

Nov. 5, 1987

Statement by Mayor Bernard Sanders

A few days ago I received a letter from the general counsel of the Central Vermont Railway regarding the Railway's thoughts ~~and~~ concepts for the future development of the Waterfront. As you know, the Central Vermont Railway is the major owner of land along Burlington's Waterfront.

Let me, as simply and straightforwardly ^{as I can,} explain to the people of Burlington and the State of Vermont what the issues are regarding ^{private} Waterfront development and the very strong differences that we have with the Central Vt. Railway.

As Mayor of this City, it is my very strong belief that the land on Burlington's Waterfront is the most important property which exists in our City. ^{And} ~~And~~ it is property which must be developed in such a way that it can be enjoyed by people of all income levels forever. Burlington's Waterfront is the heart and soul of this city and we do not intend to sell out our children's and grandchildren's rights so that large corporations ^{and in the Cent. Vt. Railway,} can make obscene profits. ^{off of it.} The issue surrounding the private development of Burlington's Waterfront is a very simple one: Will that property be developed so that it can be enjoyed by all of our people ^{together,} or will it be developed so that the Central Vermont Railway can make excessive profits ^{that's what the issue} and develop ^{is - just simple - nobody} it as intensely as it possibly can? ^{more completely than that.}

After all is said and done, the central Vt. Railway is arguing that the public trust doctrine which is applicable to the filled lands they own means the land can be used for virutally any purpose whatsoever, including from what we can gather, large-scale condominium development. ^{softly behind} Further, my ^{underlying} interpretation of their statement is that they feel that the Waterfront zoning that the Board of Aldermen unanimously adopted last ^{Dec.} year after an

extraordinary amount of work and study is not reasonable and is too restrictive in terms of what Central Vt. Railway can develop. Further,

^{understand that we} Central Vermont intends to develop a "market-driven" master plan for its ^{development} process. After development of such a plan, it then proposes to come before the City Council to request re-zoning of its property in order to ^{have that zoning set} ~~fit in to~~ ^{under} its development plans. In its statement, CV states and I quote:

"Central Vt. recognizes that any proposed development of this property must be both economically sound and reasonably acceptable to the Citizens of Burlington."

And That, frankly, is what this whole debate is about. During the last five years, the city ^{of} Burlington has made significant progress in carrying out the vision that ^{we believe} the people of Burlington have for the Waterfront. We are in the process of completing our beautiful bicycle path; we have acquired the Mobil Oil beach in the South End; we have expanded Perkins Pier; we are in the process of creating a new community boathouse; and we are planning for the public use and enjoyment of the old Moran Generating Plant. More public use activity ^{in the waterfront} is now being planned than at any time in our history. We are also moving forward rapidly to put together one of the most dynamic and people-oriented Waterfronts in this country. And, let me be very frank with you in stating, that our vision of Burlington's downtown Waterfront is not one which will be "reasonably acceptable" to the citizens of our city. It will be "very acceptable" to the citizens of our city.

A few weeks ago, when I voiced my opposition to the Pyramid Co's mall project in Williston, I pointed out the difficulty many communities in this state have in terms of development projects. Cities and towns throughout Vermont are dependent on the property tax, and are looking for ways to expand their tax base. Developers within that context come into a town, announce

their grandiose development schemes and say to the community, "Look what we're going to do for your tax base!" And when the development is completed, and citizens realize what's happening to their community, it's too late to change the situation.

We do not intend to make that mistake in Burlington. Without question, we too are concerned about maintaining our tax base and in fact, are proud of the significant increase in job opportunities that have taken place in Burlington in the last five years.