

Car camp at a loss with no place to park

■ HOMELESS:

Organizations work together to find an appropriate site for homeless lodging

By Melissa Lebahn
Community Reporter

The Centennial Car Camp is in danger of being eliminated because of low funds and land disputes unless the Homeless Action Coalition and Project Recover can work with the city of Eugene to find a solution.

As of right now there will not be a Centennial Car Camp this year, said Tom Musselwhite, executive director for Project Recover.

There isn't any money to give to the car camp, said Richie Weinman, housing and community development manager. It takes \$100,000 to run the camp. Last year the state of Oregon, city of Eugene and Lane County helped contribute.

"This was a special one time allocation and it isn't going to be available again," Weinman said.

The city of Eugene and campers' fees contributed most of the money last year, but the city isn't willing to contribute this year without inter-governmental support, Weinman said.

Musselwhite didn't see money as the issue. He said camp fees pay for toilets to be brought in, which are the real necessity; everything else is supplemental.

The camp offers a legal site for homeless people to live. It provides minimal services to the residents, such as toilet and shower facilities, and a 24-hour staff to supervise the residents. Residents buy their own resources like food, but churches and other non-profit organizations regularly donate food.

The camp would provide the homeless with the stability necessary to carry on the daily functions of life without being told they are illegally camping.

"We just want a safe, stable place where people can just be off the streets from the police," Musselwhite said.



MATT GARTON/Emerald

Project Recover would like to use the base of Skinner Butte, between Third Avenue and Lincoln Street, to set up a camp on about 2.6 acres of city land, but the city doesn't want to let go of that piece of land, Musselwhite said.

Weinman said the land that Project Recover wants to use is a maintenance yard that is not an adequate site to use for the car camp. A reasonable location for the car camp would have to be property zoned as public land, which is land where schools or the city hall is built. He said that the land Project Recover wants to use might have been rezoned and is no longer public land.

The decision not to use that land for a car camp was made by the Eugene City Council, Weinman said. He also said that the council is very concerned about the whole homeless issue. They are trying to find ways to address the issue and still keep a balance on all other city issues.

Project Recover is a non-profit group with a mission to help an increasing number of people, who are poor and have the characteristics of homeless, to find a productive and constructive way of livelihood. They also have the need to address economic and environmental stability and environmental degradation.

The Homeless Action Coalition is a coalition of agencies, social services, homeless people and students who are interested in homeless issues.

Labor union candidates vie for presidency

NEW YORK (AP) — With a call for unity to confront the Republican Congress, AFL-CIO President Thomas Donahue opened the annual convention that will choose between him and a challenger who claims enough support to take over.

Donahue's address Monday generally steered clear of the issues that divide him and John Sweeney, who claims control of 55 percent of the votes to be cast by federation delegates representing more than 13 million workers on Wednesday.

"It's true that we come here today divided on the issue of who will lead us over the next two years," Donahue told more than 1,000 delegates. "But on Thursday, let there be no question that when we leave this hall to carry on our work, we must do so with our divisions healed, our strength enhanced and our federation more united than ever before."

In a morning press conference, Sweeney said he would work to heal any divisions caused by his candidacy, but insisted "we're very serious about our program for change."

President Clinton told the delegates he supported increasing the minimum wage and he called for a tax deduction for anyone paying for higher education.

He opposed GOP plans to cut the budgets of federal agencies which enforce labor regulations

and student loan programs, and he threatened to veto proposals to cut Medicare and a tax credit for the working poor.

"It is time we learned a fundamental lesson," Clinton said. "Treating working people in a decent, fair, humane, enlightened way gives you a stronger American economy, not a weaker one."

The delegates greeted him with a chant of "four more years."

Much of Donahue's 25-minute speech focused on Republican plans to curtail the enforcement of labor laws and proposals to abolish the minimum wage, reduce college loan programs and trim a tax credit for the working poor.

Donahue called the House passage of Medicare restraints at the same time it wants to relax taxes for some an "obscene spectacle."

The Democrats did not escape his criticism either. Donahue recalled labor's differences with Clinton over the North American Free Trade Act.

"The fact is NAFTA has been a disaster, NAFTA is a job-destroyer," he said. "We were right and President Clinton was wrong — and we told him so."

But Donahue offered unqualified support for Clinton's 1996 re-election campaign, citing the president's opposition to Republican Medicare changes

and what Donahue said were threats to working men and women by the agenda of House Speaker Newt Gingrich of Georgia.

"In the next election, this labor movement is going to be with [Clinton] every step of the way, fighting to send Newt Gingrich and his mean-spirited, rubber-stamping reactionaries back home where they belong," he said.

He made only veiled references to the first contested election in the federation's 40-year history, suggesting that the rhetoric of his opponents was harmful to the federation.

"This movement cannot move forward as long as the AFL-CIO is viewed by some as the reason for every problem that afflicts the labor movement and, at the same time, as the solution for every problem," Donahue said.

Despite Donahue's call for solidarity, tensions ran high on the convention floor and among union leaders who were divided over the officers' election.

Floor business began with a motion to postpone a vote on a contentious proposal to create a third executive position at the federation.

Sweeney's side carried the motion to postpone with about 700,000 more votes than it needed after a boisterous showdown with Donahue's forces.



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