

'Long-Hair' Disputes County Welfare Rules

By BOB LIGON
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SANTA CRUZ — A Santa Cruz County policy against granting welfare aid to bearded, long-haired young men on grounds their appearance makes them unemployable, was challenged in Superior Court here Friday.

The case concerns Ronald D. Pratte, 27-year-old Boulder Creek father, who says he was denied public assistance on Sept. 14 solely on the basis of his appearance.

Pratte has a beard and wears his hair in a tight braid that extends to his waist.

Pratte, represented by Santa Cruz Legal Aid Society attorneys, is seeking a writ of mandate to force the County Welfare Department to place him, his wife, and small son under the county's aid to needy families program.

Dwight Herr, assistant county counsel representing the welfare department, Friday said hair length is just one factor in the reasons for denying Pratte's request for assistance.

Herr said the county policy does in fact concern hair length and any "extreme appearance" as a factor in determining eligibility for welfare assistance. But, he said, hair length is definitely only one of the many factors considered.

Dennis Barrett, Pratte's attorney, produced an administrative order signed in April by State Welfare Director Robert Martin saying that hair length is a matter of personal preference and not a basis to deny public assistance.

Herr answered that the order has no legal status, in that it is not backed by a court decision. Several cases, however, are pending that should clarify this, he said.

Herr, after the court appearance, said that several extensive employer surveys have been conducted in the state and that it was found that many employers refused to hire long-haired men.

Herr contends that some young men purposely keep themselves unkempt so they won't have to accept the job and can still qualify for public aid.

Friday, Herr attempted to get Judge Charles Franich to deny the writ, saying that Pratte had not exhausted other administrative procedures in getting welfare assistance.

Pratte did not appeal his case to state welfare hearing officers, but instead brought the matter directly to the court.

Judge Franich denied Herr's request, saying that Pratte could follow either course. Franich continued the case until next Friday.

In testimony Friday, Nancy Although, eligibility officer for the welfare department, told the court that she took Pratte's application on Sept. 20 but knew at that time that he would be denied assistance because of his long

hair. She told the court that all of her recommendations on assistance were reviewed by her supervisor, John Zehner.

Under questioning by Barrett, Mrs. Although said she did not clear Pratte for emergency assistance at that time because she knew that it would be overruled by Zehner.

She said the county has a policy against granting welfare to men with long hair.

At the time Pratte applied for welfare assistance last August, he said he had no money and was being forced to live with acquaintances in Boulder Creek. The Prattes had just moved here from Pennsylvania. He says he moved here looking for employment.

Pratte said that after applying for aid, he was referred to a Santa Cruz food processing plant for a job. He says a company spokesman told him he would have to cut his hair before he would be hired.

Pratte Friday denied that he had been offered a job or that he refused one.

The county denied Pratte's request for aid on Sept. 14. About a week later, however, the county made him eligible for county emergency general assistance. The family was given \$147 a month, plus surplus food.

The emergency fund is financed solely by the county, and can be cut off at any time by the county. The aid to needy family program is financed by federal, state and county funds, and cannot

be cut off without a hearing, if the applicant requests one.

Herr Friday said the county will cut off assistance to the Prattes on Oct. 31.

Herr, who has not yet presented his case in court, says he will bring out factors other than long hair at next Friday's hearing.

Disposition of the case could also have bearing on the county policy against granting surplus food to young men with long hair. The county also refuses to give food to persons living communal style.

County Supervisors recently have been urged to change the policy. Opponents contend that the policy violates federal rule, which says only that the food must go to persons who are hungry.

Township Bus System Cost 'Could Reach \$2 Million'

FREMONT — A bus system for the Fremont, Newark, Union City area will cost between \$1 and \$2 million, transportation consultant James W. Schmidt told the Tri-City Board of Transportation Control here this week.

Schmidt is chief of the traffic and transportation division of De Leuw, Cather & Co., a consulting firm that is working on a \$60,000 study of bus needs in the deep South County area.

Schmidt presented the board with four alternate plans, ranging from three to eight bus routes.

These would serve populations running from 108,000 to 133,000. They would cost between \$700,000 and \$3.7 million, depending on intensity of service selected.

One third of the study, to be finished next March, is complete.

Three crucial questions must be answered before a bus system could be opened, Schmidt said: how it would be paid for, what level of service would be required and how costs would be shared by agencies affected.

The vast, 125 square mile area requires a transportation system to serve those persons unable to provide it

for themselves, he told the board.

Persons affected are the low mobility group: Those too young to drive, persons who don't own autos and persons who aren't able to operate motor vehicles, Schmidt said.

He said that it was "almost

certain" the system would not be self-supporting and thus require subsidies, a common practice in San Francisco.

A BART representative said that his agency would probably pay for part of the system as it would serve BART stations in Union City and Fremont.

Seaside Council Under New Fire

SEASIDE — City Councilmen have been charged with failing to make a purchase of property authorized by voters and have been threatened with recall.

Joseph Dolan, who heads a group which may seek recall of the entire council, made the charges at a council meeting here.

Then Councilman Gerald McGrath answered that he has received bomb threats and challenged Dolan to refer his charges to the Monterey County Grand Jury.

The outbreak came during a council session in which

consideration of a site for a new post office here was continued until Oct. 21.

Dolan said the council has broken trust with the voters by not purchasing a small shopping center on Broadway avenue. Purchase was authorized in an "advisory" measure on the April ballot.

McGrath said he has received a bomb threat against his family and added "people have been approaching trusted employees of Councilman Stephen Ross to get them to sign statements against him."

"If you want to run the city government do it by the democratic process and run for office or call the Grand Jury," McGrath said.

Dolan, who repeatedly has said his Citizens for Fair Government committee will seek recall of the entire council, said he is not seeking any office.

Document Display To Be Dedicated

HOLLISTER — A permanent display of American historical documents, a gift

from the Hollister Exchange Club to San Benito County, will be dedicated here at 4 p.m. Monday.

The documents, in a 4 by 24-foot display case, will be given to the county in a ceremony at the San Benito County Library next to the County Courthouse.

Speaker for the occasion will be Assemblyman Frank Murphy (R-Santa Cruz).

John Vassallo, Hollister businessman who is chairman of the San Benito

Boy Named In Slaying Warrant

SALINAS — The Monterey County District Attorney's office has obtained a warrant for the arrest of an Ohio man

100 UCSC Students Back Angela

SANTA CRUZ — About 100 students turned out Friday for a rally on the University of California, Santa Cruz, campus in support of Angela Davis, arrested by the FBI this week on charges stemming from a courtroom shoot-out in Marin County, Cal.



Suspected Drug Seller Arrested

TRIAL — Ronald D. Pratte, 27, (center) talks with his attorneys, Dennis Barrett (left) and H. Ernest Fox, of the Santa Cruz

Legal Aid Society, following appearance in Santa Cruz County Superior Court Friday. Pratte contends he was

denied county welfare assistance because of his beard and hair, which he has a tight braid that tends to his waist.

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GM Auto Workers Resume