

THE GOVERNOR'S MESSAGE.

That erroneous impressions prevail as to its power and the form the application and discussion should take in behalf of a prisoner. The common mistake is to conceive that the board has the functions of a court of review, where the actions of the courts of the Commonwealth may be revised and corrected. This was manifestly never the intention of those who framed the Constitution, and the composition, and the mode of appointment, of the board, can only be learned in the law, forbids any such construction. It is a misapprehension also to suppose that it is incumbent upon the board to listen to exhaustive and elaborate arguments for and against an application, when all the testimony is marshalled on the trial is again reviewed. If this practice should obtain, as the applications increase the greater part of the time of the general assembly would be taken up by the consumption of hearing applications for pardon, to the serious detriment of the public service in their other official relations. To facilitate investigation and enable exact justice to be done, the board, and especially those connected with the administration of the law, should esteem it a duty to convey to the board all the information within their knowledge that would enlighten and help them to a rightful opinion. It is not the duty of the board to require every officer of the law, particularly the Judge and District Attorney, to furnish their opinion as to the propriety of the pardon? MUNICIPAL INDEBTEDNESS AND TAXATION. The creation and increase of indebtedness by the municipalities of this Commonwealth in the past few years has justly excited the apprehension of taxpayers and greatly augmented their burthens. So enormous has this debt become that a provision was inserted in the new Constitution to check it, and that the last session I approved an act for that purpose. While the letter of the Constitution is open to technical criticism, its spirit and intention is in my judgment clear that no city whose indebtedness at the adoption of the Constitution exceeded its net per cent shall be permitted to increase the same, in the aggregate, to exceed three per cent of the assessed value of the property therein. If additional legislation is necessary, compliance with the spirit of the Constitution and protection to over-burthened taxpayers demand that we should permit no invasion of its wise and beneficial provisions. POLL TAX. The payment of a State and county tax in kind of the qualifications of voters under our Constitution. Formerly the State imposed a tax upon trades, occupations, and professions, which was repealed, and the right to vote similar tax for county and municipal purposes was created. The imposition of such a tax upon trades, occupations, and professions is nominal, in others it is levied on the full cash value of the occupation, and is a serious burden upon mechanics and workmen, who pay the tax in kind. It is not in harmony with our institutions that citizens should be deprived of exercising their franchise by excessive taxation. The tax imposed herebefore has been uniform, and I therefore suggest the repeal of all laws authorizing the levying of taxes upon trades, occupations, and professions, and that a county poll tax be substituted therefor at a rate reasonable as to be within the ability of all to pay. NATIONAL GUARD. Assurances were given in my last annual message that the National Guard, during the ensuing year, would display unusual interest in the service and be more observant of discipline because of the recognition accorded them by the Legislature in making some provision for their support, and the decided improvement in the condition of the troops at the close of the year. The report of the Adjutant General contains many interesting details of the efforts made by the Guard to increase their efficiency and merit the confidence of our citizens. The Government of the service is rigorously exacted of every command, and the inspections were conducted with great care and with a view to have every company attain the high standard fixed by the laws. The attention of divisions has been reduced from 21 to 10, the troops of each division occupy contiguous territory, and can be easily and expeditiously mustered. The officers in command are soldiers of experience in field and camp, and the rank and file are well instructed in the duties of the service, and familiar with and regardful of its discipline. The conduct of the several companies on occasions of public parade have been in general exceptionally good, and when a sterner duty was required of them the response was prompt, and warranted the belief that they could be relied upon in any emergency. Officers are held to a strict accountability for arms and munitions of war in the custody of their commands, and it cannot be too strongly impressed upon the minds of the troops of the National Guard, that in no exigency can the arms of the State be used except in the hands of their uniformed and regularly enrolled soldiers under the command of their proper officers acting by the direction of competent authority. LAWLESSNESS. The people of free governments are always unwilling to contribute largely to the maintenance of armies and are ever jealous of military power. My experience has likewise demonstrated how impolitic and unsafe it is for a State to have no disciplined efficient force strong enough to compel obedience to authority. The law and its officers are contented and opposed with violence by large bodies of men. Pennsylvania has at times been constrained to enforce compliance with the law, and the wisdom of providing for contingencies can no longer be doubted. Men smarting under a sense of wrong, or corporations in spirit of what they conceive to be their right, sometimes seek their remedy through violence and in disregard of the law and its process. No government can tolerate this kind of address and exist. The supremacy of the law must be unques-tioned, and justice obtained through the proper and established channels, in the manner prescribed by the people themselves. Bodies of men or corporations have to more constitutional rights than individuals, and

Miscellaneous.

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