Ruth Locke Roettinger

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Biographical Note:

Ruth Locke Roettinger was a professor of government at Winthrop College in 1949, when a Committee to Study [the] Existing State Constitution was established to study South Carolina’s 1895 Constitution and recommend necessary changes. Roettinger was appointed to the committee by Governor Strom Thurmond, and she served as its secretary.

Scope and Content Note:

Eighteen items document Roettinger’s service on the Committee. Included is the Committee’s April 14, 1950, report to the General Assembly, news clippings regarding the report, and a letter from Roettinger dated April 3, 2001, commenting on her service on the Committee.

Her letter notes:

It was evident from the beginning that no revisions of affairs would be recommended. But we met and talked agreeably for two years and when the 14 members filed their report I filed a dissenting opinion.

Her minority report (pp. 50-59) states the revisions…

…do not touch the fundamental problems of government in South Carolina. These are the absence of adequate executive power where it properly belongs, and the possession of power elsewhere in the government without sufficient responsibility…. South Carolina has a government dominated by legislators. Certainly a strong and effective Legislature is desirable. But the pattern of American government is to have the Legislature limited to legislative functions, and balanced by a strong and effective executive and both of them kept in line by an alert judiciary. South Carolina does not have such a government.

Many of Dr. Roettinger’s observations were brought up again during the administration of Governor Carroll Campbell and the restructuring of South Carolina government in 1993.