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Times-Herald Editorial Page

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"Rebellion against the law is in the nature of treason. The law deserves our obedience; it alone can reconcile the jarring interests of all and blend into one harmonious union the discordant materials of which society is composed."—Judge William Gaston.

Vallejo Times-Herald, Friday, May 23, 1969

Home Rule In Name Only

The Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), which seeks to become the basis for a proposed regional government for the nine-county Bay Area, has unveiled its version of how such an organization should operate under what it calls a Regional Home Rule Agency seen as an extension of ABAG.

The new regional body would have jurisdiction over regional planning, solid waste disposal, open space and parks, regional airports, Bay conservation and development, regional transportation, waste water treatment and disposal, air pollution, regional criminal justice planning and programs to supplement local law enforcement.

Additional functions only could be assumed with the approval of 60 per cent of the agency's 38-member general assembly, provided this majority represented at least 60 per cent of the Bay Area's population. This 60-60 formula also would apply to other major decisions by the regional body, including eminent domain actions and the issuance of general obligation bonds.

The principle of home rule implied in the proposal, however, actually represents a surrender

of self-determination by the smaller counties, such as Solano, Napa and Sonoma, to the more populous counties comprising the metropolitan core of the Bay Area.

A look at the breakdown of the membership in the general assembly reveals Solano, Napa, Sonoma and Marin counties each would have only two representatives while San Francisco would have 5, Santa Clara 6, Alameda 7 and San Mateo and Contra Costa 3 each. The other six members would be chosen by the President of the United States, the governor, state assemblymen and senators, plus the president and vice president of the agency.

It readily becomes apparent that even voting as a bloc, Solano, Napa and Sonoma counties—which have no complete identification with the Bay Area as a whole—would be overwhelmed by the heavy preponderance of voting strength held by the central core counties. This may be "home rule" within the concept of the "one man, one vote" principle, but in practice it would be relinquishing control to a regional agency in which Solano, Napa and Sonoma virtually have no effective representation.