

# EDITORIAL

## Vengeance Factor in the Board's Job Massacre

*of Supes*

Five hundred thirty-one people are out of work in Santa Cruz County this week for no good reason.

The sudden termination of most of the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) jobs in this county was accomplished by the board of supervisors without fanfare or angry public debate.

On September 30 there were 646 people working in federally-funded public service projects throughout the county. On October 1, after a single morning's work by our supervisors, there were 115 such jobs.

The official explanation the politicians gave for their decision is the federal government made them do it. But a closer look leads to the sad conclusion that the true reasons for the board's action lie in a seamier part of public life. A closer look leads to the conclusion that 531 people are casualties in the most pervasive social and political retribution in recent local history.

Congress is debating a number of proposed amendments to the CETA legislation for next year. Those amendments could affect the type and level of funding to be received by this county. The board of supervisors cited the uncertainty over future funding as the reason for their drastic termination of jobs.

But the current congressional debate will not affect the money available to this county until January 1, 1979. And it is unlikely that a Democratic Congress will eliminate one million jobs throughout the nation in an election year.

Supervisor Gary Patton suggested that jobs be funded for three months in the hope that new legislation will not eliminate funds coming to this county. But the new majority on the board decided to eliminate 531 jobs now rather than wait to see if the cutback is really necessary.

The board's action might appear foolish on the surface. But a closer look

suggests they knew exactly what they were accomplishing.

With little discussion, the board managed to eliminate more than \$50,000 from programs administered by Food and Nutrition Services. During the August budget hearings, the board threatened to do everything in its power to abolish that program if it persisted in social organizing.

With no fanfare, the board managed to gut the Santa Cruz Community Legal Clinic. During the employment commission hearings on CETA projects, a representative from that legal clinic was interrogated about activity in opposition to the recent recall drive.

The board members knew what they were doing. They saw an opportunity to exercise vengeance on their political opponents and they seized that opportunity.

But the casualties are not just a handful of politically active individuals.

Patton pointed out that legal services for low-income people in the county were virtually eliminated by the board's action. The response was Supervisor Marilyn Liddicoat's flip joke that "the first thing Napoleon did when he took power was to abolish the law schools."

Many of the projects dismantled by the board provide legal help, food, childcare and other services to those among us who would never be able to buy them on the marketplace.

Cutting off services is a move that will drive many of those people from the area. The board knew this and seized an opportunity to attack and entire class of people that has offered them little public support. In the past, this board has repeatedly asked if the county's luxuriant human services network were attracting the disadvantaged from across the nation.

And at least one member of this board has suggested the unemployed move to Santa Clara County to solve their problems. The elimination of the single largest source of employment in this county will go a long way toward making that suggestion an inescapable necessity for some.

The decision to throw more than 500 people out of work was a desperate act. It was the act of a majority that knows its days in power are numbered. In the meantime they are fully willing to flaunt that power as a weapon against those who believe differently.

That is a grim reminder that those in power are playing a high stakes game.

An even grimmer side of last week's decision is nobody became angry. Nobody stepped forward to challenge the madness that left 500 people jobless. □