

January 1991

for another emergency resolution to help out the Silver Bullet cardroom.

Santa Cruz has had an ongoing and officially declared Shelter Emergency since 1990, reaffirmed more strongly in 1995, then put into a Mission Statement in 1998, two weeks before the new City Council took office. The City admits on paper that it has legal shelter or sleeping areas for less than 5% of the 500-1500 homeless community in summer, and less than 20% in winter.

How progressive were the new progressives if they wouldn't deal with a winter shelter crisis? Coincidentally, this was the time the public would be most sympathetic to repealing unfair laws.

The good news is that the entire Camping Ban — we are told — will be on the new council's agenda for the first time. Beiers promised committee hearings beginning as early as December and public hearings before the full council in February. The bad news is that Beiers, apparently anxious to get hitherto intractable conservatives in the business and residential communities on board, missed her first, best chance to ban the Bans in time for winter.

The best news is that homeless people on the street have begun to speak up in record numbers — through phone calls to City Council (which the staff there have generally declined to tally), and through independent protests unrelated to traditional homeless activists. A mass rally at the Town Clock on December 12 condemning the execution of Mumia Abu Jamal, the brutal police assault on Steve Argue for selling street newspapers (see *Street Spirit* 12/98), and the Sleeping Ban, drew several hundred at its height in a march from UCSC downtown.

Though police continue to harass sleepers — even after the City Council's "ticket only on complaint and after warning" proviso — activists have joined to establish a hotline to document police misconduct (831/423-4833 is the interim number). Radical activists are pressing a "boycott bigotry" campaign downtown to hit ban-boosting merchants in the pocket-book. Sleep may still be a crime in Santa Cruz, but public impatience over the absurdity is growing.

Becky Johnson wrote a Santa Cruz version of a familiar Christmas carol:

*"God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen,
But not in Santa Cruz,
And if you're warm beneath your quilts,
Your blankets you will lose
Bad Tidings — Not Comfort or Joy,
Comfort or Joy,
Bad Tidings — Not Comfort or Joy!"*