

# News

Santa Cruz, California

## Veterans Local Post Will Sue If Expelled By VFW

Santa Cruz veterans won't back down on criticism of U.S. politics

MICHAEL BECK



**Local VFW Commander Richard Anderson believes charges against post are vague**

ANTICIPATING their expulsion from the national organization, members of the local Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 5888 are preparing to take their case to court.

After meeting last Monday in Sacramento with a representative of the national headquarters, Richard Anderson, commander of Bill Motto Post 5888, said that his group's charter likely will be revoked. The post has been under a 60-day suspension since January for publicly opposing U.S. policy in Central America.

"Had we backed down from our position and promised to quit speaking out on what's happening in Central America, then our suspension would probably be lifted," Anderson

said. "But we believe that we have the right to express a minority opinion and we feel the charges against us are extremely vague. If our post is expelled, we will definitely take this matter to court."

The fate of Post 5888 ultimately will be decided by VFW National Commander Billy Ray Cameron. Cameron was scheduled to meet with Anderson in Sacramento, but due to a snowstorm, his plane was grounded in Minneapolis and he missed the meeting. In his place, Edward Burnham, assistant adjutant general, took testimony from Anderson and will present it to Cameron. A final decision is expected by March 17 when the suspension comes to an end.

"The meeting was unsatisfactory because there was no discussion of the issue," said Anderson. "Our feeling is that the national office is not taking this seriously. A legal fight might be to our benefit because it would force the national headquarters to explain what rules we have violated."

Local attorney Eric Schenk, who is advising Post 5888, said he has been unable to find a bylaw in the organization's national charter which prohibits a post from taking a stand on a political issue. "If the post takes it to court it will be a corporate law question because they are not in violation of a bylaw or a lawful order," said Schenk. •