

# Union urges county workers to reject offer

By BOB SMITH  
STAFF WRITER

Santa Cruz County employees will vote today on whether or not they should strike.

Union officials say the county's latest offer is for a 1.5 percent pay hike in January and a 2 percent increase in July 1992. The contract would expire in October 1993.

Tim McCormick, general manager of Local 415 of the Service Employee International Union, said the union is asking its members to reject the offer and authorize the strike.

South County employees voted at noon today on the county's latest offer and the strike authorization. The remainder of the 1,632 county employees represented by the union were to vote at 5:30 p.m. at the Santa Cruz Civic Auditorium.

Mary Lou Alexander, the county's acting personnel director, said the union and the county agreed last week to call in a state mediator to try to break the deadlock over the contract.

She said the mediator met with both sides beginning Friday and continued through the weekend and Monday, the Columbus Day holiday for county employees.

Alexander said the county would not discuss the offers made to the union.

McCormick this morning confirmed that the county offered a 1.5 percent pay increase in January 1992 and a 2 percent increase in July.

This is less than the union re-

jected last week, he said, when the county offered a 2 percent pay increase this month and a 2.75 percent next summer.

The county also proposes a 12 percent increase in the employee contribution to the health insurance plan, beginning next July.

That is less than the 20 percent proposal rejected by county workers last week, McCormick said.

The union has been seeking a 3.5 percent pay increase and no increase in health payments.

A 1 percent across-the-board increase costs about \$530,000 a year, McCormick said.

Both sides today seemed to think they were no closer to a settlement than before the state mediator stepped in. In fact, McCormick said, the two sides, instead of moving closer to a settlement, are now further away.

He said county bargainers are misrepresenting the cost of the proposed contract, computing its costs on a 36-month basis instead of the 24-month life of the contract.

The union contract runs from October to October and the current county proposal is for a two-year contract. The union wants only one year, he said. But, he said, in computing the cost of a settlement, the county is figuring the costs on a 36-month basis because it includes parts of three fiscal years.

"We have different calculators," McCormick said. "Mine is made in the USA. Theirs is from some other planet."