

people sleep outside every night (500-1500 in the City, 3000-5000 in the County) and how few legal places there are (38 in north Santa Cruz County at the date of this writing). Nowhere do we read of what cutbacks in AFDC, SSI, and GA will do to more than double the homeless population within six months. Nowhere is there an honest debate of the real impact that changing the sleeping ban law would have — as was done in Santa Barbara in 1986 with no appreciable “magnet” effect.

Clark's longest and only above-the-fold front-page article on the vigil came when she announced the vigil's death because of “potential violence” there. In fact, the only violence there came from two sources: the “hot” violence from police, including endless harassment, confiscation of property, verbal and physical abuse, an avalanche of tickets and warrants and the double standard of selectively ticketing protesters while ignoring other sleepers nearby; and the “cold” violence from the City Council, which put out anti-homeless rhetoric that inflamed violence against those sleeping outside, and the relentless institutional violence of the Sleeping Ban itself. The fatal stabbing of a homeless person, Martin Estrada, on October 1, got only the most cursory coverage from Clark.

Many proposals for modification of existing laws have been made — all of them ignored by City Council, the Citizens Committee for the Homeless, and the Homeless Community Resource Center. Some activists have proposed striking the Camping Ban's sections on sleeping and covering up with blankets. Others have suggested taking the lead from the County and holding public hearings to declare limited “no camping” zones, with the rest of the city legal to lie down in. Still others propose more limited zoning regulations that permit sleeping in industrial areas or on the outskirts of town, while outlawing it in residential and business districts.

More militant homeless rights advocates (such as the Revolutionary Coalition, which has led weekly marches from the town clocks, speakouts at Cabrillo College, and a sleepcrime chain-gang lockdown at City Council) want more. They have proposed doing away with the Camping Ban entirely, given the real shelter emergency that even the City

Council has declared exists (in November, 1995). Any real problems, they say, can be covered by existing health and safety laws. Not only should people be allowed to sleep, they must be allowed the dignity, privacy, and protection from the elements that setting up a tent provides, the right to cook their own food, and the right to a living space during the day.

All factions from right to left agree that a low-income campground is vital. Even Cynthia Matthews, a key Rotkin ally who is running with him for reelection, says she could consider “specifying designated sites, clear conditions, public review, and close supervision.” Unfortunately such a plan has been bumming around town since the mid-1980s when hunger striker Jane Imler's 1985 fast produced the first cold-and-rainy night shelter, but failed to get Sycamore Grove as a campground.

The final days of the formal and organized period of the Sleepers Protest was marked by increased desperation from the protesters and a coarsened indifference from City Council. When active AIDS sufferer “Spittin' Kitten” Reynolds slashed her arms at the Council meeting on October 8 as CCH's Community House received a go-ahead, Mayor Rotkin ignored the incident entirely. Reynolds was arrested for misdemeanor sleeping in charges that disappeared soon after — to avoid the authorities the embarrassment of not having provided shelter and care for a Person With AIDS.

Black activist Miguel Balderos was returned to prison in Santa Rita for an alleged parole violation of “sleeping outside at the protest” after he too had been arrested on misdemeanor sleeping charges. No misdemeanor sleepcrime charge has yet gone to trial, though about a dozen are scheduled for January after the several hundred infraction charges are tried in December.

Like the stars under which its advocates sleep, the spirit of the Vigil still twinkles on, frequently obscured by clouds, rained out by showers, unseen during the day. Yet still it lives. On October 27, (one day before press time for this article), “Rolling Thunder” could still be seen seated quietly on the forbidden stone wall in front of Santa Cruz City Hall, an illegal “Legalize Sleep” sign