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Indiana Legislation 1947 - Preface

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INDIANA LEGISLATION—1947

PREFACE

The Eighty-Fifth General Assembly enacted 374 laws and 8 resolutions. Except for the 1945 session this is the largest number of enactments since 1937. It is more than double the number (165) passed in 1939.

Care, however, must be exercised in evaluating the significance of legislative activity in terms of the number of enactments. Many statutes have limited effect: they correct minor administrative detail; they add useful but not fundamental procedures; they mitigate minor inequities but do not alter basis policies. The number of enactments are occasionally multiplied to satisfy constitutional limitations on legislative form. Such acts are not considered independent by the legislature; they are but a part of the general legislative program.

Granting that mere numbers do not measure legislative activity, the fact cannot be dodged that the responsibilities of the General Assembly are constantly increasing. Not only are the problems of policy growing, but also the manner of resolving them is demanding increased legislative attention. It is not enough to decide on the policy. Extensive investigation, the collection of data, and the formulation of exact statutory formulae require an ever increasing amount of committee work and legislative consideration.

The determination of policy and the formulation of statutes adequate to provide a framework for state and local operation for the ensuing biennium can hardly be discharged in 61 short legislative days. *Quaere*, has the time not come

when the state must seriously consider a longer legislative period. If so, let us understand at the beginning that a longer time probably is not necessary or even desirable for the *enactment* of statutes; time is needed for the consideration of bills and the mechanical tasks of their perfection. A beginning wisely was made by the Eighty-Fourth General Assembly in establishing a joint legislative advisory commission. Prior legislatures have also begun the practice of appointing interim committees for the study of special problems. But these are hardly enough.

What is needed is a longer session. A constitutional amendment, in spite of the 61 day clause, is not necessary. With agreement between the governor and the legislative leaders a special session can be called one month in advance of the regular session. At this session bills can be introduced and the committee process and the public hearings can be commenced. Bills should not be considered for final passage at the special session and it would be desirable, though hardly to be expected, that only those bills introduced in the special session would be considered in the regular session.

This is not the place to work out the difficult but not insoluble problems of re-introduction of bills in the regular session without duplicating printing costs, or repeating procedures already completed.

A special session so integrated with the regular session would provide the opportunity for mature consideration of the state's legislative program. It would give to Indiana the advantage of committee procedures familiar to New York, Massachusetts, Wisconsin, and Kansas. The special session would provide the mechanics for achieving a much needed lengthening of the time for deliberations within the framework of our present Constitution. It can hardly be doubted that the present bulk of legislative proposals has reached the point where the Governor might properly call the session in compliance with the constitutional mandate that he may act when in his opinion the "public welfare shall require it."