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Default in Gotham

To default or not to default. That is the issue facing the American city. I'm not talking about money specifically (though that cannot be discounted entirely) but rather that the American "polis" is facing a crisis of credibility and value.

New York, suffering under a series of irresponsible city administrations, is on the brink of fiscal collapse. As nearly everyone in a position of responsibility attempts to pin the blame on someone else, Gotham is also teetering on the brink of moral collapse.

The monetary policies of New York have been an exercise in daredevil acrobatics. Nearly every June in the past decade, there was the very real question as to whether the Big Apple could come up with the cash to fund its rather extensive and sometimes wasteful programs.

And every year, the mayor would manage, through State assistance or some strained borrowing, to squeeze under the wire on June 30 (the end of the fiscal year) to satisfy the legal requirements of budget.

Long Ago in Gotham

New York has foreseen its difficulties coming for a long time, yet the city fathers did nothing, or worse yet, aggravated the problems. The future was mortgaged long ago in Gotham and now New York only serves as a lesson to those who would be irresponsible in municipal government.

Other cities are having similar difficulties. The demographics of the American city continue to change. Costs are spiraling while tax revenues either remain stable or decline. The city of San Diego has been faced with some of these problems.

But already the number of people employed by the municipal government of San Diego has started to decline, and capitol improvement programs are being reduced in an attempt to make the smaller ends meet.

In the upcoming general municipal election, the voters of San Diego will be involved in some of these decisions in their vote for city council and school board seats.

Voted with Wilson

The September primary returned Pete Wilson to another four year term and next month's election will determine whether the Pete Wilson majority on the city council will continue. Depending on how one looks at the present council, two or maybe three incumbents have voted with Wilson most of the time. Councilmen Williams and Haro, and Councilwoman Maureen O'Connor face off against three challengers who promise to change the status quo.

In Leon Willams' bid for reelection the odds are that he will not have too many problems. Williams has always been popular and he picked up the largest vote of any candidate in the primary in all four districts.

His challenger, Jesse Albritten, though running hard on a campaign on increased growth (thus opening up more jobs especially for minorities) has failed to catch fire, and unless there is a significant development by next month, Williams should be reelected easily.

Councilman Jess Haro, appointed only last year to fill a vacancy, is facing John Flowers. Though Haro was only appointed, his incumbency will probably be able to carry him over a weak challenge by Flowers.

The toughest race would seem to be in Councilwoman Maureen O'Connor's district. The challenger, Lou Ridgeway, ran close four years ago, and the overriding issue in the campaign is the attendance record of O'Connor at City Council meetings.

Ridgeway has accused O'Connor of missing an abnormal amount of Council meetings and O'Connor has retaliated by calling Ridgeway a liar.

O'Connor has been a popular member of the council among the young and senior citizens and she has received the strong support of the mayor. The real question is whether the Ridgeway charges will be taken seriously.

If the three incumbents are re-elected, then the slow growth policies of Wilson will remain, and at least the city won't have to worry about expanding essential services, and thus expanding the budget and capitol outlay, into new areas.

7,000 in South Bay eligible to vote

4 council seats on SD city ballot

Representatives to fill four San Diego City Council seats will be selected Tuesday in a citywide election, the result of a curious system in which candidates are selected by district in the primaries but everyone votes to pick the full council slate.

Half the council's eight seats are up for grabs. Vying for them are, in District Two, incumbent Marueen O'Conner and Lou Ridgeway; District Four, incumbent Leon Williams and Jesse Albritten; District Six, Tom Gade and Ray Lussa, and in District Eight, to serve South San Diego, appointed incumbent Jess Haro and John Flowers.

ALSO ON the ballot will be nine proposed charter amendments ranging from setting up a property tax to finance transportation for the handicapped to establishing a special tax levy for use in a paramedic services program (see related story).

A general obligation bond issue to expand the Charles C. Dail Community Concourse will also be included.

Haro, 39, was appointed to the council among 26 applicants nine months ago and is counting on his past record to win the Eighth District bid.

Flowers, a 34-year-old attorney, is challenging Haro on a platform of being more responsibe to constituent's wishes.

About 7,000 South San Diego voters (Otay Mesa, San Ysidro, Nestor and Palm City) are registered to vote in the city election.

Thursday's Star-News gave in-depth coverage to the race between Haro and Flowers, the candidates who hope to represent South San Diego. Following is a brief wrap-up of the other council races:

District Two:

Maureen O'Conner, 29, is a native San Diegan elected to the council four years ago. Her concerns include protecting the environment and fairly distributing the tax burden caused by "indiscriminate development and population increases."

She supports regulated growth and, like all incumbent candidates, has won the support of Mayor Pete Wilson.

She supports moving San Diego's airport to Otay Mesa and opposes collective bargaining and the right to strike for public employes. She has endorsed the city's Affirmative Action hiring program and educational incentives for policemen.

Lou Ridgeway, O'Conner's challenger, says a bad economic climate is more threatening than growth in San Diego.

District Four:

Leon Williams, 52, was appointed to the council in 1969 and elected in 1971.

Williams supports controlled growth, relocation of Lindbergh Field to Otay Mesa, collective bargaining for public employes and fixed rail mass transit. He opposes binding arbitration and the right to strike and police crackdowns on massage parlors.

Jesse Albritten, 40, a tax consultant, opposes city policy of controlled growth, charging it has driven up the cost of housing.

The candidate favors retention of Lindbergh Field as the regional airport and more crime investigation. In short, he says, he advocates limited government, limited spending and limited taxes.

District Six:

Tom Gade, 43, an attorney and former civil engineer, acknowledges that the philosophical differences with his opponent are not really that great since both are "business oriented."

Gade believes the city needs a regional plan to accommodate growth and opposes city-subsidized housing projects. Instead, he favors giving developers reductions in park and other fees if they develop in the center city. He opposes binding arbitration for public employes and vows he wouldn't let San Diego become another tax-high Los Angeles or New York.

Ray Lussa, 31, says his record of community service makes him the better candidate.

A marketing director for Pacific Properties, Lussa favors a freer growth policy but wants to prevent hap-hazard development that could make the city's coast another Miami Beach.

He wants the airport to remain at Lindbergh Field and opposes binding arbitration and collective bargaining for public employes.