

VETERANS

# Rebel vets' lose again

By KEITH MURAOKA

Sentinel Staff Writer

8-23-85

Santa Cruz' rebel vets were out-politicked Thursday at the national convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars in Dallas. The local post's resolution against Central America intervention resolution was never heard.

Instead, the resolution got sidetracked by the national committee into another resolution, which had little resemblance to the original version.

The original version urged the Reagan administration to review its policies in Central America. The resulting version heard on the convention floor urged the administration to continue its support for democratic governments while holding the line against communist intrusion.

"They stuck our resolution in with others calling for bipartisan support for democracy," Lee Bookout told The Sentinel by telephone Thursday. Added local post commander Richard Anderson, "It was interpreted at the national level to mean something entirely different."

A subsequent motion on the convention floor by Anderson to pull their resolution out of the other in order to be heard separately died for lack of a second.

"We were outnumbered about 5,000 to 5," said Anderson, who had to dodge a wave of moans and "you're still at it" comments in even making the motion.

Anderson maintained the political game that was being played was "a little rigged." Bookout compared the Santa Cruz delegation — which numbered five — as being "freshmen senators" compared to veteran politicians. "They might call themselves patriots, but we were up against veteran politicians," he added.

As disappointed as they were, however, each member of the Santa Cruz delegation told The Sentinel that they felt they were successful in getting their point across. Namely, that not all veterans are pro-war and that there is a peace movement by some — whether it may be only five from Santa Cruz at present.

Some 20,000 vets attended the convention. Most of those 20,000 were staunch believers in a strong military presence by the United States.

"Heck, it took the VFW 80 years just to accept women in," said Book-

out. "Change comes real slowly here. Most of the vets are still fighting World War II, just like we're still fighting Vietnam."

Bookout hopes veterans, particularly Vietnam War vets, will join the national organization and possibly change their way of thinking. "This organization is doomed without the Vietnam vets stepping up and taking the lead," he said.

Although VFW commander-in-chief Billy Ray Cameron argued there are 700,000 Vietnam vets already in the organization, Anderson noted that at the convention "we were outnumbered about 100 to 1" — 99 being veterans of World War II.

Said Bookout: "I don't know if there's a light at the end of the tunnel or a train coming at us. My only hope is that 10 or 15 years from now maybe they're number will dwindle down and they'll be more receptive to our ideas."

Santa Cruzan Steve Brooks was jubilant in maintaining, "If we can be this effective with five, what can 100 do? I feel we're on our way toward getting more vets who think like us."

But Bookout said: "There's a pecking order here. If you want to move up, you don't make waves. Richard and I are guaranteed of never moving up."

Said Santa Cruz delegate Evelyn Schoenfeld: "We raised a lot of ques-

tions, and people were faced with thinking about what they were rubber-stamping. It was hard for them to realize that maybe they would have to do some independent thinking."

Schoenfeld, a World War II vet, is a new member of the Santa Cruz Bill Motto Post. Membership has ballooned from 67 to more than 150 since the post took their controversial stand on Central America.

"If the peace movement can come to our post," added Bookout, "it can come to others."

The Santa Cruzans made national news Wednesday after they spoke out against a resolution calling for "rapid expansion" of nuclear arms by the U.S. They were labeled "rebel vets."

During the convention they did manage to get one resolution approved on the national level. It called for the federal government to charge profiteering defense contractors with treason and felonious acts, and to be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

He noted that a specific rule was cited. "However, when we tried to use the same rule to fit our purposes, they told us it wasn't the same," said Anderson.

"We can't wait to get home," he added.

The group was expected back today.