

Manpower Report Cites County's Major Problem Areas

By Mel Baughman
Sentinel Staff Writer

A report on the first-year results and future needs of the Santa Cruz County Committee on Cooperative Area Manpower Planning Systems (CAMPS) was submitted today to Paul W. Little, chairman of the California Manpower Coordinating Committee in Sacramento. The document enumerates a variety of social, economic and political problems that the committee hopes to tackle during the fiscal year that starts on July 1.

It includes a variety of statistics about the county's labor force, employment categories, job opportunities, unemployment rates, and the need for auxiliary services related to employment.

The report, for example, cites the 7 per cent annual unemployment rate, which during the off-season months rises to a much higher level.

In February, 1969, the report said, the jobless rate hit 12.9 per cent, a six year high.

The jobless problem, according to the report, stems from four major reasons, "the seasonability of the country's major industries (agriculture and tourism); the low-level of skills; the surplus of labor; and the language handicap of the Mexican-American community."

The document also refers to the lack of adequate public transportation, child care, and housing.

On transportation: "No adequate public transportation exists — either within the county itself or linking it with outside industrial sites . . . Great need for more public busing, minibuses, greater diversification of routes, linking low income population, especially Mexican-American community in South County and elderly in North County, with industrial sites, employment centers, cultural, educational, recreational outlets.

"The transportation factor cannot be underemphasized. Without possession of a car, chances for securing and retaining employment are substantially decreased."

On child care: "Child care, day care, pre-school educational centers need to be drastically expanded in all areas of county, using all available state and federal resources."

On housing: "Tremendous housing shortage for almost every one in the lower income brackets.

"Doubling-up overcrowding, hygienic hazards are especially common to the farm worker family.

"A large percentage of the county's housing is below standard. Very little new housing is being built due to high construction costs, and therefore no 'filtering down' process taking place.

"County Board of Supervisors is now considering the introduction of a Local Housing Authority, but no immediate relief in sight for low income persons. Yet without federal assistance, for example, in the area of rent subsidies, there is no foreseeable solution to the housing crisis."

The report in discussing poverty cites the elderly and the farm workers as the "two largest poverty groups" since the elderly have lost purchasing power through inflation and the minimum wages of \$1.65 per hour for farm workers "is inadequate for heads of household."

The committee reported that 37.8 per cent of the county's families had a total earned income of \$4000 or less.

The report further noted the shortage of job skills among various segments of the populace and the need for expanded job training programs.

Also included is a section on industrial underdevelopment, which concluded, "In general, it is safe to say that due to lack of suitable industrial buildings and sites, and due to the fact that Santa Cruz wishes to maintain its present clean climate, there will be little major industrial development, apart from the agri-business, hospitality-tourist industries."

On racial and ethnic discrimination, the report states that the Mexican-American is "the largest minority group in Santa Cruz County — 12 per cent in the county, 24 per cent in the Watsonville area."

It comments, "Santa Cruz County definitely reflects the ethnic discrimination commonly found throughout California and the country at large. It is both personal and institutionalized, subtle and overt. There is some gradual lessening of such discrimination due to recent government legislation . . . There is also a small but growing demand for personnel . . . who are bi-lingual."

To try to solve these and other problems, a number of programs have been launched — and may be expanded — in adult and vocational education, vocational rehabilitation, and the Neighborhood Youth Corps. Cooperating agencies include the county office of education, the welfare department, the probation department, the California Youth Authority, and various educational institutions.

The committee was formed last year to improve coordination of manpower programs and to give the local area a more active role in preparing manpower programs to meet community needs.

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Richard Pfaff, standing, chairman of the 1969 Santa Cruz County CAMPS Committee, watches as three other officials of the Cooperative Area Manpower Planning Systems group sign a report on job problems and related matters. From left are Richard Brown, executive director of the Community Action Board of Santa Cruz County; Carl Anson, manager of the Watsonville office of the State Employment Service; and George Washburn, manager of the State Employment Service office in Santa Cruz. The report is due in Sacramento today.