

February 8, 1973

by law sets minimums. The County officials have the authority to set any amount above the minimums that they want. Senator Anderson's proposal is to increase the minimum approximately 25%. My discussion with Arnold Ruhnke, with Senator Anderson, with all County officials and by your own common sense, it is pretty much concluded that increasing the minimums 25% even though some people are currently above the minimum would have the net effect of increasing all salaries probably an average of 20%. My contention has been, simply, the solution to our problem of County government and to government in general is not always another increase. It's development, probably, of new techniques and efficiency. If this were occurring on the railroads, we would call it featherbedding. County population has dropped, situations have changed and yet we simply insist of keeping the same policies, the same kind of county government structures in existence and just solving the problems, supposedly, by increasing all the time. My amendment would simply do this. It would say County officials we are turning over to you the authority not only to set the maximum but to set the minimums. We believe this is your responsibility as an elected official. We believe your responsibility goes beyond deciding how much gravel should go on a road or how wide a bridge should be. That part of County government is regulating, controlling and determining how much help you need and what the salaries should be. I have stated that if we pass this bill the logical consequence with even a 20% increase, even only a 20% increase, would be a 6% increase minimum across the state in county property taxes. I am talking about the property taxes on real estate that the county is allowed to assess and I have said in my opening that in good conscience I cannot stand on this floor one day and say, "No people, we are not going to increase your property taxes," and then turn around and vote for a bill like this which has the direct effect without question of making a very substantial increase in property taxes. I have further suggested that the County officials when confronted with this situation will resort to the same thing they always have. They will say, "Well, look. Those god-darn Legislators down in Lincoln just keep running the taxes up. We didn't do it. We were forced into it. They passed the law." Put the responsibility where it belongs. Let them resolve County government problems where they should be resolved, at the local level. If you do not adopt this amendment, then I would have to recommend, as Senator Carpenter suggested, the indefinite postponement of this bill because the County officials still have that authority to go as high in salaries as they want.

SPEAKER: Senator Anderson, that was Senator DeCamp closing on his amendment. You may (inaudible)

SENATOR ANDERSON: I'd like to ask a question and I'd like to have him explain where he got his 6% figure.

SENATOR DeCAMP: If you will check with the State Auditor or if you will check with individual counties, you will discover as you probably know being a County official that the salaries for County officials, for County employees, run anywhere from 22 to up to 35 or 40% of the total county budget. Now if you increase this, let's say an average of 30% of salaries by an average of 20% then you are multiplying two zero times three zero which comes out 6% average increase in county property taxes. Without any hinting, helping or suggesting at all, Senator Murphy with those very basic figures and without this information I've just given came out to the same conclusion all by himself back there.

SPEAKER: Senator Anderson, do you still have a question for Senator DeCamp?

SENATOR ANDERSON: How much would the implementation of this bill cost in a typical county in terms of dollars?

SENATOR DeCAMP: I can't give you the exact amount in dollars