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Fred Pratt from Fairbanks Daily News-Miner continues talking about his views on the free conference system and abuses of it that result in people favoring unicameralism. In the time he has spent in legislature, he's seen that many times meetings of free conference committee haven't been posted, and often there are no meetings at all. [Talking about other shortcomings of free conference committee.]

The speaker doesn't think that shortcomings are a reason for unicameralism but rather a reason for concern for how the state operates. Fred thinks that there's no need for making massive changes in the constitution.

4:12 Fred wonders why senate was organized as a mirror image of the house even though it had only half the people. Some problems could be solved without expanding the size of the senate and Fred wonders why they have the same number of committees as the house does. House has 8 people who know the budget very well while the senate has 6-7 people out of whom most specialize on particular area of the budget and only one or two know the whole budget well.

Fred thinks that there might be a way of changing the senate's committee system or senate's representation so that it wouldn't follow population lines as closely as it does now.

6:15 Fred says that when they talk about changes to constitution, they are often talking about small changes. Fred has the feeling that the document [constitution] was designed for public participation.

It's true that sessions are long and the state is growing. If people were upset about lots of laws being passed, and about lengths of sessions, they would also be upset if nothing got done. Some people get voted in, however, so public is not displeased with them.

8:50 Chairperson thanks Mr. Pratt and announces a break, which will be followed by a question and answer session. [Break in the recording.]

The recording resumes with the chairperson introducing McCutcheon who is the chairman of the legislative branch committee and asks if he has statements or afterthoughts to make. He says he'd rather have questions come from audience. [Also Gruening and Pratt don't have anything further to say.]

11:25 [Talking about unicameralism versus bicameralism, unicameralism not being any more accountable than the alternative.] More accountability could be built into bicameral system.

Often bills are introduced only after they have majority support, and they would be easier to discuss through with 6 rather than 60 people.

The speaker is for limiting length of the sessions. Now only some people can afford unlimited sessions and aren't in a hurry to end them, while many others think that the work could be accomplished in 75-90 days.

13:40 [More talking about the length of sessions and speaker's time in the legislature when they only had a minimum number of votes to move anything.] His leadership managed to target the length of the session to be 90 days and time limits should be built into constitution. [End of the talk.]

15:48 Chairperson thanks Mr. Fink and invites Speaker Mr. Bradner to comment. Bradner thinks that people would get anxious to get off for summer season if sessions had limits. The summer months could be used for executive reviews and the membership would be spared from financial hardship of being "there" for extended periods of time.

Bradner thinks they have to acknowledge that their constitution created an executive government that might be strongest in the world if dictatorial governments aren't taken into an account. They did that because they were tired of executive function in territorial days. People in other states were shocked, wondering how they [Alaskans] are able to prevent abuse when they have a person with that much power. The answer is that the sheer accountability that lies on the governor has prevented abuse. He can't hide his actions.

18:23 Judiciary in Alaska is also streamlined. The question in some legislators' minds is if the legislature can develop strength to match the super strung executive and judiciary. [Bradner talks also about accountability in the legislature. Issues are lost in bicameralism and infighting.] The speaker wonders if the legislature can be the watchdog to the executive structure when there is danger that bureaucracy can be making decisions.

20:26 Bradner talks about legislature's role in policing a budget and questions whether they are doing a very good job.

The chairperson invites questions and also asks that the people who speak identify themselves since they are being recorded by the University of Alaska.

22:15 Helen Fischer introduces herself and talks about free conference committee reports that have hidden clauses that are not discussed on the floor. She wonders if it is even constitutional to have a free conference committee reports come to the floor without written document that has been handed beforehand.

25:19 The chairperson asks Mr. Kutchen and Bradner to comment.

[Kutchen?] says that it was their intention to have passages [of laws] recorded because they wanted people to be accountable for their votes.

26:43 Delegate Kilcher says that he agrees with Kutchen's opinion that was brought in by Fischer. He says that he endorses their position. The laws that were passed in situations that Mr. Kutchen mentioned are illegal.

A man's voice talks about passing bills through houses and the free conference committee that makes amendments. Amendments are handled in second readings that are sometimes recorded. They ought to be recorded.

Speaker Bradner talks about what the free conference committee report changes are, and if they are mere editing. It has been hard to decide if the edits have resulted in whole new bill or if they are mere amendments. If they were treated as new bills, they would have to go through votes and discussions all over again.

31:44 Chairperson's voice says that they hope to have some guidance from the court on that.

Mr. Erickson says he's concerned [break in the recording] that they have been told that their constitution has a solid foundation, but that there has been now four proposals to amend it. He thinks there's a tendency to amend constitution capriciously and without time for sufficient discussion. [Lists the amendments.] He would like to see a waiting period before voting on the amendments.

34:18 Another man talks about how one can initiate constitutional amendments. They can only make those in a constitutional convention or by having 2/3rds of each house back them so that they can be voted on.

Caroline Bruick [sp?] says that she is a corresponding law student. She wants to see the legislation to see what it means without having to check from another book.

[Talking about confusion between law books.] She would also like to see old legislations reviewed because they are a burden for the citizens. They should get rid of laws that are old fashioned or that don't work.

[About federal constitution and how laws are made. A man excuses himself because he has a plane to catch. Bruick continues talking about constitution article 2.]

40:41 A man's voice says they weren't talking about federal constitution. [A man's voice says something unclear. More arguing. Bruick asks if it's mandatory that U.S. amendments go to the people for voting in Alaska. A man's voice says that it isn't.]

42:50 Mr. Cooper's voice refers to a comment that sometimes they can't have both houses in session together to review vetoes. [Talking about checks and balances in two-party system.] The speaker is in agreement with Mike Bradner in that two-party system helps with stronger checks and balances in their form of government.

A man's voice [Mr. Bradner?] replies that bicameral system provides some protection against deterioration of checks and balances in one body. The policy participation of legislating has expanded and will continue to do so with public advocacy groups growing up. Their participation in checks and balances system will have to be considered.

45:18 Mr. Jim Road [sp?] talks about clashes between legislative and executive branches. He addresses Mr. Kutchen and wonders if founding fathers saw that as a problem. Another man's voice [Mr. Kutchen?] says that they clearly saw the problem and they gave legislature free hand in their operation, but needed the line veto in the executive branch that the legislature can override with 75% vote.

[Talking about impounding funds and the governor's right to reject the appropriation if he wants.] The topic wasn't sufficiently covered in the constitutional convention but the checks and balances between executive and legislative branches in relations to money. Solving the issue may need intervention from Supreme Court.

47:58 [Talking about finances.] That [checks and balances?] gives both branches the ability to control the other to some extent, but the legislative branch is the primary branch of the people and that is the one that should have the final say in the funds. If governor doesn't agree and the people's branch override the veto, the authority of legislature is plain and the governor doesn't have the right to intervene.

The chairperson asks if other members of the panel want to comment on the executive impoundment of funds.

49:18 Mr. Bradner says that if the executive is given the power of line item veto and the time-frame in which to use it, it indicates that the court would give a conservative decision on the question of impoundment. The speaker thinks that the governor should use his power for line item veto in a constitutional manner and not wait until he has to proceed with impoundment of funds.

Another man asks Mr. Kutchen to comment on the transfer of funds [elaborates the question]. Kutchen [?] says that the transfer of funds is a function of legislative branch and that the matter wasn't covered in the constitutional convention. The guidelines were set up for the three branches to function. If the legislature is specific in their designation of funds, the only thing the governor can do is to veto that if he doesn't agree, but he can't interfere with the legislative process.

52:00 Roland Armstrong introduces himself as a delegate and tells that he has a growing concern over their constitution and he has found that very few people feel the need to make any amendments. [Speaking about administering federal funds.] He wonders what press' role is in keeping things in balance and keeping tabs on people who have lots of power but who aren't elected.

Another man says that that's an issue that is hard to articulate for someone who does what government does with issues that they tackle. He continues that it's hard for him as a member of the press to raise an issue and get people excited about it.

54:51 [Talking about governor's power to impound funds.] There is a prerogative in the state government to not spend funds but it's a hard issue for a journalist to grasp. The speaker would like to see a greater dialogue about it and thinks that the efforts that were made in last finance committee toward a systematic review of each bureaucratic agency were toward that.

He wonders if somebody else could talk about how to approach the problem constitutionally since that is not his expertise.

57:41 Speaker Bradner says that the handling of incoming federal funds is one of the most serious finance questions that they face because they find themselves committed to programs over which they had very little policy directive. That also has to do with impoundment question and the shifting of funds question that were brought up by Mr. Road.

Legislature expects that a great majority of policies are made in the bureaucratic structure without broad-range policy input. The policy says that they should appropriate federal funds like any other funds and executive branch says that that's an executive function, creating a dispute.

59:10 Chairperson introduces Delegate [George] Sundborg who introduces himself as one of the founding fathers. He says he wants to talk about something and welcomes comments on his comment.

Every legislator has heard that they can't legislate morality. As they met 20 years before, they felt that quality of legislators would be somewhat on the same level with delegates of constitutional convention. Legislature would be no less devoted to public will. It's easy to criticize when one is outside of legislature, but to do the work isn't that easy.

There is a growing condemnation of the legislature of Alaska and the speaker feels that criticizing the legislature will be the vehicle for predatory interests who want to dominate the future of Alaska.

1:02:43 Talking about negative public perception of the legislature that's partially related to their salaries that they have tried to vote up from the 10% of governor's salary.

[End of the recording.]