

VCF BUDGET City-County NP 1/15/92

# Board opposes welfare cuts

By LANE WALLACE  
STAFF WRITER

Santa Cruz County supervisors voiced their opposition to proposed state cuts in welfare payments and said they'll work with community groups to propose alternatives to the cuts for next year.

The board's action came after 20 people testified to the board that Gov. Pete Wilson's proposed 25 percent cut in welfare payments would plunge recipients, mostly women and children, deeper into poverty.

The people, from a variety of social-service groups, came to support a resolution by Supervisor Fred Keeley opposing the cuts. Wilson's proposed cuts are part of a larger plan to reduce the state's budget deficit.

Supervisors endorsed the action on a 4-1 vote, with South County Supervisor Ray Belgard dissenting.

Keeley's resolution said 6,000 children, 11 percent of the county's total, are on welfare.

Wilson's attitude is that "chil-

## Pay-cut idea goes nowhere

Ray Belgard's proposal that county supervisors cut their own salaries by 5 percent got nowhere yesterday.

Belgard declined to join fellow supervisors in opposing state cuts in welfare, instead suggesting that the county take a "lean and mean" budget approach, starting with cutting supervisors' pay, now \$49,176 a year.

He made the suggestion in a letter to board members, but didn't make further mention of it during discussion of welfare cuts. No other supervisors brought it up.

The current recession means the "nation, state and county will have to downsize," said Belgard. "We will all do with less, not just welfare recipients."

dren don't vote, so starve them" by cutting welfare to their mothers, said Rachel Haskell of the Women's Democratic Club.

Haskell likened Wilson to a

"I'm not a welfare basher," Belgard said, adding that he saw the "ravages of poverty on children" during the 35 years he spent in law enforcement before becoming a supervisor last year.

The current welfare system fosters failure, said Belgard, saying he would like to see a program that aggressively punishes fraud, requires physically able recipients to work, "but at the same time provides a true viable level of support, including child care for parents who seek to better themselves through education."

After the meeting, Belgard said he does not endorse the proposed 25 percent cut in welfare and doesn't believe the state will make that deep a cut.

ship's captain who would "throw the women and children overboard because the ship is leaking."

The speakers, almost all of them women, didn't hold back in their

criticism of Wilson's proposal. They called it elitist, racist, an encouragement for women to have abortions, state-sponsored child abuse, savage, calculating and inhumane.

They called on Wilson to tax the ultra-rich rather than take away from the poor. Military spending should be cut rather than welfare payments, several speakers urged. Military spending is a federal issue; welfare comes from the state and county.

"Why doesn't the government help us create more jobs?" said Guillermina Ramirez, of Watsonville, a board member of the Community Action Board, an agency that helps the poor.

Michael Walker, of a coalition of groups aiming to reduce hunger among the county's children, said that when he needs to cut his household budget, "I don't give less for food and health care" for his children.

A report on the proposed alternatives to welfare cuts will be discussed by supervisors Feb. 18.