

January 13, 1964

Memo to the Council:

In our position as Councilmen, or as Mayor, it is necessary that we try to put aside small differences, that will inevitably appear. There is no reason why there should not be contention on occasion, but we should strive to do the best we can to keep this contention on issues. Therefore, I am asking that you reconsider your action of last Tuesday evening regarding the Indian Caves for the following reasons. Reasons that I think should be carefully considered, because the Indian Caves are not of importance just today, but for all time to come, if properly developed, and the development I am speaking of is a long-term program. Much, and even most of it, could not possibly be undertaken in our duration of office.

The Indian Caves are one of the finest historical areas in the northwest. Historical in a pre-history sense in particular. There is no finer sight to interest the archaeological minded scholar than the Indian Caves. That there was other history occurred in and around the area, is also of interest to the scholar, just as is the geology of the area. It is true that the Indian Caves are owned by the State, and conceivably could be developed by the Highway Department, but this is very, very speculative, as that Department has other things far more important, and pressing on their time and money than is the Indian Cave area. That Departments main function is highways, and the Indian Caves would occupy a position of a very distant and poor relative.

State owned land can be sold, and once it is sold, it is gone forever. Such things as Pompeys Pillar should be a state or national historical area. It is fortunate that the Pompeys Pillar area is owned by a history minded man, Don Foote, but men are mortal, and they can die leaving such things as Pompeys Pillar, or the Indian Caves in estates, and history is replete with heirs who could have cared less, and things that should have been preserved are lost for all time. That the state owns the Indian Cave area, means that a legislature, in a sudden whim, could sell the Indian Caves. This has happened, and could happen again. This is another reason why the City should undertake the development of the Indian Caves.

There are many civic minded individuals and groups asking for the opportunity to be City directed in the development of things such as the Indian Caves. But Billings has many people interested

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in the development of such things, and it is not necessary to call on the tax dollar, is being amply demonstrated at this very moment. I refer particularly to all of the people who have contributed both time and dollars in the preservation of the creation of an art museum in Billings. Work for this museum is well under way now, and many, many people, again, came forth when they were asked to help create this art museum.

This same vacuum exists with people in Billings standing on the sidelines now only awaiting the City to say come forth and help. Just today, I received a letter from the Yellowstone Junior Chamber of Commerce making this very offer - copies of which I am having put in your boxes. Offers have come from others, and I know that many others, both individuals and organizations, who would assist in this effort.

The economic survey pointed out the need of tourist attractions in Billings, and specifically it pointed out the potential of the Indian Cave area if City developed. At this very moment, our Governor, Babcock, and Orvin Fjare, State Advertising Director, are working hard to attract tourist dollars. This was evidenced in the sending of the Centennial band to Pasadena, and the work that is going forth to send the Centennial train to New York in the spring. We in Billings need attractions to halt the tourist for a short time, and the Indian Caves is one of the attractions that would be most easily provided to hold them. Therefore, I am asking you to reconsider your action in the interest of the people of Billings today and in the future.

Sincerely,

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Willard E. Fraser, Mayor