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Dr. Mason Gaffney
Resources for the Future
1755 Massachusetts Ave. NW
Washington DC.

Thursday, Nov. 11 1971

Dear Mason,

I have recently gotten involved with a Land Reform Taskforce founded by Peter Barnes and a number of CRLA types. As a result, I want to educate myself much more thoroughly on the variety of tax subsidies to speculative landholding and tax farming. I wonder if you could send me some sort of a reading list on the subject, as well as the reference to that article of yours in Proxmire's hearings that you lent me which I stupidly forgot to get. Also you might send Peter a couple of those reprints you gave me on subsidies to sprawl; he's very interested. His address is:

Peter Barnes/ 3975 Clay Street/ SF 94118

I'm so rry we haven't been in further contact with you on the editing of the Nader stuff; we've had a falling out with the Center the upshot of which is we're excluded from editing the book.

Finally, I wanted to ask you about an idea I had that might be used to get labor and environmentalists together. Labor is all worked up about automation and unemployment. Environmentalists are upset ^{over} exponential growth in power use and depletion of resources. Is it possible that subsidies to power use and capital investment are ~~is~~ a substantial cause of technological unemployment? This seems to be the case in agriculture. Is it the case in general? Have you or anybody else done any work on the problem?

Finally again, as you might have heard San Francisco recently clobbered something called "Proposition T" which would have imposed a six story high limitation on future construction in San Francisco

with exceptions to be granted only by majority vote on a referendum. The purpose of the referendum was not so much to stop all construction at six stories ~~and~~ as to stop monstrosities like the Holiday Inn in Chinatown (masquerading as the "Chinese Cultural Center") or huge buildings blocking the waterfront -- which have hitherto won all too easy approval from city planners. Proponents of Proposition T also argued that presently highrises pay in taxes only a fraction of the additional costs they impose on the city. (Opponents reply that "Buildings don't cause crime and traffic problems -- people do".) Labor, which sided with the developers, ~~argued~~ that highrises create construction jobs; proponents of the proposition replied that the same amount of new office space would be built every year whether in highrise^{one}~~s~~ or a number of smaller buildings. Anyway, the developers spend perhaps a half million dollars on a propaganda barrage -- including such charges as that Proposition T would require tearing down Coit Tower -- and the proposition lost by a landslide. So now the developers have a green light as never before.

All this flak flew in a ^mcoplete vacuum of information. What are the costs and benefits of highrise? How should they be taxed to ensure they don't cost more than they bring in? Would the same quantity of office space be built in smaller buildings? How can you take account of esthetics? Can you suggest any reading on the subject?

Meanwhile, I hope you will join our land reform task force in some capacity. I told Jerry Meril, a member from EDF to drop in and see you in Washington next week.

R^ugards,



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Resources for the Future, inc.

1755 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE, N.W. / WASHINGTON, D. C. 20036 / CABLE: RESOURCES / PHONE: 462-4400

19 November 1971

Y
Ms. Polly Roberts
California Action Inc.
228 McAllister Street
Suite 205
San Francisco, California 94102

Dear Polly:

Enclosed "reading list" is my own ego trip, but I checked items on tax subsidies. Would you ask Peter Barnes to let me know which items he'd like?

Sorry about your falling out with the Center. Heal the breach if you can. You need each other, and we all need you both. Let thieves fall out.

I like your idea about environment and full employment. It's what my work here is mostly about. In general I favor substituting labor for land, primary products, and dumping, to solve the 2 problems jointly.

I think Prop. T was misguided, and somewhat subjective and authoritarian--an imperialism of taste. I'm more disturbed by slums.

Next time you're in town I'll show you my library on costs and high-rise. If Jerry Merrill shows, I'll start with him. I saw some Duskin stuff--it was empty.

Do you know Catherine Clark (Mrs. Russell)? Great gal, and San Francisco civic improver.

My best to Keith, too.

Sincerely,

M. Mason Gaffney

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3 December 1971

Ms. Polly Roberts
California Action, Inc.
228 McAllister Street
Suite 205
San Francisco, California 94102

Dear Polly:

Yours on the Williamson Act is beautiful. Why aren't there more like you? Did you see Joan Irvine's testimony, Vol. II, 1969 Hearings on tax reform? 100 pages of dirt on Irvine Estate and the Act. Joan's ok.

Dan Speir at PG&E (yes, really) has a good short study on costs related to density.

Keep on trucking!

Best,

M. Mason Gaffney

P.S. Please send copy to Neal Potter, this address, and Fred Stocker, School of Business, Ohio State University.

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