

Record Budget Is Still Long Way From Approval

By BURTON W. CHASE
County Supervisor

Every year at budget time, county supervisors come under fire for "approving" a preliminary budget in May—and usually it's a record budget incorporating a big tax hike.

What the general public fails to realize is that the supervisors' action in May is only a technical step necessary before they can begin paring down the annual spending bill. When they accept the preliminary budget, supervisors are only authorizing the publication of the bill so the public can study it.

And that's just what the budget is at this stage—a proposal made by the county's Chief Administrative Officer.

This year the CAO proposed a \$1.38 billion spending measure, which in my judgment, is totally unrealistic, but it by no means has been approved—not by a long shot.

THE PROPOSED budget is being studied by each of the five supervisors, who will determine where they believe cuts should and must be made to keep the tax rate as low as possible. Then, supervisors will begin public hearings June 10 to hear any cuts citizens believe should be made. For an indication of what is done to the budget at these hearings, let's look back to last year when supervisors also faced a preliminary budget of record proportions.

In more than two weeks of intensive meeting and trimming, budget cuts of \$17.5 million were produced. Included in these were the elimination of 201 staff positions and severe cutbacks in the county exploitation fund, both made on my motion.

My opposition to a proposed \$2.5 million subsidy to the Rapid Transit District also helped keep that item out of the budget. (It is my position that the property taxpayer should not have to share the load of supporting a rapid transit system.)

ALTHOUGH I did not agree with many of the items left in the final \$1.26 billion budget for 1967-68, I was outvoted on these issues. I did feel, however, the budget had been cut as much as possible without affecting county services.

That's how it unfolded last year, and that's probably what will happen this year. Supervisors may match or even surpass the budget cutting this year, what with the growing concern over the burden placed on the small property owner.

As I see it, the 1968-69 proposed budget does not take a realistic view of the problems already faced by the property owner. Instead of providing needed relief, it calls for a 25-cent tax increase.

I am not alone in my pledge to make as many cuts as are called for, since other supervisors share my concern. We agree that the final budget—which won't be adopted until late in June—should include only critical and urgent items.

ONE BUDGET item which grows fantastically every year—and over which he county has little control—is welfare costs.

The welfare programs are mandated by the state and federal governments, and counties are forced to comply. Certainly an effective program to aid the underprivileged is necessary, but the bill for this program should not be handed to the property owner.

And that's just what the state is doing. It tells the county how to operate its welfare program and sets the standards. The county must comply, paying the bill from its only major source of revenue—the property tax.

IN FISCAL 1968-69, as a

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good example, welfare costs are expected to rise by \$70 million to \$511,656,000. This increase is forecast because experts believe 100,000 persons will join the relief rolls in the next 12 months.

If supervisors could get (a) some financial relief from Sacramento or (b) laws changed to provide sources of

revenue other than property tax for the county, the problem could be alleviated. I have gone on record, however, in favor of a property tax ceiling of one per cent of the market value, with the entire welfare program reverting to the state. If the state is to make the rules, it should pay the costs.

Five local women will be included on the weekend trip. They are Mrs. Lee Rhodus, representing the Peninsula League of Women Voters; Mrs. Agnes Turbeville, city treasurer of Palos Verdes Estates; Mrs. Mary Williams, customer relations for the Palos Verdes Water Co. and

MWD Tour Set for Weekend

Charles Nollenberger, vice president of the Palos Verdes Water Co., has announced plans for a ladies' tour of the Metropolitan Water District's aqueduct system this weekend.

Conducted each year to acquaint local citizens with the water system, the MWD tour will leave from Redondo Beach Friday morning and return Sunday afternoon.

Guests will be taken along the entire aqueduct system, which is 242 miles long from the source of the water at the Colorado River to the terminal reservoir at Lake Matthews.

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