

ECONOMIC HIGHLIGHTS

# States More Able to Meet Financial Obligations than US

One of the continuing and irrepressible controversies of the times has to do with federal grants and other forms of financial aid to the states. These have grown enormously in the past generation, and are justified on the grounds that only the federal government is competent to meet all or most of public needs covering an extremely diverse range of activities—highways, education, slum clearance, and so on.

That view, however, is disputed by Dr. William L. Frederick, Eastern Regional Director of the Council of State Governments. One publication has published his findings, in the form of a condensation of articles which originally appeared in Internal Affairs.

Dr. Frederick writes: "New developments in state government have strengthened the ability of the states to help in providing the services which the American people require from their government. Twenty-five years ago it was widely believed that the states simply could not meet the needs of the time or of the future, and it was forecast that their importance as governmental units would diminish steadily. Today the climate is quite different."

Whether the public at large realizes that the climate has so greatly changed is, of course, another story. But Dr. Frederick backs up his basic thesis with some impressive articles and statements. For instance, state revenues have more than doubled since 1948, and state expenditures have increased still more—from \$9.5 billion in 1948 to \$26 billion in 1959. Heaviest spending has been for education and highways, followed by public welfare and health spending.

In his words, "In such areas as elementary and secondary education, higher education, mental health and the conservation and development of water resources, state programs are taking new direction and assuming larger dimensions."

Dr. Frederick devotes considerable space to changes for the better which have taken place in the organization of state government in

all its branches. These fall into a considerable range of categories. The position of governors has been strengthened, and staff services have been concentrated, to the end that the governors can fill their responsibilities more effectively. Streamlining and reorganization of departments and agencies have improved the efficiency of state services. Successful programs have been adopted to attract and retain more competent personnel. Legislatures have created staff agencies to assist and guide them in dealing with problems, including those connected with budgets and expenditures. And there have been significant developments in the judiciary branch too, among them being efforts to reduce the backlog of pending cases. However, Dr. Frederick adds, "... developments are slow, and much remains

to be accomplished if the judicial branch is to be equipped to fulfill satisfactorily its role in our contemporary society."

All in all, to sum up, the progress that has taken place in state government seems to have been far more marked than most of us

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realize. To quote Dr. Ferderick once again, "In the last 15 years, the states have made significant advances in their ability to meet the old and new problems which confront them. . . . No one can be complacent in view of the problems now confronting the states and those we know to be just over the horizon, but the developments in state government . . . provide a base upon which to build. They offer a promise that state government will continue to go forward."

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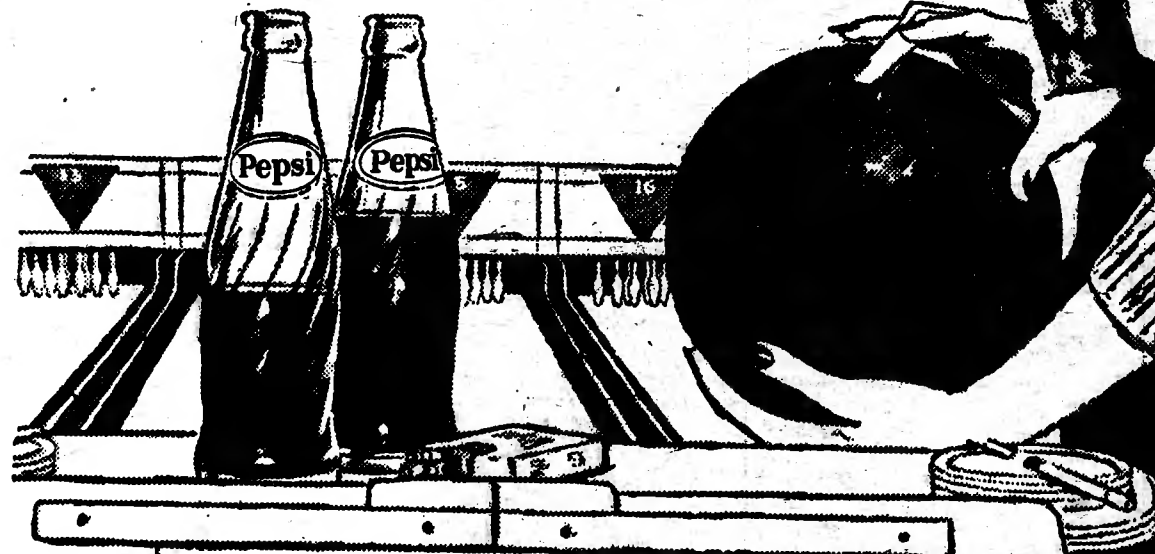
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