

REPORT  
OF THE  
JOINT COMMITTEE

OF THE  
TWENTY-SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

OF THE  
STATE OF IOWA,  
APPOINTED TO VISIT THE  
INDUSTRIAL HOME FOR THE BLIND,

LOCATED AT  
KNOXVILLE.

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## REPORT.

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*To the Twenty-sixth General Assembly of the State of Iowa:*

Your joint committee, appointed to visit the Industrial Home for the Blind, beg leave to report that they have attended to the duty assigned them and to the best of their ability in the time at their command, have examined the books of the office together with the buildings, have conferred fully with the officers and the inmates and have arrived at the following conclusions:

The object of establishing the institution, so far as we are able to determine, was to provide a place where the unfortunate people who have become partially or totally blind may have a home and may be enabled to support themselves.

If it is to be a business enterprise and the inmates only those who can labor and pay their board, as contemplated by the law, it ought to be nearly self-supporting; but if it is to become an asylum, its inmates to be supported by the charity of the state, its scope of membership ought to be enlarged to embrace all the unfortunate blind who need a home. We find the number of blind inmates who board in the home is forty; seven others are employed in the shops, who live outside the home. They are paid for their labor either by the week, by the day, or are employed on piece work. The women are charged \$2 per week each for their board, and the men \$2.25 per week each, and at the price allowed for work the larger portion of inmates have received a surplus after paying for their board. Some, from sickness and inefficiency, have become a charge upon the institution; but we think an expense to the state of about \$10,000 a year is too great for the support of an average of forty inmates and the necessary attendants, considering that the inmates are able to pay their board.



The men are employed in making brooms and brushes, and the females in making nets and hammocks. The trade, in common with other kinds of business, has been dull for the last biennial period, so that the laborers could not put in full time, and not being able to do as efficient work as laborers who have their sight, it could not be expected that the business would be conducted at a profit to the state or with very satisfactory wages to the workmen.

We find no evidence to show that the appropriations made by the Twenty-fifth General Assembly, amounting to \$22,100, have not been expended as directed, most of the same having been used for salaries of employes, subsistence, contingent expenses, and for the purchase of material for manufacturing, and no considerable amount was expended for repairs. We presume the appropriations have been expended as economically as is usual in state institutions. We find no evidence of indebtedness contracted in excess of the appropriations.

As at present conducted we believe that it will require for the next biennial period not less than \$14,000 for salaries and subsistence, and \$3,000 for contingent fund, and we believe that \$3,000 in addition to the amount on hand ought to be sufficient to conduct the manufacturing enterprise. The buildings are new, and we found them well kept, clean and in good order. The trustees ask that some additions be made to the buildings which may be desirable, but your committee think they are not necessary for present needs, and that there will not be a necessity for any considerable repairs during the next biennial period.

The officers and attendants and their salaries are as follows:

	Per month.
M. C. Gebhardt, superintendent.....	\$ 50
Mrs. M. R. Gebhardt, matron.....	25
A. C. Faraby, foreman of shops.....	30
Flora Edwards, cook.....	20
Katie Danihy, assistant cook.....	20
Ella Danihy, laundress.....	14
Julia Danihy, waitress.....	8
John Yetter, engineer.....	30
Farm hand.....	18
Physician, per year.....	125

There has also been paid to inmates for labor in shops nearly \$2,500 per year over and above the amount charged them for board, and about \$1,800 per year paid to salesmen to sell the manufactured products. We think if all the state institutions, requiring articles such as are made at this place, would

purchase their supplies here, that with proper arrangements made with jobbers a large part of the expense for traveling salesmen might be avoided.

We found the superintendent and his estimable family very kind and obliging, lenient in their treatment and discipline of the inmates, who generally expressed themselves as satisfied with their home and surroundings.

While in no sense an educational institution, we recommend that the trustees provide regular means of conveying information and instruction to the inmates by securing at least semi-weekly readings or talks by competent persons, that these unfortunate blind may become fairly conversant with the news and progress of the day. We are sure that Iowa, so liberal in its educational endowments and facilities for instruction for those who are able to take care of themselves, will not fail to liberally provide for its unfortunates who need so much more aid and care to make life endurable. None are more deserving of our sympathy and protection than these people, who are doomed to live in endless night.

We further recommend that whenever any of the blind inmates are unable to provide suitable clothing by their own efforts, and are not supplied by their friends, they should be properly provided for by the officers of the institution from the contingent fund of the same.

L. M. KILBURN,  
*Committee on part of Senate.*

G. H. VAN HOUTEN,

J. L. WILSON,

*Committee on part of House.*