

Q. Have you discussed the mandate prepared for the Court of Appeals, or anything like that?

A. No, I have not.

Q. Do you think they might not be able to handle this?

A. As a matter of practice they have always been willing, where laws that are directly affecting the public interest are involved, to accelerate the position of the matter on the docket and render an early decision.

Q. Governor, would you read that statement for us, please?

A. Yes.

The State Comptroller has been sniping at the tax program ever since it was enacted by the 1967 Maryland Legislature. But his potshots, increasing in frequency of late, have always come from an oblique angle and never directly. He has yet to question the merits of the program or the need by local governments for the revenue and additional taxing authority which will relieve the burdens on the local property tax rates.

First, he claimed to have discovered loopholes in the income tax provisions of the new law — a section that his own top aides helped draft and then reviewed word for word and line by line before the bill became law. All of the suggestions they made were incorporated in the bill, and the so-called loopholes have yet to be proved defects.

Now the Comptroller has raised serious questions about the constitutionality of the act, propounding a series of five questions to the Attorney General and requesting that he answer them as soon as possible. I'm advised by Dr. Paul Cooper, the Director of the State Fiscal Research Bureau, that all of these questions were raised when the bill was under consideration in the Legislature. In each instance, the Attorney General's office responded, either verbally or in writing, that the provisions were valid. I also was advised in a written opinion from the Attorney General that the act was constitutional before I signed it into law.

In the hope of ending this political charade and clearing up any doubts the Comptroller may have created in the public mind, I requested the Attorney General — and incidentally he has agreed — to immediately initiate court proceedings for a declaratory judgment on the constitutionality of the law. I have asked him to include in this petition the five questions propounded by