

resolutions extending our sympathy, and I shall take the liberty of appointing a committee consisting of Mr. Merrill, Dr. Freeman and Mr. Foley, to draft such resolutions.

The first speaker today was to have been Mr. Jacobson. Quite a few of you know the history of Mr. Jacobson that tremendous giant in the legislature of the state of Minnesota. He was the man who fought in the House for the bill which created the State Board of Control. Mr. Jacobson and Mr. Thomas Thorson of St. James were the two outstanding men in the House, and it was Senator Fred Snyder who took the lead in the Senate, I think.

But without the support of the Chief Executive the bill would never have passed. The Board of Control system was advocated by such men as former State Auditor Dunn and Governor Lind. But the champion of them all was our honored guest, Governor Van Sant, who not only advocated the bill, but put his full strength into the work to get the law passed. There was a tremendous struggle in the Senate and in the House, too. Institution men, representatives from institution towns, made a great fight on the Board of Control bill. I remember that former Gov. John A. Johnson, whom we all loved, a member of the Senate at that time, made a great fight for St. Peter, and that city had reasons for making a fight. But irrespective of all of that the bill passed.

We are highly honored to have the Governor with us today. He does not need any introduction. We all know him. We all love him. When he came here this morning he said as he looked around, "This is my child." We might well say that the Board of Control is the creation of Governor Van Sant. I am inclined to believe that he is proud of his child. We certainly are proud of the Governor, whom we might call the father of the child. He will now give us some reminiscences from pioneer times. Governor Van Sant.

STATE BOARD OF CONTROL LAW

Hon. S. R. Van Sant  
Former Governor of Minnesota

Thanks for the applause. I generally get it before I commence and when I am through.

It is no easy task for a man of my age to make an offhand address. It was thirty-two years ago that the fight for the State Board of Control law was made, and my memory may be somewhat at fault today, but my recollection is that it was one of the greatest fights that was ever staged in the legislature. I had had a terrific campaign for Governor. I was elected by a very small plurality.

After the election, I had a meeting with some of my associates who said, "The Republican party is in very poor repute. We must do something." So we made out a program. The first thing I proposed was a Board of Control. I came from Iowa, where the Board of Control was very efficient, and I knew something about it. I knew the founder of that Board, Governor Larrabee, who was its first chairman and who retained that position for a long time.

I want to congratulate you, and I want to congratulate my friend, the first chairman of the Board of Control in Minnesota. We have an affinity between us, a little brown button. Grand Army men are scarce, and I congratulate you, Mr. Leavitt, on being here with us today.

That reminds me of a little incident appropriate perhaps to speak of here. The Grand Army met in Indianapolis, and our Department called on Ex-President Harrison, who had just been defeated for the Presidency of the United States. I remember his speech very well, and I can confirm what he said: "The honor of holding office soon passes away, but friendship is eternal." If I can have the friendship of this Board, I want it. I want to congratulate you on your long, faithful and efficient service. It has been a great aid to the state. I hope that this Board may continue to meet with the greatest measure of success.

About the passage of this bill: The bill was being considered on General Orders. Immediately there was opposition from every one of the institutional towns. They did not see the light as they see it today. It was a very hard proposition to get the bill through. I had been in the legislature, and I knew how they tried to kill bills. The bill was originally non-partisan, but to kill it they made it partisan.

I knew we had a very hard fight on our hands, so I appointed a commission consisting of S. W. Leavitt of Litchfield, C. A. Morey of Winona, and Willam E. Lee of Long Prairie, and instructed them to go to other states where boards of control were in operation and to investigate and report as to the merits of the system. I may say in passing that these three men were appointed members of the first State Board of Control of Minnesota. They made extensive visits, going to Iowa and Wisconsin and to other states, and upon their return reported favorably upon the system.

The opposition to the bill continued. There was a great fight. But the bill finally passed.

After the passage of the bill it seemed best to put the law in operation as soon as possible. The first thing I did was to change the warden at Stillwater. It was a wise change, too. We have today—due to Warden Wolfer and the State Board of Control and some others, perhaps—one of the finest penitentiaries in the country. I am as much in favor of the State Board of Control today as I was at that time.

I do not know that I need to say much more, but I might tell you a little story about one thing that happened at the prison. There was a great ado about the pardon of the Younger brothers. You may recall that a bill was passed granting a parole to those who had served twenty-three years, seven months and eighteen days (thirty-five years less good time) of a life sentence provided their record was one of good behavior. I will now give you a bit of history which is not generally known. The bill was passed and handed to me for approval, but, before I could sign it, it was recalled for further consideration. They were afraid I would not sign the bill. I never did sign that bill. I refused to agree to it. Chief Justice Start and Attorney General Douglas, members of the Board of Pardons, assured me that it had become a law without my signature because the three-day period allowed me for consideration of the bill had elapsed, but I did not consider it so because the bill had been recalled.

Although the bill was never signed, I finally consented to the release of the Younger brothers. (James Younger had committed suicide while on parole.) But before I would consent to the release of Cole Younger, he was obliged to promise not to go into the show business and to sign agreements to that effect. The day he left the prison I called his attention to the fact that there would be great pressure brought to bear upon him to go into the show business and that the offers made him would prove a great temptation, but he said, "I promise not to do so, and you have my written agreement not to do so." Then he wanted to know if it would be all right for him to go to Texas, where he had a sister, and become a preacher. I said, "I think that would be a very appropriate thing to do." One of the conditions of the pardon was that he would immediately leave the state and never return. What was the result? He went into the show business soon afterward, and there was not an angrier man than Warden Wolfer, who had done more than any other man perhaps to have the Youngers pardoned. Later I met Cole Younger at the World's Fair in St. Louis, and he asked if he could come back to Minnesota, stating that he would rather be in Minnesota than in any other state in the Union. I said, "Yes, you may come back. But if you do, Warden Wolfer will meet you at the border and you will be put where you belong."

I am greatly pleased to be here. I consider it a great honor. It will be one of the milestones in my life. I am proud of the state of Minnesota. I am proud of its record. I want to say something to you; we are having a sort of a family reunion. I have been greatly honored. It is a great honor to have been Governor of a state like Minnesota. Few can share that honor with me. I have been Commander-in-Chief of the Grand Army of the Republic. It is a long step from the two stripes of a corporal to the four stars of a general, but I want to assure you that I have had a greater honor than that, the honor which I conferred upon myself

when as a boy of seventeen I took my gun and went down South to save the Union and retain every star on the Nation's flag. I prize that honor.

I am not going to talk politics because this is a non-partisan board. I have never known of a Governor's having made application to this Board for the appointment of men because of political service.

I want to speak of another honor recently conferred upon me. I was chosen delegate-at-large to the Republican National Convention. I am not feeling very fine over the outcome, but there is not a man in America who wishes more success for the incoming administration than I do. That should be the American spirit, the old Civil War spirit. He is our "boss." As long as he does his duty as President of the United States, we should do our duty as citizens of the United States.

I want to speak of panics. There have been fourteen major panics in the United States. I have been through thirteen of them, and I am going to live through this one. I was asked by one of the superintendents here this morning what I thought of this panic in comparison with the panic of '57. This is the worst panic this country has ever had because it is universal, world-wide. But, my friends, we are going to get through it. The United States Government has always been successful. We have won the greatest battles. We have met every difficulty in the past and mastered it. And we are going to meet and master this one.

I bid you Godspeed!

Mr. Swendsen: Governor, you can see how they feel here by the applause.

We want to thank you very much for your speech. We certainly enjoyed listening to your reminiscences and I need not tell you that we appreciate what you have said. I know you could talk for hours about olden times.

After the Board of Control bill had passed the Governor immediately appointed its members, Mr. Leavitt and Mr. Morey and Mr. Lee. Mr. Morey did not serve very long as he met with an accident and was obliged to resign. In his place the Governor appointed Judge Gould.

There was a tremendous responsibility placed upon the shoulders of these three men. There was the reorganization of all affairs pertaining to the state institutions. There were nine institutions placed under their charge for the management of which they were responsible. They also had financial responsibility for the Schools for the Deaf and the Blind, the State Public School at Owatonna, the University and the Normal Schools.

These three men and those who followed immediately after them laid a marvelous foundation. I have had the pleasure of looking through the minutes from the very day the Board had its first session, and it has done me a lot of good. When I know how careful they were in adopting rules for the institutions and installing an entirely new system, I say they laid a wonderful foundation, and it has been comparatively easy for their successors to build on this foundation.

One of the most important things which Governor Van Sant recommended to the Board was that they stay out of politics. We know how it is in the states

where politics predominate in the institutions, and in most of the states in the Union politics do so predominate. With a change of administration the heads of the institutions are changed, and sometimes this change extends to the employes. I am told that in Illinois a few years ago, when a certain governor was elected, between four and five thousand employes were replaced by others. Other states have had similar experiences. The Board of Control of our state has been complimented in the legislature time and again, and there has been very little criticism. The reason we have been successful, if we have been successful and I think we have, is because politics do not prevail in the institutions of Minnesota.

I should like to read from the first biennial report a few lines regarding politics written by Mr. Leavitt.

"It had been argued against the establishment of a board of control that it would be used as an adjunct to politics; that upon the accession of such board wholesale removals would be made to provide places for political favorites and habitual office seekers; that honest, competent officials would be subject at all times to removals from their positions in the interests of whichever political party happened to be in the ascendancy,—in short, that politics would obtain in the management of the state institutions under a board of control. The most determined pressure was brought to bear upon the board, both individually and collectively, by partisans in different parts of the state with the evident expectation that we would accede to their importunities and so verify the argument referred to. The whole matter was speedily and effectually settled for all time to come, so far as the personnel of the present board is concerned, by the following general letter issued April 26, 1901:

"To the Superintendents and Wardens of State Institutions:

"Gentlemen: As there seems to be some question as to whether or not your terms of office expire July 31st, and inasmuch as it is important to you as well as to this board, to have a definite understanding, you are advised that we do not and shall not assume that they do so expire. It will be necessary, however, for you to indicate to us at an early date your attitude and intentions concerning the matter."

That settled the whole thing so far as the superintendents and wardens were concerned. Since that day they have held their positions permanently—subject to good behavior of course—and we have had very little trouble.

The Board made the following additional statement to the Governor:

"Permit us to state, in closing this portion of our report, when you called us together to receive our appointment you stated to us, among other things, that in entering upon the discharge of our duties we were bound by no obligation other than our oath of office; that it was your earnest desire that political considerations of every nature should be eliminated from the management of state institutions; that no attempt would be made on your part to influence appointments."

As you see, the Board conscientiously followed the Governor's advice with regard to the elimination of politics. I may say that that advice has been followed by the Board ever since. I can also say that no Governor has ever asked the Board to place as much as a stenographer. We can go to a national convention in any particular line, penal, correctional or psychiatric, and find that Minnesota institutions loom very high because we have been able to get good men who know

that so long as they attend to their business they can have their positions for a lifetime. Since the first Board was organized I think we have not had reason to ask more than two men to resign.

The members of this Board feel especially honored today to have with us a man at whose wisdom we have marveled as we have run across the policies which he inaugurated. The work which he and his colleagues did is a matter of record. Mr. Leavitt, being the first chairman of the Board, was in many respects the leader of the organization. We are very, very happy to have Mr. Leavitt here. He will tell us something of the organization of the Board. Mr. Leavitt.