

ADDRESS, MARYLAND CHURCHMEN'S  
LEGISLATIVE SEMINAR

ANNAPOLIS

February 13, 1964

Reverend Mr. Cooley, officers and members of the Maryland Council of Churches, ladies and gentlemen:

Let me express my gratitude to you for inviting me to take part in this Churchmen's Legislative Seminar. Your chairman in the letter inviting me suggested that I talk on the subject, "The Governor's Role in the Legislative Process." At the time, I thought I had a fair knowledge of what that role is, but in reading certain newspaper articles since I have begun to doubt if I know as much as I thought I did.

Three days ago, one of our daily newspapers reported a speech made by one of our legislators in which he is quoted as saying that many of the members of our General Assembly are mere "vegetables" and implied that I, as Governor, wield most of the legislative power in our State House. I hasten to assure you, as citizens, that such is not the case. I know of no "vegetables" among the membership of our Senate and House of Delegates. As a Governor trying to get a somewhat controversial program through the Legislature, I am keenly conscious of where the ultimate legislative power lies. I might say also that some of our courts recently have suggested that perhaps the Governor has more legislative power than he actually does.

The role of the chief executive as legislator is a part of that system of checks and balances which constitution makers, federal and state, established to place certain restrictions on the policy of the separation of powers — executive, legislative and judicial. Some of the authority of the Governor in legislation is spelled out in the Constitution and laws, as for example the veto. Some of it is implied, as an illustration a provision which states that he "shall from time to time" recommend legislation to the lawmaking body. Finally, a part of it derives from a position of political leadership which the chief executive officer holds under our system of government.

As far as the written law is concerned, the legislative authority of the Governor is severely restricted. He may exercise the power of veto — that is to say, nullify laws passed by the General Assembly, which measures remain invalid unless they are subsequently rein-