

THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Radio Station WFBR, December 2, 1940

Baltimore

THE inauguration of a series of broadcasts dealing with the administration of the State government, of which this evening's address is the opening chapter, will make for a broader understanding on the part of our citizens of the problems and functions of government. I am very happy to have the opportunity to open this series, and it is particularly fitting that the topic to be discussed, namely, the Legislative Council, was chosen. The functioning of this new agency is possibly the most forward step in law-making that has been taken in Maryland, during the past half century, or more.

It has been more or less common practice among the people, not only of our State, but throughout the Country, to disparage Legislative bodies. Because of this tendency there has resulted a grave injustice upon the many competent and public-spirited citizens who have been willing to make the sacrifices necessary to serve their states in the law-making branch of government.

The thing that always has seemed to bother critics of the Legislature has been the fact that much, if not most, of the more important matters before that body usually have been postponed until the closing hours of the sessions, and then jammed through with little consideration and, to the minds of the people at large, far less consideration than such weighty problems are entitled to receive. What the critics of the Legislature and the public generally seemed to have failed to recognize was that the Legislators themselves were not nearly so much to blame as the system under which they operated.

The present system, of course, originated many years ago, when life was decidedly less complex than now, and when the problems that came before the law-makers required less technical and detailed research and judgment than now is the case. So involved is the modern scheme of life that, more and more of late years, thinking citizens and law-makers have questioned the ability of seasonal Legislative Bodies to deal comprehensively and satisfactorily with the intricate economic and social problems that continually are rising to demand attention and solution.

It was too much to expect of Legislators, many without previous experience, to come together from the four corners of the State and to solve in ninety days intricate problems, touching upon every conceivable phase of urban and rural life. Specialists on widely different topics were accustomed to pour in upon legislative committees a large volume of data on their pet subject. The law-makers were expected to come forth with the answers, after brief consideration, when research and the most thorough investigation were needed to reach the solution of many of the issues. It just couldn't be done and I repeat that the individual members of our General Assembly were not at fault but the system was primarily to blame.

After much consideration by various groups and research organizations throughout the Country, the thought finally was evolved that if a way could be found to eliminate some of the work at the regular sessions of the Legislatures by interim study and research, much of the complexities facing law-making groups could be removed in advance. Thus it was that in one form