I can only report what has been done by us to date and am not yet in a position to make any statement as to final conclusions of the County Officers Salary Study Commission, because no conclusions have as yet been reached.

I might say that the deeper I get into this study the more I wonder if the present-day attitude in industry, in commerce, and possibly in public office, is not somewhat like the man who sold shoestrings on the street. This man stood at the same spot near the door of a large office building all day long. Every evening one of the executives who had an office in the building would give the shoestring man a dime, but he never took the shoestrings. This went on for several weeks. One evening as the executive handed the man a dime and started on without the shoestrings as usual, the shoestring man tapped him on the shoulder and said, “Sir, I am sorry to have to bring this to your attention, but the price of shoestrings has gone up to 15 cents.”

The law authorizing the County Officers Salary Study Commission is Chapter 27 of the Acts of 1955. The Commission is composed of five members: two State Senators, one from each of the two leading political parties; two members of the House of Representatives, one from each party, and an additional member appointed by the Governor. They are as follows: Senators John Harlan, Chairman of the Commission, Richmond, and Warren Martin, Jr., Clarksville; Representatives Harriet C. Stout, Indianapolis, and William F. Condon, Greentown, Secretary of the Commission; and Mr. Elmer Crull of Richmond.

Among other things, the law specifies that the Commission shall base its study upon assessed valuation, population, area, scope of duties and necessary services required, and make a report and prepare proposed legislation for the next Legislature.
Previous Studies

I would like to give you briefly a history of other similar studies, dating back to 1917, all of which were made by the State Board of Accounts. In 1917 a study was made with reference to townships. This study resulted in the townships of the state being placed in certain classes, the class being determined by population, assessed valuation, and number of teaching units. This same general plan prevails today, with the class of the township changing with changes in the elements mentioned.

Next, in 1927 a study was made of the county salary situation and a similar plan was embodied in a bill which was introduced in the House in 1929. This bill was sent to Committee on Fees and Salaries and never was reported out. (About this time a general economic recession occurred which may have had some influence in the bill being forgotten.) However, some of the material developed in the 1927 study apparently was used in a general uniform salary law for most county officers, which was passed in 1933. This was the last uniform salary act covering all county offices.

In 1949 another study was authorized by Governor Schricker, and a report was made but no legislation resulted in the 1949 session.

Since 1933, a number of other salary laws for county officers have been introduced, and some of them passed.

The per diem laws started soon after the cost of living began to go up with the advent of World War II. These have shifted and increased with almost every legislature. The auditors obtained a new salary act in 1951. Various other acts since 1933 have given other county officers per diems, fees, mileage, percentages, etc.

However, for some of the county officers the Basic Salary Act of 1933 in still in effect. But most of them have been supplemented by per diem laws, and some have been supplemented by additional fees. The auditors alone legally receive no fees.

The general situation of inequalities and perhaps inadequacies was the reason the County Officers Salary Study Commission bill was introduced.

Current Studies

The Commission felt that in order to get as nearly as possible a fair picture of the present situation, a compilation of compensation, as reported in 1954, should be made. These reports were made by certain county and township officers, in compliance with Chapter 277, Acts of 1953. When the compilation was completed, however, it was found that
a large number of the officers did not make the reports. In 1955 an amendment was passed to the 1953 Act which attached a penalty for failure to report, and which also gave an opportunity for certain deductions, the same as allowed by the Internal Revenue Division on Federal Tax. This was done so as to arrive at a fair net figure which the official might receive and keep as his own in 1955. Response to a compensation form drafted by us, and approved by the State Board of Accounts, has been excellent as far as returns are concerned. From the standpoint of reporting actual compensation, however, the clerks are the only group which objected to reporting all of the items. Only nine clerks of the 92 in the state reported any compensation from the sale of marriage certificates.

All auditors, treasurers, clerks, sheriffs, recorders, assessors and surveyors filed reports. A few coroners, commissioners and councilmen failed to report.

These compensation reports for 1955 have been verified as to addition and subtraction and have been tabulated and finally consolidated into a table by population groups for use by the Commission in making comparisons. In addition to this information, considerable time has been spent in drafting "work-load" questionnaires, mailing them to most of the officers, and then in turn tabulating this information for the use of the Commission. For instance, the recorders were asked to report the total number of instruments filed in 1955. The sheriffs were asked to report the total number of prisoners housed in the jail, and the number of meals served in 1955, and so on.

We have also secured, for comparison, information from a number of other states with reference to salaries paid like officials in those states. In Ohio, for instance, it was learned that in 1955 a new uniform salary schedule for county officers was passed on the basis of population. These salaries seemed somewhat lower than many of the salaries paid Indiana county officers.

I would like to mention here also that in only a few of the states are the salaries of the county officials fixed locally by the Board of Commissioners.

As to the basis that will be used by this Commission for fixing salaries, no decision has as yet been reached. Our Indiana Constitution provides that county officers' salaries be based on population and services required.

As I have indicated, a great deal of information has been gathered and submitted to the Salary Study Commission. When this information has been digested, it is our hope that something will be devised that will eliminate some of the hodge-podge that presently exists, and that a fair
and adequate salary law will go to the Legislature. I feel certain that this Commission will give all groups a fair and proper hearing on any legislation that is proposed.