

Solons To Look At Taxes

By VINCENT THOMAS
Assemblyman, 68th District

Forewarnings of important issues which are certain to be on the agenda of our 1965 general session come from many sources besides our interim committee meetings. Frequently, members of both our houses are invited to speak to conventions of statewide organizations, and their remarks give indications of problems we will be called upon to tackle.

Ever since our budget session last spring it has been obvious that overhaul of our antiquated, complex state-level tax structure should be Item No. 1 on our list when we convene in January. To investigate the many problems, and to develop some possible solutions, sizeable amounts were authorized for studies by the Senate and Assembly Revenue and Taxation Committees.

Two leading legislators recently took advantage of the forum offered them by the annual convention of the county assessors' association to review different problems in our tax muddle. It is certain that the two matters they discussed will be served to us, spiced with controversy, right after the first of the year.

THE FIRST legislator made abundantly clear, right from the start of his remarks, where he stands on property taxation. Referring to it as "that festering sore in our revenue structure," he advocated reduction of this burden on California citizens. He pointed out that property tax collections have increased 150 per cent in the past 10 years, while the assessed valuation of property has been raised only 83.7 per cent and per capita personal income has gone up 83.5 per cent.

The legislator severely criticized waste and duplication in local government services. He declared that to improve the tax climate here in California, it is necessary not only to eliminate defects in the property tax, but also to improve the structure of local government. He called attention to the fact that the state now has 3,342 special districts, and that in the last 10 years their general fund expenditures have increased by an astounding 1,127 per cent.

He emphasized that there is little public awareness of the existence of most special districts. In 1,223 districts, the county boards of supervisors serve as directors, and district affairs are buried in their lengthy agendas. In many others, directors are appointed in various ways, so the public has little voice in their selection. In the remainder, contested elections are very rare. Board meetings are infrequently attended by the public, and seldom reported by the press.

SPECIAL DISTRICTS are big business. They received more than \$481 million in revenue, of which \$161 million was in property taxes and assessments. They spent \$471 million, of which \$174 million was for capital outlay. They have outstanding bonds totaling \$1.6 billion, of which \$1.2 billion are general obligation bonds.

The second legislator told the convention that some action must be taken to end assessment practices which are driving California land out of agricultural use. He reported that 150,000 acres are lost each year because farm lands are being assessed as potential commercial or residential properties. He said a deferred tax plan for farm lands, similar to that in a 1962 ballot proposition which did not pass, is being considered by many farm groups. Assessors should give this a lot of thought, he recommended.

PV Captain to Direct ROTC

Capt. Robert J. Hanson, USN, will command the Naval ROTC at the University of Southern California. He succeeds Col. Joseph N. Renner, USMC.

Captain Hanson and his wife, Josephine, live at 30803 Rue Valois on Palos Verdes Peninsula.

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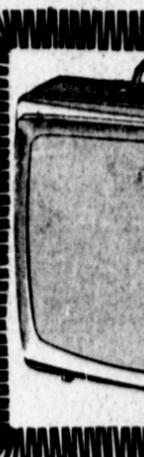
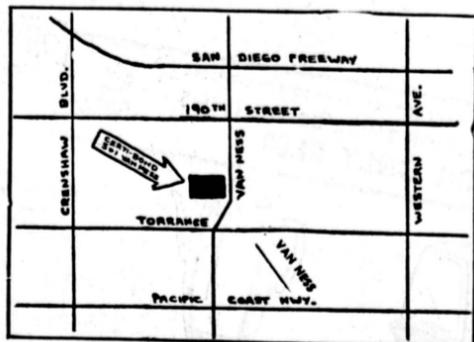


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