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Daily Argus.

The Illinois Penitentiary.

The penitentiary bill, which has passed the Illinois legislature, provides for a continuance of the present system of management, the appropriation of $330,000 for the payment of outstanding indebtedness, and $350,000 to meet future expenses. The bill passed by a strict party vote, the radical majority sustaining the swindle and the democratic minority repudiating it. Why the majority—which we presume contains a fair proportion of honest and sensible men—should support such a measure, is a mystery quite above our comprehension. There is no logical connection between the penitentiary and politics; the success of this or that candidate cannot depend upon the conduct of affairs at Joliet, nor does the penitentiary of the Union require that the convicts should be governed and worked according to any particular penal theory. The penitentiary is simply a state institution, the main object of which is, of course, the punishment of crime. The object being secured, the next and only remaining question is, shall the establishment be so directed as to pay its own way, or so misdirected as to be a continual burden upon the people? Regarding the code of discipline there is no special dispute; both parties are agreed on those general principles which experience has shown to be the best calculated for the preservation of order and health among those who are condemned to suffer the penalty of violated law; but when what may be termed the financial branch of the subject is reached, then there is a wide divergence of opinion—or, at least, of action. Up to within a comparatively recent period, the legislature leased the penitentiary to responsible individuals or companies, who gave bonds for the faithful discharge of certain duties, and assumed the whole responsibility of the concern, subject always to the inspection and criticism of a board of commissioners. It is not contended that the leasing plan was absolutely perfect, but it is acknowledged by all who know anything about the matter, that the convicts were well treated, carefully guarded, and properly disciplined, and that the State was not required to furnish any money for their maintenance. We do not blame the radical party for wishing to try another system which, as it was said, would secure all the ends accomplished by the old one, and at the same time make the institution a source of profit to the State; but we do blame that party for adhering to the experiment after results have proved it to be a ruinous failure. None of the friends of the bill alluded to, dare assert that the penitentiary serves the purpose for which it was designed any better now than it did before; that the inmates are better treated, better guarded or better disciplined—so no advantage has been gained in that quarter. On the other hand it is conceded that from the beginning of the new order of things until the present time, the State not only has not made a dollar out of the institution, but has paid out nearly or quite a million. This very bill which is likely to become a law, throws at one dash $680,000 into the penitentiary pool, and two years hence there is every reason to believe the same thing will have to be done again. Figures will not lie, and all their testimony in this business points one way.—*Mo. Rep.*

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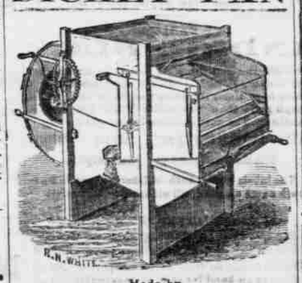

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