

New mayor 'will carry on tradition of radicalism'

By PAUL BEATTY
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SANTA CRUZ — The city has new mayor and may have found a place in American history by electing back-to-back socialists to its top office.

Mayor Bruce Van Allen took the gavel from Michael Rotkin before a packed chamber of well-wishers Tuesday night. Both men are socialist-feminists.

Van Allen began office by telling the crowd, "I love you." He then introduced his mother who came from Los Angeles to see her 32-year-old son become mayor.

He won office on a 5-2 vote of the council with Councilmen Joseph Ghio and John Mahaney nominating and voting for Councilman Spiro Mellis.

Mellis voted for Van Allen, saying he disagrees with much of his philosophy, but wanted a cooperative spirit on the council.

Van Allen said, "As to my label, I call myself a 'socialist-feminist' and my politics are what could be considered radical.

"I feel I'm carrying on a tradition of radicalism here.

"I stand for people taking charge of their own lives . . . decentralized government and economy . . . I'm opposed to social injustice (and) I stand as a man for the end of male domination over women."

Rotkin said, "About one week ago I came into city offices and picked up my messages and really felt like a mayor for the first time in the year.

"And now it's time to get out."

He thanked a broad range of people, excluding those who have sent him anonymous threats.

He turned to the council. "I hope you feel I've been fair. I tried my best," he said.

Rotkin said he agreed with parts of Tuesday's Sentinel editorial — which he said was not always the case with him — but that he disagreed over the significance of this year's liberal council's decision to increase funds for community programs.

"I feel that was significant," Rotkin said.

"In many ways the issue of socialism is not the most important issue at the local level. Socialism doesn't have that much bearing at this level.

"I hope people will understand that

'Democratic Socialism' means that government is accessible to the people, and if nothing else I hope people realize the intention to make government more accessible.

"I believe this has happened here at a significant level and I hope I have contributed in some way to the betterment of life here in Santa Cruz."

Later, Councilman John Laird was elected vice mayor, meaning he is the mayor-apparent for next year.

Laird thanked the council quickly and thanked Rotkin for containing the council's wandering and not letting it "thrash around for an hour" before calling for a decision.

Councilwoman Mardi Wormhoudt, who polled a few less votes than Laird and

therefore was left waiting for her turn at the top two offices, thanked Rotkin for his advice and help during her first year.

Rotkin was given a bound book of all his proclamations with the comment that he never turned down a request for a proclamation.

He was also given a T-shirt from City Manager Richard Wilson that labeled Rotkin "Former Socialist Mayor."

The evening was an affirmation that the liberal majority, made up of two progressives and two socialists, are firmly in charge for 1983.

Rotkin and Van Allen are up for election next year and say they will run.

On the moderate-conservative end of
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Dan Coyro/Sentinel

Michael Rotkin, left, embraces his successor, Bruce Van Allen.

New mayor

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the council, Mahaney and Ghio will relinquish their offices next as they cannot run for third consecutive terms.

Mellis said he was appreciative of the nomination, "but the political reality is that the majority chooses and I will support Van Allen as mayor.

"I'm sure it's obvious I don't support his philosophy, but I want to cooperate so we can go forward and do the job."

Van Allen says the job includes doing "everything we can to restore public confidence in the police to develop a new community-oriented police department."

The department was rocked this year with an investigation into police brutality charges. Six present or former officers were charged with brutality.

"I ask everyone, as I am, to send your hearts out to our police department," Van Allen said.

He wants more affordable houses and a large community project to improve the San Lorenzo River which he says "looks like a drainage ditch" in the city.

He said the city is a pioneer in trying to do something about violence to women "and I ask for strong, compassionate community support for that effort."

He said in the offing are major projects on roads, sewers, garbage disposal and water services.

Van Allen said Santa Cruz is a land of beauty and that it is rich in cultural and artistic resources. The beauty must be protected and the cultural projects sustained.

"First and foremost, we must commit ourselves to the task of peace. We must eliminate the threat of nuclear holocaust and join in directing our nation to peace," the new mayor said.