

Significance of Work

Usually a legislature's record lies not only in what it accomplished but also in what it refused or failed to accomplish. In this respect the 1951 legislature was no different from its predecessors. Its problems were manifold. It was constantly under heavy pressure from those who sought to cut down spending on the one hand and from those who sought to increase it on the other.

In the end it courageously went along with the middle and, certainly, most realistic view. This held that rising costs had made heavy inroads into government, that more efficient operation would squeeze enough money from current income to offset inflationary trends, thereby making it possible to keep vital programs and services at least at their present levels.

Some felt this could not be done without increasing taxes. However, the legislature had the taxpayer constantly in mind. At the outset each member seemed to subscribe silently to an unwritten vow, coinciding with Governor Beardsley's expressed desire, that there would be no new taxes or increase in taxes. This vow was kept.

Yet the legislature did go beyond the Governor's appropriation recommendations in several in-

stances in order to meet the inflationary inroads. Thus did it show its faith in Iowa's future by boldly assuming that business conditions would continue to improve enough in 1951-1953 to produce the necessary extra income, through current tax sources, that would be needed to offset the increased outgo. As this was being prepared for print it seemed that faith would be justified, for it does not appear at this time that there will be any deficit for the 1953 legislature to fret about.

Certainly this enlightened attitude on the legislature's part came as a tonic for the morale of the thousands of loyal state employees, and for many state sub-divisions, that have been all but forgotten in the struggle against ever-rising costs. For many employees it meant pay boosts for the first time in a good many months and, in most cases, even years. For many state sub-divisions, including the Boards of Education, Control, and Social Welfare, it meant existing programs could be carried on at approximately the same level and, in specific instances, on even higher levels.

To bring about more efficient operation, the legislature set up an interim committee on budget and financial control and provided for pre-auditing services to keep itself better informed. This action showed a growing concern for the manner in which the taxpayer's dollar is being spent.

Certainly it manifested greater concern, at least, for the present and the future. But the legisla-

ture's concern about use of the taxpayer's dollar in the immediate past was something else again. It "whitewashed" or "soft-pedaled" investigations into such matters as:

1. Reported irregularities in the operation of the Iowa Liquor Control Commission.
2. The action of Secretary of Agriculture in approving a salt-base anti-freeze known as "P-60" over the objections of state chemists.
3. The financing of new light fixtures for the House chamber.

Investigative committees were appointed to go into these matters, but the reports they made were far from thorough. One committee delayed action so long that Speaker Lynes upbraided its members for dilly-dallying and ordered a report brought in forthwith. In the final analysis, the reports smacked largely of politics and made mild recommendations that were merely "wrist-slapping" in nature.

In a nutshell, though, the legislature manifested a keen interest in retaining necessary services and programs at current levels and in seeing to it that the taxpayer got at least as many cents worth of government for his dollar as an inflationary dollar is worth these days.

There was noticeable concern, particularly among the newer legislators, to set their own house in order too. While they never got around to acting on a proposal to create a legislative coun-

cil, they did discuss privately ways and means of modernizing antiquated procedures. House Republicans, in control of their side of the Assembly all the way, even decided in caucus to meet late in December of 1952, instead of just prior to the opening of the next session in January of 1953, to nominate their candidate for Speaker. They calculated that such action, in event they won control of the 1953 House at the 1952 general election, would enable them to organize early and to get away to a running start at the gavel's first fall.

This far-sightedness undoubtedly will pay off, because the Republicans did win control of the 1953 House, by a 105 to 3 majority, which means the man they nominate for Speaker at their December 15 caucus will be elected in January. As a result of this assurance, he can have his standing committees ready for announcement on the opening day of the 1953 session if he chooses, several days ahead of the schedule.

Senate Republicans, while they controlled their chamber by a 41 to 9 majority, and will control the 1953 Senate by 46 to 4, took no action along this line. This may or may not be due to the fact that at least three factions developed within the Republican bloc in the 1951 Senate, making it a less cohesive unit than that in the House. Most vocal among these factions was the so-called "economy bloc" which worked overtime to reduce state expenditures drastically below their 1949-

1951 levels. Its lack of success was due to the coalition of the other two factions, with the help of some Democrats, on specific occasions.

A noticeable coolness developed during the session between the Governor and the Lieutenant Governor, but the Senate did not allow it to get out of hand.

House and Senate Republicans had their differences too, but only one major piece of proposed legislation — the civil defense bill — failed of passage because of them. Nevertheless, these cleavages are something to watch in future legislatures if the Republicans continue to gain such predominant control as they had in 1951 and will have in 1953.

The Senate showed its true colors on one occasion by refusing to be stampeded into passing a "loyalty oath" amendment that would have required all public school teachers and government employees to take such a pledge. Proponents held this was the only way to smoke out Communists in key places. But by an overwhelming vote, after a hot debate, this theory was rejected. Opponents held firmly to the belief that Communists could best be routed out by responsible governmental officials and that the basic right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty still is paramount in Iowa.

On the matter of reapportioning the Senate's 50 seats to conform with the 1950 census figure, a

mandatory order in the state constitution, the Senate did not act, despite the fact that it was reminded of this duty by one member in the waning days of the session. Nor would the House consider reapportioning its seats, presently apportioned in accordance with the constitution, despite a last minute plea to do so.

As a result of these refusals, the problem of reapportionment promised to become one of the hottest issues that would confront the 55th General Assembly. The situation in Iowa is not unlike that existing in many other states where legislatures have steadfastly refused to act on reapportionment which, in each instance, would effect rural-urban representation to the very obvious disadvantage of farm communities.

Both houses agreed to the need for a review of the state employees retirement act and created a special study committee to work on the problem during the interim. This problem is one of the biggest facing the 1953 legislature.

Its solution may well determine whether thousands of state employees will be transferred to the federal social security program or whether Iowa will continue to solve this pressing problem alone.

Action in establishing the study committee seemed to sum up both the legislature's grave concern for, and its positive attitude toward tackling, some of the state's more perplexing problems. In

the final analysis it can be reported that, in spite of its failure or refusal to act in some cases, the over-all record of the 54th General Assembly will stand as a challenge to its successors.

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