

### Property Assessment 75 Per Cent Of Market Value, Chapel Reports

By CHARLES E. CHAPEL  
 Assemblyman, 46th District  
 In 1949, two years before I began my first term in the Legislature, a law was enacted which required the State Board of Equalization to equalize assessments of property of public utilities and ordinary property owners.

As far as I know, the reason for the enactment of that law was the fact that the State Board of Equalization for many years has been assessing the property of the public utilities at about 50 per cent of market value, while county assessors assess ordinary property at about 25 per cent of market value. Naturally, the public utilities complained bitterly and had enough influence to get the law enacted.

However, each two years, at the general session, the effective date of the law has been postponed, principally because if the State Board of Equalization did force the county assessors to assess all property alike, then the tax on public utilities would drop materially but the tax on all other real property, including everyone's home, would shoot up tremendously. I am sure that you will be glad to know that I voted for the permanent repeal of this dangerous law.

THERE WERE lengthy debates before the repealing law passed, but most of the arguments were about the disclosure provisions of the bill, which force county assessors to reveal the ratio as assessments to market value. In the past, only the county assessors and the State Board of Equalization knew the ratio for each county, and they were very reluctant about telling anyone what they were doing.

For example, it took me from 1951 to 1957 to get a definite answer from the County Assessor of Los Angeles County to my question about our local county ratio and even then I got the information by questioning public officials when they appeared before legis legislative committees of which I am a member.

Incidentally, the Los Angeles County ratio is close to 25 per cent, which is about the average in California. Since Los Angeles County is a fair and reasonable one, I have never

understood why the County Assessor was so coy about admitting that he was doing the right thing in this respect.

DURING THE debates, the people representing the public utilities, including railroads, telephone companies, electric companies, gas companies, etc., were in favor of forcing the assessors to disclose the ratios they use, but the assessors of most of the counties of California exhibited stubborn opposition to the disclosure provision.

If you own a home in Los Angeles County having a market value of \$40,000, it should be assessed at \$10,000, assum-

ing that the Los Angeles County Assessor uses a 25 per cent ratio, but there are a few "catches" to this. In the first place, what is "market value"? I shall not go into this subject this week because whole books have been written on the way to determine market value and there are many court decisions which attempt to define it.

NEXT, what does the County Assessor take into consideration in determining market value? We know that he cannot count personal property in assessing real estate, hence drapes, venetian blinds, and other objects which some people consider part of the house, are not counted. In general,

shrubby plants, flowers and other landscaping is not given much weight, even though it costs money and increases the value of the property. Also, assessors usually say that they do not try to assess the view you have from your windows even though this may add several thousand dollars to the value of your home in your personal opinion.

For example, you may consider the purchase of a home for which the seller is asking \$25,000. You discover that the property is assessed at only \$5,000. Multiplying \$500 by 4 you arrive at \$20,000 and wonder why you are asked to pay \$25,000.

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