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November 7, 1992

Professor David Meyer
Search Committee
Urban Studies Program
Box 1833
Brown University
Providence, Rhode Island 02912

Dear Professor Meyer:

This letter is on behalf of Jonathan Richmond, who is applying for an academic position in urban planning and American Civilization at Brown.

Jonathan Richmond was my doctoral student for six years. I was head of his interdepartmental thesis committee, which also included Professors Ralph Gakenheimer, Joseph Weizenbaum, and Martin Wachs of the University of California at Los Angeles. As Professor Gakenheimer and I were walking back from the site of Jonathan's very successful oral defense of his thesis in February, 1991, Ralph said, "The end of an era!" -- which gives something of the sense of both the duration and impact of Jonathan's stay at MIT.

He is, in my view, one of the most brilliant and accomplished doctoral students I have encountered in my twenty or so years at this institution. He has a flair for written and oral speech (perhaps, in part, the result of his upbringing in the British school system), an intensity of thought and commitment that is highly unusual, an equally unusual combination of formal analytic capability and interpretive intelligence, and a great deal of moral courage. On the last point, his public writings on the proposed West Coast "bullet train" were very likely responsible for the demise of that ill-conceived project. Jonathan is ready -- even eager -- to take controversial and, often, minority positions in a public way. His interest in "planning ethics" is really a complement to the way of life he has adopted for at least the last ten years.

I believe that Jonathan's thesis is an excellent piece of work (a judgment shared, incidentally, by the other members of his thesis committee). In effect, he has studied the light rail transit investment decision in Los Angeles and has determined, through critical analysis of its costs and benefits -- including especially the demand model used to justify it -- that it makes no rational sense. He then proceeds to explore how such a decision

could nevertheless be made. His answer to this question combines an analysis of the politics of the decision with an analysis of its basis in prevailing myths, metaphors, imagery and symbolism. Throughout his analysis, he keeps in the forefront his abiding concern with the ethical dimensions of large-scale investments in infrastructure and, more generally, the making of public policy.

This work is well researched and original. Jonathan has applied to the transportation investment decision a set of ideas that he has derived from his mentor, Wes Churchman, as well as from Judith Innis, Mel Webber, and myself; but he has something quite unique, of his own. I think he has the makings here of a very good and potentially influential book.

As a teacher, Jonathan is experienced, lively, informative and very well prepared. He is able to work effectively with students across disciplinary lines. In his teaching, he manages to convey a strong sense of technical content while he also stimulates intellectual debate and ethical self-reflection.

I will be very happy to provide further information, if you wish it. You can reach me at 617 - 253 - 2025.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'DAS', is centered below the closing. The letters are stylized and cursive.

Donald A. Schon
Ford Professor Emeritus and Senior Lecturer