

The Unemployment Story is a Tale With No End In Sight



by Kenyon Jordan

CHEER UP, JOB-SEEKERS. Things here have been worse. Old-timers still talk about times like the winter of '58, when unemployment rose to nearly 20 per cent in February.

But that was before the university came to town. And, oh yes, they still talk about that one too.

You see, things used to be a little different here. Quieter, you know, a lot more farming. A good place for tourists and for elderly people.

Then, in the 60's, it started to change. People started to move to Santa Cruz. Not on the same scale as an area like Orange County, which doubled its population between 1960 and 1970. About half that fast, to be nearly exact.

The reason for the immigration gets into a chicken-or-the-egg debate. Did people bring business or did business bring people? In any case, the county growth rate was the eighth fastest in California. Where in the 50's Santa Cruz grew more slowly than San Mateo or adjacent Monterey county, it was the reverse in the 60's.

The result was an economy which shrugged off some of its heavy dependency on the summer tourist trade, and seasonal farm and canning work, according to the State Department of Human Resources Development (HRD).

And if economy was all that brought people here, Santa Cruz might be a lot closer to losing the tag placed on it by the U.S. Department of Labor on Aug. 7, 1964: "... an area of substantial and persistent unemployment."

But t'ain't so. Santa Cruz is just too nice a place to live for people to stay away. And so, jobs or no jobs, they keep coming.

You can see them, if you choose, waiting in line for any one of those jobs that advertise for general laborers. You'd have gotten an eyeful at Brown Bulb Ranch, for example, two Saturdays ago, when applicants were instructed to come between 9 a.m. and 12 noon. But it was all right if you got there early. The line was already 20-deep at 10 minutes till 9. The job only paid \$2 an hour... \$1.75 for women.

There are statistics, of course. The 1970 census shows that the age 20-24 group in Santa Cruz County nearly tripled in size in ten years. And if you throw in the 15-19 age group, too, which more than doubled itself, then you can account for roughly a third of the county's population growth in the 60's.

Oddly, both credit and blame for the current situation can be partially traced to the University of California at Santa Cruz.

On the plus side, a large number of construction jobs were created in the building of the structures, and the university continues to provide jobs for teachers, secretaries, maintenance men, and the like. It is the closest

thing to what James Hammond, manager of the local HRD, calls the "community's dream": an industry which peaks in the winter instead of the summer.

The negative side, economically speaking, is the students. Though no one has done a study yet on whether the university was responsible for attracting 12,900 new faces in the age 15-24 bracket (UCSC enrollment at census time was only about 3,000), a 1970 manpower report by the Human Relations Agency cites UCSC for having "expanded the area's population, while at the same time altering its age distribution pattern, traditionally

skewed toward the higher age brackets." What the report doesn't add is that employers have not absorbed the influx of young people, whether UCSC graduates or not.

Graduates, in fact, fall into a category which the HRD's Hammond calls "overeducated." Some have managed to find work in places like county welfare (see the *Times*, Vol. 1, No. 5), but "there are a lot of unemployed people with bachelor's degrees around town," Hammond says.

If you're young, haven't had special training in any field, and don't have a degree, you fall into another category. This one has a fancy government-style handle, too: "surplus pool."

The immediate connotation is that of being all wet and nobody wants you. People who have looked for work here in the winter will say the definition is fairly accurate.

Unfortunately for such people, the job future does not show much hope for improvement. Another study by the Human Relations Agency, *California Manpower Needs to 1975*, states:

"Occupations requiring little pre-employment training are growing at a slower rate than the work force, or even diminishing. The result is a job squeeze which will most likely develop in temporary and seasonal work."

Narrowing it down to this community, the chances of new industry on the employing caliber of Lockheed (the highest industrial employer with 325) coming here are very poor.

Part of the reason is the cost of land, according to George Barton, manager of the Chamber of Commerce. He estimates that it has doubled in the last 10 years. That price tag of roughly \$30,000 an acre, combined with the lack of its immediate, certain availability, has caused "a number" of indus-

tries to decide to establish elsewhere, Barton says.

The question of availability drives the job subject into another topic of local concern: environmental control.

The best land available for big industry in the city is on some 20 to 50 acres "zoned and ready" near Natural Bridges State Park. But since this area is near enough to the ocean to fall under the purview of Proposition 20, passed in 1972, industries have shied away from buying, even if they could afford the cost, according to Barton.

They fear environmentalists opposing construction could tie it up in the courts, under the powers of Proposition 20, Barton explains.

The only other "class A" land is in the Harvey West Industrial Park, but that is "less than 10 acres."

An alternative viewpoint is offered by Gordon Schontzler, president of Manning Environmental Corporation. Schontzler, whose business began in June 1972 with three persons and now employs 40, says the answer is not to lure more big factories here, but to encourage small, light industry.

"This is advantageous," he says. "Small industries like electronics or science can be less polluting. Also, if a large plant decides to leave it can affect a great number of people. That's what happened when Sylvania left here." (Sylvania used to employ 800 persons.) "What I'm talking about is a gradual, less dramatic kind of growth."

For such small industry, there are "numerous sites" in the county, Schontzler says. But the area is "limited" for big factories, he says, in agreement with Barton.

Schontzler believes the chamber, as well as other groups, could do more to make the situation easier for smaller industry. He says he received "little help or incentive" from community groups in getting his business off the ground.

But the future of Santa Cruz industry is also tied to a world-wide development: the energy shortage.

The lack of fuel, as everyone knows by now, has far-reaching effects. Already, according to Jim Hammond of the HRD, "I'm hearing grumblings from the local businesses."

But nobody can predict how bad it's going to get. As one local businessman remarked, "How am I supposed to know when even the government can't decide if the shortage is 5 per cent or 25 per cent?"

At present, no significant lay-offs are being contemplated — on the record. John Inglis Frozen Foods will be packing the spinach crop, come March or April, and a spokesman for the Teamsters' Union, which represents the workers, announced no anticipated problems.

Lockheed plans no cutbacks, in spite of the financial bind faced by Lockheed Corporation in Southern California, said George Mulhern, director of public relations. Mulhern also added that the company has shrugged off the losses of defense contracting which occurred at the wind-down of the Vietnam War.

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Your Prospects For Finding Work

The following table is based on facts and figures compiled by the Department of Human Resources Development, plus additional information gained by the reporter.

job title	chances	nature of opportunity	points to consider
registered-nurse	excellent	mostly convalescent hospitals; must work shifts.	need state license; pays about \$30 per 8 hr. shift
dental assistant	poor	private dentists; 40+ hour week; start as low as \$2/hr.	oversupply of qualified applicants, partly due to 2 yr. course at Cabrillo College
accountants	fair, but if hired to help with income tax load, beware of April 15 layoffs!	medium to large businesses	helps to have knowledge of work done by business
stenographer-secretary	demand for both	secretaries: in medical, educational, and legal businesses, and non-profit organizations. stenos: in larger businesses or govt. agencies	need experience, 60 wpm typing and 80 wpm shorthand, or the employer won't even look at you
clerk-typist	excellent if you're experienced; next to none if you're not	major employers (and best salary-givers): university and government	50 per cent or less straight typing; but still need 55 wpm
clerk-general	poor	nearly all businesses, but they usually have scores of applicants to choose from	helps to have typing ability, math aptitude and clerical training
bookkeeper, full charge	good: full, part-time and temporary	small to medium-sized firms	need typing and bookkeeping skills
clerk, general office	good, but hiring of applicants off the street is rare; is step up from other clerk jobs	usually small businesses	typing, other office skills; hiring usually within company; surplus of marginally skilled workers
receptionist	poor, due to employers' preferring to train clerks already in company	various firms; pay as low as \$2/hr.	experience useful for obtaining jobs with high payers
insurance salesman	the big apple, if you're good at selling	insurance companies, or see ads in the paper for "aggressive young men"	need car, be willing to work evenings, weekends. Sometimes 2 yrs. of college
salesperson	seasonal; rises in spring and hits peak in summer; good chance for part-time only	retail stores; union scale: \$5.27/hr. for journeyman (only grocery stores)	selling experience, helps to know specific line of goods. Union Local #839 represents some.
sales clerk	fair for part-time only, during tourist season; trend to self-service stores making for fewer openings	drug, liquor, variety, discount and gift stores; union scale: \$3.16/hr. for apprentice; non-union: usually about \$2/hr. to start	Retain Clerks Union Local #839 represents some
waiter-waitress	fair, becoming very good in tourist season	restaurants: be prepared for low, often minimum, wages, split shifts, late hours, and holidays	heavy turnover; smaller places usually willing to hire inexperienced. Many belong to Hotel Motel Restaurant Employees and Bartenders Union Local #483.
cook	seasonal; excellent, if have experience, during tourist times	restaurants: same funky hours as waiters, waitresses, but better pay	union, same as above, for many in the trade; oversupply of marginally-skilled cooks
kitchen help-dishwasher	seasonal, but high turnover creates jobs year-round	restaurants, same as above; pay about the same as waiters-waitresses	same union for many; openings now and then for temporary help during conventions, golf tournaments and suchlike
nurse aid-orderly	poor	best bet in nursing homes and convalescent hospitals; often split or night shift; often minimum wage to start	surplus, partly due to vocational nursing course at Cabrillo College
watchman-guard	poor, since high percentage of applicants can't meet requirements (physical and bonding)	sporadic demand for short-term work for special events	communication, other improvements cutting back need; dogs doing the trick in some places
porter-janitor	poor, unless you have experience	government, plus several private janitorial firms; often nights; pay \$2.50/hr. to start, \$3.50 tops	in many cases, "presentability" a factor, must be clean-cut
auto mechanic	lucrative, if well-qualified journeyman	shops, garages, auto dealers, service stations	some service stations hire employees who are less qualified mechanics

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Pacific Plantronics, the number two industrial employer here, will be building a 60,000 sq. ft. plant on Harvey West Boulevard in the near future, according to Andrew Poulis, industrial relations manager. He says, "we're all concerned" about the energy problem, but the electronics plant still anticipates about a 10 per cent increase in employment next year.

Tourism faces the bleakest immediate picture, according to Hammond. The industry "may be dramatically affected," Hammond says, "if they haven't resolved this energy problem by next summer."

No one can predict how many shops might fold altogether in the event of a major curtailment of the tourist trade. But any decline in trade would place in jeopardy the 1300 full- and 1200 part-time jobs created by "visitor-oriented" business (figures taken from a survey by the Santa Cruz County Convention and Visitors Bureau).

* * *

An average year in Santa Cruz, job-wise, has its ups and downs. The best time is the fall, when unemployment dips to as low as five per cent. The worst is usually January and February.

For the benefit of your entertainment and/or despair, here is a bi-monthly view of a typical year (based on HRD labor bulletins):

FEBRUARY - Tough times. Temporary Christmas help has been laid off, construction is still slow, and the canneries are out. Absolute off-season for tourists.

APRIL - Canneries, preservers begin to swing into action; nurseries prepare for Easter; construction work begins to increase. Unemployment percentage, which hit 13 per cent in February 1971, drops by two to four points.

JUNE - Tourists begin to arrive. Cooks, waiters, waitresses, maids, etc. find work easier to get. Unemployment rate drops a couple more points.

AUGUST - Good times continue. Agriculture, depending on the crops, hires workers in June or August periods.

OCTOBER - Combination of the final days of the tourist season, canning (usually), return to work by people in education fields, add up to lowest unemployment percentage of year: about 6 per cent.

DECEMBER - A good thousand agricultural workers are laid off, construction slows down, and canneries close down again. Christmas build-up helps keep unemployment rate from rising more than about three points.

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Now that Christmas is over, several thousand area job-seekers will be tightening their belts for the Great Abyss of January-February.

At the same time, however, a number of year-round, high-paying jobs are going wanting. A Community Labor Market Bulletin by the HRD in 1970 listed "shortages of secretaries, machinists, auto mechanics, and sheet metal workers. Additionally, Santa Cruz has chronic shortages of registered nurses, licenced vocational nurses, and medical technicians."

Recent interviews with HRD spokesmen added these jobs: skilled carpenters, electronics technicians, and cooks.

The obvious answer to the problem would seem to be to train the unskilled job-seekers for the vacancies for skilled workers. It doesn't work that way, though.

On-the-job apprenticeships are becoming as rare as gas wars. Most local employers prefer to hold out for persons with the talents which are closest to the needs.

So that's the Santa Cruz job story, at present. Getting better in some ways, getting worse in others. In the meantime, three new people move here for every two new jobs that are created.

Fortunately, few are starving. The food stamp program is fairly liberal. That's one thing job-seekers didn't have, back in that winter of '58.

(Part Two of the unemployment story will focus on how citizens and institutions are trying to alleviate the problem.)

HARD TIMES FOR THE AGED

If you're over the age of 50, finding a job is no picnic either.

Openings are "zero to very few," says Lilly Bourriague, director of Santa Cruz' Foster Grandparents Program.

What is available is mostly part-time work. For many elderly persons, their pay goes to supplement social security incomes.

Ms. Bourriague adds, however, "Even the jobs we can find, the employers won't pay these people what they're worth. I guess they think because we're old, we don't eat as much."

LONGHAIRS STILL DENIED UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

IT'S SO RIDICULOUS AND pointless," Della Hinn was talking about a problem near and dear to many Santa Cruz job-seekers.

It's a problem she and other workers at the Welfare Legal Assistance Center (WELAC) office on Ocean Street have to deal with "at least once or twice a day."

For you crew-cutters out there who haven't caught on yet, the problem is what to do if you've got long hair.

Though a growing number of employers are accepting a growing number of inches of male head hair, and some unions are beginning to make it an issue, the System's official stance remains non-favorable to unemployed long-haired young men.

Courts as high as the California Court of Appeals have repeatedly ruled that an employer has the right to deny employment to an applicant on the basis of hair length.

"We had one lawyer who used to handle these cases for us," Ms. Hinn says, "but he kept losing and losing and losing, so he finally gave up."

A typical decision would go like this:

"The very fact that this particular employer won't hire long-haired job applicants is proof that by just wearing long hair the claimant has limited his employment availability . . . Regulations require full availability and unreduced attachment to the labor market.

"As long as the claimant wears a hairstyle which is unsuitable to a significant portion of the labor market, he is not available for employment under employment standards."

One of the few decision which has been favorable to long hair was in response to an appeal based on the Civil Rights Act. This is Section 703E, which "forbids employers to refuse to hire or retain employees based on

stereotyped characterizations of sexes."

But invariably, according to Ms. Hinn, referees in Santa Cruz hearings will refer to a three-year old survey by the Department of Human Resources Development, showing that most area employers oppose long hair.

Unfavorable rulings can result in a person being cut from welfare and/or unemployment insurance.

One example, cited by James Hammond, manager of the local HRD, is of a man who was cut from unemployment for failing to cut his hair ("inadequate job search"), then cut from welfare benefits for not satisfying unemployment insurance requirements.

"The unemployment people have been really vicious," says Ms. Hinn. "We've had a little more success with welfare."

A man on welfare now has four months grace period to find a job if a hearing rules that the length of his hair is hurting his chances.

Then he has to cut his hair, or lose the benefits.

Frederick Buck, a worker and spokesman for the local HRD, says that the department "does not discriminate. You must understand the employers' point of view. He has valid reasons. He's got to think of the image of his business. If we think he may be wrong, we try to talk the employer out of it, but if we can't, we post the job anyway."

When it comes down to a fair hearing and it's employer vs. employee, however, the state nearly always sides with the former. Referees are provided with an HRD survey, taken three years ago, which shows that the majority of area employers will not hire applicants with long hair.

Complaints by WELAC that the survey is inadequate and improperly conducted have won little support.

Ms. Hinn also points to the time difference. "A lot has changed her in three years. We're thinking of doing an alternate survey."

Another criticism of the hearings is the lack of objectivity by the referees sent in by the State Department of Social Welfare. The Reagan administration has been responsible for appointing a number of people who can't see both sides, according to Ms. Hinn.

"We keep getting this one crummy referee. We got him disqualified once because he said the claimant had hair like a girl's. It gets so discouraging. And what makes it worse is there's so little work to be had here as it is. They'll tell you to cut your hair as though it were nothing. But to many of us, it's a form of free speech, a kind of statement of where you're at."

One store that is lenient with long-haired applicants is Albertson's. It hasn't always been that way. The union, Retail Clerks Local 839, began standing up for its members with long hair.

"We believe a man has a right to groom himself in fashionable manner," says James R. Dobbs, manager of local 839. "We have no more right to tell people how to groom their hair than employers. We base our judgment solely on the ability of a man to do the job."

Has long hair on retail clerks hurt patronizing of the store by customers?

"No," says Albertson's Front Street store manager Lavar Swensen. "Of course, we don't hire people with extremely long hair, not all the way down the back, for example."

He says the move to longer-haired employees began "about two years ago." The reason? "Times have changed." •

- K.J.

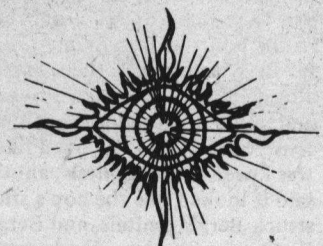
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job title	chances	nature of opportunity	points to consider
service station attendants	poor	replacement only possibilities at present; low pay, often nights	gas shortage has already caused cutbacks on hours of now-employed attendants, also layoffs
auto body repairman	good, if journeyman with tools	good-paying; dealerships, private shops	future dim for apprentices: employers say they can't afford it
TV and radio repairman	fair for experienced, no help for apprentices	usually small shops	technological advances making TVs better; repairmen having to be smarter
household appliance repairman	fair to poor	few independents; most work for stores, service centers or appliance wholesalers	technology to cut jobs here too: new appliances can be repaired more easily, and trend is to replace rather than repair
construction occupations	seasonal, but less than service trades. Dependency on supplies makes future uncertain here due to shortages. High unemployment in unions currently.	area's highest-paying work; usually hire in spring, if weather, etc. is okay. Current: long waiting list for work unless highly skilled	must pay about \$150, in full, to join laborers union
food canning	seasonal: Sept.-Oct. peak time; most workers return; not good outlook for inexperienced applicant	apply directly to company; wages good, but crazy dull; inexperienced start at \$3.12/hr.	March-April to be next hiring period, depending on spinach crops; Teamsters represents most workers
mattress tester	year-round, excellent opportunity if experienced	usually night work, though possibly some days; excellent pay, once business gets off ground	helps if you like to sleep; high snoring volume, vitamin deficiency are musts