

As background for their discussions participants read a volume entitled *Ombudsmen for American Government?* prepared under the editorial supervision of Dr. Stanley V. Anderson of the University of California at Santa Barbara, with chapters and authors as follows:

Chapter 1—*The Spread of the Ombudsman Idea*—Donald C. Rowat, Carlton University, Ottawa, Canada.

Chapter 2—*Transferring the Ombudsman*—William B. Gwyn, Tulane University.

Chapter 3—*State Government and the Ombudsman*—John E. Moore, University of California (Santa Barbara).

Chapter 4—*The Ombudsman and Local Government*—William H. Angus and Milton Kaplan, State University of New York at Buffalo.

Chapter 5—*Proposals and Politics*—Stanley V. Anderson.

Appendix—*Annotated Model Ombudsman Statute*—Walter Gellhorn, Columbia University.

Regional Assemblies on *The Ombudsman*, making use of the above-named chapters and the American Assembly conference technique, will be held across the nation with the cooperation of other educational institutions.

The report of the Thirty-second American Assembly reflects the views of the participants in their private, not their official, capacities. The American Assembly itself, a non-partisan educational organization, takes no position on matters it presents for public discussion; and The Ford Foundation, which generously provided support for this program, similarly takes no official position on the opinions contained herein.

CLIFFORD C. NELSON,
President, The American Assembly.

FINAL REPORT OF THE THIRTY-SECOND AMERICAN ASSEMBLY

At the close of their discussions the participants in the Thirty-second American Assembly on *The Ombudsman* reviewed as a group the 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 Americans 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 hear 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.

What Does an Ombudsman Do?

When the Ombudsman receives a complaint which seems to him to have validity, he asks the agency for an explanation. If necessary he consults further with the complainant and again with the agency. He reports his findings to those