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Significance of Work

There are so many laws on the books already that Mr. John Q. Public must wonder at times what's left to legislate. Haven't we reached the point of saturation, he might reason, where all a legislature has to do is calculate how much money is needed to run the government for a year or so, how to raise it, and go home?

However, a discerning review of the record of Iowa's first annual-session legislature might serve to remind him of the undulating forces that make up our vibrant, throbbing, representative form of government; to remind him of the constantly changing pressures resulting in new situations that demand a never-ending reappraisal of existing laws just to stay abreast of the times.

Indeed, ours is a vibrant form of government and perhaps the legislative branch reflects that more than either the executive or judicial branch, for its job is to make law. It has to be alert, responsive and creative to deal with such wide-ranging proposals as curbing campus rioters (without silencing honest dissent), eliminating seats in the legislature itself, tightening eminent domain laws to protect landowners, raising interest rate ceilings to make public bonds salable,

improving the pension plan for Iowa public employees and dipping into State coffers for money to fund tuition grants to private school students.

"Vibrant" was a word Governor Ray emphasized in his inaugural address when he said legislative enactment of his program would make for "a more vibrant Iowa." Any objective analysis of the Sixty-Third General Assembly's record would show it had responded, in large measure, to his call for action.

To be sure, it went off on tangents at times—as what parliamentary body hasn't? This is in the very nature of our form of government, with no one branch subservient to another. In the end, though, it transacted legislation of far-reaching significance and perhaps none more so than that eliminating 35 of its own seats—11 in the Senate, 24 in the House—in compliance with the 1968 apportionment amendment adopted by the people to make the legislature more compact, more efficient and more responsive.

It was significant, too, regardless of the politics that might be involved, that a single General Assembly actually made it through two regular sessions without enacting a general tax increase at the state level. Whether this would have repercussions in the future, only the future could tell. But the mere fact that it was done rated attention.

In the view of the *Waterloo Daily Courier* the 1969-70 legislature "largely accomplished what it

set out to accomplish—keep spending under control,” and this summed up the thinking of many citizens.

“Economy,” the *Courier* went on to say, “is never a glamorous political program and it arouses wails of anguish from agencies and their leaders who have difficulty distinguishing their function from God’s will . . .”

But the KCRG Stations in Cedar Rapids expressed another point of view embraced by many citizens:

The battle cry of the Republican majority has been—and will be in the campaign—“A no tax increase budget was passed.” But we wonder whether the legislature has not simply passed the fiscal buck to other branches of government, which will have to raise existing taxes . . . and take the heat for it.

The advantages and disadvantages of annual sessions, the legislature’s over-all record and the rural-urban split over some bills—along with the “no tax increase budget”—were among the subjects drawing the editorial attention of other media. Here’s a sampling:

The Sixty-Third General Assembly—first in Iowa history to meet yearly—sat for a record total of 226 days (95 this year) but couldn’t find the time, the will or the way to reach some major goals set for it by Gov. Robert Ray and the 1968 G.O.P. state platform.—*Des Moines Register*.

It is perhaps a bit unfair to consider this first annual session (legislature) as indicative of what is to come . . .

While it (the 1970 session) lasted as long as a regular session of some 10 years ago, it did have some problems left over from the 131 days it was in session in 1969. Unfortunately, many of these problems are also carried over to 1971 . . . Many observers felt that the sessions did not accomplish much and most of it could easily have been left to 1971.—*Fairfield Ledger*.

Governor Ray has been criticized for succeeding in providing for operation of the state government through the period ending June 30 next year without a general tax increase. For this we believe he should be commended. Had the Governor and the legislature approved a tax increase the probability is that the unfairness in Iowa's tax structure would have become even more maladjusted than it is now.—*Cedar Valley Daily Times* (Vinton).

If annual sessions of this first biennium have proven anything at all, it has been that they have not worked as well as had been hoped.—*Oskaloosa Herald*.

It was on the whole a mixed bag, as it usually is, as any democratic assembly reflecting, even vaguely, the variety of opinions held by the people it represents will be. And it's those people who will make the final, the meaningful appraisal of this Sixty-Third General Assembly—at the polls in June and November.—*Iowa City Press-Citizen*.

It was to be expected that the issue of annual sessions would be raised before the session actually adjourned this year . . . but frankly, one session is not enough to make a wise decision on how successful annual sessions are in Iowa . . . If voters want to do something about the legislature and improve it, they should work for a still smaller legislature and then better pay for the fewer members.—*Marshalltown Times-Republican*.

We are a bit prejudiced on the matter, of course, since

we didn't think there was much value in annual sessions in the first place. Usually they are simply devices for raising taxes.—*Creston News Advertiser*.

. . . for the most part this Republican-controlled legislature did a better than average job . . .—*The Times-Democrat* (Davenport).

All too often a rural-urban split was apparent. We suppose it is natural for rural and urban legislators to be on opposing sides on many of the more important issues . . . But neither can exist without the other. Each faction must consider the other's interest.—*Council Bluffs Nonpareil*.

Annual sessions will go a long way toward providing Iowans with the intensity of lawmaker attention they deserve and need in order to bring Iowa's governmental posture up to date; it is equally clear that the legislative sessions alone—even held yearly—cannot get the job done.—*Ames Tribune*.

Perhaps the most unfortunate aspect of the . . . session was the divisive battle waged by some rural legislators who apparently were victims of a near-psychosis of urban domination and city persecution. And many other lawmakers are still influenced beyond reason by the powerful lobbies of special interest groups.—*Sioux City Journal*.

One thing that is impressive is the hard work done by our legislators; anyone who thinks these men go to Des Moines and have a picnic at the expense of taxpayers is living in a delusion.—*The Daily Gate City* (Keokuk).

The procedure of subcommittee study and action, reconsideration and revamping of bills, makes it appear that an interminable amount of time is consumed in getting a piece of legislation enacted.—*Fort Dodge Messenger*.

The Democratic minority remained sizable enough, and surely vocal enough, to provide the sharp and continuing opposition necessary for a viable, responsible legislature.—*Mason City Globe-Gazette*.

The General Assembly has worked hard . . . trying to solve the knotty problems of modern Iowa. We think the members have done a good job.—*Lyon County Reporter* (Rock Rapids).

Despite the political outcries and self-serving statements of those disappointed in the measures enacted or killed, it was a good session.—*Kossuth County Advance* (Algona).

Its rural flavor showed through, despite reapportionment, for it refused to face up squarely to fiscal problems of the cities while taking good care of those in the country. Moreover, the House refused to even consider three vitally important bills requested by the Governor and passed by the Senate: court reorganization, collective bargaining guidelines for public employees and restructuring the Iowa Liquor Control Commission . . . (but) . . . it did redeem the pledge of Republican leaders to give "people" legislation priority over special-interest bills. And, whether or not one agrees with the wisdom of the policy, it did carry out Gov. Robert Ray's pledge that there would be "no general tax increase."—*Cedar Rapids Gazette*.

In the final analysis, it is up to each citizen to decide for himself how to rate the performance of the Sixty-Third. Those who might disagree on the caliber of performance, however, could readily agree it was a hard-working, industrious General Assembly that tried to meet problems, did meet