

# Information Bill Under Study

By VINCENT THOMAS, Assemblyman, 68th District. Ask the average citizen about it, and he is quite likely to tell you that most government records are confidential and not open to public inspection, because that's the way the government operates. It just doesn't come easily to him to think that government exists for the benefit of the people, not the other way around. Except for state records of his own traffic violations, he is not too much concerned with the fact that people have a right to know what their government does.

Part of that right involves access to public records, so that the facts upon which public agencies act, their decisions on those facts, may be known completely and correctly. But the old tradition which throws a cloak of silence around so many phases of governmental affairs is not easy to inter, so more legislative effort is needed to bring public records into the open.

Ten long years of effort at both state and federal levels have been necessary to enact legislation designed to open governmental activities to public inspection, and to make sure that the agencies adhere to the American principle of Freedom of Information. Recently, the President signed a bill to tumble the last bastions of federal secrecy—a bill which includes the opening of federal public records to inspection.

THE ASSEMBLY Committee on Government Organization for many years has carried on the work of improving, strengthening, and expanding California laws relating to open meetings of state and local agencies, and to other aspects of freedom of information. Prior to the 1965 general session, the committee devoted considerable time on the problems involved in opening all state and local public records to inspection. During that session, members of the group introduced a bill which would have opened such records to the public, but which would have reserved to the Legislature the power to declare by law that certain types of public records shall continue to be confidential.

Not enough support could be developed for the bill to secure its enactment during that session. However, it was referred back to the committee for interim study.

THIS YEAR, the Government Organization Committee held two public hearings on the bill, the second in San Francisco just before this is being written. The committee discovered that the only other California statute on the problem was enacted more than 90 years ago, that it is limited to the opening of

**Attends Party**  
Miss Cathy Fekete, of 2765 Loftyview Drive recently attended a theatre party, sponsored by the Los Angeles Chapter of the National Association of Accountants, at the Greek Theatre, featuring "An Evening with Victor Borge."

Army Pvt. Edward L. Teemer, 23, son of Mr. and Mrs. Edward C. Teemer, 2013 Pullman Lane, Redondo Beach, completed a field communication crewman course at Fort Ord, Calif., Aug. 19.

During the course, he was trained to string wire from the field to the communication center. Instruction was also given in basic electricity, switchboard installation and operation and pole climbing. His wife, Virginia, lives in Baywood Park, Calif.

public records for use in court trials, and that contradictory court interpretations have made it practically meaningless. The first hearing was devoted to receiving testimony on the bill from state and local agencies which maintain public records of various kinds. Many expressed themselves as opposed to the bill.

California Newspaper Publishers Association, the state Broadcasters Association, and the national journalism fraternity gave the bill strong support, and urged that efforts to secure its passage be continued. There are still some practical problems to be solved, but the bill will be before the 1967 session.

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