

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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Legislative Record

Seventy-Fifth Legislature

SPECIAL SESSION

STATE OF MAINE

1912

utter absurdity of presenting that measure as a part of the program in this special session.

The act goes into effect Jan. 1, 1913. The first election upon which it can have any effect is the election held in the fall of 1914. The next Legislature of course convenes on the first Wednesday, in January, 1913, having thus nearly two years of time before the first election which can be affected by this bill.

That is plenty of time for the next Legislature to redistrict the State. So in view of the form this measure has taken it becomes apparent that there was no good reason for including it in the program of this session, unless it is a political reason.

It seems to me there are many things that might have been properly included in this session.

A message was received from the House inquiring if there was any further business to be transmitted to that body.

Mr. MILLIKEN: (Continuing) There are certain things, Mr. President, that might have been properly included in the program of this special session which constitute a greater emergency, and for which there is a much greater need than this act. I might mention Presidential primaries, and a law for the recall of unfaithful officials. Such a bill was prepared, I understand, with the idea of introducing it here if any bills outside of the program of the administration had been admitted. The State highway money was left out of the bill last session. That certainly ought to have been presented at this session. In this bill I wish to say that it is an unnecessary part of the program of this special session.

The bill, An Act to apportion representatives to Congress, was then passed to be enacted without objection.

Mr. MILLIKEN: Mr. President, on the act to provide for the use of uniform ballot boxes and for the preservation of ballots cast at elections I have very little to say. I know practically nothing about the bill. I ven-

ture to say that not one member of this Legislature has read it. We may get home and find things in it we never heard of. We had no public hearing. I know just one thing about the bill, that it compels officials of towns to forward ballots to the secretary of State within 24 hours after the election. I believe that provision is unwise, and that the towns should manage their affairs as far as possible. I believe it will result in inconvenience to candidates who desire to inspect ballots. They can do it now conveniently and without expense. Under the new arrangement they must go to Augusta. If the town officials can be trusted to keep the ballots over night and 24 hours, they can be trusted for a longer time, to allow inspection by candidates.

The bill, An Act to provide for the use of uniform ballot boxes and for the preservation of ballots cast at elections was then passed to be enacted without objection.

Resolve amending Section 15 of Article 9 of the Constitution relating to a bond issue for State roads.

Mr. STEARNS of Oxford: Mr. President at the time I reserved an opportunity to speak upon this resolve I had had no chance to examine the amendments which had been presented, and it was only with that in view that I did so, because I am not here to oppose any proposition which has in view the betterment of our highways and the roads of the State. It is only a question of how it is best to proceed in order to accomplish that purpose.

I am not going to attempt any opposition to the bill, but it does occur to me that the provision of the amendment may in the future confront not only the proponents of the measure, but also those who are opposed to the general provisions which will grow out of this proposition. I feel that we would be better satisfied, everyone would be better satisfied, that the proponents of the measure and those who may not be in entire sympathy with it would be better satisfied, if the wording were not so ambiguous as it is. It seems to me the wording of the

amendment in regard to the distribution of the money among the counties equitably may not meet with such a construction as we all would agree upon.

We have not had time to consider this matter in the manner in which I think it should have been considered, and I have no desire to obstruct the general purpose; it is for the betterment of our roads, and the adoption of some measure that will work out that purpose. I have no desire to make any further remarks upon the question.

Mr. MILLIKEN: Mr. President, there should be no politics about good roads, and a good roads measure should not be a political measure. Those of us that remember the difficulty with which a reasonable appropriation was obtained for good roads at the session of this Legislature certainly did not expect that the present administration was as enthusiastic as it is apparently now. Of course we all understand the origin of this bill. The subject was not mentioned in the Governor's first announcement of his proposed special session. He was invited to Portland to a good roads meeting. He caught the idea there that day. There is going to be a considerable amount of money in the state for good roads at the end of the year. I pointed out a year ago that the tax of six mills for the current year was excessive. The excess will be on hand at the end of the year. That might be a nucleus for good roads. None of us wish to oppose any move for good roads. I think it is one of the best economic moves before the state, and a candidate for governor has been interested in this subject for years, and has done as much as any man in Maine to foster good roads throughout the state.

I speak of this now to point out again the inconceivable folly of putting an important measure like this through this special session without giving an opportunity for full hearing and discussion, and for the presentation of views upon this subject by men outside of the Legislature. The wisdom of the state on good roads is not confined to members of the Legislature, nor to the executive department. It is said that because this matter is going to the people there is no need for considera-

tion; that the people will consider it when they vote upon it. It is precisely because it is going to the people why it should have consideration here. I wish to point out here that there is serious danger in submitting an important matter like this to the people of Maine, without taking pains to see that it is fully discussed in advance and presented to the people in proper form. I have doubt whether the amount is large enough if we are to embark upon a good roads campaign. Presented to the people in a half-baked stage it is possible that many who might favor it if they understood it thoroughly, would not favor it when it came to a vote.

I supposed when we started in on this session that we would have a fair amount of time for committee hearings, and I sent out a hundred letters to representative men in the county and state, asking their opinion upon this matter and others. The letters I have already received in reply show that the feeling is general towards good roads, but there is great doubt and lack of information as to what this measure means, how this money will be expended, as to how fast it will be used, where the roads will be built, and all that sort of thing. We do not perhaps realize here how much a series of committee meetings, held here while we are all together, where men can gather; how much hearings of that sort tend to clear matters under discussion.

We are all for good roads. We hope since this thing has gone through and is to be submitted to the people that it is in the best form. I really fear we shall find that the lack of information on the part of the people throughout the state will illustrate to us again the folly with which we have been guilty. I venture to predict now that when the average plain citizen of the state finds out and really comes to know that this Maine Legislature, meeting in special emergency session, upon what the Governor has deemed to be a solemn occasion, and of sufficient urgency to authorize him to call a special session, and to bang through this great measure in a few days, and deliberately leave a week open when we will draw our pay; I believe then we will hear a roar of laughter from Kittery to Ft. Kent.

Mr. STAPLES of Knox: Mr. President, I should like to be able to conceive of some Democratic legislation that the Senator from Aroostook would not object to. I understand perfectly well, and I think everybody else does, that he is doing this for political buncombe. I do not blame him. The issue that we have made here is the only issue the Republican party has to find fault with Democracy. For a great many years the Republican party of the State of Maine has had control of the Legislature. And you have not originated a piece of legislation that has been in the interest of the common people of the State of Maine. I have no doubt but what the voters of the State of Maine having three months to examine the road bill or any other bill of this session, are bright and intelligent enough to know what that bill means. I am glad that this Legislature has shown the people of the state that the Democratic party is a progressive party, and that we have passed legislation here for the whole people.

Now I should not have spoken here, but I found that the effort made by the Senator from Aroostook, when he talks so much about the bill, is an insult to the voters of the state; when he says that they are not intelligent enough to comprehend what the bill is. I have no doubt that having three or four months to look it over, they are intelligent enough to understand it, and if they are not let us appropriate money and send the Senator from Aroostook over the state to instruct them.

As far as the ballot box is concerned and the election law, I think that the amendment put in there, that the ballots be sent to the Secretary of State within twenty-four hours is a wise provision, and surely there can be no suspicion that the ballots are tampered with by anybody.

As far as the good roads bill is concerned, we are all in favor of good roads. I opposed the bill until the amendment was put in that the money raised should be equitable divided in the counties of the State. I tell you when we go home to our constituents

they will thank us for that piece of legislation.

If you oppose all this progressive legislation you will be buried, next fall, so deep that you never will be resurrected.

Mr. MILLIKEN: Mr. President, perhaps I did not make myself entirely clear. I wished to point out this danger; it is entirely feasible that a constitutional amendment can be submitted to the people of Maine that they can accept if it had been made plain here just what was behind the whole thing; while not understanding it they may reject it. Suppose this matter is presented to the people and not understanding it thoroughly they do reject it; I suppose the senator would feel somewhat embarrassed, but undoubtedly he will present the matter every session, whether or no.

On the final passage of the resolve a rising vote was taken.

The vote in favor of the passage of the resolve was unanimous and the President announced that the resolve was finally passed.

Resolve providing for an amendment to the Constitution relating to the sale and manufacture of intoxicating liquors, came from the House, endorsed "House of Representatives, March 23, 1912. Seventy-one voted for the passage of the resolve, 64 against. The two-thirds vote required not obtained. Resolve failed of final passage."

Mr. STAPLES: Mr. President, if in order I move you that the Senate insists upon its former action.

Mr. SANBORN of Piscataquis: Mr. President, when this bill was voted upon, the other day, there were some of us that always objected to the bill, that thought it would be as well to pass on to the other branch, and then after passing there, when it came in here for a two-thirds vote it could be voted down or we could vote to finally pass it, as we saw fit. As of course it only took a majority vote to carry it through this branch, and you will remember if present that I made