

School Building Pay-As-You-Go Plan Suggested

By Vincent Thomas, Assemblyman, 68th District
California's public schools are no longer little, in the light of the old American phrase about "the little red school house," but neither are they red, by color or by politics. Our big problem with them is that we just don't have enough to go around, yet still the number of school children keeps on growing.

During the past 10 years at least \$2 1/2 billion has been spent in our state to build new public schools, most of it from bond issues passed by local school districts or the state, but still we are only about keeping up with the procession. When the first bond issue for school construction was approved by voters 10 years ago, about a quarter million youngsters were on "rubble" status. Today, just about the same number are getting their education on "rubble" status.

WITH HIGH COST of building, new schools financed by bond issues is one of the stumbling blocks in the way of more school buildings. Figured over the 20-year life of a bond issue, interest will run the cost of a new school up between 20 and 30 per cent.

Getting public school building on a pay-as-you-go basis, and leveling out resources to pay for new classrooms all over the state are the principal purposes of a suggested law which is being intensively studied by a subcommittee of the Assembly interim committee on education ever since the 1957 session adjourned. The initial costs of pay-as-you-go building, if the school districts were to try going it alone are regarded as prohibitively high, and there are many poorer districts that could not begin to try it.

THEORETICALLY, the state could step in and do it alone, but that might mean the end of our cherished American autonomy in California's local school affairs, so there is not much sympathy for the idea in many quarters.

The proposed bill under study would bring the State's large resources into play to help less fortunate communities. The measure would establish a state school building construction fund, which would be supported, 30 per cent from the State's general fund, 70 per cent from a special property tax, not to exceed \$1.20 per \$100 value.

REVENUES to this fund would first be used to pay off principal and interest on all local school district bonds issued before a given date, next to pay off all state school building loan bonds, then to pay of all construction costs for new and replacement schools all over the State, including equipment, built to "adequate" standards, and last for cost of administration.

The basic idea of the bill seems to have been pretty well accepted by witnesses who have appeared before the subcommittee, but there seem to be several snags which must be ironed out before a generally acceptable bill can be submitted to the 1959 session. How to equalize assessments between counties to prevent any possibility of "free rides" at the expense of others, or the State, is one example. Another is how to persuade certain school districts with low tax rates for construction and bonds to help those with less in resources.

Most subcommittee members and students of the measure think satisfactory solutions to those and other matters can be worked out. Could be we will end up with a workable and satisfactory answer to a very tough problem.

Press Club Plans Party

Highlighting the South Bay Press Club party to be held at Ed's Town House, Redondo Beach, next Thursday evening, Oct. 26, will be a buffet supper to be followed by a floor show and dancing. The affair will get underway at 8 p.m. Music will be provided by the orchestra of Stuart Robertson, Press Club president. Guests will be welcome. Hostess, Mrs. J. J. ...

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