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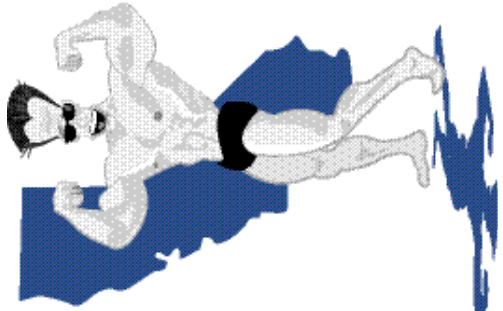

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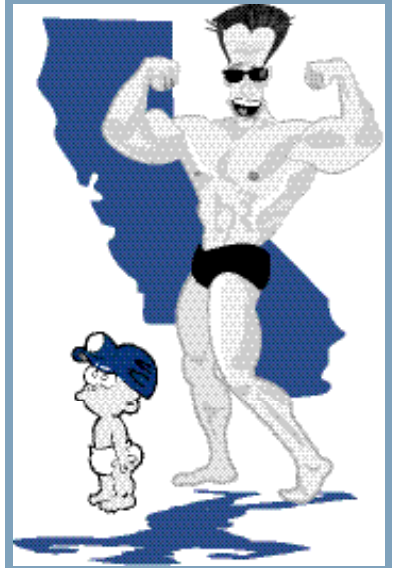

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Meeting the Governator

By Doug Carpenter

On Friday, March 11th I was invited by the Long Beach Chamber of Commerce to participate in a private meeting with Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. Arnold was coming to Long Beach to meet with his first "Citizens Kitchen Cabinet". The governor wanted to begin creating a network of community advisors to give him input on local issues throughout the state. He picked Long Beach as the launch pad for this new strategy. In addition to myself there was an educator, nurse, minority business person, woman-owned business owner, at-home businessman, and a stay-at-home mom in attendance. We met at a local residence in Long Beach and were instructed not to ask any "softball" questions that

(Continued Inside)

Meeting the Governator

(Continued from Front)

concerned us regarding California.

Arnold entered the house with a larger-than-life smile and a hand extended for a handshake with anyone within his reach. He greeted each of us individually spending time to learn our name and business affiliation. His people-skills and charisma was so huge with absolutely no air of pretentiousness.

The questions began regarding his proposal to change teacher's pay to performance instead of tenure. He was also challenged on his desire to change pension payments for nurses, police officers and firemen. He answered all of the questions thoughtfully and directly many times asking clarifying questions to better understand the issue. My question was in relation to the business migration out of California. We have seen an incredible exodus of manufacturing companies out of the state over the past 25 years. Arnold's election campaign was run on a business-friendly platform but I was concerned what was really happening to keep and bring

businesses to the state. He stated that he was working on this issue from many different avenues including tax breaks, wage subsidies and directly targeted solicitations of selected businesses to move into California. He said that his worker's compensation reform was still moving forward and that his targeted decreases in workers compensation rates should be fully in effect by July 2006. He also stated that the increasing real estate values in the state were creating huge barriers-to-entry for companies considering large facilities in California. Much cheaper land prices in neighboring states are making it difficult to justify purchasing or building large facilities in California. Many of the barriers to manufacturing in California go back for several decades and they are not an easy fix.

Someone asked Schwarzenegger why he chose to run for governor and take on these uphill battles in the state. He passionately discussed all that the people of California have done for him since he emigrated here from Austria. He spoke of the great opportunity given to him and about his desire to give back to this country. This was a great opportunity to get a sense of his vision and passion for the State of California.

Whether you agree with Arnold's policies or not, his intelligence, charisma & leadership abilities are unparalleled. I believe that the street-smarts that he has acquired over the years uniquely qualify him to bring together opposing viewpoints to move ahead for change in the state. After shaking hands and thanking his hosts, Schwarzenegger walked to his heavily guarded car and declared his first Kitchen Cabinet meeting a success. "It was unbelievable," he told reporters. "I learned a lot from my new Kitchen Cabinet, and it was a wonderful thing. It's great to be out here with the people."

BUILDING TO THE SKY

We have always been fascinated by tall buildings. Egypt's Great Pyramid of Giza was the tallest structure in the world for 43 centuries. Then the Eiffel Tower was built in 1889. At 1,450 feet, Chicago's Sears Tower was the world's tallest building from 1973 to 1996. Today, the tallest building is located in Taiwan (Taipei 101) which has 101 floors and reaches 1,670 feet. Toronto's CN Tower claims to reach 108 feet higher than the Taipei 101 thanks to its antenna.

All of these will be dwarfed by the tallest building now being built in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates. The pilings are now in place and dig 160 feet into the earth. When it is finished, visitors will swoon over this city from 123 stories high, or more. The Burj Dubai will be dozens of stories higher than the current tallest structure. It is scheduled to be completed in 2008 at a cost of $900 million.

The craze for height has hit hardest in industrializing Asian countries like Taiwan, Hong Kong and China which boasts seven of the 10 tallest buildings. It is strange to me that in the area most susceptible for earthquakes that the tallest buildings should exist. The Persian Gulf city of Dubai is proud to bring the title of "tallest building" back to the Middle East (home of the ancient Pyramids). The building shall have a concrete core that could withstand a 911 type jet airliner attack. A hotel will occupy the lower 37 floors. Floors 45 through 108 will have 700 apartments, most of which have already been pre-sold. Corporate office and suites will fill most of the rest, except for a 123rd floor lobby and an observation deck with an outdoor terrace for the brave. Unfortunately, Paragon Steel was not awarded the contract to build it.