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February 10, 2003

Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 Fourth Street, N.W. *(ste. 210 South)*
Washington, D.C. 20001

re: Tudor Place Foundation
Application no. 16974

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I understand that the application of Tudor Place for continued exception from applicable zoning regulations will be considered at the Board's meeting on February 18. Unfortunately, I will not be able to be present to express my views in person, so I take the liberty of sending you this letter.

My wife and I have lived across the street from Tudor Place for almost fifteen years, and are directly affected by large parties on its grounds, and by the increased institutionalization of the property generally.

No one objects to operation of Tudor Place as a historic house and garden; architecturally it is an important house with lovely gardens. Indeed, there would be no objection to opening its gardens, without charge or appointment, every day during daylight hours. But it was never Armistead Peter's intention that should become a rental facility for public functions.

For several years, Tudor Place has been a good neighbor, but it now seeks to be excused from the zoning ordinances which were designed to protect our neighborhood, and to be permitted to rent its premises to groups of 500 as much as ten times a year (which can be expected to be concentrated in the five month period from May through September, or twice a month). It also seeks exemption to advertise and conduct evening tours once a week, and rent out the "Dower House" for meetings and parties four times a month to groups of up to 50 guests. It is respectfully submitted that ten parties of 500 guests, 48 parties of 50 guests, and 52 evening tours (a total of 110 evening events) each year--in addition to regular and continuing daytime activities--would adversely affect the character of our neighborhood.

Tudor Place asserts that it needs such activities in order to raise funds for its operations. This justification does not stand up to examination; I believe Mr. Peter's endowment throws off more than $450,000 a year, which is certainly enough for essential operations and maintenance of a historic house. Its problems arise from the board's desire to expand operations and become a public institution. According to its 2001 Annual Report, Tudor Place has elected to employ a Museum Administrator, a Director of Visitor Services, a Director of Communications, a Director of Education, a Curator of Collections, a Registrar, an Archivist, two Museum Technicians, a Curator of Buildings and Grounds, a Horticulturist, and a Head Gardener, in addition to the Executive Director and two gardeners of the past. If Tudor Place is encountering financial difficulties, it should pare expenditures, rather than transform a historic

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residential area by expanded fund raising. If additional funds were needed, the "Dower House" (1670 31st Street) could be rented out. I am told by a reliable real estate agent that it could be rented for at least $8,000 a month ($96,000 a year).

The Four Seasons Hotel would not be allowed to buy properties on 28th Street and rent them out for parties, and there is no reason Tudor Place should be allowed to act in such a fashion just because it has no stockholders.

I am therefore constrained to oppose Tudor Place's application in the following respects:

1. If the ruling in this case increases the applicant's authority in any way, its approval should be limited to two years, so that neighbors may have the opportunity to be heard on the basis of resulting experience.

3. Group tours should not be scheduled after 5:00 p.m.

4. Regularly scheduled tours should not exceed five or six per day

6. Evening functions should be limited to a maximum of 200 at any one event, and functions with more than 75 attendees should be limited to once a month.

16. Dower House should revert to purposes consistent with a residential neighborhood.

Georgetown is a vulnerable area, and unless great care is exercised, institutionalization at Tudor Place, Evermay, and someday perhaps Sevier House, will severely reduce Georgetown's attraction as a place to live.

Very truly yours,

J. Dapray Muir