



THURSDAY, DECEMBER 19, 1985

"The educable person, in contrast to the ineducable, is one who gives promise of someday being able to think ..."

Albert J. Nock

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## Silencing a critic

The intent of city hall couldn't have been clearer: dissension within the ranks will not be tolerated. It's one thing to criticize a plan during a meeting, but once the majority has weighed in, let no one criticize the result.

That's the message that accompanies the dismissal of Salvador Mendoza from his appointed post on the Santa Ana Redevelopment Commission this week. His alleged crimes? Involvement in a group seeking to recall all seven City Council members and involvement in another group that is suing the city to block two downtown redevelopment projects.

His real crime? Not keeping his mouth shut about policies with which he disagrees.

Criticism, however, is supposed to be in the nature of the position he held. The redevelopment commission is an advisory board that recommends redevelopment projects to the City Council. Nothing should preclude the commission from recommending against projects.

Certainly council members should have known that Mendoza would not keep silent about their roughshod manner of implementing high-minded plans to turn Santa Ana into a pricey "downtown" for Orange County. Minutes after he was sworn in, Mendoza led a group of downtown Hispanic businessmen in a protest of city redevelopment policies.

Mendoza is not opposed to redevelopment — the process by which governments take land from its owner and give it to someone else — or necessarily to its methods. He wants redevelopment — but on his terms, which include not just business development but low-income housing as well.

The evils of government-imposed re-

development, however, are present no matter which segment of the community is in command.

Appointees to advisory boards come and go. What made Mendoza's appointment significant was that it seemed to be an attempt by the City Council to acknowledge (or co-opt?) dissatisfaction with redevelopment expressed by a large segment of the community.

Mendoza's appointment in June 1984 probably was intended to appease a Hispanic community upset by city hall policies that seemed to leave them outside of redevelopment looking in. Only the second Hispanic to serve on the advisory board, Mendoza was appointed at the height of the controversy over the city's attempts to oust Miguel Pulido's muffler shop from a location where redevelopment officials intended to see a shopping center.

His appointment followed by two months the start of a housing-code enforcement crackdown that had the effect of leaving numerous Hispanic families homeless. Both redevelopment and code-enforcement continue unchanged, but the voice of Salvador Mendoza was at least being heard.

Redevelopment by any means other than private property owners voluntarily selling to developers or developing property themselves will always make a shambles of property rights and personal freedoms. In the end, the people Mendoza claims to represent may not find his version of redevelopment any better — or more considerate — than city hall's.

But by ousting Mendoza, city officials lost at least a small voice against their heavy-handed policies. The voice that rings loudest now says, we'll do it our way, and we aren't interested in differing opinions.