

Significance of Work

It was a stormy, turbulent session, in many respects, which probably accounted for the fact that it ran longer than usual. Plagued with money problems from the outset, members were reluctant to come to grips with them until the final days. At times there seemed to be studied attempts to divert attention from the economic fact that outgo was exceeding income and that something had to be done to set the two in balance. Legislators, almost joyfully it appeared, seized on other issues to occupy their time in the apparent hope that the money problems either would go away or solve themselves in the interval. In the end, however, they dealt with all these problems.

Leadership of the two houses was divided as to the best approach to take in dealing with the problems. Senate leaders took the position that the first order of business was to determine how much additional revenue could be raised through new and increased taxes. Then, and then only, the appropriations should be cut to fit the tax cloth. House leaders held the opposite view. They felt appropriations were more important, that they should be made first to fit state needs and then taxes levied to bring in the additional revenue

necessary to meet them. Naturally, compromise was inevitable. In the final analysis agreement was reached through the give and take procedure in conference committees.

There was disagreement between House and Senate leadership, also, on bills involving subject matter other than money. Even to the last each house resorted to holding up some bills approved by the other until assured that the opposite house would approve its pet measures.

Meanwhile, as if this by-play wasn't enough to raise temperatures, the Senate carried on a running feud with the Governor on several counts revolving mainly around his nominations for Highway Commission posts. Also, at one point the noticeable coolness between the Governor and the Lieutenant Governor broke into public print.

The Senate finally confirmed the Governor's Highway Commission appointees, but it flatly rejected his nomination of two Board of Education members to succeed themselves. Following adjournment the Governor ignored the Senate's rejection of the two nominees — Board President Dwight G. Rider of Fort Dodge and Board Member Vincent B. Hamilton of Hampton, a Republican and a Democrat respectively — by naming them to fill two-year interim terms on the board.

While this transpired in the Senate, things were far from tranquil in the House. On that side of the rotunda, Republican "Young Turks" revolted

against entrenched leadership for refusal to call party caucuses. Their rebellion was short-lived, but they gained their point, forcing at least two caucuses in the final days. The uprising was interpreted in many quarters as sounding an ominous note that younger members will not be satisfied to occupy bench-warming roles in future sessions.

Outcroppings of dissatisfaction with leadership were manifested in other ways, too. In the Senate, veterans and freshmen alike joined in a successful attempt to snatch a bill from the powerful sifting committee under existing rules, after losing in an attempt to relax the rules as they applied to overruling the committee on such matters. In the House two attempts to take bills from sifting committees were initiated. One (involving the egg-grading bill) was successful. The other (involving the pre-audit bill) failed.

Dissatisfaction with the sifting committee system was expressed often, loudly and openly, in both houses. Some members declared bitterly that the committees no longer sifted bills but held them. They even suggested that the name of these committees be changed from "sifting" to "holding" on grounds that the latter was more appropriate. In short, differences ran deep even on surface matters. Underneath it all were clearly visible the fundamental opposing views held by advocates of the "hold-the-line" school and those who espoused the "let's-move-ahead" philosophy.

Despite such differences much significant work was accomplished. The very fact that there was such outspoken diversity of opinion on so many matters was significant in itself. It manifested a growing interest in the direction state government should take. It was significant, too, that:

The legislature, with both the taxpayer's wallet and the government's needs firmly in mind, faced up reasonably well to money problems in the end — problems that, in large measure, were inherited from past legislatures that put them aside for the day of reckoning that came in 1955.

The legislature introduced five resolutions (and the House adopted one) to amend the Constitution to reapportion membership so that one house reflected population and the other area.

The Senate refused to pass a bill to reapportion itself in accordance with the present Constitution and that the number of Senators voting on the losing side represented more people than those on the winning side.

The legislature refused to change school reorganization laws, thereby declaring itself not yet ready to accept the theory that larger administrative districts can be operated more economically while affording greater educational opportunities to more and more Iowa boys and girls.

There were votes testing the wet-dry strength in each house for the first time in years with the wets losing on both counts, but with the losing side in the House representing 500,000 more population than the winning side, while Senate losers represented almost the same number of people as Senate winners.

The legislature whipped through a bill specifically exempting private clubs, hotels, and railroad club cars from the law which, in the opinion of the Attorney General,

ruled out keeping liquor in places where beer is sold.

The Senate, in executive session, adopted a motion advanced by drys criticizing the tactics of a dry lobbyist and inviting him to make himself scarce on the Senate floor.

Only history will decide what place the 56th General Assembly will occupy among legislatures. Available to help history decide, though, are observations by many of the state's newspapers — Democratic, Republican, and Independent — which furnish much interesting reading.

The Pocahontas *Record-Democrat* viewed it as "the biggest tax-raising session on record since the hectic days of 1934. . . . a dark session as far as future Iowans are concerned." In contrast, the Republican-minded Hampton *Chronicle* declared that "never in history have the people of Iowa had better representation." The LeMars *Sentinel* felt the 56th General Assembly made a better record than "many other state legislatures," but the Colfax *Tribune* guessed that "members . . . themselves were not satisfied with the outcome of the session." The Northwood *Anchor* commented that the legislature "didn't dodge the issue of how to pay for improvements."

Many daily newspapers commented sharply on the need for fairer representation while observations on the legislature's overall record ranged from the viewpoint of the Council Bluffs *Non-pareil* that it was the "most unsatisfactory of all sessions we have observed during the last half

century," to the *Washington Journal's* comment that it was "creditable . . . all things considered."

Other comments included:

The *Fort Madison Democrat*: "The assembly did an average job . . . its overall record is worthy of neither admiration nor condemnation . . . reform in legislative procedures are badly needed."

The *Sioux City Journal-Tribune*: "It seems increasingly obvious that we have either too many of the wrong people in the legislature or the wrong system of lawmaking for these times."

The *Cedar Rapids Gazette*: "Too many key appointments went to too many little men . . . it will stand as a legislature that had an abundance of courage in facing up to fiscal problems that it inherited . . . while lacking the courage to deal with some of its own . . . as a legislature that had a better base than it had leadership."

The *Des Moines Register*: It "met the challenge of these times remarkably well in some fields but failed miserably in others. [It is] surprising that it did as well as it did with the handicaps of being rural dominated . . . Farm Bureau pressure . . . short session . . . fight with the governor . . . control by a few members . . . sifting committee throttle . . . secrecy."

The *Davenport Democrat*: "Legislators from farm constituencies prevented any move toward

wiping out the unfair and unconstitutional makeup of legislature through redistricting."

The Clinton *Herald*: "It's high time that there is a fairer system of representation in Des Moines."

The Waterloo *Courier*: "Failures of the legislature are attributable to . . . malapportionment . . . inadequate information . . . inadequate time to study the problems involved."

The Marshalltown *Times-Republican*: "Credit must be given for having balanced the budget . . . it is certainly unfortunate that the legislature did nothing about creating a commission to study our apportionment system."

The Atlantic *News-Telegraph*: "In general the state legislature gave Iowa just about what it asked for. . . . so many people want so many things and forget that it takes taxes to pay for the things they want."

Again, history will be the final judge. At this close distance, however, it already appears that history cannot miss one item of vital importance — that the 56th General Assembly may mark a transition period in Iowa lawmaking which saw "look-ahead" legislators emerging in great numbers to gain the upper hand, at least temporarily, in the never-ending contest over whose will shall prevail in formulating the policies that will determine the future of our state.

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