



## City workers rally for labor contract

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SANTA CRUZ — City workers took their demand for a better labor contract to the streets Friday with a noon-time rally at City Hall.

About 100 police, fire and service employees turned out to cheer their fellow workers' appeal for better benefits and pay.

They carried signs, one of which read, "Is the Duke (Gov. Deukmejian) more sensitive to workers' needs than our own Socialist council?" And they brought a political message to the City Council.

Simply put, the message was this: In the past 10 years, the city has grown by 30 percent, while pay and numbers of workers have remained about the same.

A political coalition among the three groups has been formed as a result of stalled labor negotiations.

Said Jerry Larrabee, president of the Santa Cruz Firefighters Association Local 3, "This is a coalition for everybody. We want what's fair and what's right. We can make a change. . . . When election time comes around, we'll be tied into one thing, feeding out of the same trough that gets

smaller and smaller while the work load gets bigger."

Some firemen arrived in an antique fire truck and passed out informational sheets to passersby.

Opening the rally was George Stavis, a representative of the Service Employees International Union Local 415, who said he was "sad none of us has a contract but proud that we are together with our firefighters and police."

Stavis said, with the increase in population, "We're picking up more garbage and reading more water meters."

While the contract two years ago gave workers a "fair" pay hike, "City workers have lost almost 20 percent of their purchasing power to inflation over the past 10 years," said Stavis.

Santa Cruz Police Officers Association president Ron Truhitte said, "The city cannot continue to operate the way it works now.

"We're approximately 14 men short. There's no way we can continue to respond to emergencies and cats on roofs unless the city provides us with a pay package that attracts new employees."

Truhitte added that 13-year police veteran Det. Rick Lofvendahl is leaving to go to the Santa Clara County District At-

torney's office, where he'll receive more money.

Said Truhitte, "I'm fully convinced that if the city had come up with more money, we wouldn't have lost him." It will take years to replace that kind of experience, he added.

Larrabee said firefighters have been "dedicated puppy dogs" in the past, taking whatever came their way in terms of contracts.

That's no longer the case. "We're going to bite the hand that feeds us," vowed Larrabee.

Both police and SEIU employees have been working since July 1 without a contract. Labor talks have reached an impasse and a state mediator has come in to help resolve the differences. New talks won't resume until Aug. 18 because of vacations which were taken by the mediator, City Manager Dick Wilson, and City personnel director Laura Brown.

Labor talks for firemen are stalled, but are not yet at an impasse, said Larrabee.

What effect the coalition will have on the City Council elections in November is unknown. But the rally brought out cover-

al announced and unannounced candidates.

Among the "progressives" were Mayor Bruce Van Allen (who is expected to announce his candidacy this week) and Jane Weed.

The moderates included Arnold Levine and Jim Felich. Independent Ed Porter was present as well.

Van Allen, one of the members of the council to which most of the talk was aimed, said "I'm pretty confident we can work it out." He added he thinks the workers' uniting together "is an important thing to do."

Weed said she was there in support of the workers. "The issues they're bringing up are reasonable."

Levine, who spent 31 years in education, said, "I empathize with city employees . . . I don't think city and school employees should bear the brunt of tight budgets."

Felich, a self-employed computer businessman, said he was concerned the City Council "is not running the city like a business. And the council is treating them like a political entity — not workers."