

PETITION AND APPEAL OF THE Tax-Payers to the Legislature.

We ask the earnest attention of your honorable body to the following particulars in which by proper legislation very large sums may be saved.

PUBLIC PRINTING.

The public printing, by the grossness of its excesses, amounts to public robbery. We submit that such is the practical result, whatever may be the motive, on which the extraordinary system is tolerated. Let examples be cited in evidence.

For the five years next preceding the first of January, 1861, the average cost of printing for the State did not exceed \$8,000 per annum.

For the five years commencing with the fiscal year 1870, the average cost of the printing for the State has exceeded \$73,000 each year, being an average excess each year on the former of \$65,000.

This enormous increase in the cost of public printing cannot be attributed to increased expense of performing the public work, nor to the large increase in the number of our citizens, for the like conditions exist in Mississippi and Georgia; and yet the recent report of the Comptroller-General of Georgia shows that the average cost of the public printing in that State for the years 1872 and 1873 did not exceed \$10,000. Mark the contrast according to the above average.

The journals of the two houses of our Legislature contain a vast amount of matter utterly worthless to the public, and their enormous bulk, with supplements added, might well cause the inquiry, why were they gotten up in that bulky form if not to swell the profits of the public printer?

The salaries of the Treasurer, Secretary of State, Auditor and Attorney-General, we ask, may be fixed as they were under the Code of 1857; and the clerks and assistants allowed these officers reduced to the number and compensation with the salaries fixed by that Code.

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LEGISLATIVE DEPARTMENT.

The expenses of the Legislative Department have grown recently into enormous proportions. The sessions are now annual, and have been greatly prolonged, and there has been a great, and, as we respectfully insist, an unnecessary increase in the number of its employees, clerks, door-keepers, sergeants-at-arms, porters and pages.

We do not wish to be understood as stating that the services of the members of your honorable body are not worth all that is now charged, viz: \$500 per annum. There is no price within our means for the inestimable blessing of an intelligent, working and earnest body of men, who consecrate their lives and devote their talents to the study of political economy, and those arts which make a people great, prosperous and happy, and who bring to the great work of enacting laws for the State, the rich results of a ripe and varied experience in civil affairs.

But, in our present impoverished condition, we respectfully, but earnestly, represent that retrenchment in all parts of the administration is absolutely necessary; and we cannot doubt that the members of your body will initiate this reform, by fixing their salaries at the sum paid before the war, which amounted, generally, to about \$250 for two years, there being but one session in that time.

This sum would be greater than is realized, on the average by citizens, in private life, and greater also than the average paid members of the Legislature by the other States in the Union.

The Governor's salary might be, without detriment to the public service, fixed at \$4,000 per annum, which is far larger than is paid by other States in the Union having no more wealth than Mississippi.

The Lieutenant-Governor's salary might also be fixed at the price usually paid to the presiding officer of the Senate, viz: double the salary of a Senator.

The salaries of the Treasurer, Secretary of State, Auditor and Attorney-General, we ask, may be fixed as they were under the Code of 1857; and the clerks and assistants allowed these officers reduced to the number and compensation with the salaries fixed by that Code.

And the salary and expenditures of the State Superintendent of Education should be reduced to a very moderate sum. His office should be a room in the Capitol.

And we respectfully ask that the salaries of all other State and District officers should be fixed at the rate paid before the war. The salaries then allowed were sufficient to procure the services of able and competent men, and we feel sure they will be sufficient now.

The truth is, that all private pursuits are so depressed, and all official positions so highly remunerative, that the difference begets a widespread greed for office, and encourages that hate of all free government—the growth of a large class whose sole interests in the State consist in their exemption of the emoluments of official position.

The compensation of the County Treasurer should be fixed so as not to exceed in any instance the sum of \$500 per annum. His duties are light, and his responsibility will be small, if the county levies are restrained as are hereinafter asked for.

The fees of the Chancery and Circuit Clerk and Sheriff are too high, and we are sorry to add, in many instances, are very much increased by exorbitant and illegal charges. We ask that this subject be carefully looked into by the Legislature, and the rates so fixed, that whilst a fair and just compensation is allowed for these services, the burdens of the suitor shall not be so great as they now are.

And we suggest that the State, like the United States, will fix a point in compensation of county officers, beyond which the fees shall go into the State Treasury.

In many counties this point might be fixed at \$600, in others at \$1,000 or \$1,200, but in no instance should it be fixed beyond \$2,000 for clerks, and \$2,500 for sheriffs, including their gains as tax collectors.

The jail fees are a great burden on the people; they are now too high; and yet in many instances extra compensation is allowed by the Board of Supervisors. They should be fixed at the cost of a plain and healthy support of the prisoners. Imprisonment in the county jail as a punishment should be made less frequent. Unfortunately, many who are guilty of petty misdemeanors, feel neither the burden nor the disgrace of imprisonment in the county jail. We leave it to the wisdom of the Legislature to devise some other mode of punishment, which, without inflicting corporal pain, or bringing forward any badge of slavery, may yet prove more efficacious in reforming offenders, and be less expensive to the taxpayers.

ASSESSING AND COLLECTING REVENUE. The cost of assessing and collecting the revenue of the State is out of all proportion to the necessary labor and responsibility required in the discharge of those duties. The gain to these officers is enormous. Under the code of 1857 the maximum which an Assessor could receive in any one year was \$500, and the commissions of the Collector were graduated according to the amount collected, so that it rarely happened that a Collector received as much as \$1,000 per annum, and he seldom, if ever, received as much as \$1,500 in one year. We respectfully ask that the compensation paid to these officers should be so regulated as in no case to exceed the sums above mentioned.

PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS. The law also should require the convicts, sentenced to the penitentiary, to be immediately removed to the State prison. They are now, in many instances, left in the county jails for many months, to the great cost of the several counties. The jail fees for a day should not exceed 30 cents.

The salaries of Inspectors of the Penitentiary ought to be saved to the State, by imposing the very light duties of these offices on other State officers, or on competent citizens without salaries. The Trustees of the Insane, Deaf and Dumb and blind Asylums, should be prohibited from using any of the funds appropriated to these Institutions, in the way of salaries or fees to themselves.

The appropriations to the State Universities are beyond the means of the State to pay, and beyond the necessities of these Institutions.

The salaries and mileage paid to the Trustees of these Institutions ought to be prohibited. The duties of these officers are extremely light and highly honorable; like services of all other institutions of learning in the State, and throughout the Union, are rendered by the best citizens without compensation.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS. Again, the expenditure of the State's money—poor as the people are—and laboring under the most crushing taxation—for the board and support of certain students, is wrong. The State is under no obligation to furnish these favored few with what is denied to the children of the State at large.

The State supposes she discharges her duty to the great mass of her children when she furnishes schools free of tuition for four months in the year. These schools are for the people at large; the colleges and universities are for the more fortunate few. Not more than one in a thousand, even in the most favored countries, ever go to college. It is wrong that nine hundred and ninety-nine should be burdened with a taxation so crushing that they are deprived, in many instances, of the means of even going to a common school—in order that one fortunate person shall have extraordinary benefits denied to the others.

We therefore ask that the scholarships in the two Universities be abolished. These remarks apply, also, to the Normal schools.

Whilst we cordially endorse the wisdom of that policy which extends to the children of the State the advantages of a free common school education, we respectfully submit that our present legislation in that respect is radically defective in theory, and in its practical workings is a great wrong rather than a benefit to her citizens.

The present rate of taxation for purposes of education, and the appropriations made for that purpose, amount to the enormous sum of \$675,000 annually—greatly more than is necessary for carrying on the State government. We suggest that the mistake in this matter has been this: The attempt has been made on an impoverished State, with all its industrial pursuits in a degraded and constantly changing condition, and all of its property values greatly depreciated, to suddenly inaugurate a complete system of common schools fully adequate to the wants of the whole people of the State, and to extend this even to collegiate education.

Whilst this would be well enough perhaps in a great, prosperous and wealthy commonwealth, yet the attempt in our State in its present condition has been productive of such an enormous taxation as to bring ruin to the doors of the parent in the attempt to educate the child, and to produce in the public mind a growing and annually increasing hostility to the policy of free education itself.

We therefore respectfully suggest a thorough change in the law in this respect—that the present tax for educational purposes be greatly reduced—that free education be restricted simply to elementary grammar schools, that the pay of County Superintendents be reduced as herein recommended—and that the effort be directed to the gradual and economical building up of a common school system which shall not by its enormous exactions excite the hostility of the citizen, but will rather attract to itself his support and affection.

The salaries of County Superintendents of Education might be saved by uniting that office, having such light duties, with that of Sheriff, with an extra compensation of \$50 per annum, except when the services of a competent citizen can be got for that sum.

The salaries of teachers in the common schools are far greater than is necessary to secure the services of the persons employed. For second-class schools \$25 per month would be ample, and for first-class \$50.

On this subject we suggest that a constitutional amendment is necessary in order to give to the present common schools the benefits of fines, forfeitures and licenses now required to be funded.

AN UNNECESSARY OFFICE. The Commissioner of Immigration is an unnecessary office. His duties are nothing; his services of no value. We suggest that his salary might be abolished, or be made merely nominal, and all appropriations subject to his control be repealed.

BIENNIAL SESSIONS. The sessions of the Legislature should be biennial. It is within the power of the Legislature to fix by law that it should meet only once in two years. This is the plain meaning of Section 6, Art. II, of the Constitution. Weak, however, that biennial sessions be not left to the discretion of the Legislature, but that the rule be adopted by constitutional amendment.

The Constitution should also be amended so as to prohibit all special legislation. A great portion of the time of the Legislature is now spent in making that kind of legislation, when the same end would be attainable by general laws.

One of the evils of the times is excessive legislation. Statutes are passed and then modified or repealed, in whole or in part, without due deliberation, and the result is that the statute laws of the State are becoming more and more intricate and confused, at every succeeding session of the Legislature. The laws should be plain and simple, so that the citizen may, without danger or mistake, conform his action to them.

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS. But probably the most flagrant evil of which the taxpayers complain, and the

greatest outrages perpetrated on their rights, arise from the action of the Boards of Supervisors. This court is really the most important of any in the State, and should be composed of the very best men in the several counties. As a general rule, we are sorry to say, the members of this Board are wholly unfit to discharge their duties, and are without respectability or oratorical ability. This, however, is not the fault of the Legislature of the State; except in so far as it encourages such men to seek for that position. The county levies, in a large majority of the counties, are extravagant and oppressive beyond all endurance. The contracts for public work are made without economy or care, and with a reckless indifference to the interests of the public. These Boards, in some instances, employ their own members to do the work not authorized by law, merely for the purpose of making them extravagant allowances. In many instances these members are wholly ignorant, and are completely under the control of the clerks and Sheriffs of these counties, to whom they make extravagant allowances. This is a great evil, and we suggest that remedy which alone seems adequate. Legislation should be immediately enacted, fixing the maximum rate of taxation at 50 per cent. on the State beyond which they shall not go in any instance.

These Boards should also be prohibited from making any contracts, or allowances, or appropriations, except when there is money in the treasury to pay them. And every such order or warrant so made and ordered, when there is not money in the treasury sufficient to pay it, should be declared utterly null and void, and all persons concurring in making or issuing them be declared guilty of a misdemeanor in office and punishable for such, as provided by law.

There is another fruitful source of peculation and wrong in the power assumed by the Board to allow for stationery, fuel, etc., to the county officers. Under this head large and unnecessary sums are allowed for ink, paper, envelopes, sealing-wax, gold pens, pencils and printed blanks. The actual cost of these things is very little, and the actual wants of the officers very small as compared with the amounts furnished. It is the habits of these officers to furnish their friends and favorites with stationery at the public's expense. The remedy for this is to return to the old rule by which each officer was required to furnish his own stationery—wood, lights, etc.—at his expense, except alone where bound volumes of record books were required.

There remains another remedy to which we earnestly, but respectfully, call the attention of the Legislature. It is confidently believed that either of the following would tend greatly to the character and responsibility of the Boards of Supervisors. To repeal all laws allowing the members thereof any compensation for their services. The services required of a competent and faithful Board would not exceed ten days annually, and the work would be done within that time, if there were no inducements in the shape of a per diem to prolong its sessions. The service would not be more burdensome than the liability to work on the public roads and streets, and the members of the Board might be exempted from the latter duty as well as from jury service.

It is believed that if no compensation were allowed, no citizen would seek the office, but that the people could find, without difficulty, a sufficient number of the very best men to discharge the highly honorable and responsible duties of members of the Board of Supervisors. But if this be deemed wrong, then we suggest that the compensation of the members of the Board be reduced to twenty-five dollars per annum, and that each member be required to give bond and security in the penalty of two thousand dollars, at least, by which he shall be bound to a faithful performance of the duties of his office, and in which he shall be liable for all illegal allowances for which he may have voted. And it shall be provided that in every instance where an allowance or appropriation of money is made, the names of the members voting for and against, should be recorded, and that such names voting for such appropriation, be embraced in every warrant issued on such appropriation. And in case the alternative of a salary is adopted, then it should be provided that no warrant for such salary should be issued in any case, except where there is money in the treasury sufficient to pay it after first paying all prior warrants ordered by the Board.

Unsolicited Advice. Aberdeen Examiner.] Since the election, the Jackson Times, the leading Radical journal in the State, has devoted the larger portion of its space to advising the incoming Democratic Legislature as to duties. Much of the advice is good, in view of the fact that many of the suggestions embrace "pet" theories of the Mississippi Democracy; but it seems to us that this advice would have been much more timely had it been addressed to the Legislature while the Times folks "ran the machine."

A Nevada bridegroom was only dissuaded from the production of a double-headed clergyman by the assurance that the kiss he had attempted to imprint upon the bride's brow was wholly unparoxysmal.

In the trial of the Messrs. Odum for the killing of A. W. McDonald, the Justices discharged William who was wounded, upon the ground that he did no shooting, and required of Winfield a bond of \$500 for his appearance at the Circuit Court in April, which bond he gave without delay.—Durant Advertiser

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THE LEGISLATURE.

Senate.

Democrats in Roman; Republicans in Italian. 1st District—(Hancock, Harrison, Jackson, Marion, Greene, Perry and Pearl)—J. P. Carter.

2d District—(Wilkinson and Amite)—W. H. White, (col.). 3d District—(Lawrence, Lincoln and Pike)—R. H. Thompson.

4th District—(Adams)—H. C. Griffin. 5th District—(Jefferson and Franklin)—C. W. Whitney. 6th District—(Copiah and Claiborne)—J. T. Smith.

7th District—(Warren)—T. C. Catchings, Chas. E. Furlough. 8th District—(Wayne, Jones, Covington, Simpson and Smith)—T. L. Mendenhall.

9th District—(Jasper, Scott and Newton)—T. B. Graham. 10th District—(Lauderdale and Clarke)—John W. Fowell.

11th District—(Hinds and Rankin)—J. L. McCaskill, A. R. Johnson. 12th District—(Madison)—F. B. Pratt.

13th District—(Yazoo)—J. E. Everett. 14th District—(Holmes)—H. S. Hooker. 15th District—(Attala and Leake)—S. T. Oldham.

16th District—(Winston, Choctaw and Sumner)—M. A. Meets. 17th District—(Neshoba, Neshoba and Kemper)—H. W. Fote, I. Stewart, col.

18th District—(Lowndes, Oktibeha and Colfax)—W. H. Sims, F. B. Barry. 19th District—(Calhoun and Yalobusha)—J. H. Thornton.

20th District—(Lafayette and Pontotoc)—J. A. McNeil. 21st District—(Lee and Itawamba)—R. H. Allen.

22d District—(Alcorn, Prentiss and Tishomingo)—J. M. Stone. 23d District—(Tippah, Union and Benton)—C. O. Reynolds, A. Shirley, (col.).

24th District—(Monroe and Chickasaw)—R. O. Reynolds, A. Shirley, (col.). 25th District—(Marshall)—Geo. A. Bright, col.

26th District—(Panola)—R. S. Taylor. 27th District—(DeSoto, Tate and Tunica)—James B. Morgan, C. G. Callicott. 28th District—(Bolivar and Coahoma)—M. B. Sullivan.

29th District—(Washington and Issaquena)—W. H. Gray, col. 30th District—(Tallahatchie, Grenada and Sunflower)—H. FitzGerald.

31st District—(Tarrant and Leflore)—W. H. Tattle. House of Representatives. Adams—M. A. C. Hussey, H. P. Jacobs (col.).

Alcorn—L. P. Reynolds. Amite—B. F. Johns. Attala—D. T. Guyton, J. K. Shrock.

Benton—Wm. Crum. Bolivar—Green Clay, J. I. J. Shelby. Calhoun—T. B. Stout. Carroll—C. M. Vaiden, H. H. Southworth.

Chickasaw—W. F. Tucker, Jno. A. Wilkinson. Choctaw—J. E. Bridges. Claiborne—W. D. Bean, E. S. Drake.

Clarke—Geo. M. Massingill. Coahoma—James Monroe, (col.). Copiah—E. A. Rowan, Geo. W. Miller.

Covington and Jones—J. T. Fairly. Colfax—F. S. White. DeSoto—Sam'l Powell, J. D. Nichols, W. H. McCargo, Jr.

Franklin—C. Byrd. Green and Wayne—Jno. F. McCormick. Grenada—Wm. R. Barksdale.

Hancock and Pearl—H. Saunders. Harrison and Jackson—J. M. McClain. Hinds—Oliver Clifton, Geo. W. Harper, Marye Dabney, M. R. Jones.

GENERAL DIRECTOR

STATE GOVERNMENT.

Adelbert Ames, Private Secretary. K. Davis, Lieutenant Governor. James Hill, Secretary of State.

I. N. Osborn, Chief Clerk. W. H. Gibbs, Auditor Public Accounts. Jones S. Hamilton, Deputy Auditor.

Geo. E. Harris, Attorney General. John Williams, State Librarian and Director of the Capitol.

MEMBERS OF CONGRESS. James L. Alcorn, Term expires March 4. A. K. Bruce, Term expires March 4.

REPRESENTATIVES. L. Q. C. Lamar, First District. G. Wiley Wells, Second District.

H. D. Money, Third District. O. R. Singleton, Fourth District. C. E. Hooker, Fifth District. Jno. R. Lynch, Sixth District.

THE COURTS. SUPREME COURT OF MISSISSIPPI. Ephraim G. Peyton, Chief Justice.

Horatio F. Simrall, Associate Justice. Jonathan Taylor, Associate Justice. Geo. E. Harris and Graham H. Simrall, Reporters.

UNITED STATES CIRCUIT COURT. The regular terms are held in Jackson on first Mondays in May and November. Hill, Judge; Geo. T. Swann, Clerk.

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT. Session commences for the Northern District, at Oxford, on the first Monday in April and December. Robert A. Hill, Judge; Visser, Clerk.

Session commences for the Southern District, at Jackson, on the fourth Monday in June and January. Geo. T. Swann, Clerk.

CIRCUIT COURT—XVTH DISTRICT. George F. Brown, Judge, Vicksburg. Boothe, District Attorney, Vicksburg.

HINDS COUNTY—(1st District)—J. A. Jones, Beginning on the second Monday in January and continuing 30 days. (2d District)—Raymond, Beginning on the fourth Monday in February and continuing 30 days. Sam'l B. Thomas, Sheriff; B. P. Wards, Clerk.

CHANCERY COURT—XVTH DISTRICT. HARVEY R. WARE, Chancellor, Bogalusa. HINDS COUNTY—(1st District)—J. A. Jones, Commencing on the third Monday in April, July and October, and continuing 30 days. (2d District)—Raymond, Commencing on the third Monday in February, May, August and November, and continuing 30 days. W. T. Ratliff, Clerk.

Officers Hinds County. Sam'l B. Thomas, Sheriff, Bogalusa. J. J. Wells, Deputy, Bogalusa.

A. J. Kerr, Deputy, Bogalusa. W. T. Ratliff, Chancery Clerk, Bogalusa. Wm. D. Downing, Deputy, Bogalusa.

W. H. Tribble, Coroner and Registrar, Bogalusa. B. F. Edwards, Circuit Clerk, Bogalusa. Sam'l Livingston, Deputy, Bogalusa.

S. D. Currie, Treasurer, Bogalusa. J. B. Greaves, Assessor, Bogalusa. Henry C. Daniel, Surveyor, Bogalusa.

W. H. Tribble, Coroner and Registrar, Bogalusa. The Sheriff, Circuit and Chancery have offices in Jackson for the 1st District of Hinds.

SUPERVISORS. 1st District—J. A. Horne. 2d District—Geo. M. Robertson. 3d District—J. W. Neal. 4th District—John Shelton.

Regular meetings are held on the second preceding Circuit Court, and may continue session four days.

JUSTICES OF THE PEACE FIFTH DISTRICT. J. H. Boyd, Lemuel Hudson. CONSTABLES—FIFTH DISTRICT. H. F. Clingan, Benj. Jourdon.

SOCIETY DIRECTORS. MASONIC. GRAND BODIES. GRAND LODGE—Rev. A. H. Barkley, Master, Crawfordville; J. L. Power, Secretary, Jackson. Next Communication, February 24, 1876.