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PINELLAS COUNTY
DEMOCRATIC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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December 15, 1954

Personal

The Hon. Farris Bryant
Box 804
Ocala, Fla.

Dear Farris:

Thanks for yours of the 13th. The question of handling the Republicans is one that has kept me from sleeping. There has been so much publicity in Pinellas County about having a "two-party system" - everybody has been given the impression that the cure for all our problems is a two-party system. Neither paper has ever stopped to explain what the two-party system really means and what it would mean if the Legislature adopted it. Few people understand it.

I have written a series of three pieces in three-letter words which one of the papers is now considering. It tells what the two-party system really is and makes clear that what the Republicans are doing is talking two-party system at election time but screaming for a bi-partisan setup once they are in office.

I think there are several possibilities. The first is for someone like yourself with stature and a reputation for honest and conservative thinking, to point out the fact that we have an increasing number of Republicans coming to the Legislature and that with Florida's growth the Legislature can anticipate the possibility of more as the years go on. That the Legislature should begin to realize now that some provision must be made to allow the Republican minority its proper place and to recognize their party as an honorable institution and as a loyal opposition. This could be followed by a proposal that they be given their own section of the House and that they and their elected minority leader be given all the standing and respect due a minority opposition party. From there it could be stated that the Legislature, not being experienced in the rules of two-party functioning, adopt precisely the same procedures in dealing with the honored minority, as the American Congress has adopted.

Under this arrangement they would be given minor places on unimportant committees. Their bills would be referred to appropriate committees,

and if considered to be good the chairman of the committee would take over the legislation and give it his name as is done in Congress - (this was the Republican practice in the current Congress) - allowing the minority member to join with the other committee members as a co-introducer. Local bills would, of course, be given special "understanding" but be introduced by a Democratic committee chairman and tagged with his name.

I firmly believe that the local bill privilege should be a party matter and not a rule of the Legislature. I likewise believe that only those local bills that have county-wide application should be given favorable consideration and that the "private" bills should be so tagged and ignored. In other words, these lads should be helped with what is good for Pinellas County but denied the privilege of helping Republicans. Cramer did a great deal of the latter.


If the Legislature is unwilling to make the private bill rule a party matter pending "home rule", then it should face the fact that it is going to allow a danger to continue until a number of the large and growing counties are represented by Republicans. I recognize it may slow us here for awhile, but it may save seats in other counties and good legislation can be passed as required.

If the Legislature will simply follow the system used in the Congress, their position would be thoroughly justified. The Republicans call themselves a minority, elect a minority leader and they should be given a group of seats in the House and treated as a minority. Vermont handles Democrats in that manner.

In the reports of committees, statements of Republican members from the first "ahem" should be recorded and made part of a minority report unless they are in full accord and vote with the majority. The reports should state that minority Representative so-and-so voted "with the majority". Every process and line of type should list them as minority members.

Am most anxious to talk with you at any opportunity you have. Listening to your talk here and watching you at the Caucus, I concluded that you were the person to give this matter substance and provide leadership for a clear program. Hope you will let me know when you are going to be this way and I will make it my business to be on hand. I am working on numerous technical changes in the registration and election laws that we have found desirable in this two-party business. I would like time to go over with you what I have done so far.

Sincerely,


Wm. P. Stephenson
Chairman