

Thomas Expects Interim Trouble

By VINCENT THOMAS
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It's evidently going to be no easy job to arrange for orderly handling of the flood of measures assigned for interim study. That was made clear at a recent meeting of the Assembly Rules Committee.

Several problems concerning operations of the interim committees were raised, and it was apparent that solutions to them must be carefully worked out if interim work is to be efficient and successful.

In its capacity as executive committee of the Assembly the Rules Committee has been given some important responsibilities over interim activities. First, it has the power of the budget.

THE COMMITTEE alone has the authority to decide how

much money will be allocated to each interim group for the expenses of its operation. About \$800,000 in contingent funds is available for use between now and the 1965 Legislature, and will be distributed by the Committee.

Second, the Rules Committee has the responsibility of assigning the various subjects to particular interim committees for study. Technically, no standing committee of either house can refer a measure directly to an interim group for further inquiry.

THE PROCEDURE calls for referral of every measure on which further investigation is desired to the Rules Committee with the request that it "be referred to an appropriate committee for interim study." In other words, the Committee

has the power both to order a topic investigated and to decide which group will do the study.

In this respect, it obviously has great influence over the matters to be given primary consideration at the next regular session.

A NUMBER of suggestions from legislative aides for greater efficiency in the handling of interim work were submitted at the Rules Committee meeting. As might have been expected, they met with a mixed response from Committee members.

First advanced was the recommendation that interim committees should spend more time in advance preparations and less time on public hearings. This brought a prompt warning from a Committee

member against giving the public the impression that committee decisions are made in star-chamber sessions, so that hearings are "phony."

ANOTHER suggestion was that fewer subjects should be explored, but that more thorough investigation should be made. This raised a fundamental question as to the desirability of limiting the topics to be studied, without at the same time blocking consideration of problems which need attention.

Criticism was voiced of some past committee reports, which sometimes give the impression that the writers had not read the transcripts of the public hearings. If this is the case, it was pointed out, the value of the hearings is almost completely nullified.

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