



What It Takes to Be a LEGISLATOR



Author discusses pending bill with fellow-legislator Bert Peaslee of Merrimack, "a high-type public servant, a gentleman I admire."

It's a hard job with little pay but it has other compensations, says one of New Hampshire's representatives.

by Nelle Holmes

OVER THE TELEPHONE, one of eight on our party line, came the query, "Have you folks done anything about that bill to lock up stray dogs, Nelle?"

The voice at the other end belonged to a good friend of mine, and a good friend of animals—perhaps the outstanding animal lover in the town. I braced myself to defend a bill designed to curb free-running dogs, a bill of which I personally approved.

"No, Mary," I answered. "That is, it isn't law. It has passed the House, but not the Senate."

"Do you think it will pass?"

"Has a good chance, but I can't say for sure."

"Then will you go into the Senate and tell them to pass it? And when they do, will you let me know? There's a dog keeps running loose in the neighborhood doing all kinds of damage. He ought to be locked up."

Surprised and relieved, I promised I'd convey Mary's message to the proper Senate committee and let her know the outcome.

"It's a good bill," she concluded. "It isn't fair to well-behaved dogs not to lock up bad ones."

There, in a simple incident, is an illustration of various facets to this problem of "representation."

For representation is a two-way matter. The representative must be willing to listen, and the constituent must want to be heard. A lawmaker can't be a mind reader for an inarticulate public. Sometimes one can't gauge the opinions of one's best friend, like Mary.

It shows, too, how simple it is for a person to be truly represented here in New Hampshire because here, with very little effort, anyone can get the ear of the local representative.

Our big House of Representatives, lower house of the General Court (historic name of our state legislature), is the fourth largest English-speaking legislative body in the world. The New Hampshire state constitution says the House shall consist of "not less than

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