



SET DESIGN . . . Richard Cameron and George Peterson, students at Bishop Montgomery High School, listen to sophomore Gary Bouchard explain the working model for Montgomery's Christmas show stage settings. Bouchard designed the settings for this year's performance of the annual Christmas pageant and will supervise the construction work.

Tax Scandal Brings New Hope of Reform

By VINCENT THOMAS
Assemblyman, 68th District

Taxation is one of the least popular topics in our legislative halls. At the same time it is a matter which preempts a sizeable portion of our time. It is our responsibility to assure that the tax laws enacted to support our California state and local governments are equitable, no more onerous than is necessary for proper support of functions the citizens want, and are efficiently administered.

Hard experience has taught us that it is impossible to

draft tax laws which will be proof against evasion or fraud. The best that can be done is to keep such violations to a minimum. Individual cases can be appropriately handled by law enforcement agencies and the courts, but mass evasion and fraud are something else again.

The state-wide scandal which jolted the people from Oregon to Mexico last spring about far-flung fraud and irregularities in local assessment of business equipment and inventories certainly demonstrated the need for

constant supervision of all elements in our local, as well as state, tax administration. The story of how thoroughly this area of operation was riddled with favoritism, graft, fraud and evasion is still being uncovered. There have been several investigations by county grand juries, and some county assessors have been indicted for alleged crimes.

THE ASSEMBLY Committee on Municipal and County Government has been holding a series of hearings on the situation in various parts of the state, the most recent of which was in San Jose. The investigative staff of the Department of Justice has sifted the evidence in many counties, and is cooperating fully with the Assembly committee.

The whole scandal was triggered, it will be remembered, by the revelation that an East Bay tax consultant had "arranged" with the assessors in several counties for special treatment of his clients, so far as assessment of their equipment and inventories was concerned. The extent to which bribery was involved, and the amount of taxation evaded by these clients, is still under investigation. In the course of its work, the Department of Justice turned up many other illegal arrangements in counties other than those in which the first consultant was implicated.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL, on the basis of his staff's detective and auditing work, has estimated that the counties affected have lost \$200 million per year in tax revenues because of fraudulent tax reports by businesses. The chairman of the Assembly committee reported that fraud specialists from the Department of Justice have discovered in most counties procedures for checking business tax statements are so perfunctory that they constitute an open invitation to falsification. And it should not be forgotten that home owners and other small property owners must make up the amounts evaded by the businesses who cheat.

It is interesting to note that the omnibus tax reform bill of our 1965 regular session, about which I wrote at the time, would have completely repealed the tax on business inventories, on the ground that its imposition tended to drive business out of California.

BMHS Sets Christmas Pageant

Plans for the ninth annual Christmas pageant at Bishop Montgomery High School are nearing completion, according to Sister Rita Frances, CSJ, who will direct the pageant.

The program will feature a series of slides illustrating the text of special music to be presented by a 90-voice Hallelujah Chorus. Special narrations, prepared by Sister Celine Marie, CSJ, of the English department, will be read.

Eleanor Taylor, a 1965 Montgomery graduate, will return to the campus for a solo in the production. Slides for the show are being prepared by the art staff under the direction of Sue Osterman.

The program will be presented at the school Dec. 17, 18, and 19.

Stage settings for the pageant will feature a background of a modern city, designed by Gary Bouchard, a sophomore.

The 1965 pageant has been dedicated to Montgomery's sports team. Sister Rita Frances said the theme is based on the continued incarnation of Christ in history. Since a child was the sign of God's presence at the Incarnation of Christ, the program will depict what happens when man departs from the simplicity of childhood in today's urbanized society.

The program will be presented at the school Dec. 17, 18, and 19.

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