

Daily Ledger

Vol. 117, No. 17

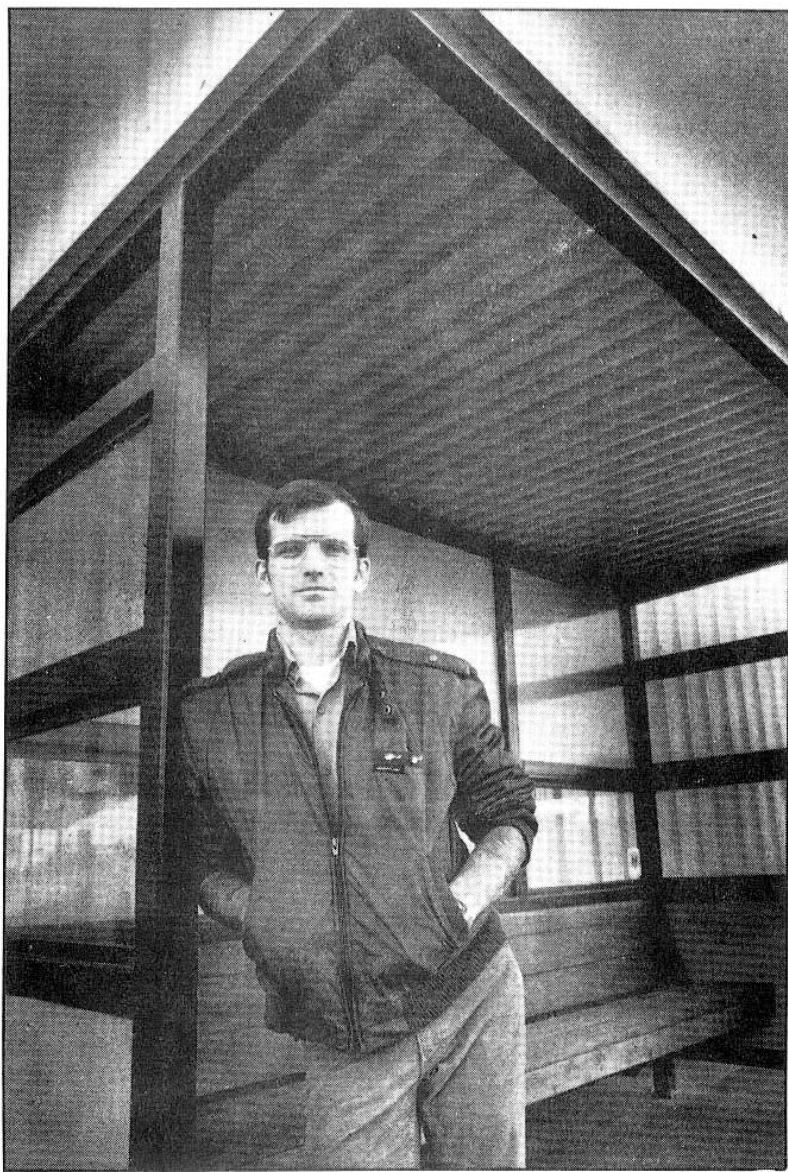
20 Pages, 2 Sections

Thursday, January 22, 1987

Antioch, California

25 Cents

'Now I know why toilet seats cost \$6,000'



Staff photo/Peter Bradt

Michael Clement was told his company doesn't pay high enough wages.

Contractor unhappy over bid rejection

ANTIOCH — Taxpayers may have missed a chance to save more than \$60,000 when a federal agency ruled that a local manufacturer did not pay high enough wages to install 19 bus shelters.

Michael H. Clement, president and owner of Michael H. Clement Corp. in Antioch, submitted a bid of \$197,463 to build and install 19 bus shelters for the Central Contra Costa Transit Authority. But last week, directors of County Connection awarded a \$234,000 contract for 16 shelters to a San Rafael company, which had sent in a bid of \$258,300 for all 19 shelters.

Clement's low bid was thrown out when an engineer for the Urban Mass Transportation Administration, which is providing federal funds for the shelters, decided that the Antioch manufacturer did not comply with the wage scale established in the Davis-Bacon Act. The engineer decided the contract involved enough work to fall under the constraints of the Davis-Bacon Act, which sets wage standards for federal construction projects.

"This whole thing has not been handled in an above-board manner because the issue should be to save money," said Clement. He added that he was not as upset about losing the contract as he was at the disregard shown for cutting costs.

"Now I know why toilet seats cost \$6,000," Clement wrote in a letter to County Connection last year when his low bid was thrown out for the same reason.

Clement, whose plant is located on Wilbur Avenue near the Antioch Bridge, said the only construction involved in the project is preparing the site and pouring concrete where new bus shelters are to be installed. His workers, who are qualified to make and erect the shelters, are paid between \$10 and \$15 an hour at the non-union plant, Clement said.

Cement masons are to be paid \$23 an hour according to standards set in the Davis-Bacon Act, which establishes wages and fringe benefits for different areas around the country. The Secretary of Labor determines the local prevailing wage rates.

John Sindzinski, manager of the Service De-

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partment for County Connection, said he eliminated Clement's bid from consideration when UMTA staff decided the contract would be considered as a federally-funded construction project. The lowest bid then became \$258,300 by the San Rafael company, he said.

But, Ernie Fuentes, legal counsel for UMTA, said County Connection directors should have asked for approval when they awarded the contract to someone other than the low bidder. "The government likes contracts to go to the lowest bidder."

He said County Connection could lose some federal funding by failing to seek UMTA approval.

Sindzinski disagreed, saying Clement's bid was not in the running when UMTA made its ruling forcing bidders to comply with the Davis-Bacon Act. "It's pretty clear cut."

For his part, Clement said he would like to see more flexibility demonstrated by government agencies when the taxpayers stand to benefit. "When the low bidder is involved the idea should be to do whatever you can do to include him to save money."

— By Tom Hoffman

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