

Ego Battles Add to County Waste; Curbs Promised

New Check on Spending

A new county purchasing department procedure, designed to curb the uncontrolled furniture spending sprees of county officials, has been ordered into immediate effect as a result of THE TRIBUNE Task Force and Better Government Association investigation into county waste.

County purchasing agent Edward J. Mulville said that from now on he will personally examine all new furniture requisitions and his approval will be needed before any items can be ordered.

Cooperation Ends

In the past, he said, all such requests did not automatically pass over his desk and were approved without question.

"We more or less cooperated with other county departments in their furnishing requests," Mulville said, "but not any more."

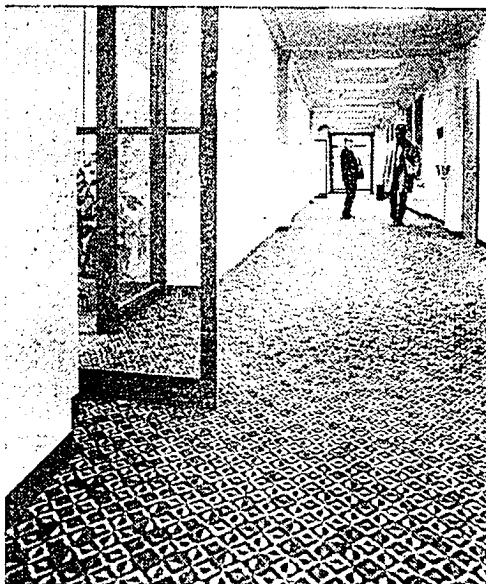
The result of this practice, THE TRIBUNE reported last Monday, was that county officials have surrounded themselves with hundreds of thousands of dollars in lavish furnishings and plush carpeting while the County Board has faced a budget crisis. The report was part of a continuing series which documents how the county wastes at least \$14 million annually.

"We took the bull by the horns," Mulville said of the new order. "We want to watch what we are buying before we buy it and not after it arrives. We are going to watch very carefully and be sure things aren't way out of line."

Acts as Watchdog

Mulville said he will be acting in a watchdog capacity, with authority to reject requisition requests that he feels are lavish or unneeded. If a department head insists on the purchases, the matter will be taken to County Board Presi-

These articles are part of a series on waste in county government uncovered by THE TRIBUNE and the Better Government Association. The series was compiled by THE TRIBUNE's Task Force, which includes director George Bliss and reporters Philip Caputo, William Currie, William Jones, and Pamela Zekman.



(TRIBUNE Staff Photo: By Michael Budrys)

Carpeting on 3d floor of the County Building cost \$28,140. It replaced tile which cost \$6,927. This was one of the items which had been vetoed by Michael Igoe, board secretary, but it was ordered anyway.

Cook County Adopts Spending Curb Plan

[Continued from first page] |
dent George Dunne for media- |
tion, he said.

Among the luxurious items |
already purchased by depart- |
ment heads as part of the mas- |
sive county building remodel- |
ing project are: a \$1,404 cus- |
tom-made, geometric-patterned |
area rug for the data process- |
ing department; a \$973 desk |
and a \$1,377 oak cabinet for |
the assessor's office; and \$236

red velvet tufted chairs for the |
County Board room.

Even the small items in the |
furnishing extravaganza were |
notable, including \$1,000 worth |
of artificial plants and trees, |
\$22.40 tortoise shell leather |
wastebaskets, and \$18.60 |
matching ashtrays for the |
County Board room.

The furniture had been or- |
dered on the recommendation |
of interior decorators who re- |
ceive a commission for their |
a d v i c e .