

following statement. The statement represents general agreement; however no one was asked to sign it, and it should not be assumed that every participant necessarily subscribes to every recommendation.

Millions of American view government as distant and unresponsive, if not hostile. Though often the targets of the resentment which ensues, government officials are usually not the cause of remoteness, but sometimes its victims. Dehumanized government derives from the impersonality of modern mass society. Improving the means by which individual citizens can voice dissatisfaction with governmental action or inaction will make for a more democratically effective society.

Many devices--governmental and private, formal and informal--already serve to amplify the voice of the individual in the halls of government. Administrative agencies may provide him internal avenues of appeal. Courts may bear his case. Elected representatives may handle his complaint. Public legal aid may be available. News media or private organizations may take up his cause.

All these means of access to government are useful. We should strive further to improve them. Because these existing devices have important functions to serve other than handling citizens' complaints, there is a need, in today's large and complex government for mechanisms devoted solely to receiving, examining, and channeling citizens' complaints, and securing expeditious and impartial redress. We believe that American utilization of the Ombudsman concept will help to fill that need.

WHAT IS AN OMBUDSMAN

The Ombudsman is an independent, high-level officer who receives complaints, who pursues inquiries into the matters involved, and who makes recommendations for suitable action. He may also investigate on his own motion. He makes periodic public reports. His remedial weapons are persuasion, criticism and publicity. He cannot as a matter of law reverse administrative action.

the citizen. In this case he may urge the agency to improve its techniques of communication. In other cases he may report to the complainant why his grievance was unfounded. In addition to handling individual complaints, the Ombudsman may take studies and recommendations for the improvement of administration.

The Ombudsman proceeds without cost to the complainant. He is able to operate informally and expeditiously without formal hearing procedures.

ESTABLISHMENT OF AN OMBUDSMAN

We recommend that Ombudsman offices be established in American local and state governments. We do not recommend the establishment of a single office of Ombudsman for the entire federal government, but we do recommend that applications of the concept be undertaken at the federal level.

The Ombudsman must be selected in a manner which assures public confidence in his independence, impartiality and professional attainments. He should be given a salary which will reinforce his high status in the community.

The Ombudsman should designate his own subordinates. The Ombudsman's term of office should be sufficiently long to minimize his preoccupation with reappointment and should not be coterminous with that of the selecting authority. Provision for his removal from office for cause should be made in such manner as not to interfere with his independence while in office.

The authority of the Ombudsman should extend to public agencies exclusive of courts, legislatures and chief executives. On the other hand, the experience of California and other states with a commission on judicial qualifications--an ombudsmanlike institution--should be given serious consideration as a means for reducing the abuse of judicial authority.

Since American local governments vary greatly in size, population, and legal structure, no uniform design need be followed and advantages are to be derived from experimentation. Such experimentation should include meaningful accessibility to the Ombudsman by all sectors of society.

provided by easily accessible information and referral agencies.

Of course, neither an Ombudsman nor legal and information services can eliminate profound social and economic injustice, which calls for essentially political solutions.

While the Ombudsman does not make policy, his office has two important indirect effects on policy-making. First, the Ombudsman's findings provide the legislature and the Executive with additional significant information and advice upon which to base major policy improvements. Secondly, the legislative process is enhanced to the extent that the Ombudsman existence permits and encourages legislators to give increased attention to lawmaking.

CONCLUSION

We urge the prompt enactment of laws to create the special office required to handle citizens' complaints--the Ombudsman.