



SMALL PROPERTY OWNERS ASSOCIATION OF CAMBRIDGE



1990 JUN 14 PM 2:34

CAMBRIDGE MA.

287 Huron Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02138
June 11, 1990

Cambridge City Council
City Hall
Cambridge, MA 02139

Attention: Joseph Connarton, City Clerk

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen:

Many times this past year we have heard some city councilors state that the majority of voters spoke last November and these voters should have their way for strong rent control in Cambridge. These statements are chilling to a member of any minority group.

One of our members, Sebastian Vasconcelos, addressed the issue of majority rule in a letter to the Local Affairs Committee last April during the C 1/2 discussions. A portion of his letter reads as follows:

"the State Legislature must act as a 'check and balance' to the despotic majority.....The consequences of such an unchecked majority, which is the case in Cambridge, were well analyzed by John Adams, in his "Defense of the Constitutions of Government of the United States of America" (1787), where he states that if the majority were to control all branches of government, without checks and balances, 'Debts would be abolished first; taxes laid heavy on the rich, and not at all on others; and at last a downright equal division of everything be demanded and voted'".

We would like to share with the Council an excerpt from a recent New York Times Book Review. The name of the book reviewed is "Abortion - The Clash of Absolutes". The name of the author is Lawrence H. Tribe. Mr. Tribe is a well recognized constitutional scholar and a resident of Cambridge.

"There is no doubt that Mr. Tribe is to constitutional argument what John McEnroe is to tennis: on the left liberal side, certainly, but oh so exciting to watch. Inevitably the sections of this book in which he takes Roe v. Wade apart and puts it together again are riveting, a true Socratic-method exercise in which Mr. Tribe volleys with Justice Antonin Scalia and Judge Robert Bork with great style. Here, for example, is a gracefully framed vest-pocket description of how the tripartite American process works:

'The whole point of an independent judiciary is to be 'antidemocratic,' to preserve from transient majorities those human rights and other principles to which our legal and political system is committed. Without this role there would be nothing to stop a bare majority of our citizens from deciding tomorrow that the minority should be enslaved or required to give up its belongings for the greater good of the greater number. This elementary civics lesson is forgotten or ignored by those who would leave every issue of individual rights that was a matter of moral controversy to be decided solely by the legislative and executive branches.'"

Whether it is John Adams in 1787 or Laurence Tribe in 1990, the same fundamental truth is with us - the majority should not trample the minority. This Council should act in a responsible manner. We have been asked to sit tight and give this council a chance. We are now close to the end of June. This is one-fourth of your term. There has been no movement by this Council for relief to small property owners. We only ask for fairness and a system we can live with. We have been given lip service. We have seen our property rights lessened. Certain members of this council object to our speaking to state legislators.

If you are going to do something, then start the process. If you are not going to do anything, then tell us. You may wish to remain silent. We will not.

Very truly yours,



David P. Sullivan
Co-chairperson

cc: Local Affairs Committee
T. Morris
B Anthony

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5-649

Communication from David P. Sullivan,
Co-Chairperson, Small Property Owners
Association of Cambridge, relative to
relief to small property owners.

In City Council,

June 25, 1990

*Referred to the
Rent Control Committee
Copy sent to Rent Control
Committee 6/28/90 de*