

WATCHDOG!



March 8, 2006

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State of the County Address

On February 7, San Diego County Board of Supervisor Bill Horn gave the "State of the County Address." He listed traffic, public safety, illegal immigration and disaster preparedness as the main priorities of the County. Horn's solutions were to build more freeways because "we all know that transit is not the only answer", to construct a fence along the Mexican border all the way to Texas, to convert gang members to Christianity, and to prepare brochures on personal disaster readiness.

At SOFAR, we believe the Board of Supervisors should leave illegal immigration to the federal authorities and gang violence to the law enforcement agencies and concentrate on their principal job: land-use regulation, which heretofore has been a resounding failure. The County's continued approval of poorly planned subdivisions is not only creating traffic congestion, unaffordable housing, environmental degradation, but also putting more homes and businesses in danger of wildfires with sprawl development. Contributing to the destruction of rural lands, the County has continued its longstanding refusal to finalize the General Plan 2020 -- while thousands of projects are approved based on the guidelines of the defunct old plan. It is a startling fact that in the entire history of County planning, the only comprehensive resource zoning ever accomplished was through (1) the SOFAR initiative that re-zoned forest land and (2) SOFAR's legal action that re-zoned 200,000 acres of agricultural preserve land. Without these actions, the remaining rural areas of the County would have been approved for development by the Board of Supervisors long ago.

Supervisor Horn's empty State of the County Address is typical of modern American politics. Horn creates a sense of immediate danger in order to divert the public's attention from policies of privatized greed.

SOFAR and the CCDC Downtown Redevelopment

Save Our Forest and Ranchlands (SOFAR) has retained Shute, Mihaly and Weinberger to submit a letter concerning the legal inadequacy of the EIR for the Centre City Development Corporation redevelopment plan, focusing in particular on the lack of analysis of alternative modes of transportation planned for the downtown region. SOFAR strongly supports the idea of a transit-based, high-density development for the downtown community that, if properly planned, could lay the foundation for a growing, vitalized urban core. The success of this downtown core depends on accessible public transit.

San Diego County used to be renowned for its great coastal beauty, mountain vistas, farms, orchards, river valleys. It is not an exaggeration to say that during the past forty years, we have been slowly covering San Diego's natural beauty with a parking lot. In fact, according to SANDAG figures, the roads, freeways, and parking lots cover an area equal to 200 square miles within the County. That equates to paving over one quarter of the entire urban area of San Diego County with solid concrete.

The result is that a majority of the constituents of San Diego are seriously considering leaving San Diego County because they see an ocean of unaffordable housing and unending traffic. We cannot allow the auto-based land-use patterns that have turned the rest of San Diego County into a parking lot to destroy the hope of the downtown redevelopment.

The CCDC EIR proves that the downtown plan remains essentially auto-based. Moreover, the document fails one of the basic requirements of CEQA: it does not include a satisfactory range of alternatives to inform decision-makers of fundamental consequences of the plan they are about to adopt. It is vitally important that alternative transportation models are studied at the beginning of this plan. If we can cover over 200 square miles of this County with concrete, then surely America's finest city has the wherewithal to build a functional transit system that would cover a fraction of that area and operate at much higher efficiency.

Amazingly, however, the establishment of real, effective transit infrastructure in downtown San Diego was not studied as part of the EIR. SOFAR has objected strenuously to this omission, because transportation is not a detail, a side issue, or a frill. It happens to be the functional foundation that will make or break the plan, that will make or break the affordable housing issue, that will make or break the stated goal of being a regional, commercial, residential center of San Diego County, and that will make or break the goal of being a livable, pedestrian-friendly city.

In light of the serious unmitigable impacts actually recognized in the EIR regarding parking and transit, CEQA requires an alternative section that discusses ways of "avoiding or substantially lessening [those] any significant effects of the project." Yet, besides the No Project Alternative, there are no alternatives in the EIR--and therefore no meaningful discussion about lessening the serious unmitigable impacts of this project. As is stated in February 24, 2006 letter from the Shute, Mihaly and Weinberger law firm, an EIR that lacks an alternatives section violates CEQA. We believe CCDC could remedy these flaws by analyzing an alternative that reduces the Plan's significant traffic and circulation impacts.

The Shute Mihaly and Weinberger letter explains how you could accomplish this, with an "Alternative Transportation Mode" alternative. This alternative calls for the establishment of a "Downtown Transportation Management Plan," to ensure the success of non-auto transportation systems. Within the management plan are several implementation measures regarding circulation and access, transit, parking, and transportation systems management for pedestrians and bicycles.

In addition, SOFAR has also retained Urban Studies PhD candidate Mike Manville from UCLA to analyze the downtown parking issues. Mike Manville, along with Professor Don Shoup, has extensively studied the occupancy, jobs and parking in America's cities. You can read an article they wrote on these concepts available

at this link: <http://www.uctc.net/access/25/Access%2025%20-%202002%20-%20People,%20Parking,%20and%20Cities.pdf>. Manville's analysis proves that the EIR's assumptions about parking demand, occupancy rate, and density are flawed. Contrary to the claims of the business community, he demonstrates how high-density urban centers with minimal parking and functional transit are beneficial to downtown businesses.

The "Alternative Transportation Mode" Alternative suggested by SOFAR presents a viable option that would reduce transportation impacts, and, if adopted, would ensure that San Diego becomes a livable, transit-oriented city. Please contact SOFAR at (619) 445-9638 or sofar@nethere.com if you would like a copy of the letter from Shute Mihaly and Weinberger or Mike Manville's report on parking.

Privatized Navigation Sinks San Diego



Privatization of the public good, which has had a long history of failure in American politics, has reappeared in San Diego. The forces of greed, which have caused such devastation with sprawl development, are planning an initiative for the November ballot to outsource many of San Diego City's public service jobs. Please see the letter below for SOFAR's position.

Duncan McFetridge
P.O. Box 475
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February 27, 2006

Mayor Jerry Sanders and Councilmembers
San Diego City Council
City Administration Building
202 C Street, 12th Floor
San Diego, CA 92101

Re: Outsourcing initiative:

Dear Mayor Sanders and Councilmembers,

In American political history, the public sector has had a long and tempting misalliance with the free enterprise system. This marriage proposal has always promised much, but has always ended in failure. And once again, this failed philosophy comes to you City Council under the rubric of "Outsourcing." It has had many names, i.e. profit motive, free-market, laissez-faire, privatization, but the underlying philosophy is always the same. Profit and the free-market will lead us to the Promised Land. Performance, however, has never lived up to promise. Instead we have a history of failure and we need to look at that history before we embark on your present course of "outsourcing." public sector jobs. Here are some great episodes in the misalliance of which I speak:

At the turn of the century, when free enterprise was monopolizing the public's natural and social resources, it took a great Republican president, Theodore Roosevelt, to divert us from impending social disaster. He referred to these

forces as “America’s Wealthy Criminal Class” and established the anti-trust laws to protect the common good from monopolized power. And then there’s that singular episode of the Great Depression, when the apostle of free-enterprise and competition, President Hoover, led America deeper into a depression with the catchphrase, “prosperity is just around the corner, free-enterprise will show us the way.”

And of course, quite recently, we had a repetition of the same old theme with California’s energy crisis. Have we so soon forgotten the mantra of how private industry and competition were going to give us fantastically reduced energy prices. The San Diego Union-Tribune wrote glowingly about the impending deregulation: “Almost by acclamation, state lawmakers yesterday sent the governor a historic measure that invites old-fashioned competition into the longstanding monopolies of the electric power industry.” Contrary to these great expectations, we all know what happened when Enron started gaming the market and ushered in a financial scandal unmatched in recent history.

The reason for these failures is quite simple. The public good is not found in the marketplace. It cannot be bought and sold; rather, it is the star by which we guide the ship of state.

Today, the dominant social and economic tragedy that faces the residents of San Diego County is an environmental wasteland of unending traffic and unaffordable homes. The reason we are in this state, is that the collective leadership known as the politicians of the region, have essentially outsourced their jobs to the development industry. Privatized land use and privatized transportation, otherwise known as sprawl, have rendered our community unlivable to the degree that a majority of citizens, according to a recent SANDAG survey, are seriously considering leaving. So the question staring us in the face, City Council, is this: With this abysmal history of outsourcing failure, why do you think the present outsourcing of our public sector jobs is going to produce anything different?

There is simply no evidence on the record that outsourcing will solve your current financial difficulty, or that unionized public employees are to blame for it. Therefore, it is the height of ideological babble to describe the current financial difficulties as a contest between " unions and citizens " as the Union-Tribune has done. This is sheer political propaganda. By mischaracterizing the cause of the problem, we do a disservice to public employees. The truth is that the contest is always between privatized greed and the common good.

Sincerely,

Duncan McFetridge

St. Thomas Aquinas Principles of a Just War

For over three years, the United States has been engaged in a destructive war with Iraq. Tens of thousands of innocent Iraqi civilians and thousands of American soldiers have been killed, anti-American sentiment is growing internationally, United States citizens are being spied on illegally by the government, and our country is forever shamed by torture practices. All of this was based on the premise that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction, a premise that was proved a lie. But even if it had been true, was a pre-emptive war justifiable?

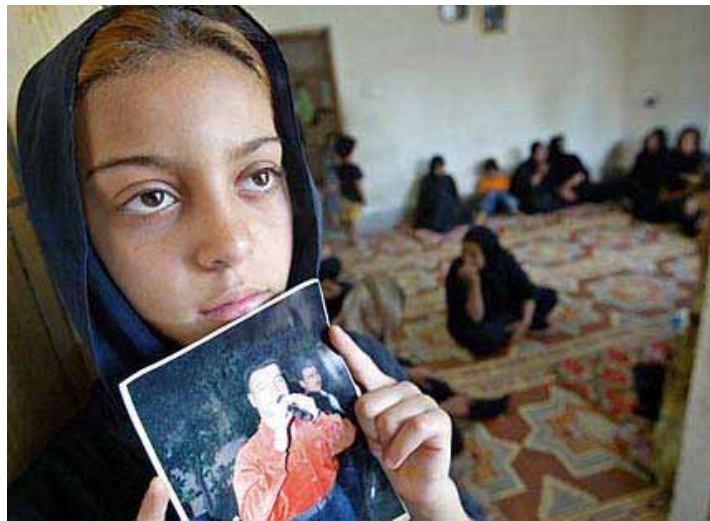
There are two ways to answer this question, one practical and one theoretical. From a practical point of view, no less an iron-willed statesman than Bismarck considered pre-emptive war to be "like committing suicide for fear of death." Accordingly, a nation that launches a pre-emptive war, in Bismarck's view, is opening itself up to the suicidal consequences and uncontrollable events provoked by war.

From a theoretical point of view, according to the Just War theory, articulated by Christian theologians, the answer is also a categorical "no", because the nation we invaded, Iraq, did not harm us, nor did it pose a threat either to us or to its neighbors. According to Thomas Aquinas, the official theologian of the Catholic Church, in order for a war to be just, the nation declaring war must first be gravely wronged and the enemy must refuse to make amends and restitution.

Moreover, as explained in *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* by Alasdair MacIntyre, Aquinas reasoned, "it requires stringent limitations upon the means which may be employed and upon the spirit in which the war may be fought." If any one of these requirements is not met, then the war is rendered unjust and the actions of those who take part in it are illicit. Under Aquinas' principles, President Bush's war in Iraq is clearly unjustified, even illegal, and, as the news reports each day remind us, the war is

causing America increasingly great harm at home and abroad. Moreover, not only does the war lack the moral justification that Aquinas demands, but the resources dedicated to this war are staggering. As SOFAR has noted previously, the war's soaring price could be used instead to re-build and invest in the deteriorating infrastructure of American cities.

As we have just seen, the Just War theory is deeply embedded in Christian theology, but since we are talking about Christianity, isn't St. Thomas leading us to something even more profound? And, isn't that something found in the eyes of this little girl, Atiyaf Hussein, who is asking why her father was killed? Unemployed in Iraq's ruined economy, her father was singing at a wedding party to earn money for his family. He was killed along with the groom and many other guests, including children, when the US air force attacked the wedding party. No answer was ever given to Atiyaf by either President Bush, Prime Minister Blair or the US military. But Christ gave her an answer in Matthew 18.



"But whoso shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea... See that you never offend any of these little ones for I tell you that their angels in heaven are continually in the presence of my Father in Heaven" (Matthew 18).

Can our Christian political leaders who support the war look into the eyes of this child and, without offense to God, tell her we killed her father for a just cause?

And, finally, as a reader of this article, can you look into her eyes and justify what we did to her and what we are doing each day to her neighbors? We are a government of the people and ultimately we are responsible for what our government does in our name. If we learn the truth and fail to act, then we arguably become complicit in the offenses of our government. It is time to act. Will you join SOFAR in requesting that local elected bodies place the legality of the war as an action item on their agenda?

More News From Bordeaux

The ambitions of the Bordeaux area over the coming years are to continue to improve living standards through enhancing the appeal of the city, and particularly by improving the quality of urban living.

Vast building sites are transforming the urban character of the conurbation in a coherent and harmonious way for the benefit of its inhabitants. With a 6.2% population increase in ten years (considerably higher than the national average of 3.2%), the metropolitan area of Bordeaux (ranked 6th among France's urban areas) can boast tremendous demographic vitality and exercise an undeniable magnetism.

Bordeaux without cars

A "Day Without Cars" (called "*Dimanche à Bordeaux*") has taken place on the first Sunday of every month in the city centre since 1998. On these days, cars are excluded from the heart of the city between 9 a.m. and 6 p.m. Cultural and sports activities are also offered to people from all walks of life, including children. This is an occasion when pedestrians, cyclists, and roller-bladers are welcome to take over the streets! Cyclists have already had their place in the sun thanks to initiatives taken by the Bordeaux Town Hall since 1997. The city has created a vast network of cycle tracks to encourage this alternative and ecological form of transportation. Approximately 550 km of lanes are now available to cyclists!



Introducing the Newest SOFAR Board Member!



SOFAR's *WATCHDOG* now has a new partner to watch over the County: "Romeo the Bull."