

Opinion

Sentinel Editorial

Employment

More Jobs, Jobless

Continued growth of the labor force in Santa Cruz County has resulted in an increase in the number of employed as well as an increase in the number of unemployed.

This enigmatic situation is not unusual in the county although it is possible that it may reflect the puzzling statistical report somewhat more than the actual economic condition.

Ever since the state had to change its employment reporting to the new federal system of place of residence, it has become more difficult to interpret the local employment status.

For example, the system records an increase of 1,000 in the labor force in August, a rather unusual condition.

In the place of residence report, the labor force gained 4,500 persons in the past year. The number of employed increased by 5,200 and the number of jobless dropped by 700.

The jobless rate for August, 1977 was set at 8.8 percent on a seasonally adjusted basis, up 1.1 percent from July, but down 1.7 percent from a year ago.

On this basis, the jobless rate has increased from 5.8 percent in June to 8.8 percent in August, a situation which is completely opposite to the economic condition in the county.

However, it should be pointed out that the employment report always shows a seasonal drop in the summer due to the loss of employment in the school system during the summer months.

When you look at the report on the job situation in Santa Cruz County, the picture improves.

There were 55,875 persons at work in the county in August compared to 53,450 a year ago, an increase of 2,425 jobs or a gain of about 4.5 percent.

Of this total 6,100 jobs were in agriculture, about the same as a year ago, but down from the 7,300 farm workers in June.

In the nonagricultural field there were 49,775 at work, an increase of 5 percent for the year.

Retail trade continued as the county's largest employer with 11,475 jobs, up 250 from a year ago.

There were 10,800 employed by government, a high figure for a summer month and up 825 from a year ago, principally due to the youth job program.

Services continued to be a major supplier of jobs with 10,525 employed, up 550 in the past year.

Manufacturing accounted for 8,950 jobs, up 600 in the year with an increase of 375 jobs in durable goods and 225 in nondurables, including 4,300 in food processing.

Employment in finance, insurance and real estate was set at 1,775, up 100 for the year while wholesale trade remained stable with 1,575 jobs.

Work in transportation and public utilities was up slightly with 2,375 jobs while construction accounted for 2,425 jobs.

Traditionally, employment will reach a peak in the county this month or next, depending somewhat on harvesting conditions and food processing.

It is expected that the total amount of employment will be a record for the county, perhaps even greater than the labor force of a few years ago.

The amount of unemployment remains a problem although we would guess that it is better than the record shows. We have our doubts that the actual number of jobless is at the 6,000 figure and we seriously question whether 8.8 percent is a realistic figure.

Nevertheless, there is also no doubt that the number of jobless is higher than one would prefer.

Andrew Tully