

IOWA HISTORY



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It was against the law for Iowans to tip their barbers in 1916

New Law Leads to Cold Soup, Soft Butter

Waiters in the state's restaurants predicted unsatisfactory service for patrons starting in July 1915 after a new law was passed by the 36th General Assembly of Iowa.

The Anti-Tipping Law came into effect on July 5 and promised a misdemeanor for employees of hotels, restaurants, barber shops or transportation establishments who accepted tips. Both the giver and the receiver were subject to arrest, a 10-day jail term and a fine of not less than \$5 or more than \$25.

Waiters warned the public that restaurant customers should expect cold soup, soft butter and steaks as appetizing as "fried shoes." As for speedy service, that would be a thing of the past. The wait for food would be like a diner ordering polar bear chops and the cook going after the bear, according to one report. When a hotel guest rang for ice to be delivered to his room, the bellboy might lose his way and arrive an hour after the guest had died of thirst.

State Representative Arch W. McFarlane of Waterloo had introduced the law. He believed the practice of tipping was "evil." A travelling salesman by trade, he said, "The law means a savings of many thousands of dollars to the people of Iowa."

Many hotel personnel were not happy about the new law. W.V. Holmes, manager of the Hotel Iowa in Keokuk, said he thought it would be hard to stop tipping in his establishment. And Des Moines' Kirkwood Hotel manager W.E. Bayfield said, "That is a ridiculous law."

The anti-tipping law had been in place for only about a month when Rev. H.L. Houghton was in F.J. Murphy's barber shop in Sioux City waiting for a shave. While there he witnessed a

customer slip a 25 cent tip to T. J. Donahoo, a barber employed by Murphy. Houghton immediately reported the crime to the authorities. Constable Sam Huber arrested Donahoo and took him into custody. Donahoo hired attorney Ben I. Salinger Jr. to defend him at his hearing. He was released on a \$200 bond.

It's not known how many other Iowans violated the anti-tipping law while it was in effect. But in February 1916 President and Mrs. Woodrow Wilson were staying at a Des Moines hotel when the two broke the law. Mrs. Wilson tipped the cloakroom girl a quarter; and she gave a waitress named Peggy Conners a \$5 gold piece. The president was a little more frugal when he tipped a messenger boy a dime for getting a newspaper. Nobody believed the law would be enforced with the Wilsons.

Meantime, T.J. Donahoo and Ben Salinger ended up taking their case all the way to the Iowa Supreme Court. (It's not clear if the fact that Ben Salinger Jr. was the son of Supreme Court Justice Ben Salinger Sr. had any bearing on the case.) In *Donahoo v. Huber* the court ruled that the anti-tipping law represented discrimination between classes of people because it allowed owners to accept tips, but not employees. According to the court, "Tipping may be an evil, but this does not justify discrimination between classes in order to put it down." The court ruled Donahoo was "guilty of no offense against the law."

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