

During the preceding year the county board has a total income of \$1,005,017.71. During the same year the board had a total expense of \$1,023,827.35, which amounted to a loss during that year of \$18,809.64. This school year began July 1, 1957 and ended July 1, 1958. During this time the board had certain things happen which will vitally affect the budget during the coming years.

It is not possible to determine at the present time whether the board can balance this budget or not, without a cutback some place. Here are some of the major recurring expenses that took place:

1. Social Security for teachers - - - - -	\$12,000.00 per year
2. Eight janitors - - - - -	11,000.00 per year
3. Four bus drivers - - - - -	4,240.00 per year
4. Increased fuel, lights, water (estimated) - - - - -	10,000.00 per year
TOTAL:	<u>\$37,240.00 per year</u>

It should be noted here that these expenses did not completely show up in the 1957-58 budget. The board paid out \$6,000.00 in Social Security. This year it will be \$12,000.00. New janitors, bus drivers, increased fuel, lights, and water hardly showed up at all, because the new buildings were not opened until late in the year.

An effort has been made to impress upon the principals the necessity for cutting back expenses to meet this problem. Most of them have made deliberate efforts to hold the line in expenditures. The board has changed methods of purchasing to help relieve this problem, buying almost everything by bids. Volume purchases are made wherever possible.

There is one area where the board stands to get into serious trouble. This is in the allotting of teachers above the state allotment. This can be done only on a very minor scale. There are times when an extra teacher is a necessity, to relieve a bad situation. This does not often happen. Extra teachers are a luxury that the present economy will not support.

It might be stated here that during the preceding year when the county board operated at a deficit of \$18,809.64, the board was financing only one extra teacher at the local level. The State was prevailed on to absorb the other two. It has been emphatically stated that with the economy move at the State level that no extra teachers will be available for the coming year.

During the 1957-58 fiscal year \$118,744.14 in local county taxes were collected from a 15 mill levy. This amounts to \$7,916.00 per mill. One teacher is now costing the county board of education \$3300.00 (average cost). Two mills will hire five teachers. The county board could provide an extra teacher in all of the schools, Negro and white for 4 mills of tax.

The board will not be able to tell whether the budget is under control until after July 1. The reason is that they have no comparable year to work against.

There is one clear fact that the board can accept without fear of contradiction. Expenses have gone up tremendously. Local county taxes have gone down. State aid has gone down. State aid is allotted to a system on the basis of "so much" per State earned teacher. During the school year 1955-56 the county received 183 State paid teachers. For the present school year the county earned 156 State paid teachers. There is no school board that can accept a serious increase in expenditure under these conditions for an indefinite length of time without facing ultimate serious difficulties.

The school people (principals, teachers, trustees) of Thomas County are not in a mood for accepting a cut back in maintenance, operation, or in supplies and materials. They desire more services, more materials, more individual attention. They are almost to the point of asking and expecting to get. During this year there has been pressure brought to bear for replacement of equipment and for improvement of buildings and facilities which were not absolutely necessary and in some cases were not even justifiable. If the board is not extremely careful they may find it necessary to not only eliminate all expenditures except those that are absolutely necessary but to cut back on expenditures that are needed badly. Many neighboring systems have faced this situation already. Brooks County has had to refuse the allotment of any extra teachers for next year. Savannah has had to pull all janitorial services. Many systems require local schools to pay their light bills in gymnasiums and furnish their own transportation to ball games. The time is at hand when the board must face a major decision. "Extra taxes" or a strong "hold the line" policy is the only alternative the board now has. Any other alternative will bring about bankruptcy.

The transportation system of Thomas County needs to be worked over. The board would receive strong opposition from local principals and trustees if this were done. A savings could be had if this were done. The board could save between 5,000 and 8,000 dollars per year if this were done. Again there is the problem of trustees and principals accepting their share of their responsibility. Local school groups expect authority in their school's operation - with authority there should go responsibility.

Unless principals, trustees and teachers recognize this problem the education of the students is in jeopardy. Parents will absorb the shock, principals and teachers can resign and leave

The board has before it at the present time a request from Thomas County teachers for a supplement. This would cost the board not less than \$16,000.00 per year. The board has a request from the teachers for assistance in their insurance program. This would cost the board not less than \$3,000.00 per year. The board will probably have a request for 8 extra teachers to be paid from local money. This would cost the board \$24,000.00 per year.

With the acceptance of this problem and the acceptance of their share of the responsibility that this problem entails from principals, teachers, trustees and board members, it is almost certain that this situation can be faced and controlled. Without this, Thomas County education faces some trying times.