$387,911, or per capita \$24.53.

It may here be noted that in 1867-8, the City Council (having control of the schools) provided \$387,900 for the support of the public schools with an average attendance of but little over 14,000, while \$300,000 is the amount estimated as adequate by the present Council (not having the control of the schools) for an average attendance of nearly 30,000 pupils, one eighth of the amount appropriated being required to provide schoolhouses. With the inception of the present system the number of pupils was so largely increased that an additional expenditure for rent of schoolhouses became necessary, amounting to upwards of \$30,000 per annum. Including this item, which amounts to nearly one dollar and a half per capita, the expenses for the following years have been:

Table with columns: Years, Number of pupils, Total Expenditures, per capita. 1874: 20,182 pupils, \$179,554.51, \$8.90; 1874-5: 18,719 pupils, \$69,128.83, \$3.69; 1875-6: 19,500 pupils, \$404,220.00, \$20.73.

The expenditures of other cities for school purposes during the past year have been—

Table with columns: City, Number of pupils, Total Expenditures, per capita. Boston: 44,942 pupils, \$1,419,657, \$31.67; New York: 108,549 pupils, \$2,275,413, \$20.91; Chicago: 28,831 pupils, \$69,536, \$2.38; St. Louis: 21,731 pupils, \$331,833, \$15.21; San Francisco: 20,750 pupils, \$86,479, \$4.16.

It will thus be seen that the cost of the public schools in the city of New Orleans instead of being excessive is below the average of other cities. Our present school system may be open to objection in some respects, but I believe much of the dissatisfaction expressed has arisen from misapprehension of the true condition of affairs, or has grown out of prejudice fostered for partisan ends. Education is the very bulwark of civilization. The benefits received from our public schools are so immensely greater than the expenditure their maintenance involves, that any successful attempt to curtail their usefulness would be a public calamity. It is in truth a strange and mistaken policy that in the assumed interest of property attacks the sources from which are derived the means of preserving public order, and of educating the children of the State. The proposition to suspend the police and school tax, aside from its palpable violation of existing laws, and the tendency that such a proposition, if carried out, would have to bring the State government into collision with the city government and to arouse anew those political animosities and complications which, happily for the success of the hoped-for legislative reforms are now dormant, strikes directly at the poorer classes, who need protection in person and property, and are unable otherwise to supply it, and deprives them of a vital want they can not otherwise supply, the education of their children, while it indirectly affects every material interest of the city. With education and the means of enforcing the law banished from a community, property would have little appreciable value.

EQUALIZATION OF ASSESSMENTS.

The present system of appraising and assessing the values of the State is unequal, oppressive and very expensive. There is a tendency to discriminate unfairly against the city. Assessments in the city are arbitrary, and in the country are exceedingly lax. Contiguous lands of equal value lying in adjoining parishes vary in assessment as much as seventy per cent. It is believed an equitable equalization of values and the correction of erroneous assessments would add \$400,000 to the assessment rolls of the State, and to that extent lighten the general burden of taxation. I recommend that there be a board of equalization established, to consist of one member from each congressional district, properly qualified by experience and integrity, to whom the assessment rolls shall be referred for equalization. This having been once accomplished, no new assessment of real estate need be made but once in five years, except as to permanent improvements made in New Orleans, which can be appraised from time to time, or the owners might be required, as in New Jersey and several other States, to deposit a sworn statement of the value of improvements made by them with the registrar of conveyances or the Auditor. The recorder of each parish and the registrar of conveyances of the city of New Orleans should be required to furnish from time to time a list of all changes of ownership, so that the proper corrections could be made on the rolls. A session of the board of equalization of sixty or ninety days would probably suffice for the purpose, and besides the other practical benefits which would result from the adoption of this plan, a direct saving of over \$90,000 a year would be effected in the cost of assessment. The States of New Jersey, Michigan, Indiana and Ohio have adopted a system of equalizing assessments similar in general principles to the plan I have suggested, and the method is found effective, just and economical.

EXEMPTION FROM TAXATION.

In previous messages reference has been made to the large amount of property owned by corporations, and used for ordinary commercial purposes, receiving all the benefits of municipal and State protection, yielding large revenues from rentals, yet exempted from taxation. Article 118 of the State constitution, which provides that "taxation shall be equal and uniform throughout the State," also provides that "the General Assembly shall have power to exempt from taxation property actually used for church, school or charitable purposes." Neither the letter nor the spirit of this ordinance contemplated that some of

the most eligible offices and the most readily rented stores in the best business portions of New Orleans should pay no taxes to city or State; that public halls of entertainment, coming in competition with similar buildings fully taxed, should be exempt; that banks and pawnbroking establishments should be relieved from the licenses and taxes which their competitors pay, and that valuable lands and buildings, outside the city of New Orleans, not "actually used for church, school or charitable purposes," should be released from paying their just share of the expenses of the general government. From a tabulated statement, prepared at my request, by the Board of State Assessors, it appears that in the city of New Orleans, with a total assessed valuation of \$125,000,000, there is real and personal property exempted from taxation to the amount of \$25,803,305. In this statement, however, there is included an item of \$12,303,125, described as the value of property "owned by the United States, by the State, or by any parish, city or incorporated town in the State." The capital stock of the national banks, which by United States law is exempted from taxation, appears also to be included; but, making all proper deductions, there still remains a very large amount of property unjustly relieved from bearing its proportion of the public burdens. I have placed this detailed statement of all exempt property on file in the office of the Secretary of State for such examination or action as you may think proper to direct.

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS.

In consonance with the principle of rigid economy in the expenditures of all branches of the government, to which the State pledged itself when it asked of its creditors their assent to the funding of its debt, I recommend that amendments to the constitution be adopted by your body for submission to the people, which will effect the following financial reforms:

1. That the salaries of all officers whose compensation is fixed by the constitution be so reduced as to approximate to the salaries paid for similar services in other States. The salaries of the executive and judicial officers of the State have heretofore been paid, for the most part, in treasury warrants of uncertain and irregular value. Under the provisions of the constitutional amendments already adopted, all salaries will hereafter be paid in cash, and it is only just to the State and its creditors that the salaries should be reduced to a cash basis. A very large saving would thus be effected.

2. Reducing the per diem of members of the General Assembly to \$5, and the mileage to five cents a mile for actual distance traveled, and limiting the expenditures of each session. A saving of about \$75,000 per annum would result from this measure.

3. The abridgment of the annual session of the Legislature from sixty to thirty days. In the peculiar situation of this State with regard to the danger of crises in the levee and other sudden emergencies, it would probably be unsafe to confine the General Assembly to biennial sessions, as in many other States. The real work of each session, however, is practically done in less than thirty days, and a constitutional restriction of the session to that limit, unless extended by joint resolution as now provided, would probably work no injury to the State, and would certainly result in a diminution of expenditure.

FURTHER REDUCTION OF EXPENDITURES.

The fees and emoluments of all tax collectors throughout the State should be reduced and limited, so that no country tax collector shall in future receive more than \$5000 per annum, or less than \$1500, and no city tax collector more than \$8000 per annum. It is a safe principle to affirm that there is no public officer in Louisiana whose duties as such are so onerous or his responsibilities so great as to justify a larger compensation than \$10,000 a year.

The fees of clerks of court and sheriffs of the parish of Orleans should be limited in conformity with this principle. In the parishes the sheriffs and clerks of court should be paid by salary, (not in any case to exceed \$1500 a year,) as full compensation for all fees now charged against the parish in criminal cases. The annual bills of fees presented by some of these officers against their respective parishes for services in criminal cases alone amount to over \$5000 per annum, an amount very much greater than the value of the services actually rendered. The salaries of parish judges should be reduced, and should be paid by the parishes themselves. The State would thus be relieved of an expenditure of over \$100,000 a year. It is a question for careful consideration whether the office of parish judge, as well as the office of parish attorney, or district attorney pro tem, might not be advantageously abolished, and the duties committed to the district judges and district attorneys respectively.

An act of the Legislature increases the salaries of the judges of the Supreme Court \$12,500 over the amount fixed by the constitution. This act should be repealed. Under the head of contingent funds appropriations were made last session to the amount of \$37,000. This item should be largely reduced.

Some legislation should be had with regard to the different monopolies that now prey upon the industries of the people. Restrictions should be placed upon the excessive charges now exacted for the legal transfer of property, the recording of mortgages, the protesting of commercial paper, and the recourse to the courts from the smallest justice's court upward. These matters, though not strictly coming under the head of State expenditures, can be controlled by legislation to the manifest advantage of the community at large. The many unnecessary charges which now hamper the commerce of the port in the shape of harbormaster, wharfinger and portwarden's dues should especially be removed.

THE CENTENNIAL.

An act of a previous Legislature provided for the appointment of a State board of managers to represent the interests of the State at the centennial celebration of the independence of the nation in Philadelphia in 1876, but made no appropriation to defray the necessary expenses. I recommend that a suitable appropriation be made to maintain the dignity of the State.

STATE CHARITABLE INSTITUTIONS.

I desire again to call your attention to the condition of the charitable institutions of the State. The Charity Hospital is burdened with debt unavoidably incurred in past years. In act No. 59 of 1874, an appropriation of over \$69,000 was made for this debt, which fell through for defect of title and want of funds. By act No. 17 of 1875, \$50,000 was

reappropriated for the same purpose, but want of back revenues devoted to the purpose has caused it hitherto to fail. Meanwhile the appropriations for current expenses require some more thorough provisions to secure their payment. In the general appropriation bill certain revenues were set apart, which are regarded as too contingent in their nature to be relied upon as a source of economy. The vast amount of sickness and suffering which this institution relieves and the necessity which exists in this climate, particularly in times of epidemic of providing for the effective treatment of the poor and homeless, render a liberal appropriation for the Charity Hospital especially proper.

I also call your special attention to the present condition of the Insane Asylum and its unfortunate inmates, and urge an immediate appropriation, in advance of the regular appropriation, for their relief. I am informed that great suffering exists owing to the want of the proper means of warming the building, and that there is a strong probability of losing experienced nurses because of unpaid wages. The buildings are very much in want of repairs and I recommend that measures be taken to put them in proper condition. The asylums for the blind and the deaf and dumb also require prompt and liberal aid.

AGRICULTURAL AND MECHANICAL COLLEGE.

The Louisiana State Agricultural and Mechanical College is now in the second year of its existence. The design of the acts of Congress has been as closely followed as was possible with the limited means, yet it can scarcely be called an agricultural or mechanical college in the true sense of the word. Until suitable grounds could be procured in the country, which would draw a representation of pupils from all the parishes for the study of agricultural science, it was thought best to secure a mechanical school or college in the city. Grounds, however, have been purchased below the city, forming part of the historic battleground, and the college, with the aid of a trifling expenditure, will soon be in a condition to remove to its new location, where practical agriculture will be added to the present course, which embraces now agricultural, chemistry and the kindred sciences. The federal donation can not be used for the purchase of lands or erection and repair of buildings. The buildings already on the ground, with inexpensive additions, will answer the purpose for the present. A proper appropriation for cost of removal and some extensions and repairs, is needed, and if this be granted, the annual appropriation of \$10,000, for completion or rearranges of purchase, may be sufficient to carry out the purposes of Congress.

APPOINTMENT OF AUDITOR.

Since your adjournment the State Auditor has tendered his resignation, which I have accepted, and have filled the vacancy in accordance with the provisions of article seven of the constitution. The practical effect of the constitutional amendments, restricting appropriations to current revenues will, doubtless, in future, prevent most of the complications which the State Auditor has heretofore had to contend with.

STATE CENSUS AND APPOINTMENT.

In accordance with the requirements of the constitution of the State, a careful census has been taken by State authority during the past year. I transmit herewith the official report of the results obtained. Your first duty will be to make an apportionment of representation which shall be equal and uniform on the basis of the population of the State as ascertained by this census. As you will perceive by the instructions issued by the State Registrar, every precaution was used to secure a thorough, fair and accurate census of the State. In the appointment of the officers to whom was confided the duty of making the enumeration, care was taken that both political parties should be represented. Whenever errors or omissions were properly pointed out to the State Registrar immediately took steps to rectify them. In two or three cases the census of the ward or parishes where irregularities were supposed to exist were retaken. I believe this census to be as correct a representation as it is possible to arrive at of the actual population of the State.

REGISTRATION AND ELECTION LAWS.

Section 31 of act No. 155 of 1874, which is the existing registration law, provides that the decision of the supervisor or assistant supervisor on all questions of insurance form or addition to the registry shall be final, and prohibits any appeal to the courts. This provision was included in the old registration law, and it has been retained. I presume by inadvertence, in the amended law. It is manifestly unjust, and I recommend its repeal. The new registration which has been effected through the State under the provisions of this act appears to be generally satisfactory, except in the city of New Orleans. A careful revision of the registration lists throughout the State, especially in New Orleans, should be made before the next general election, but I do not think it necessary that the State should incur the large expense of a new registration.

The present election law has been severely criticised, especially the provision regarding the Returning Board. This feature of the election law has been upon the statute books for several years, and was preserved and incorporated into the election law approved November 20, 1872. It is urged by the advocates of this law that the power should be lodged somewhere to set aside or challenge a palpably fraudulent election at any poll or precinct at which it should be clearly shown that on account of violence or fraud there had been no true expression of the will of the people, and that the maintenance of this right is especially just and important in this State, where armed bodies of men have at times by violence prevented a fair expression of the will of the voters, and where at least one-half of the voting population are weak, timid and notoriously non-combatant. On the other hand, the most serious objection urged against the law is the political organization of the board, and the danger of an assumption of power for