

THE PALIMPSEST

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Composition of the Assembly

Since the first state election in 1846 farmers have outnumbered all others in the General Assembly. True, the number of dirt farmers in the 56th General Assembly was down compared to the 1953 session, 53 to 51. But the number making all or part of their living from Mother Earth was up from 68 to 78. As usual, lawyers were second in number. There were 27, plus one combination lawyer-farmer-businessman, as compared to 30 and the same "combination" gentleman in 1953. The following table shows the occupations of 131 of the 158 House and Senate members:

<i>Agriculture</i>	<i>H.</i>	<i>S.</i>	<i>T.</i>	<i>Other Groups</i>	<i>H.</i>	<i>S.</i>	<i>T.</i>
Farmers	38	14	52	Lawyers	15	11	26
Farmer-Stockmen	6	1	7	Merchants	2	4	6
Farm Managers	3	2	5	Retired	3	2	5
Farmer-Businessmen	3	1	4	Publishers	1	3	4
Farmer-Insurancemen	3	0	3	Bankers	2	1	3
Retired Farmers	2	0	2	Realty-Insurance	1	1	2
Farmer-Bankers	0	2	2	Hatcherymen	1	1	2
Farmer-Merchant	1	0	1	Hardwaremen	2	0	2
Farmer-Poultryman	1	0	1	Manufacturers	2	0	2
Farmer-Minister	1	0	1				
Farmer-Businessman-Lawyer	1	0	1				

The remaining 27 legislators classified themselves as: Auctioneer, banker-insuranceman, bus driver, business-insuranceman, cabinet worker, dentist, electrical contractor, employee of John Morrell and Co., grain-feed dealer, grain elevator-realtor-insuranceman, grocer, housewife, insuranceman, investment banker, labor representative, lumberman, manager of livestock commission company, merchant-banker, produce-fur dealer, quarry operator, realtor, realtor-insuranceman, turkey raiser, savings and loan, transfer-storage company president, veterinarian, wholesaler, wholesale fuel dealer.

This list does not include the occupations of the late Representative William N. Judd of Clinton, and Claude Oberman of Yarmouth, both Republicans. Judd, former mayor of Clinton and a retired railroad yardmaster, died the fourth day of the session. He was succeeded at a special election by John W. Carlsen of Clinton, a Democratic lawyer, whose victory placed the Republican margin in the House at 89 to 19. Oberman, a farmer, resigned after winning re-election to his third term and died shortly thereafter. He was succeeded at a special pre-session election by Rep. Blythe C. Conn of Burlington, a Republican attorney.

Mrs. Gladys S. Nelson of Newton, the only woman member of the 55th General Assembly, was again the only woman member of the 56th to which she was elected for her third term in the

House. There were more new legislators than usual — 44 in the House and eight in the Senate. This reflected a turnover of 32.9 per cent from 1953 as compared to the 27 per cent turnover in membership of the 1953 legislature from that of the 54th General Assembly which met in 1951. The following table shows which session each of the 158 members was serving:

<i>Session</i>	<i>House</i>		<i>Senate</i>		<i>Total</i>
	<i>Rep.</i>	<i>Dem.</i>	<i>Rep.</i>	<i>Dem.</i>	
First	31	13	6	2	52
Second	24	3	11	1	39
Third	14	1	3	1	19
Fourth	9	1	8	1	19
Fifth	5	0	4	0	9
Sixth	1	0	4	0	5
Seventh	0	1	1	1	3
Eighth	1	0	4	0	5
Ninth	1	0	0	0	1
Tenth	1	0	2	0	3
Eleventh	1	0	0	0	1
Fourteenth	0	0	1	0	1
Fifteenth	0	0	1	0	1

The honor of being the oldest legislator went for the second consecutive session to Representative A. S. Bloedel, 78, a Republican and hardware merchant from Tabor. A red-headed Democrat, Representative Jack McCoy, was the youngest lawmaker at 25. The youngest Republican legislator was 26-year-old Roscoe L. Pollock of Douds. The oldest Democratic legislator was 70-year-old

James W. Howard of Cresco. All these honors went to the House for the first time. In the Senate the oldest Republican was Senator Lorin B. Sayre of Winterset, 72, and the oldest Democrat was Senator Arnold Utzig of Dubuque, 61. The youngest Republican was Senator Jack Schroeder of Davenport, 29, and the youngest Democrat was Senator Edward J. McManus of Keokuk, 34. The average age of all legislators was 52 years as compared to 53 years in the 1953 session. The age range table follows for House and Senate:

<i>Age Range</i>	<i>Number of Legislators</i>			<i>Age Range</i>	<i>Number of Legislators</i>		
	<i>H.</i>	<i>S.</i>	<i>T.</i>		<i>H.</i>	<i>S.</i>	<i>T.</i>
21-25	1	0	1	51-55	17	8	25
26-30	5	2	7	56-60	16	6	22
31-35	10	4	14	61-65	20	7	27
36-40	10	4	14	66-70	7	7	14
41-45	7	3	10	71-75	2	4	6
46-50	12	5	17	76-80	1	0	1

Senator Arch W. McFarlane of Waterloo carried off honors again for having the longest record of service in the legislature and assured himself of retaining the title in 1957 by winning a four-year term in the Senate after serving for many sessions in the House. Senator McFarlane reached his 70th birthday during the session. He has been a legislator 30 of the 41 years since his first election in 1914. In 1919 and 1921 he was Speaker of the House, and in 1929 and 1931 he was Lieutenant

Governor and presided over the Senate. He has missed only four sessions in which he has not been a legislator or Lieutenant Governor. He is the legislature's dean.

Despite his long record, however, Senator McFarlane was once again bested for continuous service, and for deanship of the Senate alone, by Senator Frank C. Byers of Linn County. At 71, Senator Byers has served continuously since his first election in 1928. He served two sessions in the House and has been a member of the Senate ever since. This was his fourteenth session.

Among Democrats the longest service record belonged jointly to Senator Utzig and Representative W. J. Johannes of Ashton. Each served his seventh session in 1955. Senator Utzig's service has been continuous.

Educationally, the 1955 lawmakers ranked higher than their counterparts of 1953. Of the 158, a total of 149 listed themselves as high school or college graduates as compared to 147 in 1953. A breakdown of the educational background of these 149 members shows:

	<i>College</i>	<i>High School</i>
Senate	38	7
House	71	33

The breakdown on a party basis:

	<i>College</i>	<i>High School</i>
Republicans	89	32
Democrats	20	8

Republicans controlled the legislature as usual, with a margin of 89 to 19 in the House and 44 to 6 in the Senate. However, it was the Democrats who showed gains over the previous session when they were outnumbered 105 to 3 in the House and 46 to 4 in the Senate. House terms are for two years each. Senators serve four years each with 29 standing for election at the end of one four-year period and 21 at the end of the next.

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