

Our Letter

Our Letter No. 4
February 8, 1984

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Writers

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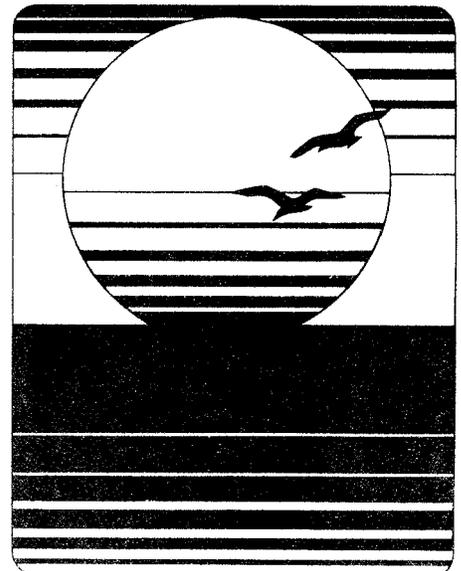
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Assemblyman Hannigan, according to Solano County Counsel, has introduced **urgency** legislation A.B. 203. It may or may not bail out the embarrassed local government planners. In the proposed legislation "the definition of 'blight' is somewhat narrowed -, which removes the use of redevelopment to correct **flooding problems** or as a result of **faulty planning.**" It seems the Hannigan bill is attempting to legislate away, obscure the errors from the past and wash away any opportunity to help truly blighted areas, specifically the White Slough-Sonoma Blvd. area in Vallejo. This area should have been declared a redevelopment area instead of the Southeast Vallejo area which has a large percentage of vacant land. The new law puts a lid of 20% on the amount of vacant land allowed in a redevelopment project. In the proposed legislation, by eliminating "flooding problems" as a qualifier for "blight", another roadblock is being placed in the way of a solution. **Hannigan's new legislation would blight this further by removing the one alternative that may be able to solve a serious problem for many agencies : locally, for the State of California, and for the Government of the United States of America.** A major traffic arterial leading to Mare Island Naval Base passes thru this area and is routinely flooded as a result of the jurisdictional squabbles.

FREEDOM

"What is the condition of the marketplace which most enhances one's ability to obtain or retain values - for instance, to start a new business, to create new goods and services, to secure new markets, to earn a profit? What is the condition which offers the greatest number of opportunities to pursue one's goals ?

It is, of course freedom."



SOLANO COUNTY LAND USE INITIATIVE

Some people call the Land Use Initiative the Orderly Growth Initiative. This title obscures the truth. The initiative does not control growth in an orderly manner.

The Initiative places a moratorium on growth. It freezes all county lands and guarantees court litigation. **READ the FINE PRINT !** The City coffers and present City land owners would be the only beneficiaries. Real Estate land Owners on limited lands inside City Limit lines would then have their prices go up because of an imbalance of supply and demand. Cities require exorbitant fees and taxes. The County does not.

The Initiative liberally offers people the right to take away their own ability to elect new directions in different supervisors and to review and update its general plan. The Initiative freezes it in concrete, eliminates public input. The present Chairman of the Board of Supervisors has just recently shut down the Public Forum Committee. This would have been one of the only places where there could have been an open public debate of this particular issue. It reminds me of the City of Vallejo obstructing and obscuring public information.

This growth control initiative would in fact forsake broader social purposes.

- (1) It excludes people from the country,
- (2) Halts growth in rural areas,
- (3) Does not address the issue of restrictive housing types in cities,
- (4) Does not address the issue of restrictive, exclusionary down-zoning practices in cities (fewer residences per acre of land).

The initiative calls for timing and sequencing its growth, but it actually **halts, restricts, excludes opportunity for people**. It allows cities to expand their spheres of influence without providing building and housing type mixtures and it excludes certain groups of people from housing by prohibitive high land cost or because of negligently depressed land values, the result of ignoring dilapidation and deterioration.

The opponents and proponents have made very impassioned pleas on both sides **trying to appeal to the masses**. All they accomplished was get on the front pages of the newspapers. So far the only ones benefiting are the people getting their pictures in the papers, the politicians, the radicals, the liberals, the rights, the lefts. But what about the guy who pays the taxes, the guy who needs a helping hand to get a new job, or the housewife who just lost her husband to another woman. It hurts, it hurts, it hurts.

The Land Use Initiative focuses on eliminating the right to speak, on reducing the right to the pursuit of your own home. It reduces the right to own and use private property. It also reduces and takes away some of our rights to representation.

The American Dream has become an American Nightmare. People are begging for reduced housing costs, wishing they hadn't bought when interest rates were so high. People are pleading for more land to be made available for dwellings that are not in City Limits. Don't the cities now have a monopoly on development and housing ?

Is there really free choice of life style in the Napa-Solano Counties or are the people being planned to fit into a mold ?

The current land use policies are unimaginative and do not put faith in the free market, in a free society. It places more value on "the process" of the few rather than allowing the masses to determine their destinies as guaranteed by the Constitution. **The Initiative is a con. It allows people to determine their fate. But in light of the recent media hipe and well orchestrated political whoopla on both sides, the people will be persuaded to give up their rights.** The goal is to persuade those who vote to give up their choices and the choices of those who don't vote, to lock into place "the plan" with NO future opportunities to change it until the next generation votes. **By freezing the market forces, the people are being persuaded to limit their opportunities.**

Planning is vague, obscure and intimidating. Is planning for the benefit of government or the environmentals ? How does the average family fit into the picture ?

What is the bigger picture ?

Some weeks ago I talked with a news man from ABC television concerning the county employees impasse. I asked him what he made out of the whole thing ? He gave me a very simple answer, one that I could understand - "What happens in Solano County will determine what happens everywhere else in California. "Could this also be what the land use initiative is about ?"

Over the years I've seen many lose jobs and opportunity, homes broken in order to see a coastal commission formed. I've seen the San Francisco Bay sequestered to a rat and mosquito preserve mandating slow access to water uses. I've seen the Suisun Marsh become a catch basin not fit for cattle, inaccessible to human feet, protected by federal and state caretakers for the benefit of the ducks. **Is the Land Use Initiative but another set of tentacles spreading into the fabric of our society ?** What is the reason for freezing land uses into a holding pattern ? Until "they" can regroup ? **Opportunity or oppression is knocking on the door of Solano County, folks,** depending on how we vote on this land tyranny plan.

The Space Age is upon us. People are moving in from all over the World to our lovely state. **Without the so called urban sprawl in the Santa Clara Valley there probably would not have been a Silicon Valley.** Without Silicon Valley we would not have seen the advent of the microchip. And without that the Space Age would not have been possible. People are moving to our area because of our climate: from the frozen continental East Coast, from the dictatorial Central and South American countries and from the oppressed Asian countries to our west. -- **Industry wants places to locate their roots of tomorrow, for the dreams of our young people, for the hopes of the free.**

So instead of offering them bickering behind closed doors, educate them to the impacts of a frozen land use.

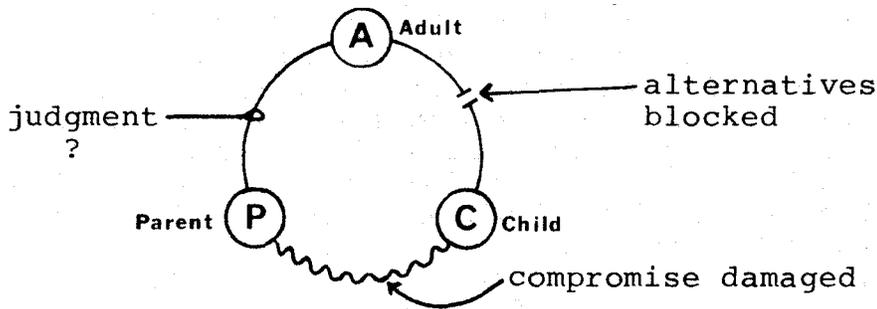
- Non-competitive land costs.
- Non-competitive building types
- Non-competitive leadership.
- An atmosphere of dissension, disgust, disrespect for democracy.
- The factor of discouraged hopes and dreams.

What are the available alternatives ?

What are the available compromises ?

Where is the good judgment ?

If the voters pass this initiative, they will be blocking their alternatives and damaging the ability to compromise !



ARE WE GOING TO LET THE Berkeley based INITIATIVE WRITERS
 DICTATE OUR LIVES ?
 READ THE FINE PRINT OF THE INITIATIVE

Years ago, a handful of patriots declared "No taxation without representation." The Boston Tea Party was the symbolic beginning of the call to freedom. **Men did not meekly sit by and watch.** They were men of action, motivated to the will of free determination, not to be ruled by tyranny but by their own consciences and dreams, not to subjugate others.

Today, many have become lazy, leaving the deciding to others. Many people don't even register to vote, let alone vote. In our last local election we saw a 38% turnout of the registered voters. Assuming that only 50% of the eligible people bother to register, the election turnout was a pretty poor showing. What is happening to us ?

- * Maybe it's the result of disheartening media reports.
- * Maybe it's because everybody is too busy.

- * Maybe it's because too many people don't think one vote will make a difference.
- * Maybe it's the demoralizing impacts of bleeding the taxpayers in worship of the sacred less fortunate.
- * Maybe it's the fact that facts are obscured, data access is obstructed, meetings hidden, agendas controlled.
- * Maybe it's because there isn't an active voter registration program.
- * Maybe it's the thousands and thousands and thousands of pages of laws, rules, regulations, codes, edicts, restrictions, mandates, ordinances, resolutions in existence NOW.

Did you ever stop to think that every day every one of us no matter whether we are a "law abiding citizen" or not , breaks at least one law ? Maybe people are fed up with the, as one planning commissioner put it, "baloney".

Not every man has or takes the time, has the patience to think about the effect of his own behavior on those around him. Most would agree it is unreasonable to let others determine our feelings and thinking 100%. Yet too many are no-longer open to new ideas, no-longer welcome potential explanations of what's happening to us. "I can't believe that. I won't hear that. It's not nice to think like that." We live in a free society where relationships are determined by intimidation, deceit and fear, and also by compassion, understanding and respect. How can people vote for representatives, for a system, without thinking about these things ? Some do.

SIGN ORDINANCE

Our Letter No. 3 addressed the Vallejo Sign Ordinance as a local matter. Since then people from different communities have agreed! Sign ordinances are oppressive, anti-commerce and in restraint of trade.

The new sign ordinance in Vallejo will declare nearly 2/3rds of the existing permissible signs illegal and a public nuisance. **This taxable property will be declared "unnecessary clutter"**. So far the City Council has delayed any and all action on the ordinance. I think they are hoping the matter blows over. Maybe they are waiting to see if the community can come to some kind of a consensus.

CONSENSUS! What does that mean? It means nobody disagrees, but is there agreement ? What does consensus have to do with free trade ?, a contract ? Consensus? All those disagreeing are hammered into silence, decide to comply, bury their oppositions in their bones and get cancer or high blood pressure later.

On November 1, 1983 when the Vallejo City ordinance for gouging business signage was heard by Planning Commission, the spokesman for Concerned Merchants Association was held off to the last by the Commission Chair. Obviously he was the spokesman for a large number of those attending. After a few minutes of his speaking the chair's assistant interrupted in an inflammatory manner saying the speaker had exceeded the time limit for speaking. **(5 minutes to that point, yet it**

was recognized by all that he was representing and speaking for at least 2 dozen merchants and individuals in the audience, and many not in attendance.) The speaker did acquiesce to the chair after a few more words. Talk about attempt to inflame the business community. The people in attendance were not at all happy with this muzzling of free speech, but they remained orderly.

When the "official" minutes of that meeting came out - there wasn't scarcely more than a passing mention of the principal speaker for the opposition - distorting, deleting, inferentially discrediting what he said. The opposition to this latest oppression of the entrepreneurs has been consistently obstructed from public input, blocked from presentation. Remember: The Beauty tyrants are coordinating this push through planning. And planning department staff want to keep their jobs. In part that's done by how the "official minutes" of the meeting is kept.

The sign ordinance is just a small piece of the pie, though. Instead of concentrating so much time and effort into it, the Council, should be directing staff to work with industry to relieve the burgeoning need and pressure of the microchip industries by actively encouraging them to move into this Napa-Vallejo-Fairfield Triangle. We have a tremendous opportunity to build a business park in our area, such as the Research Triangle in North Carolina. Businesses moving into a catalytic environment such as that would not put up crummy signs. **They would bring their own good standards of design with them and utilize local talent;**

NOT MUZZLE LOCAL TALENT !

The research triangle concept is the model for the Enterprise Zone. It is not one run by Community Development bureaucrats, personally committed to keeping their jobs. Fairfield recognizes the possibilities of an ENTERPRISE ZONE and yet they quibble over land swaps and worn out orchards. The City of Napa continues to bury its head in the sand. It pretends not to notice the interest, hoping it will go away and when someone does bring it up that person runs the risk of being ostracized. **Vallejo, as some playfully say, is issuing life vests to all its residents.** "Let's make sure no one drowns in the next high tide while businesses are being sandbagged."

"Economic Development Districts" as proposed by government is just another form of blight by planning. See the Assembly bill being proposed by Assemblyman Sam Farr. Classifying development this way may obscure the fact that the taxation siphonage, functions of redevelopment, will remain intact, under a separate title.

There is a tremendous amount of competition between Fairfield, Vacaville, Vallejo and Benicia. As a result they are driving housing costs up instead of down to improve image. Napa is very candidly discouraging development.

Vacaville is presently going in another direction. They have vacant land coming out of their ears in the form of existing industrial parks. Fairfield has the same thing. Vallejo doesn't have that, but does have the **water, water, water.** **And then there is all this land to the north of Vallejo into Napa County.** Very seldom do I see any intense agriculture use there. I think they just want to look at the "pretty" green hills (brown 8 months every year) while real estate values

are driven sky high in the valley. The area between Napa and Vallejo is a disgrace to the proud wine industry in North Napa County. **South County is a hodge-podge of activity without a compass.** Why is Napa forcing development into Solano County ? They don't talk of specific area plans for that area and if they have, it has been obscured and discouraged.

REDEVELOPMENT - BLIGHT BY PLANNING

Collinsville-Montezuma Hills Litigation - the residents of Birds Landing are suing the county because the redevelopment project is not in conformity with current state law. It was in conformity when the project was approved prior to the first of the year. Since then, however, the law has changed. The residents are complaining because over 90% of the land is vacant grazing land. For this redevelopment project to be declared qualified for redevelopment it needs to qualify as being blighted. **Vacant grazing land hardly seems "blighted" unless the sheep have overused their turf.**

Southeast Vallejo Redevelopment - one supervisor said "It needed it" referring to the conditions in that end of town. Yes, it is true much of that area of Vallejo has been forgotten thru the years but it should have been taken care of by the city and county on a regular maintenance schedule. Now the Redevelopment Agency gallops into the scene and gets to save the hides of our elected officials. What really happens is that the area is rehabilitated within the empire of the Redevelopment Agency. The Supervisor who said that part of Vallejo needs it, was correct. However, he's willing to go for improving the image in light of the fact that only 10-15% of \$30,000,000 tab is devoted to city improvements and another 25-30% to County areas.

That leaves the majority of the money for indefinite purposes. School issues have not been addressed as to the pass-through of state educational funds being used to build schools and overpasses without a voter approval or explanation. Duplication of funding, so-called simple explanations - bleeding State coffers under the false claim of "need", and loopholes - Lack of school accounting and highway building funds. Maybe a public audit is needed ? An investigation.

Blight issues are not resolved. The definition of Beauty and beastly aesthetic is not defined. For the City as a sovereign entity to impose its tastes on its citizenry is tyrannical and exceeds the privileges of representatives in a free society.

Even Tom Hannigan's proposed legislation of March 1983 defined blighted areas as :**"those which are characterized by - properties within the area suffering from economic dislocation, deterioration, or disuse resulting from faulty planning."** His current proposed legislation proposes to eliminate faulty planning as one of the requirements of blight.

Faulty Planning ?

Does Hannigan admit the possibility ? Ever since Christmas, Vallejo City

planners have declared portions of Southeast Vallejo blighted. These so called conditions have been well known for many years by Council and staff; and have not occurred over night. **In order for an area to be redeveloped it must be called blighted.** Raw, vacant land to be used for new development hardly qualifies for blight. Is this to enhance real estate values ?

At the same time, the Sonoma Blvd. White Slough area has been ignored until recently. **City Council members even dared to admit not knowing the existence of present City Limit lines in the area.** This troubles me. Our representatives don't even take the time to know their jurisdictional territory. Maybe they have suffered the same as the common man: from obscured and obstructed access to information. How are the other jurisdictional claimants of White Slough handling this ? (**Army Corps of Engineers, Bay Conservation District Commission, California Department of Fish and Game, Cal-Trans, etc.**)

It seems to me that Sonoma Blvd.- White Slough is truly blighted because of the flooding, rats, road closures, business closures, mosquitoes. **Could it be the undue hardship of jurisdictional squabbling is the major cause of blight?**

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