

When?

When will it end?

On top of all the hassles the state legislature is causing citizens by not having its budget finished on time, the conference committee now in charge of the budget has closed its meetings to the public.

Sen. Henry Cianfrani, D-Philadelphia, chairman of the special conference committee composed of six legislators, said, "I don't think I can accomplish anything with you guys around, so I'm using my prerogative as committee chairman to call an executive session."

Ciafrani is the state senator who told University officials last term, "I don't see where

you would be doing any damage to the University if there was a \$75 to \$100 increase (in tuition.)"

Perhaps he is afraid the press might catch him in a faux pas during the hectic budget meetings.

Perhaps he wants to shoot rubber bands in private.

No matter what his reasoning, the public no longer has access to the proceedings and cannot monitor the committee's priorities.

Everyone on the state payroll desires to know if they will get their pay raises, and more importantly, when they will get paid.

Penn State and other universities have cancelled

raises and could be on the verge of financial trouble depending on what the state allocates to them. The University meanwhile is borrowing money and paying interest rates to keep things running.

Now that the special committee meetings are closed, who can tell what politics will enter into the budget, or even what injustices might occur.

The Pennsylvania Legislative Correspondents' Association, an organization of reporters who cover the state capitol, are hiring an attorney to seek a court order forcing the committee to hold open meetings.

Considering what is involved, we wish them luck.

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Budget business not mysterious

By WALTER R. MEARS
AP Special Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP)— There's no mystery or magic about it, says the man in charge of changing the way the government does business on the budget.

But there are questions about zero base budgeting, and there is a jargon that certainly sounds mysterious.

There are "discrete increments of services" which means separate and distinct government programs and "goal congruence" which means corresponding and harmonious objectives and "prioritizing" which didn't make the dictionary, but means ranking by order of importance and desirability.

Then there are decision packages, brief accounts of what the government is doing in each discrete increment of service, how much it has been costing, and what it should cost next year.

Nobody really knows how many decision packages will be wrapped into the preparation of President Carter's budget for the government year beginning on Oct. 1, 1978. They'll find out in a month or so, when the agencies start delivering their packages to the Office of Management and Budget.

For all of that, and for all the skeptics

in Congress and elsewhere, the administration is confident that the new system can be implemented swiftly and efficiently, and that will pay dividends in savings and in improved federal programs.

"There's nothing mystical or magical about zero base budgeting," said James T. McIntyre Jr., deputy director of the Office of Management and Budget. "It's a very simple process. It forces old programs to compete with new programs and new initiatives..."

The idea is to draft the budget on the basis of programs and their objectives, instead of last year's numbers. Each program is supposed to be analyzed by the people who run it and who, in theory, know best whether it is working effectively or whether there are better ways to do the job. That leads to the decision package, which covers proposed spending.

Each echelon of the government gets the decision packages from the levels below, imposes its priorities, and passes on a consolidated package.

And in the end, President Carter sets the figures and priorities in a zero base budget. He'll send it to Congress next

winter. The format and content will be like those of prior budgets. The difference is in preparation, not presentation. And Carter says the new system will reduce costs, while making government more efficient and effective.

The big difference is in the process that is going on now, as government agencies prepare the budget recommendations that will be submitted to the Office of Management and Budget in September.

"This system requires that the people who run programs be involved in the budget," McIntyre said. "That provides communication from the bottom up. That's how you get realistic alternatives to the way we're doing things..."

"It forces a manager to make some tough decisions. If he didn't have to prioritize, he could just say 'I want it all.'"

McIntyre said the new budget system also will lead to closer examination of what the government is really doing — "at the programs, at the way we're delivering services around the country."

Carter's decision to go ahead immediately with the shift to zero base

budgeting is in contrast to his cautious, methodical pace on such items as tax and welfare reform and government reorganization.

Rep. Max Baucus, D-Mont., a congressional expert on zero base budgeting, advised Carter against it. He wrote Carter that the new system should be phased in, with only selected agencies and programs subject to zero base budgeting this year.

He said an immediate, governmentwide shift would risk compromising the program beneath a mountain of paperwork.

But Carter promised to start immediately, and he has. McIntyre, who installed zero base budgeting for Carter in Georgia, says the system is on schedule and on course.

There had been some suspicion that the bureaucracy might drag its feet on Carter's proposed changes.

But McIntyre said government employees have been cooperative and enthusiastic about the new budget system. "I've felt on occasion like we weren't moving fast enough at OMB," he said.

Letters to the Editor

Budget woes

During the last several weeks I have received many letters from constituents concerning the budget problems we are facing in the Commonwealth. Many of you are justifiably concerned about the delays, the problems of balancing the budget and a possible tax increase. I have answered each of these letters giving my own views and presenting the various sides of the budget, subsidy, and Philadelphia tax problems.

This week I received a long letter from "concerned citizens and taxpayers" with their views on the budget problem and posing a list of questions about government spending and taxes. Unfortunately, these concerned citizens did not sign their letter or give an address to which I could respond, asking instead for a response in this column or on my radio report.

This, of course, I can't do. I am always more than willing to talk with any constituents or to answer questions by mail, but when newspapers and radio stations give time and space to any public official, they expect and rightly so, that the material presented will be of general interest and concern to all of the people in the district and cannot be specific answers to special questions.

Generally, I can say, that no Representative in the House wants to increase taxes. I have consistently indicated that I will vote for a tax increase if there is a general subsidy program for all of the schools of Pennsylvania and not just for Philadelphia, and if I am convinced that it is necessary to balance the State budget. I honestly believe that only through a new state subsidy formula will it be possible to hold the line on local property taxes for schools.

The formula we are now trying to adopt would help all of our school districts, not just this year, but in the future, and I have been working to achieve that subsidy reform. Not only am I continuing to support adequate funding for basic education but for higher education as well, and to that end I have been working very hard to achieve equitable funding for Penn State as a State-related university. Increased support for all of education is a very vital part of the over-all budget problem. The state legislature is considering several measures which

would enable the legislature to have a tighter control on executive spending, which would provide a review by the legislature of state agencies and departments so that projects and programs are evaluated regularly and not funded automatically. This type of sunset legislation is long overdue. I have co-sponsored some of the legislation and will support it when it comes up. This should help us do a better job of budgeting in the future so that we do not automatically increase spending every year.

Many of us who are new to the Legislature are trying to deal as responsibly as we can with the problems we have inherited while trying to suggest ways to improve the process for the future. I know that as one legislator I can't change the entire process in one year or even two, but working with many other concerned legislators over a period of time, I am convinced that we can make the changes necessary to have not only a better budgeting process, but ultimately a more efficient government.

Helen Wise
state representative
77th District

Speed it up

At last someone's come up with a great idea to speed up the passage of the ERA. The National Organization for Women (NOW) is asking those who support the ERA (Equal Rights Amendment) to give up smoking cigarettes until the ERA is ratified.

NOW has a sound basis to this boycott. They point out most of the tobacco grown in the United States is raised in five states that haven't ratified the ERA (the ERA needs 3 more states to ratify by March of 1979). Two of these states — North Carolina and Virginia — produce most of the cigarettes for the U.S. (Incidentally, ratification of the ERA in Virginia lost by ONE vote.)

With females spending \$10 million a DAY for cigarettes, even a cut-back might produce a desired effect. NOW further reminds women that the tobacco industry's after-tax profits

amounted to \$919 billion in 1975. To further encourage you, I might remind you that lung cancer is catching up with smokers, and women aren't immune.

What can you do instead of smoking? You can think about what life would be like without equal rights under the law (even though Pennsylvania approved the ERA in 1972, 38 states must ratify by the deadline). You can suck a California (but not Florida!) lemon. If you really need a smoke, smoke something grown in Mexico, or Colombia, or your closet...

With the money you save, you can pledge the money to NOW, or to the League of Women Voters which both have ERA Ratification funds. If you don't smoke, you can do your part by refusing to buy from states which haven't ratified. (Florida, South Carolina, North Carolina, Georgia, Virginia, Alabama, Mississippi, Illinois, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, Louisiana, Arkansas, Missouri, and Oklahoma.)

For once, those in favor of equal rights will have the opportunity to put their money where their mouth is.

Eva C. Whitley
13th-general arts and sciences

Objection

We object to certain views stated in Ms. Lear's article (July 11) about radicalism, specifically some comments voiced by Mr. Ackerman, president of the USG. We find it rather ludicrous that a person should be considered apathetic just because his or her main goal in attending school is to receive an education. What else is a school for? Why should you even come to a university if all you want to do is play politics? That can be done at home.

It seems as though certain persons lament the current lack of protests. Are they sorry that the nation is not fighting in Southeast Asia or torn by internal strife? Do they miss protesting for protesting's sake, since waving signs about is considerably easier than doing well in Math 62?

We find the actions of Mr. Wright's advisee more commendable than simply sitting at Penn State, blocking traffic on North Atherton Street. Instead of attempting to implement

chaos, she took positive steps to change what she felt was wrong, thereby supporting her beliefs with action. Perhaps one of the faults of the 60s was that nearly everyone had something to shout, but few had anything concrete to contribute to society.

David Titley
3rd-meteorology
Ray Deatherage
3rd-petroleum and natural gas engineering

the Collegian

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Letters policy

The Daily Collegian encourages comments on news coverage, editorial policy and campus and off-campus affairs. Letters should be typewritten, double-spaced, signed by no more than two persons and no longer than 30 lines. Students' letters should include the name, term and major of the writer.

Letters should be brought to the Collegian office, 126 Carnegie, in person so proper identification of the writer can be made, although names will be withheld on request. If letters are received by mail, the Collegian will contact the signer for verification before publication. Letters cannot be returned.

The metric system — not simple

A new series of radio and television commercials is now being broadcast with increasing frequency. The television version of one of these ads shows two animated blob-like creatures dancing around urging America in song to "take 10 minutes to learn the metric way."

On the radio, the announcer sings "learn the metric system — it's good for America, the economy, and you." They make it sound so patriotic — and so simple.

I suppose it is simple — a system with three basic units for length, volume and weight on which all of the other units are based in multiples of ten. Most people have encountered the system at one time or another and have resigned themselves to the fact that the country will soon go through the big conversion.

However, I'm sure it will be the simplest for today's pre-school children. They'll be learning the system fresh when they enter elementary school — with no inches, pounds or quarts in their minds. But what about the rest of us?

I realize that compared to my parents I have been using the present English

system for a short time — but it still amounts to my whole life.

I know what the system is — I know the units and the conversions. But how long it will take until the system is a functional working part of me (and of everyone else over the age of eight), I have no way of knowing. It's just like changing to any new way of doing anything — the new way will gradually become a part of you, but there will be a lot of things you will still be tempted to do the old way because it's familiar.

Mary Ellen
Wright

Of course, there is a lot to be said for the metric system. Many people have pointed out the advantages of using the same system of measurement as most of the major countries of the world. There are enough international communications barriers as far as language and culture are concerned — the metric

system may be a right step in this direction. Others have spoken of how the conversion will aid the economy because of the amount of money that will have to be spent by various companies, etc. in effecting the change (everything from road signs to mathematics textbooks will have to be changed to metrics).

But the fact remains that it will probably be a bit more difficult than the commercials claim for an entire nation measuring things one way to start changing their ways.

Now the road signs and math books will not be the only things to go through the conversion. A variety of institutions, cliches and ways of accomplishing certain tasks will also have to change.

For one thing, can you imagine the way Weight Watchers will be affected when the country goes metric? I have enough trouble keeping track of the pounds without having to worry about grams and kilograms.

Also, my Smokey the Bear ruler (along with all of the other rulers with strange but classic slogans) will be on its way to the Smithsonian Institution before I know it.

Instead of being 5 foot 2, I'll be 15.7480 decimeters (try remembering that every time some sort of application asks for your height and weight).

When a deceased person is buried, they'll say he's "18.288 decimeters deep" (instead of 6 feet).

And just think of the hassle Bert Parks will have at the Miss America pageant when he has to introduce a perfect 36-24-36 figure as 9.144-6.096-9.144!

Remember the old adage "mind your p's and q's?" (The p and q stand for pint and quart.) Might we someday hear "mind your d's and l's" (deciliters and liters?)

These are a small example of how things will be changing when the metric system goes into effect in this country. Hopefully the conversion will be gradual so that we don't experience the changes all at once. I still contend that, although the change may be necessary, it will be a bit time-consuming and difficult.

But I just realized something — I had to use the metric system to write this column. Perhaps it won't be so difficult after all.

