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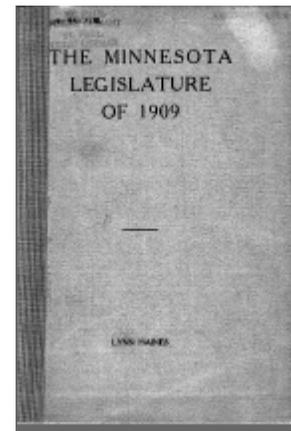
### A Search for Good Government in the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century

The Legislative Reference Library scanned a series of small books with colorful accounts of legislative sessions long past, between 1901 and 1927. Below are excerpts from and links to the full text of each.

*The Minnesota Legislature of 1909 : A History of the Session, With an Inside View of Men and Measures.* Lynn Haines.

<http://archive.leg.state.mn.us/docs/NonMNpub/oclc11626971.pdf>

Lynn Haines sets out to expose corruption, noting: “The people, heedless of the value of their birthright of citizenship, and blinded by partisanship and the subtle misdirection of public opinion, cannot easily discern how they are being betrayed by their representatives.” He feels there are many legislators who “stood conspicuously for the public interest” but is more interested in exposing those who are tools of corporate special interests, including the Steel Trust, “the railroad ring,” the Minnesota Liquor Dealers’ Association, and the Twin City Rapid Transit Company. He has little faith in newspapers. “Actual conditions and the real character of public men are kept concealed and public opinion perverted by the press of the state, particularly the largest city dailies.” The language is colorful. “Pernicious” is used seven times, and was applied both to politicians and legislation. Haines stated that many Senate bills were not voted upon openly because they were “chloroformed” in committee.



*The Minnesota Legislature of 1911.* Lynn Haines.

<http://archive.leg.state.mn.us/docs/NonMNpub/oclc11627065.pdf>

Haines suggested that legislative spending on supplies was profligate. “Four hundred and forty-four pocket knives for 120 House members and 264 pocket knives for 63 Senators! Who got the rest? Even if every employee of both branches, all the “alumni coaches” and brewery lobbyists were supplied there would still be several hundred to be accounted for.” Throughout his accounts Haines divided legislators into two main camps: reactionaries, “one who, by opposing a larger scope and scheme of democracy, represents the special interests,” and insurgents, “one who places principle over party.”



***The Minnesota Legislature of 1913.*** C.J. Buell.

<http://archive.leg.state.mn.us/docs/NonMNpub/oclc11735129.pdf>

C. J. Buell claimed in his introduction that the sensational reporting in Haines' *Minnesota Legislature of 1909* caused improvement in the Legislature of 1911, and afterwards people were eager for the information in Haines' "fearless and vigorous analysis" of the 1911 Legislature. "Many objectionable members fell by the wayside. The best and most progressive House of Representatives in the history of the state was elected in 1912."

Women's suffrage was noted in earlier volumes, and in greater detail in *The Minnesota Legislature of 1913*. It was killed in the Senate. An editorial included in the book from the *St. Paul Daily News* was critical of a senator. "The bill was defeated by a trick and the trickster was Sen. [George H. Sullivan](#), who has a long record for opposition to people's legislation. ... If such senatorial service is statesmanship, then the petty crime of a street gamin filching fruit from a blind apple woman should rank as skilled diplomacy."

***The Minnesota Legislature of 1915.*** C.J. Buell.

<http://archive.leg.state.mn.us/docs/NonMNpub/oclc06902248.pdf>

Buell felt the Legislature was improving. "I believe the legislature of 1915 has to its credit as much thoroughly correct legislation and as few dangerous enactments as any in the history of the state." Another quote from George H. Sullivan pointed out why suffrage was unnecessary. "Women now have the right to elect their husbands."

***The Minnesota Legislature of 1917.*** C.J. Buell.

<http://archive.leg.state.mn.us/docs/NonMNpub/oclc04759882.pdf>

In 1917 an equal suffrage constitutional amendment with the following language passed the House, 85-41. "Shall the Legislature submit to the men of the state whether women shall be given the full right to vote, just the same as the men?" Buell described the controversy in the Senate, and the "oratorical deluge." "Duxbury was sure that the ballot for women would inevitably lead to government by women. The men could never resist their blandishments, and thus all the offices would finally be filled by women. Disaster and ruin would overtake the nation. Let woman stay in her proper sphere. Let her be attached to some man who will vote for her and represent her in public affairs. Moreover, it is only the unattached women who are howling for the vote, and they are so unattractive they cannot get men to marry them. Just how these sirens would proceed to get possession of all the offices Mr. Duxbury did not explain."

***The Minnesota Legislature of 1919.*** C.J. Buell.

<http://archive.leg.state.mn.us/docs/NonMNpub/oclc00500242.pdf>

In the forward Buell mentioned an improvement in the Legislature since it became nonpartisan in 1911. "Since then the party boss and the party caucus have been less in evidence. Members have been more free to use their individual judgment. Whether or

not this has been an improvement depends largely on the intelligence of the individual member. An ignorant or dishonest member by a caucus for either good or bad. An honest, intelligent member is better off without a party boss or a caucus; and it is safe to say that the nonpartisan election has resulted in a better and more independent group of men coming to the legislature.”

***The Minnesota Legislature of 1921.*** C.J. Buell.

<http://archive.leg.state.mn.us/docs/NonMNpub/oclc03546606.pdf>

“The accomplishment of equal suffrage has injected an element of sincerity and enthusiasm far beyond anything noticeable in the past.”

“Again, it is common, in some quarters, to speak of the legislature as a bunch of crooks, grafters, and chumps; but the man who will take the trouble to make a study of the work in committee, to watch the discussion on the floor, and to really acquaint himself with the inside workings of the legislature of Minnesota, as now constituted and in operation, must conclude that there has been great improvement in the past fifteen or twenty years.”

***The Minnesota Legislature of 1923.*** C.J. Buell.

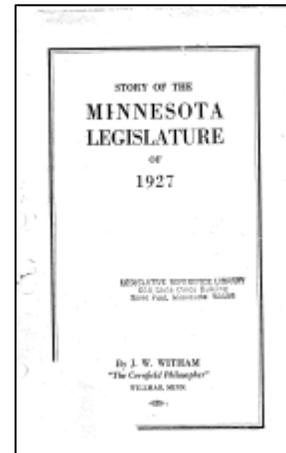
<http://archive.leg.state.mn.us/docs/NonMNpub/oclc03408302.pdf>

As this was the first legislature of Minnesota with women members, Buell devoted the first pages to extensive biographies of Myrtle Cain, Sue M. Dickey Hough, Hannah J. Kempfer, and Mabeth Hurd Paige.

***Story of the Minnesota Legislature of 1927.*** J. W. Witham.

<http://archive.leg.state.mn.us/docs/NonMNpub/oclc05365085.pdf>

J.W. Witham was from Willmar and called himself “The Cornfield Philosopher.” This book has the same style as the earlier session overviews and the same goal of good government, but it is unclear whether they are directly related. According to Witham, the most famous bill of the session was House File 373. It began as a bill to allow members to receive payment for three trips home during session. Many legislators signed on, but it was changed during the committee process to a bill raising their salaries from \$1000 to \$1500 per year. The bill barely passed, and was vetoed by the governor.



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