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**Home Rule for Counties
Vallejo Times-Herald - Earl Waters
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California's county supervisors are rebelling. Faced with reductions in the financial support provided by the state and federal governments, they want relief from a system wherein the state and federal governments mandate programs that eat up 80 percent of current expenditures but provide only 60 percent of the revenues.

"The reason for the mandates is, supposedly, that the counties don't know enough to provide for their own needs," according to San Francisco Supervisor Quentin Kopp, president of the County Supervisors Association of California.

"I reject that theory," Kopp declares. "County supervisors are just as enlightened as state legislators and congressmen, maybe more so."

In past years several counties have, individually, challenged state and federal mandated programs. The efforts have been notable only in their lack of success.

But, with revenue from property taxes, the traditional source of financial local government, sharply curtailed by Proposition 13, the state's counties are now united in demanding changes from the old ways of doing things. Their determination to bring about changes is spurred by the prospects of the decreases in state and federal allocations.

The supervisors' association has come up with a "Platform for Efficient Government," already well known to the legislators by the acronym "PEG," based upon what Kopp termed "three underlying principles."

"These are the preservation of local control, the streamlining of administration in services and programs, and the elimination of paperwork and red tape."

All told PEG contains 33 specific proposals requiring state and federal legislation. If enacted the super-

AID projects can be stalled for months while the contractors try to get needed equipment and material through the Byzantine maze of the Egyptian customs service. The easiest way to expedite delivery is to bribe civil servants to cut the red tape.

In legislative resolutions to be presented to Congress. All are aimed at allowing counties to set their own priorities for use of the funds available to them. "That is the American way," Kopp says. It is called "Home Rule."

"California counties don't object to being asked to cut back," Kopp explained. "But they don't have the ability to do that with all the state and federal mandated programs."

"Real reductions in government spending during the state's fiscal crisis will occur only if the Legislature repeals programs it has imposed on the counties. Anything less will be nothing more than a shift of

costs from the state to the local taxpayers."

Legislators are generally sympathetic to the plight of the counties but the fate of specific proposals may depend upon the amount of fire applied to their feet.

In any case, as Los Angeles Supervisor Mike Antonovich, a former assemblyman himself, points out, the current complaints vary from county to county as do the priorities the counties would set.

In his own county, Antonovich says a particularly sore spot with the supervisors and taxpayers is the multimillion dollar cost of health services for illegal aliens.

Kopp sees these differences between counties as no more than differing symptoms of the same illness. "Substantially the same thing is needed by every county in the state," he said. "That is to let the counties determine their needs and priorities."