

# Supervisors Compromise With 5% Wage Boost For Employees

In a compromise with each other, supervisors yesterday afternoon approved immediate salary increases of at least five per cent for all county employees and then heard a bitter rebuke from an employee spokesman.

How the taxpayer—the other more or less silent party to the salary increase controversy—would view the board's compromise—will probably remain a question until election time.

Supervisors had to decide whether to grant a small increase and keep the already high tax rate down or to give larger increases, with a resulting increase in taxes. Their choice was for more than the least possible increase and for less than the largest.

They were obligated to give some sort of raise to the employees, whom they all agreed were underpaid.

After a motion by Supervisor Francis Silliman of the Pajaro district to give increases amounting to \$124,000 was voted down, 3-1, with Supervisor Frank Clement absent, the board unanimously agreed to allow increases costing the county an additional \$97,000 for the nine months remaining in the budget year. Deans made the motion.

Previously, four different methods of making salary increases recommended under the recently completed Kroeger survey had crystallized.

They ranged from placing employees in the step of the Kroeger-recommended salary range that was nearest to but not less than the step occupied under the old salary range to transferring employees' pay to the step in the new ranges corresponding to their steps in the old ones. The first plan would have cost \$48,084 more than was budgeted under the old salary ordinance. The latter one would have cost \$139,731 more.

Between the two extremes were two others. One, advocated by Supervisor W. A. Deans, increased by 5 per cent salaries scheduled under the first plan. The other, favored by Silliman, would have placed employees in salary steps corresponding to length of service in their jobs. Silliman's proposal would have cost about \$124,000 more. Deans' proposal was the one that was accepted.

County employees had backed Silliman's plan. They claimed that the other plans failed to respect long service by many employees and would in many cases place veteran employees in the same salary step with beginners. This was because the Kroeger recommendations in some cases made the lowest salary step in the new range higher than the top step of the old range, thus everyone in these ranges would be put into the same step.

Silliman asserted that his plan would insure high employee morale and efficiency.

Other supervisors, purse string conscious, agreed the county was obliged to give its workers a raise, but not such a substantial one.

Supervisors Gus E. Wahlberg and C. B. Harts favored the smallest increases. Deans went along with the next largest one.

"I can't see why a person, just because he has worked for the county for a few years, is better than a new employee," Harts said. "The step system is purely an incentive to keeping people on the payroll. It's not a consideration in over-all salary increases."

"Then you're opposed to the precepts of seniority," Silliman snapped back.

Harts replied that he wasn't in all cases.

Silliman then moved that his plan be accepted. He was voted down.

Deans spoke up for his own plan, saying it performed "two equities." One, he said, was to reclassify jobs and salaries, the other was to give an overall increase.

He said raises would run about 10 per cent and that "within eight months, everyone will be just where they would have been under the option we just rejected."

Whether this would be the

case, however, remained a question, since many veteran employees will find themselves at the second step of the range, with three more steps to go before reaching the top step they now occupy. The next increase, under county custom, would come one year after October 1, when the raises go into effect. The salary anniversary date is the date when an employee had his last increase.

A suggestion by Harts that the salary ordinance should include provisions for review and possible revision six months from now was discouraged by District Attorney Charles L. Moore, who added that he had detected a marked disintegration of morale among employees in all departments since the salary controversy began.

Moore also told supervisors they could not make increases retroactive to the July 1 beginning of the fiscal year. He said, however, that the board could grant employees a lump sum equal to what they would have received if the raises had been retroactive. This suggestion got no encouragement from the board.

Deans then made his motion, heard a second from Silliman, and registered the first "aye" vote. Silliman quietly voted for it, and Harts and Wahlberg went along.

Auditor George Kriz suggested allowing \$100,000 additional in the unappropriated reserve fund to cover cost of the increase, and the board agreed.

Harts and Wahlberg urged keeping increases at a minimum and allowing large merit increases for individual employees "who deserve them." They said they would be happy to go along with civil service commission recommendations for such hikes.

It was then that Bruce Sanderson, assistant county hospital administrator and president of the County Employees' association, rose to rebuke the board.

"I think you have wronged the association and its members. Many of them have served for many years and received very little pay," he said.

"You have your decision, now the employees will have to pay for it," he commented, adding:

"I'm sure the employees will continue to serve the county to the best of their ability."

Deans turned to reply, but Sanderson departed.

Later the association president praised Silliman for "standing alone when he was convinced he was right." Sanderson added: "He is a far-sighted and remarkable man."

The board's decision was scheduled to be drafted into an ordinance to be passed with the customary three readings waived next Tuesday.

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