

Capitol Hill obsessed by deficit

By Suzie Rollins Singer
staff writer

Two issues hover above the nation's capital: the "deficit and anything else." So says Sue Worsley, a Washington-based auditor with Coopers and Lybrand. Worsley was in Oakland County last week to tell the Board of Commissioners her views regarding the destiny of President Reagan's New Federalism and how it may affect local governments.

"The concentration on the size of the

deficit is something I have not seen before," she said, "and I've been in Washington 15 years. The reason for it is quite clear when you look at the numbers. Currently, the projected deficit for 1983 is \$183 billion.

"That's greater than the sum total of the deficits from the previous five years."

Recapping the much-discussed reasons for the deficit, Worsley explained how high interest rates and decreased revenues make it difficult for economic recovery to occur quickly.

SHE DISCUSSED the Senate Budget Committee's recent action to reject the Reagan's proposed budget and adopt, by a straight Republican party-line vote, a new set of goals for the 1983 budget.

"It's a total of a \$77 billion reduction, which they are trying to achieve by increasing taxes by \$20 billion and the rest by spending reductions, leaving about \$35 billion in deficit in 1983," she said.

Some spending reductions proposed include a one-year pay freeze for all military personnel, a \$5-billion cut in defense outlays for 1983 and a three-year, \$40-billion reduction in Social Security costs.

"They specifically rejected a proposal to freeze the cost of living increases, but how they intend to cut that \$40 billion is yet to be said. They will also freeze the domestic spending at the '82 levels for the next three years," Worsley said.

However, she told Oakland politicians that national politicians would probably not act on the budget before the November election.

ON NEW FEDERALISM, she said she doubts the switch in the administration of such programs as food stamps, Medicaid and Aid to Families with Dependent Children will occur this year.

In recent months, Reagan has met with the country's governors to discuss his New Federalism plans. Those plans have been modified since he originally proposed them, Worsley said.

"The federal government has agreed

'The federal government is too big to run. But the question of how to parcel it out and who's responsible are still questions.'

to keep food stamps. The feds will take over Medicaid costs in a swap with the states, which will take over AFDC costs. Unfortunately, the feds haven't announced how they would run Medicaid," she added.

"The feds would also have some money available for states which can't run their own programs, and they'll lose in 10 programs to give back to the states, instead of the original 40, but they didn't specify which ones."

She advised local policy makers to think about what programs they would like states to administer and how it could be done.

"The federal government is too big to run. But the question of how to parcel it out and who's responsible are still questions," Worsley said.

"Do you have the capacity to run programs that the feds are turning over to you? Which programs are worthwhile for people in your area and which are not? Then forward them to your governor."

"New Federalism is moving through quickly, but it's not necessarily going anywhere."

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Water board petitions due May 22

Oakland County Drain Commissioner George W. Kuhn is asking all people and local government clerks holding petitions to restructure the Detroit Metropolitan Water Board to return them by May 22.

Petitions should be returned to the Oakland County Drain Commissioner, Public Works Drive, Pontiac 48054. They need to be filed with the secretary of state in Lansing before the legal deadline of May 26.

"To date, we have over 100,000 signatures on file, and there are more than enough petitions in the field to accomplish the goal of 229,000," Kuhn said.

Purpose is to place on the November ballot a proposal to restructure the water board, which serves 100 communities, so that suburban customers can pick their own members of the board, which sets rates and runs the regional water and sewer system.

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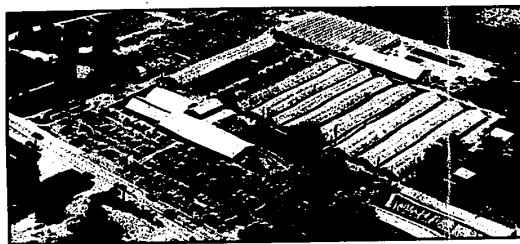
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