

SENATE No. 294.

Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT, BOSTON, June 9, 1891.

To the Honorable Senate :

I herewith return with my objections a bill entitled "An Act to provide for the building of an Asylum for the Chronic Insane," which originated in your body. The Act provides for the appointment of a board of three salaried commissioners, whose duty is to erect in the towns of Medfield and Dover an asylum for the chronic insane, sufficient for the accommodation of one thousand patients, at an expense not exceeding \$500,000. The land for the asylum has already been purchased, and plans prepared in detail and approved, and estimates made. The need of such an asylum, in the present overcrowded state of our other asylums, is imperative, and in my opinion the appropriation is proper and necessary. I do not believe, however, that for the work of construction, which alone remains to be done, the machinery created by this act is the best, most economical or most expeditious.

The experience of the Commonwealth during the past twenty years does not show that the appointment of salaried commissioners for the construction of public buildings has resulted in either economy or expedition, but does show that better results have been obtained when

such construction has been placed in boards of trustees, who are to manage the institution when completed.

I submit herewith a few instances in this experience :

The construction of the buildings for the Danvers Lunatic Hospital was originally placed in charge of a salaried commission. Starting with an appropriation of \$650,000, the final cost was nearly \$1,600,000, or about \$2,500 for each patient. The cost of superintending the construction in salaries of the commissioners, travel, clerical help, inspection, engineering and other expenses incidental to such superintendence was \$53,583.53. The work dragged along over a period of five years, when finally the commissioners were legislated out of office, and the completion of the buildings placed in the hands of a board of trustees, who were also to manage the institution when finished.

The construction of the State Prison at Concord, in the hands of a paid commission, took over five years, and, on an expenditure of about \$1,000,000, cost for salaries of the commissioners and their expenses nearly \$22,000.

The Armory Commissioners up to Jan. 1, 1891, received in salaries and expenses, \$20,826.14 on a total cost of construction of \$757,701.97; and were receiving \$6,500 in salaries this year for superintending the construction of a \$40,000 armory, when the suggestion was made and adopted that the salaries of two of the three commissioners be abolished.

The commissioners for superintending the construction of the State House extension have been paid in salaries alone up to Jan. 1, 1891, \$13,374.99 on a total cost of construction of \$395,027.03.

On the other hand, the construction of the Worcester Lunatic Hospital was under the direction of its trustees. With a capacity to hold about 100 more inmates than the Danvers Hospital, it cost nearly \$500,000 less, or about \$850 less for each patient.

Later, the trustees of the Westborough Lunatic Hospital were authorized to superintend the construction of the present hospital there. The work was admirably done, at an expense of about \$250,000 for 400 patients,

or \$625 for each patient, as compared with \$2,500 at Danvers.

At many other of our State institutions important and expensive additions and improvements have been made under the supervision of their respective boards of trustees, without the intervention of special salaried commissions.

In view of this experience, and of the fact that the only work to be done under this act is to construct buildings upon a site already selected, in accordance with plans already approved, and estimates already made, it seems to me neither necessary nor wise to create a special paid commission to superintend such construction.

I recommend that, in place of such commission, provision be made for the appointment of the trustees who are to manage this hospital when finished, and that authority be given them to cause to be erected the buildings contemplated. This was the exact course adopted in the building of the hospital for dipsomaniacs and inebriates, as provided in chapter 414 of the Acts of 1889. Provision should also be made for the appointment of a man with practical experience as a builder, to whom a proper salary should be paid for superintending the work of construction, and who should be under the direction of the board of trustees.

The advantages of the change herewith suggested, in my opinion, will be:—

1. A saving of expense to the Commonwealth.
2. Greater expedition in building the hospital.
3. Better construction and a better hospital, because built under the direction of the board who are to manage it when finished.
4. A better institution when in operation, because under the control of a board thoroughly familiar with it from their work and experience in its construction.

Fully agreeing with you as to the necessity of building this hospital, which is imperative, and as to the amount to be appropriated, I regret to differ from you as to the manner of its construction, and to return, at so late a day of your sitting, this bill for your further consideration.

If, however, the suggestions herein contained meet your approval, I believe that a proper bill containing them can quickly be drafted and passed, so that there need be no delay in beginning this important work, nor, I trust, any inconvenience to you in prolonging your session.

WM. E. RUSSELL.