11-17-1967

Michigan educator sees benefits in Constitutional reform in Montana

University of Montana--Missoula. Office of University Relations

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MISSOULA--

A Michigan educator has recommended constitutional study and reform for the State of Montana in order to increase the efficiency of government on local levels.

William J. Pierce, a law professor at the University of Michigan, said he feels a constitutional convention in the state would help delineate areas of federal, state and local governmental authority.

Pierce made his remarks during the first of a series of four lectures sponsored at the University of Montana, Missoula, by the UM law school through a $2,000 grant from the Sperry and Hutchinson Foundation Lectureship program.

He said he feels constitutional study and reform are necessary in Montana so state agencies can define ways of helping residents on local levels rather than seeking so much assistance from the federal government.

Pierce said local and state governments are losing vitality because there is a tendency to run to the federal government for assistance when such aid really may not be needed. He predicted that local government will no longer exist by the end of this century.

Pierce said that so many different branches of the state government are involved in so many regulations that it is difficult to define who is in authority.

He explained that constitutional reform in Montana would help legislators determine what the people want local and state governments to do and what the local and state regulations can accomplish in our changing society.
He recommended a streamlining of Montana's executive branch of government by electing fewer public officials and appointing more in order to achieve efficiency. This efficiency would come about by combining the more than 100 boards, commissions and bureaus in the state into a small number of departments, which would, in turn, report to the governor, he explained.

He said Michigan has a provision in its constitution which requires voters to decide every 16 years whether or not they want a constitutional convention. He said a similar provision is possible in Montana.

Among those on hand for Pierce's discussion were Robert E. Sullivan, UM law school dean, and a number of state legislators, including Missoula County representatives H. O. "Bill" Worden and Tom Haines, both of Missoula and Jean Turnage, state senator from Polson representing Lake County.

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