

1030 Trestle Glen Rd.  
Oakland, Calif. 94610  
Jan. 7, 1973

Dear Dr. Riles:

Thank you for your letter of Dec. 20. I have shared it with Dr. Wilcox and with members of the Council, and we are generally gratified to have your support in our conviction that the best location of our school is Berkeley, or its immediate vicinity. We are especially pleased, too, that you are so unequivocally opposed to the utterly callous and arbitrary concept of combined schools. The general tone of your letter was somewhat encouraging.

But we are disappointed that you could find no way to cut that Gordian knot of the "Oil Tract" in Albany. Your use of the word "Encumbered" seems very apt indeed with respect to such sticky legal matters. Short of remaining right where we are, or using those portions of the two campuses which are deemed safe on which to rebuild, it seems to us that the Albany site would be ideal. In the meantime, we are investigating the Berkeley Marina district.

The possibility of locating the school for the blind in Concord seems to many of us something of a compromise--perhaps, even, a risk. We can only assume that BARTD service will soon become a reality, and that connecting bus service will be established which will be convenient to the new school. In any case, we certainly agree that \$57,000 per acre of the 80-acre parcel you cite is a pretty stiff price. One of our teachers has a lead on a 70-acre parcel, which will sell for \$25,000 an acre, or possibly less. This must be a different parcel altogether, and Mr. Griffing has been advised of it.

Very recently, it has come to our attention that the Finance Department is ardently promoting the idea of locating both the schools for the blind and for the deaf in Sacramento, on land currently occupied by the Police Academy. Now Sacramento does seem to be a better idea than most of the other sites previously considered, and it is undeniably a metropolitan area. But moving from this present area to Sacramento would result in some rather unfortunate sacrifices. Many of the advantages we have continually cited as reasons for keeping the school in this immediate vicinity would, of necessity, be forfeited; such as:

1. Participation in the Computer Teaching Program and adaptation of materials for the blind in the Science Curriculum Improvement Study at the Lawrence Hall of Science.
2. The vocational evaluation and work experience programs at the Walport Center Workshop and the California Industries for the Blind.
3. The extensive and well-established volunteer services from the University of California, other Bay Area colleges and the surrounding community.

4. A conveniently accessible training center for student teachers in Special Education (areas of visually handicapped, deaf-blind and other multi-handicapped) for the University of California and California State University, San Francisco.
5. The school's access to the Low Vision Clinic of the University of California, as well as other specialized services of this area's fine hospitals and medical schools.
6. The services of a substantial portion of a highly qualified professional staff, unable to move out of the area because of family and personal commitments.

It is all well and good for the Finance Department to define cost in terms of dollars and cents. But what about the very real cost, in terms of a shamefully devalued education and training of California's multi-handicapped blind children, who have nowhere else to go?

When the State goes site-seeing, we believe it should do so with foresight and vision.

Cordially,

John di Francesco, President

California School for the Blind Employees Council



STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
STATE EDUCATION BUILDING, 721 CAPITOL MALL, SACRAMENTO 95814

April 16, 1973

Mr. John di Francesco, President  
California School for the Blind  
Employees Council  
1030 Trestle Glen Road  
Oakland, California 94610

Dear Mr. di Francesco:

Thank you for your letter of April 1, 1973, regarding the California School for the Blind and the need to relocate and rebuild.

It is true that this Department is committed to an East Bay location for both the California School for the Blind and the California School for the Deaf. You will be interested in knowing that the Legislative Analyst has agreed that first consideration for relocation of these schools should be given to the Mt. Diablo Valley area of the East Bay.

Among the fifty sites evaluated as potential relocation sites for the California School for the Blind, the Gil Tract was by far the most satisfactory in terms of the criteria established and the Department has reported that to the legislative committees, the Legislative Analyst and the Department of Finance. As you know this does not specify the availability of the property for the purpose of relocating the California School for the Blind. The land required to build a new special school is between 18 - 25 acres of reasonably level terrain. To secure that much property within the Gil Tract would force closure of a long time agricultural experimentation program of the University administration to replace this land with other suitable property for the specific purpose of experimental studies in agriculture. Although our need is great in relation to the School for the Blind, it is unreasonable to ask the University to solve our problem by creating problems for their own program.

It is my understanding that the Albany School District is seeking only a small portion of the Gil Tract property which is not now in use by the experimental project and can be replaced by existing property owned by the University. The school district has offered to buy 5.5 acres of the unused 9.5 parcel on the southwest corner of Jackson and Buchanan Streets. The University Board of Regents has accepted this offer. I am advised that this sale is contingent on a successful bond election before June 1, 1974. You can see that this proposal and acceptance does not force the curtailment of

Mr. John di Francesco, cont'd

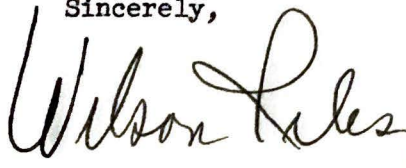
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an agricultural experimental program and enables the University to derive considerable revenue from land that is surplus to their needs.

I have provided some detail in this response so that the situation may be clear to you. I do not foresee how the Department can realistically pursue the Gil Tract property even if it has great attraction as a site for the California School for the Blind. The University was fully aware of our interest and needs at the time the Regents reached a decision in regard to the Albany School District's proposal. Additionally, the July 1, 1975, deadlines we face do not provide us with the time to engage in lengthy negotiations; we must be well along in the construction of a new School for the Blind by that date.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Wilson Riles". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

WILSON RILES