

Study projects changes in state's elderly population

By **JAMES COBLIN**
Staff Writer

Stephen Birdsall, UNC professor of geography, is conducting a study commissioned by the N.C. Legislature that updates a ten-year-old atlas documenting N.C.'s senior citizen population.

The study, titled "Geographic Patterns of North Carolina's Elderly Population," maps recent and projected changes in N.C.'s 65-and-older population. It includes maps and texts to describe different aspects of the population of people 65 and older in the state of N.C.

The study includes such information as the number of elderly people in N.C., the distribution of elderly across the state, their gender and marital status, the number of elderly persons living in institutions and living alone, and the number holding jobs.

The updated edition of the atlas is expected to be completed early in 1989, Birdsall said.

The information shown on the maps is extracted from census data files which are located at UNC's Institute for Research in Social Sciences in the basement of Manning Hall.

Laura Comer, a graduate student who is working with Birdsall on the project, said she and other graduate

students assisted him by gathering data from census tapes located in the institute, compiling the information on computer disks, and compiling it into usable maps, she said.

The information obtained from the files is processed through a specially created mapmaking program that was designed by graduate students, Birdsall said.

The program graphs breakdowns of the information to show areas of intensity that become the darker and lighter shades that appear on the finished maps. The computer then draws the maps to show the full range of the acquired data.

One map included in the study projects the growth of the elderly population from 1987 through 2000 in N.C. counties. Parts of the state where the growth for elderly population is expected to be faster than the rest of the total population are identified by shading.

The darker the shading, the faster the growth rate expected, Birdsall said.

Comer said the eastern and western counties of the state are expected to

experience significant growth of senior population in the coming years.

Birdsall said the data for this map and several others is based on population projections developed by the State Budget Office.

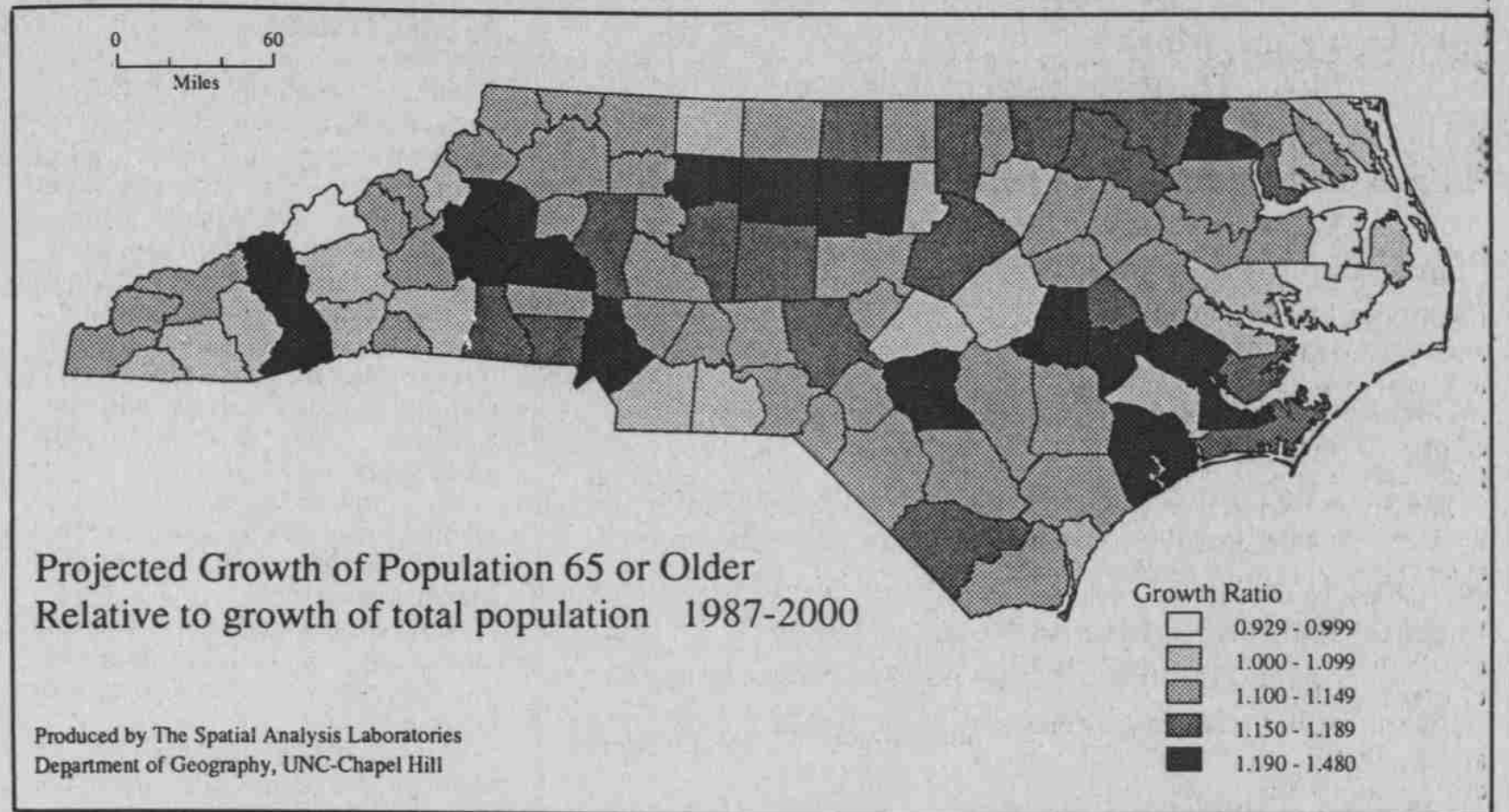
Another map included in the survey gives information about poverty among the elderly.

This map shows that the greatest concentrations of poverty among the elderly are in the coastal plains region and in many mountain counties. Areas where the poverty rate among the elderly is lower are urban and rapidly growing counties, Birdsall said.

The study's purpose includes projecting trends in the location of the state's elderly. It will give local and state government officials help in planning health care benefits and transportation for the elderly, Comer said.

She estimated that the atlas contains about 75 maps and is about 150 pages long. The text provides explanation and commentary by Birdsall.

The study "provides a base of



information for people who have to make decisions concerning services for N.C. elderly," Birdsall said. "This data base is usually not in a form

that is directly available." Dr. Birdsall is a professor of geography and associate dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. He

received his undergraduate degree from Antioch College, his Ph.D. from Michigan State, and has been with UNC since 1967.

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influence to the conservatives.

"The U.S. has a direct interest in ensuring that the Conservative Party is not strengthened in the current system," Johns said. "The struggle against apartheid, which we all consider ourselves a part of, is not necessarily a revolutionary struggle; it's an evolutionary struggle."

The ANC has not always been mindful of human rights as it began prison camps in Zimbabwe, encouraged violence against the government, and supported attacks on "soft targets" which make South Africa ungovernable, Johns said.

The United States should encourage a decentralization of economic and political power to better accommodate the many diverse elements in South Africa because sanctions and divestment policies are not effective, he said. Such policies hurt blacks' economic power and harden conservative white opinion.

"It's led to the conclusion of many South African whites that any form of reform is not going to be enough and that the U.S. will continue to destroy the South African economy," he said.

UNC activist Dale McKinley, a graduate student from Zimbabwe, questioned much of Johns' speech in an argument during the question session afterwards. McKinley said Johns was wrong in his recommendations of how the United States should promote change. Economic investment in South Africa has not worked to empower blacks politically, McKinley said.

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War I, is uncertain, Sparks said.

Namibia was granted independence by a 1978 U.N. Security Council resolution, and South Africa has been illegally occupying the country since. Though South Africa may agree to end the occupation, South Africa could prolong it through several sticking points in the resolution, he said.

"It's a step-by-step thing that could stall at any point," Sparks said of the negotiation process. "Whether South Africa is ready to withdraw from Namibia... is open to question."

The negotiators probably do not have the authority to sign any agreements, Swann and Bryant said. They must take proposals from the talks to their respective governments for approval.

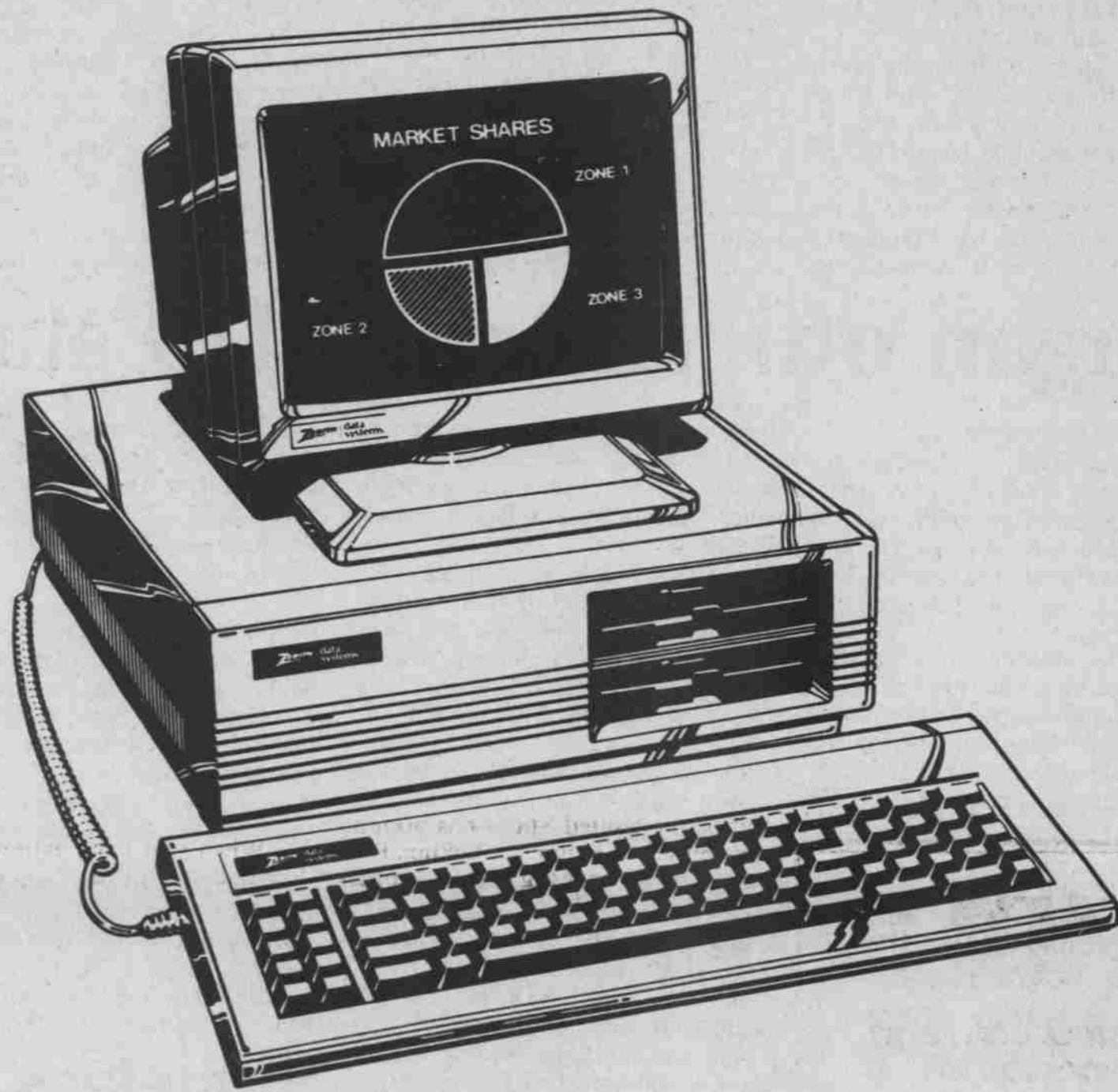
Though no statement has been released by either of the negotiating parties, "it looks as though they're almost on the verge of signing an agreement," Bryant said. Press reports say progress has been made in the last round of talks.

"Obviously when you have numerous countries involved in negotiations, the pace of the talks will be slowed," Bryant said.

A decision concerning the two issues will be made soon, he said. "By early next year at the latest, some form of treaty agreement will have been finalized."

But Sparks was not as sure of the negotiations' outcome, especially in the talks over Namibian independence. "The thing is always going to be wrapped in a thick blanket of caution," he said.

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