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Getaway Day of the Legislature.



MINORITY FOUGHT THOUGH TAMED

DENOUNCED BILL CREATING LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION TO INVESTIGATE I. I. FUND, BUT DEMAND FOR COMPLETE INVESTIGATION PASSED THE BILL.

After a great deal of talk, recriminatory and otherwise the Senate passed the House bill, as amended Thursday, providing for a Legislative commission to investigate the I. I. Fund.

Using the text of unfairness to the Joint Committee, and charging that an attempt to conceal something was the object of the Senate majority, were the sole arguments of the minority who spoke against the Legislative Commission.

In view of the effort the majority had made all along to have the investigation conducted in a proper manner, after the adjournment of the Legislature, it is difficult to imagine on what grounds this contention of whitewash, as alleged by Senators Harris and Beard, existed.

Rather the opposition to the bill denoted, if it indicated anything, that the minority did not care for further investigation, and its insistence that the exhibits of the committee be included in the report spread upon the Journal, pointed more directly to the desire of those opposing the commission, that the ending of all investigation was the object sought.

When election of members of the commission occurred, those who opposed the bill were given opportunity to serve, but declined, whether because of sulks, or pretense of standing by the members of the old committee, or with intent to force expression that the commission was administration in its complexion.

It is up to the public to choose the right answer. First action was taken by Senator Beard, soon after the Senate convened yesterday morning, when he moved to waive the rules and put the bill on its passage.

He said: "I don't like the bill on account of the amendments, but I recognize the fact that unless this bill is passed there is danger of an extra session being called."

In spite of Mr. Beard's declaration for the necessity of the bill, he voted against it when it did come up for passage.

Suggestion being made that the action on the bill be deferred until the investigating committee submit its report, Mr. Beard withdrew his motion.

When the report was finally submitted it revealed the fact that the Investigating Committee had discovered irregularities in the fund, as far as it had probed.

Accompanying the report were several exhibits—the findings of the expert accountants, newspaper clippings, reports of the Trustees, etc.—and after the report proper had been read Mr. Hudson moved that it be spread on the Journal, exclusive of the exhibits.

Senator Beard offered a substitute, that all of the report, except the six volumes of the I. I. reports, be spread on the Journal, but the motion was lost.

"I object to the concealment of the exhibits of this report," exclaimed Senator Willis.

Mr. Hudson, in support of his motion, commended the committee for its work, and declared it would not be fair to it for the Senate to spread an incomplete report on the Journal.

"We are now working to provide for the completion of this investigation," said Mr. Hudson.

"Do you want an incomplete report?" demanded Mr. Beard.

"I understand that this report is complete to a certain period," said Mr. Willis, "and in justice to the people of my district, I want to know and the people of my district want to know about these exhibits."

The argument advanced that the report was incomplete prevailed, and the motion of Mr. Hudson was adopted.

The rules were suspended by a vote of 20 yeas to 5 nays and the bill was taken up for action.

Mr. Beard denounced the measure bitterly, declaring

that the power was placed in the hands of the majority to elect the members of the commission.

"It puts it in the power of the majority to create a whitewash committee," he cried.

"I warn the Senate that when it comes time to elect the commission to get men who are above partisanship—men who are fair."

"I am confident that Governor Broward is all right," continued Mr. Beard, "but there are men who fear investigation, and I don't want a commission to whitewash them."

Senator Broome declared the Legislature favored the administration and he feared the election of a commission that possessed the same political feeling.

Mr. Henderson thought the amendment to the bill discharging the joint committee and electing a commission was a reflection on the word of the committee, and he would not, for that reason, vote for the bill.

He declared that it would be unjust to Governor Broward and the administration, for which he proclaimed a high regard.

Also Mr. Henderson declared that he would not elect a commission because a majority of each house could select the commission as each saw fit.

In opposition to the theory set up by Mr. Henderson and the other speakers against the bill, Mr. Cone made a forceful speech.

He pointed out the reasons for a full and complete investigation of the fund in order that for all time charges and insinuations of wrong doing would be removed, or else if irregular transactions had occurred they would be found and the guilt placed where it belonged.

Mr. Cone laid special stress on the value of a man's good name and the effort that should be made to sustain reputable character.

"I would rather have the whole I. I. Fund sunk to the bottom of hades than to have one man wronged," declared Mr. Cone.

"It has been said here that Governor Broward controls the Legislature," said Mr. Cone. "Then if he does he is the greatest Governor that Florida has ever had, for no man or set of men has ever been able to control the Legislature."

"The good names of men are at stake, and therefore I demand that a full investigation, in accordance with the provisions of this bill, be made," he added.

Senator Johnson ridiculed the administration and the bill, and denounced the movement to continue the investigation, saying it was a bluff of the administration.

"The Legislature reminds me of fly paper," he said, "as far as the drainage proposition is concerned, because they get stuck to it."

"I don't charge anybody with anything," he declared, and then attacked the majority of the Senate, saying that the members were afraid not to pass the bill. "If they are not," he continued, "why, my saying so will do no harm. They need not wear the cap unless it fits."

Mr. Johnson defended the members of the committee and charged that they had been treated unfairly by the amendment cutting them out of future service.

Mr. Crane did not agree with Mr. Johnson and said that no aspersion had been cast against the committee by this action. He believed the Legislature had a right to act as it deemed best, and the amended bill was the result of its deliberations.

Senator Harris lauded the committee and its work. He said he had believed that the commission would find nothing wrong in the transactions of the Trustees, except that he was positive some land had been sold below market value.

"I held this impression until a few days ago," said Mr. Harris, "but now I believe that there is a nigger in the woodpile and somebody is to be whitewashed."

Senator Buckman deprecated the implied reflection on the work of the committee and the criticism of the executive sessions, and defended the committee's policy. In this he was aided by Mr. Humphries, who said: "I considered the sources of these criticisms and paid no attention to them, but went on doing my duty."

On passage of the bill, the vote was:

Yeas—Senators Alford, Baker, Cone, Cottrell, Crane, Crews, Davis, Girardeau, Hudson, Jackson, Jett, Massey, Neel, Withers, West (4th), Zim—10.

Nays—Mr. President, Senators Beard, Broome, Crill, Clark, Henderson, Johnson, McCrory, Sims, Willis—11.

REPORT DIDN'T GO IN THE HOUSE

REFUSED TO ENTER EXHIBITS ON JOURNAL BECAUSE WORK OF INVESTIGATING COMMITTEE WAS PARTIAL AND INCOMPLETE—FIGHT ON SENATE AMENDMENTS TO HOUSE BILL CREATING INVESTIGATING COMMISSION.

It was well without the witness all day yesterday. To be true, it was not outside, but it wasn't inside. The elements poured out a libation and supplied moisture if not exhilaration.

Yet there was small need for artificial good cheer, for between acts the members assembled themselves together around the speaker's stand and heard the words of maternity pronounced feelingly by each other, and while the attaches turned back the hands of the clock, to keep in violation the terms of the resolution that stipulated adjournment at 8:30, the members of the House of 1907 marked time with warm heart throbs that spring naturally in the heart after the battle is over and the field is fair and quiet.

A few bills were passed in the morning, none of any general importance, except the bill of Senator Trammell, providing for additional help to rural schools. This provoked some discussion, and Mr. Willis of Levy kept good his record to the last, by objecting to the passage, because it meant the expenditure of more money. Mr. Watson called the laugh on the gentleman from Levy, when he said that he would be for the bill, because the gentleman from Levy was against it, if for no other reason. And there was more merriment at the expense of the Levy county member, when Mr. MacWilliams introduced a bill to change the name of the county of Levy to Bloxham. It was entered as House Bill No. 19999, and after having been read the second time it was made the special order for the next Legislature.

The House spent the day waiting on the Senate, and when the message came over they were acted on with dispatch and a recess taken until another installment came. It was during these intermissions that some one of the statesmen was called to the chair and each of the Representatives was given an opportunity to talk. It didn't matter what he talked about, attention was given, and the day took the type of an all-day singing.

The important event of the day was the reorganization of the commission to investigate the acts and doings of the Trustees of the Internal Improvement Fund. The House bill, providing that the commission should be composed of eight members, seven of whom should be the members composing the Joint Committee which had conducted the investigation thus far, and the additional member to be Representative Knight of Columbia, was amended by the Senate, so that the entire commission was made elective, three members to be from the Senate and to be elected by that body, and four members from the House to be elected by that body, thus reducing the number from eight again to seven.

The bill was amended in some other particulars, and in all of the amendments the House concurred without discussion, except as to the election of the members.

The Senate amendments to the bill and the report of the Investigating Committee were considered at the same time, not upon motion, but by incident. The Senate message was received and read, and at that moment Mr. Griggs of the committee submitted the report.

Mr. Watson gave opinion that the amendments of the Senate, making the members of the commission elective, was a reflection on the House and on the Speaker and the members of the committee. He stated that he would not serve on the commission.

Mr. Reese stated, as a member of the Investigating Committee, that he did not regard the action as a reflection on anybody.

Mr. MacWilliams was opposed to concurrence in the Senate amendment, and Mr. Richbourg favored concurrence. He thought it the proper course to take, and he

(Continued on Fourth Page.)