

Low-Rent Housing: Yes on Prop. 15

Given the need for better housing for persons with low and moderate incomes, approval of Proposition 15 is imperative.

The measure would delete from the state constitution a section added by initiative in 1950 that prohibits state and local governments from building low-rent housing projects unless they are approved by the voters in the areas where the projects are to be located.

California is one of only four states requiring such referendums, and the only one to have them locked into its constitution. The result of the stricture has been that millions in federal funds have been lost due to delays, confusion and defeats in public housing referendums. The available federal subsidies have been going to other states.

The 1950 enactment was born of fears of creation of high-rise ghettos. In recent years, however, the federal emphasis has switched from massive housing projects to scattered-site projects with small-scale developments. The change is salutary.

Opponents suggest that the proposition would

lead to increased local taxes and an erosion of the local tax base. The facts are that the federal government would pay up to 90% of project development costs, and the projects themselves would make payments in lieu of taxes. Admittedly, public project lands would be taken off the tax rolls, but so are the lands of other tax-exempt institutions, such as homes for the wealthy elderly, which make no such in-lieu payments.

Proposition 15 has an impressive array of backers. Among them are the League of Women Voters, the County Supervisors Assn., the League of California Cities, the California Labor Federation AFL-CIO, the NAACP, the Friends Committee on Legislation and the Jewish Federation-Council of Greater Los Angeles. Quite naturally, it is also strongly endorsed by building and construction trade unions and the Building Industry Assn., because it would generate jobs and spur the economy.

It would not solve California's **housing shortage** alone, but it would be a forward step, and deserves a Yes vote Nov. 5.