

Business, UFW stage marches

By PAUL BEATTY

Sentinel Staff Writer

SANTA CRUZ — More than 80 city business leaders marched on City Hall this morning in protest to Mayor Mardi Wormhoudt's proclamation in support of the grape boycott that brought about the Farm Bureau's call for an agri-business boycott of Santa Cruz.

They were met there by more than 100 United Farm Worker members and supporters, waving their United Farm Workers flags and shouting "We support the mayor!"

The two protests were loud, colorful and peaceful.

Wormhoudt was away on vacation so she missed the action as each group unilaterally read and/or shouted their reasons for being there.

Earlier, she said the businessmen's protest was politically motivated and orchestrated to happen when she was away on her vacation.

She called it a "cheap trick."

The business leaders gathered at the center fountain where they read

their prepared statements into TV cameras while the farm workers and their supporters stood out on the sidewalk waving flags, yelling slogans and listening to short speeches.

Standing with the UFW was Councilman Mike Rotkin.

Standing with the businessmen was Councilman Arnold Levin.

David Ventura of the Motel and Hotel Association claimed the agri-business boycott had cost him \$3,000 in one week at his motel and that he estimated it would cost his industry here \$1 million over the next five weeks.

Downtown businessman Neal Coonerty said he doesn't believe the Farm Bureau's boycott is having any effect on local commerce.

Chamber of Commerce President Johna Vanderpool read from the chamber's statement: "Proliferation of this anti-Santa Cruz movement has the potential of undermining all the city's efforts to

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promote tourism in its prime market.

"We strongly urge you to immediately rescind your call to boycott non-union grapes before irreparable damage is done to the Santa Cruz economy and to the business and the workers of our city."

The chamber and other groups also asked the county Farm Bureau to lift its boycott from local businesses.

As the chamber's statement was being read, down on the sidewalk national UFW board of directors member Oscar Mondragon was saying, "Viva la causa! We in no way boycott the city of Santa Cruz. We support the mayor because she has the leadership and courage to support the grape boycott."

It was reported the Santa Cruz Downtown Association was to join the boycott, but at a meeting this morning decided to make its statement through letters to Wormhoudt and the Farm Bureau.

Downtown Association President Fred McPherson III said, "We're asking both to back off and lift their boycotts."

Coonerty, a member of the Downtown Association, described the association's stand as "telling them 'a plague on both their houses'."

The chamber told Wormhoudt she had her right "to work to improve the lives and working conditions of all who labor" but there must be a "definitive delineation between your public comments as an individual and those spoken or written as the mayor of Santa Cruz."

Rotkin said the chamber has its priorities wrong. "They're siding with the Farm Bureau which has opposed laws for safe water in the fields, toilets in the fields and to bring back the short-handled hoe. I think they've chosen the wrong side."

The convention bureau stated, "We, the visitor industry, are fearful that the continuance of this boycott could seriously hurt the economic base of our area and force many layoffs of employees in all areas of our city."

"While we respect the rights of any individual to protest, we feel that we cannot support one person or a small group of people to adequately represent all opinions in an area."

Ken Whiting, representing beach area businesses, read a letter telling Wormhoudt, "You must be responsible about the overall impact and how the majority of the citizens of Santa Cruz could be affected by your actions."

A statement released by the coalition of business groups said, "This demonstration has been triggered by Wormhoudt's proclamation (and) the group feels the mayor was asserting her personal views when she should have been working on the concerns of the community."

As the two groups protested, and when the noise was at its loudest, businessman Marq Lipton, one of those who put the protest together, was asked what he thought of it.

He answered, "Oh, it's Santa Cruz."