

COUNTY REPORT

Wage Increases Are Key To 1970 County Budget

By BURTON W. CHACE
County Supervisor

One of the largest items in the proposed 1969-70 county budget is employee salaries. Linked closely to this is the controversial question of pay raises for the 60,000-plus people on the county payroll.

You may have read where supervisors have approved an average of about five and three-fourths per cent increase for most employees, a raise which will cost somewhere around \$45 million.

That sum is staggering, to be sure. Why, you might ask yourself, don't supervisors hold off on pay raises for, say, only a year to give some relief to the hard-hit property taxpayers?

IT'S A GOOD question, but the answer will give you an insight to the difficult problems encountered when a supervisor attempts to trim the budget.

First off, the supervisor is hamstrung by a charter provi-

sion which stipulates that the county must pay a "prevailing wage." That's a key word, prevailing.

This means what it says — supervisors are obliged to vote

for increases each year for their employees who can prove that persons with comparable jobs in private industry are getting more in the way of wages.

I have raised the question of whether supervisors should consider submitting the "prevailing wage" clause of the charter to the voters to see if they wish to reaffirm their support of the issue.

IF THEY did so, it would show supervisors they want to continue to compete favorably with private industry for the best work force available. If voters turn down the restriction, it would give supervisors the opportunity to use more control and judgment over salaries.

Frankly I'm a little bit on the fence on the issue. There are drawbacks and advantages either way. But the real question is, should it be submitted to voters in the 1970 election?

Another binding factor which is reflected in the pay increase total is the mandatory hikes in our welfare employee programs. To be sure, some \$16 million is forthcoming in federal and state funds to meet these increases, primarily for hospital and social workers.

BUT THE very fact that the county must follow federal and

state mandates on salaries has a tendency to throw the county pay structure a bit out of balance. Once again, it's the case of county government being saddled with restrictions by an outside governmental agency.

I supported the recommendations of the county personnel director on salaries, since most of the increases were to cover the cost of living hike reflected over the past year. In almost all cases, the salaries were hiked to meet the prevailing wage rate.

In one area, however, salaries were increased past the

prevailing level. This came about when supervisors, over my lone "no" vote, passed a minimum wage increase of \$417, exactly \$32 higher than the previous minimum rate.

THIS MEANS the county's lowest hourly rate now is \$2.40 an hour, some 80 cents more than is required in the National Wage Law. This increase seems a bit out of line to me, in that supervisors are facing a record budget and a strikingly increased property tax rate.

Also, I question whether the employee who will be receiving the minimum wage increases will be getting "prevailing" wages. These people — laundry workers, hospital workers and others at that level — already were receiving a little more than private industry pays for the same type of work.

It seems to me that the board — in overriding my "no vote" — went past the level of the prevailing wage in hiking the minimum salary.

Rules for Emergency Duty Noted

With the arrival of warm weather, many householders discover that the family car or station wagon will have to do emergency duty — hauling trash to the dump or delivering equipment for home improvement projects to the garden and garage.

And, in the process of attaching the unwieldy materials onto the family bus, the householder discovers he doesn't know the rules.

Capt. W. R. Waldron, commander of the South Los Angeles Area office of the California Highway Patrol this week explained some of the requirements for hauling.

"Nothing can extend beyond the line of the fenders on the vehicle's left side and more than six inches beyond the fenders on its right side, or in the back beyond the last support point more than a distance equal to two-thirds the length of the wheelbase.

"In other words, a carpet or other long object cannot stick out a window on the left side, and is limited to six inches outside the car on the right side. Also, if the load that extends beyond the back of the car exceeds four feet a red flag or cloth at least 16 inches square must be displayed at the extreme end. At night, two red lights of at least six candlepower, visible for 500 feet, must be attached to the end of the protruding load."

Student Writers Featured

Harbor College authors this week put on sale the third volume of the Harbor Literary Review featuring the work of student writers.

Judith Schumacher was editor of the magazine that features the work of 17 contributors. A reading of some of the selections with a musical background by Robin DeVour was performed Thursday, May 22, at noon as part of the Fine Arts Festival.

A feature of the book is a verse prepared for the Review by the late American poet and translator Rolfe Humphries.

Contributors to the volume are Larry Burd, John Butorac, M. A. Car, Dave Contreras, Vernon S. Davenport, Greg de Castro, Midge Dering, Bob Elde, Steve Fesuk, Rebecca Ann Goodrich, Don Ho, Lois Kettle, Laurel O'Neal, Lynn S. Gilbert, Beverly Whitmore, and R. Willingham.

Faculty advisors are Norma Almqvist and Annemarie Tower.

Board Selects New Trustees

The governing board of Chadwick School (Roessler-Chadwick Foundation) has elected two new trustees. They are Keith Watson, principal of Mira Catalina Elementary School, and John Tettemer, president of the Chadwick Alumni Association.

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