

# HOUSE....No. 274.

---

## Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

---

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, April 8, 1870.

The Committee on Agriculture, to which was referred so much of the governor's address as relates to agricultural matters, respectfully

### R E P O R T :

That in their opinion the time has fully come when the existing systems and methods of encouraging the development of the agricultural and material resources of the State, though agricultural societies, should receive, at the hands of the legislature, a careful and thorough revision. That an effort should be made to correct the manifest evils of the system, as it is and has been administered for a few years past, in too many parts of our State. Your Committee are well convinced that the State should discontinue its practice of distributing bounties, or require of the societies receiving them, greater efficiency of action and a more faithful compliance with the spirit of the law.

Judging the societies by the returns they have made to the secretary of the State Board of Agriculture, a very large proportion of them seem to have mistaken the *real* object of the Commonwealth in the bestowal of its bounties, and either fail to comprehend the true mission of a society and its obvious duty to the public, or wilfully disregard the interests of the State and the community in which they are located.

The primary object of the State by its liberality is to gain and diffuse valuable information among the people, to increase intelligence upon agricultural subjects, to awaken enterprise and mental activity and create such a spirit of improvement as will develop and bring out the taxable property and industrial interests of the Commonwealth.

The mere distribution by a society, of the bounty contributed by the State treasury, does not, unaided by the addition of its *own money* and *brains*, accomplish the object sought; much, very much more is, or should be, claimed and realized, or the people of Massachusetts will be very likely to conclude, with your Committee, that *such* appropriations fail to meet the reasonable expectations of its founders.

Their "returns," many of them, contain nothing but the bare award of premiums; in some cases no reports of committees accompany those awards; *no* reasons given on which they are based; why one article or animal received the premium instead of another; in fact, no information of a general interest and application is given or attempted to be given to the public.

Moreover, in many cases, as the awards show, a large proportion of the money is paid in small awards for fancy, useless articles, which have less than nothing to do in developing the agricultural growth and progress of our State.

The annual fair or exhibition is one method, and undoubtedly a good one, of diffusing information and knowledge, but obviously subordinate in importance and influence to the more lasting benefit resulting from a well-presented digest of their doings, which should never fail to be the chief feature of the printed "Transactions" of every society.

If the "Transactions" required by law add nothing valuable to the general fund of knowledge in the community, it will not be easy to discover where the compensation "comes in," or where they can reasonably pretend to have observed a proper compliance with the spirit of the law.

But apart from the gross and obvious failure of duty in furnishing information, many of our societies adopt a low standard of articles and animals which they encourage, thereby hindering rather than helping the progressive spirit and advancement of the farmer and his calling, following instead of leading to the scale of improvement and progress. Their exhibitions are too

frequently made up of unprofitable side-shows of fat women and lean men, overgrown children of underwitted parents, which, wrong as it plainly is, seriously detracts from the moral influence of the occasion, while it not seldom adds to the revenues of the society, whose primary object should be, not *merely* to make *money* but *mainly* to promote a higher standard of public taste and public morals in the community.

In conclusion, your Committee believing that much good may result from a thorough investigation of the societies of the State, ask leave to report the following Resolve.

J. W. JENKINS,  
*For the Committee.*

## Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

---

In the Year One Thousand Eight Hundred and Seventy.

---

### R E S O L V E

In relation to the Agricultural Societies of the Commonwealth.

*Resolved,* That the state board of agriculture be required to investigate the whole system and management of the several agricultural societies, recipients of state bounty,—especially as to the application of moneys received from the state treasury; the departures, if any, from the plain and obvious object of the Commonwealth in the bestowal of her bounties, viz., the advancement of agriculture and the mechanic arts, and report the results of their investigation to the next legislature, that the charters of the delinquent societies may be repealed.