

ASIAN Family & AFFAIR

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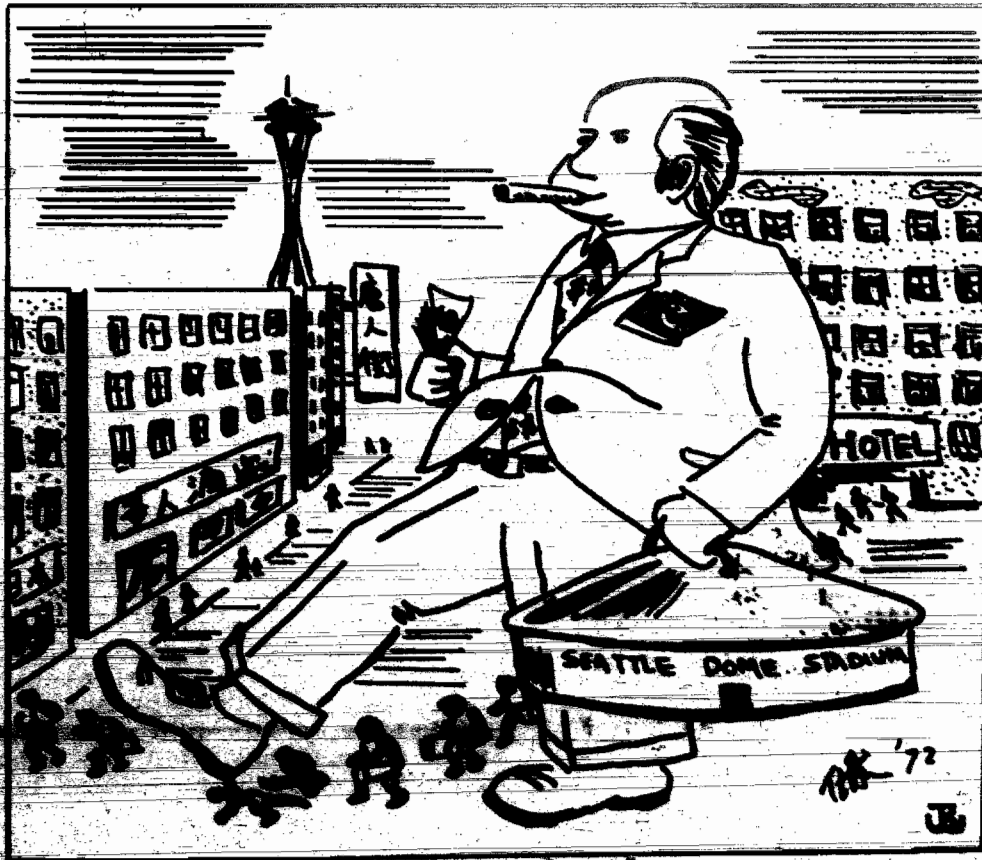
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IS CHINATOWN DO(O)MED?



To the residents of Seattle's Chinatown area, the immediate effects of the King County Dome Stadium issue approval may seem neither too catastrophic nor determinably effectual, but in the long run the consequences will be in the heat of drastic changes. And this is merely a mild state-

would like to say that our concern with the stadium and its possible effects on Chinatown was attributable to our concern for the more than 300 Filipino residents of the area--Chinatown to them was, still is, and will continue to be the heart and soul of their daily existence. It is a life-style, the very existence of which provides enough of an impetus for their survival. To live in any place other than Chinatown is synonymous with not living at all.

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Big Business versus

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The Stadium

The proposed stadium is a \$40 million project seen by most people as ultimately beneficial to the City and to her inhabitants. Ideally, if Seattle garners an NFL football franchise sometime in 1974, the stadium would operate on a successful path of improvement, ultimately causing a change in the environs of the stadium site.

On January 21st of this year, the preliminary design for the stadium was approved by the King County Design Commission, headed by Jim Braman. The implication seems to be that Seattle is well on her way to acquiring a dome stadium. Although the actual location is supposedly still a conjecture, the site, in all likelihood, will be that empty lot that used to be the King Street (Railway) Station. At this stage, the King Street site is more than a likelihood. Fact: King County now owns that lot. What the county would eventually do with this site is obvious. Fact: Mr. Schlatter's design is specifically geared toward this site. Fact: That hunk of lot (35.9 acres) covers a wide range of property extending from King Street through Connecticut Street, from First Avenue through Fourth Avenue. The King Street site will eventually be the location for the dome stadium.

In fact, as early as April 10 the bids for the dome design and construction open. Three architectural firms will be competing for the specified purpose of building just the dome. They are: (1) Narasore, Bain, Brady & Johansen; (2) Skillington; and (3) Praeger.

Parking spaces for 3,101 vehicles within the stadium complex are part of the design plans. It is conjectured that there are available on the area at the southern end of downtown 14,000 vehicle spaces for off-site parking. Chinatown is on the southern end.

As far as the entire stadium is concerned, the construction is set to commence in late August of this year, the completion date being targeted for mid-1974.

The King Street site is so certain to be chosen that the King County Design Commission, as far as future plans are con-

cerned, is already seeking a \$10.5 million federal grant in order to further build a convention - exhibition structure (still part of the overall stadium) located adjacent to the actual stadium, on the northwest quadrant.

Implications for Chinatown

One might wonder: well and good for Chinatown! Business will be booming. But --consider the future implications. Consider Chinatown's present state, the quandary of her resident peoples.

Chinatown's proximity to the stadium site is no argument. The future (or "unfuture") of Chinatown is what is at stake?

There are a number of Asian businessmen in the area doing very well. Most of them are small-time business operators who depend largely on customers for their only means of livelihood. But, consider their situation a few years from now (based, of course, on the premise that the stadium will be built)--their survival would depend upon whether the owners of the buildings (where their shops are located) would still lease their buildings to these little businessmen, on whether in the final analysis these same property owners, lured by the Sweet Smell of the dollar, would eventually yield to imminent offers from big-time business operators.

Let's be realistic--take a meditation break and look into the future for awhile. The stadium is already there. And now, look into Chinatown of that era. Do you still think you will see the present Asian shop-operators peddling their small business? For one thing, most of them do not even presently own the buildings on which their business activity heavily depends. Do you see, as we do, great, huge buildings rising up? Do you envisage in place of Wa-Sang, Kokusai or Manila Cafe, worldwide, monstrous, modern and wealthy facilities like a "Chinatown" Hilton, a "Chinatown" Sheraton Inn, and the like. . . Do you still think our Asian peoples will still be in their present situations once the stadium is in full operation? Do you still see the stadium as a boon to Chinatown residents? Chances are, if you don't own the building in which you operate in Chinatown, you will be elsewhere by this time. If you are wealthy and self-supportive, i.e., if you own the building in which you operate your own shop, your

The People, AGAIN

chances of financial gain and future existence in Chinatown are far healthier than you can imagine.

And, finally, consider the long-time Chinatown residents.

In an age where business gains rank of primary significance, the plight of the singular individual is left to its own. In the greedy business practice of personal profits unlimited, the welfare of the people are not taken into consideration. In the impending business dealings between the wealthy and still-seeking-wealth money mongers of the world of private enterprise and the unsympathetic owners of land and buildings in Chinatown, the long-time residents (of Chinatown) will become the unfortunate victims of the eventual see-saw battle between these two parties. Who will eventually give in? To them, the important thing is that they get a good business deal--at the expense of any and all.

Should we allow this to happen?

Where else would these residents live when they finally realize that a part of their lives (Chinatown) will be sliced away from them? Since most of them live on social security benefits, they can never afford to stay at a "Chinatown" Hilton.

Chinatown has had a fine, long, wealthy cultural tradition. Will it still be the same during those days of the stadium? Will the present Chinatown be nothing more than rows upon rows of spiraling edifices reaching for the skies? Will it be a barren wasteland of parking garages in business competition? Assuming that there will still be a few Asian residents in the area, will they be content to be merely speculated at as some pieces of novelty? Or would they just as soon be dead? If this should be the case, would we, as a progeny of Asians ourselves, be content to solve this problem by turning our backs on it? If we do not act now, Chinatown (in its present area) might be extinct a decade later.

Already, the fate of some resident people has been decided. Within a three-week span, two hotels in Chinatown-- the Evergreen Hotel and the Union Hotel--have evicted their residents. (Don't delude yourselves: The majority of those evicted were Filipinos, Chinese and Japanese.) Whether the cause for eviction was due to governmental pressures or whether big bus-

inesses have finally exerted considerable influence on Chinatown--these are all conjectures. The fact remains: People are being driven away from their long-time residences.

One may now wonder: What buildings will rise in place of the Evergreen and the Union? Again, one can hazard to guess. It is a known fact that Henry Broderick, Inc. (which manages most of the administrative buildings throughout Seattle) now owns that property Evergreen Hotel stands on.

It should be reiterated: Unless businesses in Chinatown OWN the land they are situated on, they will NEVER survive through the time the stadium is actually built. These businessmen will suffer, as will the residents in the area. Is the fate of human lives of little concern, as contrasted with the continued expense of business profits? Can't businesses wait until full-blooded human beings settle down first?

What You Can do to Preserve Chinatown

Mr. Schlatter stated that the King County Design Commission is working in close cooperation with various associations to be affected by the stadium site. One of these is the International District Improvement Association (INTER*IM). This organization operates primarily as a liaison between the Seattle Model Cities Program and the International District.

To the residents of the International District, we strongly urge you to let yourself be heard. If big businesses keep taking over current businesses in Chinatown, you, as residents of the area, will eventually be driven out. The officers of INTER*IM who represent you are: Carlos Young, president, who also works for the City as a systems engineer; Susan Tomita, 1st Vice President, who is also a concerned social worker; and Al Rehn, treasurer, who is also a bank manager. Susan Molmen, INTER*IM coordinator, pursues a full-time, active and dedicated interest in the matter.

The INTER*IM Board of Trustees is composed of an assemblage of individuals in mixed professions. INTER*IM's phone number is MA 4-1802. Let us hope that the Board does not forget that human interests are at stake.

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CHINATOWN

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These people (especially the officers) have an obligation to hear you as residents, as they are purportedly acting on behalf of all in the International District. Let us place things in the proper perspective: the fate of human lives comes prior to any other considerations. Let them know this. Should you have any questions or suggestions, please share them with those actively involved in the issue. In turn, they will let the authorities hear what you have to say: The INTERNATIONAL DROP-IN CENTER at 506 South King Street, with Sabino Cabildo as acting director, is now opened every day for your own benefit. Sympathetic workers volunteer their services daily. Phone number is MA 2-4053.

To those other Asians away from Chinatown who think that this conflict of values will still not affect them, consider the traditions and cultures Chinatown presents: They are endangered! Chinatown might virtually be extinct! Can one blame the International District residents for feeling that Chinatown manifests a slice of their lives? They have kept it alive so far . . . FOR US!

What can we do? More specifically, will we do what is NEEDED to be done?

The issue is there. The initiative has been started. And all we have to do is see it through.

Submitted by Sabino Cabildo, Roy Flores, and Vic Pineda

PROFILES

AN INTERVIEW WITH SABINO CABILDO

Editor's Note: Mr. Cabildo is presently the Acting Director of the International Drop-In Center located at 5th and King St. Sabino has also been involved as past vice chairman of the Asian Student Coalition (ASC) and as a supervisor at the Asian Drop In Center.

AFA: Sabino, what is your present function as the Acting Director of the Center?

CABILDO: Right now, we are trying to help our Filipino elderly who will be affected by the proposed displacement of about 700 residents living in the International District by May 28, 1972. This center was created to provide for the welfare of the elderly Filipinos, and now over 138 of them will be temporarily or permanently removed from the community.

AFA: Why are our people being displaced?

CABILDO: The fire department is enforcing the Ozark Ordinance on hotels here that don't meet the safety standards. So this means either the hotels renovate, or close down in 60 days. Renovation money is very difficult to get, and alternative housing in the area is limited.

AFA: Who is going to be affected by the enforcement of this ordinance?

CABILDO: Officially, 8 hotels are going to be affected and unofficially 5 more hotels also. This means approximately 750 units which no longer will be available for low income housing. The residents are mainly elderly people, transients, or those with limited income.

AFA: Where will the people be forced to go?

CABILDO: This is our major concern because the Intern'l District has only 212 units available. The other 500 people will have to move outside of the District. The feelings of the Filipinos here is that they don't want to leave their community. Besides the geographical ties is the unique environment which provides food, friends, language, cultural and historical ties to the people.

AFA: What impact would this displacement have on the greater Asian Community?

CABILDO: The first thing that comes to my mind is the small storefront businesses that are housed in these buildings. If the people go, the clientele would drop. If the buildings go, then of course, the businesses would go too. The larger Asian community will eventually feel this piecemeal destruction of their historical, cultural, economic and social roots, also. I have seen what happened in San Francisco's Chinatown area when other hotels were shut down and a huge Holiday Inn replaced them. One only has to look at Pioneer Square to see who benefited from that renovation, then ask themselves where the poor people went.

AFA: What is presently being done about this potential displacement of our people?

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