

Significance of Work

As the session wore on it became increasingly obvious that there were two issues of primary importance on the minds of the members of the 59th General Assembly — legislative reapportionment and property tax relief.

The lawmakers faced up squarely to reapportionment. They took the initial step, however unsatisfactory it might be considered by constituents, toward amending the Constitution to change the method of apportioning legislative seats. They also carried out the reapportionment mandates now contained in the constitution. But they merely flirted with property tax relief, and wound up doing nothing of significance after many weary hours of consultation and controversy, mostly in committee rooms.

For a while it appeared that the legislature might give serious consideration to raising the sales tax from two to three per cent. The possibility that taxes on income, cigarets, beer and corporations also might be raised underwent scrutiny too. The idea behind these possibilities was that additional revenue from such proposed increases would go into the general fund from which it could be appropriated for aid to schools, thus re-

lieving local taxes on property. But, discouraged by Governor Erbe's mid-session announcement that he would veto any sales tax increase, the legislators finally decided against raising any taxes at all.

Governor Erbe had taken a leaf from the book of his Democratic predecessor in ruling out a sales tax increase. Former Governor Loveless vetoed an extension of the temporary two-year half-cent sales tax increase when the bill reached his desk in 1957 and this action was credited in many quarters as the major factor in his successful bid for re-election in 1958. In the end, the 1961 legislature skirted the tax increase issue by dipping deeply into the state's surplus of some \$45 million to finance the cost of the nearly \$15 million a year appropriation for capital improvements.

In effect, this means postponing a showdown on taxes, including whether or not to overhaul the state's entire tax structure to make it more equitable on every side, until 1963 at the earliest.

If one considered these two issues alone, the legislature would have scored a grade of only 50 per cent. But, fortunately, it rated a good deal higher. On the credit side the 59th General Assembly approved Congressional redistricting, a fairer distribution of road funds, enabling legislation for public housing, medical care for the aged, and increased appropriations for state school aids, agricultural land tax credits and capital improve-

ments. It also approved the 58th General Assembly's proposed amendment for judicial reorganization. On the credit side, too, went the legislature's refusal to lower secondary school standards or to abolish the State Board of Public Instruction in its present form.

These actions and those of lesser importance gave the legislature a grade far above passing and certainly won for it a place among the top quarter of the entire class of the 59 General Assemblies that have served Iowa since it became a state.

However, a sampling of typical editorial comment did not wholeheartedly support this view as indicated by these excerpts from newspapers in the state:

The legislature exists to do a job for the PEOPLE. It did nothing for the people and, as a matter of fact, it did nothing for property either. — *Davenport Democrat*.

Praise for not boosting taxes could be countered with the contention that education at all levels was under-supported and that the state's cash balance is going to be reduced to a point of peril. — *Mason City Globe-Gazette*.

After each session we often wonder why it seems that the legislature is on dead center for weeks and then, at the tail end of the term, goes into high gear and passes controversial bills right and left. — *Marion Sentinel*.

Iowa has been on dead center in many respects. When the legislature went home it was even more solidly so. — *Hardin County Times*.

“ . . . on the positive side, there are two things to be mentioned. One is that after many years . . . the first step was made toward reapportionment of the state . . .

[although] . . . there are many who consider this plan, including the *Journal-Tribune*, a far cry from being true reapportionment. Another big job was congressional re-districting. — *Williamsburg Journal-Tribune and Shopper*.

Nobody is completely happy . . . nor unhappy. With such reports coming from the "extremes" it is my guess that it must have been a pretty good legislature, or at least as good as the average. — *Belle Plaine Union*.

Many of those who fought in the background in previous sessions against any (reapportionment) change were in the forefront of this battle and many a former legislator had a smile reading some of the votes in favor of the new (Shaff) plan. — *Algona Kossuth County Advance*.

The legislature was, in our opinion, less progressive than what the majority of Iowans want. The legislators may have represented the views of their constituents. But the Assembly, due to malapportionment, is not truly representative of the people in either House or Senate. — *Des Moines Register*.

The congressional redistricting plan . . . really satisfies no one. . . . The legislatures' record on medical aid to Iowa residents over 65 shows gross neglect . . . (it's) record on welfare and symptoms of spite work. . . . *Marshalltown Times-Republican*.

Without whole-heartedly agreeing with what was done, we believe, nevertheless, that the legislature deserves an "A" for acting on most of the matters it should have acted on, but an "F" for not acting on some matters that cried out for action. . . . What the legislature needs most . . . is some fresh, bold, vigorous, imaginative leadership. — *Cedar Rapids Gazette*.

The impression that this was an economy session was created because the Assembly, despite heavy pressure to the contrary, fairly well held to the limitations proposed in the Governor's budget. While legislative decisions on cer-

tain items of spending may well be questioned, we think the increases voted were for the most part justified. — *Waterloo Courier*.

Some of the problems which got swept under the rug, we suspect, may arise next year to plague those who were a party to overlooking them. — *Muscatine Journal*.

The 1961 Iowa legislature didn't pass all the important legislation it was urged to pass. No legislature ever does. On the whole, we believe the legislature did a fairly good job. It stubbornly refused to raise the sales tax to 3 per cent nor did it vote any other new taxes — although it approved a budget of \$194 million a year for the next biennium. — *Council Bluffs Nonpareil*.

For most people there is no objectivity in appraising the work of a legislature. It is "good" or "bad" on the basis of personal judgment. . . . For the people of western Iowa failure . . . to reach agreement with Nebraska on a sound and fair settlement of the long-lasting border dispute is highly disappointing. This is an example of the "bad." But a new plan of apportioning the legislature was started on its way, the senate was reapportioned . . . for the first time in a half-century or more, and a respectable congressional reorganization was passed. These are examples of the "good." — *Sioux City Journal*.

It was, in the old-time phrase, an excellent justice-of-the-peace session. The routine matters . . . went through in fine style. What got lost was the future of Iowa. . . . So Iowa must once again back off and take a look at herself. What she likely will find is a state slipping backward at a time when all conscience and national need call for new vigor and imagination. And what's the cure? Only the people can effect it. The question now before the state is whether the people really care. — *Burlington Hawk-Eye*.

Whether one counted himself among those who

took a dim view of the legislature's record, or a bright one, there could be little disagreement over one item:

This legislature, in its committee debates and backstage skirmishes, set the stage for a showdown on taxes in 1963 as well as for a continuing debate over reapportionment. If coming events truly cast their shadows before them, then the state's tax structure and all of its ramifications most assuredly left an indelible shadow from the 1961 session — a shadow that can be blotted out only by coming to grips with the issue just as the legislature did with the initial phases of the reapportionment issue this time.

FRANK T. NYE

COST OF A LEGISLATIVE SESSION

<i>Item</i>	<i>House</i>	<i>Senate</i>	<i>Joint</i>
Salaries:			
Members (including Lt. Gov.)	\$435,878.25	\$190,356.07	\$.....
Employees	198,064.21	107,501.35	19,596.23
Printing	177,874.41
Travel	1,900.64	925.40
Chaplains' Expenses	1,017.27	1,095.04
Miscellaneous	5,552.67	4,297.93	9,167.19
Totals.....	\$642,413.04	\$304,175.79	\$206,637.83
Total Cost 59th G. A. \$1,153,226.66			
Comparative Total Expenses:			
58th G. A.	57th G. A.	56th G. A.	55th G. A.
\$1,084,043.14	\$709,151.02	\$681,988.59	\$646,563.79