

Iowa People and Events . . .

Constitutional Amendments

The Fifty-sixth General Assembly of Iowa has before it for consideration several resolutions proposing amendments of the state constitution seeking change in the qualifying age of voters from 21 to 18 years and a re-planning of provisions for forming senatorial and representative districts. Impatience has been shown in some quarters because of rigid constitutional requirements in securing adoption of the changes proposed. Some critical comment has characterized the constitution as being old-fashioned and arbitrary.

In the organization and establishment of institutions great care is taken, looking to their perpetuity. Provision usually is made for changing conditions and the need at times to fit the operation of the institution to them. However, deliberate planning is noted in the granting of authority for obtaining changes in organic corporate charters, both public and private, making such possible action difficult. Thus, hasty or ill-considered changes by mistaken or unreliable leadership is sought to be guarded against.

Faulty thinking and snap judgment can easily lead to unwise and harmful action. This is occasionally evidenced in attempts to radically change the established practices of institutions, and thereby endanger their continued successful operation or even their perpetuity, if such proposed alterations can be accomplished too easily.

It is equally true with established governments and their method of operation. Fortunately, the founders of the American government, through adoption of a well considered constitution, carefully guarded against sudden whims or ill-considered changes of its provisions. A two-thirds majority of both houses of congress is necessary to propose to individual states for ratification

amendments to the constitution, and three-fourths of the state legislatures shall approve same before they may become effective.

In similar manner, the constitution of the state of Iowa requires a detailed procedure, including passage of any proposed amendment by both houses of the Iowa legislature, entered upon their journals and referred to the legislature to be chosen at the next general election. Then it must be agreed upon by a majority of all the members elected to each house. When the action of both general assemblies shall be favorable, the amendment shall be referred to the electorate of the state, and if the voters shall ratify same by a majority of those qualified to vote at the election and voting thereon, the proposed amendment shall become a part of the constitution of the state. This has been the required method for 150 years.

These procedures so radically differ from the action of mass conventions, at which everybody in attendance can vote upon proposals submitted, or by a popular vote only, that therein lies the basic reason for this country being a republic and not a pure democracy, as often erroneously claimed. Under our form of government there cannot be any stampeding of action, like occurs in nominating conventions of political parties or the old-fashioned town meetings of colonial days. There is definite protection against emotional action in the deliberate procedure both in the congress and by the states, no single segment of it being conclusive or final, nor solely determined by one body.

Critics oftentimes chafe at this deliberation and the caution and prudence involved. Likewise, they criticise the careful plan of the republic in the election of its presidents and vice presidents. Other methods were tried originally, but none ever proposed was considered an improvement. Those opposing present procedures usually suggest simply a majority individual vote or voice of the mob, inviting instability and insecurity, not comparable in reliability with the guarded and admir-

able plan of our representative government, as established for the new republic by the constitutional convention.

“Do-It-Yourself” a Success

The aggressive campaign to “Do-It-Yourself,” coupled with mounting labor costs, has brought measurable results in Midwest home building and remodeling. Not only has it tended to keep down construction costs, but has afforded an outlet for pentup energies of individual artisans, and even the amateurs. Homes have been constructed from ready-to-fit millwork lumber material, and likewise furniture and fixtures fashioned by the owner in otherwise leisure hours.

In one Iowa city a young married couple recently completed a three-bedroom home for themselves and were announced as winners of a “Do-It-Yourself” contest in which many other couples also engaged. Their prize won was an expense-paid, two-week vacation for two persons at Sun Valley, Idaho, or \$500 in cash. They accepted the cash payment and are applying it upon the cost of material that entered the construction of their new residence, which represents hundreds of hours of evenings and week-end work by the couple, who are happily reveling in the convenience and spaciousness of the new home now occupied.

The increased wage demands of labor have almost priced out of the market experienced carpenterwork and plastering labor about homes on repair and remodeling jobs, the owners and their families accomplishing such in the “Do-It-Yourself” crusade. It is stated that 85 percent of this work is now done by owners of residences.

According to W. E. Difford, managing director of the Douglas Fir Plywood Association, some “Do-It-Yourself” fans use their projects as “an escape from the tensions of our times.” He said also, some people get a “spiritual lift” from building things. Others do their own work to reduce costs. Doctors in some cases are

prescribing it for people needing concentration upon some kind of physical activity. Shortened hours of regular labor is bringing increased hours of leisure time to Americans, which has encouraged the do-it-yourself philosophy.

Early Iowa Land Records

Among the last acts of the lamented late Governor Beardsley was his transfer from the governor's large vault in the statehouse to Curator Claude R. Cook, for the archives division of the State Historical building, 67 record books of early Iowa officials, largely from 1832 to 1863 of the land offices in Iowa, particularly those of the Land Register and the Surveyor General. As public records of the area during territorial and a part of the first decade of statehood, they are valuable for what they are, rather than present use, for only occasionally do research workers of the present delve into that early period.

In the collection there are 20 correspondence letter books of the Land Office Register of various years from 1863 to 1883, and of the Surveyor General from 1828 to 1861; a pay roll record book of the state capitol from 1841 to 1859; Board of Public Works account books from 1847 to 1855; University of Iowa regents' minutes of meetings in 1845 and 1846; Treasurer of State account books 1845-1851; various single volumes of similar early dates of warrants redeemed, appropriations, school fund, school land descriptions, and duplicate school land certificates.

In addition, there are the correspondence letter books of four Iowa secretaries of state, including the administrations of Frank D. Jackson, John A. T. Hull, George L. Dobson and Wm. M. McFarland. All volumes have been catalogued and filed in the archives division. Governor Beardsley had begun early to get ready for his successor in office and have the executive department in ship-shape.

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