

## UPDATE

Since our last newsletter, there has been a great deal of activity regarding billboards around the country. Some of the news is good--some discouraging. In Maryland, an effort to wipe out the state's outdoor advertising control law was defeated, but another bill, requiring cash compensation for signs removed, passed the legislature and is waiting for the governor's signature. In Tennessee, the legislature passed a law permitting billboard companies to cut vegetation on the right-of-way, and in Pennsylvania a bill has been introduced with the same goal. In Texas, legislation was enacted which prohibits the use of amortization to compensate for non-conforming signs removed, but the Governor vetoed it! In Iowa citizens are fighting to retain amortization as a method of paying for signs removed in urban commercial and industrial areas. In short, beautification advocates won a small victory when HR 6965 was deleted from the final version of the 1982 Transportation Act, but the battle to protect scenic beauty is far from over.

## HIGHLIGHTS OF SECOND ANNUAL MEETING

Representatives from thirteen state and national organizations and members from Massachusetts to California attended the second Annual Meeting of the National Coalition in Washington, D.C. on March 26. Dr. Charles Floyd, Professor of Real Estate, University of Georgia, was re-elected president. Dr. Yale Maxon of California was re-elected western vice-president and Marion F. Brown of Maine was re-elected eastern vice-president. Carroll Shaddock of Texas was elected vice-president for the central region. Also re-elected for another year were Ruth Becker (Pennsylvania), secretary, and Phyllis Dorsey (Ohio), treasurer. Thirteen incumbents were re-elected to the Board for another year:

|                      |                        |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| Ruth H. Becker - PA  | Ellen B. Kelly - MD    |
| Marion F. Brown - ME | Daniel Mandelker - MO  |
| Sally L. Brown - KY  | Yale Maxon - CA        |
| Phyllis Dorsey - OH  | Ross Netherton - VA    |
| Charles Floyd - GA   | Barbara Sandford - NJ  |
| Lloyd Keefe - ORE    | Carroll Shaddock - TEX |
|                      | John Spaeth - WA       |

Newly elected to the Board of Directors for a one-year term were:

Sue Duncan, National Council of State Garden Clubs, GA  
 Virginia Kraut, Wisconsin Coalition for Billboard Control, WI  
 Edward McMahon, Professor of Law, Georgetown University Law School, D.C.

Members also approved a 1983-84 budget of \$27,000 with the proviso that funds be obtained through both membership growth and grants; otherwise the budget will revert to \$14,000, a figure based on 1982-83 revenues. Plans were made to conduct a membership campaign under the guidance of Ed McMahon in the east and Yale Maxon in the west. John Miller (California) will be asked to assist in designing the membership brochure. Members also approved a program which emphasized strengthening the 1965 Beautification Act and increasing public awareness of the need to protect scenic beauty.



## FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION PROPOSES NEW LEGISLATION TO "DEREGULATE" SIGNS

The Federal Highway Administration is proposing new legislation to "deregulate" the beautification program. This proposal has not yet been "cleared" by the Secretary's office, and early Coalition efforts to obtain copies of it were not successful, BUT informed sources tell us that someone within the Federal Highway Administration leaked a copy of the proposed bill to the outdoor advertising industry. This will give the industry an opportunity to circulate the proposal and comment on it, while beautification advocates cool their heels. The little we have been able to find out about the proposed legislation indicates that it is fraught with great danger to the cause of scenic beauty. As soon as we are able to get a copy of it, it will be sent to our members with Dr. Floyd's analysis for comment.

## SIERRA CLUB LEGAL DEFENSE FUND LEGAL ACTION STALLED

The Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund's legal action against the Secretary of Transportation to force compliance with the Highway Beautification Act is currently stalled while the judge rules on the Government's motion to dismiss. The Government is claiming "prosecutorial discretion." In other words, they are saying that they don't have to enforce the beautification law if they don't want to and that no one can force them to do so. If the judge rules in Sierra's favor, the case should come to trial around the end of the year--if there are no further delays.

## SECOND FHWA LETTER GIVES NEVADA SIGN PROGRAM BOOST

In our January newsletter we reported that a letter from the Federal Highway Administration's Council, saying that FHWA's position on sign control had changed, had resulted in a judicial ruling that removing Nevada's remaining 83 non-conforming signs was optional. For a state that had spent some \$3.5 million dollars to remove 85% of its non-conforming signs, the ruling was a severe blow. On the basis of this pro-industry court-opinion, industry's representatives appealed to the State Transportation Board, urging abandonment of the State Highway Beautification program. National Coalition Vice President testified against granting the request. But the key event of the hearing was the introduction of another FHWA letter stating that the State of Nevada would be unable to carry out an effective control program as required by Federal law. Unless the court ruling is reversed, Nevada could find itself in violation of the Highway Beautification Act. It is probable that the court ruling will be overturned, which would enable the state to complete its sign removal program. To quote Dr. Maxon, "The good ship, Nevada State Policy, was on January 27 hit by a torpedo, but by 3 March the damage had been contained, and it now appears that the vessel has resumed her charted course and will make port under her own power."

## ABUSES OF BEAUTIFICATION ACT IGNORED

The Federal Highway Administration appears to have completely abandoned its responsibilities in enforcing the Highway Beautification Act. It was recently revealed that the State of Indiana had paid for a large number of nonconforming billboards, but had not required that they be removed. In some cases the sign owner was paid but the land owner was not. In others, the sign owner actually painted new faces on the billboards after the signs had been paid for with taxpayer dollars. To the best of our knowledge this is a clear violation of the Beautification Act, but FHWA has done nothing to punish the offenders.

## MARIN COUNTY BILLBOARD DEBATE ENDS

An eight-year debate about the removal of the last billboard in Marin County, California has finally come to a dramatic end--with a chain saw. The charred, graffiti-covered billboard located on Highway 101 at the entrance to San Rafael, California had been called a violation of the county's billboard ban by beautification advocates, but city action in court to get it removed was not successful. The city's building code enforcement officer stated that the city was not responsible for the "vandalism."



## COMMUNICATING WITH LEGISLATORS

During the morning session, Ellen B. Kelly former Legislative Chair for the Garden Club of America, used her recent experience in Maryland to explain how beautification advocates can improve communications at the state and national levels. She discussed the importance of "networking" (working in cooperation) with other groups to support or oppose pending legislation. She called the use of a Congressional Staff Directory "essential" when trying to communicate at the federal level. Mike Haney, Personnel Specialist with the U.S. Department of Justice talked about communicating at the local level. He stressed the importance of being active and vocal in local community affairs. He also recommended writing letters to editors of area newspapers to help arouse grass root interest in fighting visual blight.

## STATUS OF SCENIC BEAUTY DISCUSSED AT MEETING

A second panel discussed "The Status of Scenic Beauty in America." Participants included Kevin Coyle, Executive Director, American Land Forum; A. Elizabeth Watson, Rural Field Representative, National Trust for Historic Preservation; Darwina Neal, President-elect, American Society of Landscape Architects; and Ronald Lee Fleming, President, The Townscape Institute, Cambridge, MA. Highlights of their presentations follow:

**KEVIN COYLE** described how scenic preservation is being achieved by the American Land Forum and other groups. "Some individuals are afraid to admit that they are concerned with scenic values, but Americans do indeed appreciate "superplaces," the cathedrals of natural resources like the Grand Tetons. It seems, however that the American people are more concerned with scenic values than our policy makers. The definition of "superplaces" should be extended to include more private and public lands. The American Land Forum has formulated the concept of Green Line Parks through which a variety of protection techniques can be used to protect privately owned landscape. It is important to clarify the language of scenic preservation with regard to state and federal legislation, and it is equally important to educate the public about scenic values so they can be informed before a crisis occurs. Although protecting scenic values at times leads to direct confrontation with economic values, economics should not be the only basis for decision-making. Scenic values can stand on their own merit."

**A. ELIZABETH WATSON** discussed the scope of the historic preservation movement. In answer to the question, "Why Preserve?" Watson stated that historic resources are a source of splendor, visual delight and variety because they provide a sense of place and enrich our lives. "The new environments we are creating today generate a 'sense of placelessness' in the repetition of the same commercial strips outside town after town. We are degrading our sense of who are as a society and where we came from, and without a past, there is no future. It is the concern of the National Trust to preserve the evidence of a region's overall historic development and to recognize that historic resources are inseparable from their setting." According to Watson, the challenge of the National Trust's work lies in meshing the concerns and efforts of a wide variety of groups who have an interest in rural areas in order to protect the future of the American landscape.

**DARWINA NEAL** offered insight into the work of the American Society of Landscape Architects. "Through a balance of preservation and development, the ASLA strives for a better quality of life for all Americans. It is the philosophy of the ASLA to design freeways and roads with the least destruction to the environment. Billboards, in addition to being visually ugly in themselves, hide the beauty of landscape design." Neal stressed the importance of advocates of scenic beauty corresponding with members of Congress to make them aware of their concern about protecting scenic beauty. She described how in times of crisis the ASLA issues "land alerts" to its chapters to inform them about the need for action. She assured Coalition members that ASLA stands firm in its commitment to protection of scenic beauty, including opposition to cutting of vegetation along the right-of-way to permit viewing of billboards.

Continued Next Page



## HIGHLIGHTS OF SECOND ANNUAL MEETING Continued

RONALD LEE FLEMING called the visual environment "reflective of the state of our harmony in the United States." He called for the development and publication of a "Scenic Manifesto" by the Coalition and other advocates of scenic beauty. The Manifesto would incorporate ideas regarding sign regulation, scenic easements and historic preservation as well as other guidelines for protecting scenic beauty. "Good structural and landscape design can create a sense of joy," he said. "When facilities relate contextually to their environment, it reduces the sense of sameness that pervades diverse areas of the United States." Fleming went on to say that in order to correct these problems there is a need for land use planning, design review, public art, sign regulation and scenic easements within communities. A comprehensive effort by major corporations with multiple franchise installations--fast food and service stations in particular--is needed to redesign existing automobile-oriented facilities so that they relate contextually to the different environments in which they are so often arbitrarily placed. Fleming, who supports the Coalition's stand against billboards in scenic areas, stressed the need for the Coalition to expand its scope to include a "broader view of visual values." "We need a positive view in order to create a sense of joy in addition to the 'no-no's' of sign control," he said. RONALD WARE, Director of Citizen Strategy, Inc., a Virginia activist group, gave a dramatic presentation during the luncheon break. He graphically described how he personally had removed some 5000 illegal signs. His enthusiasm was inspiring to all who heard him and viewed some of his "removals."

### DOWNEAST MAGAZINE CHOOSES MARION F. BROWN "ENVIRONMENTALIST OF THE YEAR"

MARION FULLER BROWN, National Coalition's Eastern Vice President, was chosen by the editors of Down East Magazine as the recipient of its 1983 "Environmentalism of the Year" award. The award is presented "to honor the men, women, and institutions that are in the forefront of the effort to renew and preserve the state's (Maine's) environmental heritage. In explaining why Mrs. Brown was chosen, the magazine said "Sometime this year, a crew from the Maine Department of Transportation will remove the last of some 3500 commercial signs that formerly blighted the scenery along the state's network of primary roads. This hard-won victory on behalf of Maine's natural environment has been many years in the making, and many individuals, agencies, and institutions have played important roles in the battle. By common consent, however, the key individual contribution has been that of Marion Fuller Brown, of York. For nearly a quarter century--as a state legislator, public-interest lobbyist, and tireless champion of highway beautification--she has led the fight to restore and preserve the natural beauty of a highly visible segment of the Maine Landscape." We congratulate Mrs. Brown for a well-deserved honor.

### MAXON LEADS FIGHT AGAINST GIANT BILLBOARD

National Coalition Vice-president Yale Maxon is leading a fight to stop the erection of a gigantic, illuminated billboard near the Bay Bridge toll Plaza in Oakland, California. One of the biggest in the Bay Area, the sign is 20 feet high and 60 feet long and would rest on a single steel column 60 feet high. The sign is intended to promote Oakland's port, airport and civic events. In mid-April at a Port hearing on the effect of the sign, Maxon presented a detailed account of how state Supreme Courts have long acknowledged that billboards could be restricted for reasons of traffic safety. The Port will adopt the final environmental impact statement soon. Maxon was joined in his efforts by the Save San Francisco Bay Association and the Bay Conservation and Development Commission. If erected at a cost of \$83,000, the giant sign will be seen by a half million drivers daily.

### BILL TO WIPE OUT SIGN CONTROL STOPPED IN MARYLAND

In Maryland, National Coalition members Ellen B. Kelly, Ed McMahon and Mike Haney won a hard fought battle to stop the passage of a bill which would have wiped out all sign control in that state. Unfortunately, their efforts to prevent the passage of a bill requiring payment of cash compensation for all signs removed were not successful. Press coverage of their activities was extensive and some of their press clippings are included with this newsletter.



## OHIO ROADSIDE COUNCIL CELEBRATES 50th BIRTHDAY

The Ohio Roadside Council, one of the leaders in the fight to preserve scenic beauty, celebrated its fiftieth birthday at a luncheon at the home of its founder, Mrs. William Gwinn Mather. The Council was organized through the inspiration of the Conservation and Roadside Committee of the Garden Club of America. Among its long list of accomplishments are helping to establish a Landscape Division in the Ohio Department of Transportation, sponsoring roadside design contests for students at Ohio State University and active leadership in the fight to protect scenic areas from visual blight. We salute the Council and its Chairman, Phyllis Dorsey, for her inspiring leadership. The Coalition is pleased that its president Dr. Charles Floyd was able to personally convey our best wishes for continued success.

## FLOYD SPEAKS TO WASHINGTON ROADSIDE COUNCIL

National Coalition President, Dr. Charles Floyd, praised the states of Washington and Oregon for their vigilance in keeping billboards off the freeway system at a recent meeting of the Washington Roadside Council. Floyd compared these west coast states and the states of the southeast, particularly South Carolina, whose sign control leaves much to be desired. He told Washington and Oregon Roadside Council members present that Congress made compensation mandatory in a 1968 amendment which declared that "no signs are required to be removed unless the federal share of compensation is available." Once the amendment was passed, however, Congress appropriated no funds to complete the program. He also pointed out that the 1965 Beautification Act now protects the industry it was intended to regulate.

## COALITION SEEKS INFORMATION ON ACTIVITIES IN YOUR STATE

One of the reasons the National Coalition was organized was to serve as a clearing house for information on beautification. Some of our members do, from time-to-time share information on what is happening in their states regarding beautification and sign control, but we would like all of our members to share. If anything is happening in your state, please send us a brief written report or press clippings about sign control, illegal cutting of vegetation, sign removal or lack thereof. We want to hear from you so that we can keep our members informed about what is happening nationally.

## HOLIDAY INNS TO CHANGE SIGN STYLE

Changing travel habits of the American Public have contributed to a decision to change the design of Holiday Inn signs. The chain which has for many years used a 43-foot tall neon sign to attract walk-in business will replace the sign with quieter, rectangular fluorescent signs. Today, 97 percent of Holiday Inn guests reserve rooms in advance. The new sign design reflects not only the change in public travel habits, but also recognizes the fact that it is sophisticated advertising and marketing, not jazzy buildings and pulsing lights that bring in patrons. Hopefully, the change by Holiday Inn, scheduled to be complete by 1985, will mark the end of an era of garrish roadside architecture.

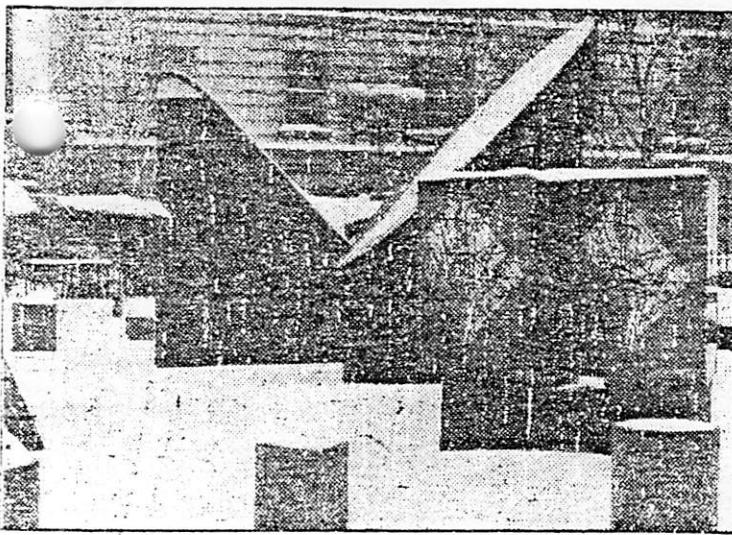
## NATIONAL COALITION SEEKS NOMINATIONS FOR "MOST ATTRACTIVE" AND "TACKIEST CITY"

If you have any nomination for the most attractive city in the U.S. or for the tackiest city in the U.S., the National Coalition would like to have your nominations. We'd like up to five nominations for each category. If you can send some pictures, that would be even better. At the end of the year, we hope to present awards to winners in each category, so send in your nominations today!

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The NATIONAL COALITION NEWS is published by the National Coalition to Preserve Scenic Beauty, 44 East Front St., Media, PA 19063 (215) 565-9131. Information contained in this issue came from the Washington Roadside Council, Ellie Kelly, Mike Haney, Ed McMahon, Yale Maxon, Charles Floyd, Kevin Coyle, A. Elizabeth Watson, Darwina Neal, Ronald Lee Fleming and Marion Brown. Editing and typing were done by NC volunteers Joanne Carter, Carolyn Capaldi and Ruth Becker.





By John McDonnell—The Washington Post

The "information kiosks" in front of the National Portrait Gallery, designed a decade ago by Massachusetts architects.

## Cityscape

# Those Abundant Signs of the Times

## Launching an Assault on Visual Pollution

By Benjamin Forgey

When three restaurants on Wisconsin Avenue near Van Ness Street decided to lure new business not too long ago, putting up dreadful-looking marquee-type signs that spell out special attractions—happy hours, ladies' nights, breakfast breakthroughs, dinner treats—it seemed clear that in the great scheme of things these were matters of small consequence.

Then again, not that small. A few weeks ago a lawyer named Edward T. McMahon stopped by my office armed with argument, sheaves of correspondence with District officials and, most tellingly, a packet full of snapshots of these particular offending signs and others that have sprouted of late like weeds around the city.

McMahon is an Alabamian who earned a master's degree in urban design before turning to the law, which he now teaches at Georgetown University. His cause is visual pollution—he's

against it. His feelings run strong, he explains, because he has seen what happened with runaway signage on his home ground and he doesn't want it repeated here: "It's like the whole state of Alabama has committed visual suicide."

McMahon's special concern is the proliferation of sidewalk signs and rollaway billboards. But after a session with him, it is hard to walk the city streets without seeing visual clutter everywhere, a sort of junk mail of the streetscape. It's the commercial signs and also the welter of street and traffic signs, the newspaper vending machines, the trash receptacles, the street vendors' displays, the sidewalk cafés built as solidly as blockhouses in public space—all designed at different times by different people to tell us something or sell us something.

Obviously there is a point beyond which one can't, and shouldn't, be too fastidious about all of this. The matter is not un-

See CITYSCAPE, C2 Col. 3

# The Assault On Visual Pollution

CITYSCAPE, From C1

complicated and the argument not one-sided. The cafés, the vendors, the newspaper boxes and even the signs serve important economic and other purposes, and, altogether, they contribute a certain chance and vitality to city life that few would want to do away with.

Indeed, it was not all that long ago that battles were fought to bring just these qualities to the sleepy streets of Washington. No one wants an environment that is prettified to the point of puritanical perversity, regulated to the point of ceaseless ennui. The issue is not regulation itself, but how to attain a healthy balance between too much regulation and not enough, between too much order in the design of the city and too little.

This issue is, of course, not confined to cities. The systematic perversion of the Highway Beautification Act of 1965 by the billboard industry is a lesson on how not to go about regulating unnecessary clutter. Sen. Robert Stafford (R-Vt.), who unsuccessfully proposed junking the legislation last year so local governments could do their own regulating, justifiably calls it the "billboard protection law."

It is useful to recall that not all of the visual confusion is sowed by unrestrained private enterprise. Governments often are notorious offenders, especially when tacking up new signs that are supposed to tell us where and when to stop, to go, to turn, to stand, to wait, to park.

And not all of the offending chaos is untouched by the hands of architects. One of the all-time outrages

against common visual sense was committed about a decade ago by a group of young architects from Cambridge, Mass., who, in their praiseworthy desire to liven up the D.C. streets, placed those bulky and atrocious "information kiosks" in front of the National Portrait Gallery at Ninth and F streets NW.

These ungainly things, which look like leftovers from a very ugly world's fair, have been a source of irritation and embarrassment from day one. District officials are always saying they'll cart the monsters away, but they never do.

Some of the more extraordinary visual littering takes place high up. A few years back a Marriott Hotel at 22nd and M streets NW erected a huge red neon sign atop its building—a beacon that from certain points of view at night outdid the Washington Monument as a signal of the city. Complaints from the Commission of Fine Arts, and others, got the sign scaled down and the lights turned off. Another high-flying beacon is the USA Today label on that sleek silver skyscraper in Rosslyn—actually quite a pretty blue glow in the dark, although I shudder to imagine every building in Rosslyn with its own nighttime stamp.

This is a key issue because the copycat logic of competition is perhaps the greatest force contributing to visual clutter. In terms of public nuisance, one sign may not be one too many, but where is the cutoff point? Two signs? Three? Four? McMahon, the sign hunter, spotted a gas station at Pennsylvania Avenue and 26th Street NW that all by itself put up five sturdy sandwich-board signs—one advertising cigarettes, one gas prices, one services available, one hours of operation and one, perhaps, for good measure. Even for a gas station, this seems excessive.

This is not to say that signs are bad, or unnecessary. They are neither. But the District government would do us all a favor. I think, by enforcing its existing laws determining their proper size and scale and placement.

# Foggy Bottom News

Published for and by the Citizens of Foggy Bottom

February, 1983

Volume 28, No. 2



## Visual Pollution

by Mike Haney

Visual pollution has reared its ugly head in the District of Columbia. Like other parts of the city, Foggy Bottom and the West End have recently experienced an increase of unsightly and illegal commercial signs and portable billboards.

The accompanying photograph of the Exxon Service Station at 26th and Pennsylvania Avenue is a good example of the visual blight spreading throughout the city. D.C. Law 2-18, Title 5A-1 regulates the size, height, and placement of commercial signs and billboards. Unfortunately, the District Government has been lax in its enforcement of this law.

For example, Section 1405.8 of this law entitled "Signs on Public Space" makes it illegal to place or erect any sort of commercial sign upon any "street, avenue, alley, highway, footway, sidewalk, parking or other public space in the District of Columbia. . . ."

Despite the clear language of the law, hundreds of large commercial signs and sandwich boards have been placed on sidewalks and other public spaces throughout the District—most within the past year. For example, in Foggy Bottom you can see sidewalk signs all along Pennsylvania Avenue. Besides being ugly and illegal, these signs block the public sidewalks and present a hazard to pedestrians and a real danger to the blind and physically disabled.

We are all pleased to see the general improvement of the commercial sector of Pennsylvania Ave. from the White House to Georgetown. We now have a selection of restaurants and other commercial establishments that were not available five years ago. However, we also have creeping commercial blight spawned by an excess of commercial signs and clutter.

Your help is needed to stop the spread of visual pollution

and sidewalk schlock. Two things are needed: First, call or write Mayor Barry and tell him you are concerned about the proliferation of commercial signs and urge him to enforce the existing law. Second, report violations of the sign law to either Mr. Leslie C. Reid, Chief of Construction Code Enforcement, Department of Housing and Community Development, 614 H Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001 and/or Ms. Carol Thompson, Acting Director, D.C. Department of Licenses, Investigations and Inspections, 614 H Street, N.W. 20001, phone: 727-6904.

It also wouldn't hurt to send a copy of your letter to Council Member John Wilson's office and follow-up with a phone call. Let's return the sidewalks to people and not signs! If you would like more information about this or other issues affecting the urban landscape, please call me at 338-3117.

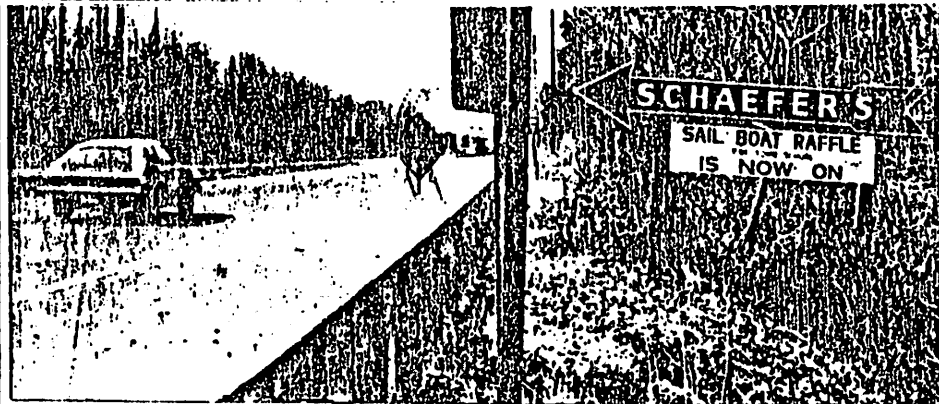
# THE



# SUN

## Billboard dismantler irks Md. businesses

THE SUN, Thursday, March 17, 1983



The popular Schaefer's Canal House, several turns and a few twists off Route 213 on the C&D Canal in Cecil county, would lose half its business without its roadside signs, owner Gunter C. Sunkler fears.

## Billboard backers assail foe Mrs. Johnson's project still causes annoyance

By Doug Struck  
Annapolis Bureau of The Sun

Annapolis — It is, perhaps, a sign of the times that a conservative state senator wants Edison Beachy fired.

Mr. Beachy, whose job is to promote scenic roadsides, is to Senator Walter M. Baker all that government intrusion represents.

And Senator Baker speaks for free enterprise, for the right to run a business for profit.

Last year, when the Maryland General Assembly reached deep into the innards of the state bureaucracy to find Mr. Beachy — singled out the lifelong civil servant right down to

his position number and slashed his job from the budget — roads boss M. Slade Caltrider simply moved him to another job doing the same thing.

Now, that effrontery has provoked the irate Eastern Shore senator to move to abolish the four-man state office for which Mr. Beachy works, at the loss of \$800,000 in federal funds and the risk of further penalty.

All because of billboards.

Mr. Beachy's job is to take down billboards. He pays businesses that own the signs and the farmers on whose land they are perched for that removal, and can go to court to do his work, all in the name of prettier

highways.

The problem comes when those businesses and farmers don't want the road signs down. When they enlist the aid of the legislature, Mr. Beachy must fear for his job.

It started because Lady Bird Johnson did not like billboards along roads. She adopted as her pet cause an existing highway beautification program and persuaded Congress to give states extra highway funds for cleaning up their roadsides.

Maryland began in the mid-1960s with a list of about 1,600 offending signs in agricultural and residential areas. See SIGNS, A21, Col. 2

### SIGNS, from A1

areas along major roads. All but the last 120 or so have been removed.

Many of those lingering signs are on the Eastern Shore, however, where businessmen and farm owners do not take kindly to orders of what to do by government officials.

Especially if it affects their pocketbooks.

Some of Mr. Beachy's efforts would do decidedly that.

Take the case of Gunter C. Sunkler, who owns the popular Schaefer's Canal House on the C&D Canal in Chesapeake City.

Mr. Sunkler's restaurant, which hires up to 195 workers in the height of the season, is several turns and a few twists off main Route 213. Without his three big advertising signs on that route telling motorists how to find his establishment, "nobody would be able to find us. Our business would be cut at least in half," he says.

And it is not as if his big billboards are an eyesore, Mr. Sunkler contends.

"I take pride in my signs," he says. "They aren't just a regular Howard Johnson's sign, they are artwork. I pay a guy to stand there and paint for a week every year to have them done right."

Even Mr. Beachy agrees that Mr. Sunkler's signs look pretty good. The problem is, they are on agricultural land along a primary road, thus in violation of the law, and they must come down.

That does not make much sense to Mr. Sunkler, who says he pays a hefty chunk of taxes on his \$2.7 million annual business. "It's absolutely ludicrous. If they cut my business then they lose the taxes."

And it sticks in the craw of Mary Maloney, who helps run an advertising agency with about 200 signs in the Upper Shore.

"We resent that our taxpayers' money is being used to try to buy our signs that we don't want to sell," she said. "With the economy being what it is, there really are more important things to spend money on."

Actually, Congress reached the same conclusion and has appropriated no money for the states' programs for nearly three years. When the \$600,000 still left in the fund for Maryland — and the state's \$125,000 contribution — is spent for signs, the program here will go out of existence, state officials here say.

Continued Other Side

But that is not fast enough for Senator Baker (D, Cecil), who heard complaints from businessmen in his area and last year tried to cut four employees in the sign acquisition program from the budget.

When that caused a fuss, he settled for Mr. Beachy. Mr. Beachy was the program's point man, and businessmen squawked loudly that he used threats, intimidation and pressure to do his job.

The legislature cut out Mr. Beachy's job, but Mr. Caltrider promptly put him in another.

"There is absolutely nothing wrong with that fellow's conduct," Mr. Caltrider said of the 26-year state worker. "The guy is not a tiger or a jerk. He's

a conscientious employee trying to do his job. If he's cut out again, I'll do the same damn thing."

Mr. Beachy's immediate supervisor, Calvin W. Reese, however, did reassign Mr. Beachy to concentrate on signs in Western Maryland.

Mr. Beachy wrote some final letters to Cecil county businessmen, however, who again contacted Mr. Baker, who last week introduced a bill to abolish the whole program.

Senator Baker says he is willing to lose the \$600,000 in remaining federal funds and risk the possible federal penalty of 10 percent of the state's highway funds in order to kill the program.

"If there is an infringement upon a person's constitutional right to engage in free enterprise, no amount of dollars should be balanced against that." Besides, he said, "Signs aren't necessarily ugly. What may be ugly to one person is beautiful to someone else."

"I think he's going way overboard," Mr. Caltrider said of the senator's latest bill.

"We resent that our taxpayers' money is being used to try to buy our signs that we don't want to sell. With the economy being what it is, there really are more important things to spend money on."

— Mary Maloney,  
of advertising agency



# THE



# SUN

April 4, 1983 (Baltimore)

## Stopping the Billboard Interests

**Editor:** There is a bill in the Maryland legislature which would allow many signs to be erected along certain Maryland highways, often rural, which would ruin the purpose for which millions of people travel these roads. Tourism is Maryland's second largest business (\$2.7 billion in 1981). Why should our roadsides and efforts to attract tourists to our state be ruined by a single industry, the roadside sign and outdoor advertising industry?

Crocobite cars are shed for supposed lost revenue to farmers on whose land the signs sit. There's talk of government interference with free enterprise. The loss of business to restaurants, etc., off on side roads is belabored if these businesses can't have signs on main roads.

I too am a taxpayer who helps pay for the roads. I like signs in appropriate places: bona fide commercial areas and on the premises of actual businesses — not in corn fields. The roads were not built for advertising. When they are used for this purpose, they become a free medium for the advertising industry.

If the proposed legislation repealing sections of the old law passes, the roadside signs advertising a place like Schaefer Canal House could be completely obscured by hundreds of other, larger signs. Tourists visually bothered by the confusion of signs would be jarred as they travel the federally funded roads in what

once was scenic Maryland. Restaurants off the road first will have to erect two signs, and then erect two bigger signs, to compete with all the other establishments just off the road that need to advertise. Everyone will be allowed to advertise (as would only be fair) and motorists and passengers would be treated to giant billboards advertising mattress springs, shimmied against the setting sun in a cornfield.

Up until a few months ago, people arriving by train in Baltimore were greeted on Charles street by a perfectly legal, large billboard advertising an exterminator company. It was crowned by huge termite and other, less attractive insects. No offense meant to our useful exterminators, but the immediate image of our wonderful, renewed Baltimore crawling with threatening pests of Hittcockian proportions was more than a little dismaying.

The Highway Beautification Act of 1965 created incentives for states to adopt sign control measures. Maryland still has \$600,000 in federal funds to pay the billboard and sign industry to remove certain non-conforming signs. The law was unbelievably generous in the time it allowed for sign removal and in the amounts of compensation it paid the industry. Some signs were valued as high as \$15,000. Farmers who had accommodated the offending signs on their land also were compensated.

Federal funding for this program ended three years ago. But Maryland's Transportation Department has been complying with the law — in part because violation would result in forfeiture of the \$600,000, as well as a 10 percent reduction in federal highway funds. The Transportation Department should be commended for its efforts to protect motorists, promote tourism, and create award-winning portions of landscaped highways (such as Route 70 near Hancock).

Tourist booklets could indicate all the varied establishments along and just off highways. They could be distributed at toll booths and elsewhere. Advertising on radio, television and newspapers also serves the public well.

**Editor:** The writer is a member of the board of the National Coalition to Preserve Scenic Beauty.  
Ellen H. Kelly,  
Baltimore.

THURSDAY, MARCH 31, 1983

## Billboards

**Editor:** The Sun's March 17 article entitled "Billboard backers assault foe" indicates that the purveyors of visual pollution are again on the move.

Under the guise of protecting free enterprise, Senator Walter Baker has proposed a bill which would spread billboard blight and clutter across the state of Maryland.

Maryland has done a good job of cleaning up its roadsides. These efforts should be strengthened not gutted. Billboards are plain and simple a blight on the landscape. They are ugly and unnecessary. Moreover, billboard blight causes accidents, confuses motorists, creates highway safety problems and wastes energy and money.

Perhaps most importantly, if Senator Baker's bill is enacted, Maryland stands to lose millions of dollars. In addition to losing \$600,000 in federal funds and a possible 10 percent penalty on the state's highway fund, Maryland stands to lose millions of tourist dollars. The reason is simple. The more Maryland comes to look like other states — ugly and blighted — the less reason there is to visit. Give tourists flashing signs, billboards and clutter and they might as well stay at home!

Senator Baker's bill is way off base. Instead of cluttering up our highways the state legislature should enact a highway user tax on billboards. A billboard is after all a user of the highway. The money collected from this tax could be used to buy up the remaining billboards and provide funds for highway landscaping, parks, picnic areas, etc.

Marylanders are entitled to clean air, clean water and clean land. Senator Baker's bill would scar our land and blight our landscape. Moreover, it would cost millions in lost revenues. Let's kill this bill before visual pollution is allowed to raise its ugly head.

**Editor:** Ellen Kelly's letter opposing billboard signs along the Maryland highways and in the cornfields. We recently passed a bill on this issue, and one of the real difficulties I noticed was the lack of advertisements on the bill. At you along the roadways. Even our youngsters remarked about the lovely drive on northern

**Editor:** Ellen Kelly's letter opposing billboard signs along the Maryland highways and in the cornfields. We recently passed a bill on this issue, and one of the real difficulties I noticed was the lack of advertisements on the bill. At you along the roadways. Even our youngsters remarked about the lovely drive on northern

# Letters to the Editor

## Billboards Pollute Our Everyday Life

THE SUN, Saturday, April 23, 1983

**Editor:** Senator Walter M. Baker's proposal to put an end to billboard control in Maryland, as reported by Doug Stuck March 17, is appalling, not only because of the nature of the proposal, but also the distorted thinking about it.

Senator Baker is not the self-appointed champion of the free enterprise system because he defends the right of businesses to advertise their goods and services. Instead of his billboard proposal, he should be seeking to preserve the scenic integrity of Maryland.

Vermont passed one of the strongest anti-billboard laws in the country with no ill-effects to the numerous small businesses in Vermont. Standardized traveler's information signs similar to the ones along some of Virginia's highways were mandated, and the advertising industry shifted with the revised needs of its market.

Mary Maloney, the advertising executive, should be well aware of the advertising alternatives available to businesses. I agree with her statement that the taxpayers' money should not be spent to compensate the outdoor advertising industry. Declare billboards and off-premise roadside signs illegal, establish a permanent moratorium on further off-premise billboard

Charles Street and in the country.

Take it from one who has seen total lack of regulation of commercial signs — the landscape is worth preserving. Houston highways have become an ugly commercial jungle. I hope Marylanders have more sense.

Shirley A. McFaul

and sign placement, and establish a fair and esthetically pleasing system as is used in Vermont. Who knows, perhaps Ms. Maloney could get one of the first contracts for the new signs.

With regard to the remarks made by the owner of the restaurant, Schaefer's Canal House, it is questionable that he would be hurt by the removal of the directional road signs. The article that actorized the restaurant as popular. If you call Schaefer's Canal House you will discover that it is so popular that you need reservations on Saturday night.

Holiday Inn of America surveyed its guests and discovered that 97 percent of its business was conducted by reservation and most of that was repeat business. I suspect that a similar survey by Schaefer's Canal House would indicate almost the same results and fears of bankruptcy because of sign removal would subside.

If an advertisement in a magazine or newspaper offends us or doesn't interest us, we can ignore it, turn the page, and it is gone from our lives. In a similar fashion, we can deal with radio and TV advertising. Day-glo posters, real estate signs and other visual pollution can stay with us from day to day as we pass it on our way to work, shopping or the beach. For the most part, Maryland is a beautiful and scenic state. Let's do what we can to preserve what we have and control visual pollution wherever it exists.

Michael K. Haney,  
Takoma Park



# Waging war on billboard blight

April 2, 1983 The Montclairian

By Peter Allen

OAKLAND — Yale Maxon gets the Billboard Blues. Those giant slabs of commercial artistry are a "sock in the eye, a sock in the mind," for the 76-year-old retired political science professor.

For some, billboards are simply an effective way to get a message across. But for Maxon, each billboard represents a forcible entry into his consciousness and he considers all of them aesthetic felonies. He has been resisting these cultural crimes for over 30 years.

His latest lament involves the Port of Oakland's proposal to erect a 20-foot by 60-foot sign near the Bay Bridge toll plaza. The sign resting on a single steel column, would rise 60 feet and advertise the Port's presences, its activities, as well as carry public service announcements.

The \$83,000 sign would be twice as large as the average billboard, Maxon said. However, the precedent for large signs is just across the Bay, where several 20-by-60-foot signs greet drivers entering and leaving San Francisco. Each sign is 20 feet longer than the floor of a racquet ball court.

"It's just a God-awful idea," Maxon said about the proposed sign. "It isn't as if it's functional. It's just plain ugly."

But others, such as D. Christopher Davis, head of the Convention and Visitors Bureau, and Bill Downing, head of the Oakland Chamber of Commerce, see such a sign as drawing needed attention to Oakland's most successful entity — the Port of Oakland.

Maxon, Downing, Davis and others offered their pros and cons in a Port hearing last week of a Draft Environmental Impact Report on the effect of the sign.

Downing was critical of those who forced the Port to conduct the unusual environmental impact study.

"The Chamber...questions the need for this entire laborious process regarding a relatively

minor project which offers so many positive benefits," Downing said, reacting from a statement. "Due to circumstances beyond its control, the Port was forced into a time-consuming Environmental Impact Report which cost \$85,000 in public funds, to say nothing of the hundreds of staff working hours expended."

The half-inch-thick report was triggered by public outcry last summer after it was discovered that the Port had decided to erect the sign without any public input.

The environmental impact report, prepared by the Port's planning department, concluded that although the sign may be a "visual intrusion" and "create an unattractive condition" it would not have a significant negative effect.

The report considered four sites near the toll plaza and recommended two. One site is on the south side of the highway, about 1,000 yards west of the toll plaza and the other site, also on the south side of the highway, is about 130 yards east of the toll plaza.

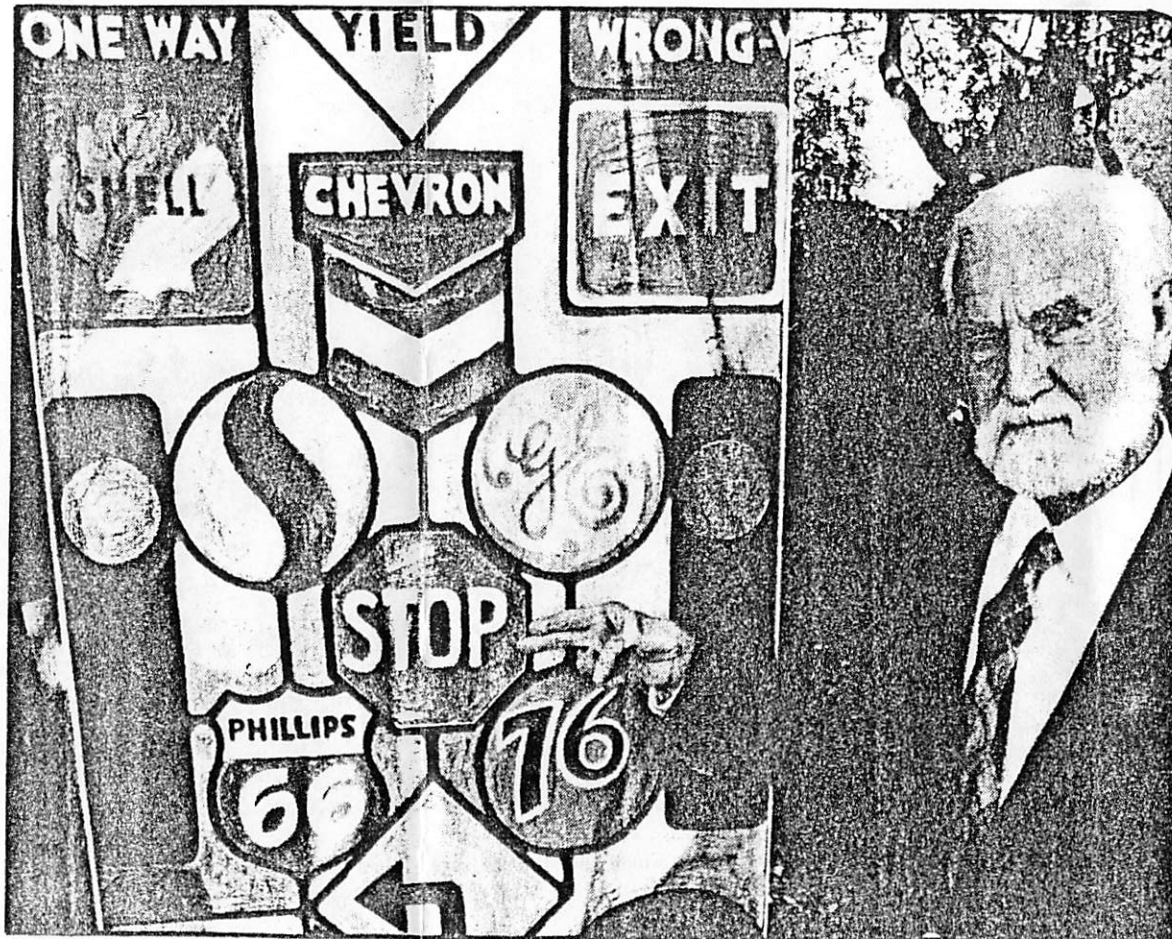
Advertising the existence of the Port is not a new idea, the report said. For 30 years, until 1979, a transit shed in the harbor carried the message: "Port of Oakland." The cut-out sign was 15 feet high and 225 long. The shed was eventually torn down to allow for new Port development.

The Port sign was praised by business leaders and others, such as Alameda County Supervisor Fred Cooper, who said he would be opposing the structure if it were going up in a rural area.

John MacDonald, a business executive who is heading this year's Mayor's Summer Jobs Program in Oakland, said he hopes to secure some free advertising on the sign. "I view this project with some drooling, if you will," he said at the Port hearing.

"The Port of Oakland needs and deserves this kind of high visibility as a reminder to the public of its excellent degree of service, both in maritime and aviation traffic," said Downing. "It is Oakland's foremost single industry — a fact that should be underscored in the public consciousness."

However, Michael Wilmar, director of the San Francisco Bay Conservation and



DISGUST WITH signs apparently runs in the family. Here, Yale Maxon shows off a painting by his wife, Helen. It's called 'Mantra for Americans.'

Continued Other Side



Development Commission, criticized the report for failing to present "a persuasive argument that a sign of this size and type is needed."

Wilmar claimed that the sign would partially block a view of the Oakland Outer Harbor and of Port cranes that "believe it or not, have been cited as outstanding examples of industrial design." He added that the brief view from the Bay Bridge is the closest most people come to witnessing daily Port operations.

At the hearing, Maxon presented the Port with a detailed account of how state Supreme Courts have long acknowledged that billboards could be restricted for reasons of traffic safety.

But Maxon, a straight-backed man with intensely blue eyes that are set off by white hair and beard, later acknowledged that the real issue is aesthetics. He has hated billboards for a long time.

After graduating from Stanford in 1928, he taught for 15 years in Hawaii. "There were no billboards," Maxon said. "It was just a beautiful country."

He later spent five years in rural Japan and his vistas were also unobstructed with billboards.

So when he returned to the United States after the war and began doctoral studies in political science at Berkeley, he was shocked by what he saw. "Every billboard was just a visual assault," he recalled.

In 1951, he began his 32-year war against billboards by joining the California Roadside Council.

He now serves as the Western vice-president of the National Coalition to Preserve Scenic Beauty. Maxon, a retired instructor at Merritt College, lives in the Berkeley hill area with his wife, Helen, who is a watercolor artist.

Maxon has served on a national advisory council on billboards. He traveled to Washington D.C. twice and returned both times by Greyhound bus, to get an eyeful of America. For the most part he liked what he saw, though he cited with disgust the interstate between Palm Springs and Indio, as well as parts of Arizona and New Mexico.

For Maxon, the problem is that the signs are not merely *ugly*, but they are also "grossly inappropriate."

"When you come into a beautiful area and a six-hundred square foot sign says that Brand X has less tar, well, that's *irrelevant* to the scenery, for God's sake."

When Maxon talks scenery, he means everything, even if the billboard merely pokes a hole in a sweeping vista of the sky.

"The sky is part of the view, isn't it? I think it's our contact with nature. When we look up in the sky and see the clouds, the stars, the sunset or the fog, that is part of our view. (Billboards) are a kind of visual intrusion into your thinking and feeling. It's intended to do that. That's why the signs are of such violent colors — harsh angry colors when they are put in front of the green trees or the blue of sky."

The visual contact with nature, he said, "is one of the things that keep us sane. People like to live in the hills — why? Because it's just kind of — well — it's pleasant to be among growing, green things."

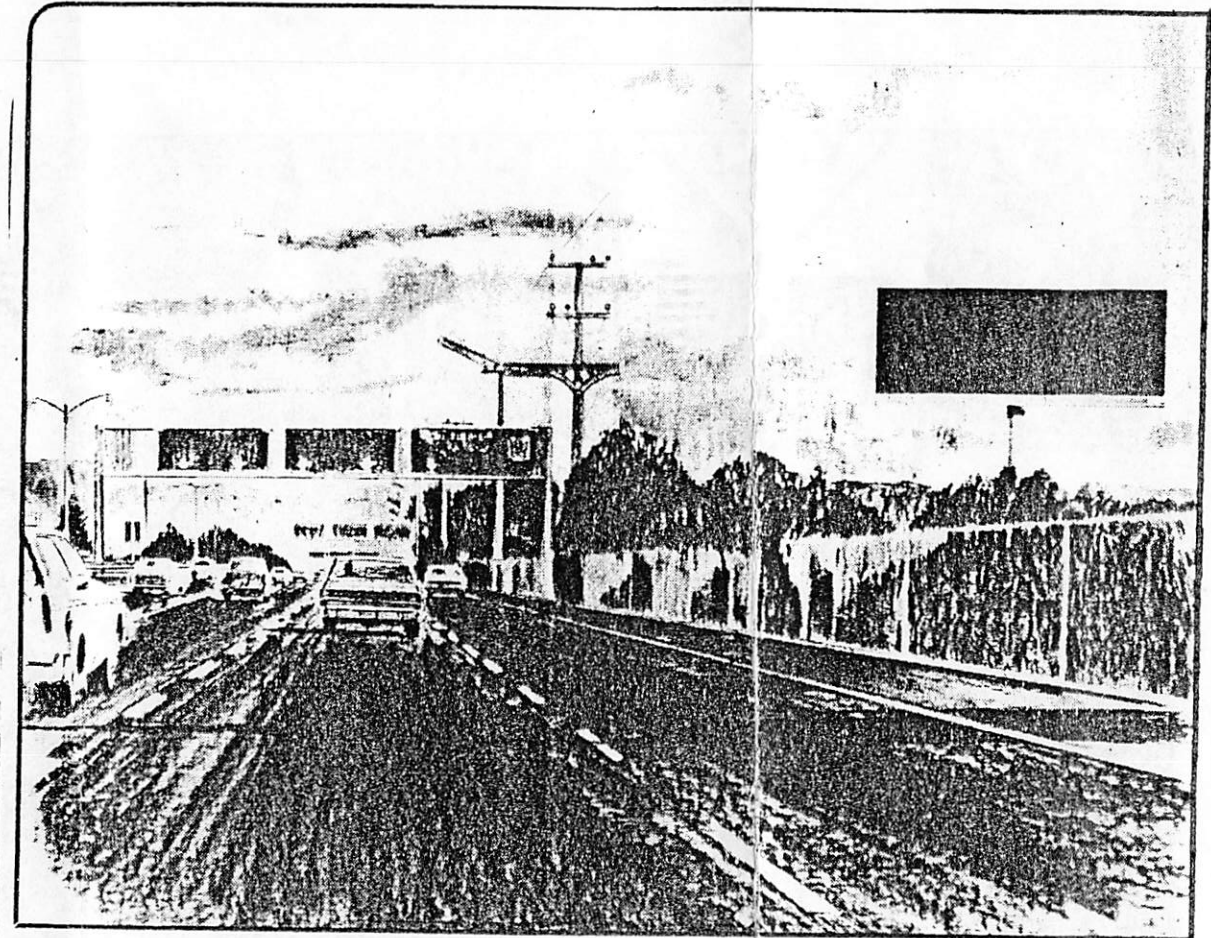
But there are no growing green things down by the Port harbors, unless it's an accident. There's just a bustling urban scene of a healthy Port. Why should one worry about an impeded view of what the environmental impact report called a "drab, industrial landscape"?

"The difference," Maxon explained, "is that the cranes and buildings are *functional*. This billboard is just a badly brought up child jumping up and down and saying, 'Look at me! Look at me!'"

Billboards, Maxon said, belong to America's past. The proposed Port sign reminds him of the boosterism of the '20s. "I think that as American communities have matured, we have gotten past that crude, crass look-at-me advertising. I think this thing is a matter of taste. That's what it boils down to."

The Port has yet to adopt the final environmental impact report and will accept written statements regarding the sign through the first week of May. Meanwhile, Maxon is hoping that others will share his distaste for the billboard and force the Port to shelve the project.

April 12, 1983 The Montclarion PAGE 17



PROPOSED BILLBOARD, near the toll gate plaza, would advertise existence of the Port of Oakland.

Montclarion/Chris Gilbert