

# VILLAGE VIEW

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On every side and at every opportunity people are positively pulverizing Proposition 2½. Hardly a single good word is heard for it, and since few of its good effects have been felt yet, it's hardly surprising. When the majority of people cast their votes for it, they were aware, first, that it would strike blows at a lot of individuals, and, second, that it would take time to show any helpful results.

The first good news taxpayers have received in years came in the envelopes containing our excise tax bills, however, and that's a beginning. On the other side of the coin, we find beach/dump sticker prices have risen to \$3, and as time goes on, other user fees will rise or be imposed. And that is a better way to raise necessary revenues than across the board taxation.

Inflation (which Proposition 2½ does help control) hurts everyone too; and more people are hurt more seriously by inflation than will be hurt by Proposition 2½.

In the meantime, budgets are being cut. The Barnstable School Committee announced recently it has cut some \$40,000 from next year's budget by increasing the number of students in elementary school classrooms from 22 to 23. It is inconceivable that one extra child in each classroom will overburden the teachers who have those classes. Most of today's adult population attended elementary school classes containing up to 40 or more youngsters. We are fully as literate as present-day high school graduates and suffered no apparent ill effects; nor did our teachers.

If programs for the disadvantaged must be cut to meet the restrictions of Proposition 2½, people will adjust to some trimmed services. Those who are non-beneficiaries of social programs cannot continue to carry the burden of the proliferating and expanding costs of all those services, and bear the brunt, as well, of depreciating dollars.

A recent state government-financed publication, for example, lists 91 different "advocacy groups" operating in Massachusetts (**The Beacon Hill Update**, 3-20-81). These are, conveniently, broken down into 15 different activities of service, ranging alphabetically from ones concerned with problems of the disabled to those involved primarily with problems of youth in the Commonwealth.

Headquartered in Greater Boston, alone, there are eight advocacy groups concerned with economic development and jobs, eight devoted to problems of minorities, seven health groups, seven each for the elderly and for energy, six more working on mental health and another half-dozen working to improve conditions for women. There are no less than nine advocacy groups for youth. A total of twelve different groups work to improve housing.

All concern themselves primarily with low or middle income citizens who, for one reason or another, have difficulties.

Financing the administration of these advocacy groups is enough to give all of us difficulties! Every single one of them depends on funds out of our pockets for survival! No, they're not all entirely tax-supported; some get a major part of their operating funds from either state or federal monies, however; and those which don't "belly up to the public trough" regularly solicit contributions from private citizens. No matter how they are supported, "we, the people" are their only source of operating money.

The dollars to pay for operation of these 91 different advocacy groups comes, directly or indirectly, voluntarily or involuntarily through taxation, from your pocket and mine and flow directly or sometimes indirectly (losing some of its value, en route through federal or state administrative offices), to the pockets of those employed by those 91 different groups. Little, if any, of the money forcibly removed or willingly given in the naive hope our donations will truly make this a better world for the less fortunate, actually reaches the needy.

Disillusioned? I'm utterly disgusted. Each of those 91 advocacy groups rents an office, has a telephone, employs a cadre of staff who are paid salaries. Some salaries are paid to people who compose letters soliciting more financial support or to prepare grant requests for more public support. None of these non-profit groups pay taxes, of course (although their employees do, of course).

Do they do any good? Well, do they? Are we better off as a society than before they sprang forth like mushrooms and toadstools? Is our educational system turning out better-educated and better-prepared graduates? Are the disabled better able to cope? Are the elderly better or worse off than before? Do we have more available housing? Are there more jobs for the unemployed? Is our economy improved by the existence of these advocacy groups?

Do minorities fare any better? Is public transportation improving or collapsing? Are conditions for women better? Are taxes lower? Is youth better served, better behaved, better prepared to take a responsible place in society? Are mental or physical health facilities better and less expensive?

Does welfare function to help needy people through emergencies and get them back on their feet so they can be self-supporting?

If any of the answers were affirmative, perhaps some of these groups could be viewed as beneficial; but seldom do we see anything get better. Instead, the fabric of society hangs in shreds and continues to deteriorate almost as fast as inflation accelerates.

Wouldn't it be cost-effective for the various groups serving different functions to combine their efforts and cut adminis-

trative costs? Is it economical for society to support 91 groups to provide 15 types of services? Conceivably, one family could be receiving assistance in the form of counseling and aid from half of these groups, at the same time. And how much simpler it would be for a family needing assistance to deal with one service organization rather than having eight or a dozen in a particular area of need to contact for needed help.

Proposition 2½ may bring about consolidation of some service and advocacy groups, as well as pare the budgets of local departments that provide services to taxpayers.

Before we urge our legislature to repeal 2½, let's give it an opportunity to do the job intended. If that means making a few personal sacrifices, let's be willing to make them for the good of everyone in the Commonwealth.

When Proposition 2½ means that we, as individuals, must give up something we've come to look upon as a "government service we're entitled to receive," let's keep in mind that even though we can take less, we're going to be required to pay for less, as well. If all of us sacrifice a little, less money will be needed to administer the government, and it will cost us considerably less to be governed.

When the number of people "taking" exceeds the number of people being taxed, or exceeds the ability of working people to support themselves in addition to the "takers," EVERYBODY will end up at the doors of the welfare office.

Where's the money going to come from at that point?