

**Report from page 18**

Consent Calendar, and 151 remained.

Bills come up alphabetically according to the name of the committee recommending them, so “Science, Technology, and Energy” bills are third from the end, just in front of “Transportation” and “Ways and Means.” (Ways and Means is your Representative David Karrick’s committee, which has the important job of finding revenue for all state functions.)

Word filtered through back channels that if the House voted to lift the reprimands, the delaying tactics would stop.

Many representatives were furious at this attempt at what felt like blackmail. Most resolved they would stand fast and get the People’s work, the work of the House, finished no matter what.

Some feared that if too many reps got tired and left, or if the reprimanded faction walked out, the quorum would be

lost, and all legislative action would have to simply stop. (The quorum is the minimum number in attendance to legally conduct business, or 268 members.)

As we took our seats, some were surprised when the Speaker announced that in order to maintain a quorum, he was locking us in! What? I suddenly recalled that more than a year ago, after I was sworn in, I received an official summons in the mail, requiring my presence in the House under pain of ... I forget what, because it seemed so unlikely. Then we heard that the State Police were in the building. Wow, this was no fooling around!

We pushed on, and the delays continued. Six o’clock went by, only a few bills were finished, and the delays continued. Nine-thirty, and I broke out my supply of chocolate-covered espresso beans and passed them around to my sleepy neighbors. It was looking grim.

At midnight we all took a short

break to snack on apples, power bars, and water provided to everyone by the staffers. We observed that COVID-19 cases were increasing every day, so suspending the House deadline and reconvening to finish the work at a later date would be increasingly dangerous.

Meanwhile, 400 people or so, many over 80 years old, were staying up all night to listen to arguments in a crowded room. Was there any way this could get worse? The mood began to shift from rigid opposition to the camaraderie of facing hardship together. A bit weird, but cool.

Back in our seats, someone made the proposal that we suspend the rules and reconvene at a later date to finish our work. That motion was soundly defeated – just push on!

Around 2 AM, somebody on the other side proposed we limit debate to three minutes on each side, and it passed by a loud voice vote.

Weeks before, at the executive sessions, others on my committee had volunteered to write lengthy floor speeches for all our bill’s debates before the full House. (I had been Clerk for three weeks, so I was kind of tired of writing stuff and didn’t ask for one of those!) Instead, I volunteered to offer several of the short and stuffily formal “parliamentary inquiries” or “P.I.’s”, which contain a short outline of a bill’s main points, presented as a question: “Mr Speaker, if I know that this bill ... [does this, and that and the other good thing] ... then would I not push the green button to accept the committee’s recommendation to pass this bill?”

With the clock running out and 12 bills in our committee, my committee chairman asked me if I could give the P.I.s in place of the floor speeches. I scribbled and edited my notes on about six bills, to be as succinct as possible.

For each of several bills, I made the pitch and the bills passed, one after another. The last one was an especially con-

tested bill (about the radiation detectors I mentioned above) and whaddayaknow, the power plant’s spokesperson is sitting up in the gallery, at three in the morning!

I got fired up, gave the pitch in a coach’s “down by six at half-time” pep-talk style. (I had a good deal of practice at that – it’s a situation my football team found itself in many times when I was a coach, but we always finished the season with more wins than losses.)

When I was done speaking, the House applauded (an unusual breach of decorum). Perhaps because they liked what I said, or was it because we were that much closer to being done? The vote was counted, and the bill passed 160 to 128.

The last Ways and Means bill passed a bit later, and the House adjourned around four in the morning.

A Republican colleague with whom I have worked closely on the bipartisan apprenticeship bill found me on the way out and wanted to chat. He was really excited about having been in an absolutely epic session of the New Hampshire House, the likes of which nobody could remember! It was a nice feeling of camaraderie and resolution. The People’s work was finished, at least for the time being.

The next day, my colleague Kermit Williams shared his thoughts:

“I was reminded last night of Shakespeare’s play *Henry V*, where Henry tells his troops on the eve of the battle of Agincourt, in part;

*And gentlemen in England now a-bed  
Shall think themselves accurs’d they  
were not here,  
And hold their manhoods cheap  
whiles any speaks  
That fought with us upon Saint  
Crispin’s day.*

That night was our Saint Crispin’s day, and it will be remembered by all of us forever. And future reps who were a-bed in New Hampshire will wish they had been there, because last night will be “legendary!”



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