

The OHIO BAR

Publication of the

Ohio State Bar Association

STATE HOUSE ANNEX

COLUMBUS 15, OHIO

including

Ohio Law Abstract Advance Sheets

JOSEPH B. MILLER, *Editor*

LEO P. ENRIGHT, *Business Manager*

Vol. XXV

October 6, 1952

No. 38

A SUMMARY OF THE CAMPAIGNS FOR AND AGAINST THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

By ARCHER REILLY of Columbus

Amidst the clamor of campaigns to elect the candidates of the major political parties, another campaign of perhaps more long range significance to Ohio, but largely unnoticed, is also underway. This is the campaign for and against the Constitutional Convention. It does not feature glamorous personalities, patronage awards, nor well-oiled professional political machinery. However, it is being intensively conducted on both sides by people who sincerely believe their respective cause is right and will prevail.

The campaign for a "yes" vote on the convention was originally spear-

headed by the Ohio League of Women Voters. The League adopted the convention as a major study project in 1948. After many conferences, reports and forums among the local League organizations, two state conventions, the first in Columbus in 1951 and the second at Akron last year, officially endorsed the Constitutional Convention.

This action placed the state League of Women Voters in a position of direct support for a "yes" vote. Since then practically all of the local Leagues have publicly endorsed the Convention. These groups represent eight thousand

Published weekly except the last week in August and the first week in September at 71 E. Elm St., Norwalk, Ohio.

Send all Changes of Address to Publisher, The Ohio State Bar Association, State House Annex, Columbus 15, Ohio

Entered as second-class matter, July 10, 1942, at the Post Office, Norwalk, Ohio. Under the Act of March 3, 1879.

Per Copy, 35 Cents

Per Year, \$8.00

women especially noted for energy and public spirit. The most active local League organizations in support of the Convention are at Springfield, Cleveland (6 local Leagues in a County Council), Youngstown, Akron, Toledo, Dayton and Cincinnati.

The Constitutional Convention work for the League organizations has been sparked by Mrs. Marian Resor, Cincinnati, Mrs. Werner Blanchard, Dayton, and Mrs. Charles A. Harris, Cleveland. Typical organization routine includes speakers for service clubs, PTA's and other community organizations; booths at county fairs and the distribution of literature prepared by the State League of Women Voters Organization. During the week before the election the more active groups are planning intensive telephone campaigns, and as much door-to-door canvassing as possible.

The League approach to the convention issue is to stress the need for a general constitutional review with particular reference to the Home Rule provisions, judicial reform, re-examination of legislative apportionment, and a consideration of longer terms for elected state officials; rather than to push some definite specific reforms. The State organization has prepared charts and drawings for speakers as well as scripts for special skits to be presented at civic meetings.

Some months ago the Ohio League of Women Voters in conjunction with the social science section of the Ohio College Association and many prominent individual citizens, including Howard White, of Miami University; Robert Rawson, Cleveland; Jefferson Fordham and Harvey Walker of Ohio State University; Brooks McCracken, Cleveland; George Coen,

Lancaster; Mrs. Fred Davis, Lima; Clingan Jackson, Youngstown, and representatives of the American Association of University Women, joined together to form The Committee For a Constitutional Convention. This group which was officially launched in July of this year after several preliminary meetings, now represents the central core of the drive to secure a "yes" vote on the Convention.

As part of its formal organization, The Committee For A Constitutional Convention elected Robert S. Miller of Troy as chairman, Mrs. Werner Blanchard, Dayton, vice chairman, and Malcolm Heed, Parma, treasurer. The Committee is organized under an executive group composed of the four district chairmen and several other active pro-convention leaders.

The front line campaign organization is set up under a chairman for each congressional district. These chairmen are expected to organize county committees in every county in their particular districts. In Hamilton and Cuyahoga Counties which have more than one congressional district within the respective counties, chairmen have been appointed for the entire county. The principal functions of these district organizations is to coordinate the distribution of literature, help provide speakers for meetings and work with other organizations which have endorsed the convention.

The Committee plans to do some statewide mailing and limited door-to-door canvassing just prior to election day. However, limited finances are a restraining factor for these traditional campaign activities.

The Committee is also not sponsoring specific reforms, but a general Constitutional re-evaluation.

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It is the Committee's position that a Constitutional Convention is the best and most equitable way to provide what it holds to be a much needed review.

Many other state organizations have publicly endorsed the Convention and plan to sponsor it through their official publications and local channels. They include among others, the Ohio Education Association, the A. F. of L. and the CIO, the American Association of University Women, the Pastors Convention of the Ohio Council of Churches, the Ohio Federation of Teachers, the Ohio Federation of Women's Clubs, the Toledo and Cleveland Municipal Leagues, and the Hamilton County Good Government League.

The drive for a "yes" vote has been materially benefited by vigorous editorials in several major newspapers such as The Youngstown Vindicator, The Akron Beacon Journal, The Cleveland Press, The Columbus Citizen, and the Cincinnati Post. At least two of these papers are expected to publish strong pro-convention front page editorials just before election day. Convention advocates expect help from the Toledo Blade, and hope for some support from The Cincinnati Enquirer.

The Convention proposal has many sincere opponents who are also conducting a thorough, well-organized campaign to present their viewpoint. Generally, they assert that the constitution is essentially sound and that needed changes can be made through more effective and less expensive methods. The organized groups favoring a "no" vote have been spearheaded by The Ohio Farm Bureau and The Ohio Chamber of Commerce.

The Farm Bureau has been circulating its official position concerning the Convention through its strong statewide organizational net work for many months. Specific campaign activity involves the distribution of pamphlets and essays thru the County Farm Bureaus, the organization's sixteen hundred advisory councils, and the various women's committees. Two publications, The Monthly Farm Bureau News, and the weekly editions of the local Farm and Home News editions along with a statewide radio hook-up, are utilized to carry the Farm Bureau's convention view-point.

The Farm Bureau is particularly interested in the legislative reapportionment issue. Several state maps have been circulated depicting legislative apportionment under various passable plans.

The Ohio Chamber of Commerce has taken a leading official stand against the Convention and has organized a vigorous campaign. The state Chamber has distributed a well drafted booklet among all of its members and all local chambers of commerce.

The Chamber has also done effective work among newspaper publishers and editors, service clubs and other community organizations. Within the Chamber of Commerce network most of the local organizations have set up local committees for a "no" vote on the Convention.

The official state campaign organization for a "no" vote is The Committee to Protect Ohio's Constitution. This organization has headquarters at the Southern Hotel, Columbus, managed by Miss Olive Huston, formerly Executive Director of the National Business and Professional Women's Clubs. It has over 1000 signed members

representing every county in the State. Mr. Arthur Hamilton of Lebanon, is chairman. Its other officers are Vice Presidents Everett Rittnour, Piketon; Maurice Edwards, Cincinnati; John King, Columbus; Charles Murray, Middletown; Ross Shumaker, Toledo; Gertrude Jones, Findley; Mrs. Marie Shaffter, Wooster, and Robert Laylin, Columbus, is treasurer.

The "Committee To Protect" plans extensive mailings containing sample ballots and attractive brochures which brief a 12-point platform presenting its case. It also has set up local organizations which schedule speakers at various local meetings and prepare spot announcements for local radio stations.

Many other state groups are officially on record for a "no" vote, and are presenting their positions through their regular organizational structures. They include the Ohio State Grange, the Ohio Real Estate Board, the Ohio Building and Loan League, the Ohio Manufacturers Association, the Ohio State Medical Association, many business and professional women's clubs and the American Medical Association Auxiliary.

Both sides of this issue have argued their cases in spirited fashion. They have used the traditional devices familiar to bond issue campaigns and community drives, as well as organized party contacts, including pamphlets, mailings, speakers, and as much radio and even in isolated instances, television, as funds will permit. Many individuals have given vast amounts of time and effort to their respective causes. The campaign's lack

of public attention is due to the fact that there are no personalities to act as symbols for dramatic effect. Thus, the vote on the Convention is likely to be considerably less than the vote for the major offices.

All interested parties naturally wonder about the outcome. A look at modern Convention vote history is helpful in one respect. It tends to underline the fundamental fact that the Convention vote is likely to follow the general trend of public thinking.

For example, in 1912 Ohio was a center of so-called "reform era" represented by such public men as Tom L. Johnson, Brand Whitlock, Samuel M. Jones, Hiram Peck, James Fox, Newton Baker, Henry Hunt, Herbert Bigelow, and Washington Gladden. In that year Ohio voted "yes" on the Convention. Twenty years later Ohio was in the midst of the depression and apparently the voters were in no mood for convention activity. The convention proposal was defeated with 1,056,000 votes against and 853,619 for the convention.

In neither case was the issue settled by organized campaigns, despite their unquestioned educational value. The results reflected the public mood at the time of the election.

What is the public mood now? Apparently the answer to that question, for both the Constitutional Convention and several other campaigns of considerable public interest, must be awaited until after more than 3½ million Ohioans have gone to the polls November 4th.

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