

previous system, leaves no doubt upon the minds of the undersigned of the superiority of the plan at present established and pursued. And although in some few instances the prices for which the work was done, when it was put up to the lowest bidder, were something less than the present prices, yet in a majority of the cases it was not less, and in some instances where it was done at the lowest prices, there is sufficient proof before the undersigned to satisfy them that the contractors materially sacrificed their interests to their strife for competition, a result which ought not to be sought for or desired by a high minded and liberal Legislature. It is a matter of but little difficulty to ascertain what is a just and fair compensation for the public printing required by the State, without resorting to proposals and competing bids. Whatever that price may be, founded upon a due regard to the interests of all the contracting parties, the undersigned believe ought to be given by the State. This is believed to be the course pursued by the Congress of the United States, by most of the States of the Union, and if we have been rightly informed, by the Corporation of Baltimore, who have also abandoned the plan of putting up their printing to the lowest bidder.

Having arrived at this conclusion the attention of the committee was next directed to ascertain whether the tariff of prices, which have been paid for the public printing for the last five or six years, is just and reasonable.

The chairman of the committee with this view corresponded with some of the printers of the city of Baltimore, making inquiries as to the rates at which they would agree to do the work of the same kind.

A comparison of the offers which have been received in reply with the prices for which the work has been executed, will enable the House to form their own judgment upon this subject.

The price paid for printing 1600 copies of the Laws is \$2 50 per page, folding and stitching included.

The price for which the Baltimore printers propose to execute similar work, is \$2 00 per page, the folding and stitching to be an extra charge. Assuming the volume of Laws to average 600 pages, which the undersigned have found to be the average for the last five or six years, the amount of the utmost difference in this item between the prices given and offers made, would be about \$1000 for printing the whole volume of the Laws.