

Seeing red on the Fourth

Homeless, angry locals stage rallies

By MARK BERGSTROM 7-5-89
Sentinel staff writer

SANTA CRUZ — Homeless activists from around the state and fed-up local residents squared off on Independence Day.

The burning issue was: "Is this the land of the free?"

About 200 homeless activists called for an end to the city's camping ban, saying homeless people should be free to sleep where they can. The 600 protesting residents said they were tired of giving Santa Cruz "bums" and "squatters" a free ride.

Carolyn Busenhart, who put together the residents' "Take Back the Town" counter-protest at City Hall, thanked organizers of the statewide homeless protest for choosing Santa Cruz, saying, "If they had not, we'd still be the silent majority."

Homeless activists, rallying in front of the county courthouse, said they chose Santa Cruz so they could help protest the city's ban on outdoor sleeping. Most of the demonstrators came by chartered bus from Oakland, Berkeley, Sonoma and Santa Barbara. Mitch Snyder, nationally known homeless activist from Washington, D.C., sent a telegram in which he

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A small army of residents in red came out to let area homeless and outside activists, marching below, know they had lost patience. Dan Coyro/Sentinel photo

Protests: signs of the times

7-5-89

SANTA CRUZ — Both homeless activists and angry residents claimed Bart Simpson as their poster boy for their Fourth of July demonstrations.

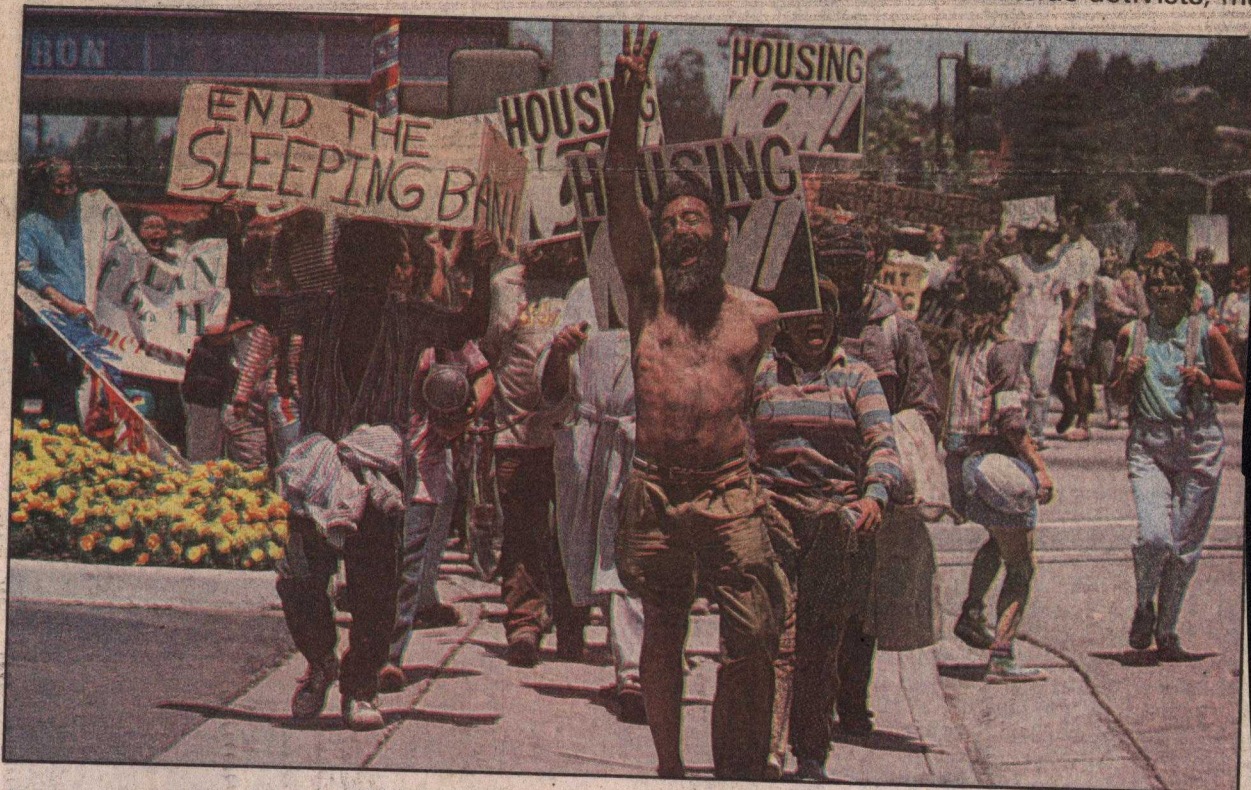
A homeless activist carried a poster of Simpson declaring, "Like housing for homeless, Dude."

On the other side, a red-shirted resident hoisted a giant poster with a drawing of Bart shouting, "Get a life!"

These placards raised in the two demonstrations showed the feelings on both sides of the issue:

- "Jesus was homeless, too"
- "Homeless go home, and take UCSC with you"
- "The homeless fight back"
- "Throw the bums out"
- "Jobs not bums"(sic)

Finally, there was this large sign in front of City Hall, directed at progressive political leaders, Santa Cruz Mayor Mardi Wormhoudt and county Supervisor Gary Patton: "Moses said: Load up your ass and your camel and follow me to the promised land. Mardi and Gary say: Sit on your ass, light up a Camel, this is the promised land."



July Fourth protests

Protests

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called for decriminalization of homelessness in Santa Cruz. "Let there be justice and then there might be peace," his message said.

Noting that the county spends about \$84 million a year on health and social programs and a homeless shelter, Busenhart said Santa Cruzans have no problem with helping the truly needy. But, those who don't want help, or don't want to work, she said, are not truly homeless. "They're squatters and we should accurately call them squatters," Busenhart said.

Busenhart and others called for strengthening the camping ban. They circulated petitions seeking to make violations misdemeanors punishable by jail sentences.

Rod Quartarero, a former City Council candidate, told the cheering crowd that he does not see an island in the middle of the Santa

Cruz harbor. "There's no statue saying bring us your weak for a free ride," he said.

The resident protesters all showed up at the rally wearing red shirts. They also waved small American flags and raised banners to show their approval when speakers called for telling the local street people to either get jobs or get out of town.

One man had taped his placard to a baseball bat. The placard read, "I've lost that caring feeling."

The red-shirted locals and homeless activists clashed only briefly during the day because the two groups held their rallies at different locations.

One red-shirted woman squared off with several homeless supporters, including city Planning Commissioner Celia Scott-Von der Muhll, on the steps of the courthouse.

"I'm seeing a lot of upset peo-

ple," Scott-Von der Muhll later told a reporter. "We've got a big problem, not just in Santa Cruz, but across the nation.

"The problem won't be solved by kicking people out of town, but only by seeking peaceful solutions," she said.

Several red-shirted men and a couple of teen-agers with signs calling for the street people to get out of town confronted the homeless activists later in the day in front of the Post Office.

There was no violence, and police reported making no arrests. Gerald Waldron of the Oakland Homeless Union told a reporter he understood the local residents' frustration over the homeless issue. "I think if anything, it's (red-shirt rally) a good example of the strain on the taxpayer," Waldron said.

Just pouring money into social agencies, he said, won't break the cycle of poverty. People need training or retraining so they can find jobs, he said. The problem of jobs and of affordable housing, he said, is a national problem and must be addressed by the federal government.

While Waldron and others called for jobs and shelter, local activists did not. At one point late in the day, local activist Linda Edwards shouted at a fellow protester to stop yelling about housing. "It's human rights," she urged. The local homeless activists railed against the police for arresting people for sleeping in front of the Post Office or in city parks. They called for the City of Santa Cruz to



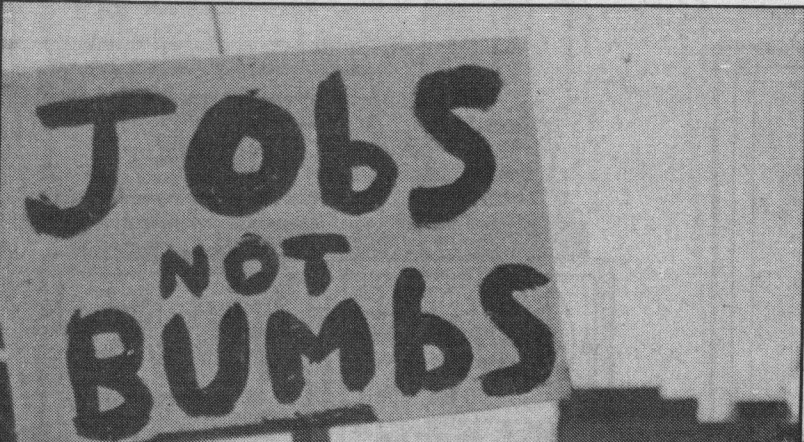
Dan Coyro/Sentinel photos

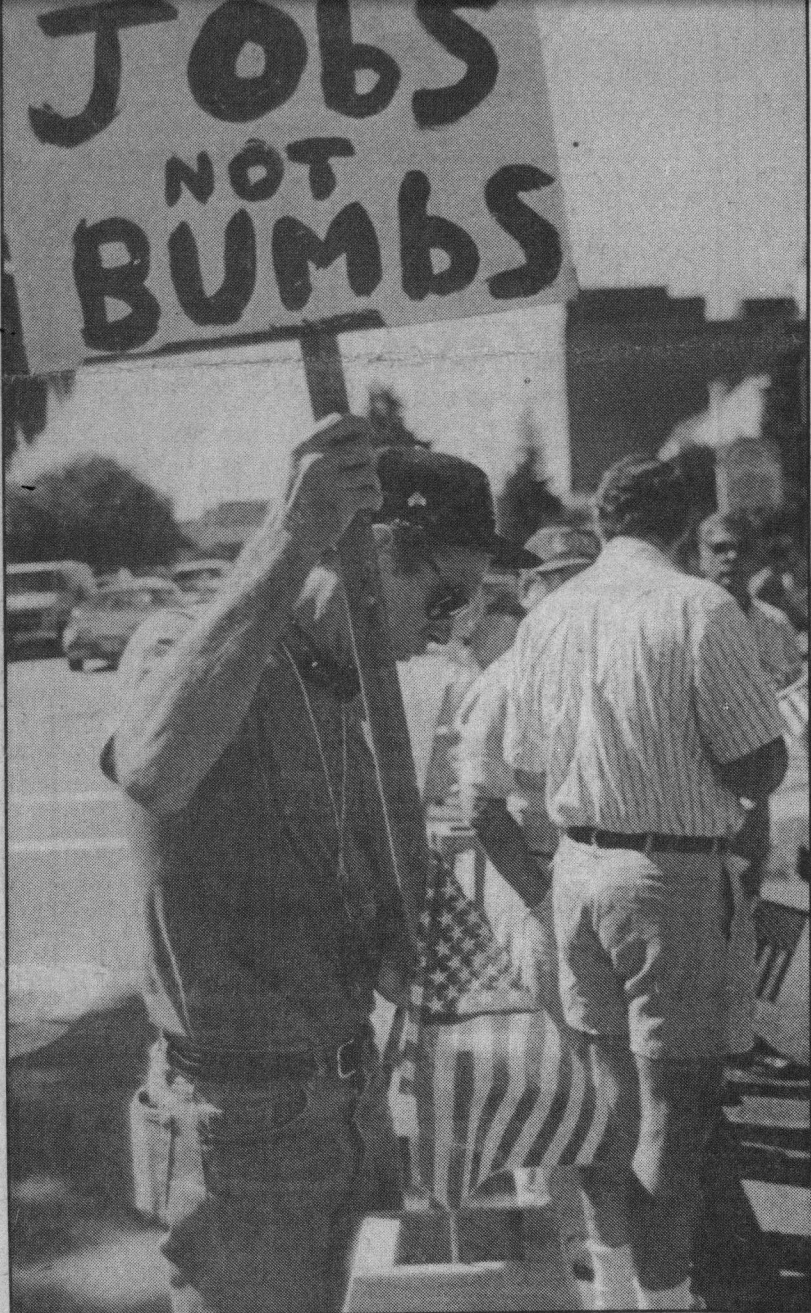
Members of the Oakland homeless union came to town to lend their support.

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Flags, red shirts and signs marked the City Hall protest.

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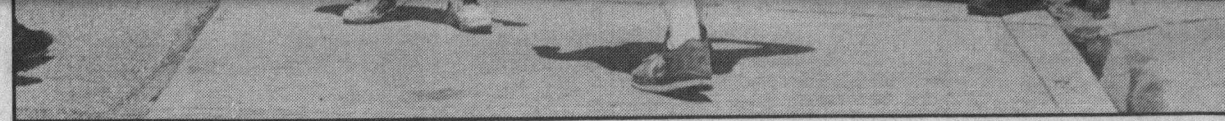
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Former Mayor Bruce Van Allen, who said he favored repealing the ban, told the crowd he believes that will never happen. "It's a loser, no City Council will stay in office for more than two weeks if they did," he said.

Van Allen's comments were met by shouts. "Throw the progressives out," screamed one man.

None of the current City Council members took part in either demonstration, although Don Lane watched both. "I'm just watching and listening," he said. "Maybe I'll learn something to help us figure out how to resolve this situation," Lane said.

Councilman John Mahaney watched the residents' rally from a secluded corner at City Hall. "Peo-



Dan Coyro/Sentinel photos

Members of the Oakland homeless union came to town to lend their support.

ple are obviously fed 'up," he said. Mahaney said the protest was the largest he could recall.

Mahaney blamed the local homeless backlash on a small group of activists. "There's just a few people stirring things up," he said.

Anyone who comes to Tuesday night's council meeting, he said, will find that the City Council is going to spend \$1 million next fiscal year on problems for the needy.

Those who donned red shirts Wednesday were largely longtime local residents. They were business owners, dentists, police officers' wives.

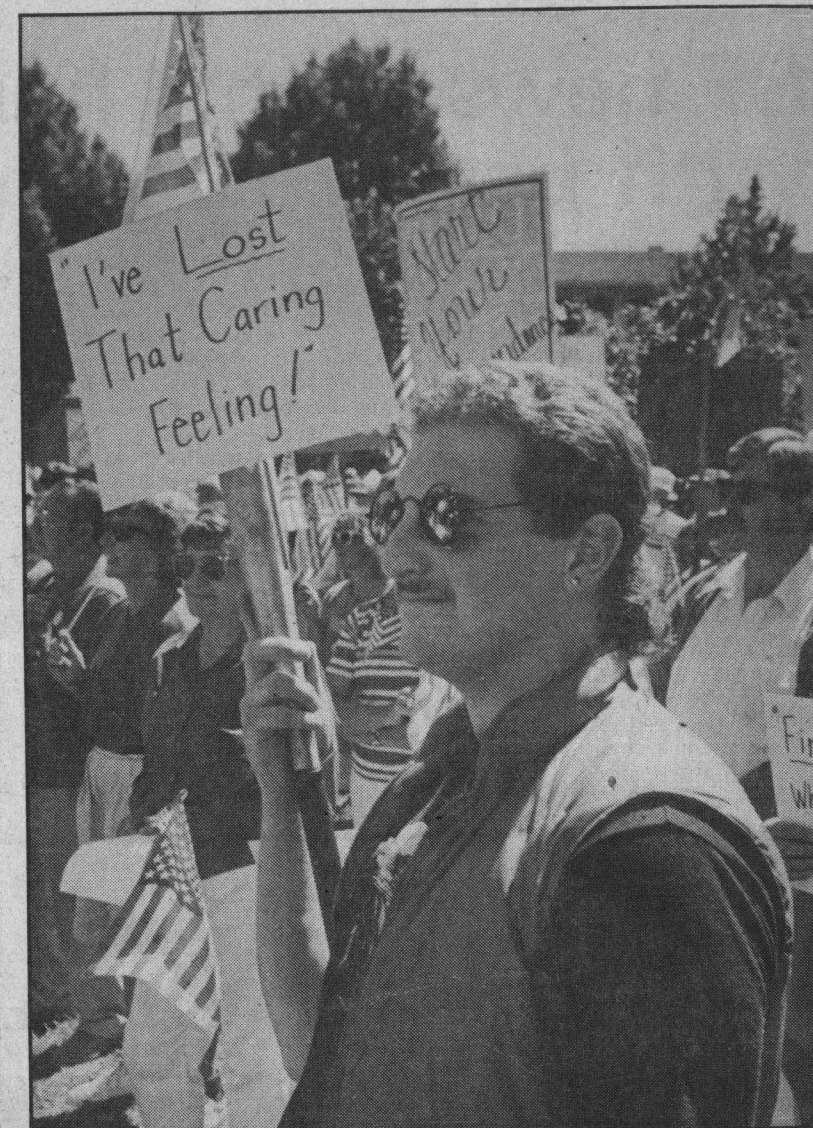
Among them were Santa Cruz native Lorrie Weber and her three small daughters. "We live on Grant Street and have a real problem with the homeless going into the park where our kids play. The men urinate on the sidewalks in front of our children and, just the other day, we found a woman lying nude in the park with her pants around her ankles," Weber said.

'People are obviously fed up.'

— Councilman John Mahaney



All was peaceful when counter-protesters confronted homeless activists.



Counter-protester let his bat and sign do the talking.