

## **New Roads to Truth**

**C**OMPARISON of the laws of the various states on any given subject is a task requiring no more than competence and the patience to do a little work in a law library.

But that is not enough. What is needed is the "outdoor" testing and observing of the actual operation—the degree of enforcement or non-enforcement of these laws.

It is only rarely, unhappily, that research scholars are provided with funds adequate to finance such field work; but other means are available to approach the values of comparative on-the-spot studies by a single team.

Legislative councils, an early concept in the *Model State Constitution* of the National Municipal League, have spread across the land into 42 states. They are a prolific source of objective studies, with the lively possibility of comparing methods and results one with another. Through the Council of State Governments, their work, which pri-

marily is to serve their respective legislatures, is reported in orderly, helpful fashion.

Institutes of governmental research in almost as many universities provide another means by which a single problem, common to all or most areas of the country, can be faced simultaneously. The institutes are likely to have more freedom of choice of subject matter than are the legislative councils but both may be somewhat inhibited in attitude and vigor by their dependence on legislative appropriations.

Nevertheless, in this age of increasing intergovernmental cooperation, it should be relatively easy to achieve an occasional meeting of the minds on a project of general concern on which the capacities of all institutes or all legislative councils or both could be brought to bear.

Chief weakness of the idea is that many of these agencies are not as well staffed and financed as they might be.

## **One House for Missouri**

**W**ITHOUT attempting to excuse the failures and omissions of the lobby-dominated Missouri legislature, it must be admitted that the work of the Assembly was hampered considerably by the system within which the lawmakers had to operate. The two-house legislature with its five months of life was made to order for selfish manipulation by the paid representatives of special interests.

What Missouri needs if it ever is to enjoy the most effective Assembly is a small one-house legislature patterned after the unicameral system Nebraska has had for some twenty years. A body of 68 members, two from each of 34 districts nearly equal in population, has been studied by the Missouri League of Women Voters. Such a chamber would provide fair representation for urban and rural voters, sadly lacking now.

More than that, it would have several decided advantages over Missouri's traditional two-house Assembly.

Because of its very nature, a one-house legislature would have no need of the all-powerful conference committee, with its last-minute deals aimed at compromising Senate-House differences over particular legislation. Because of its limited size, its committees would be fewer than at present, and their work ought to be more visible and easy to follow. This in turn would make it possible for the voters to fix responsibility for legislative failures.

A unicameral legislature also ought to attract superior candidates. The state could double salaries and still spend less than it does now. But even if the caliber of the individual lawmaker were not materially improved, surely his performance ought

to be better because of the inherent virtues of the machinery with which he would be working.

Missourians are not unmindful of the clear advantages of the one-house concept. This was demonstrated in 1944 when 47½ per cent of the state's voters cast ballots for a unicameral plan that suffered from a lack of support because a whole new state constitution then was under consideration.

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In November 1962 the people must be asked if they want to revise and amend the state constitution. That referendum would provide an opportunity to seek reform of the legislative branch. Or the unicameral plan could be put on the 1960 ballot by initiative. Either way, the poor record of the legislature just ended should assure broad receptivity to the proposal.

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## Comes the Revolution

**I**T IS sometimes difficult to convince the sovereign voter that he should trust his city council or other properly elected officials to work out such things as pay scales.

The folly of attempting to do otherwise was illustrated by what happened in Union, New Jersey. In a referendum, the voters raised the pay of rookie policemen and firemen to \$5,400 per year, the same as the seven police sergeants or the nine fire captains were earning.

But in the same election the voters rejected a proposal that would have

released the superior officers from salary scales set in a referendum three years earlier.

Salaries simply do not belong in city charters. When they are frozen there, it takes a referendum to revise them in the light of changing conditions. And it is not particularly healthy or edifying to have uninformed (or not) city employees trying to club the voters into line on a question that the elected representatives are in a better position to decide fairly and in line with a properly thought-out plan.