

# Justice News and Homeless Blues from around California

by Robert Norse

## SANTA CRUZ

In late January, the Citizens Police Review Board and the Santa Cruz City Council upheld the police slaying of "Happy" John Dine without public hearings or an independent investigation.

Dine, a disabled man who had frequently marched in homeless protests, had been targeted by some police officers for his outspoken hippie manner downtown and was shot twice after allegedly brandishing a toy gun. [See *Street Spirit*, Dec., 1997, and Jan., 1998.]

The Board's decision was taken without a formal vote after several months delay with no criticism for the police chief and district attorney, even though they have not repudiated a statement issued 16 hours after the shooting that the Police Review Board later found to be false.

On March 15, the SCPD shot a second man, Brian Andrus, five times in front of his wife at the door of his home.

Santa Cruz activists are gathering signatures for the Initiative to Repeal the Sleeping Ban. Contact Homeless United for Friendship and Freedom (HUFF), 309 Cedar St., #14B, Santa Cruz 95060. Phone: 408/423-4833; fax: 408/429-8529; email: wmnofstl@cruzio.com

## SAN JOSE

Food Not Bombs successfully challenged a merchant/police smear campaign against the homeless on March 22, when they picketed the home of a resident

whose quotes had been used by the *San Jose Mercury News* in a March 16th story. The "round the bums up" story focused on St. James Park, where Food Not Bombs serves food in spite of police harassment. San Jose city officials also recently ordered the complete fencing off of the downtown Cesar Chavez park and a misdemeanor downtown sitting ban [*Street Spirit*, May, 1997]. Food Not Bombs can be reached at 408/257-9424 (contact Lennox). Also fighting for shelter space in San Jose is the Community Homeless Alliance Ministry (408/345-2353).

## PALO ALTO

Only one ticket has been issued under the city's downtown Sit/Lie Ban, according to Food Not Bombs worker Purusha Obluda — due in significant part to the large protest against the law at the Palo Alto City Council and in candlelight civil disobedience on University Avenue last spring [*Street Spirit*, April, 1997].

Authorities in the city of 60,000 (with an estimated homeless population of 150) barred Victor Frost, a local homeless man, from holding a weekend First Amendment camp-out protest at City Hall in his attempt to build pressure for a city-sponsored or tolerated campground.

Low-key police pressure has apparently reduced the visible homeless population downtown. Rains and official indifference have washed away the Palo Alto Urban Ministry's morning homeless facility — now struggling to survive in a truck parked near the Transit center. For more

information: call Purusha Obluda at 650/843-0333 ext. 3663.

## SAN FRANCISCO

Judy Appel, attorney with the Coalition an Homelessness (COH), says the S.F. Parks and Recreation Department has stepped up pressure on homeless people with daily sweeps in Golden Gate Park. Mayor Willie Brown's bum-basher squad is giving its victims five minutes to move, or, if they aren't present at the time police arrive, taking people's survival gear and discarding it. In response, victims are suing the City in small claims court.

In March, COH activists turned Supervisor Amos Brown's anti-homeless attack on "shopping cart theft" in public hearings into a partially successful proposal for Lucky's to set up a donated shopping cart program. Police may have slowed their seizure of homeless shopping carts in most of the city, though Parks and Rec squads have stepped up their confiscations in Civic Center.

COH receives at least one complaint a day that police tow away vehicular residences (i.e., vans and cars that folks use to sleep in). COH asked the S.F. Police Commission to put a moratorium on the tows, and asked the Mayor's office to set up a special permit program for folks to be able to stay in vehicles. COH has been in negotiations with city officials since the fall of 1996 to set up a lot where people in vehicles can have a community, be free from police harassment, secure some basic amenities, and pay rent. A Port of

San Francisco site has been identified.

Media hysteria generated by Ken Garcia's *S. F. Chronicle* article last fall denouncing homeless persons camped in Golden Gate Park as "arsonists, parolees, and drug users," has resulted in the City fencing off of a portion of the park, followed by an overflow of refugees into the Haight, and several homeless deaths. Citations for sleeping in the park have decreased recently, but risen for the same "crime" in nearby doorways.

In response, COH has initiated a Covenant Campaign to neighborhood groups, pledging them to seek alternative ways of addressing homelessness — other than calling in the police.

After NIMBY pressure closed three community shelters, city bureaucrats opened an emergency shelter in an isolated industrial area with 400-600 beds. Meanwhile, the winter death toll has increased, in part because of the police policy of confiscating homeless property. To help, call COH at 415/346-3740.

A candlelight vigil for police victim Mark Garcia will be held Wednesday, April 15, at 7 p.m. at St. Peter's Church, 24th St. and Alabama to support Garcia's family and demand justice.

## BUENA PARK (NEAR ANAHEIM)

Reverend Wiley Drake reports groundbreaking for a church shelter in Buena Park, after he finally secured a conditional use permit after a two-year fight with the city, in which he was tried by a jury and