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# Veterans VFW Chief To Meet Head Of Local Post

Fate of Santa Cruz group may hang  
in balance

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RICHARD Anderson, commander of Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 5888 and Billy Ray Cameron, the organization's national commander, will meet Monday in Sacramento to discuss the local group's maverick stance against U.S. policy in Central America.

The local post has been on suspension since January and Cameron now is deciding if it will be expelled from the national organization.

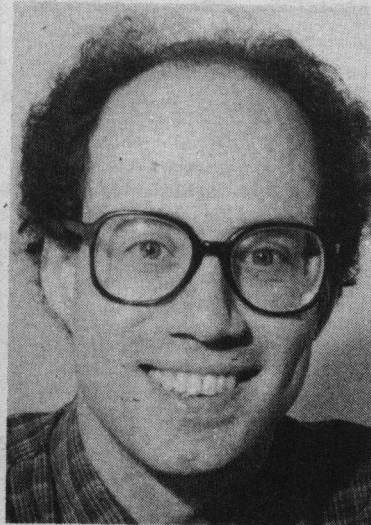
Should the post be expelled, Anderson said yesterday his group will seek aid from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and file a lawsuit against the national organization. Cameron's decision is expected by March 17, when the 60-day suspension comes to an end.

VFW Adjutant General Howard

Vander Clute when contacted yesterday at the organization's national headquarters in Kansas City, Mo., said there is a strong possibility the local post will be expelled from the national organization.

"If Post 5888 is unwilling to conduct its affairs within the intent of the national bylaws, then it leaves us absolutely no alternative and we will proceed with the cancellation," he said. "Our bylaws prohibit individual

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ACLU attorney Eric Schenk: Local VFW did nothing wrong

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posts from adopting positions which oppose the orders of the commander in chief."

But Eric Schenk, an ACLU attorney who is advising Post 5888, disagrees with Vander Clute. "At first I thought a suit could be filed against the national organization charging that their bylaws were in violation of the First Amendment which guarantees free speech," he said.

"But, I can't find a bylaw which prohibits a post from taking a stand on a political issue. As far as I can tell, Post 5888 has not violated any bylaws and the decision to suspend them was totally unfounded."

Members of the local post had hoped to meet with Cameron last week when he was scheduled to visit Santa Cruz. But the death of his father caused Cameron to cancel the visit.

The conflict between the local post and its headquarters dates back to the VFW's national convention last summer in Chicago, when the VFW as a

tion of American primacy in Central America, the Caribbean and South America."

VFW Post 5888, named after deceased Vietnam veteran Bill Motto, disagreed with that policy. Last December, a post member delivered a letter to Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega which called for "a policy of self-determination and non-intervention in Central America." One month later the local post was placed on suspension by Cameron because he considered that action to be in violation of the organization's national policy.

"A policy statement is not the same as a bylaw," argued the ACLU's Schenk. "A policy is merely a proclamation and it does not create obligations. If a post wants to speak out against a policy, there is no bylaw which prohibits it from doing so."

Vander Clute insists, however, that Post 5888 has violated a bylaw. "All policies become mandates of the organization and individual posts are required to comply with those orders," he said. "If the national commander decides to cancel their charter and they take it to court, we will certainly be ready to defend our position." •