

Liquor Probe, Air Junket, Banker Ruckus Relieve Monotony for Unicameral

By MELVIN PAUL
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LINCOLN — The legislature plunged into a revamped work schedule this week determined to drive for adjournment before June 1, but warned by one of its leaders that the members were "not getting anywhere and if you want to be here until the middle of June, you're certainly working toward it."

The warning came from impatient little Sen. Arthur Carmody, of Trenton, who is pushing for an early adjournment. The juggling of the work was ordered by Lt. Gov. Charles Warner, who with Legislative Clerk Hugo Srb, picked out 19 bills dealing with revenue and taxation and moved them to the top of the list to be considered this week. Simultaneously, Sen. Harry Pizer, of North Platte, chairman of the committee on arrangement and order, summoned his group to discuss priority for other bills.

'Head for Cover' Salon's Warning—

Whether it was the prospect of one of the longest sessions in the 14-year history of the unicameral or whether they hadn't completely recovered from last week's unscheduled overnight stay in Gering and Scottsbluff, the lawmakers were snapping at each other like tired terriers.

Committee members badgered witnesses unmercifully during the latter part of the week and there were several cases of friction on the floor. This deporter thought at first it might have been simply his imagination until he discussed with several of the men who are most sensitive

to the legislative mood, the lobbyists. "Only one thing to do when they're like this, son," an old hand cautioned, "just head for cover."

Insurance Lists Disagrees—

The liquor probe of the legislature took a back seat during the week to developments outside the legislature. Gov. Val Peterson told reporters "it appears that (Liquor Commission Blaine) Young has violated the law" by having "part of the insurance business" of 33 Omaha liquor licensees.

The governor had asked Young to furnish him with the list after Sen. Hugh Carson, of Ord, had charged Young was using his position to sell insurance to tavern owners and after a former Omaha licensee had told the liquor probe that commission agents had "given him a hard time" after he had not followed their "advice" to buy his insurance from Young.

Peterson withheld immediately action on Young pending a reply from the attorney-general as to whether he had furnished grounds for removal from office.

In his letter to the governor, Young protested that "I have never tried harder in my life to do a good job."

At week's end, Carson, who thus far has asked most of the questions in the liquor inquiry, asked another:

"Did Mr. Young supply all the names of his insurance clients in the liquor business? His list doesn't agree with mine."

Sales Tax Bill Still In Committee—

A sales tax for Nebraska? That was the question for four hours before the legislature's revenue committee last week as tireless Sen. Dwight Burney, perennial sponsor of a sales tax



FRONTIER GETS AWARD . . . Dr. William F. Swindler (third from left), director of the University of Nebraska school of journalism, presents Carroll W. ("Cal") Stewart, publisher of The Frontier, with one of two awards granted by the university. At the far left is Paul F. Wagner, publisher of the Dakota County Star (South Sioux City), which won a "general excellence" award from the Nebraska Press association. Wagner was recently appointed administrative assistant to Gov. Val Peterson. Second from the left is Jack Lough, publisher of The Albion News. The News was one of the four papers winning Ak-Sar-Ben placques for "community service." Awards were made in Lincoln at the annual Nebraska Press association convention in March. — Lincoln Star Photo.

measure, and his co-introducers Sen. Chris Metzgar, of Cedar Creek, and Carl Lindgren, of Campbell, extolled the virtues of a 2 percent tax on everything but rents, some farm supplies and articles already covered by a sales tax, like gasoline and cigarette.

The opposition was formidable. It was led by Robert Armstrong, paid secretary of the Omaha Taxpayers association, and included a solid labor front. Farm organizations were divided. The Grange, represented by B. V. Holmes, of Milburn, and Dr. H. C. Filley, of Lincoln, favored the bill, as did Charles Marshall, of Elmwood, president of the Farm Bureau Federation. Appearing against the proposal was Chris Milius, of Omaha, head of the Farmers Union.

Observers gave the bill little chance of getting out of committee. Chairman of the group is Sen. Charles Tvrdik, of Omaha, who has debated the sales tax issue publicly with Burney. In the 1949 session, for the first time, the sales tax bill was voted out to the floor but was killed there.

One Opponent of Pari-Mutuel—

Parimutuel race betting in Nebraska will continue, the government committee decided as it voted 8-0 to kill Senator Carson's proposal calling for a vote on outlawing the practice. Carson, a member of the committee, did not vote against killing his bill.

When Chairman Karl Vogel asked the 100-odd persons in the hearing room to indicate which side of the issue they were on, nearly all signified their opposition while no one appeared in support. During the hearing, however, Dr. Frank Court, pastor of St. Paul's Methodist church in Lincoln, entered and asked to speak for the bill.

"Wherever you find gambling," he told the committee, "you find a force that will tear down character."

Al Raun, of Walthill, representative of the Nebraska Fair Managers association in protesting the bill. He pointed out that more than 80 percent of Nebraska's fairs "would be in economic difficulty" without the funds from racing.

James P. Lee, of Omaha, a member of the board of governors of Ak-Sar-Ben which runs the state's biggest race meeting, emphasized the lack of demand for repeal of the law and pointed out that his organization this year budgeted \$106,000 for "charitable, education and agricultural purposes."

Others appearing in opposition were Warren Albert, of Columbus; Percy Resseque, of Madison, State Fair Secretary Ed Schultz, E. F. Pettis, of Ak-Sar-Ben, John Binning, of Lancaster County Taxpayers league; Murray Champine, Omaha businessman, and Jake Sulemberger, of the Alliance fair board.

Legislative observers predict that Senator Carson's LB 320, which levies a 5 percent tax on the handle at parimutuel tracks, will not encounter the same opposition.

Hartington Banker Opposes Appointment—

E. W. Rossiter, president of the Bank of Hartington, became involved in an argument with state

senators during a hearing before a legislative committee in Lincoln Wednesday, March 28:

The Omaha World-Herald published the following account of the incident:

"A Hartington banker startled a legislative committee Wednesday by wresting a document from the hands of a protesting state senator.

"E. W. Rossiter, president of the Bank of Hartington, won the tug-of-war with Senator John P. McKnight, of Auburn. But later he yielded to the requests of Senator McKnight and Chairman Harry Pizer, of North Platte, and handed the document back to the committee on committees.

"Declared Senator Arthur Carmody, of Trenton:

"In six sessions in the legislature, this is the most disgraceful action I've seen. I think this man owes this committee a public apology."

"Mr. Rossiter did not apologize.

"The Hartington banker had appeared to oppose approval of Governor Peterson's appointment of State Banking Director J. F. McLain to another two-year term.

"But after hearing a parade of bankers indorse Mr. McLain, the committee quickly approved the reappointment on a voice vote. The appointment now goes to the floor of the legislature for a vote.

"Mr. Rossiter declared that Mr. McLain is 'deliberately doing everything he can' to keep state banks from becoming members of the Federal Reserve System.

"He showed the committee photostatic copies of a letter addressed to him and signed by Maple T. Harl, chairman of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation. The letter praised Mr. Rossiter.

"The Hartington banker asked that the letter not be made public. He did not explain what connection he thought there was between the letter and his opposition to Mr. McLain.

"When Senator John J. Larkin, Jr., of Omaha, asked why the letter should not be made public, Mr. Rossiter strode to the head of the committee table and wrested a copy away from Senator McKnight.

"Senator McKnight insisted

that the letter go into the public records of the committee.

"Earl H. Wilkins, of Geneva, president of the Nebraska Bankers Association, introduced a string of witnesses who strongly urged Mr. McLain's reappointment."

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