

Police to crack down on pickets

Admitting a "nice guy" approach didn't work, Watsonville police have announced a crackdown on violators of the court order governing picketing at the city's two struck frozen-food plants.

"We have continually explained and warned pickets of the rules laid down in the court order. As soon as we are not present, the rules are ignored," Capt. Terry Medina said in a letter to Sergio Lopez, secretary-treasurer of Teamsters union local 912. The letter, which Medina delivered personally on Tuesday, said, "Effective this evening, our officers will be in uniform and expecting strict 'letter of the order' compliance with the court orders."

The order affects pickets at

Watsonville Canning and Frozen Food Co. and Richard A. Shaw, Inc.

Medina said that after a meeting with union officials Jan. 10, police changed their approach. Instead of making arrests and issuing tickets, "we put out officers in plain dress and tried to gain compliance of the court orders on both sides by making more personal contacts with strikers and employees by explaining more of the court orders to all persons involved."

The approach didn't work, Medina said in the letter.

"Drinking continues to be a problem on your (Teamsters') property outside the union hall. Rock throwers still run to the union hall as a sanctuary to

escape identification or apprehension," he wrote to Lopez.

"We will disperse crowds gathering on the corner of West Lake and Walker streets and at any limit-line outlined in the court order. These locations, especially the corner of West Lake and Walker, have repeatedly been the scene of rock throwing at passing cars. Any person drinking alcohol in a public place or an auto will be arrested."

Medina said an incident Monday night, in which Watsonville Canning president Ron Trine's car headlight was broken, a Register-Pajaronian reporter was attacked, and a crowd threw rocks at police, was only a partial reason for the change in police policy.