

## Deportation of Hundreds Looms in Eureka

from page two

them set up camps in this town."

Eighty percent of the South Spit residents are disabled, mentally or physically. There are about a dozen children. One-third of the community is female. Most of them have non-operational vehicles. Dr. Ring swears in her court declaration: "most... live in trailers which provide shelter from the weather, cooking and food storage facilities, and some security from theft and assault. Evicting people from shelter, however poor, in the face of oncoming winter weather, without providing an alternative will have detrimental effects on their health... and is not in any way justified by the medical facts."

Health Officer Lindsay asked for and got \$55,000 from the County Supervisors for "homeless relocation" expenses, much of which was spent to staff a road-block gate with sheriffs, then security guards, and to euthanize or adopt out the residents' pets. Jetty residents were issued mandatory ID cards which are checked when they enter and leave. The security guards and ID checks at the armed and guarded gate create what many residents describe as an atmosphere of police-state surveillance and intimidation.

The police seem bent not only on evicting the long-standing homeless community from the Jetty, but persecuting them until they are forced to leave Eureka entirely. Dervin reports that she found Larry, who fled the Jetty earlier and now sleeps in an abandoned building, in tears on September 23. The former Jetty resident reported that police had threatened to take his dog and told him nobody from the Jetty was welcome in Eureka. He was given 10 days to get out of town.

Jinny Jernigan, 64, a homeless advocate for more than 10 years, was one of four additional social workers paid by the County to walk the South Spit Jetty as protective cover for the homeless removal. On September 23, she quit, disgusted with the County's activities, and swore out a declaration indicting the County for incompetence at best — the social workers had virtually no resources or information to give the Jetty residents.

Jernigan calls the County claims that they are housing homeless people with the allocated money "simply lies." A Health Department worker suggested to *Street Spirit* that the County had helped relocate over 130 people, a claim Dervin and Attorney Jan Turner said was knowingly false. Nardia, a resident on the Jetty,

writes that her repeated attempts to get even a single application form from social workers were met with silence and that her family members have not been allowed past the armed and guarded gate.

The police harassment and upcoming expulsion violate a legal settlement between Humboldt County and the Jetty homeless community made on August 19, in which the County had signed off on an agreement to end harassment of the campers. It allowed the homeless community to stay on the federal property at the end of the Jetty unmolested, ending periodic police harassment through trespass tickets; the August settlement also ended a 1994 "public nuisance" lawsuit that police and county bureaucrats had been using to drive away "the undesirables." In return, the South Spit campers agreed to take care of the land and move to an alternate site when that became available.

Barely a week before the October 2 eviction deadline, Attorney Jan Turner filed a lawsuit demanding that the courts enforce the August settlement. She filed 28 declarations documenting that persons providing necessary medication, food, water, and transportation have been prevented from entering South Spit Jetty; that those on South Spit without picture ID have been unable to leave; and that the health "emergency" used to justify wholesale abrogation of constitutional rights is a pretext to facilitate state purchase of the Spit. Turner further contends that the state agency planning to purchase the property, the Coastal Conservancy, has refused to do so until campers have been removed; the Coastal Conservancy paid for the guard gate. Humboldt County's unilateral decision to blockade the homeless community on federal property also cuts access to a state beach and a county park.

Lindsay's "health emergency" tale fit in well with Humboldt County Supervisor Stan Dixon's plan to redevelop Humboldt Harbor by having the State of California buy the five-mile strip of property from Pacific Lumber and the Army Corps of Engineers, and turning it into a managed recreational area. The one sticking point: the State's Coastal Conservancy would not purchase the Pacific Lumber access road until all the homeless people were off the property. Rather than evict them straightaway and be forced to pay costly relocation fees, Dixon engineered a bill via State Senator Thompson authorizing the Coastal Conservancy to make a study and buy the spit.

Resident Jesse Katz writes, "I was liv-

ing in Eureka and I moved out here to get away from the drugs and the police harassment of the homeless. I'm clean out here. For the large part we were chased out here, given no options. The Jetty is closer to a community than I ever found in Eureka. Kill me or take me to jail. I don't want either but I'm not afraid."

Seven-year resident Guy Keller writes, "I'm being held against my will, because I don't have ID. They will let me out, but they won't let me back in." Fourteen-year-old Meredith Giles writes, "My mom has asthma, emphysema, and her kidneys are failing. I feel like I'm more free here than anywhere else in the world. When all this started happening, I felt like I was a prisoner, that I was more of a number than a person. It didn't feel like America, that I was trapped in some other country."

James Darpino, who lives at South Spit with his wife and two children and has one of the few operational vehicles, writes of the "simple but beneficial way of life" with "people tightly knit." "The unity here has a bond so strong that nobody goes without food, without water, or any of the basic necessities of life."

Merv Jensen, reporter for *Homeward*, a Sacramento homeless newspaper, spent four days in Eureka in September. After speaking with County Health officials and Jetty residents, he saw the County's anti-homeless campaign as "some sort of a far-fetched land deal, an immoral, unfeeling, and remorseless effort." He was so struck with the injustice of the situation that he returned to the Jetty after filing his story to be with residents when police move in to uproot the community (currently scheduled for early October).

Lurch, who has been homeless in Santa Cruz and Santa Barbara, says that the "homeless out here aren't activists or protesters; we're losing it because of that." Phil, disabled and from a well-to-do family, writes: "The family out here on the Jetty is more important than my own family because they need more." Eleven-year-old Chris, a fifth grader, said: "I feel like something is going to happen, like there is going to be a big storm or something."

There is virtually no housing available for under \$300; the Eureka Housing Authority has a long waiting list and does background checks, and only slumlords will rent to people without rental references, which homeless people obviously do not have. Trailer parks won't admit those trailers still mobile on the Jetty because they are too old. The County has refused even to supply gas money so people can seek housing on their own. Eureka bars overnight sleeping in vehicles.