

1/10/78 H. Milk

THANK TO LT. GOV. DYMALEY, ANN ELIAZER, ETC.  
INTRO

Fred Harris  
Zoo Committee

while these comments are most certainly <sup>for the</sup> ~~and it would be~~ <sup>also</sup> ~~for the~~ <sup>hope</sup> ~~who are~~ <sup>not</sup> ~~here~~

In 1977, a large seaport city on the East Coast voted to take away the rights of some people. Later that year, <sup>in the</sup> a large seaport city <sup>this time</sup> on the West Coast voted into office one of those same people. That same West Coast city once had a frightening nightmare of the future--and the next morning promptly voted against Richard Nixon. That same city <sup>SPV A portion follow the lead</sup> ~~a few years later~~ voted to decriminalize marijuana and now sees states like Mississippi follow its lead.

That city, our city--San Francisco--has now broken the last major dam of prejudice in this country and in so doing has done what no other city has done before.

How does one thank a city? I hope, with all my heart, that I can do the job that I have been charged to do and do it so well that the questions raised by my election will be buried once and forever--and that other cities <sup>ONCE AGAIN</sup> will follow San Francisco's lead.

I understand very well that my election was not alone a question of my gayness but a question of what I represented. In a very real sense, Harvey Milk represented the spirit of the neighborhoods of San Francisco. For the past few years, my fight to make the <sup>V</sup>oice of the neighborhoods of this city be heard was not unlike the fight to make the voice of the cities themselves be heard.

Let's make no mistake about this: The American Dream starts with the neighborhoods. If we wish to rebuild our cities, we must first rebuild our neighborhoods. And to do that, we must understand that the quality of life is more important than the standard of living. To sit on the front steps--whether it's a veranda in a small town or a concrete stoop in a big city--and talk to our neighbors is infinitely more important than to huddle on the living room lounge



and watch a make-believe world in not-quite living color.

Progress is not America's only business--and certainly not its most important. Isn't it strange that as technology advances, the quality of life so frequently declines? Oh, washing the dishes is easier. Dinner itself is easier--just heat an<sup>d</sup> serve, though it might be more nourishing if we ate the ads and threw the food away. And we longer ~~near~~ fear spots on our glassware when guests come over. But then, of course, ~~we never really have any~~ <sup>the guest don't come because</sup> our friends are too afraid to come ~~over~~ to our house and we're too afraid to go to theirs.

And I hardly need to tell you that in that 19 or 24-inch view of the world, cleanliness has long since eclipsed godliness. Soon we'll all smell, look and actually be laboratory clean, as sterile on the inside as on the out. The perfect consumer, surrounded by the latest appliances. The perfect audience, with a ringside seat to almost any event in the world, <sup>without</sup> ~~sans~~ smell, <sup>without</sup> ~~sans~~ taste, <sup>without</sup> ~~sans~~ feel--alone and unhappy in the vast wasteland of our living rooms.

<sup>I think that</sup> What we actually need, of course, is a little more dirt on the seat of our pants as we sit on the front stoop and talk to our neighbors once again, enjoying the type of summer day where the smell of garlic travels slightly faster than the speed of sound.

There's something missing in the sanitized life we lead. Something that our leaders in Washington can never supply by simple edict, something that the commercials on television never advertise because nobody's yet found a way to bottle it or box it or can it. What's missing is the touch, the warmth, the meaning of life. A four-color spread in Time is no substitute for it. Neither is a 30-second commercial or a reassuring Washington press conference, ~~on a bottle of baby food from a tin.~~

I spent many years on both Wall Street and Montgomery Street and I full<sup>y</sup> understand the<sup>e</sup> debt and responsibility that major corporations owe their shareholders. I also fully understand the urban battlefields of New York and Cleveland and Detroit. I



see the faces of the unemployed--and the unemployable--of this city. I've seen the faces in Chinatown, Hunters Point, the Mission and the Tenderloin and I don't like what I see.

~~How~~ oddly, I'm also reminded of the most successful slogan a business ever coined: the customer is always right. ~~Nothing is too good for that customer of ours.~~

What's been forgotten is that those people of the Tenderloin and Hunters Point, those people in the streets, are the customers, certainly potential ones, and they must be treated as such. Government cannot ignore them. <sup>AND NATION CAN</sup> Business ~~cannot~~ ignore them. What sense is there in making products if the would-be customer can't afford to buy them? It's not alone a question of price, it's a question of ability to pay. For a man with no money, 99¢ reduced from \$1.29 is still a fortune.

American business must realize that while the shareholders <sup>always</sup> come first, the care and feeding of their customer is a close second. They have a debt and a responsibility to that customer and the city in which he lives, the cities in which <sup>the business itself</sup> they live, or in which they grew up. <sup>it</sup> To throw away a senior citizen after they've nursed you through childhood is wrong. To treat a city as disposable once your business has prospered ~~there and perhaps outgrown it~~ is equally wrong and even more short-sighted.

Unfortunately for those who would like to flee them, the problems of the cities don't stop at the city limits. There are no moats around our cities that keep the problems in. What happens in New York or San Francisco will eventually happen in San Jose. <sup>It's just a matter of time.</sup> And like the flu, it usually gets worse the further it travels.

Our cities ~~are not to~~ <sup>MUST NOT</sup> be abandoned. They're worth fighting for, <sup>R</sup> not just by those who live in them but by industry, commerce, ~~the~~ unions, everyone. Not alone because they represent the past, but because they also represent the future. Your children will live there and so will your grandchildren. <sup>Hopefully</sup> For all practical purposes, the eastern corridor from ~~B~~oston to Newark will be one vast strip city. So will the



area from Milwaukee, ~~Wisconsin~~ to Gary, Indiana. In California, it will be that fertile crescent of asphalt and neon that stretches from Santa Barbara to San Diego. Will urban blight travel the arteries of the freeways? Of course it will-- unless we stop it.

So the challenge of the '80s will be to awaken the consciousness of industry and commerce to the part they must play in saving the cities which nourished them. Every company realizes it must constantly invest in its own physical plant to remain healthy and grow. Well, the cities are a part of that plant and the people who live in them are part of the cities. They're all connected; what effects one ~~eventually~~ effects the others.

In short, the cheapest place to manufacture a product <sup>NOT</sup> may be the cheapest place at all, if it results in throwing your customers out of work. There's no sense in making television sets in Japan if the customers in the United States haven't the money to buy them. Industry must actively seek to employ those without work, to train those who have no skills. "Labor intensive" is not a dirty <sup>WORD,</sup> ~~name~~, not every job is done better by machine. It has become the job of industry not only to create the product, but also to create the customer.

Costly? I don't think <sup>K</sup> so. It's far less expensive than the problem of full <sup>loading</sup> docks and no customers. And there are additional returns: lower rates of crime, smaller welfare loads. <sup>And</sup> in having your friends and neighbors sitting on that well-polished <sup>front</sup> stoop. It's easy enough to sum up: If you want to make it here, put it back here so others can make it here.

Industry and business has made our country the greatest military and economic power in the world. <sup>Now</sup> I think it's time to look at our future with a realistic eye. I don't think the American Dream necessarily includes two cars in every garage and a dispose-all in every kitchen. What it does need is an education <sup>AL</sup> system with incentives. To spend 12 years at school--almost a fifth of your life--without a job



at the other end is meaningless. Every ghetto ~~kid~~ <sup>child</sup> has the right to ask: Education for what?

It's time for our system to mature, to face the problems it's created, to take responsibility for the problems it's ignored. Criminals aren't born, they're made--made by a socio/economic system that has turned crime into a production line phenomena. "In 1977 there were so many burglaries per second, so many murders per hour..." ~~And the profile on the map is constantly up~~

It sounds simplistic to constantly say that jobs are part of the answer. But there are things to consider. As huge as they are, corporations and companies frequently have more flexibility than the people who work for them. A headquarters company can leave town, a factory can literally pull up stakes and move ~~away~~ <sup>SOMEPLACE ELSE</sup>. But the workers they leave behind frequently can't. The scar that's left ~~behind~~ isn't just the empty office building or the now vacant lot; it's the worker who can no longer provide for his family, the teenager who suddenly awakens from the American Dream to find that all the jobs have gone south for the duration.

It was an expensive move the company made. You see the empty buildings but you don't see the hopelessness, the loss of pride, the anger. You've done a lot more than just lost a customer. And when I say losing a customer, I don't mean just your customer. There are other businesses and they ~~might~~ <sup>WILL</sup> move or shift, and the people they leave behind are also your customers, just like yours are theirs.

I think, perhaps, many companies feel that "~~helping~~ <sup>SPICE</sup> the city" is a form of charity. I think it more accurate to consider it a part of the cost of doing business, that it should be entered on the books as amortizing the future. I would like to see business and industry consider it as such because I think there's more creativity, more competence perhaps, in business than there is in government. I think that business could turn the South of Market area not only into an industrial park but a neighborhood as well. To coin a pun, too many of our cities have a complex, in



fact, too many complexes. We don't need another concrete jungle that dies the moment you turn off the lights in the evening. What we need is a neighborhood where people can walk to work, raise their kids, enjoy life.

That simple.

And now, I suspect, some of the businessmen<sup>Phyllis</sup> in this room are figuring--perhaps rightly--that they've heard all this before. Why is it always business that's supposed to save the city? Why us? Why isn't some<sup>BODY</sup> else doing something? How about you, for a change, Harvey? What the hell are the rest of the people in this room doing?

And you've got a point. But I merely suggested that business <sup>must</sup> ~~should~~ help, that we must open up a dialog that involves all of us. A businessman's<sup>own</sup> decisions aren't his alone<sup>on his</sup> for the simple reason that they effect far more people than just him. And we have to consider those other people. There<sup>th</sup> are ghosts that sit on your boards of directors and they must be ~~acknowledged~~ <sup>RESPECTED</sup>.

And <sup>now</sup> I think it's time that everybody faced reality. <sup>REAL REALITY</sup> So for the next <sup>few</sup> ~~five~~ minutes, it's going to be <sup>slightly</sup> down and dirty.

A small item in the newspaper the other day indicated what the future might be like. Mayor Koch of New York turned his back on the elegance of Gracie Mansion and opted for the comforts of his three-room apartment--and I'll refrain from any comparison to our good Governor.

Mr. Koch chose his three-room apartment because he likes it. Nothing more complicated than that. He likes it.

And believe it or not, that's the wave of the future. The cities will be saved. ~~And~~ The cities will be governed. But they won't be run from three thousand miles away in Washington, they won't be run from the statehouse, and most of all they won't be run by the carpetbaggers who have fled to the suburbs. You can't run a city by people who don't live there, any more than you can have an effective police force



made up of people who don't live there. In either case, what you've got is a ~~variation of~~ an occupying army.

The cities will be saved. The cities will be run. They'll be saved and they'll be run by the people who live in them, by the people who like to live in them. You can see it in parts of Manhattan ((~~they're not~~ <sup>50th</sup> just the west side and the ~~parts~~ <sup>parts</sup> ~~where they're renovating warehouses~~)), you can see it along Armitage street and on the far north side of Chicago, and you can certainly see it in San Francisco.

Who's done the most for housing in our city? The Federal Government? The State? Who's actually renovating this city, who's buying the houses and using their own <sup>SWEAT</sup> ~~own~~ and funds to restore them and make them liveable? And just how many homes do you think that includes by now? How many thousands? The people who are doing this are doing it out of love for the city. They're renovating not only the physical plant, they're renovating the spirit of the city as well.

The cities will not be saved by the people who feel condemned to live in them, who can hardly wait to move to Marin or San Jose--or Evanston or Westchester. The cities will be saved by the people who like it ~~there~~ <sup>here</sup>. The people who prefer the neighborhoods stores to the shopping mall, who ~~see~~ <sup>GO TO</sup> the plays and eat in the restaurants and go to the <sup>S</sup> ~~dicos~~ <sup>dicos</sup> and worry about the education the kids are getting even if they have no kids of their own...

That's not just the city of the future, it's the city of today. It means new directions, new alliances, new solutions for ancient problems. The typical American family with two cars in the garage and 2.2 kids doesn't live here any more. It hasn't for years. The demographics are different now and we all know it. The city is a city of singles and young marries, <sup>D</sup> a city of the retired and the poor, a city of many colors <sup>WHO</sup> ~~that~~ <sup>MANY</sup> speaks in ~~many~~ <sup>D</sup> ~~different~~ <sup>many</sup> tongues.

That city will run itself, it will create its own solutions.. District elections <sup>WAS JUST</sup> was not the end, it ~~isn't~~ <sup>is</sup> the beginning. We'll solve our problems--with your <sup>R</sup> ~~help~~ <sup>help</sup>



if we can, without it if we must. We need your help--I don't deny that--but you also need us. We're your customrs. We're your future.

I'm riding into that future and frankly I don't know if I'm wearing ~~that~~ <sup>THE</sup> fabled helm of Mambrino on my head or if I'm wearing a barber's basin. I guess we wear what we want to wear ~~and~~ we fight what we want to fight. Maybe I see dragons where there are only windmills. But something tells me the dragons are for real and if I shatter a lance or two on a whirling blad<sup>6</sup>, maybe I'll catch a dragon in the bargain.

So I'm asking you to take a chance and ride with me against the windmills--and against the dragons, too. To make the quality of life in San Francisco what it should be, to help our city set the example, to set the style, to show the rest of the country what a city can really be. To prove that Miami's vote was a step backwards and that San Francisco's was two steps forward.

Yesterday, <sup>an</sup> ~~an~~ esteemed colleague on the Board said that we cannot live on hope alone. ~~But my colleague missed the point.~~ <sup>I think I know what he's struggling with</sup> The important thing is not that we cannot live on hope alone, but that life is not worth living without it. If the story of Don Quixote means anything, it means that the spirit of life is just as important as the substance.

What ~~the narrow minded and the ignorant~~ <sup>others may</sup> see as a barber's basin, you and I know is that glittering, legendary helmet.

The End