

Call number: 01-79-09 PT. 3

Name: General discussion

Date and place: 10/17/1976, University of Alaska Fairbanks

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Notes: Original on cassette tape. Master copy on CD.

The recording begins with applause for the speaker, [William N.] Cassella, who wrote the preface to Victor Fischer's book about the importance of Alaska Constitution and constitutional convention. [Congratulates delegates on the constitution, and participating in a truly American process. Talks about writing of U.S. Constitution.]

3:06 Bill says that he was asked to talk about the future of the states and he has a presentation about the evolution of the states. Alaskans made a profound contribution to writing of state constitutions and Bill talks about how role of states has been affirmed, partially thanks to Alaska. He reads a couple of laudatory paragraphs about writers of Alaska's constitution. [End of the speech.]

7:17 The chairman thanks the previous speaker and invites delegates to make comments on the presentations. He asks comments from Ada Wien.

Ada says that she has a layman remark to make, and mentions being impressed by Tim Wallace's comments in the resources committee meeting when he said that the resources article shouldn't be changed. Ada's voting in the resources committee was influenced by utilitarian thought. They were thinking about past and present, but not future, which might be a source of complaint.

10:26 Ada mentions President [William] Egan's opinion against elected judgeships that have made a mess of the state and thanks the audience. [Applause.]

Next speaker is Delegate Armstrong who contributed to the law in the constitution. Armstrong thanks God for the establishment of Alaska as a state.

[Unclear talking.]

12:14 Delegate Buckalew mentions a few delegates and then closes his speech.

Barrie White says he believes in man's right to say what he thinks and gives an account of his political beliefs.

16:35 White continues talking about his experiences as a delegate and a statehood activist.

21:22 The chairperson thanks Delegate White and calls for Delegate Jack Boswell. Boswell says that he is happy that their constitution turned out so well. [End of speech.]

Chairperson introduces Dorothy Awes who did a lot for drafting the constitution.

23:21 Dorothy says that constitutional convention was the highlight of her life. It wasn't theoretical, and the discussions helped her vote on the ballots. Talks about Egan's speech, and regrets that he didn't share his views sooner on the convention so that they would have been discussed. She has found "this gathering" meaningful and interesting. [Applause.]

25:25 The chairperson introduces George Sundborg who did a lot for the constitution. He mentions that it has been evident to him during his career as an administrative assistant to Senator Gruening that the candidates for statewide offices in Alaska come from legislature. [Talks more about politicians rising from legislature that gives them prominence to run for offices.]

29:34 Sundborg jokes that Yule Kilcher interpreted his prior talk as accusing him of being a freeloader. He thinks that the constitutional convention was a marvelous experience and that the review convention has been too, and thanks the audience. [Applause.]

30:26 Chairperson invites Senator Coghill to speak. He talks about constitution being an evolving document but says that there isn't too much criticism because people haven't exhausted the reasons for amendments. He thinks that constitution was strong on individualism. One fault in the constitution is that they didn't write in checks on big government bureaucracy.

34:41 The chairperson thanks Jack Coghill and invites Catherine Nordale, who worked for the constitutional convention, to speak. Katherine touches upon Native rights that weren't talked about in the constitution. They just talked about people.

36:33 Chairperson asks Mr. Hurley to speak, but he says he can't speak right then. [Unclear talking and joking.] A man's voice is talking about their monies, and about a check from Nome and "the 55 Club".

40:12 [Katherine says something unclear about the check.]

Chairperson invites George Cooper to speak. [Unclear talking.] He says that his only concern is the tendency of people to jump into amendments. Talking briefly about a suggestion to amend the natural resources section. [Applause.]

42:44 Leslie Nerland is invited to speak. He praises a few delegates: W. W. Laws from Nome, who was named a treasurer, and Vic Fisher, for holding “this reunion”. He thinks that the convention has been wonderful. [Applause.] Nerland continues by talking about the merits of Alaska’s constitution.

45:55 Delegate Ed [Edward] Davis, a lawyer, is called to speak about his contribution to the constitution. Davis says he doesn’t have much to add to what has been said, except that he hasn’t heard anybody mention the moment when they signed the constitution. [Reminisces and talks about how nice it has been to reconvene.]

Muktuk Marston is introduced. He talks about how he thought that Alaskans were sovereign people, but realized that federal government is controlling them more than before. He’s not happy about that. They are taking away 1/3 of Alaska for d-2 lands. [Talks more about conflict with resource development needs and nature conservation effort.] Muktuk thinks they have a great constitution but says that he doesn’t like the legislature who are young and inexperienced. [More talking about how to fix Alaska, applause.]

52:27 Chairperson thanks Muktuk Marston and invites Helen Fischer to speak, mentioning that Helen influenced many articles and served as a constitutional delegate and as a legislator.

Helen talks about her experience with writing legislature, sitting between Vic Fischer and Ralph [likely Rivers], which was intimidating for Helen. She lost her shyness when she was a legislator. [Talks about her influence over constitution, and how she doesn’t support amendments that haven’t been made known to the general public.] She’s proud of all the articles of the constitution. [Applause at the end of the speech.]

57:36 Chairperson asks John McNees, who represented Nome and was active throughout the constitutional convention, to speak. He says that he was a supporter of the unicameral system. John says that “the assignment on unicameralism was an assignment” and says that it was necessary to “have it aired.” They have needed the bicameral system during post constitutional era. [John talks about the review convention briefly.]

He hopes that the records of the convention aren't going to be buried in the archives but that the general population can use them [hah! – V.L.] He addresses students and Native people in the audience and is happy that they attend, and closes his speech.

1:00:34 Chairperson calls for Delegate Jim Doogan to give his observations. Jim addresses President Bill, and says that he can't add anything that hasn't been said before and he agrees with what Barrie White and Leslie Nerland. He hopes that there's going to be another reunion. [Applause.]

1:01:55 Chairperson introduces Delegate [Maynard] Londborg who came from lower states to attend. Londborg addresses the audience and reminisces a bit about his 10 years in Alaska. He speaks about how they tried to include "outlying areas" in the constitution and is delighted to see panelists from those areas, taking their presence as a sign of progress. He thinks that another convention should be somewhat further in the future, and hopes that voter apathy doesn't happen in Alaska and hopes that citizens will vote "next month."

1:06:23 Vic Fischer, who organized the convention review, is asked to speak. Vic gives credit to a number of other people who helped him with organizing the meeting and talks about the guiding ideas they had for the review.

[Recording ends mid-sentence.]