

Hammond on the Somerville affair

Dear Editor:

A retiring congressman asked for his reaction to departure from politics, responded: "I break out in a rash of happiness at the very contemplation." I'll not go that far, but there sure are some things I'll not miss.

Like spin-offs from the Somerville affair. Those who want him drawn and quartered assert he was granted favored treatment by not being bounced out in the street; rather than simply removed as Game Director. Conversely, Somerville supporters are infuriated at what they presume to be my retribution for political pronouncements by Somerville at odds with mine. Additionally, one editor asserts I tried to gag Department employees on the subsistence issue, threatened to fire those who disagreed.

On assurance that my "rash" is not contagious, please permit me to lead you by the hand through a few facts past which too many have detoured.

First, I have rigidly, and sometimes painfully, permitted commissioners to select their own subordinates; rather than tell them who to hire or fire. In turn, I held them accountable to me. To do so and not permit commissioners to select people they felt could best perform beneath them would be, I felt, unfair.

Accordingly, when Commissioner Skoog several weeks ago said to me he wanted to relieve Somerville as Game Director, I told him that was his decision, but asked that he defer the action until after the subsistence vote. Does anyone now doubt that to have done otherwise would have only increased acrimony and confusion on that issue?

But what about the so-called

"gag" order? Unfortunately, some mixed oranges and apples on that one, though admittedly I provided both. On the subsistence issue I thought I'd made it clear that I could hardly reprimand employees for criticizing subsistence statutes over which I had expressed concerns and proposed amendments.

However, if you'll recall, about the same time a number of inflammatory fish and game regulations were also floated out which some felt were designed to inflame the subsistence controversy.

Some would have permitted qualified subsistence users to harvest fish and game by means denied all others. For example, permitting aircraft hunting and grossly expanded bag limits were but two of several repugnant proposals which elicited violent opposition.

As to just what motivated those who structured these proposals I can only speculate. However, when I attempted to find out who supported them, all expressed opposition.

After pointing out the oversight in not including proposals to permit subsistence users to, say, take game by machine guns from helicopters or through the use of poison—which would have really gotten your dander up—I pronounced that I could find no one in my Administration who supported these proposals and that anyone who did so should find employment elsewhere.

This constituted the infamous "gag" order on fish and game. What a phony issue! It's enough to make my "rash" itch overtime.

Why was Somerville reinstated?

When Commissioner Skoog removed him as Game Director he did so as a result of public

reaction to actions taken by Somerville which Skoog had previously approved. As a result, Somerville chose to litigate removal and demanded reinstatement. The Department of Law then counseled that because of Skoog's prior approval of Somerville's actions, Skoog had dismissed him on improper grounds and that he should be reinstated or the State could be held libel.

Accordingly, I broke my policy of not telling a commissioner whom he must either hire or fire and directed Skoog to rehire Somerville. Since such action was at Somerville's request and places him once more in an exempt position where he is totally exposed to replacement by the incoming Administration, one has to admire the courage of convictions which inclined Somerville to come out from under the security blanket of untouchable classified employment where Skoog was prepared to place him in order to secure additional time towards his retirement.

In my view, all of this did two things: First, it proves just how badly things can be botched when professionals permit politics to unduly influence their actions. Certainly, had Ron Skoog any chance of being retained by the new Administration, politics and would-be politicians in Fish and Game destroyed those chances — a fact I hope those who chose to play it now fully understand. And, second, it makes it doubly delicious to slowly scratch that rash and reflect on just how little missed is any itch to further deal with such issues.

Sincerely,
Jay S. Hammond
Governor

Candidate Carlson says thanks

To the Editor:

Warm thanks and sincere appreciation for the 49,179 votes for my recent bid for U.S. House of Representatives.

I am especially proud of my strong showing in the rural

villages.

I am also proud of my successful efforts in the reduction of campaign costs which produced 73 votes per dollar as compared to my opponent's one vote per dollar.

Be assured that I will continue to monitor the record of our sole representative in Congress and WE WILL GET HIM IN TWO YEARS!

Sincerely,
Dave Carlson