

Iowa Senatorial Deadlocks

BY EMORY H. ENGLISH

With the operation of the Iowa primary law, the present generation of politicians has lost some entertainment and a marked degree of excitement afforded in the old-time conventions held in the state. The record has it that up in the Forty-ninth, the Big Four district comprised of Lyon, Osceola, O'Brien and Sioux counties in northwestern Iowa, in 1899, it took 3,273 ballots by delegates in a two-day convention to nominate a Republican candidate for state senator.

Selection was finally made of George W. Lister, an attorney, of Sibley, Osceola county, who received the nomination on the last ballot through his securing in addition to the five delegates from his home county, the votes of the thirteen delegates from Sioux county, which prior to that ballot had been cast for the incumbent Senator Henry Hospers of Orange City, seeking renomination.

The convention was held at Sheldon, its sessions beginning June 27, 1899. The officers were H. P. Scott, of O'Brien county, chairman, and H. B. Price, secretary, of Lyon county. Three candidates received votes, being Ed C. Roach of Rock Rapids, Lyon county, former member of the state House of Representatives in the Twenty-first and the Twenty-second General Assemblies, Mr. Lister, who had not been a legislator, and Senator Hospers.

Upon the first ballot the following vote was had: Lyon county—Roach 7, O'Brien county—Roach 10, Osceola county—Lister 5, and Sioux County—Hospers 13.

During all subsequent ballots had that day until late afternoon, when breaking all previous political records in the state, at the end of the 2,360th ballot, the voting was the same, and adjournment was taken until 7:30 that evening. Then voting was resumed

and proceeded with many roll calls, when adjournment was taken until the next day. All sorts of suggestions and schemes were advanced for a settlement of the deadlock, but none were successful up to that time. The Roach managers, needing just one additional vote all this time, were anxious but hopeful. However, it still was not forthcoming.

Senator Hospers naturally desired a renomination despite decided sentiment in other counties for a change. His delegates had remained anxious all day and during adjournments in the balloting labored with the five Osceola delegates to support Hospers, which consistently had been given to Lister right along through the balloting.

Voting was resumed the following morning, but each roll call remained the same; no outside candidates were voted for at any time. Eventually the Hospers delegates decided their senator could not be renominated, and concluded to end the deadlock by choosing between the other two candidates which should receive the nomination. Their choice was Lister, who had trailed with five votes during all of the balloting. So, on the 3,273d ballot the thirteen Sioux county votes were cast for Lister, giving him a total of eighteen and the nomination, and on motion of delegate Sam D. Riniker, of Lyon county the vote was made unanimous with no dissent.

The defeated candidates made congratulatory addresses and pledged support of the nominee. Complimentary resolutions praising Senator Hosper's service were adopted unanimously, and a notable Iowa political convention came to a close shortly after four p.m. of its second day.

This was the second deadlocked convention in the Big Four senatorial district, and of special interest to A. H. Davison of Des Moines, long the secretary of the Executive council of Iowa, formerly a resident of Rock Rapids, Lyon county, which he represented in the Iowa house in the Twenty-fifth General Assembly.

He was quoted in the *Iowa State Register* with the following informative comment:

This convention in the Big Four district is just like the one four years ago. Perhaps I'm able to feel a little more philosophical about it this time, because then I was a candidate for the senatorial nomination. It was the same fight as now, except then O'Brien had a candidate. Frank P. Piper was supported by its ten votes, Lister had the five of Osceola, Hospers the thirteen of Sioux, and the seven of Lyon were for myself. George W. Pitts, who is now chairman of the Sioux delegation, was at the head of Hospers' delegation from Sioux.

In that convention, as in the present one, Sioux and Osceola had just enough votes to nominate if they could get together. Hospers agreed positively that he wouldn't be a candidate for a second term, and this was one of the sources of his strength. They took either 1,767 or 1,776 ballots, I'm not now certain which, before a nomination was made. Then the Sioux county people got tired. A fifteen-minute recess was taken, and they gave it out that they were going to make a break. Then, on reconvening, O'Brien, rather than let the nomination go to Lyon, broke, giving part of its vote to Hospers and part to me; but Hospers got the larger part of it, and enough to nominate him.

Back of the Constitution

We Americans say that the Constitution made the nation. The Constitution is a great document and we never would have been a nation without it, but it took more than that to make the nation. Rather it was our forefathers and foremothers, who made the Constitution and then made it work. The government they constructed did get great things out of them, but it was not the government primarily that put the great things into them. What put the great things into them was their home life, their religion, their sense of personal responsibility to Almighty God, their devotion to education, their love of liberty, their personal character.

—HARRY EMERSON FOSDICK, D.D.

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