

60 MINUTES PRESENTS

A TRAGIC SOAP OPERA:
STEALING FROM THE BLIND
OR
TURNING A DEAF EAR

Series
Jensen
Channel
7-

LIST OF CHARACTERS

(Some Good; Some Bad; but all Well-Known to the Nation)

Governor Ronald Reagan
Governor Jerry Brown
University of California
University of California Students (Graduate Assembly)
City Government of Berkeley
Citizens of Berkeley
California Legislature
Little Hoover Commission (State Investigators) and Watchdog
The Deaf of California
The Blind of California

PLACE

California Schools for the Deaf and Blind which sit on their 119-year-old beautiful campus of 50 acres in Berkeley, California (Where Chaos is Always a Way of Life)

TIME 1972-

The big, rich, powerful and arrogant University of California with a long history of land grabbing secretly desires to push out the handicapped blind and deaf students from their 119-year-old 50 acre school campus (Good-bye to Traditions and Roots?). In collusion with the State Department of Finance and the State Department of Education (Corruption in Government?), the schools are told they must move because of an active earthquake fault. (Why no geologic study? Why didn't they listen to leading geophysicists?) The Deaf School employees are told they will lose their jobs if they fight (Suppression), but the Blind fight--long and hard (1972-1978). The State proceeds to spend over \$50 Million (Government Fiscal Waste) to build a school far from the metropolitan area among the cabbage patches* on soil worse for earthquakes. Meanwhile, out of the woodwork trying to look innocent, comes the University declaring they want (Worth Over \$30 Million) the property free and announcing there is no active fault. War begins. The City of Berkeley says no to U.C. acquisition. The residents of the City are fighting hard to stop U.C. and to work to save the schools on their present site. The U.C. Graduate Student Assembly adopted a resolution to keep the Deaf-Blind Schools there. Sacramento politicians might say it is too late and there is "too much water under the dam", but it is muddied, corrupt water and justice should be served. The "Little Hoover Commission" of the State Government will investigate, but time is running out. . .

TUNE IN NEXT WEEK....

To See if Justice or Corruption Wins!

*The Cabbage Farmers are now suing the State for the dust on their crop from construction on the new site.

CITY OF BERKELEY

John H. Denton

COUNCIL MEMBER and VICE MAYOR

December 12, 1979.

Mr. Palmer Williams,
Senior Producer, 60 MINUTES,
555 W. 57th Street,
New York, N. Y. 10019.

Dear Mr. Williams:

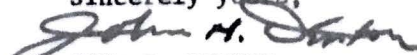
Let me strongly endorse the proposal by THE DAILY CALIFORNIAN that 60 MINUTES investigate what has motivated the State's Department of Education to force the Schools for the Deaf and Blind to move from their century old campus in Berkeley to a poorly located replacement facility in Fremont. As you undoubtedly know, this is a community of very sharp political differences but on this issue there is no voice to be heard supporting the move except that of the administration of the University of California which has fought, for the last 50 years, to obtain for its use the 50 acre site on which the Schools are located.

The excuse for the move was a specious contention, now completely exposed, that the Schools were on an active earthquake fault. And in their reckless haste to clear the way for the University juggernaut to take over the Berkeley site, the Department of Education officials engaged in a never fully understood exchange of land to obtain a new site with a more serious fault than that claimed to have existed on the Berkeley campus.

Based on the City Council's recent reiteration of its long standing position that the Schools should not be forced to move, I believe the Mayor and all Councilmembers (who are in rare unanimity on this issue) will cooperate with you in every way possible to help you develop this story. Our local Assemblyman, Tom Bates, has asked the Governor to take a stand against the move and in this he has the support of our other Assemblyman, Elihu Harris and of our Senator, Nicholas Petris, as well as of many other members of the California Legislature. It is known that when Governor Brown first took office he questioned the wisdom of moving the Schools and it would be our hope that your investigation would focus attention on the problem and rekindle his interest in doing justice to the wishes of the deaf, blind and disabled community to retain the Schools in Berkeley.

The proposed move violates the State's Education Code by substituting an inferior educational facility for the deaf, blind and disabled for a superior one, uniquely adapted to their training needs. It also violates the State's Environmental Quality Act in that no comprehensive report has ever been made on the impact of the change on the deaf, blind and disabled community in the State, their education and their integration into the social and economic life of California. Your help in developing this story is earnestly solicited.

Sincerely yours,



JOHN H. DENTON
Vice Mayor

Civic Center 2180 Milvia Street Berkeley, California 94704

(Phone 644-6399)

1030 Trestle Glen Rd.
Oakland, CA 94610
Dec. 13, 1979

Mr. Palmer Williams
Senior Producer, SIXTY MINUTES
555 W. 57th St.
New York, NY 10019

Dear Mr. Williams:

The purpose of this letter is to direct your attention and concern to a most despicable bit of state politics which will profoundly and adversely affect the education of the blind of California. (It probably will affect the deaf as well. But I cannot speak for them.) In a classic example of the miscarriage of justice and democracy, there is very strong circumstantial evidence of connivance between State officials (both elected and appointed) on the one hand and officials of the University of California on the other.

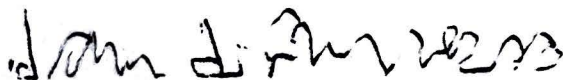
The Schools for the Blind and for the Deaf happen to be adjacently located in Berkeley, in very close proximity to the campus of the University. It is well documented that the ever acquisitive University has for decades importuned the State for permission to annex the site of the special Schools for its own interests, and in recent years it has found a sympathetic ear in the State government, notably in the Departments of Education, Finance, and General Services. With the blessing of Governors Reagan and Brown, the State of California has thus deferred to the cupidity of the University by callously uprooting the century-old Berkeley based educational programs for the blind and for the deaf from the culturally and socially enriching environment of the San Francisco Bay Area to the relatively barren and fallow site in rural Fremont. The State's rationale was based on the ridiculously tenuous assumption that the special Schools were astride an active earthquake fault. On this unsubstantiated premise, the State committed itself to building new schools in Fremont, in utter defiance of scientific data which tended to condemn the unstable alluvial soil of this new site as potentially more dangerous. With land purchased and construction well on its way, the University came out of hiding and openly declared its intentions to acquire the neighboring site. Ironically, it was the University's seismic and geologic tests which thoroughly demolished the State's bogus imperative to move the special Schools to safer ground! But despite the obvious speciousness of the State's position, the will of the mighty University, it seems, must be done, at a cost of some \$53 million to the taxpayers of this state and irreparable damage to the quality of special education for the blind.

It is not the purpose of this letter to chronicle in detail the sequence of events leading to the all-too-imminent tragic dislocation of the special schools. Pertinent information is available to all who are genuinely interested.

Though I myself am blind and a product of a residential school for the blind, as well as an instructor, for twenty-two years, at the California School for the Blind, I do not presume to be an official spokesman. However, for nearly six years I served as president of the Employees Council of the California School for the Blind, which was organized expressly for the purpose of combatting the State's irrational plans. I am now retired. But I am still very active with the organized blind as a member of the Executive Board of the American Council of the Blind of California. In any case, I have no doubt whatsoever that I speak for the entire community of the blind, the educators of blind children, and the children's parents in unalterable opposition to the senseless dislocation of the School for the Blind. It is significant that neither the blind nor the blind children's parents nor the instructors of the blind were ever consulted. We tried to make ourselves heard; but we obviously were not heeded.

With an aroused public indignation, we fervently hope to abort the fulfillment of the University's covetousness. But more than that, we want to preserve the integrity of the current educational program for the blind so firmly rooted in Berkeley. Will you help us? We know you can.

Respectfully,



John di Francesco

1415 Grizzly Peak Boulevard
Berkeley, California 94708
December 23, 1979

Mr. Palmer Williams, Senior Producer
Sixty Minutes
555 West 57th Street
New York, New York 10019

Dear Mr. Williams:

On behalf of the Employees Council of the California School for the Blind, I strongly urge you to investigate the eviction of the Blind School from an ideal environment in Berkeley.

In spite of strong protests over the last seven years from educators of the blind, graduates, and the blind community, State Officials have recklessly proceeded to move the school to Fremont. The Fremont location is detrimental to the education of blind children. It lacks the public transportation, cultural advantages, and medical facilities necessary for the education and well-being of our children.

According to State Officials, relocating the School for the Blind was necessary for the safety of the students in the event of an earthquake. They claimed an active fault trace existed under some school buildings. Although this trace was only inferred, these State Officials claimed a seismic study of the area would be too costly. Estimated cost of such a study was \$15,000. Actual cost of the new site and school will exceed \$50,000,000.

Recently, the University of California did conduct a seismic study of the Berkeley site. The results of this study indicate the school is not situated on an active fault trace. Rather, the school is located on bedrock which minimizes ground motion during an earthquake. In contrast, the new Fremont site is on filled land. Soil tests there indicate a liquifaction problem exists. Therefore, the school is being moved from a safe site to one which is less safe. The school is being moved from an educationally advantageous site to one which is isolated and inadequate.

As a citizen, I have difficulty understanding how elected and appointed representatives could so thoroughly ignore the pleas of educational and geological experts when determining the fate of handicapped children with special needs. As a taxpayer, I am incensed by the waste of public funds for a facility that is unnecessary and unwanted. As a teacher of blind children, I am thoroughly puzzled. After eleven years of teaching blind and deaf-blind children, I consider myself an expert in education of the sensory impaired. However, I must admit, I am totally at a loss dealing with the refusal to see and hear as evidenced by State Officials in the California State Department of Education.

Can you help us? Will you investigate this boondoggle? Enclosed you will find a position paper of the Employees Council. If I can be of any assistance, please contact me either at school (415-843-2662) or at home (415-548-5253).

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,

Judith S. Peletz
Judith S. Peletz