

# *Employees* City Charged with 'Intimidating' Workers

by Bill Elder

The Santa Cruz city manager's office has been charged with "blatant intimidation" of city employees by a spokesperson for the city employees union.

The charge arises from drawn-out contract talks between the city and the City Employees Association (CEA) which have been going on for over a month.\*

"Our complaint is that city management engaged in an unfair labor practice," CEA business agent Walter Allen told the *Independent* on Tuesday.

City employees who belong to the association — and who have not been covered by a contract during the month of negotiations — are

up in arms over city management's "threat" to conduct a vote among CEA employees if the association itself would not call the vote, Allen said.

Such action is in violation of City Ordinance 76-14 which says the city "shall not interfere with, intimidate, restrain, coerce or discriminate against employees" in contractual matters.

The action is also in violation of the National Labor Relations Act which states that "polling of employees by an employer" is prohibited except under "unusual circumstances."

The dispute stems from contract talks held in late November when city management reportedly made its final offer to CEA employees and threatened to hold a vote

after the CEA had drawn up a "counter-offer" it wanted to vote on.

City management then went ahead and held the vote among non-CEA city employees, Allen said.

The CEA asked city council at Tuesday night's council meeting to declare the talks at an impasse and to request aid from a state mediator.

"We're going to do everything we can within the limit of the law for our employees," Mayor Larry Edler assured Allen and several dozen CEA employees who clapped and cheered after Allen delivered the association's request to council.

Kent Rice, negotiator for

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