

31 May 1990

Anger at 41pc fare rise for ferries

By OWEN HUGHES

DISCOVERY Bay residents last night reacted angrily to news of ferry fare rises of up to 41 per cent and immediately announced a series of meetings with government officials to fight the increases.

Mr Jeremy Marriot, executive director of developers Hongkong Resorts (HKR), last night announced the ferry company would increase the residents' pass from \$550 for a 62-trip monthly pass, to \$750 for a 60-trip pass valid for three months.

Twenty-trip passes would also be sold for \$300, replacing the present 10-trip passes costing \$110.

Mr Alfred Croucher, of the Discovery Bay Action Group, said the increases ranged from 36 per cent to 41 per cent. This figure falls short of the 69 per cent hike residents say the company was planning to impose.

But Mr Croucher denounced the "despicable" way the rises had been made and said they demonstrated contempt for the way the residents had tried to enlist government support against any change.

The action group has set up meetings this week with Omelco representative, Mr Tai Chin-wah, Consumer Council representative, Ms Pamela Chan, and Mr Gordon Siu Kwing-chue, Transport Commissioner.

Mr Croucher said HKR would have to be more accountable to Discovery Bay residents and to the Government and pledged the action group would continue to battle for the interests of the residents.

Fellow action group member, Mr Henry Mao Yau-fong, added: "Owners' committees are

not being allowed the chance to put forward counter proposals. This is just typical of the management style we have seen over the years.

"We have to just go ahead with government meetings and hope to bring some scrutiny to the monopoly the developers hold over transport to and from Discovery Bay.

"We will continue to compile reports from different professionals into aspects of that monopoly. We believe the developers were running an extremely profitable service even before these price increases."

Neither Mr Marriot nor anyone from HKR or its off-shoot which runs the ferry service, Discovery Bay Transportation Services Limited, were available for comment last night.

Residents had earlier called for a six-month freeze on the original proposal of a 69 per cent increase, accusing HKR of exploitation and blackmail.

More than 200 people staged a rally at the Discovery Bay pier on May 20 to protest against the planned increases, but representatives of HKR refused to meet them.

Residents denounced the company as holding them to ransom, saying they had no other means of getting to Hongkong Island.

They were also angered by plans to raise other charges, including management fees, which they say are already among the highest in Hongkong.

Discovery Bay Transportation Services has said it expects to lose \$6.6 million this financial year.