

# Watsonville police crack down on demonstrators

## Fifteen people arrested for failing to disperse

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Fifteen people were arrested and a state of near-martial law was in effect on many Watsonville city blocks Saturday afternoon as police carried out orders to keep the peace.

In response to criticism that too much force was used, Watsonville Police Chief Ray Belgard said he "tightened police control to the maximum legally allowed" to avoid violence.

Most of the arrests during the downtown demonstration were made outside police headquarters on Union Street about an hour after a peaceful Teamsters rally ended at the Santa Cruz County Fairgrounds. (See page 13 for related story.)

The day's activity was the sixth day of civil disobedience in connection with the frozen-food strike. Much of the activity was spurred by a flyer distributed two weeks ago calling for a shut down of Watsonville Canning.

Following the rally a caravan of cars went by the Watsonville Canning plant honking horns

and cheering the pickets. Some 100 union members and supporters were watching on the sidewalks. Police cooperated with the car caravan, but then regrouped to disperse the gathering.

Police forced the crowd back from the plant and arrested two people. At this time they were joined by mutual-aid riot teams from the city of Santa Cruz and from Monterey and Santa Cruz counties.

The crowd was pushed away from the plant and had mostly broken up by the time it reached Rodriguez Street.

Later the crowd re-assembled at police headquarters. Some protesters entered the station lobby, calling for the release of the pair arrested earlier.

After removing the demonstrators from the station lobby, police lined up three deep in front of their headquarters. The crowd, now down to about 40, stood in the city hall parking

lot or across Union Street.

Using a bullhorn and speaking in English and Spanish, police ordered people to leave, warning that those who did not clear the area would be arrested.

Residents of houses along Union Street across from the station stood casually on their porches and watched.



Police chased this man into a home on Union Street and brought him back to the station for booking.



This scene of watching and waiting held for about 10 minutes until police approached two men video-taping the event and placed them under arrest. A phalanx of police then charged the booing crowd, pushing it into Grant Street.

Several people who wanted to get away from police confrontation stood along Union Street, but soon found their haven was not safe as police began arresting onlookers and individuals running away from the main crowd on Grant Street.

It was unclear whether the order applied to individuals and small clusters of people scattered along Union Street toward the library, and when asked why they were arresting the Union Street onlookers, officers refused to answer.

While this reporter was interviewing four UC-Santa Cruz students, away from the eye of the demonstration, police rushed the young men, who ran away.

Police made several arrests during a short period, including the arrest of one man who ran into the open front door of a home across from the police station for refuge. In hot pursuit five officers ran in after the demonstrator and dragged him out.

Next, while this reporter was interviewing a demonstrator a few minutes later at some distance from the police lineup on Grant Street, police arrested him and took him away in the police van.

Police refused to say why they made the arrest, and threatened to arrest this reporter.

At 5 p.m., about 20 minutes after the order was given to

disperse, the crowd vanished and the street returned to normal.

A handful of demonstrators proceeded to the headquarters of Conco, the holding company for Watsonville Canning, on Green Valley Road, but didn't stay long and there was no disturbance.

Chief Belgard said Monday his force carried out his orders to keep the peace by "breaking up crowds before they start trouble."

He said information gathered from undercover intelligence, publicity of pre-planned demonstrations and the experience of the violence last week made him believe "strong control" was necessary.

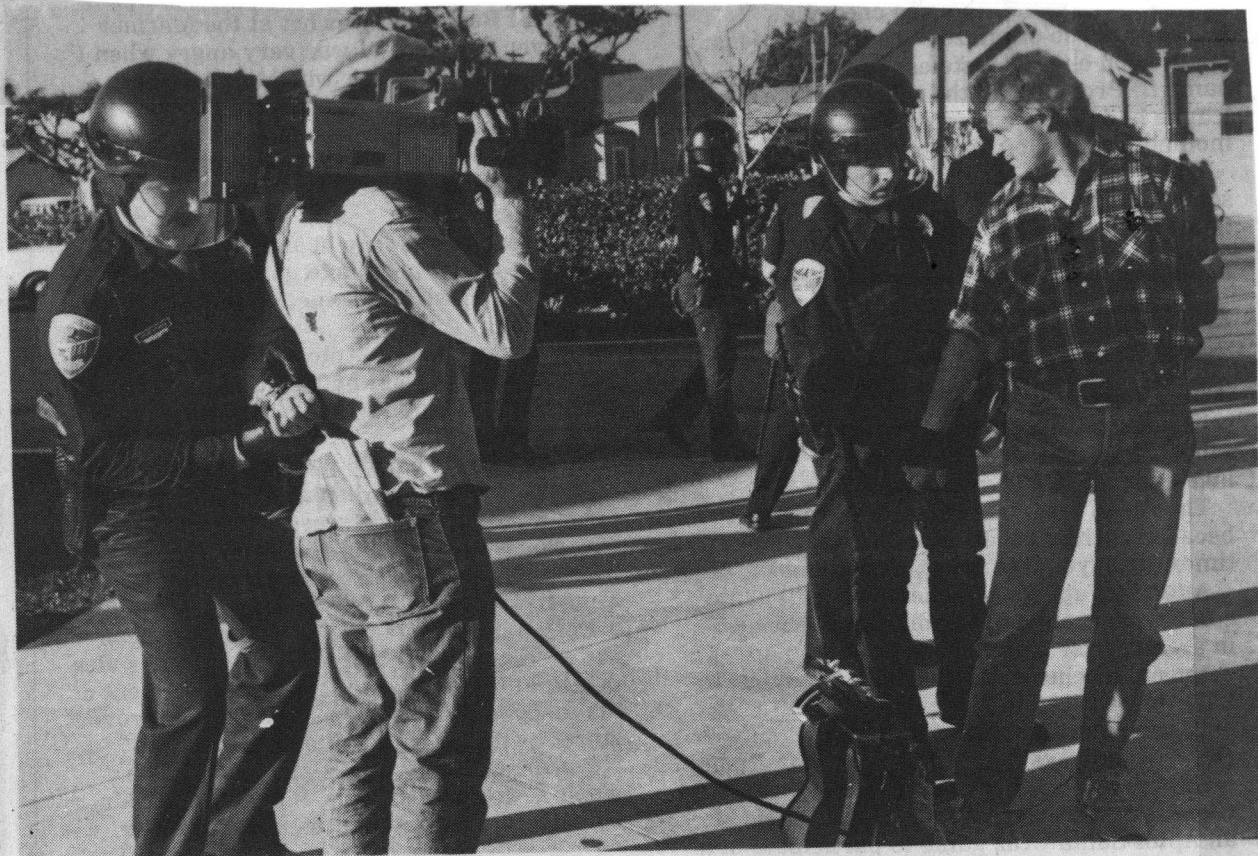
Most of those arrested were not strikers, but Belgard said the police were not aiming to arrest only outsiders, just the "faces we see regularly at these things."

"We arrested the ones who refused to disperse," said Belgard. "We usually don't have trouble with the local people, they just go along."

Belgard said all actions were taken with the intention of defending property and public safety. He said he believes if

police had not made the arrests violence could have erupted.

"This time I took the steps necessary before the violence occurred," said Belgard.



Jon Silver (with camera) and Joe Dees were arrested while filming the rally.

He said although he expects tensions to ease this week he will direct his officers to disperse groups anywhere in the city where there is a potential for a strike-related disturbance.

Arrested for unlawful assembly and failure to disperse were Alva Alvarez, 27, of Watsonville; Jon Silver, 26, of Rio del Mar; Joe Dees, 41, of Watsonville; Carlos Rosales, 27, of Watsonville; Alan Traugott, 62, of San Jose; Ron English, 27, of Santa Cruz; Victor Carillo, 28, of Watsonville; a 14-year old

female; two Stanford University students, Huerta Mario, 21, and Joel Bellenson and two UC-Santa Cruz students, Carlos Tejeda, 20 and Rene Castro, 20; Gloria Betancourt, 38, a Watsonville Canning striker was arrested but later released. Oscar Esquivel, 30, of Watsonville was arrested on a warrant that had nothing to do with the strike. Frank Bardacke, 44, of Watsonville, a teacher at Radcliff Adult School, was arrested Saturday morning on a warrant resulting from strike activities earlier in the week.