

# SC Alternative Education Program Is Questioned

A plan for an "alternative high school" was criticized as bypassing the three established Santa Cruz City high schools and cutting into an already - undernourished budget Tuesday night.

Don Maxwell, chairman of the high school district's budget committee, urged the city board of education to establish "alternative education" programs at Santa Cruz, Harbor, and Soquel high schools before creating another separate school unit.

But Ed Borovatz, one of four teachers who drew up the alternative high school proposal, and who would be one of the new school's instructors, said that Maxwell is mistaken in his charges.

School board members voted last week to set up such a school this fall, with about 100 students. It would not have regular classes, but place emphasis on individual study, use of the community rather than a classroom as a learning resource, and other unusual approaches to education.

"I do not wish to give the impression that I oppose alternative methods for students to learn," Maxwell said. "Certainly, rising absenteeism, the early graduation syndrome, and general apathy toward learning speaks for itself."

Setting up an alternative school, however, will have serious budget effect on the existing high schools, and the program should involve "all, or at least some, of the teachers at each school" in discussing it, Maxwell said.

Harbor and Santa Cruz will have to give up a teacher each, and Soquel High two teachers, for the alternative school, Maxwell said, and this will "undoubtedly create many hard feelings as well as create some rather serious problems of class size and course offerings."

Borovatz, however, said today that the school board directed money for the alternative schools not be taken from any of the regular school programs, and that schools not be robbed of any teachers. If necessary, the money will come from district reserves.

Maxwell nevertheless claimed the school "will cut significantly into our already poorly funded school program. With the well-intentioned efforts of providing a more flexible education program for a few students, we will in effect be creating a somewhat less effective program for the many."

He also charged that the four teachers in the alternative school will be teaching fewer

students than some teachers in regular high schools. Borovatz, however, denied this. He said that the alternative school teachers won't have a "preparation period" outside of classes like regular high school instructors, "so we are giving up something to get something, and our class loads will be larger."

Maxwell concluded his comments with a plea for more study of the alternative school idea. He said there are many good programs going on in regular schools, and why make a regular school "off limits" to alternative school students.

Alternative programs should be established at each campus first, Maxwell said, and then if they proved to be "inadequate or impossible," a separate alternative school could be set up.

Borovatz said in answer that there is no reason that alternative school students can't attend regular classes if they want.

"The whole idea of setting up an alternative school is to give students a choice. Some do better in regular classes, some in alternative classes. This seemed to be the most sensible way to start such a program," Borovatz said.