

Welfare activists blame Brown for deaths of 2 infants

By Chuck Buxton
Sacramento Bureau

SACRAMENTO — A welfare rights organization supported by state and federal funds alleged Wednesday that Gov. Brown contributed to the deaths of "two innocent children" by failing to enforce emergency assistance regulations.

Kevin Aslanian, who founded the Welfare Recipients League seven years ago in Santa Clara County and who is on welfare himself, told a press conference in the governor's office waiting room that his organization was accusing Brown of "being personally responsible."

PRESSED for details, Aslanian said one 1976 case, now the subject of a lawsuit, involved a six-month-old Riverside County infant who allegedly died of pneumonia after her parents were refused aid and were unable to care for her properly. He explained he knew of a second similar case in Alameda County, but offered no further information.

Aslanian, whose organization was stripped of county support two years ago, also was asked how his group was funded. "Through donations," he told reporters.

A later check revealed that the Welfare Recipients League, which has offices at 1505 E. Santa Clara St. in San Jose, receives \$14,500 a year from the state Department of Social Services to aid food stamp clients and also receives federal funds that cover the salaries of four workers.

THE outspoken, 35-year-old Aslanian was accompanied by several league members and about half a dozen children, including his own three youngsters, 3, 5 and 7.

Group members placed two symbolic bottles on the desk of the governor's receptionist. One represented "the blood that he (Brown) has bled from the poor children primarily," and the other ashes, "consisting of all our hopes that he has destroyed with his policies," according to the league's press release.

Aslanian acknowledged that he and his wife receive welfare payments through the federal Aid to Families with Dependent Children program. The monthly amount "is generally \$487," he said.

He added that he has been on welfare "on and off about 6 or 7 years."

Asked later about the



—AP PHOTO

SYMBOLIC JARS of blood and ashes are left in Gov. Brown's reception room by welfare activists Elisa Richard, center, and Kevin Aslanian, right, and children accompanying them in protest.

state and federal funding, Aslanian responded from his San Jose office: "I'm not getting it, the League is getting it. I don't get nothing. I'm just a volunteer over here."

Aslanian first applied for welfare after losing a job as a truck driver. He discovered the difficulty of "paying for kids and paying rent and looking for a job" with a welfare grant, and has been "organizing ever since."

He won a reputation in Santa Clara County as a brash, sometimes domineering advocate of welfare rights with a mastery of the complex welfare regulations.

Although the Santa Clara Board of Supervisors approved the payment of \$24,000 to the league under a federal revenue sharing program between October 1973 and October 1975, those funds were stopped after a controversy over Asla-

nian's \$900 a month salary and his advocacy efforts while on welfare.

County officials did not criticize his handling of the money.

For at least the past two years, according to a spokeswoman for the state Department of Social Services, the league has received \$14,500 annually to help people with the food stamp program.

The four federally funded workers, on hand for at least the past four years, are paid through

the CETA (Comprehensive Employment and Training Act) jobs program. Annual salary is between \$8,000 and \$9,000 a year for such jobs, according to a program administrator.

Rick Skinner, the state attorney handling the case referred to by Aslanian, had no additional information on the circumstances of the infant's death.

He said the lawsuit filed by the league is still in its early stages.

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