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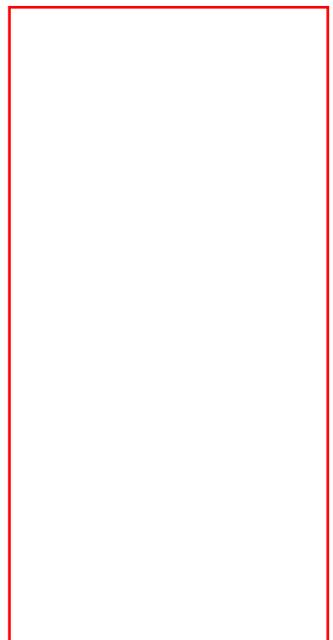
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Mott Foundation owes Glades a parting gift

Palm Beach Post Editorial

Monday, July 28, 2008

The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation gave away more than \$100 million in 2006. Among the 545 grants were \$100,000 to the Civil Society Institute in Druzhby Narodiv, Ukraine, and \$300,000 to the Genesee County Land Bank Authority in Flint, Mich. Is it too much to ask that next year's grants include employment assistance to Belle Glade and Clewiston?



The Mott Foundation is one of the great charitable organizations in the United States, with assets of \$2.2 billion. It was started in 1926 by Charles Stewart Mott, who went from early supplier for General Motors to major stockholder and board member, back when people said that what was good for GM was good for the country. The foundation also is one of the owners of U.S. Sugar, which Mr. Mott formed in 1931.

Assuming that negotiations with the South Florida Water Management District are successful, U.S. Sugar expects to close in six years on its deal to sell the district all of its holdings - including 187,000 acres in Palm Beach and Hendry counties - for \$1.75 billion. Mr. Mott's foundation has a 19 percent stake in U.S. Sugar. The Mott Children's Heath Center, another Flint-based charitable group, owns 22 percent and, according to the *Flint Journal*, the Community Foundation of Greater Flint, has a 6 percent stake. Other owners



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include the for-profit MFO Management Co. (14 percent) and the U.S. Sugar Employee Stock Ownership Plan (34 percent).

Last week, Palm Beach County Commissioner Jeff Koons made the sensible suggestion that the charitable owners of U.S. Sugar be asked to leave a bequest to the community it will leave behind. The proposal has precedent. After being enriched by South Florida land for two decades, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, a \$7 billion behemoth out of Chicago, has established a \$25 million endowment with the Community Foundation for Palm Beach and Martin Counties.

It's not as if the Glades does not qualify for assistance. Poverty, unemployment, teen pregnancy, AIDS and low graduation rates are serious problems. They are likely to worsen without U.S. Sugar's 1,700 jobs.

And it's not as if U.S. Sugar, whose chairman William White also is chairman of the Mott Foundation, hasn't helped already. Mott money established the Community Foundation and the Glades Community Development Corp. Clewiston literally was built and furnished by U.S. Sugar/Mott money: library, youth center, hotel, airport, day-care center, college scholarships, recreation areas, auditorium, ballfields, tennis courts and streets.

Politicians looking to save the Glades will need to tap federal, state and local sources. But the foundation that gained so much from the labor in the cane fields - and will benefit so greatly from the taxpayer buyout - also has a responsibility to help.

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