

The TALLAHASSEE Voter

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA

PURPOSE: To Promote Political Responsibility Through Informed and Active Participation of Citizens in Government

President - Mrs. Charles K. Mann

Editor - Mrs. J. C. Myers

1511 Hasos

926 Abbiegall

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September 1966

Sept. 29 - General meeting on CONSTITUTIONAL REVISION
8 p.m., Leon Federal.

Oct. 13 - All day ACTION WORKSHOP, Duval Hotel (See pp. 4-5)

Oct. 20 - Morning unit meeting on CONSTITUTIONAL REVISION
10 a.m. at home of committee-head Inez Weaver
1708 Myric Rd. * **

Evening unit meeting on CONSTITUTIONAL REVISION
8 p.m., Leon Federal. **

Oct. 26 - Board meeting - 8 p.m., Leon Federal

Oct. 24-9 - League booth at the North Florida Fair (See p. 4)

Nov. 8 - ELECTION DAY

Nov. 17 - Morning unit meeting on WATER RESOURCES
10 a.m. at home of committee-head Fran LaSeur,
1545 S. Magnolia Dr. **

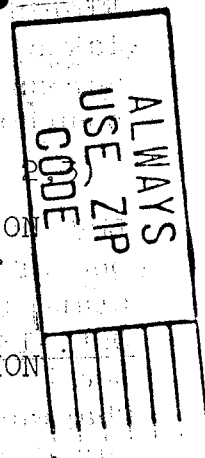
Evening unit meeting on WATER RESOURCES
8 p.m., Leon Federal.

Dec. 1 - Morning unit meeting on PLANNING AND ZONING
(Time and place to be announced).

Evening unit meeting on PLANNING AND ZONING
8 p.m., Leon Federal.

* We are particularly pleased to announce the resumption of morning unit meetings! Requests for them have been numerous. Please urge your friends (members and non-members) to attend if this is a more convenient time.

** These are concensus meetings. For your background study we enclose the blue sheet on WHAT IS A CONSTITUTION? and the Facts and Issues publication on "Who Pays for a Clean Stream?" for those who did not receive them at the Sept. 15 General Membership meeting. Do come prepared to help us reach concensus!



BE GLAD YOU'RE A TALLAHASSEAN!

Local Leaguers will have a unique opportunity to become better informed in areas of League interest in the weeks to come:

WATER

A public hearing on quality of interstate waters will be held Oct. 11 at 10 a.m. in the House Chamber of the Capitol. It will be sponsored by the Governor's Advisory Committee on Water Quality Control. Florida waters involved are rivers, lakes, and other waters that flow across or form a part of the state boundary.

ACTION

LWV of Tallahassee will serve as one of five hostess Leagues in the state for an area workshop on Action Oct. 13. Ora Kromhout and committee members Juanita Forbes and Ruth Chapman are enthusiastic about this, our first opportunity to hostess other LWV's in our area - those of Okaloosa and Pensacola counties. A large turnout of our own members is especially important for this reason, as well as for the important information each of us will receive. (See full agenda, p. 3).

CONSUMERS ALL

The Florida Congress on Consumer Affairs will meet Oct. 13-15 at FSU to explore how effectively government protects the consumer. Mrs. Esther Peterson, U.S. Assistant Secretary of Labor, and Dr. Coston Warne, publisher of "Consumer Reports," will be headline speakers. Also scheduled to speak are Agriculture Commissioner Doyle Conner and Atty. Gen. Earl Faircloth.

CHINA

Right in line with our national CA study on foreign policy is the Quaker-sponsored program tentatively titled "China - Many Views" set for Nov. 3 in a local church. Although still in its planning stages, the prospectus sounded so good to our Board that it was decided that we should cancel our scheduled Nov. 3 general meeting, freeing our members to attend if possible. We expect to be one of several Tallahassee groups participating as "co-operating organizations." Conservative, moderate, and liberal views are to be presented. Principal speaker will be China authority Dr. Allyn Rickett. Annette Sterke and Betty Phifer of our League are on the ad hoc committee developing plans and may be called for further information.

LEGISLATORS

The National LWV with FSU will sponsor a pre-session conference Jan. 26-28, 1967 to provide Florida legislators with background information that will help them when making decisions in the areas of taxation and finance, education, roads and highways, and health and welfare. This is a project of the LWV Education Fund through a grant from the Sears-Roebuck Foundation. Unfortunately, sessions will not be open to the general public, but informal conversations with Leaguers attending should give us a special insight.

At FSU Oct. 28-29 will be a conference sponsored by the Dept. of Urban and Regional Planning to discuss problems brought about by increasing urbanization of Florida. Planning and zoning is again a local CA item with a public hearing on Tallahassee's comprehensive plan as one objective of Margaret Menzel's committee. Let's get to the conference if possible!

Felicitations to Voters Service chairman Marian Buford, her committee, and various volunteers (including Cadet Girl Scouts) for establishing good public relations for League on Sept. 24. They set up tables in the shopping centers and downtown to distribute Voters Guides, Tallahassee booklets, and Constitutional amendment materials.

Also we are pleased with the participation of two local Leaguers in special programs:

Fran LaSeur represented the League at the national meeting, in Tallahassee, of the National Association for College Women.

Ora Kromhout appeared on the WFSU-FM program "FSU Forum" taped here and sent out to educational stations throughout the country. She discussed the Swedish agent for justice called "Ombudsman," a non-partisan commissioner appointed by a Parliament or Legislature to investigate complaints from individuals.

An invitation has been received and accepted by our Board to set up a booth at the North Florida Fair. We are grateful to Mildred Kremkau for agreeing to head a committee working on this. Since it will not be until the end of next month you still have time to offer your ideas and/or help. (Incidentally, there is a \$100 prize being offered for the best booth!)

Volunteers, particularly drivers, are needed by the non-partisan group known as the "Big Bend Voter Education and Anti-Poverty Campaign, Inc." Funded by the Southern Regional Council, they are working to register over 65,000 eligible voters in 12 counties, including Leon. Students in certain government courses at FSU are to be sent into rural areas to teach basic facts of government. For more details call Mrs. George Lewis, II.

With regret the Board has accepted the resignation of Rosalind Pfeffer who was serving as finance chairman. Also we regret to lose as members Edith Feldman and Sophia Melvin whose husbands have accepted positions elsewhere.

But with special pleasure we welcome Betty (Mrs. Gregg) Pfifer, 1584 Marion Ave., as a new member and two new transfer members:

Mrs. Norman Kerr
Rt. 3, Box 321
Tallahassee, Fla. 32301

Mrs. Robert Garvue
3211 E. Lakeshore Dr.
Tallahassee, Fla. 32303

Mrs. Kerr comes from the Falls Church, Va. League and Mrs. Garvue from Bloomington, Ind.

Essential references for your study of U.S. - China relations:

The United States and China by John King Fairbank is generally considered the most comprehensive all-purpose reference on U.S. - China relations. Available FSU library or paperback (Compass Series, \$1.85).

U. S. Policy with Respect to Mainland China contains hearings before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. This is fascinating reading. Marge Meeter has a copy, or it can be ordered from Superintendent of Documents, U. S. Govt. Printing Office, Washington, D. C. 20402.

Intercom's "The China Problem," (Jan.-Feb. 1965, \$1.00, Foreign Policy Association) contains a variety of essential information on China and summarizes major issues in U. S. - China relations, results of opinion polls and a sampling of opinion leaders' views. Available at the FSU library.

WHAT IS A CONSTITUTION?

There are probably as many definitions of a constitution as there are political scientists but common to all is either of two words, "basic" or "fundamental". In our files we discovered one which is a good digest of all.

"A constitution is a body of fundamental law. It is established for the purpose of providing a set of governmental machinery on the one hand, and of protecting the citizen from an unfair or improper use of governmental authority on the other. When we say that the provisions of a constitution are fundamental we imply that they are relatively more permanent, more stable and less subject to the need for frequent change than are the provisions of statutory law. Statutory law, on the other hand, is regarded as being more or less transitory in character, as being more concerned with current policies and practices and less with those "eternal verities" of government which have been handed down, generation after generation, from the past. A constitution is supposed to represent an attempt at stating accumulated wisdom of the ages on the subject of government, while statutes are a contemporary effort to deal with problems of a current nature.*

The fundamentals fall into four groups:

STATEMENT OF RIGHTS: A recognition of the important personal and civil rights of citizens which are universally recognized in democratic societies and which may not be invaded by public authority.

FRAMEWORK OF GOVERNMENT: Provides for the form of organization. Traditionally, in this country, there are three separate branches established: executive, legislative and judicial. Provision is made for qualifications, method of selection and term of office of those who will serve in these branches. (Provision should be made for the legislature, the branch basic to representative government, to be truly representative with a method for periodic and automatic readjustment. If the constitution is to remain functional provisions for organization within each of the

GET US TO THE
LAUNCH ON TIME!



branches should be flexible and adaptable to changing needs.)

POWERS OF GOVERNMENT: Defines the power and responsibilities of each of the branches. (The definitions should be brief but clear, and in language having general rather than too specific application, should state the limits of authority to be exercised and the extent of responsibility to be delegated.)

AMENDMENT PROVISIONS: A statement of methods for amendment or revision. (These should ensure the right of the people to amend or revise the constitution through orderly processes, stringent enough to discourage precipitate action, yet responsive to the will of the people.

WHY CHANGE OUR CONSTITUTION?

Florida's present constitution was drawn in the reconstruction period when there was deep distrust of the executive and not a great deal of faith in the legislature or indeed in representative government itself. As a consequence, the constitution weakened the governor's powers by providing for a plural executive (the cabinet) further encumbered by ex-officio boards and sprawling organization. It placed excessive limitations on the legislature through specific tax limitations and earmarked revenues, among others. The judiciary is cumbersome, complicated and uncoordinated. The constitution seems to place great confidence in the electorate by providing for so many elective offices the resultant length of the ballot makes

informed and intelligent voting very difficult. This confidence in the electorate is then denied by restrictions on local self-government and the fact that the power to initiate constitutional change is vested solely in the legislature.

This document might have been a workable body of statutory law (never a suitable constitution) for 1885 Florida with its 300,000 people and a yearly expenditure of half a million dollars. But certainly it is not for 1966 Florida with its 5,000,000 people and a yearly expenditure of around two billion dollars. Its length, estimated at between 5,000 and 50,000 words and more than five times that of the U.S. Constitution and twice the average of the other states, incorporates so much statutory detail that there have been 212 proposed amendments (42 by the last three legislatures) and 135 of them adopted (24 since 1962) with 13 pending. In the 1965 session of the legislature 111 Joint Resolutions on 83 different subjects were introduced. 18 of them passed, 4 were adopted in a special election in 1965 and one rejected. (The Road Bond Amendment)

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

The LWV Yardstick for Constitutional Revision which has already been published in many local Voters was recently reviewed and reaffirmed both at State Convention and by local Leagues. League representatives have testified at the hearings of the Con Rev Commission in response to the proposed rough draft of the new constitution. Their testimony was based on comparison of the draft to the LWV Yardstick and to specific LWV positions such as: a strong executive with a Lt. Governor and an appointed cabinet; apportionment based on population, bi-cameral legislature with fixed numbers in each house and a flexible self-executing formula administered by an outside agent with automatic court review; a uniform, simplified court system; permissive home-rule; general elimination of statutory detail throughout.**

It is now our job to consider these positions and other relevant questions so that we will be prepared to respond more specifically to the refined draft to be released by the Commission early in November. Neither that, the Commission's final draft which will emerge from its three week convention starting late in November, nor the

proposal approved by the legislature to be presented to the voters is likely to meet all of our standards. Your study and participation in discussion and consensus will determine what positions the LWV will support or oppose at any of these stages. Some of the questions we must consider pertain to the methods of selection, terms of office and the organization of the executive. It's likely that the Commission will recommend retaining the elected cabinet, but there is still debate on this question. There are proposals to elect part of the cabinet, some to limit cabinet terms, or to unlimit the governor's terms. The rough draft proposed succession through the cabinet, but others favor a Lt. Governor. In our testimony we have questioned the inclusion of much of the material in the articles on finance and taxation, local government and education as being statutory. We also objected to the method of modifying or eliminating homestead exemption in the draft. Even more important is the question of whether the subject of homestead exemption is not properly a statutory matter rather than a constitutional matter. How much concerning home-rule should be spelled out in the constitution? Should it be completely permissive or should the legislature be required to provide optional methods by law?

It is extremely important that when we are considering these and the other matters we shall be discussing at our coming meetings, we remember that it is not the merits of any of the specifics we are debating. The question we must consider is whether they are properly matters of constitutional law or statutory law.

*From material prepared for the National Municipal League, 1953, by Dr. W. Brooke Graves.

**These positions are explained in detail in HERE WE STAND, Sept. 1964. This publication and copies of League testimony are available from the State Office. See your local Publications Chairman.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF FLORIDA
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