Mayor Widener makes a deal

Do bribes and mobsters make good neighbors?

By Bill Wallace

Taxpayers of Berkeley, beware: your City Council is in the process of virtually giving away a 440,000 chunk of prime-grade municipal real estate to a huge global conglomerate with a long history of bribes, kickbacks and links to organized crime.

The land in question is an 80,000 square foot parcel at the corner of Fifth Street and Delaware in the city’s controversial West Berkeley Industrial Park project. The city acquired the real estate as part of its badly misguided $9 million plan to redevelop land in Berkeley’s industrial zone. According to the plan, the improved land would be sold at bargain basement rates in order to encourage new businesses to move into town.

But the new business that is scheduled to move in may not be precisely what the project’s planners had in mind. In a deal made late last month, the City Council accepted a $132,600 offer for the land from ARA Services, Inc., a $1.5 billion-a-year conglomerate which numbers jok box companies, vending machines, industrial clothing suppliers, school bus firms and even nursing homes among its holdings.

Since the company was founded in 1959, ARA has:

- Been linked to top U.S. mobsters and their associates by affidavits sworn in and foreign politicians and businessmen;
- Admitted making $393,000 worth of bribes and questionable payments to U.S. and foreign politicians and businessmen between 1970 and 1979;
- Received hundreds of citations at its nursing homes — more than 20 of which are located right in the Bay Area — for violations of state laws and nursing home regulations;
- Been sued by Southern and Mid-Western news distribution companies for unfair business methods, illegal re­straining of trade and unlawful monopolistic practices.

"This was the reply. "Out of context like that it doesn't keep up on the scientific literature."

But even so, the presumably well-informed PG&E spokesman is dead wrong according to Dr. John Gofman, professor emeritus of medical physics at Berkeley. "It's a case where knowing a little hurts a lot," says Dr. Gofman. He explains that Davin’s claim is based on the low absorbability of plutonium in the intestine. But there's a very serious catch: the simple chlorine found in drinking water oxidizes plutonium in which case, according to Dr. Gofman, "the absorption is about a thousand to ten thousand times better."

Unfortunately, it is not only Davin who hasn't kept up on the scientific literature. Current federal limits on plutonium in food do not reflect these findings, which were published in Science magazine last year.

Furthermore, adds Dr. Gofman, "All you need is a couple small ulcers where some of those (plutonium) particles can lodge down in a crevice... and it's going to stay there and guarantee cancer..."

"That's totally missed by this idiot, and it's a very serious oversight."

"Thus armed, I called Mr. Davin to ask if he was ready to eat his words. "I didn't make that statement," Davin said defiantly. "I told him I had a tape of the broadcast in my possession, and he paused. Remaining as gracious as ever, he nonetheless stammered a bit as he launched into an explanation of "relative hazards" and of "the point I think, a New Left group repeating the methods of the '60s. They are part of the increasingly powerful anti-abortion movement, a Right group in progressive clothing. Their anthem: "All we are saying is 'Give life a chance.' " In recent years the anti-abortion movement has been taken over by slick political analysts who have successfully blindsided what they've learned from the Left about influencing public opinion with what they've learned from the Right about building power bases. What has emerged is a hybrid force that could eliminate legal abortions in the next five years."

Their success in last November’s elections was impressive. The National Right to Life Committee (NRLC), the country’s most powerful anti-abortion organization, takes credit for the election of six "pro-life" Senators (who replaced pro-choice people), four Congressmen, three..."

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When the late Lyndon Johnson showed off the scar on his stomach to photographers, it immediately became an international image. People wondered privately what he would have done if he had been operated on for hemorrhoids.

New Jiminy Carter has helped break that taboo. In an opening monologue, Johnny Carson reported that a White House boaster had substituted Crazy Gravy for Preparation H.

Dan Sorkin, former disc jockey who first brought comedian Bob Newhart to public attention, is now an official spokesperson for Synanon.

As Arthur Miller’s play The Crucible, the original version of Invasion of the Body Snatchers was intended as a metaphor for the oppressive anticommunism of the ‘50s as personified by Senator Joseph McCarthy. The remake is more like a documentary about grad students.

Several all-music radio stations have been playing records unreported by commercial stations. But they haven’t explained that it was a rating test in which they are using popular music, which is a paradox. They don’t have any listeners and get high ratings so that they can get more commercials.

Here is perhaps the most bizarre exploration of what happened to the members of People’s Temple. The official newspaper of The Black Panthers in Oakland was uncollected mail.

It is quite possible that the neutron bomb was used as a sort of a biological warfare weapon that contains radioactive molecules, which, when released into the atmosphere, kill human beings — but do not destroy property.

There is an unofficial race on between Hustler and Playboy as to which will show the first completely erect male penis. Hustler appears to be in the lead as they are approaching that goal on the installment plan. Meanwhile, the question remains, however discreetly, how long can it be done on the head of a hard-on?

According to a University of California study, marijuana smokers have worse teeth and gums than non-marijuana smokers. This could be attributed to the chemical properties of blinding marijuana binges. However, researchers found that the non-smokers visit their dentists more often than the smokers, who are probably just too stunned to make an appointment.

As with Miniaci’s suit against ARA, a federal jury in Philadelphia last summer took a special trip back to New York to meet with ARA’s president, John McCullough, before returning home.

In a lawsuit, O’Neill claims that Miniaci filed significantly inaccurately in ARA’s relations with the SEC.

For a war afflic­tive in December 1978, alleged that which had not told he had been granted unsecured loans to thugs, ARA executive Mark Wolfing, stating that Miniaci should be given the responsibility of recovering the money.

A history of bribery and kickbacks is no less shocking than its alleged gang­sters. According to a report which the company filed with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission in 1977, its ‘questionable or un­lawful payments’ included $1,415,000 in illegal state and local political payoffs, $170,000 worth of gifts to U.S. officials and businessmen and an additional $900,000 in ‘gifts’ to government and business officials overseas.

A review of the SEC report may cover only part of ARA’s illicit financial mane­uvering. O’Neill’s lawsuit alludes that the company failed to list over $100,000 of its illegal payments and kickbacks to the SEC in 1977, and that a recent inspec­tion found evidence of far more cor­ruption.

But one need not look so far away as Washington, D.C., for examples of ARA’s difficulties with the law. Right here in the Berkeley area, the Berkeley land which the firm is trying to gentrify for an incredible 73 violations including

If you are going to die for something, you should not just let it happen to you. Go back to the Jews in Germany. If you have a loaded gun in your home, and the state comes to get you, you can at least get two or three of them. I’m not opposed to violence as a course of action in many instances. Sometimes passive resistance is totally ineffective. But I believe fire to yourself is not the answer. With my luck, I would be un-inflammable.

Show me where it hurts.

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