

PLOTTING CHARGED TO HOUSE MEMBERS

MacWILLIAMS SPRINGS SENSATION BY ACCUSING MEMBERS OF CAUCUSING TO DEFEAT MEASURES ADVOCATED BY CERTAIN MEMBERS—CALLS CAUCUS "BEFO' DAY CLUB"—ADMITS THAT OTHER SIDE OF HOUSE HOLDS CAUCUS.

Its guy line loosed by Representative MacWilliams, the only real, palpating and sizzling sensation of the session to date floated into the House yesterday morning.

The St. Johns member characterized the House caucus as a "Befo' Day Club," and charged that the members composing the caucus were organized to fight any and all measures offered or advocated by certain members of the House and Senate, whom he named.

This condition, he declared, was unprecedented in the Florida Legislature. The statement made in an excited pitch brought on a lively situation, and heads popped up in different sections of the House, much after the manner of corn in a hot oven, and the measure was introduced with such force that trouble seemed unavoidable.

The heated remarks and retorts of the members were neatly rounded out, however, with a happy don't by Representative Knight of Columbia, and the session ended amicably, while the ministerial member from Orange (Crawford) stretched his catholic arms over the assembly and adjured them to cultivate the arts of peace and the affection of fraternity.

The discussion arose over Senate Bill No. 205, which was offered in the Senate by Senator Sams and passed without inquiry or debate.

The bill seeks to amend the law concerning the letting of the State printing contract by requiring of bidders a certified check for only \$250, and providing that the printing may be divided into many lots and let to any number of bidders.

The measure came up on special order, and Mr. Kirkland moved indefinite postponement.

Mr. Wells arose to oppose the motion. "I hope the motion will be lost," said he. "It is a well-known fact that there were only two bids at the time the last contract was let, for the reason that it was necessary for bidders to deposit with the Board of State Institutions a certified check for \$12,500.

"There are very few printers who can put up that much money, and some of this work for the State could be done by other printers. One of the bidders referred to did not have the certified check required and his bid was thrown out in spite of the fact that it was from forty to fifty per cent lower than the other bid. Everybody could give a check for \$250, and it is a well-known fact that the man who gave the check for \$12,500 never had that much money in his life."

Mr. Wells explained that he did not refer to the present State Printer, for he was not the original bidder, having obtained control of the State printing from the former printer (Hilson).

"I think this bill is right and just," continued Mr. Wells. "If the State can be saved forty to fifty per cent on its printing it should be done. I am in favor of giving every man in Florida a chance to bid on this work."

Mr. MacWilliams desired to ask the gentleman from Lake (Kirkland) why he made the motion to indefinitely postpone action on the bill.

Mr. Kirkland—Simply because I don't think that any man, be he resident of Tallahassee, St. Augustine or elsewhere, should be given the responsibility of doing the State printing with a deposit of only \$250 as a pledge of good faith and ability to do it. I could myself put up a check for \$250, and I couldn't print one day's journal to save my life. Then, again, under this proposed law, the Board of State Institutions would be eternally advertising for bids."

Mr. MacWilliams then proceeded to explode the machine which set the House agog.

"If there ever was a bill before this House which spoke of honesty and fairness this is it, for it provides for the letting of the State printing contract without fear or favor to the best bidder.

"Mr. Speaker, this is the first time in some time that this Legislature has had two political parties represented in it. We have here a Representative of the Socialist party (the gentleman from Manatee), but he represents his county well and I have the greatest respect for him. But we have also a condition in this House that has never existed before; we have a part of this House caucusing against—not measures, but men. We are reliably informed that these men have agreed that no measure offered or advocated by Mr. Griggs, myself, Mr. Watson, Mr. Wartmann or Mr. Clarke or by Senators Harris or Buckman can be passed here.

"This 'Befo' Day Club' meets every night over the city market in the city of Tallahassee and decides upon what they will support and what they won't support, and I think we might as well hold the sessions of the Legislature over there."

Mr. Richbourg wanted to know where the gentleman got his information and who the members of the "Befo' Day Club" were.

Mr. MacWilliams—I think you are one of them. I have a complete list. I say, Mr. Speaker, that the members of this body have no right to oppose measures because of their advocacy by certain men. I will vote and have voted on the merits of every proposition as it appeals to me, and it is my hope and my desire to believe that I have been misinformed. I sincerely hope it is not true. I would hate to think that the members of this body were

R. R. COMMISSION GETS \$25,000 A YEAR.

Senator Broome Opposed to Clerk Being Raised to \$1,800 and Increase in Salary Cut to \$1,500.

Senator Adams introduced a bill yesterday providing an appropriation of \$25,000 annually for the Railroad Commission, an increase of \$10,000.

This increase was opposed necessary on account of providing special counsel for the Commission and authorizing the body to employ an inspector of the physical properties of railroads.

The bill also provided that the salary of the clerk to the Commission be increased from \$1,200 to \$1,800 a year.

This portion of the bill brought prompt objection from Senator Broome.

He offered an amendment making the salary \$1,500, and denounced the larger sum as outrageous extravagance.

"Why," said he, "all the other clerks of the State departments receive not more than \$1,500, and it is enough salary."

"Talk about too much work; it's all nonsense and poppycock."

In support of the increased salary, Senator Adams read from the report of the Railroad Commission of the value of the services of the clerk and therefore he should receive more salary. The clerk was receiving the same salary now as in 1897, and was worth more now to the State on account of his experience.

"It is a 50 per cent increase," said Senator Willis, "and I am greatly opposed to it. With other employers the usual rate of increase is 10 per cent, and this increase of 50 per cent is entirely too much. If he is not satisfied, let him resign," added Mr. Willis. "Lots of men who are just as competent would be willing to take the position at \$1,500."

Senator Cone spoke of the experience the clerk has gained, whereby he had grown valuable to the Commission.

"He should have an increase of salary," said Mr. Cone. "He occupies the most responsible office in the Capitol next to a Cabinet officer, and should be paid in accordance with the importance of the office."

Senator Broome's amendment was adopted, and then the bill was passed, twenty-four voting for and five against.

so lost to a sense of justice and fairness as to condemn measures because they were introduced into this House by certain men. I don't want to believe it. But I understand that the gentleman from St. Johns was caucused on by the 'Befo' Day Club," and it was agreed to oppose it on the floor of this House.

Mr. Harven—The gentleman made any such statement as that is a diabolical lie.

Mr. Farris—Let him lie and let him get through—I'll answer him.

Mr. Kirkland—The gentleman said he was RELIABLY INFORMED. If he was reliably informed, how can he hope that he was misinformed?

Mr. Williams—Point of order, Mr. Speaker. The gentleman is not speaking to the question.

The Speaker—The gentleman will confine his remarks to the question before the House.

Mr. MacWilliams—I will, Mr. Speaker. I submit, sir, that this bill is a perfectly fair proposition. It opens the opportunity to everybody to make a bid on this State printing. I do not make charges against anybody, but I say this much, and no harm can be made of it; it offers a fair field to all, with favoritism to none, so as to secure to all a fair deal—ain't that fair? I want to say that I do not make charges against anybody. I have the greatest admiration and respect for every member of this House, and I say that I trust the rumor is untrue.

Mr. Richbourg—I demand to know the name of the gentleman's informant. The honor of the members of this House has been questioned, and the House demands that the name of the person be made known to it.

Mr. MacWilliams—This has been general talk. I do not make the charge; I say only that it has been a rumor. If it is denied on the floor of this House that is sufficient to satisfy me.

Mr. Farris—Mr. Speaker, I regret that the gentleman from St. Johns has seen fit to openly charge on the floor of this House that measures before this House have been acted against because of the men behind them.

"I will say that we have a caucus and have been meeting every night and we expect to meet every night until the close of the session; just so long as vicious measures come before this House, just so long we propose to caucus and fight those measures in the interest of the people. The gentleman has made charges without proof to back them, and I desire to say on behalf of the 'Befo' Day Club,' and I am proud to own that I am a member of that organization, that we have never discussed men, and our attention has been given to measures only, and if any man has left that caucus and made the statement that measures were opposed because of their advocates, that man is a malicious and unqualified liar, and I am responsible for the statement."

The Speaker—The gentleman will refrain from using unparliamentary language.

Mr. Farris—I am replying to the gentleman from St. Johns, sir, and he was not so particular about the language he used. I want to challenge that member, sir, to produce proof to support his assertions. He makes a charge on the floor of this House, and when driven to the corner he comes back with the feeble excuse that it was a rumor. And so far as this bill which we now have under consideration is concerned, I can say that I never knew of it until this morning, and on behalf of the mem-

HOUSE DECLARES FOR IMMIGRATION

BILL BY MR. KNIGHT OF CITRUS UPON RECONSIDERATION PASSES FOR ENGROSSING—ENTERTAINING CROSS-FIRE BETWEEN REESE AND FARRIS.

Mr. Kirkland came into the House yesterday morning with both sides of his slate filled and the lackadaisical air of having lost sleep.

The appropriation bill which passed the House Friday afternoon, carrying more than half a million dollars for higher education, caused Mr. Kirkland to sit up in the night and calculate how long it would take a poor man to save that much money. He gave the House the benefit of his figuring at the first opportunity. This was offered when he moved reconsideration of the immigration bill.

"While we are appropriating so much money for higher education, Mr. Speaker, it does seem to me that we might afford to spend a little money for immigration. This we know will do some good. It would take an ordinary man nineteen hundred and ninety-nine years to save the amount of money appropriated by this House yesterday for higher education. Now that we have given this much money we ought to get some people into the State to enjoy the benefits of it.

"We've got room in Florida for five million people, and we wouldn't be much crowded if we had them. We all know that in some sections of the State we can travel half a day without sighting a dwelling house. We need people here to build up the waste places. This State must eventually become an agricultural State; the timber and the phosphate are being exhausted, and we will in the end have to fall back upon the resources of the soil."

Mr. Smith of Lake reinforced the remarks of his colleague. "I feel it my duty," he said, "to put myself on record in advocacy of this bill. This State is but wanting the magic touch of industry to build up the vacant spaces with homes, and to make habitable the wilderness running wild. This is one of the best States in the Union, yet we are much behind others when it comes to industrial and agricultural progress. If this Legislature refuses to pass this bill it will go down into history as an unprogressive body, but if we do pass it I truly believe that our posterity will be grateful."

Mr. Reese, who had opposed the bill previously, had not changed his mind. He saw in it a great evil, because it would, he said, bring an undesirable class of people into the State to compete with the labor already here, and would cheapen the price of labor.

Mr. Willis of Gadsden did not regard this as a serious proposition at all. He said negro labor was unreliable and dictatorial and healthy competition would improve conditions.

Mr. DuPont, who has an immigration bill pending providing for an appropriation of \$2,500 to be used by the Commissioner of Agriculture, opposed the bill carrying the larger appropriation (\$15,000). He thought it enough to begin with the smaller amount.

Mr. Knight of Citrus said that the gentleman from Escambia (Reese) seemed to be unable to get over the idea that immigrants were to be brought to the State to be subjected to a state of peonage, because the gentleman had prosecuted cases of peonage in which foreigners had figured as the victims. Mr. Knight referred to THE MORNING SUN editorial as a conclusive argument in favor of immigration.

Mr. Parkinson was in favor of the bill. He related an anecdote aptly. He said that he and Mr. Reese had been able to agree on most measures up to this one. It reminded him of the old Quaker in a new community. Speaking to his wife he said: "Martha, it seemeth to me that everybody hereabouts is queer but me and thee, and sometimes I think thee a little queer." Mr. Parkinson thought Mr. Reese a little queer on the immigration bill.

Mr. Farris thought he would fail in his duty if he did not support the bill. He could not agree with Mr. Reese as to the interference with labor conditions; he didn't think there was any need to fear such a result; yet he understood Mr. Reese's position, because he was the representative of organized labor.

Mr. Reese: "Will the gentleman permit a question?"

Mr. Farris: "Certainly."

Mr. Reese: "Haven't you a petition in your desk from the organized labor of your county asking you to oppose this bill?"

Mr. Farris: "I have. Will the gentleman yield to a question?"

Mr. Reese: "Certainly."

Mr. Farris: "Haven't you a resolution in your desk from the Pensacola Board of Trade requesting you to support this bill?"

Mr. Reese: "I have. But the Pensacola Board of Trade is composed of half a dozen real estate men, who own all the salable land in Escambia County."

Mr. Farris continued his remarks after the laugh at the expense of the Escambia County member had subsided.

"Nobody appreciates more fully the worth of the laboring man than I do," he said, "and it is largely due to his loyalty to me that I was given such a handsome plurality."

Mr. Reese: "Then, do you not think you owe your constituency the duty to accede to their wishes in this matter?"

Mr. Farris: "I do not think I am doing violence to my duty when a matter of such great importance to the State is involved when I can see nothing but benefits to all the State to result from the passage of this measure."

The bill was passed for engrossing.