

Where we've been defines where we're going. This helps define who Fred Strong was, is and will be:

Fred's biography lists a lot of things he's been involved with but, if you weren't there, it's hard to assess. He started his involvement and advocacy over 50 years ago.

He has prevailed many times to bring security to the family farm as well as local agribusiness; reduce the cost of major programs; involve our citizens in the planning, approval and implementation of public outreach efforts both foreign and domestic; and many local funding, property rights and economic development efforts in all areas of community life.

A specific effort that is well documented took place in 1977-78 when the Governor's Office of Planning and Research proposed the "Urban Development Strategy For California". At the time Fred was residing in Santa Margarita and had land use and public policy consulting offices in San Luis Obispo and Santa Rosa. He was the contract chief executive officer for The Sonoma County Alliance in that county and for Citizens for Environmental Balance and Economic Stability covering San Luis Obispo County on behalf of thousands of "concerned citizens".

On behalf of the Sonoma County Alliance, the Sonoma County Board of Realtors and the Construction Industry Association he responded to the 84 page document which was blaming the citizens and local government for the problems of the state. It proposed 13 policies and 42 actions to remove decision making power from the people and from local government in order to "improve" things by giving these rights and powers to State and regional government.

Fred produced an eleven page report analysis which opposed 30 actions, supported nine and supported, if amended, an additional three of the proposed actions to accomplish the proposed state takeover of local control. He appeared at multiple meetings and delivered the paper on separate occasions.

The result was a major overhaul of the document with over 50 amendments which resulted in retaining citizen involvement and local government authority for the planning and infrastructure of the state. The final document, issued in February 1978 was shrunk to 36 pages.

An extensive look at what he objected to and what he said and followed through on is a revealing look at the character of the person asking you to consider and support his candidacy for the California Assembly. To set the stage, Jerry Brown was the Governor and Bill Press was Director of the Office of Planning and Research (OPR). In his comments Strong frequently uses the word "we" to indicate the State of California as it purports to represent the people of the state and its government.

His introduction states:

"We talk about the well being of present and future generations and point to urban sprawl as uniquely California. We indicate that it is bad. Then we turn around and point our fingers east and point to their cities and the deterioration of the inner core areas and say we must avoid that. Further, we place agriculture on a pedestal for special consideration and treat it as if all it needs is prime land and water. As we attempt to implement actions based on these premises we build a body of law that would be well suited to a Tolkein or Bradbury novel but ... unfortunately ... not to the real world of America 1977+.

"Urban sprawl is not uniquely California. Look to Detroit, Denver, Kansas City, Miami Beach or Chicago. If it is bad in the minds of people ... it is bad for the other guy ... or for society ... but not for oneself because a majority of Americans seek, strive for and fight to retain their little

piece of suburbia. Sprawl means low, as opposed to high, urban densities. Sprawl means large yard and a pool. It means a place for a horse or a few chickens to some. It means the illusion of country living through landscaping and screening to others. It means the illusion of isolation with the convenience of proximity.

“If it is bad, it is bad only in its high cost of maintenance and its theoretical impact on agriculture. The costs and what amenities are paid for collectively, should be a decision by our citizens at the local level; expressed by ballot measures that spell out the amenities and the tax bite necessary to support them. If you don’t want to pay for the Cadillac you better drive a Chevy. If you can’t, or don’t want to, afford a Chevy you better take a bus or walk.

“We then also say that we don’t want inner-eastern-city atmospheres in California. In that we are condemning the high density experiments of earlier generations. Efficient and economical in physical maintenance of public services but costly in the field of social welfare and public safety.

“The problems of the inner core city are not problems of structural maintenance. They are socio-economic problems. They involve frustrations of the poorly educated and financially impoverished. They involve moral and ethical values or the lack of them ... and while they cannot be effectively legislated they can be publicly influenced. The morals and ethics of government and its newsworthy personages form, unfortunately, more of an actual guide for society than does the Bible. The words and actions of Plato, Aquinas, Spinoza and Schweitzer are as nothing compared to the words and actions of Nixon, Carter, Nader, Brown and Press in forming public attitudes and actions. So long as public people, policy and legislation characterize general areas of the economy such as corporations, utilities, building trades or Real Estate as bad or immoral we will never eliminate more deeply seated prejudices from the public ethic and mores. So long as public policy and legislation assumes that people, as a whole, are basically bad rather than basically good, the public will not have a healthy self image nor will its actions reflect a good self image.

“So long as public people, policy and legislation reflect a disregard, however slight, for property rights, civil rights and our other Constitutional freedoms, the public will continue to disregard them also.

“That brings us to agriculture. There would be no conflict between adjacent land uses if there was mutual respect. Ask your ag people. Their biggest problem in urban fringes and near transportation corridors is harassment from people with no regard for their rights. More harm has come to their productivity from government interference in their management practices than from all the urban and real estate pressures since the founding of this state. The basic premises of this document are invalid. The policies are harmful. They will not achieve the goals you have set. The total impact of this proposed policy will be to reduce agriculture’s capitalization potential resulting in decreased production proportionate to population growth. It will impact heavily on the economy in a negative manner. It will reduce the self esteem of the of the individual. It will make a sham of the principle of self-determination. It is a document not of problem solving but of social engineering. ... engineering in a direction which has no evidence of publi9c will or desire. To be specific to the document itself:”

Strong then took each section, point by point and demonstrated the problems while suggesting corrections. This was done for 63 different sections of the document. He achieve changes to over 50 of them.

A few of the cogent remarks were:

On page 22 the facts are presented in a manner which criticizes the choices of the young and the elderly and lays the groundwork for regional and state planning.

Strong said: "You present impressive figures and recognize the needs of children and older people for housing, food and public services ... but you have ignored the need of children for love and of older people for dignity and for all of us -- freedom of choice."

On pages 26 and 27 the document describes the "state role in urban development" and "a partnership: state, regional, and local government." Strong opines: "While you use words well to describe the reasons why people should not govern themselves at a local level and while you paint beautiful idyllic pictures of the coming utopia, you fail to say that the accomplishment of these things means the loss of individual choice, the loss of responsibility by local officials to their electorate, the loss of personal responsibility (including the acceptance of results for one's actions be they good or bad), the loss of panoramic variety."

Strong agreed with policy #1 but disagreed with some of the implementation actions. He said that the priorities were a "cosmetic approach" and said, "If you really want to do something overhaul the total property tax laws of this state, reduce time consuming and costly regulations and recognize that people can't live in better conditions than they can afford."

He opposed the proposal to create a "Speculative Gains Tax" to be charged to anyone who made a large profit on the sale of their own home after living in it for only a short time.

While proposing more regulation on housing another policy called for the public retirement system to finance low income housing, with a state guarantee of the investment. Strong said, "There is no way private enterprise will ever be able to respond to market needs if the public sector intervenes with an unfair competitive advantage." Many people have pointed out a similar problem with the recent health care proposals.

Strong further stated, "Enough fingers have been pointed at the private sector for failure to do a job which they have been hindered in by government interference. It is time government stopped pulling on the reins while whipping the horse."

His stance was very strongly in favor of local control and individual liberties.

The final Urban Strategy backed off most of the things he criticized and came forth with a document that was much more sensitive to local control and individual rights. As usual, the devil was in the details.

About the same time he became aware of an emerging effort by Governor Jerry Brown to have the State take over ALL water rights in the state by a series of legal maneuvers. He commissioned the "Governor's Commission To Review California Water Rights Law". The background and position papers were contained in six staff papers which began being released in May 1977. The final paper was released in January 1978. The thrust was an analysis of each somewhat independent area of water law with an apparent thrust toward how each segment could be adjusted to ultimately reside all water "ownership" in the State of California rather than its subdivisions or individual citizens.

Strong has followed this effort throughout that period and still does, as demonstrated by his written and oral testimony and participation in state meetings on water, water plans, and water law up to and including January 20, 2010, and moving into the future through his current appointments.

Strong points out that some of these authors are still connected to the State in one capacity or another and their previous experience and background could be significant if Governor Moonbeam gains another term as Governor.

Paper # 1 was authored by Marybelle D. Archibald who became an attorney in 1976 and, after authoring the first paper and setting the tone was brought into the Attorney General's Office in 1983 where she remained until 2005. Upon leaving the AG's office she was appointed to a position as an Administrative Law Judge in Sacramento.

Papers 2 and 6 were written by Anne J. Schneider who later practiced extensively before the State Water Resources Control Board and is entrenched in the Delta proceedings.

Papers 3 and 5 were written by Clifford T. Lee who became a member of the California Bar in 1976 after first earning a degree in political science. He wrote his papers as a staff attorney to the commission. In 1979 he was rewarded with a position in the Attorney General's office where he has represented various state environmental agencies in state and federal courts. He is currently a professor at Hastings College of Law at the University of California.

Paper four was written by David B. Anderson. His paper was number four on "Riparian Water Rights in California." The other papers were on "Appropriative Water Rights in California" (#1); "Ground Water Rights in California" (#2); "Legal Aspects of Water Conservation in California" (#3); "The Transfer of Water Rights in California" (#5); and "Legal Aspects of Instream Water Uses in California" (#6).

Reading these reports is as important to understanding the direction of the water departments and the Attorney General (Jerry Brown), and possibly the next state administration, as reading Mein Kampf was to understanding Hitler. Efforts may be diverted, delayed or stopped but the ideas behind them never die.