

I cannot recall in government how many times you give a government agency the ability to tax and it does not tax. I say that if we are going to form a regional government that the only way people have of getting at that regional government is at this point and not at the point of imposing taxes. I would vote in favor of the amendment, because I think the people should have the right to decide whether regional government should be formed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Does any delegate desire to speak in opposition to the amendment?

THE CHAIRMAN: Delegate Needle.

DELEGATE NEEDLE: Mr. Chairman, I rise to oppose the amendment proposed by my very able colleague from the second district of Baltimore County. We certainly don't vote as a block. This proves it.

Keep in mind, if you will, that the present Constitution permits the General Assembly today to establish regional governments, but apparently does not provide that these regional governments shall be submitted to the localities involved for local referendum. Your Committee on Local Government has provided the people of the State with an additional safeguard they do not have now, that is the permissive referendum, which the General Assembly may impose.

Therefore, we are providing that additional safeguard. To impose a mandatory referendum, I submit, would be only giving lip service to the future establishment of regional governments.

We are attempting to considerably strengthen county governments, and I fear if they become substantially strengthened it is entirely possible in the future they may be very reluctant to relinquish any powers they have gained. We would, in providing for mandatory referendum, permit the tail to wag the dog.

I think the General Assembly must concern itself with statewide issues and the establishment of regional governments is such a statewide issue.

To permit local parochialism by local veto of particular counties to dictate to the General Assembly policy in this area would be highly regressive when we can now take a bold step into the future.

I suggest that you reject the amendment and support the committee recommendation for a permissive referendum, which was a

consensus opinion, many of the committee members feeling there should be no referendum in this area whatsoever.

THE CHAIRMAN: Does any delegate desire to speak in favor of the amendment?

*(There was no response.)*

Does any delegate desire to speak in opposition?

Delegate Winslow.

DELEGATE WINSLOW: Mr. Chairman, I should like to point out to the members of the Committee that this entire section dealing with multi-county governmental units is looking a rather considerable distance into the future. There seems to be a misapprehension that this section is adopted, at the very next session the General Assembly is going to proceed to create regional governments.

All the Committee is interested in doing here is to provide the possibility for the General Assembly to act when the time is ripe. Rather than tie the matter up at this point, when we haven't the slightest notion in which direction it will be well for the General Assembly to act, I should think it would be better to maintain this entire area within the jurisdiction of the General Assembly to deal with as the conditions prevail at that time.

I should like to point out also, if I may, that if the amendment which has been proposed should carry, then every time that the General Assembly wished to add a simple little power to an existing agency or to withdraw a simple little power from that agency it would have to put the question to a vote. It would then read, as I have it, that the General Assembly shall provide referenda for any law affecting the powers of a regional government. I submit to you this Committee is hardly in position, it seems to me, to require a referendum at every spot where the General Assembly, in order to meet an immediate condition, should have to put the question to a vote of the entire area.

THE CHAIRMAN: Does any other delegate desire to speak in favor of the amendment?

*(There was no response.)*

Does any delegate desire to speak in opposition to the amendment?

Delegate Gallagher.

DELEGATE GALLAGHER: Mr. Chairman and ladies and gentlemen: If I may