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Letter to Janice from Ernie

Ernest Bonner

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10/14/97

Janice:

Unaccustomed as I am to writing letters, here goes. Over the last few months, I have been trying to reconstruct some of my past planning experiences for a journal I am writing to my grandchildren. There are two overwhelming feelings I get when I look over the somewhat scanty record of my planning career:

1. I can't believe how much I have forgotten about the why, what and how of things, and
2. when I can remember, or am reminded by something in writing, I am amazed.

Anyway, the primary purpose of this letter is to pose some questions to you as someone with greater mental capacities than me, and therefore able to remember more about exactly what did go on there in Cleveland during the early seventies.

So let's list the questions:

1. When did you report to work in Cleveland? I think you were the first hired, and I understand your first assignment was the capital improvement program. True?
2. Earl Landau eventually came to work for us--I think in 1971. Do you remember what his assignment was? On a recent visit Earl said that he had been asked by Norm to develop a social policy plan for Cleveland at about the same time that we were working on the plan. Do you remember anything like that?
3. How and when did the weekly sessions with other City Hall bureaucrats get started?
4. Were you on the staff when we moved upstairs to the sixth floor? Do you remember when that move occurred?
5. Have you any comments on the accounts of the Cleveland policy planning process by Pierre Clavel or others?
6. I remember you and I and Doug sitting in a little room on the sixth floor banging out the basic direction for the Cleveland plan. Were there others? I vaguely recall a great sense of frustration on both our parts occasionally. Was there? And, if so, about what? I also remember Doug being less than interested in that phase of the plan, and sometimes being a little hostile to the effort. I'm going to get down to San Francisco soon to get Doug's remembrances, but wonder if you have any comments?
7. I got there in January of 1970. The first documentary evidence I have of any accomplishment is a paper entitled, "The Family Assistance Plan of 1970 and the City of Cleveland," a paper I wrote for Stokes' testimony before Congress in May of 1970. The earliest evidence I have of anything in writing about the basic direction of the plan is in March of 1971, a document entitled "An Outline of Thoughts on the Conceptual Framework and Policy Format for the General Plan of the City of Cleveland." What were we doing between May 1970 and March 1971? I assume that this is approximately the period you came to Cleveland, and that you began working on the capital improvement program, where we came across all kinds of trouble to get into: garbage, muni light, police, etc, but I have no documents during that period.
8. Do you have John Linner's address and phone number?

Well, as you can see, I have forgotten most of what went on there between '70 and '73 when I left. If you can fill in any of the blanks I would appreciate it. If you have any documentary or photographic evidence of the goings on there I would appreciate a copy. And, of course, I would appreciate any other comments or observations you might have on that period of our lives in Cleveland.

I talked to Andy Gold the other day. He's still in Hartford, and has been on the planning commission.

Take care. Lynn says Hi.

Ernie.