

# Mall 'rousts' spur protest by homeless

□ Supporters of a homeless shelter have banked \$50,000 in gifts — **Page A4**

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**SANTA CRUZ** — About 30 street people demonstrated at the Town Clock Thursday afternoon and late into the night, raising hand-painted cardboard signs protesting alleged rousts by police.

The protest came on the heels of violent confrontation between street people and police recently on the Pacific Garden Mall.

About half a dozen street people Thursday night again claimed they were rousted by police. Two people were arrested.

Identities of those arrested were unavailable late Thursday, said Police Sgt. Andy Crain. Crain said the woman was arrested about 8 p.m. on charges of being drunk and knocking trash cans over along the mall.

Crain said her boyfriend was arrested on charges of battery on an officer when he tried to interfere and struck an officer in the nose.

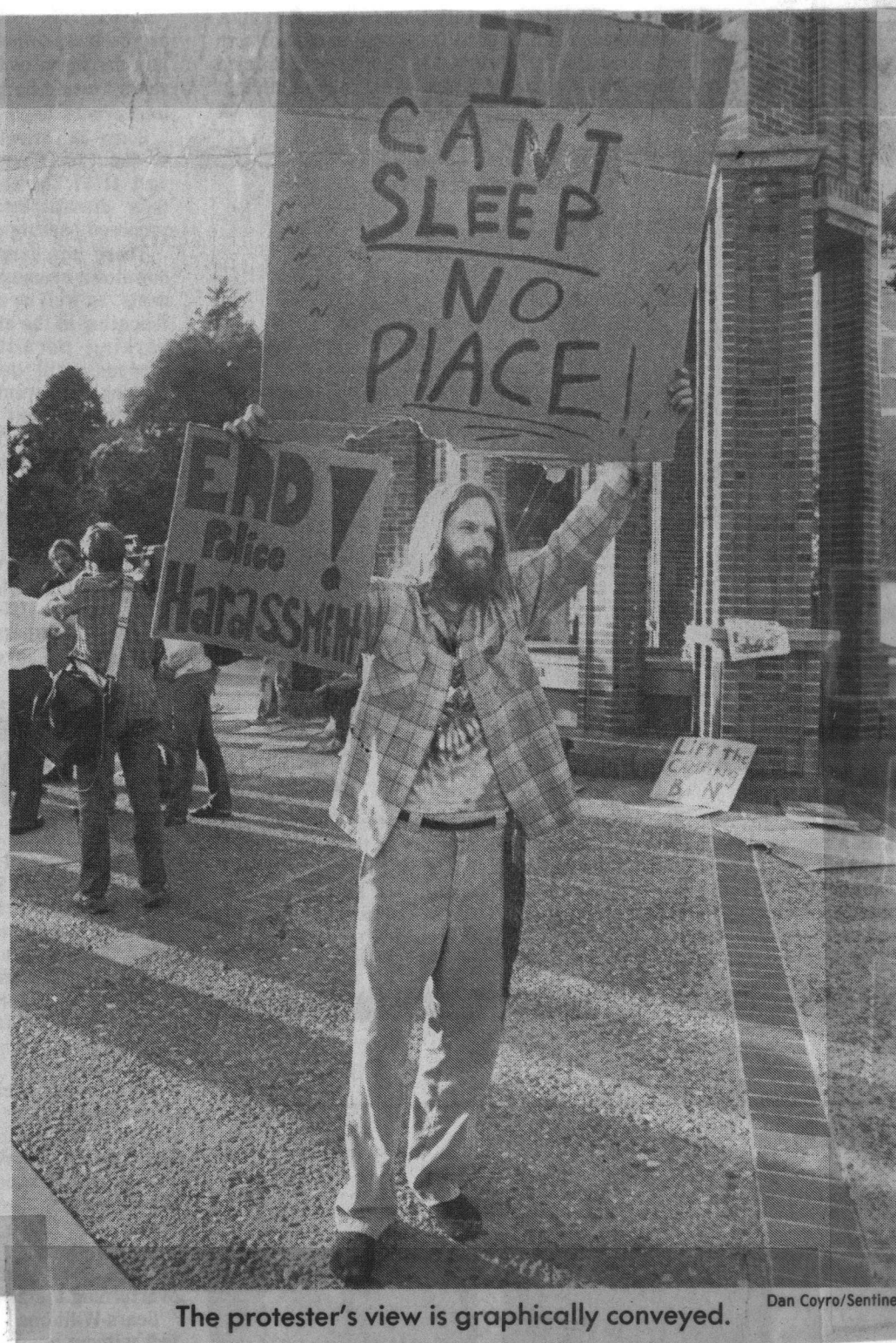
Several street people, however, claimed police dragged the man by the hair out of a police car while he was handcuffed. Crain said the man was taken from the car when he became violent and damaged one of the police car's doors.

Thursday night's incident followed a daylong protest against what street people claim is continued abuse.

Earlier, demonstrator Tom Corbet, conceded that passing motorists showed little sympathy when they saw his hand-written sign proclaiming "End Police Harassment."

One motorist yelled "Get a job!" One street person retorted "Give me a job!" A muted voice from the middle of the demonstration said "I don't want a job."

City Councilman Arnold Levine happened by and stopped to hear the street people's complaints. "The message that has come down is, spend money or leave town," said one man.



The protester's view is graphically conveyed.



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

## Street people appeal to passing motorists.

Others complained that business owners have begun hosing down the sidewalks in front of their stores to keep the street people away.

Levine said the city depends on downtown businesses for sales-tax revenue to fund city programs, including a planned shelter for the homeless.

One man said a shelter is for women and children. Several said they just want a "sanctuary," a place where they can camp out and be free from violence.

Levine offered to sit down and discuss the street people's grievances in the next day or two.

Police say the recent confrontations are isolated incidents. The street people say they are tired of being stopped for sitting on planter boxes or having their backpacks on the sidewalk. They say they are being rousted in attempt by the police to rid the streets of the homeless.

Police Chief Jack Bassett went to the St. Francis Catholic Soup

Kitchen at noon Wednesday to talk with the street people.

"He wasn't well-received by the crowd," said Peter Carota, who feeds the homeless there. But, Carota said, Bassett was able to speak one-on-one with a number of people.

Just a few hours later, some of his officers wrestled a man to the ground after he refused to sign a ticket for blocking the sidewalk with his backpacks.

The biggest incident occurred last Saturday afternoon when officers said they had to use mace to control an advancing crowd while they arrested a woman who refused to sign a citation for blocking the sidewalk with her knapsack.

The confrontation caused two stores to close early that day.

"One guy was jumping up and down yelling 'I'll kill him, I'll kill him,'" said John Mills of Zoccoli's delicatessen. "It was 20 to 5 so we just decided to close."

"In the past, most of the street people seemed to be leftovers from the hippie days. It was peace, love

REFERENCE

SANTA CRUZ SENTINEL  
November 14, 1986

Pacific Garden  
Mall-1980-Oct 16, 1988





Dan Coyro/Sentinel

Police question street people in walkway near the mall earlier this week.

and rock 'n' roll," Mills said. "Now there seems to be a lot of anger."

The Sportsman's Shop, next door, also closed early.

The owners of the two businesses met with Deputy Police Chief Steve Belcher Wednesday afternoon, asking the same questions Belcher said he's heard for 10 years.

"I told them we are not doing anything differently," said Belcher. "I said the issues are the same ones I was discussing with businessmen in 1976." The only difference, Belcher said, is that the street people are now congregating in a new location.

In 1976 most gathered around the intersection of Pacific and Soquel avenues near the old transit center. When the transit center moved, the street people moved north and south on the mall and in the parks.

Belcher said more street people have been congregating on the mall because of stepped-up narcotics enforcement in San Lorenzo and Scribner parks.

"It's like a balloon; you step down on one end and it pops up somewhere else," he said.

Belcher admits that the situation has become more confrontational in past weeks. He believes the street people are frustrated from being moved from place to place by citizen complaints and police action.

Still, he says, the incidents revolve around a few individuals. "The only reasons there was this big incident is because a couple of people wanted it to be."

And, he says, the incidents don't signal an increase in crime. "There is not a lot of violent crime in the downtown area," he says.

The latest incidents have stemmed from the failure of persons to sign citations for a very minor offense — blocking the sidewalk.

Belcher said Saturday's incident occurred after an officer warned a woman twice last Saturday about blocking the sidewalk in front of Zoccoli's deli with her knapsack. When the officer came by a third time and still found the knapsack in the same spot, he wrote the woman a citation.

She refused to sign it and started to walk away.

"Once that happens, the options narrow," Belcher said. The officer grabbed her by the arm to stop her, at which time a crowd of some 30 street people began to gather.

Two other street people tried to prevent the arrest as the crowd moved in on the officer. He used mace to gain control.

"I think it would be great if people understood it's not a problem between the street people and the merchants," Mills said. "It's a matter of observing the rules and a problem of law enforcement."

Merchants are concerned about the incidents, saying the timing is bad with the Christmas shopping season coming on. Some say this

season could be crucial to a couple of businesses on the mall.

Some complain the problem always seems worse just as the biggest shopping season is about to begin.

Belcher believes street people are just more visible during the lull between the end of the summer and the start of the Christmas shopping season.

During summer tourists flood the mall. And, some of the street people go elsewhere — to the beach or to the mountains.

"When Christmas shopping starts, I think they (street people) again will disperse with more people downtown and a more intense use of the mall," Belcher says.

Currently two officers are assigned daily to the mall. Police Chief Bassett said two to four more officers will be assigned there starting the day after Thanksgiving.