

More Mystery Added To Controversy Surrounding SC Area Service Center

By WALLACE WOOD
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The web of charges and official mystery wound around the Santa Cruz Area Service Center and its anti-poverty program grew more tangled Thursday night.

"Nobody has made any official charges about the area service center. Somebody has made some statements which appeared in the press," the Rev. Cassius Ellis told the service center board of directors.

Then he proceeded to do the same thing, claiming he personally threw out "dope" (marijuana) smokers from the center, and demanded to know why board members "haven't been up here to see what's going on."

Along with a charge that "revolutionary material" was printed and distributed at the center, it was the latest of a series of charges by officials.

It just added to the confusion and uproar, as the service center board met in the eye of the storm — the center itself, located at Seabright Avenue and Broadway.

Reluctantly, the board ap-

pointed board members Joseph Wampler and the Rev. Samuel Quijas to join Ellis and the rest of an investigative team to look into the supposedly secret charges. Ellis is to hold the first closed meeting today.

But the center board blasted the way the "investigation" has been handled, claiming innuendo and suggestive charges were made at public meetings reported in the press.

"We're not knocking the press, which was only doing its job, but the way this came up without anyone coming to us. We're responsible for this center," said Wampler. He added that the service center board has a right to conduct its own investigation and declared, "We're not going to be a rubber stamp for this whole thing."

A letter will go to the Community Action Board, county supervisors and state antipoverty officials complaining of the investigative procedure.

The board took one immediate step. It ordered center Director Bob Shapiro to have other all organizations give him copies of any printed material used at the center, and pass it on

to the service center board. If any material goes outside the boundaries of allowed anti-poverty guidelines, Shapiro has authority to stop its distribution and contact the board chairman immediately.

For the past three weeks, the service center has been the target of arrows from county and CAB officials.

The center is supposed to be the central gathering place for the poor in Santa Cruz, and a number of minority group organizations meets there.

Rumors began circulating last summer that marijuana was smoked at the center, that it was being used as a "hotel" for transients and that other unsavory activities were going on.

Last week county supervisors were on the verge of dumping the entire poverty program if that were necessary to get rid of the center. A number of other charges were made, including some that young people at the center were driving away older persons, and that revolution was promoted or condoned there. An investigation was ordered, and it is to be secret because "personnel" matters are involved.

Center Board Chairman Jack Stevens said the nearest thing he saw to a revolutionary document was a mimeographed sheet suggesting support for "Huelga!" the farm workers' word for strike.

The investigation timetable also seems to be in a state of confusion. Supervisors said they would sign an agreement to permit the center to operate only under conditions that an investigation will be complete in 60 days.

Yet Olympio Galon of the state Office of Economic Opportunity said Thursday night that the whole CAB program, including the service center, has been approved by his office "without conditions" and forwarded to Gov. Ronald Reagan for final approval. The budget includes a \$308,000 federal fund grant.

The governor has 30 days in which to approve or disapprove the program, Galon said.

There was no explanation on the status of supervisors' "conditions" nor of the difference between the 30 days the governor has to act and the 60 days for the investigation.

Galon did say the state office is encouraging the "internal" investigation, which follows an unofficial investigation by Dan Forbus, chairman of the board of supervisors, and by a representative of the governor's office.

The Rev. Herbert Schmidt said it is "a question of basic principle" that Forbus and the investigator should have brought their charges first to the area service center board. "Until this meeting, this board has never been informed," Schmidt said. "There has been improper handling of this." He urged the complaint about procedures be included in the letter to the CAB and county officials.

James Urquhart noted that federal rules forbid the service center to "keep anyone out, or stop them from bringing literature in here. Then, if something goes wrong, the center gets blamed for it."

Wampler agreed. "I think this center has done a lot of good in the community which is largely unrecognized. I think the government agencies have an attitude against these antipoverty programs. I've got my back up against the wall, and I'm ready to fight. But I have to pause, because I know I have nothing to lose," Wampler said. The poor, he implied, have plenty to lose.

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