

Organization of the Assembly

Almost in unison the presiding officers of the Iowa House of Representatives and the Iowa Senate whacked their gavels and the 61st General Assembly, completely reapportioned for the first time in 61 years, was in business. The hour: 10:05 a.m. The date: January 11, 1965.

Where there had been 158 members in 1963, and in every session since 1904, there were 183 in 1965. The Reapportionment Act passed by the 60th General Assembly, at a special session in 1964, increased the number of Representatives from 108 to 124; the number of Senators from 50 to 59. To accommodate the 25 additional members, new seats and desks were added to each chamber. The 16 new seats in the House crowded that huge room almost to the rear wall. But plenty of room remained in the Senate chamber despite the nine new desks. In addition to new seats, both chambers had been newly carpeted and there were new draperies at the long windows, as well as new restraining ropes to keep spectators from the floor. So the chambers presented a fresh, pleasing appearance.

Calling the Senate to order was Lieutenant Governor William L. Mooty of Grundy Center,

the only Republican still holding a major State office following the 1964 landslide election. He, too, would be leaving office soon. But the law called for him to preside until his successor, Senator Robert D. Fulton, was sworn in on January 14 as Lieutenant Governor.

Wielding the gavel in the House was Representative Bruce E. Mahan, 74, a retired educator from Iowa City. He had been chosen by fellow Democrats for the honor of presiding over opening ceremonies.

Both chambers buckled down to routine business promptly. In the House, a 36-year-old industrialist, Representative Vince Steffen of New Hampton, was elected unanimously as Speaker. To back him as Speaker Pro Tempore, House members chose unanimously Representative Charles P. Miller, 46, a chiropractor from Burlington. Each was beginning his second term.

In the Senate, members unanimously elected Senator George E. O'Malley as President Pro Tempore. He drew a laugh in accepting the position when he noted Democrats would be in control of the Senate for the first time since 1935. He asked Republicans to be patient until "we Democrats can get used to this high plateau of being in the majority." It would take a week or two for Democrats, he said, to get their feet on the ground.

Speaker Steffen accepted his position with a plea for all members "to cast aside partisan differ-

ences, for we hold in common responsibility as stewards of the people of Iowa." He listed taxes, reapportionment, education, resource development, and public safety as the "most crucial issues" to be faced by this legislature but said they must be "effectively" solved. Any attempt to "muddle through every issue would only prolong the session beyond what either the patience of the taxpayer, or of the lawmakers themselves, is capable of bearing." He said it would be impossible to reckon with all the problems confronting them in 100 days, or even 200 days, so they would have to deal, of necessity, with only the most urgent. He predicted they would establish many precedents.

Republican legislators were highly cooperative in the opening-day ceremonies, just as Democrats had been when they formed the minority. The Republicans had attended a breakfast that morning where they heard State Chairman Robert Ray admonish them to be "a constructive minority;" to support those measures they felt to be in the state's best interests and to oppose all others.

Once the routine oath-taking, selection of seats, appointment of staff members, and other items were out of the way, the Democratic majorities of both chambers moved swiftly to redeem a campaign pledge: To end legislative committee secrecy. The Senate also ruled out executive sessions on confirmation of the Governor's appointees.

Actually, Republicans had opened Senate committees to newsmen several years earlier. But they had refused to end secret confirmation sessions and they had declined to open House committee meetings. So Democrats took great delight in implementing this pledge—even though they were to be accused frequently by Republicans, as the session wore on, of deciding in closed party caucuses what should have been decided in open committee meetings.

The big reason things went so smoothly on opening day was because Democrats followed the long-standing custom established by Republicans, of settling on their legislative leaders at pre-session caucuses. So did the Republicans, although for the first time in 30 years they were selecting minority leaders.

Democrats of both House and Senate had defied a Friday the 13th superstition to meet on November 13, a Friday, at the Fort Des Moines hotel in Des Moines, to choose their leaders. That was only 10 days after the election and served notice the Democrats intended to let no grass grow under their feet. But, despite the fact they had openly professed to be against legislative committee secrecy, and the fact they had admitted newsmen to these caucuses when they were the minority party, the Democrats closed the doors to both of their caucuses this time, explaining they were purely "family" affairs.

Thus, the results of the votes were never disclosed by which House Democrats nominated Representative Steffen for Speaker, and by which Senator Andrew G. Frommelt, 43, a realtor and insurance man from Dubuque, was elected Senate majority leader. Nor was there an announcement of the results of the votes by which Representative Miller and Senator O'Malley were nominated for Speaker Pro Tempore and President Pro Tempore. In fact, some members said the results were never announced even in the caucuses, other than the names of the winners.

It was announced, however, that House Democrats unanimously elected Representative Elroy Maule, 51, Onawa farmer, as their leader. They also named Representative Casey Loss as assistant leader and, at a later caucus, they selected Representative W. R. Gillette, 40, Spencer farmer, as party "whip." Senator C. Joseph Coleman, 41, Clare farmer, was named as assistant leader in that chamber. All Democratic leaders were veteran legislators excepting Speaker Steffen and Speaker Pro Tempore Miller, who were in their second terms, and Representative Gillette, who was serving for the first time.

After the closed caucuses of November 13, a storm broke out over the manner in which they were handled, and it was one which was renewed several times during the session. Representative La Mar Foster, 66, West Branch farmer, return-

ing for the first time to the legislature since he served as Speaker in 1937, charged that Governor Hughes and Democratic State Chairman Lex Hawkins, whom he dubbed "Lippy Lex," had manipulated the House caucus to bring about Representative Steffen's nomination as Speaker. That, he claimed, was the reason for the caucus secrecy.

Representative Foster said that three days after the election, Chairman Hawkins sent a telegram to all elected Democratic legislative candidates, calling them to the November 13 meeting and ordering them not to commit themselves to vote for any candidate for Speaker. Representative Foster, the last Democrat to hold the post, was a candidate for it again. So was Representative Keith H. Dunton, 49, Thornburg farmer, and several others. These had agreed to withdraw as candidates, Representative Foster revealed, after Governor Hughes met with them just prior to the House caucus.

Representative Foster said the various candidates had agreed among them to choose him as Speaker Pro Tempore in return for his withdrawing as a candidate for Speaker. Representative Steffen said there was "no firm agreement" on this, but Representative Foster insisted he had been "double-crossed." He also said Chairman Hawkins had no business in the caucus; that it was for duly elected Democratic House members only. Hawkins did not reply to the charge.

The former Speaker said he was also irked because Representative Dunton was nominated for Speaker, and later for Speaker Pro Tempore, even though he had agreed with other candidates to defer to Governor Hughes's wish that the nomination go to Representative Steffen. "Had I known there was to be a contest," Representative Foster said, "I would have stayed in the race."

During the session Representative Foster spoke out at frequent intervals against what he described as "party bossism" in the selection and operation of the committees, and for the handling of other matters that did not suit him. In fact, he even refused to attend party caucuses, as did Representative Arnold Utzig of Dubuque, and others, on occasions.

In any event, there was no question but that Governor Hughes had tapped Representative Steffen for Speaker, largely because the latter had supported the Governor's program in 1963 while some of the other candidates had deserted him on one or more of what he felt were key issues.

On November 18, five days after the caucuses, the new Democratic leaders announced that they would streamline the legislative committee system by reducing the number of House committees from 42 to 15, and the number of Senate committees from 30 to 15. Respective House and Senate committees were to be given the identical names to make it easier to call joint sessions.

Meanwhile, House and Senate Republicans, their numbers reduced from 117 in 1963 to 47 (with the 48th to be picked up November 24 in a special election in Black Hawk County) met sadly and solemnly on Sunday, November 22, 1964, at the Savery hotel in Des Moines to select their leaders.

Republican Senators, as usual, closed their caucus and so did House Republicans, who customarily had opened their pre-session caucuses. When the Senate caucus ended, it was announced that Senator Robert R. Rigler, 41, New Hampton banker, would be the Republican leader for the third consecutive time—only this time he would be leading the minority. Apparently there was no contest for this post.

There was a hot contest, however, for House Republican leader. No vote was officially announced but by piecing together bits of information newsmen learned that six ballots were taken before Representative Floyd P. Edgington, 65, Sheffield farmer, was declared winner. He defeated Representative Maurice E. Baringer, 43, Oelwein chemical company executive, 11 to 8, on the last ballot.

Representative William J. Scherle, 41, Henderson farmer, received votes on the first five ballots, while Representatives Lester L. Kluever, 44, Atlantic lawyer, and Marvin W. Smith, 63, retired farmer-teacher from Paullina, received votes on

the first two ballots. Here is how the balloting went:

Candidate	Ballot					
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
Edgington	6	7	7	9	8	11
Baringer	4	5	7	6	8	8
Scherle	4	5	5	4	3	0
Kluever	2	1	0	0	0	0
Smith	2	1	0	0	0	0
Totals	18	19	19	19	19	19

For some reason, one House Republican did not vote on the first ballot. Four others were unable to attend the caucus: Representatives William J. Coffman, 46, North English insurance salesman; C. Raymond Fisher, 57, Grand Junction farmer; Leroy S. Miller, 49, Shenandoah implement dealer; and Arthur C. Hanson.

Three Senators missed the Republican Senate caucus: Lucas J. De Koster, 46, Hull lawyer; Charles F. Griffin, 54, Mapleton pharmacist; and Clifford M. Vance, 62, Mount Pleasant lawyer.

Although Democrats were in control of both houses for the first time since 1935, a look back showed they had almost reversed their position of 12 years earlier when they claimed only seven of the 158 legislators. And, for Republicans, it was the low point of an era. This table shows the division in membership for the last seven sessions:

Year	House		Senate		Total	
	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.
1953	105	3	46	4	151	7
1955	89	19	44	6	133	25
1957	72	36	40	10	112	46
1959	60	48	33	17	93	65
1961	78	30	35	15	113	45
1963	79	29	38	12	117	41
1965*	23	101	25	34	48	135

*25 new seats added by Reapportionment Act of 1964, including 16 in the House, 9 in the Senate.

Before the first day ended, the Senate and House met in joint session to canvass the 1964 election vote for Governor and Lieutenant Governor. An invitation was issued to Governor Hughes to deliver a message outlining the condition of the State to a joint session on the following day. The 61st General Assembly, which was to establish new records, both for length and cost, was underway in earnest.