

# Move for new county pits suburbs against urban core

By WILLIAM GOUGH

Suspicion, doubt and a quest for identity are behind the move to carve a county from the southwest side of King County.

It is a move fraught with the suburbs-versus-city complex. It is a move that could dismember King County.

Evergreen County would lie along Puget Sound from Seattle's south city limit to Pierce County. The Highline, South Central and Federal Way School Districts would comprise the new county.

Talk of forming the county has attracted much interest, although the move is in its infancy and the goal not in sight. Organized opposition is a possibility, but none has emerged yet.

**BURIEN**, an amorphous sprawl of businesses and residences, seems to be at the center of the campaign to obtain enough voter signatures to nudge the Legislature into creating the county. Persons there, led by merchants, say King County isn't delivering governmental services in proper proportion to revenues received from them.

They view the county courthouse against a skyline of downtown Seattle buildings, symbols to them of the central business establishment, saying King County is too closely allied to Seattle interests. The county's domed stadium, being built in the downtown's south end, is part of that view.

South King County residents voted overwhelmingly against building the stadium at the Seattle Center, and seem equally disposed against the new site.

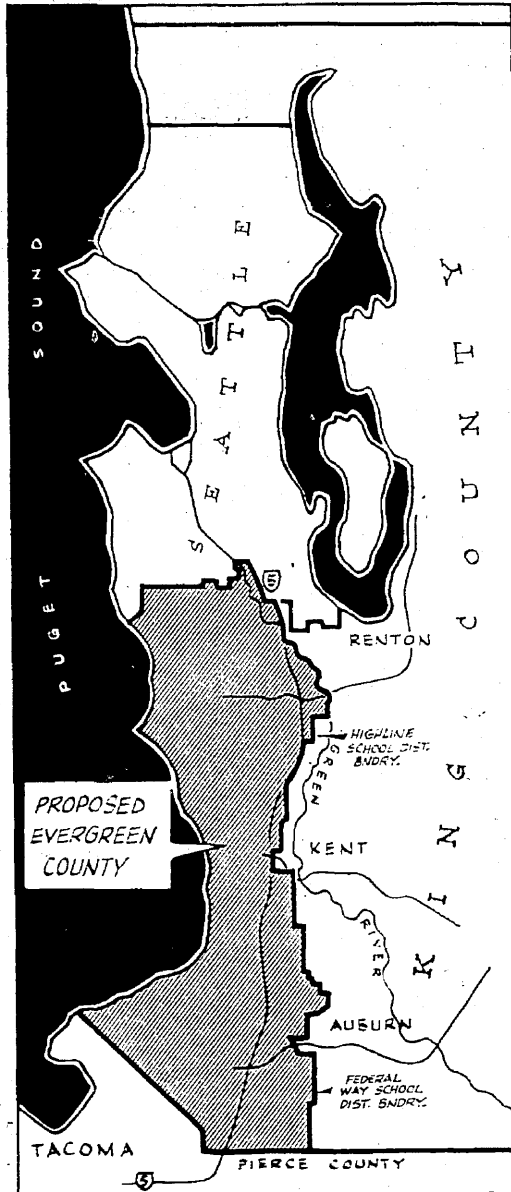
**IRONICALLY**, a state constitutional amendment approved last fall to allow the merging of governments — to have fewer rather than more — is a catalyst for the formation of Evergreen County.

Some persons believe that a grand design for government could emerge from this, leaving them less political and economic independence. They foresee the possibility that their school systems would be tied to Seattle's system and its laborious efforts to achieve racial balance.

"We wouldn't mind black students being bussed out here, but we wouldn't want our students being transported miles away into Seattle," one man explained.

Highline Community College trustees have endorsed the new-county concept. Boards of the Highline and South Central Districts have given tacit approval to it.

There is concern that sewer districts would be assimilated into Metro, and that higher utility costs would result. There is dissatisfaction with the ex-



penditure of Forward Thrust funds, even over the planting of trees along Southwest 152nd Street in Burien.

**PERVADING** the new-county move is a sense of a lack of identity in Federal Way, White Center and Burien, communities that look like cities but aren't.

In the past two decades, there have been six incorporation attempts in areas that would be part of Evergreen County. Burien has tried to incorporate three times, and another attempt is afoot that some believe is a better alternative to the more drastic action of forming a 40th county in the state.

(East of Lake Washington, there is talk of forming a Cascade County. But this move is being taken less seriously.)

Evergreen County would include the cities of Des Moines and Normandy Park, most of Tukwila and small parts of Kent, Pacific and Auburn. An estimated 18,945 people live in these incorporated places.

**WHAT IS** the motivation for the new county?

In his editor's office at The Highline Times, Reid Hale said residents believe they lack self-determination in how they are governed by King County.

Hale, who discussed the concept with political scientists at Washington State University last spring, envisions a three-member board of county commissioners.

People don't approve of King County's executive-council form of government, Hale contended, saying "the buck no longer stops in the courthouse."

When the nine-member council and county executive John D. Spellman want to pass the buck of responsibility or blame, they point fingers at each other, he said.

**THE SPELLMAN** administration is not noticeably alarmed over the new-county move but has taken cognizance of it. Spellman and his representatives recently have been in the southwest part of the county more frequently.

They not only have de-

fended the administration but have provided basic information useful to the move — facts and figures on such matters as costs of services and assessed values of properties.

He has issued a report that estimates that expenditures would exceed revenues in the new county, but the figures admittedly are based on the kinds of service county departments now provide and on population ratios in many instances.

Petition forms have been circulated widely in business places. About 4,000 signatures have been collected thus far. About 48,000, or over 50 per cent of the registered voters who live in the area, are required. But 60,000 is the goal, to make the Legislature take notice that the people really want a new county.

**IF ENOUGH** signatures are obtained, the Legislature has the option of creating Evergreen County, ignoring the issue or referring it to all of the 95,791 voters in the three school districts.

Meanwhile, the talk in the affected area is of King County actually being "Seattle county." Some say King County promised to build several Forward Thrust swimming pools in the Highline district, built one and is building a second only because of political pressure.

In Adair's Restaurant in Burien, Del Adair spoke of King County's "broken promises" regarding the construction of ball fields near Highline High School.

"We don't feel we get back representation from King County for the money we give not until we scream," Adair said. "Our government is too damn far away from us."

Anna C. Hall, 16232 13th Ave. S. W., signed a petition. "I am tired of paying for Seattle's problems," she asserted.

Mrs. Maurice Coffey, 30222 25th Place S., has not signed petition. "I don't feel a new county could come into being without a change for the worse in taxes," she said. "There wouldn't be that much benefit in dollars and cents."

Mayor William F. Kaseburg of Normandy Park also is opposed to the secession.

"I think the people behind the move have no comprehension of the enormous problems which they would be confronted in establishing court and police systems and a health department," he said. "Many of their complaints relate to services that a city normally provides, and would be better served through the formation of a city, not a county."

The Normandy Park City Council has decided not to take a role in the new-county move.