

Referendum, Initiative Procedures Under Study

By VINCENT THOMAS
Assemblyman, 68th District

The Battle of the Propositions which highlighted our recent memorable general election has certainly added considerably to the public soul-searching as to what should be done to improve our California initiative and referendum procedures. This was made clear at a late conference between the special Commission on Constitutional Revision and the Joint Committee on Legislative Organization.

One recommendation of the commission as to changes in these procedures aroused such immediate public interest and reaction that the commission must have been a bit surprised. It is certain

that the advisability of any such changes will be a prime topic at our 1965 general session.

The 39-member commission was established by law following voter approval in 1962 of a constitutional amendment which authorized the Legislature to submit to the voters a complete revision of our State Constitution, instead of limiting it to submitting only separate proposed revisions of its various specific provisions. Given a \$100,000 appropriation for expenses, the commission has been hard at work for the past year. Its first progress reports were delivered to the joint committee at the conference.

Article IV of the Constitu-

tion, which covers the Legislature and the initiative and referendum procedures, was first reported on. Among other recommendations, the commission advocates changing the initiative procedures so that constitutional amendments proposed by petition of voters must be submitted to the Legislature before they could appear on the ballot.

The Legislature would be given 60 days in which to act on such proposals. Its failure to act would be regarded as rejection, but in any event, its attitude would have to be printed on the ballot. However, the Legislature could not prevent any such measure from appearing on the ballot, regardless of its own action on it.

The commission declared that the purpose of this change is to encourage proponents of initiative measures to utilize initiative statutes instead of constitutional amendments. "It would be entirely inaccurate to describe the proposed initiative constitutional amendment procedure as a 'hurdle' or a restriction on the initiative process," the commission asserted.

Despite this disclaimer, several Legislators, and some commentators, viewed the recommendation with considerable alarm, so this particular suggestion received the bulk of publicity about the commission reports. In fairness to the commission, it

should be pointed out that it also recommended annual general sessions of the Legislature, and elimination of the Governor's power to limit consideration of matters at a special session. The group agreed that these changes are the most significant proposed in Article IV.

The commission argued that because of the state's growth its problems are so

substantial they should not wait two years for legislative consideration, or discretionary action by the Governor. His power to limit action to certain topics may be a violation of the concept of separation of powers into legislative, executive and judicial, as set forth in Article III, following the U. S. Constitution.

Hayden, Stone Executive Named

Edward J. Bonville Jr. has been appointed assistant manager of the Hayden, Stone Inc., office in Rolling Hills Estates.

Bonville received his bachelor's degree in 1952 from Boston University. He was employed by Robertson Paper Co. prior to joining Hayden, Stone Inc. in 1961.

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