

The Glebe
Society

BULLETIN

No. 1 of 1976. (Jan.)

P.O. Box 100, Glebe, 2037. Phone 660-0026

*Planning & Environment Commission
300 Castlecreagh*

GLEBE POINT

IS THERE ANY ALTERNATIVE FOR THE
DEVELOPMENT OF GLEBE POINT ?

At present Parkes Developments are proposing to proceed with a plan to develop over 4 acres of the 7 acre site on Glebe Point as seven typical blocks of units.

The Glebe Society opposes the development because:

Firstly and most important, it will be completely out of keeping with the surrounding area, which is predominantly Victorian single and two storey terraces with a reasonably low (by inner city standards) population density. What is more some of the buildings are quite unique and original in design, enhanced by the setting, which included some boat yards and light industry.

The proposal will add 188 units - by Parkes own reckoning adding nearly 500 people to what is now a small community. The old residents will be swamped by unit dwellers. It is assumed that each unit will add a car, and consequently traffic.

A typical square block unit development will not add anything aesthetically to the area, but will be a harbourside eyesore, such as blights suburbs more prestigious than Glebe. But there is no way that such a development would get started at Hunters Hill or Beecroft. Perhaps the present residents of Glebe can be similarly protected.

No provision is made for low income housing. It is clear that if the unique character of Glebe is to be preserved, the low income earners must not be shouldered out.

Apart from Venetia, there is nothing to the development except units and open space. Some imaginative addition to the life of Glebe could be welcome - public workshops, artists studios, squash courts, theatre commercial or public.

The development is unimaginative and is dreaded as a future depressed dormitory area.

The place chosen by Parkes for the main open space is amidst the blocks. Why not on the corner of Glebe Point Road and Mary Street (as a current petition asks) which site commands the best view on the Point? It commands both Rozelle and Blackwattle Bays, with a view up to the Harbour Bridge. It is said that they have admitted keeping a high fence up on the long vacant site lest people grow accustomed to the view and demand it.

The site offers a challenge for development. There can be few sites in Sydney, on the Harbour which have such potential. It would be tragic to waste the opportunity.

If Parkes appear unable to undertake an acceptable (to the people of Glebe) scheme, why should not someone who can be allowed to? I am sure that if the area were placed under controls such as exist on the Glebe Project, it would be possible to find a developer who would be interested in attempting a development more in keeping with the surroundings, and showing more imagination in contributing to the Glebe environment.

In 1973, when Leichhardt Council last considered this proposal, students at the University of N.S.W. developed a scheme for a town house development which won wide favour, especially with local people and aldermen. It did not fit Parkes' financial rules.

The Glebe Society will be making proposals along the above lines over the next few weeks to the Council, and to Government departments and instrumentalities. We would welcome suggestions and positive ideas for averting this imminent grey menane of environmentally unsuitable building.

Jim Coombs
(Presented to Australian Frontier meeting
in November.)

PLANNING

The publicity campaign of the mayor and town planner, which has appeared in the Link and the Glebe Weekly over the last few months, is clearly leading up to radical changes in the planning scheme and the flat code of the previous Council. This has important and dangerous implications for Glebe residents.

Mr. Kenna (the Council's Town Planner) is reported again as talking of medium and high rise development on "the ridges".

The two main arguments, which they are trying to sell the people of Leichhardt, to support their reintroduction of intensive flat development are ill-informed and distorted.

Firstly, the mayor claims that "flat development will reduce rates".

On the contrary: what we pay in rates is directly related to how much it costs to provide services and run the municipality. Even if land values go down, the total amount we pay remains constant, and we pay more in the dollar on the reduced value. To claim that increased values decrease rates is utter rubbish, we pay the same total amount, it's simply less in the dollar on the increased value.

Further, any population increase which might result if a lot of flats were built, will not have a significant effect on rate income. Flat dwellers and unit owners do not pay rates at the same scale per family as people who own houses - their rates are assessed on the value of the land upon which their block of flats stands. Admittedly, this value will rise if flats are built upon it, but nowhere near in proportion to the increase in population that might result. To make a significant difference to the value of the land, permissible redevelopment densities must be so high that the resulting buildings would severely damage the environment of the area in which they are built. In other words, the minor increase in rateable value which might accrue on a flat site zoned for high density is not worth the effects that that building will bring about on its surroundings.

Secondly, the Town Planner says he is "worried about" the fall in population which Leichhardt has experienced since the war, and suggests that we must plan to increase the population to the figure of 75,000 people.

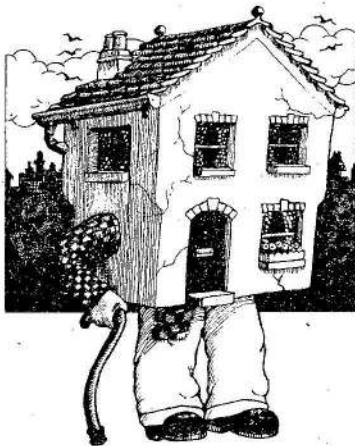
He appears to have ignored a number of important factors. He overlooks the fact that similar population declines have occurred in all of the more densely populated inner suburbs of Sydney over the last 25 years and that between 1966 and 1971, for example, Leichhardt's rate of population decline was only slightly more than the whole of Sydney, South Sydney, Marrickville and Woollahra and substantially less than the rate of population decline in Newtown. This characteristic of falling inner area populations is typical of most western cities. The reasons for it are quite clear, are well documented and are, in fact, things to be pleased about rather than "worried about".

Quite simply there are fewer people living in each dwelling. In the year 1950 an average of four people lived in each house; now it is less than three. The fall in this "occupancy ratio" commenced after the war when the conditions of war-time overcrowding began to be relieved, and more recently community affluence and therefore their space requirements have increased. Surely, both of these are things to be pleased about. Efforts to "correct" the decline can only result in environmental disasters like Randwick or Canterbury or Kirribilli over substantial areas of the municipality.

We might well question why the Council should now be reconsidering their plan for the Leichhardt Municipality of 1974 which was submitted to the State Planning Authority. The municipality would be better served if the Council spent the time and money publicising their opposition to the expressways which, if constructed, would result in a loss of 10% of the houses in Leichhardt, with a consequent erosion of the rate base and substantial decrease in population.

Stephen Harris

RENTAL ACCOMMODATION



It was in the 1920's that many of the houses in Glebe began to deteriorate. With the introduction of suburban train lines many people moved into the outer suburbs, regarding the terrace houses and small cottages of the inner suburbs as undesirable. This meant that landlords of a lot of the houses in Glebe were living in the northern and eastern suburbs and with return on their properties low they were loathe to spend money on their maintenance.

Even today with the enthusiastic movement to the inner suburbs the rental property is very much part of the Glebe scene. More than half the residents of Glebe are tenants rather than owners, and Glebe also has the largest number of tenants in the Leichhardt Municipality (this is greatly reinforced of course by the ex-Church of England now Australian Government-owned lands).

But what controls are there to make these pleasant places to live in? Who controls the living standards of these properties?

The Leichhardt Council has laid down requirements for flats and lodging houses according to their category (these don't apply to the Australian Government property - this is Crown Land so doesn't come under the jurisdiction of Local Government). These requirements are in regard to site occupation, minimum floor area, etc.

All flats, whether in newly built blocks of flats or in old converted houses are required to have kitchen, bathroom and toilet facilities and hot water for a bath and hand basin and a minimum floor area of about 650 square feet. According to the latest building codes newly built flats should have hot and cold running water in both kitchen and bathroom, but old flats only need to have hot water in the bathroom. But one of the major problems has been the emergence of the lodging house - required since 1970 to be licensed - which can have communal facilities.

But it is up to the individual to take action - if a person is forced by economic reasons to take a flat which he/she feels is sub-standard or has any doubts about, they should be encouraged to contact the Health Inspector at the Glebe Town Hall. The Council makes door-to-door inspections and will quickly deal with any complaints.

People are apathetic. Both tenants and owners are antagonistic to council inspections - tenants particularly resent intrusion because they, often justifiably, fear a rise in rent if new facilities are needed.

But the more people actually make complaints, worry what their surroundings are like and who find out what their rights are, the better for their individual home environment and for the whole of Glebe.

Leonie Henschke

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS:

Mr. & Mrs. C. Hosking
Graham and Jan Patterson
Andrew Gonczi
Mr. and Mrs. A. Simons

EDUCATION R-R-REVOLUTION

If your child is only getting a sound traditional education in the 3 'R's "Reading - 'Riting - 'Rithmetic" it is quite inadequate.

There is a quiet, steady but non-violent REVOLUTION going on in education in Australia: and this is essential if we are to meet the challenge of change. The features of the revolution are:

RESOURCES
REASONING and
RESPONSIBILITY.

RESOURCES such as books, pens, maps and 'classroom teachers' are now inadequate on their own. In a good revolutionary school there are tape-recorders and projectors of many kinds, 3D models, games, cameras, T.V. (now colour) and a host of other mechanical and electronic paraphernalia that are readily accessible to the children - and sometimes even available to adult learners too. In addition, people with knowledge, skill and expertise for example, musicians, policemen, mothers, sportsmen, professors, mechanics and special educators are brought in to interact with the children. Another resource is the learning environment; children now learn in adventure playgrounds, at offices and factories, parks and shopping centres, forests and beaches, farms and theatres by means of excursions.

REASONING is a key factor in any young revolutionary's education. Gone are the days when children passively accepted knowledge as it poured forth from the teacher or the pages of a book. Now children have experiences and do things and are encouraged to think things through for themselves. Children now ask the questions and then search for the answers, thereby setting their own syllabus.

RESPONSIBILITY makes or breaks the new schooling. If you take children camping in the mountains, swimming in pools or give them a video-tape camera, then you must depend on the children's sense of responsibility. Imposed discipline can maintain order but it's very restrictive on learning in an experimental context.

What about the schools around Glebe? To be consistent with the spirit of inquiry, I ask you to find out for yourself and more importantly become an active revolutionary by offering a small proportion of your knowledge, skills and time.

However, don't forget that any realistic revolution can be ruined by too-radical progressives or sabotaged by ultra-conservatives.

Vive la Revolution!

Graham Patterson

FOR YOUR DIARY

ARE YOU A PARTICIPATING MEMBER ?

In 'For Your Diary' you will see there are special meetings of the Social Activities Group, the new History Group and the Environment Group. Please show your support and attend these meetings and if possible give your ideas for future activities.

Wednesday, 28th January, 8 p.m. A meeting of the Social Activities Group to select the convenor and to decide on activities for the coming year. All welcome at the home of Jeanette Knox, 26 Victoria Road.

Tuesday, 3rd February, 8 p.m. The first meeting of the General History Group. All those interested in delving into the history of Glebe will be welcome at the home of Dorothy Perkins, Flat 20, 411 Glebe Point Road.

4th-6th February. The Summer School for Gardeners, see November's Bulletin. For further details contact Theo Ahlston, 660.1083.

Saturday, 7th February, 10.30-12.30. Coffee morning at Albert Renshaw's, 14/2 Mary Street. Tea, coffee and biscuits for 20 cents.

Wednesday, 11th February, 8 p.m. A meeting of the Environment Group. All members welcome. Come and meet the Group's new convenor, Ralph Kaye, at his home, 62 Toxteth Street.

Monday, 9th February. Jim Coombs has been invited to address the Australian Institute of Traffic Technology on the Expressway at Dept. Main Roads Building, 2nd floor, 303 Castlereagh Street. If you wish to attend, let Jim know by ringing him on 660.0026. All moral support would be much appreciated.

CRICKET MATCH

Our Annual Cricket Match against the Balmain Association is being arranged for March. Would all able-bodied cricketers please contact Jim Coombs on 660.0026 for team selection.

May, 1st-8th. The Autumn School: New England Heritage at Armidale. A week long programme for all adults balanced between informal lectures (on subjects ranging from the Land Forms and History of New England to Australian Folklore and Painting the New England Landscape) and excursions. For further details and booking forms, contact the Editor, Joey Rowden on 660.5704.