

Finance which I appointed more than two years ago. This study has been revised extensively by a legislative committee. The latest such revision I received just one week ago today and even now I understand that further modifications are being considered. Just recently I stated as clearly as I knew how that I was not opposed to the objectives of the Cooper-Hughes plan but that I would insist on any modifications that were necessary to protect the State's revenue position. All of us by this time are fully aware of the importance and necessity of providing a program of tax relief to the heavily burdened property owners of this State. I would be my hope that you and I together would work toward the end of providing such a program of relief while at the same time protecting the fiscal integrity of the State.

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

Before I move into the area of specific provisions of the budget and a general legislative program which I am recommending, I should like to make a few observations about the economic condition of the State. The general upsurge in the economy of our country, the longest in all of history, continues undiminished, and Maryland has maintained its position in the vanguard of this movement. The population of the State continues to increase. Although one of the smaller of the States in area, Maryland has climbed to twentieth among the fifty States in the number of inhabitants. There is every indication that the growth will continue.

Our gross State product last year touched a new high of \$12.4 billion, a \$600 million (or 5.1 per cent) increase over the previous year. Total personal income in 1965 reached \$10,733,000,000, a jump of 9 per cent as compared with the national growth rate of 8 per cent. The total civilian labor force reached 1,319,800, representing a 4.3 per cent growth. Unemployment, at 3.4 per cent during the first ten months, was below the national average, and the low mark of 2.6 per cent for October was the lowest since October, 1956.

These are but a few of the statistics which show a condition of vigorous economic health, with Maryland ending its best year in a decade and with the prospects for the year we have just begun bright indeed. Having reviewed the broader aspects of the budget and some economic factors that may influence our decisions there at this session, I should like to turn now to what I consider some of the salient points in the budget, the details of which you have before you.