

The Employment Outlook

The latest report by the Department of Employment once again clearly reflects the changing economic picture in Santa Cruz County with the new emphasis on manufacturing growth.

In a comparison from August, 1968, to August, 1967, these figures show what has been happening:

Labor force: Now 43,100, compared to 42,200 a year ago, a gain of 2.1 per cent or 900 persons.

Employment: Now 40,600, compared to 39,100 a year ago, a gain of 1500 jobs or 3.68 per cent.

Unemployment: Now 2500, compared to 3100 a year ago, a decrease of 19.3 per cent or 600 persons.

Jobless rate of 5.8 per cent, compared to 7.3 per cent a year ago.

Manufacturing employment: 7600 in 1968, compared to 6700 in 1967, an increase of 900 jobs or 13.4 per cent.

The department reports that manufacturing firms employed six of every 10 new workers, a marked change in the county's economic structure.

August this year was not a particularly good month as the tourist and recreation business was not up to par, especially in overnight accommodations.

Normally the recreational business and higher occupancy rates in motels and hotels provide additional summer jobs which did not materialize this year to the extent of previous years.

However, manufacturing in both durables and nondurables provided a needed increase in the employment field to brighten the entire picture.

The growth in the industrial field was highly important for there were only nominal gains in other fields of endeavor with the service field only up 200 workers in the year while employment in retail and wholesale trade, the county's largest job classification, remained unchanged at 8700 persons.

Government employment was down in August as it always is due to the closing of schools. However, the total in this field, 5900 persons, reflected a gain of 400 jobs.

Construction employment also was unchanged at 2200 jobs while public utilities employed 1500, compared to 1300 a year ago. Agricultural employment declined 200, to a total of 5400, although work in food processing was higher than a year ago.

And, while it was encouraging to note that the unemployment rate dropped below 6 per cent to 5.8 per cent, the total of 2500 jobless is still too high for a county this size.

We have made some definite gains in the total employment picture but we must still develop more jobs to reduce the number of jobless. The total number of un-

employed in the county ranges on the high side because we have a number of seasonal activities, including agriculture, tourist and recreation jobs as well as construction work.

Just how many of our unemployed are unskilled is hard to say for Santa Cruz County does not have the benefit of sufficient statistical information to make accurate estimates. Yet we have the feeling that it is still too difficult for some qualified people to find jobs in the county in some fields.

There has been an impressive increase in the number of jobs in the health care field by the addition of more hospital rooms plus a large increase in nursing home and convalescent hospital facilities.

In fact, we are a little surprised that there hasn't been a greater increase in service employment, just because of greater health and medical care facilities.

The lack of growth in the retail and wholesale trades can be attributable during the summer months to a drop in tourist and visitor business as well as a general lack of growth in the commercial field.

On the other hand, the increase in manufacturing jobs has been constant the past year and should remain relatively good in the months ahead. Without such a growth the 1968 figures would not reflect major improvement.