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Justice News

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SANTA MONICA STRUGGLES

Jennafer Waggoner, the editor of *Making Change*, and activist David Busch won a partial victory in mid-April in a lawyerless defense against trespass charges levied by vindictive Santa Monica authorities. After five court appearances and 200 hours of legal defense time, Waggoner and Busch abandoned their planned necessity defense and jury trials, accepting probation and 50 hours of community service. The two had occupied the abandoned Flamingo Motel last fall with 100 other homeless people for more than a week as cold, wet weather menaced thousands of street people while the City of Santa Monica kept its shelters closed.

The protesters enraged city authorities and engaged the media by locking themselves into a metal claw device of the sort used by environmental activists [see *Street Spirit*, February, 1998].

In apparent retaliation for her resistance, Waggoner has been evicted from the Social Services Commission — eliminating the only homeless person on that

board. She reports that less than 10% of Santa Monica's homeless have shelter in May. Those who sleep in their vehicles not only face \$38 tickets but regularly have their cars towed and confiscated.

The "no sitting on public railings and sidewalks" ordinance passed last year to prettify the promenade [*Street Spirit*, July, 1997] is regularly used to sweep away young people. Promenade performers are required to get \$130 permits and must move every 30 minutes. Street newspaper vendors are required to carry a police document that binds them to giving away their paper to anyone who asks — a direct attack on the vendors of her *Making Change*. Waggoner expects to file a report on human rights violations to the Human Rights Commission of the United Nations this summer at the UN Non-Governmental Organization Conference.

Waggoner and her paper are also struggling with the \$300,000 megapaper *The Big Issue*, newly arrived from England, which published its first U.S. edition on April 2. Waggoner reports that NASNA, the North American Street Newspaper Association, has declined to back up its January 8th resolution opposing *The Big*

Issue's arrival in Los Angeles. In the absence of NASNA support, Waggoner and her vendors ratified a deal with *The Big Issue*, which the London-based paper has largely refused to honor.

Waggoner says TBI is violating its own charter by moving into the territory of another street paper, has not come through on technical and publicity support as promised, and has missed every weekly negotiating meeting in April. TBI founder John Bird, Waggoner says, is using Los Angeles as a bridgehead to move on the U.S. market in an action that menaces all small local homeless newspapers.

She has vowed to initiate a protest of The Body Shop, a large multinational corporation backing *The Big Issue*, if Bird does not make good on his promises by mid-May. Contact Waggoner at 310/289-7446 to support her.

STATEWIDE RESOURCES

Available for homeless and activist use statewide is the California Homeless Civil Rights Action Network and Internet page: <http://www.cruzio.com/~chhc/hcr.html> Under-used in the last year, this page is accessible through many libraries with Internet access. Readers can update the

activist community worldwide about what is going on in their own communities regarding positive and negative developments on the street. Log on and tell us what's happening in your community.