

# CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION ISSUE IN IOWA (1960)

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As an alternate means of initiating constitutional changes by a body other than the elected legislative assembly, the Iowa Constitution of 1857 provides that the voters at the general election of each year ending in the number "0" shall have an opportunity to vote on the question, "Shall there be a convention to revise the Constitution, and amend the same?" If a majority of Iowans voting on this question favor a constitutional convention, then it is supposedly the duty of the Iowa General Assembly at its next session to provide the framework for the convention's operation: means of financing, basis for selection of delegates, etc.

With two exceptions since the turn of the century (1920 and 1960), there appears to have been very little interest in the legislature's providing for a convention as a means of initiating constitutional changes. The majority of voters at the 1920 election actually favored a convention, but statutory enactments by the legislature during its 1921 session presumably satisfied the rural interests who had championed the cause of the convention; thus, it was subsequently felt that no convention was actually necessary. As Table 1 shows, very few voters in the 1930, 1940 and 1950 elections were particularly interested in a constitutional convention, with 42, 36 and 41 per cent, respectively, of those voting on this special issue favoring it. In addition, only 60, 47 and 63 per cent, respectively, of those who voted for the office of governor voted on the special issue. However, as Table 1 also shows, the voters at the 1960 election demonstrated much interest in utilizing the convention route to revise the state's Constitution. Besides a very close election on the special issue, with approximately

47 per cent in favor and 53 per cent opposed, almost 90 per cent of those who participated in the election voted on the issue.

Table 1

Votes on the Constitutional Convention Question, 1910-1960			
Year	% Voting Yes	% Voting No	% Voting*
1910	45	55	78
1920	56	44	59
1930	42	58	60
1940	36	64	47
1950	41	59	63
1960	47	53	89

\*Persons voting on question compared to those voting for governor.  
(Source: *Iowa Official Registers*, 1910-1960).

The purpose of this essay is to describe the political situation in Iowa prior to the 1960 vote and to analyze the vote on the question of a constitutional convention. As a point of departure, the dominant political issues within the state are examined, with legislative reapportionment being foremost among them. Next, the roles played by the major interest groups in the state, as well as the two political parties, in the convention question are examined. Finally, an analysis of the convention vote is undertaken in an attempt to ascertain the main factors that led citizens to vote either for or against the holding of a convention.

#### Political Issues

The issue that probably generated the greatest political conflict in Iowa in this century erupted around 1955. This conflict, generally between rural and urban interests, centered upon the apportionment of the Iowa General Assembly. For approximately 10 years following the end of World War II, the political conflict over this issue—and a rather low-keyed conflict it was—was articulated in terms of whether or not there was a need to reapportion the legislature. Rural interests held that the Legislature for a long time had done an adequate job of meeting the state's legislative needs and, therefore, there was no need to change its basis of representation. Urban interests, on the other hand, believed that

many of their demands were not being met by the rural-oriented body, and that the only way they could obtain measures more agreeable to their interests was by increasing urban representation.

For decades representation in the Iowa legislature had been based on population and area in both houses, with area having the predominant influence. The Constitution originally provided that the Senate and House should be apportioned on the basis of population. Various other provisions of, and subsequent amendments to, the Constitution, (along with the uneven pattern of population growth and movement within the state) created gross malapportionment by the 1950s. The House, apportioned heavily on the basis of area, was composed of one representative from each of the 99 counties in the state. In addition, each of the nine most populous counties was permitted an additional representative by virtue of a constitutional amendment passed in 1904. Representation in the Senate, although it was supposed to be based on population, was also heavily weighted according to area. A breakdown of these districts according to population groups is as follows:

Number of districts	Population in districts
1.....	263,000
4.....	100,000-200,000
14.....	50,000-100,000
25.....	25,000-50,000
6.....	Under 25,000

This breakdown demonstrates the population deviations that existed among senatorial districts. To cite an extreme example, the senator from the Polk district (Des Moines) represented an area that had a population of 263,315 persons, while the senator from the Adams-Taylor district (in the southernmost part of the state) represented only 17,756 inhabitants. Thus, urban interests believed they were grossly underrepresented in the state legislature.

Beginning in approximately 1955, both rural and urban interests were agreed that some form of reapportionment was necessary. Both also believed that the constitutional amendment process would have to be used to base representation in

at least one of the two legislative houses on population. The conflict over reapportionment after 1955 was articulated in terms of which house should be based on population and which on area. Rural interests took the position that the House of Representatives should be apportioned according to area, with one representative being elected from each county. Their position was generally argued in terms of the absolute protection of minority, or, in this case, rural representation and rights. Urban interests, on the other hand, argued that if only one house were to be apportioned on the basis of population, it should be the House of Representatives, in accordance with the Federal structure.

Numerous proposals were presented by both sides during the 1955, 1957 and 1959 sessions of the General Assembly. All, for one reason or another, were defeated. Although party politics within the legislature played an important role in this matter, Table 2 demonstrates the rural-urban cleavage that also characterized the lawmaking body on this issue. Urban Democrats and Republicans joined together in favoring a plan that would have based representation on population in the House and on area in the Senate.

The Legislature ended its 1959 session without passing any redistricting plan. Urban interests were quick to point this out, claiming at the same time that the rural-dominated Legislature would not and probably could not pass reapportionment in behalf of urban interests. Therefore, they advocated that the issue could only be resolved by taking it out of the Legislature and placing it in the hands of a constitutional convention. Rural interests charged the urbanites with being obstructionists and claimed that a fair plan satisfying all interests concerned would be approved by the 1961 session of the Legislature; therefore, there was no need for a constitutional convention.

Table 2

Population of counties	Democrats		Republicans	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
40,000 or more	18	0	5	1
20,000-40,000	3	4	5	9
Less than 20,000	3	20	6	33
	24	24	16	43

Another of the major issues debated in the Iowa Legislature in the 1950s centered upon the official state policy regulating the purchase and distribution of liquor. This policy had been established in 1934, shortly after the people voted to end prohibition. Under the new policy, the state government had the responsibility for the purchase and distribution of all "hard" liquors. The sale of liquor-by-the-drink, or "across-the-bar," was prohibited. To legally acquire any liquor within the state, one had to purchase it at a state-operated liquor store. Beer usually could be acquired in "normal" retail outlets such as taverns and grocery stores.

Judging by the behavior exhibited by members of the State Legislature in the 1950s, it becomes evident that persons desiring a more "liberal" state liquor policy had grown more numerous and vocal. For example, in 1949 a bill was introduced in the House of Representatives by seven rural "dry" legislators. The bill, in effect, would have permitted counties on a local - (county) option basis to have complete prohibition with respect to beer and liquors. The bill narrowly escaped being enacted into law by a 50-57 vote margin.<sup>1</sup> Ten years later (1959) the House considered a bill that would have permitted the sale of liquor-by-the-drink on a local - (county) option basis. Although the proposal was soundly defeated, 35-72, an analysis of the roll call vote (see Table 3)

Table 3

Liquor-By-The-Drink Roll Call Vote House of Representatives—1959				
Population of counties	Democrats		Republicans	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
40,000 or more	16	1	5	1
20,000-40,000	3	5	3	15
Less than 20,000	5	17	3	33
	24	23	11	49

The 72 legislators who voted against this bill represented counties with 49.2% of the Iowa population, while the 35 who voted in favor of it represented counties with 50.8% of the population.

<sup>1</sup>*Journal of the House, 58th General Assembly.* Des Moines: State of Iowa, 1959.

demonstrates that the division of legislators was predominantly along rural-urban lines. Generally, legislators representing urban constituencies, regardless of their party affiliations, voted in favor of the legalization of liquor-by-the-drink in those counties where voters approved such a plan in a local referendum, while legislators representing rural constituencies, regardless of party affiliation, voted against it.

The demand for liquor-by-the-drink as essentially an urban phenomenon was accentuated by two factors. First, six of the 11 most populous cities of Iowa are located on the borders of the state, next to cities or towns of other states which have liquor-by-the-drink. Business interests in these cities believed that they lost much revenue directly or indirectly by residents crossing the border into the adjacent states to purchase their liquor "across-the-bar." Second, there occurred in Iowa during the 1950s a large increase in the number of key clubs, private clubs in which an individual by the payment of a usually nominal fee could become a member and enjoy whatever privileges or advantages that accompanied having his liquor served "across-the-bar." In Polk County (Des Moines), for example, there were over 100 key clubs by 1960, of which only a few were considered to be "legitimate" private clubs—fraternal organizations, service clubs, country clubs, etc. (Club members had to consume their *own* liquor—that which they had originally purchased in a state liquor store—in order for the club to be considered legitimate.) Urban law enforcement officials found it difficult to regulate the operations of these clubs. The State Legislature, reluctant to pass laws that might jeopardize the legitimate fraternal and service clubs, maintained a hands-off attitude toward measures that had as their objective more stringent regulation of the so-called "phony" key clubs. The presence of these two factors—business losses as perceived by border city interests and the growth of allegedly unregulated "illegitimate" key clubs—provided "wet" interests within the state with ammunition to fight for a more "liberal" state policy.

Another political issue of the 1950s associated with the 1960 constitutional convention question focused upon the division of state road money to the state's three major road

systems: primary, secondary, and cities and towns. Rural interests generally opposed any reduction in state expenditures going to secondary roads, while urban interests, especially toward the latter part of the 1950s, demanded a substantial increase in appropriations for roads and streets in cities and towns, usually at the expense of the secondary road fund. Basic to the problem of financing Iowa road construction and maintenance is the fact that the state has more miles of road in relation to the number of inhabitants and the number of square miles than any other state.

The state initiated its highway, road and street modernization program in 1949 when the 53rd General Assembly established the state road-use tax fund. "The farmer needs to get out of the mud" was the often heard campaign slogan of the rural interests. The State Legislature, in setting up the fund, decided that the primary road system should receive 42 per cent of the money allocated from the fund; the secondary road system, 50 per cent; and municipalities, 8 per cent. With the exception of a few grumblings in the urban press, there appeared to be very little conflict over these initial percentage allocations.

Major changes in the allocation of state road money were made in 1953 and 1955 when, in each year, the Legislature increased on a "temporary" basis the state gasoline tax by one cent. This two-cent increase, which later became permanent, was earmarked for the primary road system. Thus, in 1956, including this two-cent increase, the percentage allocations of state road money to the various road systems were 51 per cent to primary roads, 42 per cent to secondary roads and 7 per cent to municipal roads and streets.

Before and during the 1959 session of the legislature, urban interests increased their demands for a "fairer" distribution of state road money. About this time, the urban press began employing the slogan, "city people need to get out of the mud, too," as an obvious reply to the rural interests who opposed any increase in the allocation of road money to municipalities—at the expense of the secondary roads. A bill was introduced in the General Assembly which, if it had been enacted into law, would have increased the portion of the road-use tax fund allocated to cities and towns from

eight to 14 per cent (excluding the two-cent special gasoline tax earmarked for primary roads). The proposed 6 per cent increase was to come from a corresponding decrease in the allocation to the secondary road system. The Legislature, as a "temporary" measure, passed an amended version of the bill which provided for a 2 per cent "off-the-top" (before the regular formula was applied) appropriation from the road-use tax fund to cities and towns for an 18-month period. At the same time, it provided for the establishment of a Road Study Committee, composed of legislators and interested non-legislators, to study the road situation and make recommendations to it in 1961. The urbanites fell short of their 14 per cent goal and were quite unhappy about their inability to obtain more favorable treatment with respect to state road financing policy from the rural-oriented Legislature.

Another political issue of the 1950s that can be associated with the 1960 constitutional convention question concerned the official state policy dealing with labor organizations. For more than a decade, organized labor viewed with general disfavor the laws regarding its organizational activities. Two laws, one dealing with labor union membership and the other with strikes, were passed by the General Assembly in 1947. The first, the so-called right-to-work law, made it unlawful to discriminate in the employment of any person because of membership or non-membership in a labor union, or to require any person to pay dues to a union as a condition of employment. The law, in effect, outlawed the union shop. Organized labor considered it even more restrictive than usual in that it prohibited any employer from deducting labor union dues from an employe's pay check unless authorized by the employe. Furthermore, such an authorization had to be countersigned by the employe's spouse, if he or she were married. The second law passed by the Legislature in 1947 was designed to curtail labor boycotts and strikes. The law made it illegal for a labor union to enter into any conspiracy or contract by strikes, or the threat of strikes, for the purpose of forcing any employer into any agreement.

Voting patterns in the State Legislature during the 1950s on bills that would have repealed the right-to-work law and



other laws considered to be restrictive by organized labor generally demonstrated both a partisan and rural-urban cleavage. This rural-urban conflict was stimulated by those groups interested in maintaining the *status quo* with respect to labor policies. Manufacturers, businessmen and a large proportion of the rural political community were aligned on this issue. On the other hand, those groups which favored the repeal of these labor policies were found only in the urban areas of the state.

A number of other governmental reform issues had been discussed and debated during the 1950s which were associated with the 1960 vote on the constitutional convention. In fact, most proponents of the convention pointed out that such needed reforms could easily be proposed by a convention. Most notable among the proposals were those for county government consolidation, a shorter ballot for state elective officials, annual sessions of the State Legislature and an increase of the state debt limit.

Proposals to change the county governmental structure usually had as a central theme the consolidation of the 99-county structure into fewer such units of local government. Claiming that consolidation would result in more efficient local government, the proponents of such proposals were mainly urban interests, including the urban press. Opposition to such proposals was generally rural-centered, with farmers' groups, county elected officials and the rural press leading the way.

Another issue of structure reform that had overtones of the rural-urban conflict concerned the proper method of selecting state officials. Iowa's top executive and administrative officials—governor, lieutenant governor, secretary of state, auditor, treasurer, attorney general and secretary of agricultural—had traditionally obtained their offices via popular election. Most proposals to "modernize" the executive branch of the state government contained provisions which would make all executive and/or administrative positions appointive, except for the top two; the governor and lieutenant governor. Following the cabinet structure of the national government, the proponents of such plans generally

agreed that the power of the governor within the political arena should and would be enhanced by permitting him to select his own top administrative officials. Generally, sentiment in favor of such proposals centered in the urban press and at colleges and universities. These same groups were the chief advocates of such reform measures as annual sessions of the legislature, increasing the state debt limit, etc.

#### Interest Groups

Groups allied in favor of a constitutional convention in 1960 included the urban press, organized labor, the League of Women Voters, municipal officials of larger urban areas, college and university academicians and an *ad hoc* group, the Citizens Committee for a Constitutional Convention. The issue of reapportionment was probably the most salient factor in binding these groups together. Generally urban-centered, these groups felt that the rural dominated legislature would never pass a reapportionment plan acceptable to their interests. Members of this larger reformist grouping in the convention controversy had attempted in the 1950s to change a number of the previously discussed state policies, policies which they considered detrimental to their more specific interests. The role of each one of the interest groups which comprised the reformist interest grouping will be briefly examined.

Probably the most influential and certainly the most outspoken proponent of a favorable vote on the constitutional convention was the urban press. This group was composed mainly of the dailies of the largest cities in the state: *The Des Moines Register and Tribune*, *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, *Waterloo Daily Courier*, *Davenport Morning Democrat* and the *Burlington Hawk-Eye Gazette*. There was only one major urban daily that opposed the calling of a constitutional convention: the *Council Bluffs Nonpariel*. The *Nonpariel's* position on the convention was consistent with the generally anti-reformist posture it assumed on other controversial issues debated in the Iowa Legislature during the 1950s.

Of the urban newspapers *The Des Moines Register and Tribune*, because of their large state-wide circulation and enthusiasm for many reform measures, were the most potent advocates of the 1960 convention. During the 1950s, these

papers had championed such measures as legislative reapportionment, county government consolidation and reform, "home rule" for urban areas, a shorter ballot and annual sessions of the legislature. *The Register* and *Tribune* urged their readers editorially on many occasions prior to the election to vote "yes" on the convention question. In addition, they emphasized via the political cartoon, the "backwardness" of the Iowa Legislature, while at the same time extolling the "virtues" of the constitutional convention as a means of initiating what were considered as overdue structural changes within the state's political system.

The Iowa Federation of Labor (IFL), an affiliate of AFL-CIO, also supported the calling of a constitutional convention. In 1960, 85,000 workers residing in the more urbanized areas of the state belonged to this group. The group's total expenditures for all of its various activities was approximately \$100,000. The involvement of organized labor in the convention issue was based on its desire for legislative reapportionment and the abolishment of the state's right-to-work law. Labor representatives felt that the latter could be achieved only with the "true" accomplishment of the former. As the vice president of the IFL stated at the time:

No matter how hard the labor movement might work, no possible way could be found to elect enough representatives under the current apportionment with a liberal attitude toward labor to make possible the repeal of the Iowa right-to-work law, or to gain proper, up-to-date, and fair laws on unemployment compensation, workmens compensation, minimum wages, or any of the other laws common to the east or far west . . . Of the 99 counties, there are major concentrations of unions in only 15 or 16, and 50 of them have virtually no union membership at all.<sup>2</sup>

The Iowa League of Women Voters (ILWF) also formally supported the constitutional convention. In 1960 this group had a total membership of some 1,800 women and a total budget of approximately \$7,600. Like the IFL, a fairly large proportion of the League's membership was located in the more urbanized areas of the state. As in most other states, this women's group has traditionally assumed a reformist

<sup>2</sup>Dale, Vernon, *Personal Correspondence*. Des Moines: Iowa Federation of Labor, Oct. 17, 1960.

posture on a number of public policy questions. The position of the Iowa League on the constitutional convention was consistent with its previous positions on legislative reapportionment, a shorter ballot and annual sessions of the legislature.

Generally, municipal officials of Iowa's major urban areas also were members of the reformist interest grouping. Their interest in a convention was based on the belief that the State Legislature was not responsive to many of their policy demands of the 1950s. The problems faced by such officials in controlling "illegitimate" key clubs has been referred to earlier. Many municipal officials blamed a good number of their financial and administrative problems on the legislature's failure to provide "home rule" for any of its urban areas. This group believed that a convention could initiate a constitutional "home rule" amendment, in addition to providing a reapportionment plan more acceptable to their interest.

The state organization of municipal officials, the Iowa League of Municipalities (ILM), took no formal position on the convention question. This was due partly to the fact that a substantial proportion of its members were municipal officials of essentially rural, conservative towns. Probably even more important was the reluctance of the organization's leadership to take a stand on the convention; taking a pro-convention stand would risk angering the rural-dominated legislature and might possibly endanger the League's future proposals. As the executive-director of the League stated before the 1960 election:

Municipalities are dependent on the good wishes and cooperation of the state legislature for their survival. The state legislature decides what municipalities may do and not do, what acts they may not perform and those that they may, what taxes they may levy and what taxes they may not levy. Hence, since the state legislature is the master of the municipality — so to speak — and since the league is the only instrument that municipalities have to plead their cause before the state legislature, it would be unwise indeed for the league to participate in any highly controversial matter in which the welfare of municipalities is not clearly at stake, and thus incurring the ill will of some members of the legislature.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup>See the *Iowa Business Digest*. Iowa City: State University of Iowa, Summer 1960.

The municipal officials of the larger urban areas in the state who advocated the calling of a constitutional convention did so, therefore, on an individual basis and not through their state-wide organization. (Since the 1960 election, the League has undergone a major reorganization in terms of both personnel and approach.)

College and university academicians, although not formally organized, also tended to favor a constitutional convention. The interest of this group in a convention had its moorings in the general "liberal" disposition usually displayed by many members of the college and university community on many political issues. Another factor influenced academic opinion. The Iowa Constitution of 1857 provided that at no time could the state's bonded indebtedness exceed \$250,000. Some academicians felt that the educational facilities at the state supported universities were either inadequate or quickly approaching such a status. To many, the constitutionally imposed debt maximum served as a barrier to a possible rapid means of obtaining a substantial amount of capital to make major improvements in educational facilities at the state institutions. Thus, academicians tended to support a convention not only because of their general "liberal" predisposition, but also because they considered the convention a means of removing what they considered an "unrealistic" maximum indebtedness figure.

Several months before the 1960 general election, the proponents of the convention organized an *ad hoc* citizens' group to promote on a wide-scale basis a favorable convention vote. Known formally as the Non-partisan Citizens Committee for a Constitutional Convention, most officers of this group were officers or prominent leaders of the interest groups that comprised the reformist grouping. For example, the vice president of the IFL, the president of Grinnell College, the executive director of the (State University of) Iowa Alumni Association, the publisher-editor of the *Iowan* magazine and a few leaders of the ILWV served on the Committee's board of directors.

Many groups although *formally* neutral on the convention question, were *informally* opposed to the convention. This

was especially true with respect to a number of groups that had vested interest in preserving the *status quo* of official state governmental policy. To favor any changes via the convention route would present these groups with certain risks. In the end, if the convention received a favorable vote, it might have been too great a risk, especially if some state policies currently in effect and favorable to their more specific interests were altered in any way.

In formal opposition to a constitutional convention were the following three interest groups: the Iowa Farm Bureau Federation (IFBF), the Iowa Manufacturers Association (IMA) and the rural press. Although the number of groups that opposed the convention is obviously less than the number that supported it, the actual strength of those opposing the convention was great. Taken individually or collectively, the IFBF, the IMA and the rural press had traditionally been quite powerful in Iowa politics.

Active in the campaign period prior to the election, the IFBF formally announced its opposition to the convention. The IFBF was generally regarded as the most powerful interest group at the time. The least the IFBF was able to do, if it could not obtain the legislation it wanted, was to block the passage of any legislative proposal considered detrimental to its interests. The power of this group resulted from several factors: membership, financial resources, organization and communication, leadership and legislative access. Two of these with special significance were the group's membership and financial strength. For example, in 1960 the IFBF had approximately 120,000 members and spent a total of approximately \$600,000 for its various *state* activities. It ranked considerably ahead of any other interest group within the state with regard to these two indicies of power.

During the 1950s the IFBF generally opposed, in whole or in part, a number of the programs or policies advocated by the reformist groups. For example, it successfully opposed measures that would have increased substantially the amount of state road money going to the municipal streets and highways at the expense of the secondary road system. It also successfully opposed a shorter ballot and other measures

that would have led to major county consolidations and reforms. Together with the IMA, it opposed the attempts by organized labor to repeal the right-to-work law. In addition, it successfully opposed the attempts of urban interests to obtain a state-wide daylight savings time law, and legislation which would have permitted cities to levy a sales tax. The opposition of the IFBF to the calling of a constitutional convention in 1960 was consistent with its general legislative activities during the 1950s.

It would be unfair and inaccurate to state that the IFBF actually opposed legislative reapportionment during the latter part of the 1950s. Under the pressure of urban forces during the first part of the 1950s, the IFBF did actually draft and propose a reapportionment plan around 1955. However, the proposed constitutional amendment, which eventually became known as the "Shaff Plan," failed to pass the Iowa Senate during either the 1957 or 1959 sessions of the General Assembly. The main opposition to the amendment came from a coalition of Democrats and urban Republicans.

The IFBF claimed, for both internal and external propaganda purposes, that the State Legislature was best equipped to handle the reapportionment problem. The IFBF achieved much notoriety, especially in the urban press, for the placards that many of its members placed on the door-knobs of both rural and urban homes during the campaign.

Aligned with the IFBF in opposition to the convention was the IMA. In 1960 this group was composed of approximately 520 business and industrial establishments and expended around \$80,000 for all of its activities.

Another traditionally influential group, the Association opposed a number of proposals advocated by the reformists during the 1950s. Among these were opposition to the following suggested governmental reforms: (1) a shorter ballot for popularly elected state officials, (2) annual sessions of the legislature and (3) an increase in the debt limitation imposed upon both the state and local levels of government by the Iowa Constitution. In addition, the IMA strongly opposed any change in the state's right-to-work law. Since organized labor actively supported the convention in 1960, it was not

at all unusual to find the IMA on the side of the convention's opponents on this issue.

The campaign period prior to the election also found the rural press generally on the side of the constitutional convention's opponents. In accordance with its general anti-reformist disposition, the rural press opposed many of the changes advocated by the reformists during the 1950s. For example, this group looked with general disfavor upon the proposals which would have had the effect of granting urban areas more "home rule" authority. Opposition to many state governmental reforms—a shorter ballot, annual sessions of the legislature, etc.—were generally voiced in the small town press also. The anti-reformist posture of this group stemmed at least partly from the fact that its members tended to reflect the interests of conservative, rural, small town businessmen, who, to a large degree, were economically dependent upon the patronage of farmers residing within their neighboring communities.

Like its urban counterpart, the rural press was, on many occasions, editorially quite outspoken on the convention issue. It also used the political cartoon, emphasizing the likelihood that a constitutional convention would function as some type of monster, tearing apart every "sacred" provision of the Iowa Constitution and changing certain desirable public policies currently in effect.

Several months prior to the 1960 election, the opponents of a constitutional convention also formed an *ad hoc* citizens' group, Iowans for Reapportionment By Legislative Action (IRLA). Comparable to the Citizens Committee for a Constitutional Convention, this special group was designed to appeal to a broader public than the above mentioned three groups could. Prominent members of the board of directors and original incorporators of the IRLA included the publishers of rural newspapers, manufacturers and former leaders of county Farm Bureau organizations. In addition, a number of prominent bankers and former legislators served on the board of directors or were original incorporators of this group.



### Political Parties

The 1960 state Democratic platform was very explicit in its endorsement of a favorable vote on the constitutional convention. The platform stated:

The Democratic Party of Iowa believes that all citizens of the state of Iowa are entitled to fair and equitable representation in the legislative branch of the government.

We further believe that citizens of the state of Iowa are entitled to other governmental reforms including the adoption of the short ballot for the state of Iowa; the adoption of four year terms for the State Officers; and governmental reorganization. All of these governmental reforms require changes in the Iowa Constitution.

We therefore support the holding of a Constitutional Convention and urge the citizens of Iowa vote YES on the question to hold a convention to amend and revise the Constitution.<sup>4</sup>

The Republican party platform, on the other hand, was ambivalent toward the convention question. In essence, the Republican platform suggested to the voter to make up his or her own mind on this issue. It formally stated:

The question of whether the citizens of Iowa should vote in favor of or against the holding of a Constitutional Convention is not in the usual sense a partisan political issue. But we feel this is a question of major public interest in this decennial year of 1960.

The pros and cons of this question are being vigorously and ably advanced and debated by a number of responsible groups and organizations, some of whom favor the holding of a Constitutional Convention and some whom [sic] oppose it. We therefore, urge each of the citizens of this state to carefully consider the arguments advanced on both sides of this issue and to cast an informed vote in that way which they [sic] believe will be in the best interests of the State of Iowa.<sup>5</sup>

Generally, the formal pronouncements of the major parties on the convention question reflected their bases of support. The Democratic party got its most consistent support from the larger urbanized areas of the state. The Republican party, on the other hand, relied upon both rural and urban residents for its support. Delegates from urban areas had much influence at state Democratic conventions, while delegates from

<sup>4</sup>*The 1960 State Platform and Candidates of the Democratic Party of Iowa.* Des Moines: The Democratic State Central Committee of Iowa, 1960.

<sup>5</sup>*The 1960 Republican State Platform.* Des Moines: Republican State Headquarters, 1960.

both rural and urban areas exercised varying degrees of influence at Republican conventions.

The 1960 gubernatorial candidates of the major parties took positions on the constitutional convention that were similar to their respective party platforms. Edward J. McManus, the Democratic candidate, favored calling a convention and actively urged Iowans to vote "yes" on the question at the November election. Norman A. Erbe, the Republican candidate, held that the legislature would approve a reapportionment proposal at its next session regardless of the vote on the convention. He stated publicly that he thought he "might" personally vote for a convention.<sup>6</sup>

#### The Constitutional Convention Vote<sup>7</sup>

The results of the convention vote demonstrated the widespread interest of the electorate. Of the 1,273,820 Iowans who voted in the 1960 presidential election, 1,002,796 (about 80 per cent) voted either "yes" or "no" on the convention question. Of those who voted for either gubernatorial candidate approximately 90 per cent also voted on the convention question.

The majority of those voting on the question voted against the calling of a constitutional convention; 400,034 (approximately 47 per cent) favored a convention and 532,762 (approximately 53 per cent) opposed it. The proportion favoring the convention tended to vary a great deal from one geographical area of the state to another. For example, the percentage of "yes" votes varied from a high of 81 per cent in Polk County (Des Moines) to a low of 11 per cent in Ida County in northwest Iowa. The convention received a majority of favorable votes in 16 counties; these 16 ranked among the top 18 Iowa counties in population according to the 1960 census. Voters in counties located in extreme southern and northwestern Iowa cast a substantial proportion of their votes against the convention proposal. This negative response cannot be attributed merely to geography, given the current

<sup>6</sup>See *The Des Moines Tribune*, Oct. 4, 1960.

<sup>7</sup>The author has undertaken a rather extensive statistical analysis of the constitutional convention vote. However, only a general summary of his findings is reported here.

variance in residential patterns throughout the state. What generally marks these two areas off from other areas in the state is the fact that few urban areas of any substantial size are situated within them.

Table 4 shows that persons in urban counties voted in higher proportions in favor of the convention, while persons in rural counties voted in larger proportions against the convention proposal. The urban versus rural residency factor seems to have been the most important determinant of voting on the question. Generally, urban residents favored the calling of a convention, while rural residents opposed it.

It should be added that other factors were probably also important determinants of voting on this question, although undoubtedly less so than rural or urban residence. Voters in counties with a large percentage of persons employed in manufacturing voted in higher proportions for the convention, while those in counties with a smaller percentage of persons employed in manufacturing voted against it. This finding is consistent with the previous description of the position taken by organized labor in the convention controversy.

In addition, voters in counties having populations with high average incomes and educational attainment levels cast their votes in larger proportions for the convention than did voters in counties with persons having low incomes and educational attainment levels. This relationship existed even when comparing counties with high percentages of urban and rural residents.

No significant relationship existed between the vote for governor and the vote on the convention, even though the parties and their candidates took different positions on the convention question. In other words, persons who cast their votes for governor did not vote alike to any significant degree on the convention question. Presumably, the casting of ballots for governor and the convention were two separate, or distinct, actions on the part of many voters.

Table four appears on page 190.

Table 4

How Urban, Mixed and Rural Counties Voted on the Convention Question				
Counties Classified*	Number of Counties Whose Voters Favored the Convention by the Following Percentages			
	Under 31%	31-60%	Over 60%	
Urban	0	7	8	(15)
Mixed	13	20	1	(34)
Rural	44	6	0	(50)
	(57)	(33)	(9)	(99)

\*Classification of counties into urban, mixed and rural groups is based on the percentage of each county's population residing in urban areas of 2,500 or more according to the 1960 census. Urban counties have over 60%, mixed counties between 31% and 60% and rural counties under 31% of their populations residing in urban areas.

## MARKERS FOR REMEMBRANCE: THE MORMON TRAIL

by Lida I. Greene  
Librarian, State Historical Library

Some months ago a lost marker was brought to the Iowa Historical Museum. It was wooden, the carving weathered and a little forlorn. It looked as though it had been hiding in a fence corner for a dozen hard Iowa winters. The legend read, "Mormon Trail".

In the years of the Civilian Conservation Corps in Iowa, 1933-1940, a whole platoon of these signs had marched across the old Trace in southern counties. Roy Chastain of Des Moines, then employee of the Iowa Conservation Commission, has good reason to remember both the Trail and the markers. He covered much of the ground between Montrose and Council Bluffs, helping to locate probable camp sites of the migrating Latter Day Saints and overseeing the planting of the signs that were to be a memorial of the great hegira (1846-1852).

Several years ago Roy Chastain brought to the Department of History the plat maps of Iowa counties he had used in the 1930s to mark the route of the Saints. Lee County to Pottawattamie, the trail was traced in red with dates and notations

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