

Constitutional Convention

Journal/16

Approved December 1, 1955

ALASKA CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

JOURNAL OF THE TWENTY-SECOND CONVENTION DAY, Tuesday, November 29, 1955

The Convention was called to order by President Egan at 9:00 o'clock a.m.

The Invocation was given by Reverend Orland R. Cary of the First Baptist Church of Fairbanks.

Roll call showed all delegates present except Mr. Coghill and Mr. Harris. The President declared a quorum to be present.

(The following is a direct transcript from the record:)

"Tuesday a.m., Nov. 29

MR. PRESIDENT: We are very happy to have with us this morning, one of America's most distinguished citizens, a man whose abilities and responsibilities are well known to each of us, the man who in 1953, in his capacity of majority leader of the greatest deliberative body in the world, called up the combined Alaska-Hawaii Statehood Bill, steered it through a long and thorny debate and voted for its passage. It is my great pleasure and my honor to present to you the Honorable William F. Knowland, United States Senator from California. Senator Knowland.

SENATOR KNOWLAND: Mr. Chairman, members of the Constitutional Convention and fellow Americans, I am highly privileged to have this opportunity to meet with this Constitutional Convention which is carrying on this most important of tasks. And perhaps this may be the last Constitutional Convention for statehood in our entire American history because our 48 states, of course, are now members of the sisterhood of states, the Territory of Hawaii has already drafted its state constitutional convention, and it is highly unlikely, perhaps at least during our lifetime or our generation, that any other territory unorganized and now under the American flag is apt to be an organized territory for the ultimate purpose of statehood. So this is indeed a historic occasion. It is my first opportunity with Mrs. Knowland to visit this great area of our country. We have been tremendously impressed not only with the area, the limited time we have had here in seeing a very small segment of your Alaska, but we have

been even more impressed with the greatest of all human resources, of course, the people of this great Territory, and I have a very deep conviction--no one has a crystal ball that can predict with certainty at the precise time that you will come into statehood--but I have a deep conviction that in the not too distant future this great Territory will join the sisterhood of states. I also have full confidence that within the lifetime of most of those in this room today will see Alaska not only as a state of the Union, but I think as one of the great and important states of the American Union.

"Now, if I could bring you in the brief time I have today, could bring you a message, it would be to not in any sense be discouraged because you have not become a state as yet or that you may not become a state even at the coming session of Congress, though I pledge to you, as I have already to the people of Alaska and the people of my own state, that I shall do everything I can, as the minority leader of the Senate as well as a Senator of the State of California, to expedite action on Alaska and Hawaii statehood. And I hope that at least it will be given favorable consideration at the coming session of Congress. If it does not come then, it will inevitably come in the very near future. Now all of the states almost that came into the Union after the original 13 went through a difficult period. My own state was not an exception, and perhaps I may be pardoned for reading a paragraph or two out of the Congressional Record of some of the things that were said about my own State of California to show how wrong even members of Congress could be.

"Mr. John Maquee, 1850--the state was admitted to the Union on September 9 of 1850--had this to say and I quote:

'The inhabitants, I beg pardon, the floating population of every color and nation who happened in California, have since that time clothed themselves with the habiliments of sovereignty and demand admission as one of the states upon equal terms with the others. This whole thing of the sovereign State of California would look better in the pages of the Arabian Nights than in the archives of this body.'

"Now the Honorable Representative James A. Sedden of Virginia, in the House of Representatives on January 3 of 1850, declared and I quote again,

'A very large proportion of them are mere sojourners, adventurers and wayfarers, roaming over a wild, uninhabited expanse in quest of treasure with which to return to their homes. The right of such a population to establish a state

government can surely not be gravely entertained by any. It is not to be tolerated, and at whatever hazards California ought to be remanded to territorial subordination.' Well, of course, since that time my state has grown from a population of some 65 thousand to a 13-and-a-half millions of people, and it is not beyond the realms of possibility, some Californians feel, perhaps unfortunately so, that by the census of 1970, we will have a population of some 25 millions of people. I think the present pressures of population will undoubtedly make Alaska look even more attractive to some of the Californians who will want to come up into this beautiful country of yours.

"I think the great challenge that faces us as free people is how we can do what Americans have always sought to do, and that is, to leave to our land and to our children a better land than we ourselves have found. This has been the objective of Americans ever since we won our independence. It has been the spirit which has helped us to grow from a small colony of three million on the Atlantic seaboard to a great nation of 165 millions of people, the most productive industrially and agriculturally the world has ever known, with the highest standard of living that any people have ever enjoyed. I don't believe we would have had that great growth except under our great constitutional system. The men who drafted our constitution were wise men. They were operating under a divine inspiration, as I believe this great deliberative body is acting under a divine inspiration. They wanted to preserve for themselves and for all posterity the freedom which they had won at so great a sacrifice. They now knew the history of the world up to their time. They knew that where the men had lost their freedom they had primarily lost it because of the concentration of power in the hands of a single individual in a national government, and in order to protect their generation and all future generations of Americans, they established our federal republic. They limited the power of the federal government and reserved all other powers to the people and to the states thereof, and in the federal government itself, they wanted to divide the powers so that they could not be concentrated in the hands of a single individual. And in our constitution, perhaps with some significance, they set up three great coordinate branches of the federal government--the legislative, executive and judicial--and named them in precisely that same order. Now, if we are half as wise as men who gave us our republic and helped to preserve it in the intervening period of years, we will preserve our federal republic, our constitutional system of divided powers of the federal government, one of limited and specified powers.

"I do not believe that even under our constitutional system our great nation could have grown, and I feel certain my own State of California could not have grown under and waiting for a paternalistic government at Washington. I think it has only

been that the resources of our area were opened up to private investment. I think the American system of free enterprise, the competitive system of free enterprise, has done more to build our country and give our people the high standards of living that we have. It will be very difficult for your own great area to have its ultimate economic development, and, I am sure that those in this room know far better than I, where the federal government is the owner of approximately 90 percent of your land area, it is going to be important that you invite investment of thrift capital. Our own great country developed its railroads, its mining resources and its industry first from the development of capital abroad and then from the development of capital from various parts of the United States of America. Our great neighbor of Canada has shown tremendous progress. It has been making some of the greatest advances of any nation in modern times. I think Alaska has all the background and all the qualities and all the resources to have a development as great as has Canada during the past few years.

"I want to say in conclusion that your work is being watched by not only the Congress of the United States, but, I think, by our 165 millions of people. Despite the objections that have come from some people to statehood, I think the overwhelming proportion of the American people expect, and I think ultimately they will demand that both Alaska and Hawaii become states of the American union. Anything I can do in my individual capacity or in my capacity as a minority leader of the Senate of the United States to expedite that day and in the meantime to help you work out the many problems that you have, which in equity, should be worked out with the federal government, I will be prepared to do. I can think of no pledge which as American citizens, regardless of the party we belong to, and after all, some of these great problems facing the world today are American problems-- they are not party problems in any sense of the word--I think of no pledge we might take as American citizens better than the pledge of Thomas Jefferson, the great architect of the Declaration of Independence, who said, 'I have sworn upon the altar of God eternal hostility on every form of tyranny over the minds of man.'"

At the conclusion of Senator Knowland's speech, the President stated that he noted many distinguished guests in the gallery, among them Mrs. Knowland, Governor and Mrs. Ernest Gruening and President and Mrs. Ernest Patty.

The President declared a ten-minute recess.

AFTER RECESS

Mr. Doogan moved and asked unanimous consent that the Journal for Saturday, November 26 be approved as read. There being no objection, it was so ordered.

Mr. Collins announced that the Committee on Direct Legislation would meet on adjournment.

Mr. Rosswog announced a meeting of the Committee on Local Government at 11 a.m.

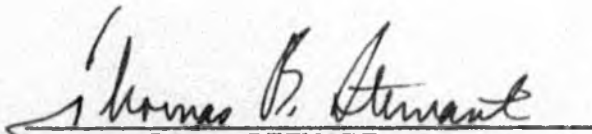
Mr. Riley announced a meeting of the Rules Committee on adjournment.

INTRODUCTION AND FIRST READING OF PROPOSALS

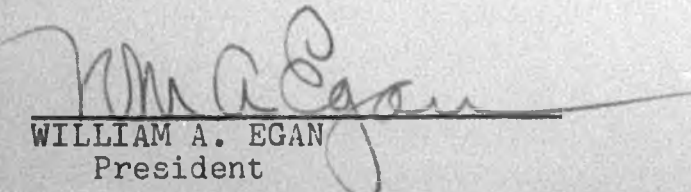
Proposal No. 28, by Mr. Robertson, entitled ESTABLISHING THE SEAT OF GOVERNMENT, was introduced, read the first time and referred to the Committee on Resolutions.

Mr. Cooper moved and asked unanimous consent that Senator Knowland's speech be spread on the Journal in its entirety. There being no objection, it was so ordered.

Mr. V. Rivers moved and asked unanimous consent that the Convention adjourn until 9 a.m., Wednesday morning. There being no objection, it was so ordered.


THOMAS B. STEWART
Secretary

Attested:


WILLIAM A. EGAN
President