

Budget Top Item on Legislative Agenda

PRESS-HERALD

JANUARY 5, 1966

By VINCENT THOMAS
Assemblyman, 68th District
Not too many leaves of the New Year calendar will turn before we resume our legislative labors in Sacramento. All of us know that a special session will be called, and as I write this it has been announced that the opening date will be Feb. 7, the same day the regular 1966 budget session will convene.

Many interested observers are speculating about the various topics, and the number of them, which will be put on the agenda for the special session. Reapportionment is certain to be one of them. There were minor defects in the bill which was passed last Fall which will need correction if the Supreme Court approves the

overall plan in the measure. If it should disapprove it, and order that its own redistricting scheme be installed, the problem will be much more serious and our labors much harder.

The possibility that the new medicare act might need some minor reworking also has been mentioned. Many of those interested in its operations — the healing professions, the hospitals, state and local administrators, insurance carriers, and medical care plans — seem of the opinion that some actual experience under it should be gained before any attempts to change it are made.

IMPORTANT factors upon which the Governor may well base his decisions as to what

could be included in the agenda for the special session will undoubtedly be discussed at length at the parley which he is holding with legislative leaders of his party. Their recommendations should provide him with a useful cross section of party thought.

Our 1966 budget session could be a very tough one, and quite prolonged. If, as the Governor has publicly stated, the total state budget for 1966-67 will touch \$4.5 billion, there will obviously be a very ticklish political problem of how to raise the additional revenues needed to finance it. If the difficulty in upping taxes during our sessions in early 1965 may be taken as a criterion, it could take some time to work out acceptable tax increases

during the election year of 1966.

THE TWO political parties are not far apart in their estimates of the amount of new state revenue needed to finance a budget of the indicated magnitude. The Governor has warned that a general fund deficit of from \$250 to \$300 million will confront us at the budget session. The minority floor leader of the Assembly fixes it at about the same amount, and calls for keeping expenditures to a sound minimum.

Section 34 of Article IV of our State Constitution in providing for the submission of a budget for each fiscal year to the Legislature, specifies that "if the proposed expenditure for the ensuing fiscal year shall exceed the esti-

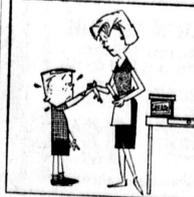
mated revenues therefor, the Governor shall recommend the sources from which the additional revenue shall be provided." In commenting on the state financial outlook, the Governor made no immediate recommendations for tax increases.

IN SURVEYING possible sources of new revenue, the minority leader noted that California taxes on cigarettes, distilled liquor, and beer are much lower than those in most states. He also noted that raising the state sales tax by one per cent would produce about \$360 million more per year.

It certainly seems as though our 1966 sessions will keep us very busy working out the best answers to this budgetary problem.

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FRESH
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LIBBY'S
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