

Newspaper Resources: A selection of articles from newspapers covering the organization of the coalition session

The Spokesman-Review, January 13, 1963, “Lawmakers Are Ready for Rigorous Battle at Olympia,” by Jack Fischer

“In the House it is a different story. The Democrats are in the majority, but only by a 51-48 margin. And the Democrats are hopelessly split.

Row Over Speaker

A majority of Democrats favor the four-time incumbent speaker, John L. O’Brien of Seattle for re-election to that post. This was evidenced at their caucus last month when he received a large majority of votes.

But another group—smaller, but adamant—feels that O’Brien must go and are backing William S. Day of Spokane for the speakership.

It is doubtful that many from either group will waver, which means the victor must pick up some Republican votes.

One of them will do this eventually, but the chances of anyone being elected speaker on the first ballot Monday is dim. Republicans will probably nominate their floor leader, Daniel J. Evans of Seattle, for speaker and no candidate will get the necessary 50 votes on the first ballot.

Regardless of the outcome, there will be bitter feelings which will be evident throughout the session.”

The Spokesman-Review, January 14, 1963, “GOP Votes May Elect Speaker,” by Jack Fischer

“Spokane has not held the speakership since the 1947 session.

Republican leaders presented a masterful display of evasiveness following their caucus and Evans said, ‘Much of our success depends upon our security.’

If they support Day they have been assured of equal representation on key committees, as well as some chairmanships.

Top Importance

The main area is on a committee which is generally an unimportant one. This is the reapportionment committee and with redistricting now mandatory this group has assumed top importance for this session.

If the Republicans have equal representation on this committee they may not be able to pass a redistricting measure, but they will be in a position to kill any proposal which they feel will be detrimental to them in future elections.”

The Seattle Times, January 15, 1963, “Coalition in Control of Lower House,” by Ross Cunningham and Lyle Burt

“Legislative attention centered today on the House of Representatives, where a newly formed coalition of Republicans and conservative Democrats took command and began shaping an organization to serve their purposes[...]These were developments: In committee assignments, Republicans are to share representation equally with Democrats on the 16-member Rules Committee, and the committee chairmanships are to be shared on about the same basis. Comment: Under normal procedures Democrats would have been given controlling membership on all committees[...]Day, apparently after discussions with Republican leaders, made what amounted to a flat ‘no-new-taxes’ pledge, and backed it up by dispensing with the House committee which writes tax legislation.”

The Spokesman-Review, January 15, 1963, “Rep. Day Takes Top House Job: GOP Support is Decisive,”
by Jack Fischer

“State Rep. William S. Day, Spokane County Democrat, Monday was elected speaker of the state House of Representatives, defeating four-term incumbent John L. O’Brien of Seattle with the solid help of Republicans. [...] It was the most exciting opening day of a legislative session in years and O’Brien openly showed his bitterness in a cutting speech, terming the action as ‘low-type political maneuvering’ and ‘immoral.’

Wants Code of Ethics

‘There should be a code of ethics, even among legislators,’ he said. ‘I am sure a price was paid and we are going to suffer. The blame will be placed on the Republican party and I will do everything I can to bring this about.’ [...] ‘I am still a Democrat,’ Day said, ‘so the Democrats have not lost everything.’ [...] ‘We in this bipartisan move have considered what we basically want to do,’ Day said. ‘We plan to utilize the best brains in the House for the good of the state. We feel we have a mandate from the voters to provide the best possible program with no increases in taxes.’

[...] ‘This decision was not based on personalities,’ [Evans] said. ‘Mr. O’Brien has served long and well. We made our choice because we could not buy the Democratic state platform and had to go along with those Democrats who walked out of the Democratic state convention last June.’

In his bitter answer, O’Brien said, ‘We didn’t like your platform either. You are in for an interesting 60 days.’

The Daily Olympian, January 15, 1963, “Hot Time at House Party,” by Dick Lawrence

“How did you like Monday’s Housewarming on the Hill? It would be inaccurate to describe the affair as a party. It was more like three parties—the majority-minority Democrats, the minority-majority Republicans and Big Daddy’s determined delegates.

[...] O’Brien, who had been watching proceedings from the rear of the chamber and cast his vote for you-know-who, hurried into the middle of the floor for a chat with Day, Mrs. Hurley and others of his dissident Democrats. The results were shown by the second roll call: Evans 48, O’Brien 44, Day 7.

O’Brien, now at the front of the chamber, said to Evans: ‘Give us some time.’ The Republican leader shook his head. ‘We’d like a recess. Give us the courtesy[...],’ suggested O’Brien. But it was not to be, and when the desperate parliamentary ploy failed, O’Brien was out and Day was sworn in as presiding officer.”

The Daily Olympian, January 15, 1963, “Big Day in the House,” Editorial

“The Republicans have the upper hand in the lower house of the Legislature. And despite the bitter language hurled at the GOP delegates by the deposed Speaker, Seattle’s John L. O’Brien, the Democrats have only themselves to blame for their own debacle.

Before and during the 1961 session, Chief O’Brien feuded with members of his own tribe. The dissension was not diminished when the Democratic State Convention delegates, meeting in Bellingham with O’Brien as chairman, approved what many considered to be a radical platform.

[...] O’Brien contends this action was a ‘low-type’ of politics, that the action was ‘plainly dishonest’ and that a harmonious session is impossible. In contrast, Evans called for support of the principles of individual liberty and ‘fiscal responsibility to give our children a government free of debt from spending sprees of their fathers.’”

The Spokesman-Review, January 16, 1963, “Organizing of House is Pushed: Speaker Plans for Reshuffle,”
by Jack Fischer

“With the election of Rep. William S. Day, D-Spokane, as speaker, all committee assignments and much of the patronage for the session were being reshuffled. Even the seating arrangements on the floor will be changed. Seated in the front row on the Democratic side of the aisle will be Robert A. Perry of Seattle, who will serve as Day’s floor leader; Mrs. Joseph E. Hurley of Spokane, assistant floor leader; W.L. McCormick of Spokane, a supporter of Day’s from the first ballot, and W.J. O’Connell of Tacoma, who switched to Day on the second ballot.

O'Brien Far Off

John L. O'Brien, who was defeated by Day for the speakership and now refers to himself as 'minority floor leader,' also will sit in the front row, although he will be far off on the side under the gallery balcony. His seatmate will be Keith H. Campbell of Spokane, the so-called minority whip. This is about all O'Brien will receive. O'Brien is also slated to get bounced off the powerful Rules Committee.

[...] ... Disputes Recalled

Throughout last year a group of Spokane Democrats had numerous disagreements with party officials and McCormick and Day led a walkout from the state convention when they announced they could not accept the platform adopted at that meeting. O'Brien was chairman of the convention and made many cutting remarks directed at the two Spokane legislators.

Now, however, it is obvious that Spokane legislators will play a prominent role in this legislative session and may well be in a position to virtually dictate what the final program will be."

***The Spokesman-Review*, January 16, 1963, "Speaker Day Has Great Opportunity"**

Editorial

"The liberal extremists who have tried to gain a more dominant hand within the Democratic party, and to control the Washington legislature this year, have been severely shaken by the election of William S. Day of Spokane County as Speaker of the House of Representatives. Mr. Day's defeat of the veteran John L. O'Brien was the result of a determined effort by minority Democrats to keep their party free from leftist labels and leftist policies, and to restore to the state government a greater sense of responsibility to the whole public[...]"

***The Seattle Times*, January 19, 1963, "Divided House Meets Today to Seek Truce"**

"The strife-torn House of Representatives met today to continue the prolonged battle between the Democrats and a coalition of Republicans and seven dissident Democrats. It was the earliest Saturday meeting of a regular legislature in the memory of veteran legislators[....]The dispute centers around the membership of the all-important Rules Committee, which holds life-and-death power over all legislation in the lower chamber."

***Daily Olympian*, January 20, 1963, "House Coalition Clamps Down on O'Brien Clan," by Leroy Hittle**

"In 53 action-packed seconds today, the Republican-Democratic coalition in the House pushed through a controversial amendment to House rules, an amendment that has tied up the chamber in bitter debate for the last four days. For seven hours of meetings and conferences today, the coalition failed to solve their differences with the regular Democrats. Then the coalition threw out all amendments proposed by the regular Democratic faction led by former House Speaker John L. O'Brien. Next they adopted a resolution by Mrs. Joseph Hurley, a dissident Democrat from Spokane, to amend the House rules to reduce the number of committees from 31 to 21. Then they adjourned the house until noon Monday. As the coalition moved in prearranged precision manner, Democrats jumped to their feet, grabbed for microphones and demanded the floor. Speaker William S. Day, Spokane Democrat who was elected speaker by the coalition Monday, ignored them."

***The Seattle Times*, January 27, 1963, "Legislators' Gamble: Careers at Stake in Coalition," by Ross Cunningham**

"The success or failure of any political venture depends on its outcome. Thus it will be many months, probably not until the 1964 elections, before members of the coalition in the State House of Representatives will know how their political careers will fare[...]"

Evans still is long-shot for governor. He probably, however, would have been a still-longer shot if he and other Republicans had not seized upon the opportunities of the coalition to exercise for their party an influential position in the Legislature. Otherwise, in a minority position they would have been run over as roughshod by the Democratic majority as the coalition has run over the House minority...

One of the attractions to Republicans to go into the coalition was the critical issue of legislative reapportionment. This is a business where no holds are barred, and the Republicans would have been gerrymandered by the Democratic majorities so that quite a number of the former would not be able to be re-elected. Gerrymandering is considered fair play in politics.

***The Seattle Times*, January 27, 1963, “The Coalition: Two of the Principals,” by Don Duncan**

“Perry—He Pulled Away from the Left”

“Perry, 41, is the ham-handed, ruggedly handsome 45th District representative who quotes Greek philosophers to prove a point, has read the complete works of Karl Marx and Nicolai Lenin. Perry also is a Democrat who has swung from the far left of his youth to something right of center...Perry became business representative for Local 45, the Electrical Workers Union, in 1956. It had a stormy ending. Perry voted for House Bill 197 at the last session—a vote viewed by most Democrats as pro-private power. Perry says he saw his vote as ‘a protection of the rights of the individual to decide for himself if he wanted to let Public Utility Districts take over private power. The Union sacked Perry[...] ‘I’m very concerned with how far government can go in our society,’ Perry continued. ‘I think government, and not business, is the big enemy of the union. My violent eruption came when I saw unions wiped out in Nebraska when PUDs took over all private power.’

“Mrs. Hurley—She’s a Rug-Puller”

“The housewife-teacher-legislator took the center stage in the comedy-drama that marked the first week of the 38th regular session of the Legislature. O’Brien had scorned the attractive second grade teacher in 1959 in the all-important Rules Committee where she wanted a secret ballot and ‘he wanted to know just where everyone stood.’ Mrs. Hurley finally had her way on the secret ballot. Then she set out to upset the leader of what she terms ‘the too-liberal Democrats west of the Cascades.’

‘The people involved in it (the coalition) are so steamed up they are going to push a program demanded by the people for many years,’ Mrs. Hurley said. Mrs. Hurley resents anyone challenging her right to call herself a Democrat just because she cast her lot, temporarily, with House Republicans. ‘I’m an old-fashioned Democrat,’ Mrs. Hurley said. ‘I’m a Democrat all the way when it comes to doing what’s right for the people.’ The attractive legislator is, by her own definition, ‘not a public-power advocate,’ a stand which sets her apart from many fellow Democrats.”

***Tacoma News Tribune*, January 28, 1963, “Demos Rap Knuckles of Rebels: Those Who Refuse to Go Along with Caucus Decisions Begin to Feel Lash,” by Jack Pyle**

“Party responsibility took the spotlight again today as the third week of a somewhat hysterical session of the Legislature opened here[...]The strain was beginning to show at home. Southwest Washington Democrats adopted a resolution recommending that the seven Democrats they identify as those who joined with the Republicans to take over control of the speakership be drummed out of all party organizations.

...There have been party sanctions against seven of the ten, but two have gone free. They are Rep. Arnie Bergh of Seattle and Dick Taylor of Mukilteo. Seven were banned from the party caucus...the seven the finger is being pointed at include O’Connell, Day and Reps. Robert Perry of Seattle, Chet King of Raymond, Dick J. Kink of Bellingham and Mrs. Joseph Hurley and W.L. McCormick, both of Spokane....The resolution went so far as to say the seven were ‘elected under the guise and pretense that they were members of the Democratic party...All but Mrs. Hurley have, actually, liberal Democratic voting records from past sessions. Mrs. Hurley is considered a conservative Democrat.

[...]There is also some retaliatory measures being taken against Rep. Marion C. Gleason of Tacoma who announced yesterday she will defy the House Democratic minority caucus and accept her chairmanship on the Commerce and Economic Development Committee.”

***Daily Olympian*, February 6, 1963, “House Battle Flares Amid New Charges,” by Leroy Hittle**

“The battle between Republican and Democratic members of the House flared up again Wednesday as both sides inserted bitter statements in the Journal. Rep. Daniel J. Evans of Seattle, Republican floor leader, charged there were “very strong indications” Governor Rosellini used his influence to keep regular Democrats from accepting their assignments as chairmen and vice chairmen of House Committees. The Democratic caucus leader, Rep. Avery Garrett, Renton, said Evans’ charge was ‘ridiculous.’ He termed it a ‘publicity stunt.’”

***Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, March 1, 1963, “Welfare Lien Bill Killed in House After Dramatic, Tense Debate,” by Stub Nelson**

“On this burning issue, the controlling House coalition temporarily fell apart, and the self-proclaimed Democratic minority registered its biggest victory to date. Six Republicans joined 47 Democrats in killing the bill, while 42 Republicans and three Spokane coalition Democrats tried desperately to keep it alive. The highly emotional debate over the recovery clause drew a packed gallery, with the House working on a “call” and members locked in the chambers.”

***Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, March 1, 1963, “Speaker Day’s Rulings Spur House Fury on Columbia Pact”**

“The quick gavel of Speaker William S. Day threw the House into a furious uproar this evening as he banged through decisions on the controversial Columbia Interstate Compact. Within seconds, Day ruled that a bill ratifying the seven-state compact could not be amended and moved the measure back into the Rules Committee where it can be rescheduled for final action. Then he recessed the House. The result was the worst turmoil witnessed in the lower chamber in many years. Day a coalition Democrat from Spokane, ignored scores of loud angry cries for ‘point of order’ as he rammed down his gavel in machine-gun fashion. Democratic House members swarmed angrily in the huge hall-like chamber, frustration and anger written on their faces.”

***Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, March 3, 1963, “House Passes Bill Adding Month to Daylight Saving Time”**

“An attempt by three Democratic representatives to read into the record a statement branding Speaker William S. Day a ‘dictator’ failed today. The House rejected the statement by a 55-44 vote.”

***Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, March 8, 1963, “Coalition Backed Budget Bill Passes,” by Stub Nelson**

“After a bitter debate lasting more than seven hours, the coalition-controlled House late tonight passed the main 1963-65 budget bill, 52-43. Coalitionists—Republicans and dissident Democrats—claimed the budget was balanced and would require no new taxes. Regular Democrats contended it was \$13 million out of balance.”

***Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, March 13, 1963, “Rosellini Critical of Legislature”**

“The current session of the Legislature ‘has accomplished less than any Legislature I have seen here in 25 years,’ Gov. Albert Rosellini charged today. The governor told a news conference that the lawmakers ‘have devoted more time to bickering than they have to constructive legislation.’ ‘This session has been full of controversy, rancor and bitterness right from the start.’ The Governor said.”

***Tacoma News Tribune*, April 7, 1963, “When Good, Was Very, Very Good, But When Bad, ‘T’ Was Horrid,” by Jack Pyle**

“Biggest surprise—The function of the coalition in the House and Speaker William S. Day’s ability to wield the gavel. Day came comparatively green to the speaker’s platform, but gained considerable success with his

ability. He became well liked and admired even among many of the regular Democrats who wouldn't dare say so publicly, but will tell you so privately. The regular Democrats expected the coalition to fall apart for at least the first 45 days of the regular session, but if anything it got more solid, accomplished reforms in legislative procedures, worked hard, and really screened all legislation that came to the floor.

Worst result of the coalition—Although the coalition was in House, it tended to weaken the Senate[...]The senators were leery of the coalition, didn't choose to deal with it, and stood back, hoping it could think up ways to blame the coalition for any and all failures of the session.”

***The Seattle Times*, April 8, 1963, “Record Budget, No New Taxes, Topped Legislative Session,” by Leroy Hittle**

“Members of the 38th Legislature were gone today but they left behind a record-breaking \$1.8 billion state budget that was virtually in balance with no new taxes. It was their major accomplishment. The legislators failed to solve the other major problem before them when they convened January 14—that of legislative redistricting.”
