

# Ombudsman to Study Citizen Complaints

By VINCENT THOMAS  
Assemblyman, 68th District

"Tell it to Sweeney" may be an almost forgotten slang phrase, but it neatly sums up a situation in today's government which irritates many citizens. That is, there is no really effective procedure for registering complaints against alleged bureaucratic bungling and then getting some remedial action. A governmental Sweeney is as non-existent as the one in the phrase.

That is not to say that government agencies ignore citizen grievances, or fail to come up with adequate solutions in most instances. It is merely recognition of the fact that the complexities of governmental organization are such that occasionally no answer is forthcoming, or one which is not acceptable. This can still be the result, even though protests are directed to Legislators, or to the Governor.

More than a century ago, Sweden gave its people an official grievance commissioner—the Ombudsman—to receive and act on complaints. The system has worked so well for all parties concerned, complainants, administrators, and Legislators, that several other countries have established the office of Ombudsman, the most recent being Great Britain.

A BILL to provide an Ombudsman within California state government was introduced in the 1965 session. It passed the Assembly, but died in the Senate, and was referred to the Assembly committee on Government Organization for interim study. This group recently held a two-day public hearing on the proposal. Several Legislators appeared to testify, as did political scientists, administrators, and spokesmen for various civic organizations. The committee chairman described the bill briefly, reminding those present that Sweden's 31st Ombudsman had dis-

missed the operations of his office with the committee earlier this year, and said that his group is also concerned with the need for such an office on a county or municipal level.

The author of the 1965

measure discussed at length his reasons for advocating a California Ombudsman law, reviewed the specific provisions of his bill. He defended the use of the Swedish word "Ombudsman" to designate the office here, and explained

that it means "one who speaks for another."

mission made up of the Chief Justice, the Attorney General, the President of the University, and one appointee each from the Senate and the Assembly. A permanent joint legislative committee, composed of equal numbers of

both parties in each house, selects its nominee from the candidates, who is then appointed to the office by joint resolution. The term of office is four years, and reappointment is permitted. The joint committee acts as a continu-

ing advisory group for the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman may receive and act on written complaints from persons who claim to be aggrieved by any action, recommendation or omission by any state agency.

He can hold hearings and subpoena witnesses, and must make written reports on his actions to all complainants. He can reject complaints for good cause, but must give his reasons for rejection to the complainants.



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### Open House Scheduled by Sheriff

Sheriff's stations throughout Los Angeles County will be open to the public Saturday, Oct. 15, Sheriff Peter J. Pitchess announced today.

The association is the sixth annual Sheriff's Open House and Pitchess has extended an invitation to all county residents to visit the 14 designated facilities.

A special invitation was extended to boys and girls of school age.

Each of the 14 stations will feature guided tours, inspection of patrol cars and other equipment, and several special displays. In addition, members of the Mounted posse will be at each station to show their special equipment.

Visiting hours for the event, which is co-sponsored by the Los Angeles Junior Chamber of Commerce, are 10 a.m. until 4 p.m.

Sheriff's stations serving this area are located at 4331 S. Innox Blvd. and at 7901 S. Compton Blvd.

Marine Cpl. David S. Hansen, son of Mr. Harold Hansen of 3115 Merrill Drive, was promoted to his present rank while serving with the First Light Anti-Aircraft Missile Battalion in Da Nang, Vietnam.

His promotion was based on a time in service, and rank, military appearance, and his knowledge of selected military subjects.