For rate structure revamping

Judge insists on water watchdog

By TOM LONERGAN

Federal Judge John Feikens wasn't just thinking aloud recently when he suggested closer scrutiny for the De-troit water and sewerage system budg-

et.
"I'm going to insist that there be a watchdog committee," Feikens said

this week.

The chief U.S. District judge announced his intention Monday after successfully mediating a compromise on new sewage treatment rates for the next 18 months between city of Detroit Water and Sewerage Department officials, suburbay customers and industrial users.

FEIKENS wouldn't say whom he would appoint to the watchdag committee. He plans Monday to get the views of city, suburban and industry lawyers who worked out the sewage rate compromises. He also plans to meet soon with Mayor Coleman Young, whom he appointed special administrator of the city's sewage treatment plant last year, and with state and federal environmental officials.

cials.
"No one as far as I know has said,
"We have checked every last dollar in
this new (sewage rate revenue) goal

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— Judge John Feikens

THE RATES were proposed by Camp Dresser and McKee, a consulting firm hired by Detroit in compliance with a 1977 consent judgment reached between the city and federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). That agreement put the massive Detroit sewage treatment plant on a timetable to meet federal anti-pollution laws by 1983.

The treatment plant serves 3.2 mil-

in people in more than 70 metropolitan area communities. According to that area to the compromise will reduce total revenue from the new rates by \$3.5 millon, about a 2 percent decrease.

"All of this rate making ought to be subject to a group that has interests hat are not just consultants' interests," Feikens said, adding:
"There isn't anyone here who can say that any one of these figures proposed by the rates consultant was subject to question."

sioner George Kuhn.
Kuhn, who is leading a petition drive
for regional control of the sewer and
water system, welcomes Feikens'
watchdog committee proposa.
"We've got to put a lid on the cost,
and the coasilant fees can't run rampant," said Kuhn, who estimates 471
million was spen by DWSD on consultunils between May 1977 and the end of
1976.

"I say today they've spent \$5 million to \$10 million more — that's what the watchdog committee's about."

DETROIT OFFICIALS questioned whether more "experts" were needed to determine rates and monitor DWSD's operation.
"The \$194 million (revenue need proposed by the consultant) has been subjected to more scrutiny than ever before," said Richard McClear, DWSD at-

fore," Sain riculate increase, "All challengers looked at (the rates) and, with very few exceptions, found no problem," McClear added.

But Philip Tannian, former Detroit police commissioner who is attorney for area laundry companies, said, "We didn't do much more than scrape the authors of the budget issue"

didn't do much more than scrape the surface of the budget issue." Attorney William Hampton of Farm-ington Hills, who represented Oakland County in the negotiations, said DWSD must have better accounting proce-

must have better accounting how dures.
"Detroit has no method to compare actual ongoing expenditures with the budget." Hampton said.
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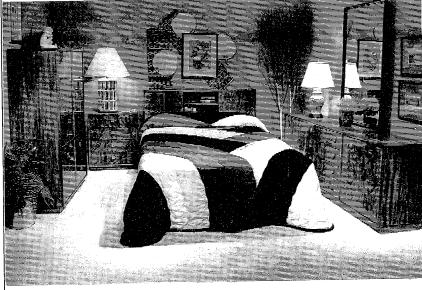
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