



Missouri Constitutional Convention Papers (C0016)

Collection Number: C0016

Collection Title: Missouri Constitutional Convention Papers

Dates: 1941-1945

Creator: Missouri. Constitutional Convention

Abstract: Correspondence, speeches, radio scripts, and related materials concerning the work of the Missouri Committee for the New Constitution and the Missouri Public Expenditure Survey to promote ratification of the Constitution of 1943-1944.

Collection Size: 4 cubic feet
(418 folders)

Language: Collection materials are in English.

Repository: The State Historical Society of Missouri

Restrictions on Access: Collection is open for research. This collection is available at [The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Columbia](http://www.shsmo.org). If you would like more information, please contact us at columbia@shsmo.org. Collections may be viewed at any research center.

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Donor Information: The papers were donated to the University of Missouri by the Missouri Public Expenditure Survey, Inc. on June 22, 1945 (Accession No. CA0239).

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Historical Note:

There are two agencies represented in this collection: the Missouri Committee for the New Constitution (MCNC), which was created through the Constitutional Convention to advertise the constitution with appropriated state funds, and the Missouri Public Expenditure Survey, Inc. (MPES), an incorporated public interest group that watched over government spending in Missouri for the taxpayers of the state.

On December 5, 1944, a mass meeting of 900 people was held at the state Capitol to begin the campaign for ratification of the new constitution. Before adjourning, the group created MCNC to advertise and educate the populace on the benefits of the proposed constitution. MCNC's purpose was to "establish centers in all sections of the state for distribution of information concerning the new constitution," and to assign speakers to discuss issues in the constitution. Jacob M. Lashley of St. Louis was selected as chairman, Mrs. Henry Haskell of Kansas City as vice-chairman, Mrs. Frank E. Atwood of Jefferson City as secretary, and Tom K. Smith of St. Louis as treasurer.

MCNC had three conditions to fight during the campaign: voter apathy, resistance to change, and the Association Against the Proposed Constitution (AAPC). Voter apathy was the greatest enemy of the new constitution. The 25 February voting date had three things going against it: the weather, the one item ballot, and the war which had not yet turned in America's favor.

While MCNC could not do anything about the weather or number of items on the ballot, it could make the new constitution a visible subject to the voters of Missouri. The publicity campaign that MCNC produced was responsible for trying to attract attention to the issue to get voters to the polls. Although the turnout was not very high on election day, the media campaign did produce many votes in favor of the constitution, especially in Kansas City and St. Louis.

Resistance to change had been seen in most of the states which had previously revised their constitutions. The Constitutional Convention appropriated funds before the adjournment not only to advertise, but also to produce pamphlets, speeches, and other materials to educate the voting public on the advantages of the proposed constitution. This duty was taken most seriously by MCNC. Speakers' bureaus were set up in most counties, and numerous pamphlets were written exhorting the new constitution's advantages to labor, business, agriculture, and other economic and political groups in Missouri. The function of educating the voters was possibly the most important function of MCNC.

The opposition created by AAPC was limited by its lack of organization and its weak support. AAPC reported that the new constitution would lead to desegregation of schools, equality for women and blacks, and increased state regulatory incursions into private enterprise. Although AAPC did not pose a real threat to the ratification of the constitution, it did force MCNC to waste time and money dispelling falsehoods reported to the public. MCNC remained active until February 27, 1945 when the constitution was ratified by the voters of Missouri.

MPES, a political action committee, started in 1940 with the primary purpose of watching government spending in Missouri for the taxpayers. Through publishing *Missouri Taxpayer*, *Your Tax Dollar*, and other special reports and publications, MPES sought to keep the taxpaying public of Missouri apprised of events in the capitol pertaining to the spending of state tax dollars. MPES supported the new constitution because it provided the ground work for a more streamlined and efficient state government. The group's support included sponsorship of a statewide essay contest for high school students.

Besides their concern for the ratification of the new constitution, the two groups were also connected by the person of Edward Staples. Staples, editor of *Missouri Taxpayer* from its inception, was prominent in MPES, while also serving as publicity director for MCNC. These materials were donated by MPES, which leads to the impression that Staples may have had a hand in saving the material on MCNC and adding material from MPES.

Arrangement:

The collection has been arranged into the following four series:

- Correspondence
- Organization
- Publicity
- Source Material

Scope and Content Note:

The collection contains the papers of the Missouri Committee for the New Constitution (MCNC) and the Missouri Public Expenditure Survey (MPES) relating to the ratification campaign for the new constitution. The material includes correspondence, advertisements, cartoons, pamphlets, speeches, radio scripts, press releases, lists of supportive organizations, and other miscellaneous material.

The greatest amount of material is concentrated in the months October 1944 to February 1945 and pertains mostly to MCNC. MPES-related material is the only available in the **Correspondence** and **Publicity** series. Most of the material has been arranged alphabetically, then chronologically when possible. Of note is that the correspondence within the collection is filed by initial contact then response. The four series are not

mutually exclusive; correspondence can be found in each series and related topical material can be found in the **Correspondence** series.

The latter three series document different aspects of MCNC. The **Organization** series deals with the different phases of work that together constituted MCNC. The **Publicity** series chronicles the effort of MCNC to publicize the new constitution through the use of the radio, movie theaters, newspapers, and public gatherings. The **Source Material** series includes material used to formulate publicity pamphlets, radio scripts, and advertisements in favor of the new constitution and to answer the charges of those opposed to the constitution.

More complete series descriptions can be found in the container list.

Container List:

Correspondence Series

Correspondence received through the offices of the Missouri Committee for the New Constitution from other organizations interested in the ratification of the new constitution. The material has been grouped by subject: Jacob M. Lashley, Franc L. McCluer, Edward Staples, Endorsements, Miscellaneous, and Missouri Public Expenditure Survey. Only the latter two groupings are not a direct result of MCNC activities. All material is in chronological order within each grouping, with the response to a letter directly following the initial contact. Additional correspondence can be found in the **Organizations** and **Publicity** series.

- f. 1-11 Lashley, Jacob M., 1944-1945. Chairman of Missouri Committee for the New Constitution. Appointments, endorsements, congratulations, and answers to requests concerning the proposed constitution.
- f. 12-28 McCluer, Franc L., 1944-1945. Executive director of MCNC. Speaking engagements, endorsements, answers to opposition, and other problems related to the committee.
- f. 29-36 Staples, Edward., 1944-1945. Publicity director of MCNC. All phases of publicity of the ratification campaign and some personal letters. Copies of treasurer's reports, undated to 5 February 1945.
- f. 37-61 Endorsements, 1941-1945. Letters of endorsement received from organizations across the state as early as October 1944 and as late as February 1945. The materials are arranged by either group name or by type of group. Each grouping is in chronological order with undated material at the beginning of the group.
 - f. 37 American Association of University Women
 - f. 38 Chamber of Commerce
 - f. 39 Educational groups
 - f. 40 Labor groups
 - f. 41 Library group
 - f. 42-45 Local groups

- f. 46-48 Miscellaneous organizations
- f. 49-50 Parent-Teachers associations
- f. 51 Patriotic groups
- f. 52-54 Service clubs
- f. 55 Service voters
- f. 56-61 State association
- f. 62-66 Miscellaneous, 1942-1945. Letters supporting and opposing the calling of constitutional convention and writing of a new constitution. Some copies of letters written by Allen McReynolds who served as president of the "State-Wide Committee for the Revision of the Missouri Constitution." Also included is correspondence of Frank B. Williams, chairman, and Leo J. Clavin, director, of the Association Against Proposed Constitution and L.E. May, outstate publicity director of Missouri Committee for the New Constitution. The material is in chronological order with undated material at the beginning.
- f. 67-68 Missouri Public Expenditure Survey, Inc., 1945. Letters in support for the new constitution. Included is material concerning contributions and a statewide essay contest conducted in support of the new constitution. The correspondence is in chronological order.

Organization Series

1944-1945. The series consists of material compiled by Hugh K. Graham as organization director for Missouri Committee for New Constitution. Includes names of county chairmen, co-chairmen, directors of publicity, and field men for county and district organizations. Some material also compiled by Les C. Deeson, director of the Speakers' Bureau.

The series is arranged alphabetically. County chairmen lists, correspondence, and minutes are in chronological order. Field men's reports are in alphabetical order by name of county. Plans and phases, which includes correspondence, manuals, advertisement layouts, memos, and lists of union and professional organization memberships, is not in any discernable order.

- f. 69-72 County chairmen lists
- f. 73-198 Correspondence, general
- f. 199-213 Field men's reports
- f. 214-217 Minutes
- f. 218-233 Plans and phases of work

Publicity Series

Correspondence, pamphlets, cartoons, office memos, lists of supporters, reports, press releases, radio scripts and speeches, and public speeches produced by the office of the publicity director of MCNC.

This series is arranged alphabetically, then chronologically where possible; however, in each grouping there is usually a large bloc of material that can only be dated by year and appears at the beginning.

Correspondence is available in the motion picture material, general correspondence, leaflets, outdoor advertising, radio, and speakers' bureau material. In each case the correspondence is not extensive and is mixed with other material. Other material concerning publicity and be found in the **Correspondence** series, especially the Edward Staples correspondence.

- f. 234-246 Broadsides, 1944-1945
- f. 247 Motion picture material, 1944-1945
- f. 248-300 Newspaper cartoons and clippings, 1944-1945
- f. 301-307 General correspondence, 1944-1945
- f. 308-311 Leaflets, 1944-1945
- f. 312-316 Opponents' literature, 1942-1945
- f. 317-342 Press releases, 1943-1945
- f. 343-345 Outdoor advertising, 1944-1945
- f. 346-356 Radio, 1944-1945
- f. 357-363 Speakers' bureau, 1944-1945

Source Material Series

This series consists of the material used by the Missouri Committee for a New Constitution to create "position" pamphlets to answer questions on education, labor rights, government power, farmers' plight, and taxes. Included is correspondence, legal opinions, published pamphlets (some special issues pertaining specifically to the new constitution), quotes from public figures, and reports from field men.

The material is void of any discernable order except that is divided by subject or topic. The field men's reports consist of 3x5 note cards containing progress reports sent back to headquarters from the respective field posts.

- f. 364-367 Educational data
- f. 368-371 Form letters
- f. 372-379 Handbook notes
- f. 380-386 Legal opinions
- f. 387-390 Quoted statements
- f. 391-402 Reference data
- f. 403-418 Field men's reports

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