



DIGEST

Around and About

IT LOOKS as if the story will be only half as bad as it might have been, when the Board of Supervisors adopts the 1971-72 general fund property tax rate next Tuesday (Aug. 31). CAO Arthur Will advised the Board this week that instead of the 75 cent increase being talked about a couple months ago, the final increase will be about 35 cents per \$100 of assessed valuation. Will said the latest slashes, totaling 20 cents, are possible because some \$20 million less will be needed for welfare, thanks to slower growth in relief rolls; and the County, for this coming year only, can save \$14.5 million by postponing until future years part of its contribution to the County retirement fund. Despite these cuts, Will said, the tax rate will hit a record high of about \$4.44 per \$100 of evaluation.

THE EMPLOYEE relations commission is functioning again with the
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Nixon Order Freezes County Pay

COUNTY OFFICIALS moved rapidly this week to conform with President Nixon's executive order freezing wages, prices, and rents throughout the nation as of Aug. 15.

A task force of County executives, headed by CAO Arthur Will, informed the Board of Supervisors (Aug. 19) that "based on the information we now have, the executive order appears to have the following effects on the County:

"Wages and salaries of County employees are frozen. . .

"Negotiated agreements which the Board already has approved but have not yet gone into effect are frozen until Nov. 12, the date when the order expires. Negotiations now under way will continue to conclusion and be presented to your Board, but none of the provisions falling within the effect of the President's order will go into effect until the order is lifted. There are 3,573 employees involved in both of these categories. . .

"Step increases based on merit and longevity will not be allowed for the duration of the President's order. . .

"Bona fide promotions that constitute an advancement to an established job with greater responsibility are allowed.

"The question of employee fringe benefits and any increases in this area requires further study. . ."

County counsel John Maharg will present an emergency ordinance to the Supervisors next Tuesday (Aug. 31) embodying the freeze provisions. The ordinance authorizes director of personnel

Gordon Nesvig to issue further administrative directives if necessary to implement the President's order.

The ordinance also says that it "shall not preclude any person from receiving any bonus compensation established on or before Aug. 14, 1971, to compensate special working conditions of a job assignment such as night shift differential or stand-by pay."

Meanwhile, County officials are seeking information on whether the
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737 Emergency Jobs

THE COUNTY expects to have 737 new workers within the next two weeks—the result of a high-speed recruiting push under the federal emergency employment act.

The workers, paid from federal funds and referred to the County by the state's Department of Human Resources, will work side by side with other County employees in 36 departments. The jobs, as listed in the County's application for funds (Aug. 16), include:

—100 hospital attendants and 73 medical technicians, assistants, corpsmen, and community workers

—87 intermediate typist clerks, 14 key punch operators, 30 recreation leaders, and 25 appraiser aids

—61 apprentices, helpers, and power equipment repairmen in the mechanical department, 21 engineering aids, and 10 air pollution inspectors

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Around and About

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required minimum of two members—chairman Ben Nathanson and Reginald Alleyne. Nathanson quit the commission effective Aug. 6 after a dispute over whether ERCOM had enough authority to force County management to comply with its orders. Nathanson later asked to remain on the commission, and the Board of Supervisors reappointed him (Aug. 17). At last Tuesday's Board meeting, Supervisors Ernest Debs and Warren Dorn said some "clarifications" of the 1968 employee relations ordinance may be necessary, and amendments to the ordinance will be proposed.

Meanwhile, steps are under way to fill the vacant third seat on the commission.

A COUPLE of front-office changes upcoming at the hospitals: William Barr, longtime head of the giant department, has announced he will retire next Jan. 1—and his secretary, Mrs. Yolanda Sanchez, will move Sept. 13 to become secretary of CAO Arthur Will. Mrs. Sanchez, a 42-year-old grandmother, came to Big General fresh from high school and has spent most of the intervening 24 years with hospitals, except for a 1952-59 stint with the sheriff.

THE RTD says Monday, Oct. 4, is the "firm start date" for its new minibus service between Civic Center and the uptown shopping area. The little buses, powered by compressed natural gas, with 20 seats along the sides, will run every four minutes from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. from Civic Center up Hope, Flower, and Figueroa streets to Ninth street, jog east on Ninth, then north on Hill to First, south again along Broadway to Ninth, then west to Figueroa and back to Civic Center. Fare—a dime, no transfers, no passes.

THE FREEZE: Getting Down to Cases

THE PRESIDENT'S Cost of Living Council, headed by secretary of the treasury John B. Connally, has issued the following answers to frequently asked questions about the 90-day wage and price freeze that went into effect Aug. 15:

Q. Are deferred wage or salary increases which have been negotiated to take effect in the future permitted by the freeze?

A. No.

Q. What effect does the executive order have on cost-of-living wage or salary increases ordered by a municipal government and to become effective subsequent to the date of the executive order (Aug. 15)?

A. State and local governments are subject to the executive order freezing wages and prices.

(This order apparently postpones at least until Nov. 12, the expiration date for the 90-day freeze, salary increases for some 2,800 County employees who were scheduled for higher pay starting in early September. The affected groups include some 1,400 electricians, painters, carpenters, plumbers and other craftsmen; nearly 1,000 building inspector and surveyor classes' employees whose pay was to rise Sept. 1, and 411 sanitarians and health investigative employees due to receive an increase Sept. 3.)

Q. Are the wages of such state and local governmental employees as firemen, policemen, and the like included in the freeze order?

A. They are subject to the freeze just as are all wages in private industry.

Q. How will wages and salaries be determined for new jobs?

A. Scales will be determined on the basis of comparable jobs within the affected business or firm. If no comparability exists within such entities, such scales will be determined on the basis of comparable jobs in nearby firms.

Q. What is the policy on promotions?

A. Bona fide promotions that constitute an advancement to an established job with greater responsibility are allowed.

Increases in certified apprentice and learner's rates under programs established prior to Aug. 15 are allowed.

Merit and longevity increases are not allowed.

(County officials presently interpret these answers to mean that step increases and longevity increases scheduled between Aug. 15 and Nov. 12 may not be granted until after the freeze; this will affect approximately 7,800 employees.

(However, promotions to existing higher jobs and reclassifications within the County system will continue as at present.)

Q. If a salary increase was granted and the employee actually performed under the new rate prior to Aug. 15, can he be paid at the higher rate if the pay day is after Aug. 15?

A. Yes, if there are adequate records to demonstrate that the increase was put into effect prior to the freeze date.

(This ruling permits 231 County plant operating engineers to slip under the wire. The Board of Supervisors approved pay increases for them last July 13, the ordinance went into effect Aug. 13, two days before the deadline.)

Q. Does the freeze terminate bargaining for wage changes during the 90-day period, or can these proceed, with the understanding that they cannot take effect until the federal government permits?

A. The freeze does not terminate bargaining for wage changes during the 90-day period. However, no wage increases negotiated during the 90-day period can go into effect during the period of the freeze.

Q. Can a union and management
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PAY FREEZE

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recent increases in health plan premiums is affected by the price freeze. Talks are under way with federal officials and with representatives of the four County-sponsored health plans—Blue Cross, CPS-Blue Shield, Ross-Loos, and Kaiser Foundation. First paycheck deductions for the higher premiums were made Aug. 10, five days before the freeze date. However, the increased rates were for coverage beginning Sept. 1. Gunther Dumalski, employee benefits manager, said the auditor-controller's office is holding in trust the amount of the premium increase on behalf of the 40,000 enrolled employees until the freeze provisions are clarified.

In another reaction to the President's freeze order, the Board of Supervisors last Tuesday (Aug. 24) did not adopt a recommendation from the County retirement board that would have meant larger deductions for retirement from employees' paychecks—an average increase of \$3 more per month per \$1,000 of salary for general members, and for safety members an average rise of \$6 a month per \$1,000 of salary.

A consulting firm of actuaries has said the increase was necessary because of a greater drain on retirement funds since the ceiling for annual cost-of-living increases in retirees' allowances was raised in 1968 from 2 percent a year to 3 percent.

County counsel Maharg ruled last Tuesday the increase in contributions would appear to violate the freeze order.

Halting the Leapfrog Game

(Following is a portion of the lead editorial in the New York Times of Aug. 19 entitled "Holding the Line.")

PRESIDENT NIXON is right in stressing that the willingness of all Americans to accept temporary sacrifices will be a major element in success of the ninety-day freeze he has ordered on prices, wages and rents. That freeze is an indispensable foundation for more flexible, long-term measures to end the inflationary spiral that has gnawed away at pay envelopes, business profits, pensions, and every other form of income.

The President's decision to scrap his own noninterventionist philosophy was a response, long overdue, to an overwhelming insistence by people of all parties and all economic levels that the federal government had to come alive if the dollar was to be strong and American goods were to remain competitive in world markets. . .

Undoubtedly the freeze seals in many inequities for the brief period in which it operates. A worker whose union is negotiating for higher pay will see no justice in having to wait for more money when millions of other workers already have got their 1971 wage increases. A company will resent having to keep its prices unchanged because it failed to move as fast as hundreds of other companies in raising its charges. . .

Nor is the belt-tightening mood enhanced by the orgy of speculation that gripped Wall Street in the days after the President unveiled his new economic policy. . .

The freeze is, however, an essential first step toward an equitable plan for price-wage stability. But no such plan will ever evolve if the freeze vanishes under a flood of exemptions or a refusal by major economic power centers to observe it.

Nothing contributed more to the runaway trend of the wage-price spiral in recent years than the insistence by each strong group that it had to get everything anyone else got—plus a little more. If that leapfrog cannot be halted now, the loss to all Americans will be much greater than the minor hardships some may now be required to undergo.

Questions, Answers

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negotiate for pay increases to be effective after the date of the freeze but also retroactive to cover the freeze period?

A. No.

(These interpretations affect two groups of County employees

—200 automotive and maintenance men who have been negotiating with County management and are still in fact-finding, and some 400 librarians whose unit arrived at an informal agreement with County management Aug. 13 but has not yet signed a written agreement to be submitted to the

Board of Supervisors.)

Q. Can the fees that a state or local government charges for services provided by the government be increased?

A. No. Fees for water, gas, sewer, and similar services may not increase. However, fees for licenses or legal penalties, such as traffic tickets, may be increased.

American Mexican Hiring Shows Rise

AN EIGHT-month campaign to give American Mexicans a better break at obtaining County jobs has led to a sharp rise in Spanish surnames on the payroll, director of personnel Gordon Nesvig has informed the Board of Supervisors.

Nesvig said that while employees of Spanish-speaking heritage constituted only 4.7 percent of the work force in December 1968, their number had risen to 6.8 percent of the force in August. He said that since last November, nearly a fourth of the County's "new hires" have been Spanish-speaking.

The remainder of the work force is Anglo-Caucasians (63.3 percent), blacks (25 percent), Orientals (2.9 percent) and other nonwhites (2 percent).

Nesvig said an effort to raise the number of minority persons into policy-making positions (above \$16,000 per year) has had slower going but has shown progress; 13.3 percent are at or above this level, about 2 percent more than in December.

Working on Weekends

A LABOR arbitrator has ruled that County management has the right to schedule a basic five-day work week including Saturdays and Sundays if it is necessary to the public service mission of the department.

The arbitrator, Dr. Harold Somers, had been appointed by the employee relations commission to hear the case after the Los Angeles County Employees association disputed management's right to schedule animal license inspectors to regular Saturday or Sunday shifts during the animal control department's annual rabies clinics in July, August, and September.

Somers said the scheduling must be based on valid management needs and not established solely for the purpose of depriving employees of overtime.

The arbitrator noted that "the County is under no contractual obligation to create or continue overtime."

JOB INFORMATION

The department of personnel operates 24-hour telephone service for:

- Promotional job openings, call 628-9116.
- Open competitive examinations given by department of personnel, call 628-9111.
- Open competitive examinations given by individual departments, call 628-9115.

Health Signup Opens

THE OPEN enrollment period begins next Monday (Aug. 30) in the four County-sponsored health plans and will continue until 5 p.m. Friday, Sept. 17.

Any employee, during the three weeks, may enroll himself or his dependents in Blue Cross, Blue Shield, Ross-Loos, or the Kaiser Foundation health plan without providing a health statement from a doctor or any other evidence of "insurability." An employee also may shift during the open period from one health plan to another.

Enrollment forms and detailed information on each plan's benefits are available from payroll clerks or the personnel office in each County department.

Employees already enrolled in a health plan who do not wish to change their present coverage are not affected by the open enrollment period.

New Sheriff's Building

A PLANNED new sheriff's administration building moved another step along last Tuesday (Aug. 24) as the Board of Supervisors authorized an architect to prepare schematic plans for the \$16 million structure. It will rise near the County central jail on Bauchet street.

The multi-story building will house the sheriff's executive offices, record system, crime and photo labs, weapons repair, investigative and undercover units, support groups, and community relations units.

A parking structure for 1,900 cars is included in the project.

EMERGENCY JOBS

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—50 community aids in the fire department.

—40 deputy sheriffs I, 18 radio-telephone operators, 48 DPSS day care teachers' aids, 30 probation group supervisors I, and 13 probation community workers I.

Director of personnel Gordon Nesvig said the new employees will be hired as temporary monthly employees with civil service status (a federal requirement). Preference for jobs will go to unemployed veterans of the Korean and Vietnamese wars.

The federal government, which hopes to funnel at least 150,000 unemployed into jobs with local governments across the country, has earmarked \$17.2 million for the County to share this fiscal year with 65 smaller cities (under 75,000 population) and other entities, such as school districts. The County will get about one-fourth of the \$17.2 million for its 737 jobs. Nesvig said more federal funds may be forthcoming later.

The emergency employment program is scheduled to last until at least 1973, unless the nation's unemployment rate drops below 4.5 percent before that time.

Nesvig said U. S. officials hope that at least one-half the persons hired will be able to transfer into regular, permanent County positions eventually.

County of Los Angeles

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