



## Mayor Bradley's quest for 'leadership'

By WARREN OLNEY

*"Microphone, don't you know? Ah's de Mayah."*

— Tom Bradley, wrestling with a jammed microphone at his inaugural reception.  
July 1, 1973

*"Tom's conducted himself so as to alleviate the fears Sam Yorty built up. The police are still in uniform; the fire department still answers calls; the Communists haven't taken over the government."*

— City Councilman Joel Wachs,  
December 1973

Tom Bradley's Amos-'n-Andy self parody may have sent shivers up the spines of a few bigots on inauguration day, but by that time he didn't care. Just a month before, he had carried virtually every section of the city — even the San Fernando Valley, that white suburban enclave where Sam Yorty had felt most protected, and where Yorty's warnings about "dangerous radicals" and "black militants" taking over City Hall had worked against Bradley four years before. This year, politicians as astute as former Assembly Speaker Jess Unruh were convinced that race would once again prevent Bradley from beating Yorty, should the two get into another runoff. Unruh even entered the primary himself, along with former police chief Tom Reddin and a lot of other candidates who felt Bradley couldn't win. But Bradley did win, and by so great a margin that he could indulge himself in that self-parody, an act that would have been rash before the election (and even in July it may have bothered some of Councilman Wachs' valley constituents).

Wachs' assessment suggests that just by not sending an army of crazies out to tear up suburban lawns, Bradley's done better than some people thought he would. And yet, six months into his administration, it's hard to find *anybody* who bad-mouths the Mayor. If anything, he's broadened his support, to the point where Bill Roberts, a conservative professional who managed the first Reagan-for-Governor campaign

and who started out with Unruh this year (they parted company after disagreements over policy and finances) now says, "If he keeps this up, he'll be one hell of a fine Mayor and be reelected easily."

### Broad-based support

The more Bradley is seen, the less he inspires racial fears. He has none of the flashiness or defiance that had set teeth on edge in some white circles. In fact, he is dignified to the point of dullness. Recently, he told a group of high school news editors in Van Nuys, "Morality is as important in public service as it is in church." And he talks that way all the time. Beyond that, he does not consort conspicuously with other black politicians. "He's not that kind of groupie," a staff man says. Most of the other elected black officials supported Unruh in the primary, so that Bradley was elected without their help. His enormous majorities in the black precincts are thus less worrisome than they might have been to the 85 percent of Los Angeles that is Anglo or Mexican-American.

Bradley's base of support remains intact, though. Instead of indulging in post-election vindictiveness, as some had feared, Bradley has been "statesmanlike" toward blacks who supported Unruh. So says Assemblyman Frank Holoman, who remained neutral. There have been no reprisals, and when Bradley supported one of 29 candidates to fill his own vacant council seat, most of the other elected black officials fell into line. A split of the black vote, which might have lost the seat to popular Japanese television actor George Takei, was avoided. So, while Bradley isn't a "groupie", neither is he an outcast. "Tom hasn't lost his blackness," says Assemblyman Leon Ralph. But while Yorty was accused of being the tool of special interests, Bradley has avoided becoming the captive of the most obvious special interest of all, and Yorty's warnings about "black militants" and "dangerous radicals" have been forgotten.

The one thing that Bradley, Unruh, Reddin and Wachs (he was a candidate, too), along with the Irish soprano, the right-wing TV performer, and all the rest

of the motley, Southern California crew that got into the primary agreed on was that in all Sam Yorty's 12 years in office, there had been no "leadership" in City Hall. Leadership was a word they all used, whatever different meanings they might have intended. Yorty had two responses. First, he would say that the others were making promises no mayor could ever fulfill, because the office is so limited by the City Charter (an answer he once was denounced for by a U.S. Senate committee investigating the Watts riot). If there were problems, they were the City Council's fault; the Mayor said he had no authority to solve them. His second response, often uttered in the same breath, was that there were no problems, anyway. "Los Angeles," Yorty would say, "is the best-governed city in the country, and everybody knows it."

### Charter limits

Yorty was right about the charter. It says the City Council is Los Angeles' "governing body", and all it provides for the Mayor to do is draw up the budget and appoint commissioners, few of whom are even paid. The commissioners set policy for the 28 city departments, but the departments report to the council as much as to the Mayor.

"The best-governed city in the country," however, does have some problems. The air is so polluted here that every native over the age of 12 is said to have emphysema to some degree. The automobile is said to be the villain, and yet 22 percent of all land in the city has been given over to it, most strikingly in the central downtown business district, where 70 percent of the land is covered with highways, streets and parking lots. Supposedly, lung disease and pavement are the price of getting to work — but not for everybody; fully 40 percent of the population is too young, too old, too poor or too handicapped to have access to a car. And if 2.5 million people have fouled the nest so far, Los Angeles is zoned to accommodate 7.5 million more — hardly evidence of government planning for a less-congested future.

If such problems exist, a mayor can only deny them or blame them on the City Council for just so long. Despite the limited powers given his office by the charter, he is still the most conspicuous politician in town, and sooner or later dissatisfaction will be focused on him. For Yorty, the limit was 12 years. During this year's campaign, what Bradley came to mean by "leadership" was the willingness of a mayor to extend his influence beyond what the charter specifies, and it is for his "leadership" since inauguration day that Bradley is now winning praise.

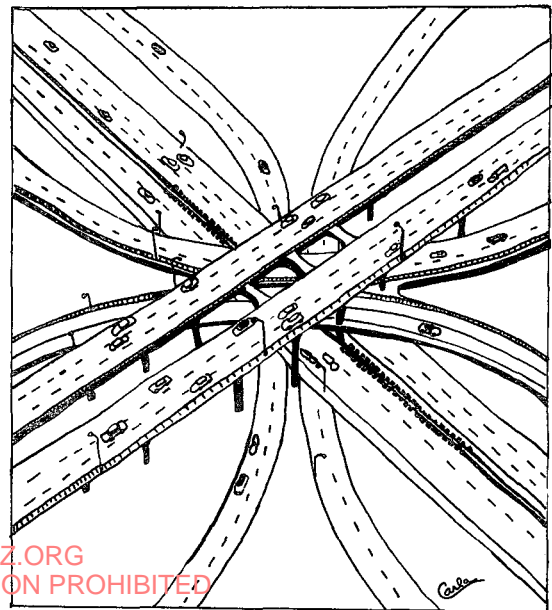
His first move was to choose what he called "a broadly based staff". He made a point of counting up the representatives of each ethnic group. His two top aides, the deputy mayors, are a Jew and a Mexican-American. Masamori Kojima, one of a dozen or so in the second echelon melting pot, was not only allowed to campaign for Takei as Bradley's council replacement, but used mayoral stationery to disseminate his views and contradict the Mayor's. Having charged that Yorty stacked his commissions with contributors and cronies, Bradley came up with an advisory committee on appointments. One fourth of its members had not supported him for election. Most of his 150-odd commissioners were recommended by the committee, and there has not been much grumbling about the results. Bradley claims to have achieved "ethnic, economic, cultural

and geographic balance," which he says guarantees that he will be mayor of "all the people."

Then, Bradley told the commissioners to be independent. "I do not expect you to be rubber stamps for the Mayor," he said. Since then, the Fire Commission has balked at making budget cuts as large as Bradley requested, and the Parks and Recreation Commission embarrassed him by resolving that freeways should be cleared for bicycles on Sundays. Some ardent early supporters, notably some conservationists, complain that Bradley's administration is now so "broadly based" that they can't get in to see him anymore. But Bradley replies that he now must represent the entire city, and says the multitude of various interests in his administration prevent its capture by any single one.

Yet, "in the broadest sense," says Deputy Mayor Maurice Weiner, "everyone has access to Tom Bradley," and if there is one factor most often mentioned in Bradley's favor it is his effort to "open up" the office. This fulfills a campaign pledge. This does not just mean giving different groups their own places on his staff or his commissions. Bradley spends so much time talking to individual constituents that there have been, among the voices of praise, some complaints that he acts as if he's still campaigning. He has spent whole days in various sections of the city, touring facilities, talking to community groups, rapping with students. He has been very well received, even in the *barrios* of East Los Angeles, where hatred of blacks is said to be spreading dangerously.

But the big event of the "open administration" was the first "open house" at Bradley's City Hall office. Anybody who had a grievance was invited to come and tell it to the Mayor. To reporters as the day began, Bradley said, "One difference between cities which have had unrest and cities which haven't is whether people believed their government was available and responsive. They need to know somebody's listening." By the end of the day, a somewhat haggard Bradley had listened to at least 100 of his constituents, although many were diverted to his staff for lack of time. Ultimately, of course, they were all referred to staff, but Weiner contends that the Mayor wasn't wasting his time, even though he heard complaints about school conditions, over which he has no control, and sewers clogged with tree roots. "The Mayor got a look at how his office works," Weiner says. "He *had* to ask questions about how the various problems were being handled, which



gave him a new perspective. He could change procedures if he didn't like them, and he did change some."

It's too soon to know how the visits are being followed up, if they are, but while Bradley may not have staved off another Watts riot, he did get a favorable editorial in the *Los Angeles Times*, and the open houses are now monthly events.

### Opening up government

Another effort at "leadership" beyond the limits of the charter is the attempt to open Los Angeles' city government to itself. Remarkable as it may seem, Bradley is the first Mayor of Los Angeles to hold cabinet meetings with all his 28 department heads present or try to let each of them know what the others are doing. Partly because of the charter, partly because of growth too rapid to keep track of, and partly because of the kind of men who have been elected, no Mayor has ever imposed a coherent set of policies, or even a rational pattern, on the administration of Los Angeles. At least, that's the claim of Deputy Mayor Manuel Aragon, who has asked the new commissioners to draw up priority lists for their departments and submit them to the Mayor. The priorities will then be wed to broader objectives for the city as a whole — clean air, less traffic, cheaper housing — producing what Aragon thinks of as an "agenda for the city," to which each department can then contribute. By the year after next, he wants the "agenda" reflected in the budget of each department; then, as he puts it, "We'll be running the departments by citywide goals, rather than running the city by departmental goals." Such a quest for order may be characteristic of new administrations, but it is unfamiliar in Los Angeles.

Aragon also hopes to reform the procedures of some major city departments, most notably the Harbor Department, "our most glaring problem." The Yorty administration, often against the recommendations of outside consultants, built huge facilities at the harbor, some of which have never been used. (Directories in telephone booths at a \$2 million passenger terminal still are dated 1963, just as they were on dedication day, which was also the last time the terminal was open.) Aragon says the Harbor Department needs checks and balances that those who decide to build will no longer be those responsible for cost-accounting. No mechanism exists to determine revenues from capital investments, he says, and Aragon thinks there should be one.

### City Council's role

Redirection and reorganization will remain as visions, however, without the cooperation of the 15-member City Council, which is so much the "governing body" of Los Angeles that Bradley needs its approval to restructure his own office staff. The Mayor's standing with his former colleagues will be crucial to his ultimate success or failure, and one of them calls Bradley's improved relations with the council "his greatest coup".

During last spring's election while Bradley was campaigning as a man who "gets things done", this councilman called Bradley's 12-year legislative record "miserable". He accused the candidate of making proposals for their publicity value, and then failing to lobby them through, while at the same time taking credit for the accomplishments of others. (Jess Unruh made similar charges against Bradley in the primary



campaign.) But this same councilman now commends Mayor Bradley for his "excellent performance", saying, "He's compensated for his own personal shortcomings by getting good people, and maybe that's what leadership's all about."

Another council veteran had initial doubts about the Bradley staff. "They started out thinking the experienced people didn't know anything," he says, but "they're listening more now, and they've learned that they can't crowd all the power into the Mayor's office." Both men said they were pleased that Bradley's not "grabbing the limelight", which, considering all the attention he's received as "the most important black politician in the country", is a tribute to his tact.

### Split on Proposition 1

Bradley was hit by heavy weather in the dispute over Proposition 1, Governor Reagan's tax-limitation initiative. The Mayor, in his first statewide involvement since his election, was against the measure, and appeared in television commercials to say so. But the council, amid a charge by Assembly Speaker Bob Morretti that the Governor offered a judgeship or two in return, voted to support Proposition 1. At the California League of Cities convention in San Francisco, Bradley was put in a squeeze when Los Angeles Councilman Arthur Snyder convinced the body to rescind its previous opposition to the initiative and adopt instead a position of neutrality. The Mayor avoided an open fight, though, with a neat bit of legerdemain that he's used in the past. Since he was representing the city, he said, he would go along with the council position, even though he felt differently himself. Deputy Mayor Weiner admits that such strategic fallbacks can be construed as weakness if they have to be taken repeatedly. "But it's okay," he says, "if the Mayor and the council don't disagree very often."

And so far they haven't. Bradley's long experience on the council means he knows its procedures. "We're all friends," says Wachs. "We talk freely. It's entirely different from the way it was with Yorty." (The former Mayor was openly hostile to the council and blamed it publicly for the city's troubles.) While three councilmen will oppose him on the principle, Bradley has four who support him regularly, and he should be able to muster enough fence-sitters to get what he wants from the full 15. Already, he has been granted \$10 million of the \$12 million he asked in cuts from the budget passed before he took office, and he has further impressed his opponents on Proposition 1 by asking all departments to submit next year's budget requests at 95 percent of