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Newsday/Christopher Hatch

Defense Budget Subject of Sit-In

On cue, the 11 left the entrance of a Manhattan weapons research institute and filed into a waiting police van yesterday morning after protesting what they said was the unfair treatment of the homeless.

After a 50-minute sit-in outside the Riverside Research Institute, a 42nd Street think tank that works on nuclear and space-based weapons systems, the protesters were arrested and issued summonses for criminal trespass. They had come from Emmaus House, a Harlem-based religious organization, to protest defense spending while the ranks of the homeless increase 10 percent a year, said the group's leader, the Rev. David Kirk.

It was a cordial protest, with Police Sgt. Thomas Graham doffing his cowboy hat as he spoke to the demonstrators and arranged an orderly arrest. Graham said there have been about five other protests in the past year at Riverside, long a rallying point for activists opposed to defense spending.

Before he was arrested, Kirk said, "People think of the peace issue as a middle-class issue. But we are here to

say it is also an issue for the poor. More and more money is spent on weapons that kill, but what about the crisis in this country for people who do not have a place to live?"

Emmaus House recently raised about \$600,000 to renovate the Charles Hotel on 124th Street in Harlem, Kirk said, providing 42 rooms for the homeless. But Emmaus House can do little to address the acute shortage of affordable housing in New York City, he added. The morning's protest apparently did not interrupt the institute. "We are pretty used to it," an unidentified employee said.

The Rev. David Kirk, center, leads sit-in yesterday at research institute.