

Organization of the Assembly

Iowa Democrats rallied strongly in 1954 to recoup legislative losses suffered in the crushing defeat dealt out by Dwight Eisenhower and the Republicans two years previously. They not only held the three House seats they had won in 1952 but snatched 15 more from the Republicans at the 1954 election. Moreover, they re-elected three Democratic Senators, whose terms expired in 1954, and seized from Republicans two additional seats which, with that occupied by their lone hold-over Senator, gave them a total of six. Even with these Democratic gains, Republican majorities stood at 90 to 18 in the House and 44 to 6 in the Senate. So there was no doubt which party would organize the 56th General Assembly.

Accordingly, the 90 Republican Representatives gathered at the Hotel Kirkwood in Des Moines. By meeting only a week prior to the opening of the session Republicans reverted to tradition, forsaking a 1952 experiment when they met in December, a month ahead of the session. The earlier date was to allow the nominee for Speaker — who was assured of election — time to select his committees for announcement on opening day. However, committees were not ready

any earlier than usual in 1953, hence the return to the later caucusing date.

Many House members assembled a day ahead of the caucus to lay themselves open to last minute pleas of the eight announced candidates for the nomination for Speaker. It became increasingly evident in the caucus-eve sessions that Arthur C. Hanson of Inwood, a veteran of four terms who had strong support from the Iowa Farm Bureau Federation, was the front runner. The big question was whether other candidates — Ernest Kosek of Cedar Rapids, Vern Lisle of Clarinda, A. L. Mensing of Lowden, Earl A. Miller of Cedar Falls, George L. Paul of Brooklyn, Wendell Pendleton of Storm Lake, and W. H. Tate of Mason City — could keep the nomination from Hanson long enough to unite on a candidate to beat him. This had happened in the past on more than one occasion, so no one conceded the race to the front runner.

Next morning, however, Hanson's supporters required only three ballots — fewer than usual — to prove their strength was more than sufficient to nominate him. Needing 46 votes to win, Hanson led with 33 on the first ballot and increased his tally to 44 on the second when Pendleton and Miller withdrew, in that order, before the voting started. Tate, Paul, Mensing, and Kosek all withdrew, in that order, before the third ballot started, leaving the field to Hanson and Lisle, who counted

among his supporters friends of the Iowa Manufacturers Association. Hanson polled 50 votes to Lisle's 40 to win handily. Here is the result of the voting:

<i>Candidate</i>	<i>Ballot Number</i>		
	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>
Hanson	33	44	50
Lisle	18	30	40
Tate	9	8	—
Mensing	8	2	—
Pendleton	8	—	—
Paul	6	4	—
Kosek	5	2	—
Miller	3	—	—

Lisle leaped to his feet when the result was known to move that the vote be made unanimous for Hanson. "Let's close ranks and give the new speaker our best support," he said. "Let's make this a real session."

Hanson thanked the assemblage and commended other candidates for their high type campaigns. Turning his attention to the task ahead, he observed that "all of us have to carry our share of the load." He asked for "your help and advice" in carrying out his duties and commented that while he would give seniority some consideration in naming committees, "I'm not bound to observe it as rigidly as congress." He declared he would "give more emphasis to background, experience and personal preference," than to seniority.

Republicans next sought a nominee for speaker

pro tempore. Lisle's name was offered but he withdrew it on the ground that he had served in this capacity in 1953 and the honor should go to another. The race then narrowed to two members — Wendell Pendleton and Frank Thompson of Guthrie Center. Pendleton won 55 to 35. In his "thank you" remarks Pendleton drew warm applause when he said: "If we solve all the problems we are confronted with this will be truly an outstanding session." His nomination was made unanimous.

Election of Dewey E. Goode of Bloomfield to a third term as Republican floor leader was the next order of business. He had no opposition. Nor was A. C. Gustafson of Des Moines, a long time staff member, opposed for the chief clerkship of the House.

At this point W. C. Hendrix of Letts rose to move that the honor of calling the House to order be given to a woman, Mrs. Gladys S. Nelson of Newton. His motion was adopted unanimously. Customarily this honor is reserved for the senior legislator from Polk County which is the seat of government. By proffering the honor to Mrs. Nelson, Republicans not only defied custom but showed their distaste for the action of Polk County voters who had elected two new members to the House — both Democrats!

No sooner had the applause for Mrs. Nelson faded than Floor Leader Goode announced that

Governor-elect Leo A. Hoegh had requested an opportunity to appear before the caucus. Hoegh was introduced and, in what is believed to be the first such appearance in Iowa history, made a plea for teamwork on the part of the executive and legislative branches.

Harking back to his days as a legislator when a liaison committee worked with the Governor, Hoegh asked for a similar committee composed of one Representative from each Congressional district, in addition to the Speaker, speaker pro tempore, and floor leader, to work with him. There was a spontaneous bit of comedy which drew howls of laughter, when Hoegh declared "I fully recognize, gentlemen and Agnes," only to recover quickly when laughter broke out, "I mean Gladys — there must have been a girl named Agnes in my past — that we may have had disagreements in the past but our job is to give Iowa good government. . . . You are the voice of the people and I hope and expect to go along with your decisions. A liaison committee will go over and discuss a program to decide what is best for Iowa."

House Republicans did not immediately approve of the idea 100 per cent. Some districts named members to a "liaison" committee but others did not. As the session progressed, however, House Republicans did work out a liaison system which functioned fairly well. Senate Republicans received the same proposition direct from the in-

coming Governor at their caucus, but they never fully accepted it. They had their own ideas about a liaison committee.

There were 44 Republican Senators, and they caucused at the Hotel Savery in Des Moines on January 8. By tradition, the retiring president pro tempore calls the caucus to order if he is still a member of the Senate. If not, the honor goes to the retiring Republican floor leader if he is still a Senator. In this instance, neither gentleman was returning to the Senate, so the honor went to the chamber's dean, Senator Frank C. Byers of Marion. For the first time in recent years the caucus was opened to the press.

The first order of business was to nominate a candidate for president pro tempore. This honor went unanimously to DeVere Watson of Council Bluffs, a seven-session veteran, after W. Eldon Walter of Beaman and Alan Vest of Sac City withdrew before a vote was taken.

There was a contest for floor leader, however, with Duane E. Dewel of Algona, a three-session veteran, winning over J. T. Dykhouse of Rock Rapids — 26 to 17. A lone vote was cast for "Watson" but no one discovered whether it was for DeVere Watson, already recipient of the previous nomination, or for Harry E. Watson of Sanborn, who was not a candidate for the post.

The Senate had another job to do by virtue of the fact that Iowa no longer had a Lieutenant Gov-

ernor to call the body officially to order on opening day, Lieutenant Governor Leo Elthon having succeeded to the vacancy created by the death of Governor William S. Beardsley in November, 1954. Under the law, anyone who can prove he is a duly elected Senator is empowered to do this. Republican Senators avoided any possible confusion over the matter by asking Senator Byers to do the honors.

Then, significantly, the caucus was adjourned prior to hearing Governor-elect Hoegh. The implication was plain enough, but Senator J. Kendall Lynes of Plainfield sought out the press to make sure. By adjourning, Senator Lynes explained, the Senators were no longer officially in caucus. They were individuals who had remained in the caucus room to hear the incoming Governor. Thus, a fine line was drawn between the executive and the legislative branches — a line that was to take on additional meaning as the session progressed. Some Senators later said they were not aware, at the time, of the reason for the adjournment.

Greatly outnumbered, Iowa Democrats did not bother to nominate candidates for House or Senate offices. At a January 9th caucus at the Hotel Fort Des Moines they elected Casey Loss of Algona, a three-session veteran, as minority floor leader in the House and re-elected George O'Malley of Des Moines to that position in the Senate.

O'Malley's election touched off a rift in the ranks of the six Democratic Senators when Arnold Utzig of Dubuque, with three more sessions of experience behind him than O'Malley, stalked from the caucus room and let it be known that henceforth he would operate independently of other Democrats.

On January 10, actions of the Republican caucuses were made official. Mrs. Nelson rapped the gavel that called the House to order while across the rotunda Senator Byers performed the same duty after Senator Dewel obtained unanimous consent for him to act in the absence of the Lieutenant Governor. In the House, Gus T. Kuester of Griswold, twice House Speaker, was named temporary Speaker to serve during preliminaries. Then Carl Ringgenberg of Ames nominated the Republican candidate, Arthur C. Hanson, for Speaker. Thompson seconded for the Republicans, and Loss moved for the Democrats that a unanimous ballot be cast for the Inwood lawmaker. The motion was carried.

Roy J. Smith of Spirit Lake nominated Wendell Pendleton for speaker pro tempore. Clark H. McNeal of Belmond seconded for the Republicans, and L. A. Falvey of Albia, for the Democrats, moved that a unanimous ballot be cast for the 35-year-old veteran of two sessions. This motion was also carried.

In the Senate, Lynes nominated DeVere Wat-

son for president pro tempore. O'Malley seconded for the Democrats and moved that a unanimous ballot be cast. His motion was carried and Watson took over the chair.

Other formalities required only a few minutes and the 56th General Assembly was open for business which started immediately with the introduction of the first of several hundred bills received during the session.

FRANK T. NYE