

SENATE...No. 94.

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**Commonwealth of Massachusetts.**

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IN SENATE, March 25th, 1847.

*Ordered,* That the Standing Committee on Prisons be instructed to inquire into the expediency of legislation to prohibit the employment of convicts under sentence, in engraving, and any of the processes used in making bank bills.

Sent down for concurrence.

CHAS. CALHOUN, *Clerk.*

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, March 26th, 1847.

Concurred.

CHAS. W. STOREY, *Clerk.*

## Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

IN SENATE, April 12th, 1847.

The Committee on Prisons, to whom was referred the Order of the Senate of March 25th, to inquire into the expediency of prohibiting the employment of convicts under sentence, in engraving, and any of the processes used in making bank bills, have considered the subject, and beg leave to submit the following

### REPORT:

The Committee, in order to place themselves in possession of all the facts which had a bearing on the case, made a visit to the State's Prison, in Charlestown, and each member of the Committee was present, and they were shown into all the work-shops connected with that institution, and were generally gratified with every department, and the various occupations therein pursued, *except* the branch of *fine steel* and *copper-plate engraving*, which the Committee were informed was done, agreeably to contract, for W. W. Wilson, of Boston, whose contract would expire in about three years. The specimens of the work exhibited to the Committee were well executed, and the engraving was done by a convict named Medows, whose skill in that capacity is far from being inferior, and his daily practice tends to perfect the art, and make him equal, if not so already, to any engraver in the country; besides, he has the aid of what is called a transferring press, which affords great facilities of giving fac-simile impressions of any specimens of engraving; and thus it seems to the Committee that the *implements*, and *appendages*, and *skill*, are located in the prison,

for executing bank-note engraving, as well as printing, to a considerable extent; but, under the careful supervision of the officers of the prison, the Committee do not feel immediate alarm: but they are unanimously of opinion that this branch of business should be discontinued within the jurisdiction of the prison, as soon as is consistent with existing contracts: for, if suffered to continue and increase, it may afford opportunities for convicts, when discharged from prison, to flood the country with counterfeit bank notes, done in a style of imitation which would require the nicest scrutiny to detect.

The Committee beg explicitly not to be understood as casting any reflections upon the officers of the prison, or the person with whom the contract is now pending, which the Committee hope and trust will end without harm: but they do earnestly recommend that no subsequent contract for engraving or copper-plate printing be made, for the execution of those branches within the prison; and the Committee deem it necessary, in the present position of the case, to submit the accompanying Resolve.

JAMES MAGUIRE, *Chairman.*

**Commonwealth of Massachusetts.**

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In the Year One Thousand Eight Hundred and Forty-  
Seven.

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**AN ACT**

Relating to the Employment of Convicts.

*BE it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives, in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows :*

- 1 After the expiration of any contract now existing,
- 2 no convict, sentenced to the punishment of hard la-
- 3 bor in any prison in this Commonwealth, shall be
- 4 employed in the business of engraving, or in any
- 5 other employment incidental to the making of bank
- 6 notes.