

# Taxes Up 4 Times He Says

Committee of  
Assembly Told  
Of Big Jumps

By VINCENT THOMAS  
Assemblyman, 68th District

Once again the cry against "taxation without representation" is being raised in the land. And from all indications, this time there appears to be some truth behind this accusation, now being hurled at many of our special governmental districts.

This was brought out dramatically at a recent two-day hearing of the Assembly Municipal and County Government Committee. An unhappy taxpayer who bought a summer cabin site in the high Sierras described the tax H-bomb which hit him in 1962. Over the 10-year period from the time he purchased it and built a cabin, his property taxes increased gradually from \$55 per year to \$82 in 1961. His 1962 tax bill was for \$340—a roaring 314 per cent in one year.

The cause, he soon found, was a newly created county water district, which had been set up without his knowledge or vote. This district, it appeared, had promptly authorized the issuance of \$795,000 in general obligation bonds, again without knowledge or vote of the property owners.

A SPOKESMAN from the Attorney-General's office explained to the committee and the disheartened taxpayer how it had been possible legally to saddle him with this quadrupled tax burden. Until 1951, the record shows, state law relating to the establishment of county water districts required a minimum population in each such district of 300 people, but the law was changed then to delete this provision entirely. The result has been to encourage land promoters to create many such districts so as to up their profits at the expense of taxpayers in the districts.

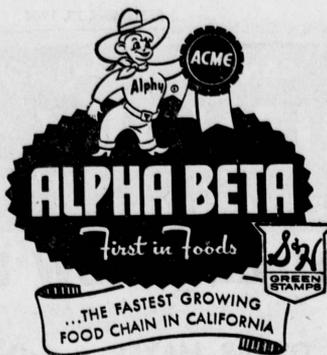
This spokesman said that this particular district had been created by a land promoter interested in developing the area. He had complied with the law by filing a petition with the county board of supervisors which contained six valid signatures. The six signatures were those of the promoter, his wife, and four of his employees.

Since this law requires no direct and specific notice to each property owner within the district boundaries, formation of the new district was approved by the supervisors, and an election was held at which the bond issue was approved. Thus the taxpayer was effectively denied representation with respect to the levy on his property.

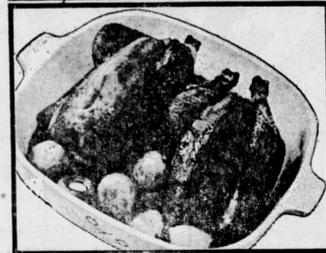
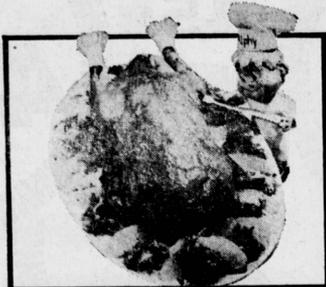
THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL's representative concluded by saying, "We find once again that a law which once had safeguards against exploitation by promoters has been amended to be an ideal vehicle for the money-short developer."

The committee consultant reported that there are increasing indications that bond money is being used to provide improvements in subdivisions which previously were considered a natural part of the promoter's development costs. His report recommended: 1) that a debt limitation in terms of a fixed percentage of the value of land and improvements in a district be set; 2) that the district securities commission review and approve all promotional bonds in districts having less than 300 population; and 3) that certain existing provisions of law which encourage speculative land development be repealed.

The committee was also warned that a state agency, the Mt. San Jacinto Winter Park Authority, which has issued \$8.15 million in revenue bonds, appears headed for trouble, because its cable tramway project is not producing enough revenue to retire the bonds.



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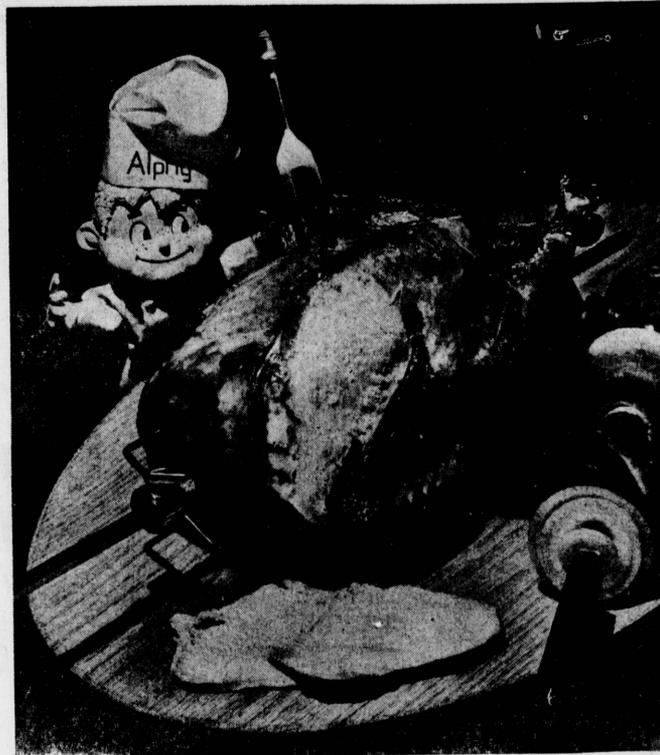
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