

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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LEGISLATIVE RECORD

OF THE

One Hundred and Sixth

Legislature

OF THE

STATE OF MAINE

1973

KENNEBEC JOURNAL
AUGUSTA, MAINE

Mr. BUSTIN: Mr. Speaker, Ladies and gentlemen of the House: Sometimes we always begin our speeches by saying that we are dismayed or amazed to see something appearing in the newspapers. I want to begin the same way this morning by expressing amazement and dismay over a headline in the Daily Kennebec Journal, the story which charges that a charge from the President of the Maine Senate that the Office of Economic Opportunity was used for political purposes. In that article the President of the Maine Senate says, "It was inappropriate for the Office of Economic Opportunity to send out a memorandum telling CAP directors, Community Action Program directors, that there was a public petition drive underway for the Maine Public Power Authority advising them that some poor people might be able to earn ten cents per name in getting signatures on these petitions.

I do not think that this was a misuse of state time and money. Those of us who are aware of the purpose of the Office of Economic Opportunity know that its primary function was to be an advocate for low income people. In fact, to teach low income people that they should not depend on welfare but they should be able to do things for themselves, to help low income people and senior citizens learn the political process and to involve them in it so that they can, in fact, help themselves to know how the system works and to know what their rights are under the system.

So I believe its action of the Office of Economic Opportunity was consistent with that office's obligation to be an advocate for the poor. But I guess my chief amazement and dismay comes from the identification of this issue as a partisan matter. This comment, coming from a leader of the Republican party, seems to justify what we Democrats have been saying all along, that it is the Republican party which for years has protected the interests of the big utility companies.

This did not appear to be a partisan issue but now it seems to be

one. It would seem to me that the President of the Maine Senate is, in fact, in this article attempting to discredit the Public Power petition drive, to cast a shadow over it; when, in fact, we know that the petitions were distributed by hundreds and hundreds of Maine citizens who firmly believe in the Maine Public Power Authority and I can guarantee for one fact, that the people who sign it in the City of Augusta were not all Democrats.

I don't think that the attitude that we are seeing reflected in this article is particularly new. It is a cynical attitude which is pervading the country which gets its leadership from the President of the United States in the denial of education funds, health, programs for senior citizens. Today's Portland Press Herald headline, HUD cutoff gets \$10.5 million in Maine housing.

What we are seeing is the amassing of great political power against people who cannot defend themselves, who do not know how city councils work and how legislators work. The bulk of the "great society" programs were designed to give people a chance to participate in their government.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the gentleman from East Millinocket, Mr. Birt. For what purpose does the gentleman rise?

Mr. BIRT: Point of order.

The SPEAKER: The gentleman may state his point of order.

Mr. BIRT: Mr. Speaker, the gentleman is making reference to a member of the other body in rather unfair terms. I personally feel he is out of order and I move the Chair should so rule.

The SPEAKER: The Chair will rule that the gentleman speaking, Mr. Bustin, should confine his remarks without making reference to a member of the other body, without making undue reference to the gentleman from the other body.

Mr. BUSTIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now it is being said, not only can't the people have the programs but they can't even be advised of what they can do to help themselves. It may be possible that this legislature will

vote to kill the OEO in July, but I think that I can safely predict that this will not stop the people from Maine from being heard on the Maine Public Power Authority.

On motion by Mr. Birt of East Millinocket,
Adjourned until Monday,
February 26, at two o'clock in the
afternoon.