

Organization of the Assembly

Iowa Republicans scored an overwhelming victory for vacancies in the General Assembly in 1952. The victory was so decisive, in fact, that political reporters could find no evidence that either party ever had gained such domination of the General Assembly. The Eisenhower landslide had dealt a staggering blow to the Democratic party in Iowa.

In the House the Republicans won 105 of the 108 seats at stake. In the Senate the Republicans won all of the seats up for election except one. However, their margin of seats in the Senate was 46 to 4, because three of the holdover Senators were Democrats. With such huge majorities there was no doubt which party would organize the 55th General Assembly. The real fight, then, was to be found within Republican ranks at their caucuses, with official election in all cases only a mere formality after the session opened.

Anticipating the possibility that they would again control the House in 1953, Republican members of the 54th General Assembly had authorized Floor Leader Dewey E. Goode of Bloomfield to call an earlier-than-usual caucus preceding the opening of the 55th General Assembly. They rea-

soned that if they did win control again, an early caucus would enable them to nominate a candidate for Speaker who, in turn, would have ample time to name his committees within a day or so after being formally elected, thus getting the session off to a running start.

Normally House Republicans do not caucus until the Saturday before the Monday on which the session begins. Consequently, when Republican members caucused on December 15, 1952, at the Kirkwood Hotel in Des Moines, it marked a departure from tradition. Several members had announced their candidacies for the speakership — a post where the salary had been doubled from \$2,000 to \$4,000 by the 1951 legislature to begin in 1953 — prior to the caucus and, indeed, a few already had been campaigning for it.

The usual warm contest was in prospect when the caucus got under way, but no one anticipated the intense battle that ensued before the 1951 Speaker — William S. Lynes of Waverly — was nominated on the seventh ballot for a second term. Lynes won by a single vote over Lawrence Putney of Gladbrook, speaker pro tempore in 1951.

Among the factors that figured in the selection of a nominee (geography, personal friendships, and hope of good committee appointments) was the issue slated to become the most widely discussed of the session — whether the sale of yellow oleomargarine should be permitted in Iowa.

All 105 Republicans were present for the caucus except A. S. Bloedel of Tabor and Robert Carlson of Sioux City. Another member, W. Oliver Turner of Corning, was tardy and missed the first three ballots but cast his vote on the last four.

In the balloting with Lynes and Putney were Arthur C. Hanson of Inwood, George L. Paul of Brooklyn, Guy G. Butler of Rolfe, Ernest Kosek of Cedar Rapids, and Fred Schwengel of Davenport. Butler and Kosek withdrew after the third ballot, Paul and Schwengel followed suit after the fourth. In announcing his withdrawal, Kosek added a touch of humor when it was sorely needed to ease the tense situation by saying: "I am releasing Linn County's vote." This was in reference to the fact that he had received only two votes on the third ballot which were presumed to be those of Linn County's other member, Emil Novak of Fairfax, and his own.

On the fifth ballot Putney led Lynes 44 to 38 while Hanson received 21 votes. On the next ballot Putney picked up five and Lynes four of Hanson's votes, leaving the tally: Putney 49, Lynes 42, and Hanson 12. At this point Hanson announced his withdrawal, thus setting the stage for the dramatic seventh ballot with Putney needing only three votes to win, while Lynes needed ten.

When the ballots were counted the result was: Lynes 52, Putney 51. The seven ballots for speaker follow:

Candidate	Ballot No.						
	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>
Lynes	21	25	28	32	38	42	52
Putney	21	26	29	34	44	49	51
Hanson	25	27	26	26	31	12	—
Paul	15	11	6	5	—	—	—
Schwengel	6	7	8	6	—	—	—
Butler	7	3	3	—	—	—	—
Kosek	7	3	2	—	—	—	—

The silence that prevailed upon the announcement of the final vote was broken finally by the defeated candidate, Putney, who moved that Lynes's nomination be made unanimous.

"Let's close ranks," Putney said in an emotion-filled voice. "Let's have a good, solid legislative session. I'm happy with the contest today. There is no hard feeling. There were no unkind words. Best of luck to you, Bill."

After Putney's motion was adopted the winning candidate, a fifty-nine-year-old drainage engineer who came to the legislature in 1947 for the specific purpose of modernizing Iowa's antiquated drainage laws, took the floor. He accepted renomination modestly and almost unbelievably. After observing that he was "very much surprised" to win when he thought he was beaten, Lynes concluded: "I feel very happy and proud about the confidence you people have placed in me. . . . Now let's get together for the good of the people of Iowa. You are the board of directors."

Lynes said he realized that with such an over-

whelming majority of Republicans in the House there was an opportunity for factionalism to develop in the ranks. He hoped all members would guard against factionalism and he asked each one to list his committee preferences at once so he could name his committees.

Once the speakership race was determined, the caucus turned its attention to the nomination of a speaker pro tempore. Two ballots were necessary before the honor went to Vern Lisle of Clarinda. Lisle received 67 votes on the second ballot to 18 for Henry N. Stevens of Scranton, 15 for Schwengel, and 3 for Paul M. Walter of Union. First ballot results were: Lisle 42, Stevens 30, Schwengel 22, and Walter 9.

The next matter of business was the election of a majority floor leader. With 99 of the 103 members present participating, Representative Dewey Goode won a second ballot victory over Lawrence Putney and Dwight W. Meyer of Odebolt. Goode received 67 votes to 19 for Meyer and 13 for Putney.

Unlike House Republicans, the Senate Republicans waited to caucus until Saturday, January 10, two days prior to the opening of the session. As usual their caucus was closed to the press, but word leaked out of a spirited contest for majority floor leader with Ralph W. Zastrow of Charles City nosing out J. T. Dykhous of Rock Rapids by a vote of 23 to 19.

Stanley L. Hart of Keokuk was nominated president pro tempore.

Republicans, of course, already had the presiding officer of the Senate by virtue of the election of a former senator, Leo Elthon of Fertile, as lieutenant governor. He presides over the Senate without vote except in case of a tie.

With no chance whatever of winning any office, House and Senate Democrats did not bother to contest for a single one. They did get together on the Sunday prior to the opening of the session, but reporters were in the dark as to whether they actually designated minority floor leaders. As the session wore on it seemed that each of the three Democratic House members acted in that capacity on different occasions, while the Senate chore seemed to be that of George E. O'Malley of Des Moines.

Formal election of the Republican nominees came on January 12, 1953. But that was not the only noteworthy matter that took place on opening day. At 10 a.m. the House was called to order for what is believed to be the first time in its history by a first term member and one of such tender years, politically speaking — Paul Parker of Des Moines. This honor customarily falls to the senior member from Polk County, but because of the illness of that member — Earl C. Ryan of Des Moines — it fell to the thirty-one-year-old Parker who discharged it with dignity.

After the opening prayer, A. C. Hanson of

Lyon was elected temporary speaker on the motion of Lawrence Putney. Shortly thereafter, A. L. Mensing of Lowden nominated William Lynes for Speaker. His motion was seconded by Carl H. Ringgenberg of Ames for the Republicans, and by Robert C. Reilly of Dubuque for the Democrats, who also proposed that a unanimous ballot be cast. The motion prevailed, and Lynes became the fifth man in Iowa history to hold the speakership twice. Upon accepting the gavel, Speaker Lynes thanked the members for again according him the honor of being their leader.

Across the rotunda Lieutenant Governor William N. Nicholas called the Senate to order at 10 a.m. — since he would hold the office until the inauguration of his successor, Lieutenant Governor-elect Leo Elthon, on January 15. Senator Stanley L. Hart was named president pro tempore by unanimous vote after his nomination by Republican Floor Leader Ralph Zastrow, there being no other nominations. Hart accepted, saying he was "deeply touched and humbly grateful." A. C. Gustafson of Des Moines, veteran of many sessions, was named chief clerk of the House, and Carroll Lane of Carroll, a former House member, was renamed secretary of the Senate.

On January 19, Speaker Lynes and Lieutenant Governor Elthon announced their committees and the 55th General Assembly got down to business.

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