

Howard Zinn Disturbs the Sleep of the Elite

I think that something should be done to interrupt the sleep of people who pass such laws."

— Howard Zinn, commenting on anti-sleeping laws in Santa Cruz

by Becky Johnson

The progressive/liberal elite of Santa Cruz met in a standing-room-only crowd on October 25 to hear Howard Zinn, the great tell-it-like-it-really-was history revisionist and author of *A People's History of the United States*.

Zinn gave his \$15-a-head audience the same lesson that homeless activist Dan Hopkins had been giving progressive politicians and the rest of us for the past seven months in front of city hall as part of the City Hall Sleepers Protest (see related article and photo above).

The all-important message that both Howard Zinn and Dan Hopkins convey is: It is NOT PROGRESSIVE (excuse me for shouting) to harass, humiliate, handcuff, arrest, ticket, threaten, flashlight, arbitrarily run warrant and ID checks on, create false charges, kick or verbally abuse street people as a matter of social policy.

It is cruel and unusual punishment for

homeless people to deprive them of sleep. And the various city ordinances enforced by the Santa Cruz Police Department do just that. Also, the "privatized" police, AKA The Downtown Hosts, act as an untrained, low-paid police force whose primary purpose is to discourage street people from gathering in public places.

Howard Zinn spelled it out for them all, in language anyone could understand. How do you solve the homeless problem? Tax the rich, he said.

A young man stood up and asked Zinn what he thought about the law in Santa Cruz which makes it illegal to sleep outside. Zinn shook his head in amazement. "I think that something should be done to interrupt the sleep of people who pass such laws," he told the young man.

City Councilmember Scott Kennedy was sitting directly behind his mentor Zinn on the dais, but he did not applaud Zinn's answer about the Santa Cruz anti-sleeping



Art by Moby Theobald from *Down and Out in Berkeley*

laws. Nor did he applaud when Zinn announced to thunderous audience approval that he was voting for Ralph Nader.

On foreign policy, Zinn had this to say, "If we applied the Declaration of Independence to our foreign relations policy, we could not wage war... The promises of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness would make dropping the bomb on Hiroshima inconceivable. We could not kill 100,000 children as an act of U.S. policy."

The event, hosted by the Resource Center for Non-violence, was sold out and, according to organizer Doug Rand, was forced to turn away another 150 to

comply with fire codes. Vice-Mayor Cynthia Matthews gave Zinn the key to the city and declared it Howard Zinn Day. Even with the key to the city, let us hope Zinn is never forced to sleep outside anywhere within the inhospitable city limits.

As the audience left the forum, they were greeted by homeless activist Ray Grueneich, who held a small, hand lettered sign. It said:

"I think that something should be done to interrupt the sleep of people who pass such laws."