

Chinese Americans Fear for Affirmative Action

CADC calls for Brown to return Scott-Norman donation

BY JANET DANG

The Chinese American Democratic Club last week denounced airport contracts that it said unfairly excluded Asian Americans as it called for the mayor to return a donation he had received this spring from a company at the center of an FBI probe.

"It is outrageous for Willie Brown's campaign to be profiting from a firm that is at the center of the FBI investigation and which appears to be abusing the city's affirmative action laws," said club spokesman Sam Kwong in explaining why his group wants Willie Brown to return a \$500 contribution he had received in April from Scott-Norman Mechanical. The focus of an ongoing series in the *San Francisco Examiner*, Scott-Norman is accused of serving as a front that allowed whites to take millions of dollars in construction contracts that could have gone to



minorities.

It looks like these people contribute money—that they're going to have an easier chance of getting a contract," said longtime CADC member Roland Guan, whose group has endorsed challenger Clint Reilly. "Here's this mayor who says he's for people of color, he's for the poor. Here's this contract that is a front."

Kwong said that Asian Americans seeking airport contracts "have received proportionately far less work than other purported minority contractors who have associated with the mayor"—a contention roundly refuted by Brown campaign spokesman P. J. Johnston.

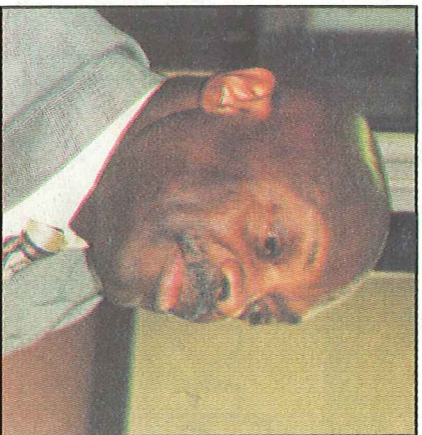


PHOTO BY JOVENISHMOVA

The group wants Mayor Willie Brown to return a \$500 contribution he received in April.

"The Chinese American Democratic Club is extremely hostile to Mayor Willie Brown. They have no place commenting on FBI investigations, for which they know nothing of," he said. "They have no place making demands upon Mayor Brown or his campaign. They are Clint Reilly supporters and any comments they make should be in that context."

"Virtually every Chinese community leader or elected official supports Mayor Brown," said Johnston, who gave as examples the Asian Pacific Democratic Club and the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association.

It's ironic that an organization supporting Clint Reilly would even get into the issue of fund raising, because Reilly has such a bad record," said Johnston, referring to more than \$70,000 in fines levied by state authorities in connection with election violations over the past decade.

"Mayor Brown plays by the rules," Johnston said. "He's never ever been fined by any watchdog organization and all his fundraising is complete legal and appropriate."

The mayor this month convened a three-member panel to look into how the city awards contracts to minority bidders. In late July, FBI officials seized files and documents from the Human Rights Commission, which certifies which businesses can be considered as being owned by minorities,

women or city residents. The city may count bids from such firms as slightly lower than they really are or can reserve a bid just for minorities or another group under the city's 1984 policy, renewed last year.

"Affirmative action is a good law but nobody is enforcing it," Guan said. "We're saying someone has to do some enforcement and we don't see anyone doing any enforcement. We believe in the program but have been frustrated."

What remains in little dispute, however, is the fact that Asian Americans are very underrepresented in SFO's multibillion-dollar overhaul. The airport director's 1998-99 report, in fact, notes that "ethnicity and gender participation on airport construction projects match and/or exceed the available labor force"—with one exception: Asian Americans. "They comprise only 4 percent of airport construction workers, as opposed to 20 percent of city workers overall.

"It's very difficult to speculate as to why there are such low numbers of Asians working on construction projects," said Theresa Lee, deputy airport director of administration. Perhaps, she said, Asian Americans might not want to bid on large, complicated projects like the \$2.4 billion airport renovation. There's also the possibility that language barriers make it harder to keep up union apprenticeship programs, as well as the fact that unions, which facilitate many contracts, have fairly small numbers of Asian Americans among their ranks. Said Lee: "Hispanics represent a good percentage of laborers... [For] Asian Americans, I think, the number is much lower."

On Monday, Aileen Hernandez, a member of Brown's investigative panel and the chairwoman of the Coalition for Economic Equity, told reporters that she and her group are deeply committed to preserving the city's commitment to minorities.

"Despite the impression left in the public mind by recent media barrage of stories about a few firms alleged to be 'fronts' for large, out-of-state construction firms under contract with city agencies, the reality is that the vast majority of [minority, women, local business enterprises] who have bid on and won contracts perform well and do not violate

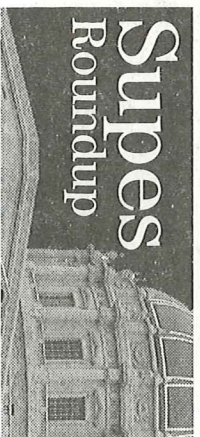
S.F. Supervisor Teng Requests Merger Hearing

Lawmakers to vote next week

BY JANET DANG

At Monday's meeting, the first after a monthlong recess, Supervisor Mabel Teng quickly and quietly introduced a resolution on behalf of absent colleague Michael Yaki, who had last month called for hearings into Hearst Corp.'s deal to buy the *San Francisco Chronicle* and to possibly close its own paper.

If the supervisors agree next week, a hearing is to be set before the end of the month. According to sources close to city officials, her request came on the heels of a letter that District Attorney Terence Hallinan's office sent to the U.S. Attorney's office asking it to closely scrutinize the matter. Mayor Willie Brown sent such a request to Attorney Gen-



"Alternative medicines, such as acupuncture, have proven to be an effective treatment for over 100 ailments and medical conditions," Teng said.

"Acupuncture has been successful in treating drug addiction, as well as symptoms and side effects caused by HIV/AIDS," Teng said. San Francisco continues to lag behind in providing alternative medical approaches, given that the National

eral Janet Reno last month. **HEALTHY ALTERNATIVES:** Teng also asked the board to support a hearing before her Housing and Social Policy Committee to consider creating a pilot program for drug users and AIDS patients at San Francisco General Hospital.

the law." Hernandez said she "hasn't paid much attention to the investigation—because we know [that fronts are] a very small portion... but we are concerned about... fronts in the city."

Minority businesses continue to receive well below their equitable share of contracts, according to Oren Sellstrom, the coalition's legal counsel and a staff attorney for the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights of the Bay Area. Studies that looked at minority contracts have still found wide disparities, he said—but things are better now than in the early 1980s, when only about 3 cents of each dollar of city contracts went to women and minority owned businesses.

"Asian American continue to lose dramatic dollars and equal opportunity," said Diane Chin, executive director of Chinese for Affirmative Action, who was at the coalition's press conference along with representatives from ASIAN, Inc., the Council of Asian American Business Associations, and other affirmative action advocates.

Contractor Stanley Chan spoke Monday on behalf of others like him. "A lot have benefited from this program," he said of the ordinance. "We'd like to see it continued."

Hernandez said that preserving the city's diversity efforts would have benefits beyond any one group. She stressed that only qualified firms are selected under the ordinance.

At this point, she said, "We need to reinforce its effectiveness. We don't want this whole program twisted with the FBI."

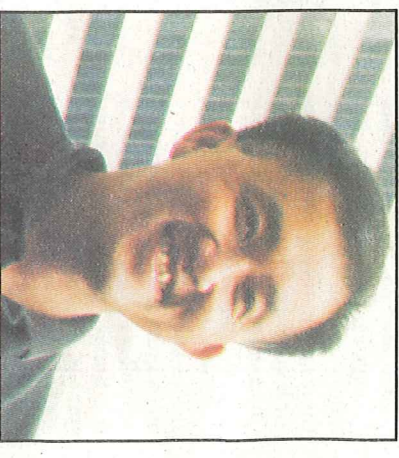


PHOTO BY J. DANG

CADC spokesman Sam Kwong

into whether long hours and grueling conditions had contributed to her death, and Amniano voiced support for keeping relaxed schedule put in place after Hernandez's death.

Until recently, civilian paramedics—who do not work 24-hour shifts like firefighters—put in five 8-hour shifts per week. After Hernandez's death, the schedule was changed to four 10-hour shifts per week. According to Fire Lt. Ed Campbell, all other paramedics work the same schedule as firefighters—24-hour shifts followed by 48-hours of rest—and are stationed in fire houses.

Though Service Employees International Union Local 790 is in negotiations with the department in an attempt to procure a different schedule for the city's civilian paramedics, Campbell said the department regards Hernandez's death and the Local 790's contract negotiations as two entirely different matters.

The Bay City News Service contributed to this report.

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