

Interim Groups 'Watch Dogs' of State Officials

By VINCENT THOMAS
Assemblyman

Its system of interim committees authorized to act between sessions gives our legislature an effective means of keeping abreast of day-to-day developments in all fields of activity in which your state government has a legitimate interest. Through these committees and their various sub-groups, the legislature can follow important events and trends in local as well as in state administration which might require statutory consideration.

Your legislature has the basic responsibility for enacting laws which establish the functioning of various parts of the state government units in the State, most of which have been created in response to public demand by you, the citizens of various communities located everywhere within our California boundaries. As legislators, we also have a continuing responsibility to keep such laws up-to-date, to make sure that they are fully adapted to the current needs of our ever-expanding population and economy.

The various interim committees which share the watch-dog function in local government operations are our best tools to use in carrying out our duties connected with community organization and affairs. Without the great advantage of their ability to dig out detailed facts concerning any problem, and their flexibility in holding investigative hearings wherever and whenever needed, we would be considerably handicapped. It would be difficult to provide you with the legal foundations for local units which would be most responsive to your needs, yet most efficient and well administered.

Under our California laws, the different kinds of local units have been given varying degrees of self-government, but all of them have been made subject to periodic review of one kind or another in the interests of the general public welfare. Ordinarily, this review function is delegated to the grand juries of the various counties, but in some instances special investigative laws have been passed by our legislature.

Also, in recent years, a series of laws have been enacted, intended to assume full public knowledge of official actions of both local and state agencies. "Sun chamber" government, with its dangers of special favors and special discriminations, is now only past history in California, we are confident.

Under our state constitution, in addition to the delegated statutory investigative powers, your legislature has a continuing responsibility for keeping itself informed as to the manner in which the many local government units perform their duties. It is a responsibility to which many of the interim committees devote most of their attention.

Mother Nature has richly endowed California with natural resources of all kinds. Their utilization has greatly increased our agricultural and industrial wealth, thus attracting thousands of new residents and providing a better standard of living for all of us. Yet experience has demonstrated that proper preservation and utilization of these resources must be a constant concern of your legislature.

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