

Summer Collection of Taxes Would Aid School Districts

By GIL HERMAN

While school districts in the Birmingham area have managed to work out their budgets to meet the financial requirements of the coming fiscal year, and have presented them for approval to the Oakland county allocation board, one problem persists!

How to make financial ends meet during the high expense-low income period that comes each December. The bulk of school districts' revenues does not come in until after the first of the year. (The result is school trustees are at their lowest point from mid-November to mid-January.)

Districts frequently are hard pressed to meet teachers' salaries and other expenses during this critical period.

To meet expenses, school boards usually have to borrow money. To borrow, they first must get consent of the Michigan State Municipal Finance Commission. When consent is granted the loan can be sought by offering banks anticipated tax money notes for security.

ANOTHER WAY is for the state to advance sums that will be deducted from future state aid payments. This is the preferred method because no interest is charged. But in many cases the state does not have the money to advance, so the schools must go to local banks for short-term notes.

These notes cost the schools from two to three per cent interest on the sum borrowed.

During December last year, local school districts borrowed in the following amounts: Birmingham, \$200,000; Troy, \$50,000; and Southfield, \$125,000.

IN ADDITION, Troy received advance money from the state of \$70,000, and Bloomfield Hills district was prepared to borrow \$50,000 when an unexpected advance in tax money from Bloomfield township tided that district over.

Conceivably, the situation could develop where there was no money to be advanced by the state and no loans to be had from banks.

The reason for this low point in school treasuries is that school tax collections do not start until December. Other sources of revenue are not enough to meet the bills.

ONE POSSIBILITY of alleviating this situation would be to spread school taxes at the same time city taxes are spread in those portions of a school district that lie in incorporated areas.

City taxes are collected in July. If school taxes in cities were collected at the same time, there would be sufficient funds to keep schools going until taxes from unincorporated areas started to roll in.

A majority vote of a city's taxpayers could put this method into effect in municipal corporations. Such a method could not be used in township areas without special

Lathrup's contribution is not enough to meet the entire needs of the Southfield district in the critical period, but it would help a lot to have it come before fall, Glenn Leary, school administrative assistant, said.

Troy school district which has not incorporated areas, could not benefit from such a plan.

SIBLEY SAID most cities in the county already are collecting school taxes in the summer time. An example is the city of Berkeley where the practice has been in effect since 1945.

M. P. Anderson, superintendent of Berkeley schools, reports that the system has worked out very well and has eliminated the "no funds" problem in the late fall.

Local school administrators are agreed that such a plan would be beneficial to their school districts.

SUCH A METHOD, although helpful to schools, could be very difficult to put into effect, is the opinion of Dwight B. Ireland, Birmingham school superintendent. He pointed out that the public probably would strongly oppose

such a move because it would lump both winter and summer taxes into one large bill.

"A 2-year plan, although they wouldn't be paying out any more money, might find it more burdensome to meet all their taxes at once than in two installments," he said.

BIRMINGHAM City Treasurer Russell T. Berger agreed with Ireland that such a plan might prove too burdensome for the Birmingham taxpayer.

"The combined city and school tax would exceed \$48 per \$1,000 assessed valuation. This would be a much heavier tax bill than the present combined school and county tax which amounts to \$35.25 per \$1,000 assessed valuation. In addition residents still would have to meet the county tax in December, although it would be very small without the school tax added," said Berger.

City Clerk Robert Studler, Bloomfield Hills, believes such a plan would further complicate the already complex task of billing for taxes. He agreed with Berger that it could be done, however.

Readers' Letters Are Encouraged

The Eccentric solicits comments—pro or con—from readers telling of their reactions to the suggestion that school districts save money by collecting taxes in the summer so the boards of education would not have to borrow money in the late fall.

Letters may be sent either to the Eccentric or to the school officials of your particular district.

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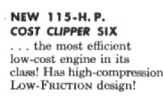
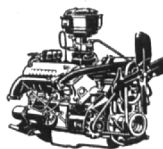
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