

375 and not more than 400 members," which means the number is just under 400. This huge group, representing one of the least populous states, has been criticized as "inefficient, unwieldy, and amorphous," and defended as "truly representative, fair to all groups, and impossible to buy."

This is not the place to argue the matter, but even if the number of representatives were cut in half, it would still be possible for a "representative to represent."

That is why membership in the body is an exciting and interesting privilege, even though the \$200 salary for a two-year, one-session term, plus mileage for daily attendance during the session, is no prime attraction. There is no better training for a political career than a state legislature.

IN MY CASE, serving in the legislature filled a long-standing desire for some practical experience in government, a subject which I had studied and taught for years. In 1950, when certain personal responsibilities lessened for me and there appeared to be a vacancy coming up for representative from our town, I responded to the suggestion that I run and filed my candidacy at the very opening of the filing period.

A local gentleman listed himself to oppose me at once, and much to the surprise of both of us, the incumbent whose ill health was supposed to have taken him out of the race, filed too.

I had to get to work, so I went up hill and down dale ringing doorbells and seeing people. Some wanted a complete run-down on matters I might have to vote on if elected. Some didn't ask me a thing about the issues—they just wanted to get acquainted.

During the campaign one of my opponents was reported to have said, "She's a nice lady, but this is no job for a lady." He made the mistake of saying this in the hearing of two very energetic women.

Personal campaigning is strenuous but it has wonderful compensations. You discover so many talented and accomplished people. In our small town I talked to craftsmen, artists, farmers who owned prize-winning green pastures and record-breaking dairy herds, skilled machinists, housewives, and lumber experts. Also, you get to know your constituency in a way that is impossible when you must depend on radio, television, and the mail to reach the voters. Most seasoned politicians will say there is no substitute for the personal handshake as an effective way of getting votes. I'll go further and say there is no substitute for personal conversation as an effective way of getting to "know your town." If you are elected this personal knowledge is invaluable.

At any rate, I became very "bullish" about the town, and perhaps this feeling of pride carried over to my fellow citizens and helped elect me the town's first woman representative.

Particularly trying for a woman in the New Hampshire legislature is the

ordeal of taking the floor. No speeches are allowed from the member's seat in the House, so anyone desiring to speak must climb over fellow members (there are no desks, because there is no room

for 400), walk down the aisle to the microphone, adjust the instrument, and summon courage.

But if it's rare that you speak on the floor of the House, it isn't at committee

meetings. Before committees, a representative can appear with an assurance of ample opportunity to present constituents' views, and a woman gets the same attention as a male member.

This is important because it is in committee that most of the work is done in any legislature, and especially in a large one. So most of your time is spent attending your own committee

sessions, or "representing" at the hearings of others.

As a lawyer's daughter I wanted to be on the Judiciary Committee and realized that ambition during my sec-

ond term. It is a busy and important committee, and serving on it with attendance to other committees made my schedule a busy one.

On a typical legislative day, com-

mittee work begins at 9:30 or 10 a.m. and continues until the House session at 11 a.m. Usually the session lasts an hour or two. Sometimes, though, the House gets tangled up in a long debate and stays in session until late afternoon.

After the session and a luncheon respite, committee work begins again, and if you are on a busy committee, you have to get excused to appear before others where bills which you introduced are being heard, or where your constituents want you to air their views, or where you escort them so they can air their own.

One committee which has seen a lot of me is the Fish and Game Committee. The landowners tell me to "let them know up there in Concord" that they are sick of having hunters walk over their garden plots, shoot their goats and cows which they mistake for deer, and pick off birds so close to their dwellings they leave bloodstains on the clapboards. My beaver-trapping friends say that beaver has dropped in price and the committee should lower the tagging fee. The apple growers have been pestered by porcupines and insisted on getting the bounty raised. It took a lot of committee work to get this one through.

As a former teacher and a representative from a town which has a growing school population without a proportionate growth in revenue, I visit the Education Committee often, too. Long before Sputniks and Vandergaards were roaring above, we were grappling with the problem of better standards in our rural areas and coping with the nightmare of increased school costs.

All this committee work doesn't leave much time for another phase of a representative's work—doing errands for the townspeople. Sometimes the errand consists of bringing home license plates or special publications. Often it is getting the answer to a question. It's only natural for people to dread governmental red tape, and many don't know where to seek information. As a freshman legislator I used up a lot of shoe leather finding the right places to take these problems.

Some of the queries I've taken to the capital are:

"How can I get my well water tested for purity?"

"Does the state do anything to control wood ticks?"

"Can the State Welfare Department help me adopt a child?"

"How do I get a state flag for my boy away in the service?"

"Are book record albums available for the blind?"

"What must I do to become a real-estate agent?"

Most representatives are willing to do these errands, not only to accommodate the voters but to learn something. The answers to the above are educational all right. If we had the paid staffs of wealthier legislatures, these matters would be attended to as routine detail, but for us they make one more way of representing. It's all in the day's work.

And if you aren't convinced that it is a day's work to represent even a small constituency, come up to New Hampshire and see for yourself!

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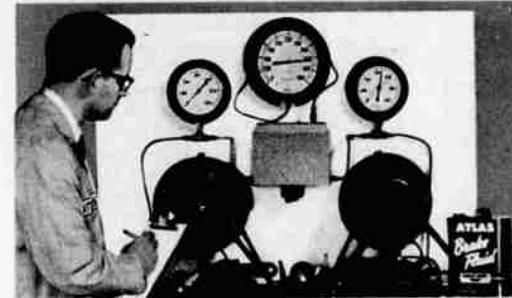


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