

The Mercury

SAN JOSE, CALIF., TUESDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 20, 1970

17

Santa Cruz Problem —Runaway Juveniles

By BOB LIGON
Mercury Staff Writer

SANTA CRUZ — Is Santa Cruz County unwittingly harboring runaway teen-agers?

This is a question some county officials are asking themselves in light of the many juveniles who are able to "live off the land" here.

Food, shelter and medical care are readily available to young people at little or no cost.

One reason for this, county officials say, is some state laws sometimes are grouped together as "emancipated minors" laws.

Assembly Bill 334, for instance, says a county health department must treat free of charge any juvenile (12 to 18 years for girls, 12 to 21 years for boys) suffering from a venereal disease, with or without the parents' consent or knowledge.

Purpose of the law, said Dr. Dwight M. Bissell, assistant county health officer, is to encourage young people to seek help who otherwise would not if they knew their parents would find out.

The confidentiality involved also encourages a youngster to name the person from whom he contracted the disease, said Dr. Bissell. But, some county officials say, it also keeps a parent in the dark, preventing them from understanding the child's problem.

Assembly Bill 656 says:

"The consent of the parent, parents or legal guardian of such a minor (15 years or older, in this case) shall not be necessary in order to authorize such hospital, medical, dental or surgical care, and such parent, parents or legal guardian shall not be liable for any care rendered pursuant to this section."

The law defines a minor as a person 15 years of age or older who is living apart from his parent or legal guardian.

The existence of numerous youth communes in the county is another reason why juveniles can reside here at little or no cost.

The young people pool money, or despite county efforts to the contrary, are able to qualify for public welfare assistance and, or, surplus food.

The county has a policy

against providing surplus food to communes, but, as County Welfare Director Raymond Ansell has said, it is difficult to enforce.

Several camp communities have developed this summer in remote mountain areas. Young transients, for the most part, can join these communities. Abandoned cabins are also being occupied.

County records show that

venereal disease in the county continues to skyrocket. While few cases were reported in the county a decade ago, last year the county alone had 422 cases of gonorrhea. So far this year, from January through September, the county has had 360 cases of gonorrhea.

Of the total number of cases so far this year, 49 of the victims involved were juveniles.

Records aren't available on whether the juveniles' parents were notified of their youngster contacting the disease.

Dr. Louis Ruschin, county hospital director, said, however, that about 80 per cent of the juveniles treated consent to have their parents notified.

"We try in all cases to get them to allow us to notify their parents," he said.

Opposition Expected Tonight

As D

FREMONT — a proposed waste operation tonight every type of when they apply the planning of a use permit.

The firm of Chadwell proposed dumping "bris, commercial non-wet garbage" brought in by 50 acres at the Warren avenue

Live City

SANTA long-stalled corporation promotion against

Live Oak for Local (CAL-G) filed County a to circulation corporation

The goal to get 25 per cent of the area population

If the successful then go there.

D. J. LOCAL ting significant mediation "The cations