

services through the provision of additional revenue and alternative revenue resources. This year Frederick County's budget leaped 17 percent to an all-time record \$11.9 million, yet the county property taxes remained constant at a rate that ranks fourth *lowest* among Maryland's twenty-four subdivisions. Fiscal reform provided Frederick County with over \$2,165,000 in additional direct State aid. *Without* fiscal reform your county government would have had to raise property taxes sixty-five cents (65¢) per \$100 assessed valuation to provide an equivalent sum. *With* fiscal reform, Frederick County can combine maximum services with minimum local taxation to become a prime attraction for commercial, industrial and residential development.

Three blue ribbon committees have been established to attack other obstacles to economic development; to eliminate illogical impediments; to assure that Maryland's statutes and policies are conducive to increased investment.

The newly augmented Hughes Committee is preparing recommendations for the 1968 General Assembly of essential reforms in business and industrial taxation. As a community cognizant of the debilitating effects of onerous business taxes, Frederick citizens can especially appreciate the sensitive relationship between a favorable commercial tax climate and economic development.

A second commission has been formed to evaluate the State's existing interest and usury statutes. The development of a clear and consistent statutory code on credit practices is imperative to protect both consumer and commercial interests.

Most important to Frederick County is the nine-member committee appointed to study State highway financing and the redistribution of gasoline tax revenues. Here, where your interests are ably represented by Delegate William Houck, new means and measures must be determined to extricate Maryland's highway programs from their critical financial straits. I recognize that a comprehensive highway network is essential to economic development and I share your frustrations with the present pace of road construction. The problems in this area that we have inherited from the previous administration are overwhelming; the obstacles that we have encountered as a result of the national inflationary spiral are monumental. But we must face them.

I am looking to this committee and to the State Roads Commission to find new solutions; to designate new alternatives and to develop new measures which will revitalize Maryland's highway programs. I