

Borovatz Replies To Grand Jury Report

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Thanking the 1976-77 Grand Jury for its "diligent and thorough service," County Supervisors' Chairman Ed Borovatz has filed answers to a number of complaints by the jury.

Concerning welfare fraud—an area where the Grand Jury said two of its witnesses testified that 50 to 70 per cent of the clients cheat the system—Borovatz answered, "The board fully supports the statement that prevention is of greater importance than prosecution."

He said that one problem has been "staff turnover in the fraud investigator position and also within the earnings clearance system."

To accomplish "prevention," Borovatz said, intake eligibility workers should carefully and fully explain to all new applicants their responsibilities in reporting information that can affect their eligibility. He explained, "The utilization of fraud investigators at intake is not permitted under the cost allocation of funds received by the department."

"Experienced intake workers are able to detect when applicants may be committing fraud (and) on several occasions the fraud investigators have been called on to

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participate in the interview process with applicants and because of the joint action, applicants have withdrawn their applications."

The Grand Jury recommended that Santa Cruz have four fraud investigators for its caseload, with Borovatz answering, "The department has a Special Investigations Unit consisting of one unit supervisor one fraud investigator and four specially trained earnings clearance system workers whose responsibility is to handle all unreported income earned by recipients."

During June budget hearings, the board hired a second fraud investigator, but also eliminated the position of supervisor of the investigation unit. In the board's answer, it states, "Even though the state guidelines recommend that each SIU should have one fraud investigator for every 1,000

Aid to Families with Dependent Children cases (setting the need for four in this county), this is not always necessary or needed if there is other auxiliary staff available."

It has also been complained at board meetings following the grand jury report, that there is a heavy backlog of welfare fraud complaints that need investigation.

Borovatz said that with less staff turnover and a streamlining of the earnings clearance process, this problem will be cleared up.

The jury also found that the county's Front Street jail is "inadequate and antiquated," and pointed out a number of corrections that should be made.

Borovatz reported that either the repairs to such problems as tank alarms and window screen damage have been repaired and that other items are given the continual repair they demand.

Concerning the jury's recommendation that the county adhere to its affirmative action goals, and that it make appointments without "acting for political motives and or personal gain," Borovatz answered that the latter statement clearly states county policy and that the affirmative action program is adhered to.

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