

Thursday, March 30, 1961

Bringing State 'Con' Up-To-Date

When you vote Monday, April 3, the most vital and important proposition you will be asked to decide is this:

Shall a convention be held to consider revision or amendment of the Michigan Constitution for subsequent submission to the Electors of this State for their approval?

This proposition currently is referred to as "Con-Con." Need for a revision of Michigan's Constitution has become the most lively and widespread topic in years. There are proponents and opponents on this subject—though both sides do agree that many needed changes are desired in this document that was adopted in 1908, and has been amended numerous times since.

SHOULD THE VOTERS approve this proposition April 3, then within 120 days another election must be held to name 144 Convention delegates, representing each of the State's 84 Senatorial and 110 House districts.

Should such a Convention be held, it is expected that it would conclude its work so that whatever proposed new document is completed may be submitted to Michigan voters in April of 1962.

Actually, little disagreement exists as to the need for bringing the present State Constitution up-to-date. Basic disagreement as to how it should be accomplished is divided between proponents of a totally new Constitution, or resorting to the amendment-by-amendment procedure.

Then, too, there is a considerable portion of Michigan groups that oppose any change—their reasons being that present financial or political advantages may be partly or wholly changed.

This latter group argues that "no provision unable to win support of a majority of voters on its own merit should be 'smuggled' into our Constitution as a part of a large 'package'."

AUTHORITIES ON this general subject point out that since the 1908 adoption of the present basic State Constitution, Michigan's population has tripled, has become dominantly industrialized and urbanized.

They believe that a Constitutional Convention should attract a high caliber of delegates, representative of the entire State.

Other phases of State government needing revision include extending the present two-year term for the Governor to four years, thus providing the incumbent needed time to get acquainted with his office and the State's manifold problems and suggested solutions.

It long has been argued that, since a Governor is held accountable for most of the State's affairs while he is in office, he should be allowed to appoint key persons to top administrative jobs now filled by popular election. These include Attorney-General, Treasurer, Highway Commissioner, Supt. of Public Instruction, Auditor-General, and Secretary of State. Lieutenant-Governor to be elected by vote, as at present. This would enable a Governor to exercise controls over functions which the voters hold him responsible for now.

THE NEED FOR consolidating the scores of agencies, boards, bureaus and

commissions into 15 or 20 agencies also is advised. Appointment of State Administrative Manager, comparable to a City Manager, also is being discussed.

In the area of State Courts, many feel that changes should be made relative to selection and retirement of judges, the organization and jurisdictions of the judicial system and its administration. Michigan now has four types of Courts: Supreme, Circuit, Probate and Justices of the Peace. An Appellate Court, to relieve the Supreme Court of its docket of many cases of lesser magnitude, has been defended.

Need for administrative changes in authority of metropolitan units of government, perhaps merging some of them into "authorities" where their problems are common—such as roads, sewers, water supply—are desired by some groups. They also stress that local governments should be given wider latitude in determining additional sources of taxation. Reapportionment of the Legislature also is felt by many as a serious subject for consideration.

THE ABOVE, PLUS numerous other ideas, have been advanced by the proponents of a new Constitution.

Personally, this newspaper approves the need for a current Constitution Convention. Whether or not its defenders will be able to affect all the important changes they seek is an open question. There are those who, believing that if every needed correction is included in a new Constitution, it will tread on the toes of so many groups and organizations that it could be defeated when submitted to the voters. That, of course, remains to be seen.

Finally, however, it must be admitted that the periodic need for overhauling a State's Constitution is as desirable as changing a city Charter, or amending a statute on the State's books, or a local ordinance.

Are we in Michigan not a reasonably literate people? Can we not be trusted to hold a Constitutional Convention, write a new and/or revised document—then, at a subsequent election, either approve or reject it?

The history of American government testifies that we are.

When you visit the polls next Monday, there are two other matters you will vote on:

1) Raising to \$5 million the amount the state legislature may grant in aid for development of industrial, manufacturing and municipal projects.

2) Candidates for the state offices of regents for the University of Michigan, Michigan State University and Wayne State University; superintendent of public instruction; state board of education; highway commissioner and justices of the supreme court.

We recommend a "Yes" vote on the new limit for financing industrial, manufacturing and municipal developments projects. The present \$250,000 limit is much too small for today's needs.

Regarding state candidates, both parties have named qualified men. As in most elections with most voters, party affiliation will determine for whom votes are cast.

Spring cleaning time is about here again.

The annual battle against accumulation is being planned by the housewife. We might call attention to an additional incentive this year—as well as issue a warning: be careful about what you throw out of the attic trunks. The Birmingham Civil War Commission (BCWC) has appealed for old documents, diaries, and pictures about the War Between the States. If you come across any mementos, and plan this year to dispose of them, please see that they get to the BCWC instead of into the trash. To those of you who are preserving the 100-year-old records and pictures, we urge you to loan them to the BCWC so it can look them over for local data. Address of the BCWC: 264 Park, Birmingham.



PEOPLE'S COLUMN

State Has Law Governing Dogs

To the Editor: In one of the recent issues of The Birmingham Eclectic, there appeared an article concerning a dispute arising out of dogs being permitted to roam at large.

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I THOUGHT it might be both of interest and a deterrent to dog owners who permit their dogs to roam unmanned by any individual capable of controlling them to be made aware of the laws of the State of Michigan pertaining to dogs.

Therefore, I have prepared and am enclosing herewith the pertinent parts of Act 339 of the Public Acts of 1919, as amended, together with the pertinent parts of Act 278 of the Public Acts of 1939, as amended. I believe that a reprinting of the enclosed acts or a synopsis thereof in The Birmingham Eclectic would contribute to the rendering of a public service.

THE DOG LAW - Act 339 of the Public Acts of 1919, as amended. It shall be unlawful for any owner to allow any dog to stray from his control, or to be in any public place, or to be in any place where the presence of such dog is prohibited, or to be in any place where the presence of such dog is prohibited, or to be in any place where the presence of such dog is prohibited.

SEC. 18. It shall be the duty of every owner of a dog to keep such dog under his control, and to prevent such dog from being in any place where the presence of such dog is prohibited, or to be in any place where the presence of such dog is prohibited, or to be in any place where the presence of such dog is prohibited.

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Dewey's Philosophy Is Misunderstood

To the Editor: I feel that I must come to the defense of the philosophy of Dewey. I am pleased to see that the writer in the March 2 issue of The Birmingham Eclectic for the fact that students entering colleges and universities are deficient in reading and writing of English.

There has been much misunderstanding of the philosophy of Dewey by educators and apparently by your editorial writer. It has been interpreted as license for "Johnny to do what he wants to do."

It was expressed by a Harvard professor in an oversimplified but nearer-to-the-truth in a letter as "getting the child to do willingly what he must do anyway."

THE PHILOSOPHY of Dewey, simply stated, means making use of the terrific dynamic power of children's interests to teach them the fundamentals of science, history and geography.

There are attractively illustrated and delightfully written books on almost any subject you can mention. Unfortunately, most of them have either been "promoted" and are visiting teachers of college professors or have left the field of teaching because of the inadequate salaries paid to teachers and the

MARY CHASE in her book on Maine tells how surprised she was to discover that the China so dully referred to in the textbook was the same China that her sea-faring grandfather had made so vivid and delightful.

We stress the "mechanics" of reading when the "mechanics" of motion would yield more results. I helped to train many teachers who made use of the philosophy of Dewey in their teaching and I can assure you their pupils could read and write their native tongue.

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One Thing or Another

Several times in past years, I have heard two of Birmingham's representatives to the Oakland County Board of Supervisors say publicly, in effect:

"We base our votes at supervisors' meetings on the basis of the general good of the county. What is good for the county is good for Birmingham."

ALTHOUGH THERE was a difference in words, the theme was the same: "What is our purpose as supervisors? To work for the good of the county."

These comments were not definitive enough. "Do you feel loyalty—if I may be permitted to use that word—is first to Birmingham, or first to the county?" I pressed.

There is no conflict of interests, they tried to assure me. "We don't vote until we have the facts—then we vote as those facts indicate," was their consensus.

ETHER I WAS NOT getting my point across—or they were being evasive. "Let me put it this way—do you feel you are a representative in the same sense as U. S. Congressman William S. Bromfield represents Oakland County? Or do you feel you are an at-large delegate, representing the larger political unit, like Senator Philip Hart represents the entire state of Michigan?"

I had directed this question specifically at Mrs. Hope F. Lewis. MRS. LEWIS HESITATED a moment, then said, "Well, I suppose I feel more like Senator Hart."

I believe that is the feeling of the other three supervisors whom the Birmingham City Commission has appointed to represent me—David Levinson, Luther Heacock and Carl Ingraham (also a city commissioner).

I believe this attitude toward their supervisor's job is only indirect representation. Thus, a Birmingham resident is no more important to them as a supervisor than a resident of Madison Heights in the southeastern part of the county, or the person who resides in Holly Township in the northwest.

"WHAT IS GOOD FOR Madison Heights and Holly people, is good for me. And what is good for you is good for the people in Holly and Madison Heights," our OWN supervisors are telling us. What chance of re-election would Cong. Bromfield have if he told his constituents:

"My votes are based first on what the consensus is in ALL 496 U. S. Congressional districts rather than how you Oakland County residents want me to vote."

OR Senator Hart if he came out with: "EACH state gets equal weight in my vote."

BROMFIELD AND HART are elected to REPRESENT their respective constituents in Congress.

It is today's political life, "to represent" means to "stand in the place of; to typify; also to serve as a sign or symbol of."

Bearing in mind constantly, however, that good sense and judgment must be exercised not only for the welfare of the specific political subdivision, but that that representative's decision will have on the general welfare.

IT IS MY FEELING THAT congressmen as well as county supervisors should vote their constituents' consensus—unless it is one of those rare instances where the constituency's consensus is black and common sense says it should be white.

But nine out of ten decisions are various shades of gray. It is only when the various shades are put together in a polling of representatives that the majority decision tells the exact color of gray that results.

This is the purpose of representative government today.

City Beat

President Kennedy has offered plans for stimulating national economy. Detroit Mayor Miriani has ordered acceleration of automobile purchases by his city and has asked neighboring communities to do likewise.

Uncle Sam is expediting payment of GI insurance dividends and income tax refunds. Some 10,000 carpenters in the metropolitan area will receive advance payments of vacation and holiday benefits.

SAID MIRIANI in a letter to the Birmingham City Commission: "... If we all accelerate the purchases of new cars and automobiles, trucks and parts that we normally would purchase after July 1... the upturn predicted by economists could be advanced to March or April instead of July."

"This in itself would tend to stimulate citizens to purchase as well, rather than waiting until vacation time."

FAR BE IT from this writer to throw cold water on a hot idea, but... What happens after all these advance payments? Do we perpetuate this practice in an attempt to avoid another slump in the economy? Do we ever catch up?

But to be more positive about this thing, how about promoting a community-wide bonus sale? Say something like this: If you're a local resident making a purchase in a local store, you get 10 per cent off. If you're non-local, you get

five per cent off. OR, HOW ABOUT local employers paying their employees a special "Stimulate Local Economy" bonus?

Only trouble is, this something-for-nothing bonus deserves much of the blame for the existing economic chaos. Oh, well, it was entertaining to conjecture a little.

NOW TO GET BACK to Miriani's suggestion... I met with mixed reaction in Birmingham. Said City Manager L. R. Garber, "We might tell him we bought a couple of Ramblers last month. For the benefit of Commissioner and Ford executive Robert Page, someone commented, 'We might buy a couple of Fords.' Mayor Florence Willett asked if any more purchases were contemplated.

"Four more police cars this year," replied DPW Supt. Thomas Brien. "Any chance of speeding up purchase of them?" "Not unless we drive the present ones more." Commissioner Harry Denyes said of the plan, "I think it merits serious attention."

IT'S A WORTHWHILE idea to speed up the economy, said someone else. "In this area," commented Commissioner William E. Roberts. Our parting statement: "Let's stimulate."

By DENI SCANLON

"People Are Funny" may be true—but it's true. What they say "off the record" or unintentionally can keep the laugh in bed. Just this week a governmental official sat listening to a serious discussion on a garbage and rubbish contract. He had heard his colleagues' opinions so many times that it was obvious he was getting the fidgets. "I move the contract be approved," one finally stated. "Second," was the reply. "All were in favor and voted 'Aye.' Then the official turned and muttered, 'That's a relief. Two more weeks and we'd have to eat the stuff!'"

The verbal exchange between backshop men in a newspaper plant often sounds like what the catcher of one ball team would say to a batter on another. "Parade me," I said, trying to pass two of them standing in the narrow aisle near the machines. One, who recently suffered a broken heel, snapped, "Go the other way!" Then the other retorted, "You shouldn't talk to her like that!"

Speaking of writing, a rather interesting note came in the mail last week. It was from the woman who called the news office to complain. After her problem was solved, this column carried notice of it. This is her reply to that notice: "Shall I write a beatitude To show my hearty gratitude? If I say it, with or without frowns, It will probably end up in 'Talk of the Towns'!"

A rather unintended indiscretion came about this week when a discussion on techniques of writing started amid a group of women. One was for long paragraphs, terse words and correct spelling. A second girl was convinced that short sentences, a number of quotations and proper punctuation meant success. The third girl, a sweet-naive-frail type, quietly added, "I like to start sentences with propositions."

50 YEARS AGO March 31, 1911. It takes only \$160 for the only lot No. 28, left in Euclid's addition, west side of Ann street. Cement walk and water right up to this lot, built on both sides. Also a fine home in Birmingham on April 1, for rent on Southfield (between Euclid and electric lights, bath, \$15 per month.

The land just north of the cemetery road, owned by Postmaster Mrs. Danie L. Jones, has been sold to Mrs. Maria Young, Mrs. Eva Jones and Mrs. Charles Carson, Miss

30 YEARS AGO April 2, 1931. In order to permit a more thorough study of the proposed \$400,000 village budget by the newly appointed committee of the Property Owners Division of the Real Estate Board, the public hearing and adoption of the budget was postponed to another week. The regular meeting of the village commission Monday night. A thrilling last-minute rally (See HAPPENINGS, 4-B)

Happenings of Long Ago

Bits of News Gleaned From Old Files Of The Eclectic

STRICTLY FRESH

The biggest room in the world is the room for improvement.

One good thing about having enemies is that they never try to borrow money.

A sensible girl is not so sensible as she looks, because a sensible girl has more sense than to look sensible.

A synonym is a word that you use when you don't know how to spell the other one.

Some people are never convinced they are on the right course until they have explored all the wrong ones.

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