

COUNTY REPORT

Purchasing Agent Spends \$70 Million Each Year

By BURTON CHACE
County Supervisor

Sound policies and efficient systems are the key to savings for any government agency which provides as many services as Los Angeles County.

Like private enterprise, the county must operate on proven business principles if it is to get the taxpayer the most for his dollar.

One of the key county departments which has achieved great success by following this theory is the Purchasing and Stores Department, under the direction of Purchasing Agent Victor W. Quam.

In 1967-68, for example, this department will spend approximately \$70 million for supplies and materials needed to serve residents of Los Angeles County.

THAT'S QUITE a purchasing budget—larger than similar budgets for many of the 50 states. As chairman of this department, it has been very pleasing to closely view the operation of the staff members and the results they have achieved.

Although formal bidding is discretionary with the purchasing agent, Quam insists on competitive bidding for 90 per cent of the over-all purchases.

The other 10 per cent encompasses such items as subscriptions, monopoly items, postage stamps, etc. Postage alone will account for about \$800,000 in 1967-68.

FORMAL bids are opened and publicly read at noon each day. After awards are made, the bids are placed on public display in the department's lobby.

With this above-the-board policy, the public not only gets the most for its dollar but it can retain full confidence in the Purchasing Department.

Before purchases are made, the products are subjected to specification and preparation checks and testing to make certain there is no loss of quality.

As an example, many agencies throughout the United States made news recently when it was learned they were paying high prices for drugs needed in their hospitals and health centers.

LOS ANGELES County, through its methods of investigation, coupled with competitive bidding, purchased its drugs at the lowest prices in the country without any sacrifice in quality.

The purchasing scope ranges from courthouse fur-

niture to pencils and ink. In contrast with the many varying small orders is the annual gasoline contract the purchasing agent administers. More than six million gallons are bought for county use, and another 10.5 million gallons are purchased on behalf of other agencies.

THROUGH cooperative buying, the county can extend its lower gasoline price break to schools, special districts, and incorporated cities. This passes the savings along to the taxpayer even more.

Most of what the county buys, it eventually sells, and disposal of property is handled by the purchasing agent, too.

Even though the county has no zoo, it has disposed of peacocks from the Arboretum, buffalo from William Hart County Park, and a stuffed giraffe from the Natural History Museum.

Purchasing for the county is a massive job—one which is being performed very efficiently thanks to its fine leadership and dedicated staff.

THE CASE history of a 64-year-old man who contacted tetanus last month points up very vividly the need for immunization against this serious disease.

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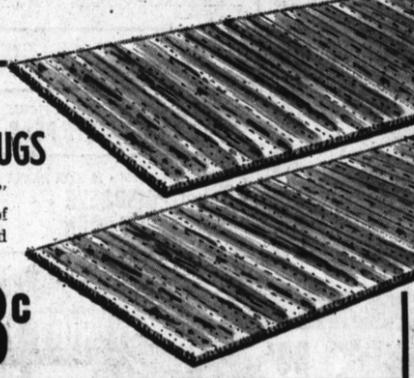
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