

Significance of Work

Some confidently predicted that this legislature was doomed to failure. It was, they said, so tightly hobbled by divided control—one observer preferred “political schizophrenia”—that it could not possibly accomplish anything noteworthy.

They could see little ahead but heated wrangling of a partisan nature. Each party, they declared, would be so intent on trying to win the pole position in the 1968 election race it would overtax its energy supporting its own program, leaving none to work with the opposition for the common good.

Indeed, it appeared they might be proved right when the Republican-controlled House and the Democratic-controlled Senate got stuck for the better part of three months, from the session's outset, in the thorny thicket of reapportionment.

As they gradually wore each other down over this issue, it became increasingly apparent that the goal of some newly-elected House Republicans was to “repeal” the 1965 session because it was the work of the Democrats. And that the goal of some equally stubborn Democrats was to shoot down every good idea tagged “Republican.”

Sensing this, leaders of both parties wisely re-

frained from moving in on their troops until the troops themselves became aware that their tactics were making no headway. The leaders long since had agreed that, under the circumstances, cooperation definitely was a two-way street and unless both parties accepted that as a fact, it would be a futile session. Once the leaders and veteran legislators of both parties prevailed on less-experienced colleagues to accept this point of view, the future took on a brighter hue.

The results were highly rewarding. Far from hobbling the legislature, divided control actually opened the way to passage of some of the most far-reaching legislation in Iowa's history—legislation that neither party had been able to put through in recent years when it, alone, controlled both houses. The reasons were logical enough: both parties wanted these measures passed into law. Some—like fair housing—were so loaded with controversy that neither party was willing to risk its political fortunes as having been solely responsible for putting them there. This opportunity, then, to pass them with bipartisan support was too good to miss. It left each party in the enviable position of being able, from the standpoint of practical politics, to claim the credit, or to deny the blame, for these measures according to whatever future campaign circumstances might dictate.

So a divided Assembly passed these laws that previously had defied each party alone:

The three-bill package to shift a part of the school tax burden off the shoulders of property owners by raising more revenue, through increased and expanded income, sales and other taxes, and through equalizing real estate assessments, in order to boost school aid substantially; the fair housing and the public employees civil service bills; two governmental reorganization bills, one to restructure the Iowa Tax Commission and the other to merge three existing boards into a new Department of Social Services.

Even with divided control, however, it is doubtful that the school aid-property tax relief package could have been passed without the secret meetings of House and Senate leaders of both parties with Governor Hughes, where it was agreed to push it through in the last days of the session without benefit of routine committee processing. This unusual course of action touched off editorial fireworks that were heard throughout the state:

Supposedly responsible legislative leaders committed themselves in advance to support the plan before the citizens had even seen it.—*Iowa City Press-Citizen*.

It was conceived in secrecy, born in controversy and will live in confusion.—*Spencer Daily Reporter*.

In a recent Washington news-letter Iowa was singled out, along with California, Michigan and Maryland, as a state of higher taxes . . . This is the sort of notoriety which was spawned by the overnight tax bill imposed upon Iowans at a legislative secret huddle . . . —*Oelwein Daily Register*.

The new state tax law appears to have piled confusion upon confusion to the point where those who are supposed to have created it seem not to understand it.—*Atlantic News-Telegraph*.

The legislators acted like a bunch of sheep dogs with the round-up dog yapping at their heels . . .—*Kossuth County Advance*.

The public is entitled to a review of the reckless and irresponsible way in which Governor Hughes and . . . legislative leaders met in secret to develop a \$200 million spending program and rammed their \$100 million tax increase bill through . . . before the public had the opportunity to voice its objection.—*Waterloo Daily Courier*.

So it remained for the governor to get the leaders together under conditions they would accept, to construct a compromise measure. And it required the pressure of adjournment breathing down their necks, to get the legislature to act on it. The result is a tax package designed to make everyone unhappy. But few critics are able or willing to propose alternatives that would be any more acceptable.—*Burlington Hawk-Eye*.

Never in all history has such a major piece of Iowa legislation been handed out under such cloak and dagger techniques . . . Little wonder that the Governor and the legislature are being soundly criticized . . . —*Centerville Iowegian*.

The point is Iowa can't have it's cake and eat it too. If it expects to attract new industry and to expand business it cannot levy taxes that inhibit such growth and development.—*Estherville Daily News*.

. . . to the extent that the new tax bill provides property tax relief in the operation of public schools, it will be welcome. Iowa taxpayers may find that the taxes added amount to almost as much as the property tax relief.—*Boone News-Republican*.

Participation in such an unconscionable procedure, so far afield from the normal democratic process, cannot but prove to be a millstone around the necks of all legislators who served in the Sixty-second General Assembly . . . —*Carroll Daily Times Herald*.

The speed with which the legislature seemed to be moving . . . without fully informing the citizenry of just what it was doing is bound to cause repercussions. When you are getting your head shot off, some like to know from what direction the blow is coming.—*Creston News Advertiser*.

If the hurriedly passed \$102 million tax bill is intended as a cure for property tax ills, many Iowans may soon hope for a return of the disease.—*Fort Dodge Messenger*.

Editor-Publisher Willard D. Archie of the Shenandoah *Evening Sentinel* was so disgusted he sat for a day in front of his typewriter but "words did not come." "They hardly came the second day," he wrote. "Maybe it has left us in a state of shock."

Another editor-publisher, confided he had been out of the state when the package was passed and was so unpleasantly surprised by the legislature's action he had to restrain himself. "I didn't write a damn thing," he confessed.

Many newspapers were so editorially expended in criticizing the new package and the methods used in passing it that they never got around to commenting on the session as a whole. But some did and here is what they wrote:

. . . the legislature lived up to the Governor's call for

"constructive compromise at all times." It wasn't easy. It contributed to the longest legislative session in Iowa history. And it produced some results with which neither party is particularly happy. But, as a comparison of January expectations and July accomplishments indicated, it did produce results.—*Des Moines Register*.

There have been too many issues for this single session. Here is the best argument for annual sessions.—*Ottumwa Daily Courier*.

The session will be remembered as the one which made the first serious attempt to transfer the tax load from real property.—*Independence Bulletin-Journal*.

Government has become too complex and fast-changing to run on an every-other-year legislative basis.—*Mason City Globe Gazette*.

One explanation for the extra long session is that the legislators first had to dispose of a baton of constitutional amendments left over from the last session.—*Dubuque Telegraph-Herald*.

. . . the tax and school aid measures, studied over several months and then passed in a rush after the unprecedented meetings between legislative leaders and the Governor, coupled with the wearing 18-hour marathon the last day, pointed up the need for a change in the legislative pattern.—*Council Bluffs Nonpareil*.

One observer has labeled the Illinois statehouse in Springfield the "Cave of the Winds." In the light of the 1967 performance, that in Des Moines might be described as the Temple of Confusion. — *Davenport Times-Democrat*.

At this point the most specific thing the people can sink their teeth into is that the lawmakers made it home by the Fourth of July. Most of what else took place, especially in the frenetic final days, will have a later impact. It is a bit like the funnel cloud in the distance; the people

know it will hit them but they are not quite sure how much damage it will do.—*Sioux City Journal*.

. . . it was a session that proved the value of a strong two-party system. And, ironically . . . that proved unfounded agriculture's fears for its fate in a fairly apportioned legislature. For this legislature, the most fairly apportioned since 1904 but still short of one-man, one-vote representation, did better by agriculture than any other single segment of the state's economy.—*Cedar Rapids Gazette*.

. . . it was a progressive session despite the political split . . . Much good legislation was passed but unfortunately this was overshadowed by badly written laws—and more important, what the legislature failed to do that it should have done.—*Marshalltown Times-Republican*.

The so-called tax relief bill, which favors a special group rather than the public in general, more than offsets the good that has come out of the legislative halls.—*Oskaloosa Daily Herald*.

. . . it remains a fact that all of the representatives in the public press and other media, which would lead Iowans to believe their lawmakers are confused, frustrated, disorganized, uninformed and that the whole business is a mess, are not accurately stated. It's not that bad, it's worse.—*Ames Daily Tribune*.

Station KWWL-TV in Waterloo reported:

Despite its record length, despite—or maybe because of—its political schizophrenic makeup, this legislature will go down as one of the most productive in the history of Iowa.

Legislative leaders, sometimes poles apart during the session, were quick to agree that the politically divided makeup of the assembly was at once

its curse and a blessing in disguise.

They blamed it for the record length of the session. But they added that it also enabled the legislature to pass some laws that an assembly controlled by one party would not have passed for fear of voter reprisals.

As expected, leaders of each party charged the other with prolonging the session by dilly-dally tactics. Lieutenant Governor Fulton, Senate Majority Leader Frommelt, and House Minority Leader Gannon said the session was long because the House Republicans loafed away the early part of it. Speaker Baringer, House Majority Leader Millen, and Senate Minority Leader Rigler retaliated by pointing the finger at Senator Frommelt, saying the session would not have lasted so long if he had taken less time to organize the Senate. Representative Millen charged that Governor Hughes could have shortened the session had he stepped in earlier to apply pressure to Senate Democrats to pass the tax revision package.

So the debate raged in what political analysts would call the best traditions of the two-party system, as both laid the groundwork for the possibility of a special session to review the highly controversial tax package and for the 1968 election to determine which would control the Sixty-third General Assembly in 1969.