

# Disability Insurance Program Under Study

By VINCENT THOMAS  
 Assemblyman, 68th District  
 Our California disability insurance system, which has plunged into fiscal hot water several times during the past few years, is being carefully scrutinized by a special joint legislative committee which was created by the 1965 session. This Joint Committee on Unemployment Compensation Disability Insurance has held two recent hearings to explore the problems which have plagued the system. The latest was held in Los Angeles early this month.

At the first of these hearings the Department of Employment statistician told the committee that if the benefit schedule enacted by the 1965 Legislature, and the tax structure devised to support it were left unchanged, the disability insurance fund would probably remain in balance for the foreseeable future. Representatives of organized labor argued that, since worker contributions alone support the system, the level of benefits should, in equity, be left to the workers' decisions as expressed to the Legislature by their organizations.

THE SECOND hearing was planned to receive opinions from all interested groups as to what modifications, if any, should be made in the existing eligibility and benefit provisions of the disability insurance law. However, before any testimony on these matters was presented, the committee chairman read into the record a letter from the director of the department which outlined a policy decision recently publicized by the governor.

For a few years, until after the effective date of the 1965 amendments, the provisions for cash weekly benefit amounts contained an escalator clause, under which the weekly benefit was increased for most claimants by \$1 for each \$2 increase in the average weekly wage of covered workers over a 1961 base figure. This escalator clause was removed as part of the labor-management administration compromises which enabled passage of the 1965 amendments as non-controversial.

THERE WAS still considerable labor opposition to removal of the escalator clause, however. In addressing the annual convention of one of the statewide labor organizations, the Governor promised that he would make restoration of the clause part of his official legislative program. The director's letter to the joint committee put that

group on notice of the governor's policy stand.

In the remarks with which he opened the second hearing, the chairman of the joint committee said that

there would be little point in arguing whether additional salary steps should be added to the schedule used to determine the weekly benefit amount, or whether the high

quarter earnings brackets should be changed, or whether the minimum earnings necessary to qualify for benefits should be increased unless there is some agreement

as to what the disability insurance system can reasonably be expected to accomplish. Labor spokesmen renewed their pleas for more liberal benefits.

A REPRESENTATIVE of the Association of California Life Insurance Companies reminded the committee that private carriers had been

writing cash weekly benefit policies long before the Disability Insurance law was passed, that in the early years of the system they had actively written most of the coverage

under the law, offering great benefits than the state ability insurance law was prepared to re-enter the field if given the opportunity.

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### Peninsula Road Work Scheduled

County Supervisors have approved a \$10,000 allocation for the paving of a section of Palos Verdes Drive East, Supervisor Burton W. Chace said today.

The improvement of the 1,250-foot section, between Colt Road and Coral Ridge Road, was approved yesterday.

The work will consist of paving to join with recent improvements constructed by owners of the adjacent properties.

"This is the type of roadway improvement which points up how the county and its residents can work together for the betterment of our highway system," Supervisor Chace said.

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