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Which way does political wind blow?

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SANTA CRUZ — It's politics for real this time around as the city goes into an election year that will decide if its two socialist councilmen were an experiment or a reflection of the way things are.

It will be a year when the business establishment and the "outer rim of the affluent" will have to prove they've learned something of modern politics in order to slow the progressive movement in the inner city of Santa Cruz.

It is also an election year that will have the two socialists — Mike Rotkin and Bruce Van Allen — taking their

three-year records home to the neighborhoods where their supporters are working to get them re-elected and to fill two other seats.

Four of the seven council seats are up for election Nov. 8, but moderate-conservative Councilmen John Mahaney and Joseph Ghio are prevented by the city charter from running for a third term.

The issues will be socialism, the UCSC computer park, traffic, and campaign tactics.

There could be 20 candidates signing up between Aug. 11 and Sept. 1 at 5 p.m.

Rotkin and Van Allen make up the council majority, generally voting

with progressive-feminists Mardi Wormhoudt and John Laird — two of the three carryover councilmembers.

The third carryover, moderate Spiro Mellis, could end up a minority of one.

Wormhoudt wants women feminists elected to the seats held by Ghio and Mahaney, saying that in a city as progressive as Santa Cruz there's too few women representatives.

Laird agrees with her. "The complexion of the city has finally changed so there is a general progressive-moderate majority and the council majority is in sync with that."

That kind of thinking and the reali-

ty of socialists in local government is something of a nightmare to conservative Doug Austin, a man who lives outside the city and can't run for the council, but who led the successful campaign against rent control last year.

"The real issue is whether the people want a socialist City Council — and remember 'progressive' is just camouflage for socialist. I think the voters were duped last election and were surprised at what they got and they'll vote moderate this time."

Austin and others founded "Santa Cruz Alert," a city political group that is working to defeat the socialists and progressives.

Austin worries most that "there's a chance we'll end up with a socialist majority of five or six, and that opens it up for city charter changes and direct influence on the administration."

It takes five votes to fire the city manager and it's felt a five-member majority would have greater influence on the administration.

Rotkin says of Austin and Santa Cruz Alert, "I expect the right will try to make socialism an issue. They announced they were going to do that at the Political Affairs Committee of the Chamber of Commerce."

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"They're politicizing the chamber and they're going to run a negative campaign on label turf.

"I think the biggest issue they'll raise, and I think it's a mistake on their part, is that we spent around \$300,000 on social programs. That will raise the question of whether the city government is to serve all the people, or simply return to being a machine to guarantee that business interests are served."

Mellis and Ghio say the issue of socialism is a natural in the campaign. Ghio says if he were running, it would certainly be one of the "issues I'd pick up and run with."

Ghio is going to be involved "as much as Bert Muhly was the year he couldn't run (and) I still feel it's my seat."

Other issues are traffic problems about which Ghio claims the present majority is "doing nothing," greater densities for housing and accessory housing which the majority is looking into, and "whether we should be spending time on national and international issues such as the El Salvador vote we took."

Ghio says if the moderates and conservatives are going to win, they'll have to match the progressives' ability to organize "and they're better organized now and we'll need more money today when it's harder to raise."

Making it harder to raise funds is the city's new campaign finance ordinance that limits candidate contributions to \$75 from each source.

It is not clear, Rotkin and Austin say, if a group such as Santa Cruz Alert is free to spend greater amounts by not endorsing candidates and simply coming out in opposition to the progressives and socialists.

The \$75 limit would have hurt conservatives in 1981 when they got \$6,000 from CREPAC, the California real estate interest.

Laird says there may be a large number of candidates. "I think he could be right, unless both sides try to talk people out of running to concentrate their vote," Mellis says.

He thinks the public will "perceive there are slates" whether or not the two sides hand-pick candidates.

Wormhoudt says, "I think the problem with slate politics in a community this size is that people want to make individual judgments and they resent the notion they are being told who to vote for."

Van Allen believes the Research and Development Park proposed for the UCSC campus is going to be the big issue.

"It's not clear if the issue will be on the specifics of traffic, market, and jobs, or on the process of local control in the planning.

"If it's the question of local control, and Santa Cruz is being told it doesn't have any, then that really gets people mad. People in Santa Cruz are used to having a say."

Van Allen sees other worries in welcoming the high technology computer companies into Santa Cruz.

"Do we really want an industry like Atari that suddenly lays off 1,700 workers and then exports their job. It's still an unstable industry and I'm not sure it's fulfilling its promise.

"Another question is the problem of toxic material. Scotts Valley encouraged the electronics industry and now is trying to come up with some way to monitor the toxic materials."

Ghio says the socialists will have to answer for not fixing the roads while at the same time they are planning to "spend gobs of money to plant trees in the streets."

But, Rotkin says the trees are part of the Livable Streets plan that has neighborhood support. He says the moderate-conservative side of the board opposed the gas tax that was meant to raise money for road maintenance so they should answer to that.

Laird says the "complexion of the city has finally changed to progressive," he believes the race will be won by the stronger candidate, no matter the politics.

He says Mellis in 1981 was such an example and that Mellis "plays an incredibly important role by representing one group of people and he does it well, with integrity and honor."

Laird adds, "I would like to see more women on the City Council and I expect there will be plenty of women candidates, hopefully of all political persuasions."

He says he could name 10 people who say they will run and there may be as many as 20.

Ghio says some former councilmembers are interested, but he doesn't think they're "electable" in today's political make-up in the city.

Austin is saying the socialists want a stronger majority to extend government control into private business. He quotes a Portland Oregonian newspaper account of a talk Rotkin gave in Portland to a coalition of neighborhood groups.

Rotkin told the groups that government should get in on the profit from some businesses in order to provide some services. He spoke of Santa Cruz's construction of business buildings on the wharf that go up for lease and of the possibility of public ownership of cable TV.

Austin, an insurance agency owner, also notes that Rotkin mentioned public ownership of homeowners insurance.

Austin sees it as a major takeover by socialists, progressives and the Campaign for Economic Democracy founded by Tom Hayden and Jane Fonda.

Wormhoudt says, "Red-baiting didn't work last election and I don't believe it will work this time. The people are more intelligent than that and the city is small enough that people meet the candidates at forums and question them themselves."

Rotkin says, "I would like to see us battle over the issues, rather than just battle over socialism."

"I'm going to run a positive campaign on what the council has done for social service, reaction to neighborhood requests and the Livable Streets plan." "What I'm really nervous about is that Reagan is such a failure there might be an anti-incumbent vote across the nation and that could cause us some serious problems."