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Drug Abuse Center Official In Drug Center Hassle Fired

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Arthur Hempel, who had proposed a combined alcoholic-drug abuse rehabilitation center in the Bonny Doon area, was fired Friday by Dr. Louis Ruschin, General Hospital Medical administrator.

News of the firing was learned only late today, and neither Dr. Ruschin nor Dr. Arthur Giese, Hempel's immediate superior, could be reached in time for comment.

Hempel said, however, that his termination also means the end of the proposed \$250,000 treatment program.

"I was startled to learn of this action," Hempel admitted. "I think it cuts off what promised to be an excellent program which is badly needed."

Hempel was asked to resign Friday in a letter signed by Dr. Ruschin and apparently drafted by John Allen, hospital

auditor. The letter, which Hempel claimed was not delivered until late Friday, ordered him to resign by 3 p.m. or be fired.

The letter declared Hempel assumed authority "not delegated to you, plus in my opinion, the ill-considered use of these self-assumed authorities."

"These actions have resulted in serious impairment of relationship with members of the county Board of Supervisors, the county administrative office and the county personnel office," the letter said.

The letter cited an example where Hempel had made commitments to hire some persons from other areas when the program is finally approved.

This was considered "inexcusable" by the medical administrator.

Hempel said he has offered jobs to some other social workers, and treatment special-

ists, about 15 of whom would be hired if the treatment center became a reality.

"This is not unusual practice," Hempel declared. "Dr. Giese knew of this previously, and so, I'm sure, did Dr. Ruschin."

Hempel pointed out that the Board of Supervisors agreed to hire an assistant county counsel even though the post is not legally created.

Hempel admitted the noise of controversy over the Bonny Doon center probably caused his firing. But, he insisted, opposition to the center is not nearly so deep as some county officials have believed.

Though some officials have insisted the Bonny Doon treatment center was a surprise to them, Hempel said he could document instances where officials were fully informed of the plans in advance.

The letter of dismissal also cites Hempel's "personal involvement" with county supervisors before Ruschin endorsed the program and his "self-initiated involvement with elements of the community" — apparently a reference to the Bonny Doon school board meeting at which the proposal was announced — as reasons for dismissal. The letter also mentions a problem with Hempel's relationship to the nursing staff of the General Hospital.

Hempel again insisted all his actions were cleared beforehand with his superiors.

"Exactly what they are saying, in effect, is that the program is terminated, I think this is the most unfortunate aspect of the whole thing," Hempel said. "We really haven't had a chance to present this to the public and let them decide if it would be acceptable."