

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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LEGISLATIVE RECORD

OF THE

Ninety-Eighth Legislature

OF THE

STATE OF MAINE

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Purposes," which was tabled by the Senator from Somerset, Senator Sinclair, pending final passage.

On motion by Mr. Sinclair of Somerset, the resolve and accompanying papers were retabled pending final passage.

On motion by Mr. Martin of Kennebec, the Senate voted to take from the table House Committee Report of the Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs on "Resolve Authorizing Aeronautics Commission to Conduct an Augusta-Waterville Airport Survey," (H. P. 1066) (L. D. 1524) reporting that the same Ought to pass as amended by Committee Amendment A, which was tabled by that Senator earlier in today's session pending motion of Mr. Silsby of Hancock that the resolve and accompanying papers be indefinitely postponed.

Mr. SILSBY of Hancock: Mr. President, since I made my motion to indefinitely postpone I have conferred with the Senator from Kennebec, Senator Martin, and I believe that he should have the opportunity to amend the resolve to take out my objections, and there I request that I be permitted to withdraw my motion.

The PRESIDENT: The Senator from Hancock, Senator Silsby, requests permission of the Senate to withdraw his motion. Is this the pleasure of the Senate?

The motion prevailed.

On motion by Mr. Martin of Kennebec, the "Ought to pass as amended" report of the committee was accepted in concurrence and the resolve was given its first reading. Committee Amendment A was read and adopted.

Mr. Martin then presented Senate Amendment A and moved its adoption. Senate Amendment A was read and adopted, and under suspension of the rules the resolve was given its second reading and passed to be engrossed as amended by Committee Amendment A and by Senate Amendment A in non-concurrence and sent down for concurrence.

On motion by Mr. Cole of Waldo, the Senate voted to take from the table Bill, "An Act Increasing Regis-

tration Fees for Motor Vehicles and Operators' Licenses," (H. P. 1088) (L. D. 1572) which was tabled by that Senator earlier in today's session pending passage to be enacted.

Mr. COLE of Waldo: Mr. President, I now move that the bill be passed to be enacted.

Mr. SILSBY of Hancock: Mr. President and members of the Senate: I think this is one of the most serious matters we have to decide in this 98th session of the Legislature. I say it is most serious because it is a matter that is going to reach at least 420,000 people, most of whom are citizens of this State.

I would like you to know that if this increase in drivers' licenses and increase in registration is enacted that we are endeavoring to raise approximately \$420,000 from increase on drivers' licenses in each year of the biennium, and approximately \$466,000 on the seven percent increase of registration, making a total of \$886,000 per year.

Now you will recall that a few days ago, or a week or so, I presented to this honorable body an amendment, by which amendment it was my purpose — and I think I had the approval of a good many citizens of this State — that all of the State Police should be paid out of the general fund rather than the highway fund. Somehow it seems to me and others that if we can go part way we might just as well go all the way.

My purpose in offering that amendment was to be consistent in my philosophy of State finance, that we have no right to have a bond issue such as the highway bond issue of \$24,000,000, unless we provide some way to pay for it; and with the State Police being paid entirely from the general fund we would have provided that way to pay for the bond issue.

Now it seems to me that it is not too late at this time to go all the way and pay the State Police in their entirety from the general fund; and I say again, if we can go half way let's go all the way. So there must be some of you that believe in tapping the general fund at this time.

There has been a great deal of talk in and about the corridors of this State House since we first convened as to the additional sales tax, and many have said and I think many believe that perhaps to finance our program for the next biennium that we only needed half a cent increase in the sales tax. The argument against it was the administration, that it would be too difficult to administer. Now if we only needed the half cent, then tell me how in commonsense can we say today that when we have got a cent more money, which is at least nine million dollars a year, that in addition to that we still have got to pick away at the peoples' pocket-books to get another \$866,000 a year? Somehow I may be old fashioned; I am progressive, I hope, I am not a liberal, but I do think we can get along without this money for the next biennium.

I well recall, back in 1951, when the sales tax was enacted and I happened to be sort of in the middle of that battle, the argument of the opposition was that we would soon be increasing it, and we are. I went along with the increase with the thought in mind and with the knowledge that we are acquiring more money than we need at this time for our next biennium. I do believe that under the high cost of construction and the high costs of today with the low value of the dollar, that perhaps it is better policy for us to go along and just leave the 420,000 operators alone for a time at least.

I do not know where we are going. We have not endeavored to broaden the base of the sales tax; as a matter of fact we have narrowed the base. I did not find any fault with giving the farmer what he got because I think he has had a tough break, but I do object to giving him some money with one hand and taking it away with the other. I do object to us having a handful of money in this hand which is all for the common purpose of operating this great sovereignty of the State of Maine, and having a surplus in the hand way beyond what would be safe for operating, and in this one having none, and asking the people to put something into that.

Now I cannot go along with the argument that drivers' licenses are at the same price as they were many years ago when the dollar had a value, because on the other hand what is the automobile driver paying as of today? What have we done to the automobile owner this year? If he trades his automobile, under the sales tax and he pays a two thousand dollar trade-in price he would pay under the 2 per cent \$40, and under our newly-enacted sales tax when it does become law, he is paying \$60. Isn't he paying enough. Haven't we tapped the automobile driver enough, haven't we tapped the owner enough? And isn't he paying in proportion the additional tax on gasoline? Whether he is an owner or a driver he has to buy gasoline. Sometimes I borrow a car, and usually I borrow my wife's car and her gas tank is usually empty and I am paying for the operation of the car.

So I say to you: I just can't go along with this increase in drivers' licenses and in the increase across the board. I still believe that we can go part way, we can finance this bond issue out of the general fund for the next two years and let the next legislature do what they want to do then. Probably this is a futile attempt on my part, but I am going to stand up and vote against the enactment of this increase in drivers' licenses.

Mr. COLE of Waldo: Mr. President and members of the Senate: I hesitate to debate this issue with my good friend, the Senator from Hancock, Senator Silsby, but I think we are all agreed that if a twenty-four million dollar bond issue is necessary — and I think we are agreed that it is — that we should have intestinal fortitude enough to stand up here and set up enough debt service to retire that issue.

Now, as the good Senator from Hancock, Senator Silsby says, the drivers' licenses are the main bone of his contention, that it is unfair that a driver should pay an increase of one dollar. Now shouldn't we make a comparison between the driver and the registered owner? There are drivers without cars who earn their living operating motor vehicles. Would it be fair and just to let the driver who is earning his

living by operating one of these vehicles to go scot-free and still increase the registration fee of the automobile and truck owner? To me that seems most unfair.

It is true, as the good Senator from Hancock, Senator Silsby, said, that the cost of drivers' licenses have not been increased for many years, since 1912 to be exact. That was in the days when two dollars really was two dollars. Now they ask: Why should we increase drivers' licenses by a dollar, because many other states have less fees? I would like to bring out this fact: that the State of Connecticut, which we all agree is probably without doubt one of the richest in New England in industry as well as in numbers, and they have a three-dollar driver's license fee. I am sure they are in a much better position than we are. Here we are up in Maine with more miles of highway than any other state in New England, and only 930,000 people to support our highways.

Let me make another comparison, with the State of New Jersey, which I think you will all agree is more financially-able than the State of Maine in many ways. They do have a three-dollar driver's license fee.

Now when we speak of the general fund, the sales tax and the surplus that it may bring—and I hope it does—because through these surpluses we have the only opportunity to make capital improvements for our institution, our colleges, teachers colleges and the University of Maine—and it seems to me that the policy we adopted in the past has been very sound, due to the fact that the general fund has no debt as of today. Wouldn't it be good, sound financing if we do build up a surplus and let it take care of our capital improvements? It seems sound to me. I think you will all agree that we should take advantage of our new federal program, the one that the Highway Department and the Highway Committee has set up, one of the largest and the best, I think, that this State has ever offered. I am certainly very much in favor of it, and I hope that this bill has final enactment.

Mr. HILLMAN of Penobscot: Mr. President, I rise in opposition to this bill for the reasons that the

good Senator from Hancock, Senator Silsby has presented. I have not changed my mind from the beginning of the session. I do not feel that we can continuously increase taxes, and as he has said, I think that the people back home have had enough of these increases. In order to bring this to a close, I will not continue to debate it, but I am certainly in opposition to the bill as presented by the Senator from Waldo, Senator Cole, and I ask for a division when the vote is taken.

Mr. FARLEY of York: Mr. President and members of the Senate: Since the first of January in my community I have sold the program of the increase in operators' licenses plus that on cars. My main reason for doing that is this, and I have never seen anyone yet bring the issue to the front: We have now, from a national standpoint, been paying a tax into this program that we are going along with. I notice that in New Hampshire they have passed a one-cent gas tax increase to complete their twenty-five million dollar bond issue. In the State of Vermont they have raised operators' licenses two dollars and their cars four dollars. If we are going to participate in this program for which we have paid for years into the federal government it is about time for us to take some action and go along.

The Senator from Hancock, Senator Silsby, has referred to the general fund. I do not believe in taking money for these purposes out of the general fund, any more than I did yesterday for the causeway, but I do believe that the State Police do an awful lot of work for the public that should come out of the general fund and not out of highway funds.

This is a proposition forced upon us by the federal government and something we have got to look at square in the face if we are to proceed to go along. I hope that the motion of the Senator from Waldo, Senator Cole, prevails.

Mr. PARKER of Piscataquis: Mr. President and members of the Senate: I rise in support of the Senator from Waldo, Senator Cole, because I cannot help but believe that the majority of the people of the State of Maine, in thinking of our high-

way problem, believe as I do, that we should first set up a well-rounded program that will take care of our different categories of roads and that we should give them proper financing, and that means the issuance at this time, I am sure, of highway bonds, and also that those bonds must be retired in a sound, business-like way. This, to my mind is the soundest method of approaching that problem. Mr. President, when the vote is taken I ask for a division.

The PRESIDENT: The question before the Senate is on the motion of the Senator from Waldo, Senator Cole, that the bill be passed to be enacted.

As many as are in favor of the enactment of this bill will rise and stand until counted.

A division was had.

Twenty-two having voted in the affirmative and eight in the negative, the motion prevailed and the bill was passed to be enacted.

On motion by Mr. Parker of Piscataquis, the Senate voted to take from the table the 19th tabled and unassigned matter, (H. P. 1056) (L. D. 1504) Bill, "An Act to Authorize the Issuance of Bonds in the Amount of Twenty-four Million Dollars on Behalf of the State of Maine for the Purpose of Building State Highways," which was tabled by that Senator on May 22nd, pending enactment.

Mr. PARKER of Piscataquis: Mr. President and members of the Senate: I do not propose to deliver any kind of a prolonged, extended talk on this bond issue. We have gone over it for weeks; it has received favorable consideration in both this branch and the one at the further end of the hall. I would just like to emphasize possibly a few points.

Because of the Federal Highway Act, we have found that we in the State of Maine, in order to participate, must of necessity increase our highway spending over the next thirteen years. It seemed to the majority in both branches, and I believe to the majority of the highway users in the State of Maine, that this is the soundest method of approach to construction of our interstate highway as well as to take care of the other necessary state road categories.

When we visualize being in a car in Houlton and driving to the west coast or to the winter climes of Florida without a single traffic light, without any intersections or bridges, it means to me that we are certainly looking at our highway problems and our highway program in a way that is very worth while.

Mr. President, I move the pending question.

The PRESIDENT: The pending question is the enactment of the bill. Under the Constitution this bill requires for its passage the affirmative vote of two-thirds of the Senate members present.

As many as are in favor of the enactment of the bill will rise and stand until counted.

A division was had.

Thirty having voted in the affirmative and none in the negative, and thirty being more than two-thirds of the members present, the bill was passed to be enacted.

On motion by Mr. Parker of Piscataquis, the Senate voted to take from the table the 18th tabled and unassigned matter, (S. P. 533) (L. D. 1503) Bill, "An Act to Make Allocations from the General Highway Fund for the Fiscal Years ending June 30, 1958 and June 30, 1959", which was tabled by that Senator on May 22nd, pending enactment.

Mr. PARKER of Piscataquis: Mr. President and members of the Senate: If you will turn to L. D. 1503 in your legislative documents you will note the different expenditures that the bill calls for. It is, I believe, one of the soundest investments that we make in the State of Maine when we set up a program such as L. D. 1503. It calls for sound financing and calls for construction and reconstruction of our most important roads. It also calls for the Public Administration wage plan, as you will notice at the top of Page 3. I believe it has had serious consideration by all of us. I move at this time, Mr. President, its enactment.

The PRESIDENT: This being an emergency measure, it requires under the Constitution the affirmative vote of two-thirds of the entire elected membership of the Senate.

As many as are in favor of the enactment of the bill as an emer-