

UCSC-6

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Editorial

Slowdown at UCSC a sobering prospect

(See stories pages 2 and 17)

THERE HAVE been plenty of omens before, but Charles J. Hitch, president of the University of California, put it pretty clearly when he indicated that the university's Santa Cruz campus may slow its growth far more drastically than most outsiders had imagined.

One advance sign, of course, was generally noted. UCSC had planned to open one new college each year, and so far the pace had been kept up. But this September there is no new college opening, and the sixth of them, originally scheduled for 1970, will begin operation next year instead.

The idea was that the new campuses of UC — at Irvine, San Diego and Santa Cruz — would grow at approximately the same rate until each of them reached the present enrollment ceiling at Berkeley and Los Angeles, 27,500 students each.

Now, says Mr. Hitch, it's entirely possible that the new campuses will be held to a "viable size" of perhaps 5,000 students.

All previous projections of Santa Cruz

County's growth had in mind the 27,500 figure by 1990, which — when faculty and families and employees are added — would total a "university community" of more than 100,000 persons, which is just about the total population of Santa Cruz County today.

There are those — notably among the older people in Santa Cruz — who aren't entirely happy with the university as it is, and who'd be glad if the place were cut back or even abandoned. These are the people who are unduly disturbed by some students' manner of dress and their political activism.

But there's a greater area for concern involved in this UC cutback. The inexorable pressures of a growing population mean that Santa Cruz County's open spaces aren't going to stay open long. If these spaces are not to be filled by students, scholars, university employees and the like, they're going to be filled otherwise. And some parts of that "otherwise" make a person feel that maybe a planned, orderly, more or less self-

contained university community is at least predictable, and in some senses more desirable than the catch-as-catch-can development which already has blighted the Santa Clara Valley just over the hill.

We've already witnessed an uproar from property owners and real estate people in the Santa Cruz mountains, who object most strongly to a suggestion that having a well and a septic tank on the same small lot is bad sanitation, bad planning and bad government.

We are already seeing some of the county's choice residential spots turned into mobile home parks — some of them de luxe, to be sure, but covered with structures whose owners will pay less and less taxes (as their "vehicles" depreciate like automobiles) while the rest of us, living in conventional homes, pay more and more.

Everywhere about us the pressures of increased population are becoming more evident daily — pressures on street and highway systems, on schools, on city and

county services. Those will increase at a rapid rate, whether or not the university grows. If the university doesn't grow, or grows very slowly, then we'll still have to cope with a large quantity of population, coming in faster as a university slowdown creates an unexpected relative vacuum. If that happens, then many of us will have cause to wish the open space had been filled to a larger extent by a university community rather than in a random manner.

There is, of course, nothing President Hitch can do about university growth. That growth depends on the attitude of the legislature and the governor (not very helpful these days) and of the public (which takes a dim view of education because of campus riots recently).

All the same, a cutback for UCSC is going to be bad news, if only because we'll get the quantity of people into this county anyway and will have to sacrifice a degree of quality.