City Employes' Union Representative Terms Union Critic 'Overly Dramatic'

A representative of the Santa Cruz city employes' union has termed "overly dramatic" a series of union criticisms by Randy H. Hamilton, executive director of the Institute for Local Self Government.

Hamilton maintains in a study published in the current public affairs report of the University of California's Institute for Local Self Government: "Labor unions are trying to resolve a life-or-death struggle for their existence by a skyrocketing, militant drive to organize public employes like teachers, nurses, policemen and firemen."

Union membership has declined by about a million members in recent years despite increases in total employment, Hamilton declared. And public employment has become the fastest growing sector of the U.S. economy.

"Since our biggest future growth in employment will not be in blue collar operations, union recruitment of white collar members is of a life-or-death significance for unions," Hamilton claims. "This being so, the new militancy of public employe unions is not going to decrease. The movement to unionize public employes has entered a new era in which tough, no-holds-barred trade union methods will be commonplace."

"**Public employes are organizing not because the unions need them, but because they need organizing,**" countered Robert McLane in a statement to The Sentinel.

McLane is a representative of Council 49, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employes, AFL-CIO, the union which now represents most Santa Cruz municipal employes.

"They (public employes) need organizing because they are underpaid, and because they have little to say about conditions of employment," McLane went on. "This is a condition which public employes have accepted in the past, but which they are increasingly reluctant to accept in the future . . . In the past, public employes have enjoyed somewhat better fringe benefits than private employes. But the accelerated rate of negotiated agreements covering such things as pensions, health and welfare, vacations, union security clauses, has made the advantages of public employment decrease. The changes have been quite rapid in the last 15 years."

McLane agrees with Hamilton that public employes unions are going to become more hardnosed in their negotiation methods.

"**Strikes, work stoppages . . have been used and they will be used as long as workers enjoy the right of free citizens to band together and help establish the conditions of their employment,**" he declared. "As a matter of fact, the only countries where public employes do not have these rights are . . . the totalitarian countries.

"I have noticed in my discussion with the city council in Santa Cruz a noticeable preoccupation with the possibility of strikes. Strikes, like wars between countries, can be avoided if the parties discuss their differences and arrive at a satisfactory solution. I have stated before the city council in Santa Cruz that the responsibility for work stoppages, which may occur, rests squarely upon the shoulders of all parties.

"Negotiated contracts with no-strike clauses have been notoriously unsuccessful at keeping industrial peace. Likewise, legislation prohibiting strikes has been powerless to maintain industrial peace because the sharing of power, which compels good-faith negotiations, no longer exists."

(The no-strike clause was a

● Strikes increased in number from 28 in 1962 to 42 in 1965 and more than 150 in 1966. Current tallies indicate the latter figure may be doubled this year.

● The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employes has increased by 500 per cent to nearly a half-million members over the past decade, and is the fastest growing union in the AFL-CIO.

● Almost all U.S. cities with a population over a quarter-million now have one or more employe organizations to deal with.

"Many people try to draw distinctions between private employment and public employment which are more imagined than real, and Mr. Hamilton is among these," McLane retored. "The problem of changing personnel and budget practices are hardly (more) difficult for the City of Santa Cruz than for a

giant corporation such as General Motors, for example.

"**Public agencies can learn much more from the experiences of private industry. Most labor agreements are negotiated. A small minority have gone as far as a strike. In most of such cases, somebody miscalculated.**"

Hamilton notes that the common conditions of employment are not the only basis for strikes by public employes. "In addition to traditional employe purposes, such as wages and hours or working conditions," he stated, "public employe organizations are striking in support of demands for what many public managers consider essentially policy decisions."

Thus social welfare workers have struck on such issues as the allocation of cash spending money for needy children, some teacher contracts limit the number of students in a classroom,

and police and firemen have sought to bargain over the number of men assigned to patrol cars and fire engines.

Traditionally, public employe strikes have been declared illegal through statute, court decision and common law, but, Hamilton points out, a striking employe group will require immunity to prosecution under such laws before it will begin to negotiate.

McLane thinks much of the initial difficulty of his dealing with the Santa Cruz City Council stems from the council's lack of experience in negotiating with a union.

"We are walking over new ground in unionizing public employes and I think it is shockingly new to some members of the city council in Santa Cruz," he said. "But it really is not a very difficult situation if the responsible parties use good sense . . ."

Capitola Planners Approve County Federal Aid Road System Proposal

The Capitola Planning Commission last night approved a County Federal Aid Secondary Road System proposal, which includes extending 49th avenue to Portola drive bridge across Soquel Center street.

The commission received matter through a letter Warren Harrison, county tor of public works.

The proposed route from Mission street in Cruz across the new street bridge and out Br across Woods Lagoon enth avenue. This sec now being developed City of Santa Cruz.

It then would run fro enth avenue to 17th and then over Corcoran to tie in with Portola d Portola drive it would with 49th avenue, run Wharf road to where would go across Soque to Center street. Th then would connect w street, which joins the

"I see nothing wro this. It's something needed for a long tim Commissioner Royce mann.

Harrison recommen Bay avenue-49th ave nection to reach the over alternate routes avenue or Park avenu

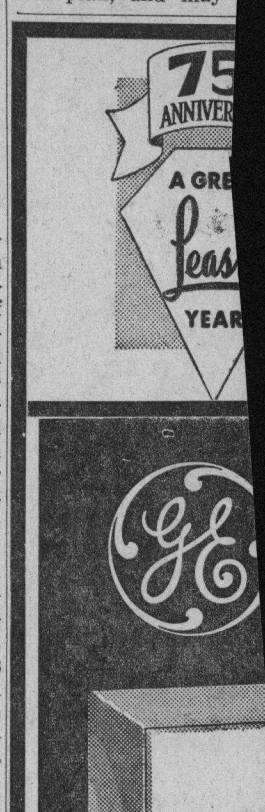Mark R. Reschar, Capitola city enginee mended the new rout it conforms with the eral plan, and may

way to get federal funds for the Soquel Creek bridge.

Reschar said Cliff drive could not be improved

into a bind in a request for a use permit to open a liquor department

pels good-faith negotiations, no longer exists."

(The no-strike clause was a point of contention at the last meeting between McLane and the council. The city asked for a statement from the union that it was aware state law forbids strikes by public employes. McLane objected to the request, and still has not agreed to sign the statement, which the council has required as a condition of official recognition of the union by the city.)

Hamilton continues his criticism by noting that public employe unions are using the up-to-date services of attorneys, economists, statisticians and public relations men. These have been instrumental in the enactment of new laws favorable to public employe unions by 16 states since 1965. Also, Hamilton says, they are working "night and day to create a new climate of public opinion" that union leaders believe will result by the end of this year in at least 50 per cent of the population accepting public workers' right to strike.

Increasing unionism among public employes, especially teachers (now 25 per cent organized), he notes, is necessary if the labor unions are to be more acceptable to white collar employes, professionals and technicians in both public and private employment.

Hamilton cites the following national figures showing a sharp upturn in the militancy and strength of public labor unions: