

# Coast Welfare Statistics Are Inconsistent

By DON WILSON

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SANTA CRUZ — Santa Cruz County, says County Administrator Ted Durkee, is "a comfortable place in which to live."

He thinks that fact may account for what seems to be an above average unemployment rate and an equally high welfare rate.

Santa Cruz County government this year will spend 45 per cent of its total budget on "public assistance," which includes some things beyond the normal concept of "welfare."

Statistics compiled by the County Supervisors Assn. tend to indicate that Santa Cruz County does have a higher than average number of welfare recipients.

But — oddly enough — sparsely populated San Benito County has an even higher rate in some respects. And neighboring Monterey County has a welfare rate about half of that of either Santa Cruz or San Benito County.

For instance, figures show that one out of every 16 people in the state (about 6 per cent) receive food stamps. In Santa Cruz County the percentage is 8.3 per cent — a not unexpected figure considering the nature of the area. But in San Benito County, 9.2 per cent of the population gets food stamps.

And in Monterey County, the figure is only 5 per cent.

All three Central Coast counties follow averages rather well in regard to aid to families with dependent children — a "welfare" category which appears to be somewhat constant throughout the state. With 0.7 per cent of the state's population, Santa Cruz County also has 0.7 per cent of the dependent families. San Benito County has 0.1 per cent of the population but only 0.07 per cent of the dependent families. The level is about the same in Monterey County, with 1.2 per cent of the state's population and 1.0 per cent of the dependent families.

Throughout the statistics, Santa Cruz County with its population of 149,200 has just about the same number of welfare recipients as does Monterey County with its population of 261,300 and in many respects has about 10 times the number of recipients as San Benito County with 19,400 population.

The same thing holds true in administrative costs. With almost identical budgets of \$3 million last year for administration of the "categorical" welfare programs, the counties of Santa Cruz and Monterey find themselves with widely disparate local tax costs.

Santa Cruz County's cost per-taxpayer were

about double those of Monterey County's, since each county had to put up an almost identical \$650,000 from local taxes but with Santa Cruz County having only half as much population from which to get the taxes.

On a cost per-population basis, Monterey County welfare administration costs are lowest of the three counties, with a figure of \$2.70 per person in the county. The rate is \$2.75 in San Benito County and \$4.39 in Santa Cruz County — the highest figure according to population but no worse than the others in terms of costs per-case.

Some statistics: the number of people receiving old age security in Santa Cruz County is 2,623, in San Benito County, 330, and Monterey, 2,447. Blind in Santa Cruz, 126, San Benito, 12, and Monterey, 119. Disabled, Santa Cruz, 1,514, San Benito, 160, and Monterey, 1,767.

Families with dependent children, Santa Cruz, 8,859 people in 2,989 families, San Benito, 903 people in 267 families, Monterey, 12,588 people in 3,965 families.

In those same families, there were 1,140 unemployed people in Santa Cruz, 80 in San Benito, and 1,261 in Monterey.

Of the people receiving aid because of depen-

dent children in the families, there were 3,075 adults and 5,784 children in Santa Cruz, 244 adults and 659 children in San Benito, and 3,920 adults and 8,668 children in Monterey County.

Governmental experts frequently cite the mountains with their quiet forests and their local communities, the coastal beaches and the generally salubrious climates as reasons why an unusually high percentage of the population apparently has moved to Santa Cruz County to retire.

Add to that the presence of a major university with its generally unemployed students and you have factors which are said to contribute to a high "welfare rats."

But doesn't Monterey County have nearly the same characteristics? Why does it only have half the welfare caseload on a population basis?

San Benito County does have a generally salubrious climate but is lacking, certainly, in such things and mountain communities, coastal beaches and university students.

Why then does it have as high a welfare rate as Santa Cruz County on a population ratio?

That's something the statistics fail to show.

## Arbitration Option For Monterey

SALINAS — Monterey County Hospitals have been selected as a statewide testing ground for a program which ultimately



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## House To Debate