



Supes limit access to budget hearings...

by Bob Johnson

The battle of the budget continued to simmer this week in a series of skirmishes over public participation in deciding how county tax dollars will be spent.

Fear and rumors of political retribution by the new board of supervisors shroud the pre-budget atmosphere in a number of county departments and community programs.

Meanwhile, the new majority has avoided definitive statements on what they intend to do during the August budget sessions.

The board has also backed away from large public meetings on the budget since a crowd of 700 people protested layoffs or program cuts at a public hearing on the budget last month.

Board Chairperson Cecil Smith had backed a proposal to hold the August sessions in the undersized conference room on the fifth floor of the governmental center.

Excess observers were to be allowed to hear the proceedings over loudspeakers in the basement. Fire marshalls would be present to prevent an overflow capacity.

But Smith backed off from that plan Tuesday and led the decision to hold the hearings in the governmental center civil defense room, which will accommodate the first 150 comers.

Supervisor Gary Patton attacked the original proposal as an attempt "to insulate the board of supervisors from the citizens," and voted against the move to the basement as not

enough to accommodate the large crowds expected at the budget sessions.

Tuesday's conflict came on the heels of a controversial attempt to ban the public from the board sponsored budget seminar by the Local Government Center at Santa Cruz High School last weekend.

The board majority's attempt to make the workshop an "invitation

only" affair was scuttled when the school decided a meeting on its grounds had to be public.

The seminar highlighted a sweeping series of cost cutting devices, including contracting out governmental services to private companies, reducing employee hours to cut the cost of benefits and intensifying the use of advanced labor saving technology.

The most popular expert at the

seminar was Robert Carlson, Richard Nixon's appointee to the United States Welfare Commission and Ronald Reagan's choice as the California state director of welfare.

Carlson argued that counties should try to expand local control over welfare programs and to scrutinize the social services budget closely to find programs not mandated by state and federal laws. *(cont'd on back page)*

...and eye CAB poverty funds

by Bob Johnson

County supervisors moved quietly to concentrate control over local anti-poverty efforts in their own hands this week.

After more than a year of moving to relinquish control over federal anti-poverty funds, the board decided Tuesday to study the feasibility of retaining that power.

Allegations that the board could be paving the road toward retribution against politically active social programs have been leveled by the Community Action Board (CAB).

Currently CAB is slated to assume power over the \$289,000 in Community Services Agency monies and other grants on November 1.

CAB was chosen as the agency to administer the funds after months of public hearings on the issue.

For years, the county has been the final authority over local use of federal anti-poverty monies.

The decision to get the county out of the administration of the program, or to "degreen," was largely an attempt to insulate anti-poverty efforts from the politics of local government.

In leading the effort to reverse that decision, Supervisor Cecil Smith argued that "Proposition 13 has now raised concerns over the desirability of the board of supervisors relinquishing control over the use of any federal funds."

Smith believes that concentrated control in the hands of the supervisors will make it possible to "integrate allocations for maximum benefits to local citizens."

But CAB charges that Smith is making a ploy to "prevent the people of Santa Cruz County from gaining control of local anti-poverty programs."

"There are poor people serving on the Community Action Board," CAB responded, asking rhetorically, "Can

the same be said about the board of supervisors?"

Fear of retaliation against activist programs by a conservative board of supervisors may spring from halting the "degreening" process, CAB contends.

The Welfare Legal Assistance Center (WELAC), for example, receives a substantial portion of its funding from federal anti-poverty monies.

Serving as an advocate for welfare recipients and applicants against the county government is one of WELAC's major functions.

In the past, that function has led WELAC into open political conflict with the board and at least one supervisor has argued that the organization could be dispensed with.

If the "degreening" is reversed, the supervisors will have the power to end WELAC's funding.

Other programs now slated to re- *(cont'd on page 3)*