

by Robert Norse

One phase of the City Hall Sleepers Protest came to an end on October 15, 229 nights after it had begun. The energy behind the months-long protest has transplanted itself and blossomed into more active outreach around Santa Cruz.

Cofounded by "Dragonsheart" Dan Hopkins and "Shitkicker" Sean Alemi, the round-the-clock "sleepless" sleep-out at Santa Cruz City Hall protested the joint evils of an enforced ban on sleeping outdoors anywhere within city limits, and the lack of a legal low-income campground.

The "fight-back" energy from the Vigil has moved to new arenas: police abuse on downtown Pacific Avenue, renewed protest at public events on campus and elsewhere; and continued day-time protest and sign-carrying in front of City Hall. "Skidmarks" Bob Duran has reopened his Copwatch table near Friendship Corner at Cathcart and Pacific where Officers Evelith, Over, and a bevy of blue-bellied badge-bearing bullies maintain maximum pressure on "criminal" sitters, sparechang-

ers, musicians and jewelry sellers.

Dan Hopkins, a homeless San Jose peace activist, street juggler and Save Our Shelters militant, initiated and sustained the vigil with frantic humility. Last year Hopkins was a resident of the Coral Street Open Air Shelter and then a militant with Save Our Shelters, the union of community and homeless activists that sought to save that homeless campground. In February this year, Hopkins stood nearly alone in challenging "Community House", a \$2 million-dollar, 40-person trailer project. This project is the fund magnet sponsored by the city's monopoly emergency shelter provider, the Citizens Committee for the Homeless (CCH).

Sean Alemi, often at odds with Hopkins personally and politically, was a controversial and charismatic worker in Feed the People. By May, Alemi had racked up the greatest number of misdemeanor "sleep-

spent nearly a month in jail. Judge "Kangaroo" Kelly Barton ordered him not to return to the vigil at night, and Alemi frequently walked the razor edge of that

order to bring food to hungry vigilers and participate in their meetings.

It was only when Alemi and Hopkins were both put out of commission by legal charges, splits, disagreement and exhaustion, that the vigil receded to its current flickering status.

On March 1, Hopkins, Alemi, and a dozen others began the City Hall Sleepers Protest. Helping to spark their protest was the conversion of a campground, previously used by hundreds as a sanctuary, work base and shelter, into a locked field surrounded by no trespassing signs. In the course of the next seven and one-half months, Hopkins and his comrades would take more than 350 tickets for such crimes as "sitting on a wall" (improper conduct on public property), "putting out a cigarette on the ground" (littering), "covering up with blankets" (Sleeping Ban violation), and, of course, "sleeping".

Two months later, when Mayor "Roust the Wretched" Rotkin found he couldn't drive the protesters away with sneers, blanket-raiding expeditions, sign-trashing police vandalism and a campaign of lies,

he got the Council to vote for an injunction — a court order that stiffened penalties for peaceful protest at the Vigil. One act of sleeping became a potential crime punishable by six months in jail, as did carrying one sign bigger than 14 inches, or one act of cooking, storing or preparing food. A dozen people now face scores of misdemeanor charges, some for violating the injunction, some for simply sleeping outdoors twice within 48 hours.

After the November election prompted a drumbeat of street community scapegoating, harassment on downtown Pacific Avenue and at the Vigil escalated. "Rolling Thunder" Sheridan, who claimed never to have gotten a ticket in his life,



Protesters Carry On the Fight to Legalize Sleep

In Santa Cruz, a seven-month sleep-out vigil ends, but activists push forward their struggle for homeless rights

Like the stars under which its advocates sleep, the spirit of the Vigil still twinkles on. "Rolling Thunder" can still be seen seated quietly on the forbidden stone wall in front of Santa Cruz City Hall, an illegal

"Legalize Sleep" sign leaning brazenly (and illegally) against a city lamp-post nearby.

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