

Hundreds protest INS raids

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SANTA CRUZ — Four hundred people, including Mexican Americans and human rights activists, gathered at Beach Flats Neighborhood Park Saturday to march through town in protest of immigration raids that have hit this town and others in the past few months.

They heard Santa Cruz Mayor Mardi Wormhoudt call Immigration and Naturalization Service agents "thugs and goons" for their methods of rounding up undocumented Mexicans in the Beach Flats neighborhood near the boardwalk.

Agents swept Beach Flats on Nov. 9 and 27, arresting a 22 people. The raids came at the hour when the poorer families are

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— Mayor Mardi Wormhoudt

collecting to get food from the St. Francis Catholic Kitchen truck.

Neighbors said in both incidents the INS agents in vans and sedans pulled in suddenly, jumped from their vehicles and chased people who were frightened into running.

The agents went into homes after people they suspected of not being citizens and

not having the "green card" that allows immigrants to work in the U.S.

INS Agent-in-charge Bruce Haakedahl said his men are doing their job and will continue to conduct sweeps. The timing of the food truck gathering and the raids, he said, was "coincidental."

Please see Page A5

Immigration arrests protested

Continued from Page A1

He said the law allows his agents to enter homes without a search warrant, and that his men were sent in because of complaints from residents and the Santa Cruz police.

Police Chief Jack Bassett said his department has never called for an INS raid.

As the marchers gathered this morning to the beat of Native American drums and songs of protest, Councilman Mike Rotkin said he was seriously considering taking a resolution to the council asking that "INS agents be banned from Santa Cruz."

He didn't know if the local ordinance would be enforceable against the federal government's immigration service, but said it would open the way for a possible citizen's arrest of an INS agent and lead to

"a very interesting court suit."

The march along Santa Cruz streets began in sunny weather and continued up town and around the federal building under lowering skies.

No one got wet.

At about the corner of Cathcart Street, a car suddenly made a left turn and hit the front wheel of a city motorcycle cop, spilling him onto the road. He got up, apparently uninjured.

Marchers carried signs stating "Stop INS Invasion" and "How Can A Human Being Be Illegal?"

The march wended up Pacific Garden Mall, snaked around the post office and dissolved into San Lorenzo Park. At the park, speakers encouraged resistance to the INS.

Before the march began, speakers for La Familia, the self-help center at Beach Flats, the Beach Flats Defense Committee and Migrant Media Project urged solidarity against the raids.

Chemo Candelaria, representing the American Indian Movement, urged the gathering "to feel the drumbeat and your hearts will beat together."

He and seven other Native Americans gathered around a large drum, beating out a rhythm and chanting.

Other speakers came forward, then a folksinger, and then the march, led by those carrying a large banner announcing "March ken Protesta Contra La Migras" — march against the immigration authority.

One of those joining in was Emma Solden, a county resident and city worker who said this was her first protest march. "But, there has to be a better way for them to meet their objective. What the INS is doing is outrageous."

Another speaker said, "We're the ones who do the work and we're the ones who are humiliated."

Mayor Wormhoudt said, "In the city of Santa Cruz we believe that everybody, either citizens or not, with proper papers

or not, has the right to the protection of the Constitution of the United States.

"Nobody has the right to terrorize people, to go into homes without a search warrant, to endanger the lives of sick people and to arrest poor people who are standing in line to get food."

Wormhoudt said she met with Police

Chief Bassett and member La Familia Friday to make certain his department was not calling in the INS.

She said the chief assured her and La Familia representatives that he was not.

Wormhoudt said she didn't want the city "cooperating with thugs and goons" from the INS.