

Luetkemeyer Re-Elected After Sharp House Debate



JOHN A. LUETKEMEYER
Re-elected state treasurer

Fiscal Reform Drive Is Behind Treasurer Fight

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Annapolis Bureau of The Sun

Annapolis, Jan. 15—The session which briefly ruffled the General Assembly today during its selection of a state treasurer was an indication of a far broader concern among some legislators over Maryland's fiscal policy—a policy which, they say, has cost the state millions of dollars.

Critics of the way Maryland now manages its money argue that the state needlessly fails to earn interest on a substantial part of its funds. They describe the present treasury system as archaic. They complain of an apparent conflict of interest in the treasurer's office. And they say that the state continues to miss opportunities to use its investments for social benefit.

These issues have been examined (Continued, Page B 3, Col. 6)

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Annapolis, Jan. 15—The General Assembly, meeting in a rare joint session, routinely re-elected John A. Luetkemeyer to a third four-year term as state treasurer today but not before the first sharp House floor debate of the session.

During the House debate, the make up of the treasurer's office came in for some criticism.

Mr. Luetkemeyer is chairman of the board of the Equitable Trust Company. He was former Gov. J. Millard Tawes's campaign treasurer and is the fourth banker-politician in a row this century to have backed a winning governor and successfully got the part-time, tokenly paid but powerful, treasurer's job. The post carries a salary of only \$2,400 a year.

The floor debate in the House came before the joint session with the Senate was convened.

Delegate Walter S. Orlinsky (D., 2d Baltimore) moved that the election be postponed until the only apparent candidate, Mr. Luetkemeyer, could be questioned about his office's relationship with the legislature.

The state Treasurer holds a little-publicized office but he is one of three men constitutionally placed on the Board of Public Works along with the popu-

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larly elected Governor and Comptroller.

As a member of that board, he casts his vote on construction, road building and other state contracts.

As Treasurer, he parcels out state money to the various banks, including his own, in the form of checking accounts and interest bearing deposits.

The Treasurer, since he is elected by the Legislature, would seem to hold a post originally designed to give the Legislature some control over the Board of Public Works.

In practice, however, a Treasurer has been proposed by the governor and elected without opposition by the Legislature. He has subsequently had little or no formal dealings with the General Assembly during his four-year term.

Not Prepared For It

"The purpose of having us elect the Treasurer is to give us some entry into that mysterious body known as the Board of Public Works," Mr. Orlinsky said in asking that the election of Mr. Luetkemeyer be deferred.

The announcement of the election came at the morning session and many delegates had obviously not been prepared for it.

After some questions from the floor, Delegate Thomas Hunter Lowe (D., Talbot), stated that indeed Mr. Luetkemeyer "is the only candidate the chair knows of who is likely to be nominated."

Delegate Eugene J. Zander (D., Montgomery), pointed out that "it has become traditional that the state Treasurer is a member of the banking fraternity and this has raised some questions."

"When we came here this morning, Delegate C. Lawrence Wiser (D., Montgomery) said, 'I bet 90 per cent of us didn't even know we were going to elect a Treasurer. Are we a rubber stamp?'"

"Open And Above Board"

Delegate John S. Arnick (D., 7th Baltimore county), the majority leader, hinted that Mr. Orlinsky was objecting to obtain press coverage. Mr. Arnick went on to say, "Everything seems open and above board,"

derway, the only hitch in Mr. Luetkemeyer's re-election was the general puzzlement of the legislators over how to spell his name on the paper ballots they were casting.

Mr. Lowe tried to spell it out for them, beginning "L-E-U-T..." until a chorus of protests caused him to check back and say, "I apologize. I was reading from the ballot of the president of the Senate."

The good-natured objection to this from the Senate president, William S. James (D., Harford) was lost in the laughter.

Mr. Luetkemeyer got 168 votes. Three legislators abstained and one ballot—that of Mr. Orlinsky who had balled it up and tossed it to a page—was invalidated since it bore the name of John A. Luetkemeyer, Jr., the Treasurer's son.

Governor Mandel had urged the re-election of Mr. Luetkemeyer whom he regards as a hard working and knowledgeable asset to the administration.

Nothing But Praise

All of the delegates who objected to holding the election immediately had nothing but praise for Mr. Luetkemeyer's ability and integrity and stressed that they were criticizing the concept of the office itself.