

R.R. SANTA CRUZ Budgets

Supervisors to discuss equitable pay for women

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SANTA CRUZ — "Female job ghettos" is the way the California Commission on the Status of Women calls them.

They are the handful of jobs that women dominate, and traditionally they rank lower-paying than "men's jobs."

Nationally, the statistics show that women earn 57 cents for every dollar a man takes home. In California, the women fare a little worse, earning just 50 cents for every man's dollar.

Recently the Santa Cruz County Women's Commission wrote the Board of Supervisors with a recommendation to study the issue of "comparable worth" here with the goal of correcting any gender pay differentials that exist.

On Tuesday, Supervisors' Chairwoman Robley Levy will present those recommendations to the board. In her letter on the topic, Levy has asked the County Administrative Officer to write a report and present it before labor negotiations get under way for the 1985-86 contract.

"Clearly, the issue of equitable compensation is complex as well as deeply important to all county workers," Levy said. But she adds, "Comparable worth is basically an equity issue."

The question of what "comparable worth" entails is still open to debate. To some, it means equal pay for equal jobs.

But it also includes comparing jobs that are similar but not exactly alike — for example, what a clerk's job is

worth versus that of a technician.

Finding a balance between bringing pay in line and not discriminating against longtime employees is often painful, as witnessed by the San Jose city workers' strike of 1981.

However, the California Commission on the Status of Women says that's to be expected.

"The implementation of comparable worth will be difficult because it entails profound changes in both current economic policy and cultural and social attitudes," it said in a 1983 report. But the commission goes on to say that equally as controversial labor practices — like child labor and slavery — were abolished after lengthy periods of social criticism and political lobbying.

Although the county has made what supervisors consider significant strides in the direction of equalizing pay, Levy has asked the board to reaffirm its commitment to the issue.