

Dress Code Splits Youth Commission

By Wallace Wood
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Sharp differences over students' right to dress or cut their hair as they please split members of the County Youth Commission Friday.

Commission members heard charges from a suspended Santa Cruz High School youth, Kimball McKai, that the school administration was practicing "selective enforcement" of the dress code on him and other students.

The meeting was an unofficial one, since there was no quorum with six members present.

McKai pointed out that two students from Soquel High School, who defended the

school's right to determine matters of appearance, were both in technical violation of the code but were not even warned by administrators.

The two were Janice Stewart, who wore a cheerleader's costume with a short skirt to the meeting, and Douglas Ley, who admitted his hair was long over the ears.

But the two, along with a third Soquel student, Gary Walker, were obviously groomed differently than McKai and a friend, Jeffrey Williams. McKai and Williams wore collarless shirts and combed their long hair behind their ears in an attempt to meet the letter of the dress code, which forbids hair over the ears or

below collars.

About the only thing most commission members did agree on was that selective enforcement, if practiced by the school administration, was unfair and should be stopped.

The two sides of the argument were carried principally by Miss Stewart and Jeffrey Hare, a Cabrillo College student who is not a member of the commission.

Hare sported both long hair and a beard, and argued it makes no difference in his conduct or his studies.

"The assumption is that short hair and good dress makes you behave better. It doesn't change a person," Hare declared.

In fact, Hare charged, the school administration's enforcement of the dress code "only creates undue tension and problems among students." If the matter was left to students and their parents, Hare said it would actually promote more "character and independent development. You have to develop yourself when you go out in the real world."

Miss Stewart, however, declared "you people are learning on the community's money. It's the taxpayers' prerogative to require certain dress." She said, "Kids don't want to submit to authority any more; it's bad."

Ley added he sees little chance the school administra-

tion or the school board will change the dress code, despite any pressure from students.

"The community is not for long hair," Ley said. "The school administrators are out to suppress it because they want to get the money to run the schools." The money, he pointed out, depends on the passage of bond or tax proposals by the public.

Williams said the school administration "has been harrassing me and Kim (McKai) and others who are student organizers against the code."

McKai added he was at first told his air was acceptable; then told later to cut it "because even though it is brushed behind my ears in school, I

could let it down after school is out."

"Why is Kim being suspended for what he does outside of school?" asked Nicholas Hanks, informal commission chairman.

McKai also said he was told that, as a suspended student, he was liable for arrest and placement in juvenile hall as a truant.

"That's not true," interjected Assistant County Counsel Mike Johnston. "We've talked to the administration, and they won't tell you that now, I'm sure." Johnston added, however, students could be taken to juvenile hall for "disobedience," but did not define the term.

The group broke up without reaching any conclusion.