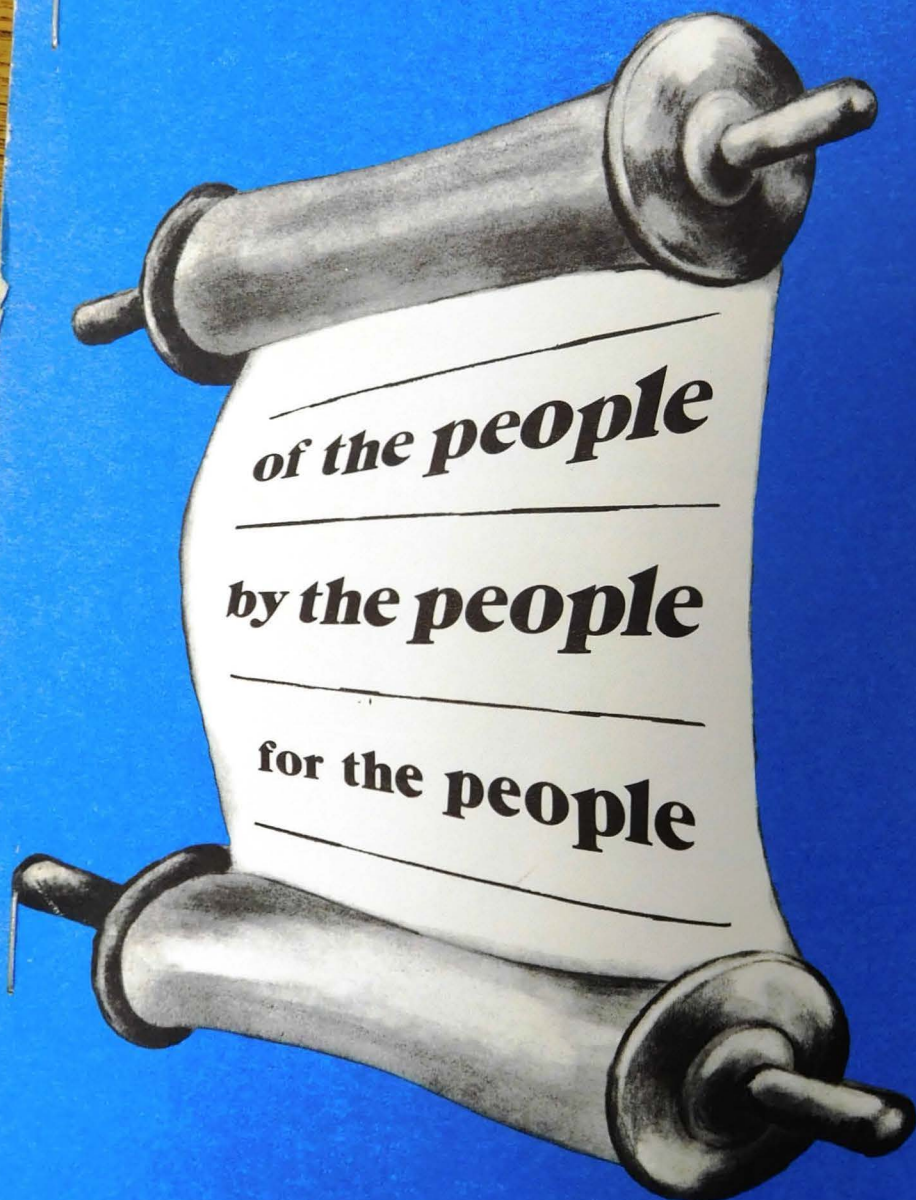


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Public Information

We, The People...



***An
Introduction
to the
Montana
Constitutional
Convention***



Cooperative Extension Service
Montana State University, Bozeman

W E, T H E P E O P L E . . .

An Introduction

to the

Montana Constitutional Convention

by

Lucile Speer

Issued in furtherance of cooperative extension work in agriculture and home economics, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Torlief S. Aasheim, Director of Extension Service, Montana State University, Bozeman, Montana.

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FOREWORD

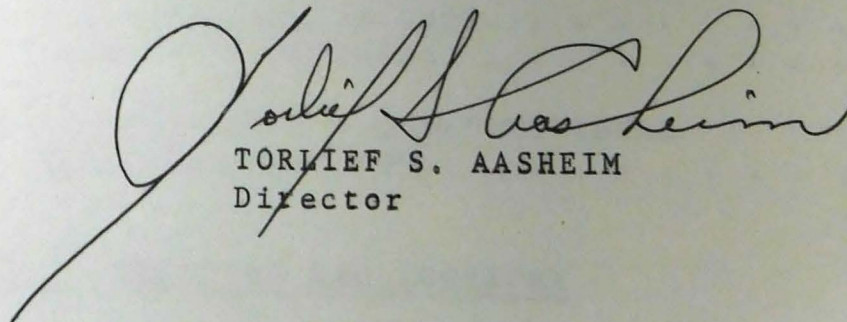
The people of Montana in November, 1970 voted 133,482 to 71,643 to call a convention to revise the Montana Constitution.

In this area of constitutional change, all critical decisions must be made by the people. They approved calling the convention; they will elect the delegates; and the responsibility to approve or reject the proposals of the convention will finally rest with them.

The Montana Cooperative Extension Service is pleased to distribute this citizen's guide to the Constitutional Convention. The issues involved in writing a new constitution are complex and outside the voter's everyday experience. We hope distribution of this monograph will assist the public debate on issues to be considered by the Convention. The Extension Service believes that to the extent that convention delegates and the rest of the public are well informed, misunderstandings may be kept at a minimum, both in writing the constitution and in voting on it.

This publication was written by Miss Lucile Speer, a knowledgeable student of the Montana Constitution. Miss Speer, Documents Librarian Emeritus at the University of Montana, was a member of the Montana Constitutional Convention Committee that conducted the 1970 campaign supporting the calling of the constitutional convention. She has spoken widely for the constitutional revision. Miss Speer has written two other works on the convention: A Better Constitution for Better Government; A Study of the Montana Constitution and A Constitutional Convention for Montana.

The Montana Constitutional Convention Commission encouraged the Cooperative Extension Service to publish this publication as a public service. The publication of this booklet as a public service by the Cooperative Extension Service is not meant to imply a position of endorsement.



TORLIEF S. AASHEIM
Director

CHAPTER XI

CONSTITUTIONAL REVISION--WHAT FOR?

Idaho's Constitutional Revision Commission, in its letter transmitting the draft of a new constitution, noted that change just for the sake of change is not necessarily beneficial. Few tasks in governmental reform are more difficult than modernizing an existing constitutional system. Its successful execution requires long and difficult efforts, an informed and public-minded citizenry, and a dedicated body of delegates. The goal of constitutional revision justifies such effort.

When the 1967 Montana Legislature requested the Legislative Council to study the Montana Constitution to see if it was "adequately serving the needs of the people of the state," it learned that the Constitution had weaknesses which impaired effective government and which could best be corrected by complete revision. It is cluttered with statutory details which obstruct adaptation to changing social, economic, and environmental conditions; it places restrictions on all branches of government that prevent them from dealing with modern problems; many provisions are obsolete, outdated by the growth and complexity of government; and it lacks the clarity, simplicity and readability important to the people's charter.

What is the goal of constitutional revision in Montana? Without doubt, Montana citizens believe that state government today needs improvement. But what kind of state government is constitutional reform intended to promote and support? Is constitutional revision merely the substitution of a new set of restrictions, or is the Constitution to be changed to provide the basic governmental structure to solve the complex problems of a dynamic social order?

Framers of the Alaska Constitution said that it was their purpose to produce a constitution "short and flexible, to allow for the great changes that the future will bring to Alaska," a constitution that "should provide for a government that is energetic in fostering the growth and development of the whole state and the welfare of all the people." To accomplish these ends, the convention "prepared a simple plan of state government that is characteristically American."

No finer expression of the ultimate goals to be secured through constitutional revision can be found than in the preamble of the new Illinois Constitution: ". . . to provide for the health, safety, and welfare of the people; maintain a representative and orderly government; eliminate poverty and inequality; assure legal, social and economic justice; provide opportunity for the fullest development of the individual; insure domestic tranquility; provide for the common defense; and secure the blessings of freedom and liberty to ourselves and our posterity."

The goals of each state will vary according to its particular blend of historical traditions, resources and economic conditions, geography and environment, and people and cultures. Before beginning to review the Montana Constitution to revise its defects and improve its effectiveness, the Montana Constitutional Convention, representing the people of the state, must decide what are the goals of this state, and what purpose the constitution will serve in implementing these goals.

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