

Santa Cruz Protest

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denouncing Rotkin's procedural coup as a threat to democracy, but had no words of support for the basic human rights of the homeless. Neither she, Kennedy, nor Beiers made any effort to publicize the grim facts about the Shelter Crisis/Sleepcrime situation in Santa Cruz.

A PROTEST FOR AMNESTY

Activists responded to the council's betrayal of the human rights of the homeless by organizing a January 14 demonstration in support of amnesty for sleep-crimes and democracy at the Santa Cruz City Council. Neither Kennedy, Beiers, nor Scott agreed to speak at, support, or even acknowledge the "Mid-Winter Demonstration of Hope for the Santa Cruz Homeless Community."

In fact, Kennedy resumed denunciation of activists and attacked the legal counsel of the City Hall Sleepers Protest at the first council meeting in January. Even as protesters inside and outside the chambers passed out literature supporting "democracy at Santa Cruz City Council, human rights for the homeless, amnesty for sleep-crimes, a winter shelter emergency, an end to the blanket and sleeping bans, reform of the camping ban, and [ironically enough in light of Kennedy's disavowal of activists] the actions of councilmembers Scott, Beiers & Kennedy."

Organizers on the street saw the January 14th council meeting as an opportunity. HUFF (Homeless United for Friendship & Freedom) activists assembled the most prestigious endorsements for a Santa Cruz homeless demonstration ever, including S.F. Supervisor Tom Ammiano, Arcata Green Party City Councilmember Bob Ornelius and Berkeley's newest City Councilmember Kriss Worthington. Activists with the New York Coalition for the Homeless, the S.F. Coalition on Homelessness, the Eugene-Springfield Homeless Action Coalition, and the Oregon Human Rights Commission sent

Coalition Against Homelessness, the San Jose Community Homeless Alliance, Palo Alto Food Not Bombs, Santa Cruz Housing Now!, the Revolutionary Coalition and Refuse and Resist!

Some local service providers, perhaps leery of offending the new "balance of bigotry" on the council, stayed away. ACLU honcho Eleanor Eisenberg and Karen Gillette, director of the Homeless Community Resource Center, maintained a pregnant silence. Others, like Shelter Project Director Paul Brindel straddled the issue by sending a letter opposing the ban to the council, but declining to attend. Frank Pucelik, controversial supporter of a Safe Haven sleeping spot for homeless people, and recent victim of a *Santa Cruz Sentinel* smear job, risked job and relationships to publicly endorse the event.

Homeless locals kicked off the all-day rally by raising banners and voices smack

in the heart of the Santa Cruz downtown. Civil rights attorney Ed Frey spoke to a crowd whose angry listeners sported backpacks and blankets adorned with colorful "No Sleep, No Peace" signs. Frey urged support for his client, homeless activist David "B.D." Dumars, in jail for 45 days for loudly protesting police violence against the 1994 Valentine's Week homeless street vigil.

The scene of that 1994 crackdown was half a block away from where the speakers stood. Santa Cruz police had pepper-sprayed and dragged B.D. off in handcuffs for speaking to a crowd at Georgiana's cafe in support of sidewalk sleeper Robert Flory. Ironically, Flory himself has now been found guilty of 24 counts of "sleep-crime," was fined over \$1500, and announced he would refuse to pay or do "voluntary" community service.

Dragooned into the street speakout was old-time legal activist Ray Grueneich, a courtroom fighter against the Sleeping Ban since the late 70's. Grueneich acted as free lawyer for the damned through the late 80's and early 90's, taking every Sleeping Ban case that came his way.

From San Francisco came Food Not Bombs cofounder Keith McHenry urging demonstrators to keep a vigilant eye on the terrifying Clinton "anti-terrorist" law, which gives the FBI power to begin spying again on nonviolent political activists and mandates 15-year sentences for innocent donations to organizations the Feds unilaterally and secretly decide are "terrorist."

Listeners then took their demonstration on the road with a march up and down Pacific Avenue chanting: "We Demand the Right to Sleep at Night," pausing at the statue of IWW organizer and musical-saw player Tom Scribner. There, two years ago, a Wobbly convention had slept out 70 strong to demonstrate that union's opposition to the sleepcrime law, recognizing that the sleeping ban makes slaves of folks who rent as well —putting them in fear of jail if they fail to please their bosses and find themselves on the streets at night with the need to sleep.

Liz Babcock of the Revolutionary Coalition moved the crowd by reminding them that poor people are part of the community, not to be judged and jailed by the casual cruelty of the Ban.

Moving to City Hall at mid-afternoon, the marchers bellied up to a steaming soup line, complements of Joe Schultz, master chef of India Joze restaurant, who had himself been arrested in 1989 for serving the homeless free food outside at the Santa Cruz Town Clock. Kate Wells, attorney for protester and juggler Dan Hopkins, spoke about his upcoming trials and appeals under the Ban. Hopkins appeal would circumvent the California Supreme Court's wretched *Tobe* decision because the Santa Cruz law specifically outlaws sleeping, unlike the Santa Ana camping ban upheld by the *Tobe* verdict.

Demonstrators filled the council chambers to hear futile and irrelevant debate on an arcane procedural dispute. Celia Scott

moved to adopt a parliamentary rule that would prevent a repetition of Rotkin's gag-the-minority maneuver of a month before. A motion to table or to postpone

indefinitely would, under Scott's motion, require both council and public input before they could be voted on.

Rotkin and his allies made short work of Scott's motion. Kennedy broke ranks with dissenters Beiers and Scott to resume his seat in the city power structure by opposing Scott's procedural reform. Even Scott and Beiers ultimately joined in a feast of reconciliation that again left the homeless outside looking in. On the dubious theory that any rule at all is better than no rule, the mini-rebels joined with Rotkin to pass his rule that motions to table "should not be used" to muzzle the council minority and the public, but could be so used, if anyone wanted to. Basing democratic process on trusting Rotkin after his harsh winter antics was a peculiar solution that seemed unprincipled.

The defeat was predictable. The losing councilmembers had not rallied liberal supporters, refused to work with radical allies, and wouldn't raise the real issues that would have produced at least an educational assault on the Sleeping Ban.

In a final spate of ludicrous grandstanding, Kennedy — a no-show in the struggle against the Sleeping Ban for the last six years — bemoaned the failure of the council to consider "real" homeless issues. Positioning himself as a critic of irrelevant procedural chatter and a champion of investigating substantive homeless issues, Kennedy moved to set up a special study session of the Rotkin-controlled Social Services Subcommittee, putting true debate on the camping ban yet another month down the long, and wet, winding road.

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