

MACHINE'S HALCYON SESSION OF 1905

Boas Mansion Converted Into a "House of Mirth" in Harrisburg.

PARTY BOSSES PLAN INIQUITY

Senators Sisson and Stober, Republican Candidates, Supported All the Vicious Legislation That Made the Session of 1905 Infamous.

The legislature of 1905 was a "halcyon and vociferous" affair. In imitation of the Albany "House of Mirth," the Boas mansion in Harrisburg was generously contributing to the "gayety of nations" during that session.

Under the control of the insurance commissioner it was a sort of kennel of "yellow dogs" of all sorts and conditions. Each night the gang assembled within its hospitable walls and planned and schemed the looting operations of the immediate future. It was the seat of revelry and a fountain of corruption.

The legislature of 1905 has gone into history as the most wanton and venal in the history of the state. Its work was so bad that Governor Pennypacker felt constrained to call it back to repeat most of its measures, and the men responsible for its iniquities obeyed orders to thus stultify themselves with the same servility that they accepted orders to pass the bills at the regular session. This feature of the legislature of 1905 has no parallel. No other legislature within the memory of man has such a record.

The legislature of 1905 was as eager to defeat good legislation as it was zealous in promoting bad. Few good bills got out of committee, and such as did were allowed to die on the calendar. Early in the session Senator Goehring, of Pittsburg, introduced a bill providing for civil service tests in the selection of state officers, but it was stifled in the committee. Mr. Edmondson, of Bradford, introduced a bill requiring that anthracite coal offered for sale in the state be 95 per cent pure, and it met the same fate.

There were a good many other measures which would have conserved the interests of the people if they had been enacted into laws. But they were all killed before that stage, at which a roll call is in order, was reached. Under such conditions the action of a particular senator upon such bills is left to conjecture. But the managers of the dominant party were against such legislation or it would have passed. Senators Sisson and Stober invariably voted as the machine manager directed, and it is safe to say that they were against the bills that failed.

No Uncertainty on Vicious Bills. But there is no uncertainty as to how the Republican candidates for auditor general and state treasurer voted on the vicious legislation projected and promoted by the machine. The bill to increase the number of bank examiners, for example, was supported by both of them. Senate Journal, 1905 page 308.

One of the principal jobs of the session was the "act to amend an act relating to the board of public grounds and buildings." Upon this measure Mr. Sisson and Mr. Stober voted in the affirmative. Senate Journal, 1905, page 842. In vetoing this bill Governor Pennypacker said: "The effect of this bill, if it became a law, would be to authorize the board of public grounds and buildings to engage the services of 132 new employees. The amount of their salary and compensation, together with the increases of salaries and compensations of persons now employed, would amount to the sum of \$216,969 for the ensuing two years." Vetoes by the governor, 1905, page 158.

A bill to increase the number of courts in Allegheny county was voted for by both Sisson and Stober. Senate Journal, 1905, page 358. This measure was also vetoed by Governor Pennypacker, who said in his message: "The effect of this bill would be to increase the number of judges in Allegheny county from nine to fifteen and to lead to an expenditure in salaries alone of the annual sum of \$51,000." Vetoes by the governor, 1905, page 13.

Bills were passed providing for additional law judges in Cambria county. Senate Journal, 1905, page 383, and in Erie county, Senate Journal, 1905, page 492. Sisson and Stober voted for both of them.

The machine majority in the legislature is always open-handed with the judges, but during the session of 1905 it was liberal with everybody. A bill providing for stenographers and assistant stenographers for courts was passed finally on Feb. 23, Sisson and Stober voting in the affirmative. Senate Journal, 1905, pages 556-557. It was subsequently vetoed by Governor Pennypacker on the ground that "it would be an attempt upon the part of the legislature and the governor to exercise control over the courts." Vetoes by the governor, 1905, page 24.

Corporations Favored Freely.

An act declaring valid and inde-feasible as to any right of escheat in this commonwealth was voted for by both Sisson and Stober. Senate Journal, 1905, page 891. This measure also fell a victim to Governor Pennypacker's veto axe. In his veto message the governor said: "To permit corporations, organized for reasons given above in other states, to hold real estate and do business here, would be, in effect, to nullify, indirectly, our own laws. This bill presents to such corporations an easy means of escape from the disabilities imposed upon them." Vetoes by the governor, 1905, page 20.

The legislature revealed its subservency to the railroad corporations in the passage of the act "in relation to railroads under lease, and saving their charters and franchises from forfeiture or impairment in case of failure of their lessees to maintain and operate any portion of their lines." This was a slimy and venomous legislative snake. It would have enabled big railroad corporations to get rid of any branch or troublesome small railroad at the trifling expense of the cost of leasing it. Under existing law failure to operate a piece of railroad for two years works the forfeiture of the franchise, and communities damaged by being deprived of railroad facilities to which they are entitled could build a new branch and connect with another road. But this bill would have given the big concern power to close up the smaller road permanently. It was passed by the senate finally on March 31, Sisson and Stober voting for it. Senate Journal, 1905, page 850. Governor Pennypacker vetoed it. Vetoes of the governor, 1905, page 66.

One of the most absurd bills considered during the session was one authorizing coroners in counties of population between 100,000 and 125,000 to employ stenographers at a compensation of \$5 a day. Both Sisson and Stober voted for it. Senate Journal, 1905, page 1670. Fortunately it was vetoed.

Another legislative absurdity was a bill providing for the draining of swampy lands, and both Sisson and Stober voted for it. Senate Journal, 1905, page 1931. In vetoing this preposterous proposition Governor Pennypacker said that owners of swampy lands ought to pay the expenses of their own improvements, and that if the measure should become a law it would clandestinely bestow upon the owners of the land the right of eminent domain. Vetoes by the governor, 1905, page 44.

A Ripper In Disguise.

The bill to provide for the employment and support of the poor in Schuylkill county was a sort of "ripper" in disguise. The obvious purpose of it was to legislate out of office the directors of the poor of that county, and it only failed of its purpose because Governor Pennypacker had a lucid interval. Sisson and Stober voted for the bill. Senate Journal, 1905, page 897. Governor Pennypacker disapproved it because it deprived the people of their right to elect their own local officers. Vetoes by the governor, 1905, page 52.

There were a number of water snakes wriggling through the legislature during the session of 1905. The machine managers, rich in spoils, had come to realize the vast value of water powers and were striving to get control of all that were available. The railroad corporations were also reaching out for control of watersheds and water supplies.

Among the bills introduced with this object in view was one "authorizing railroad companies to acquire, hold, dispose of and guarantee the stocks and securities of water companies." In the event of a water famine this measure would enable the railroad companies to supply their locomotives even if the people of communities furnished. Sisson and Stober voted to bestow this dangerous power on railroads. Senate Journal, 1905, page 1158.

The bill entitled "an act to preserve the purity of the water of the state" was another serpent. It provided that consent of the board of health should be obtained before any community or company could erect water works. The iniquity was fought with considerable energy and was supported at every stage by Sisson and Stober. On final passage, however, Sisson dodged the roll call, but Stober is recorded as voting for it. Senate Journal, 1905, page 998.

The gang didn't feel quite secure with the legislation thus far obtained and Senator McNichol, the Philadelphia contractor-politician, introduced a bill to create a commission to regulate the water supply and control the watersheds of the state. This measure was railroaded through at a high rate of speed. It was "read in place" March 15 and passed finally March 22, Sisson and Stober both voting in the affirmative. Senate Journal, 1905, page 901.

Pet Iniquities of the Machine.

The Philadelphia "rippers" were pet iniquities of the machine. John Weaver, who had been promoted from the office of district attorney to that of mayor as a reward for permitting Sam Salter to be acquitted, was indulging in some in-cere reform pretences and the machine concluded to "clip his wings," so to speak. The "rippers" provided for the election of the heads of certain departments by a vote of councils, which under the then existing law were appointed by the mayor. It might be said that this was "the crowning atrocity" of the session. There were three of these bills, numbered respectively 441, 479 and 480. The two latter were so vicious that Pennypacker vetoed them. Both were voted for by Sisson and Stober, how-

ever. Senate Journal, 1905, pages 1283 and 1284. It was in this veto message that Pennypacker eulogized the late Mr. Durham as "the most influential political leader in Philadelphia." Vetoes by the governor, 1905, page 167.

A merry little joker of the session was the bill increasing the salary of the deputy insurance commissioner. Mr. Durham was insurance commissioner at the time, but he was so busy managing the politics and "milking" the people of that city that he couldn't get to Harrisburg oftener than once in two or three months. The warrants for his salary had actually to be sent to him by mail. This absenteeism devolved a good deal of additional labor on the deputy, and Mr. Durham's servile slaves in the legislature naturally concluded that his recompense ought to be increased in the ratio that his burdens were multiplied. Sisson and Stober voted for the bill. Senate Journal, 1905, page 1689.

The Quay statue bill was "the apple of the eye" of the machine at the time and ever since has been the burden of its grief and an abomination. Sisson and Stober both voted for it. Senate Journal, 1905, page 1589.

The act authorizing street railway, electric light and power, hotel and park companies to merge or consolidate was a sort of tub to the smaller corporation whale. There are a number of men in the cities, tin-horn gamblers, thimble-riggers and other sorts, who go to the legislature or ply their vocations in the winter, and imagined that such a combination of powers would afford them splendid opportunities in the summer. These gentlemen proposed to legislate themselves into the chance. The bill was introduced and passed. Sisson and Stober voting in the affirmative. Senate Journal, 1905, page 1590. Pennypacker vetoed the bill.

Snakes in the Legislative Grass.

Another snake in the legislative grass was the bill authorizing manufacturing corporations to deal in goods and materials manufactured by others. It was in direct violation of the constitution, the spirit of the common law and the traditions of the country. Sisson and Stober voted for it. Senate Journal, 1905, page 895. The bill was vetoed.

The bill to rebate taxes on forest lands, enacted during the session of 1905, was what the old-timers would call "a little thing" for the timber and tannery trusts. It provided for a rebate of 80 per cent of the taxes on scrub timber tracts for a period of thirty-five years. Before it was introduced the trusts had bought up practically all that kind of land in the state with a view of holding it until another crop got ripe and ready for the axe. Paying taxes on land during the period in which they were waiting would be expensive, and the always fertile-minded trust managers conceiv-

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ed the plan expressed in this law to escape the burden. These facts were pointed out clearly, but the trust agents stick together, and the bill was passed. Sisson and Stober voting for it. Senate Journal, 1905, page 1346. The bill to increase the salary of the harbor master of Philadelphia was the payment of another installment of the machine obligation for the acquittal of Sam Salter. The then harbor master swore to all kinds of alibis and other things to justify the packed jury in voting to acquit the champion ballot-box stuffer, and the easiest way to reward him for his crimes was to increase his salary. The bill passed finally, Sisson and Stober voting for it. Senate Journal, 1905, page 1689. The acquittal of Salter has cost the state more than any other crime ever committed within its borders.

The number and salaries of employees of the state treasury were increased, Senate Journal, 1905, page 1105, and the number and salaries of the employees of the state library were increased during the session of 1905. Senate Journal, page 777. Sisson dodged the vote on the treasury increase, but voted for the library increase. Stober voted for both.

Pennypacker Provokes Foolish Bill.

In his veto messages Pennypacker was in the habit of poking fun at the legislature on account of the wretche-

grammar and other delinquencies in form and expression of the bills sent to him for approval. Finally the legislature passed a law providing for the appointment of a man to edit the bills and whip them into some sort of shape. Really the purpose was to provide a fat and eminently respectable job for some favorite political "lame duck," and Pennypacker's criticism inspired the idea and furnished the excuse. Both Sisson and Stober voted for the bill. Senate Journal, 1905, page 781. Another office of similar character was created during the session of 1909, both Sisson and Stober voting for it.

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