

Education Grim View Of SC School Finance

By Mel Baughman
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A grim picture of poverty in the Santa Cruz High School District was painted last night for some 500 persons who attended a meeting called to spur passage of a school tax proposal which voters will decide at a special election on February 20.

As a result of the continuing lack of funds, the audience was told, severe educational deficiencies have been created that are drastically curtailing the local students' ability to compete in tomorrow's world.

During the one-hour meeting, Keith Shaffer, president of the Santa Cruz City Board of Education, reviewed a series of cuts in supplies, equipment and classes at Santa Cruz and Sequel High Schools.

At Santa Cruz High School, he said, 35 classes have been eliminated, including remedial reading, advanced speech and drama, third and fourth year Spanish and French, and instruction in Latin.

In addition, as a result of the cutback in instructors, a number of teachers are teaching classes in which they have neither a major nor a minor.

Shaffer said that administrative and disciplinary problems have been created by the re-

duction of the post of dean of students to a half-time position, that the budget for instructional supplies has been cut 53 per cent, and that no funds are available for equipment such as typewriters and other machines used in the business education program.

He said class loads have risen until each teacher now is instructing some 180 students, an increase of 30 from previous levels. He added that an English project has come to "a disastrous halt" and that English classes now are too large for writing to be taught correctly and that not enough books are available for the students.

In science classes, Shaffer said, equipment is needed to provide all students experience in the laboratory, only one session of physics is offered, chemistry classes lack glassware, biology students need books, supplies and equipment, and additional math teachers and texts are required.

Foreign language instruction is suffering, he continued, from shortages of books and the lack of audio-visual materials from the educational materials center of the county office of education.

A similar situation exists at Sequel High School, Shaffer

declared. There are no vocational materials, counseling has been limited, contact with students' homes has been curtailed as the result of stopping the practice of mailing grades, one U.S. history class lacks books, world history students need texts, and books used in salesmanship instruction are nine years old.

Shaffer said there is a shortage of books in driver education courses, business education tapes are needed, and there are shortages of electronics equipment. He added that physics experiments have been cancelled and the microscopes have not been serviced in two years.

He said the language laboratory is completely inoperative, no library books have been purchased this year, 130 magazine subscriptions have been cancelled, and the school no longer subscribes to a daily newspaper.

Shaffer declared, "We're not giving the kids the education we got."

Citing the present 85 cent operating tax rate, Shaffer said the Santa Cruz High School District is one of three in the state with such a rate. He said this means that local students will be ill-equipped to compete with youngsters from other

areas where support of education is higher.

Shaffer said, "Education is an American heritage. We just can't operate on 85 cents." And he added, "Don't let a small militant minority lead you from your task with half-truths."

Shaffer said the trustees are taking a business approach to the budget and that the budget for the coming school year will be "realistic and honest."

He said the board seeks to actively involve citizens in the affairs of the schools, notably through citizens advisory committees. He said the board had reduced administrative and classified (non - instructional) personnel.

Opening the meeting, Norman Walters, chairman of Citizens for Better Schools, predicted success of the February 20 election when voters will ballot on a proposal to raise the present 85 cent tax rate to \$1.32 per \$100 of assessed valuation.

He said the previous four elections failed as a "result of overconcern with side issues." He suggested that some citizens' "dislike for the superintendent" should not be allowed to affect their "concern for our youth." (See related news on Page 10.)



Keith Shaffer