

11/18/82

County won't leave Social Security system

Board of Supervisors

SANTA CRUZ — County employees will keep paying into the Social Security system after supervisors Tuesday rescinded a 1980 resolution that would have withdrawn the county from the program as of 1983.

Supervisors rescinded the resolution because a majority of employees voted against the scheduled withdrawal. The 1980 resolution was conditioned upon employee support of the withdrawal.

The vote to toss out the resolution was 4-1. Supervisor Dan Forbus voted against the rescission only because he wanted the matter continued for a week.

The continuance was requested by Assistant District Attorney Don Gartner, who represents the employees' Middle Management Unit.

Gartner told supervisors middle management employees wanted more time to review a report prepared by County Administrative Officer George Newell on withdrawing from the Social Security system and more time to prepare a presentation to be given before supervisors.

Gartner bitterly complained about Newell's report, which concluded the package of benefits available through Social Security couldn't be duplicated by the county at an equivalent cost.

He said employees didn't have enough time to review the report before voting on whether to withdraw. He also complained the report didn't adequately address the costs of alternatives to the Social Security system.

While in 1980, the board spoke of the importance of having such a study for employees well in advance of the vote on withdrawal, the final copy wasn't available to all employees until late last month, Gartner said.

Patton said the report was delayed because work generated by last winter's storm.

Employees were given two options when they voted — whether they were opposed to withdrawing from the Social Security system or whether they wanted a one-year extension of the withdrawal resolution so the issue could be looked into further.

While 445 members of the

employees' general representation unit voted to withdraw and only 145 favored the one-year extension, the 20 middle employees voted overwhelmingly for the extension. Only one middle management employee favored withdrawal.

Supervisor Gary Patton questioned Gartner's motives in asking for a week's delay. He said he had heard rumors the middle management unit was planning to file a lawsuit to stop the withdrawal.

Even without the delay, Gartner said, the middle management unit could still file a lawsuit.

Gartner told the board employees are "adults, not children" and should be able to make up their own minds on whether it's better or worse to be in the Social Security system.

But Patton said employees shouldn't be able to immunize themselves from a system designed to protect the elderly. He called the legislation allowing government employees to withdraw from the system "a loophole."

Moore pointed out there are efforts

in congress now to close the loophole and urged the board to continue in the system, since full participation may be its salvation.

"Government workers are going to have to support the system in order for it to survive," Moore said.