

THE
FITZROY
HISTORY
SOCIETY



Social Justice Walk Around Fitzroy

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**The Fitzroy Historical Society and the Fitzroy Legal Service
present**

A social justice walk around Fitzroy

Led by Brian Stagoll and Pauline Spencer

Fitzroy has quite a unique history as a place where many campaigns, innovations and reforms for social justice arose for the first time in Australia. The list includes anti-poverty programs, aged care, housing reforms, family planning, family day care and community child care, local government involvement in social planning, community legal services, international groups and many significant Aboriginal organisations.

Why Fitzroy has been such a social laboratory is a question we hope to open up on this walk.

Join Brian, Pauline and a host of key local figures who have been actively involved in struggles for social change, to revisit the places where it all happened. Participants will be invited to contribute their own memories and ideas.

This walk will start at places around the Brotherhood of St Laurence, move to the Atherton Gardens estate, then the Fitzroy Town Hall (with stories of its famous public meetings), back onto Brunswick Street and the Social Planning Office and end up at the Fitzroy Legal Service for refreshments and debate.

Sunday 18 April 1999

10.30 am – 12.15 pm

**Meet at the Rob Roy Hotel, corner of Brunswick and
Gertrude streets, Fitzroy**

\$2 members \$3 non-members

Fitzroy Historical Society / Fitzroy Legal Service

Social Justice Walk Around Fitzroy - 18th April, 1999

Introduction: (at the corner of Brunswick and Gertrude Streets, outside Rob Roy Hotel, at 10 a.m.) Brian Stagoll: You can't come to a street demonstration without a megaphone and this megaphone has a venerable history. The megaphone holder is Pauline Spencer from Fitzroy Legal Service. Pauline and I concocted this walk one day when we were walking back from some meeting. We were talking about the street's history and she said "This would make a great walk". So before long Pauline had organised the Fitzroy Historical Society to talk with me, and here we are. We are the convenors of this meeting: this means that we are going to, in the spirit of social justice, make this as participatory as possible. We want stories from everybody.

Barry Pullen always says that it is not a proper meeting in Fitzroy unless at some point there is dissent from the floor. So I am hoping that there will be debate, but not too much. Pauline and I are going to sort of herd you along. Our basic plan is this: we are going to stop in about five locations and I've asked several people to talk about what happened historically at these locations. People like David Scott, Barry Pullen, Paul Coghlan, Anna Fratta, and Pauline. We are going to move around the streets, aiming to get back to Fitzroy Legal Service about twelve o'clock. So welcome everybody.

I'd like now to introduce David Scott. David has been associated with Fitzroy since the 1950s and is a very distinguished figure in the history of Australian social policy and social justice. We are very grateful that he could come here this morning. David was up all night dealing with the crisis in East Timor, so he is still very much on the job.

Thank you Brian for inviting me to be part of this. My story is essentially with the Brotherhood of St. Laurence and its activities. I see Barry Pullen and Laurie O'Brien here, people with local knowledge, so I do expect some different versions as we move around.

The story of the Brotherhood starts just around the corner in Fitzroy Street. The four terraces opposite (on Gertrude Street) are now on the National Register, but in the 1970s they were run as boarding houses. The then owners approached the Brotherhood asking whether we would like to buy them. We did, because we thought they were a very critical resource for people who required that sort of accommodation. Mr. Grace, the director of St. Vincent's rang me and advised that the entire block was zoned for St. Vincent's Hospital. I found that that was not so and we went ahead and bought them. It was interesting that in those days St. Vincent's had those enormous expansion plans.

(Move into Fitzroy Street) **[Location on map : No. 26]**

This was St. Mary's Church Fitzroy. In 1933 the Brotherhood of St. Laurence came here from Newcastle, New South Wales. The founder of the Brotherhood, Father Tucker was, in 1930, fifty years old. He had a parish at Adamstown, the coal mining area of Newcastle. He had always had a dream that the Anglican Church needed a group of committed young men who would live frugally and do the work of the church in the parishes. So he formed the Brotherhood in Newcastle. He was invited to come to Melbourne a couple years later by the then Archbishop, at the initiation of Canon Father Maynard of St. Peter's Eastern Hill : a man of considerable intellect and scholarship, who was also a very strong Christian Socialist. So the Brotherhood came here, with only Father Tucker and one other member of the Order. Members of the Order would remain unmarried for as long as they were members, live frugally, have access to education and do the work of the Church. So they came here to find a "very high church" Church. Father Tucker was very unhappy from the beginning because all the people who worshipped here came from other suburbs. There was nobody from the local, very depressed, area. Fitzroy, in the 1930s, had the highest rate of unemployment, large areas of slum housing and was an enormously depressed place. Father Tucker lived in a two-room cottage behind here, which I remember going to as a child. There was no window in the bedroom and a small sitting room. Soon after the Brotherhood arrived here they were overwhelmed by the problem of unemployment. Someone gave them ten shillings and they rented a very small terrace down here on the right and took in some unemployed young men. The need was enormous so they then rented two large two-story terrace shops in Brunswick Street beside a vacant block and a woodyard behind down this lane. They then converted that into accommodation. I can again remember coming here and it was like a backpacker's hostel. There were about fifty unemployed young men living there, with a kitchen and a meeting room. That was the Brotherhood's first contribution to the unemployment problem. Father Tucker was very angry about unemployment and started campaigning.

He also felt that unemployed families would be better off living in the country where they could be more self sufficient. He interested George Coles in buying forty or fifty acres at Carrum Downs and started a village during the depression for unemployed families.

When the War broke out, members of the Brotherhood went off to war service, to be replaced, in a way, by a number of conscientious objectors who wanted to do something to help people but could not serve in the forces. Frank Coaldrake was probably the most important of those - a man of considerable intellect, compassion and organisational ability. Others were Don Wilding, Tony Bishop, Gordon Henry - a very interesting group.

As the War progressed, they started to think about post war society. They started to develop the ideas that there must never be a depression like that of the 1940s. A number of documentary films were produced. One was "Jail Does Not Cure" about the futility of sentencing people who were drunk and disorderly due to alcoholism, to short jail sentences. It was a very dramatic film : there was a wine saloon called the House of Lords just down the road on the other side of Brunswick Street and they filmed that from a window on this side. There is a shot of the owner just hitting this man in the face and tossing him in the gutter. The other film "Beautiful Children" contrasted the way children were bought up in the inner suburbs in those days to those who lived across the river. The most dramatic was "Beautiful Melbourne" which focussed on the grossly substandard housing that had been identified by the Methodist reformer Oswald Barnett earlier in the 1930s. So those films made a significant contribution - and they are still available from archives. All that emerged from here soon after the war and it put the Brotherhood on the map.

Question: "Tell us about the evictions struggles that occurred in Fitzroy Street."

I'm not sure of the sequence, but I recall two instances. One was of an old woman in her eighties who had her leg amputated and wanted to get out of hospital and go home to Armadale but was not able to do so. The sub-tenant refused to move out. In those days tenancy laws were all a matter for the Commonwealth. So Father Tucker, Frank Coaldrake and Tony Bishop went around and saw Members of Parliament, including Harold Holt. They all said nothing could be done. So Tucker, Coaldrake and Bishop said they would sit on the veranda of this place until the tenant moved out. Well, of course, the media were there in droves. Tucker had to give up soon, but Coaldrake and Bishop sat there for five weeks and there was enormous controversy around these priests defying Legislation during the War. The RSL said they would go around there and hose them off the veranda. They didn't know that Tucker had been a Chaplain during the First World War and, the story goes, buried some 700 Australians in France. Another very dramatic incident involved Frank Coaldrake, defending a family called DiCapo, in one of the terraces in Palmer Street, and were to be evicted. They were sub-tenants with a large family. Coaldrake, Tucker and Bishop boarded themselves inside the house. The police arrived in numbers. The story *is told in "God and Three Shillings"* of how Coaldrake was clutching on to a stairway and a policeman come up and tickled him under the arms and that was the end of the barricade. But the Chief Justice acknowledged the inadequacy and confusion of the Landlord and Tenants Act.....

Those were, perhaps surprisingly, the first activist activities by a group of clergy.

(Moving down Fitzroy Street)

Just a bit further down we reach this cobbled lane that went into what was a woodyard. There was a terrace here and two or three terraces down there. This one was a brothel for a number of years. Father Tucker was very friendly with the proprietor, in a platonic way. His little cottage was there and there was a big iron gate covered with corrugated iron and barbed wire across the top. One windy night he came out to try to fix it and it slammed. There he was, this middle-aged Anglican clergyman locked out in the street. He had a choice - walk right around along Gertrude Street and Fitzroy Street in his pyjamas, or risk his life by climbing over the barbed wire. He did the latter! He was a great tree planter wherever he went - he planted that large poplar there which was the only tree of substance in Fitzroy at the time. He also had the idea of bringing people up here - governors and important people - trying to get them involved. A tree that has unfortunately been chopped down, the Huntingfield Tree, was planted by the wife of the governor. In this building in the 60s Geoff Sambell was the director. I was seconded to develop Community Aid Abroad, something which Father Tucker had started. The present building backing onto Fitzroy Street was built in the 60s.

So, just to go back, I'll list several of the things that have sprung from this fairly fertile ground. One was in the 1930s. Father Tucker had the idea of people needing clothes collecting them from people wanting to give them away, by selling them for small

amounts to help people retain their dignity. I believe that this was probably the first Opportunity Shop in Australia in the 1930s. After the War Geoff Sambell saw a business opportunity in this and organised a commercially operated business collecting goods and running opportunity shops.

Another was that during the War, when Father Tucker lived here the numbers of elderly people who lived in rooms concerned him. They had to get out of these rooms during the day, but had nowhere else to go. So he simply opened up one of the rooms and called it a club - the Coolibah Club. That was the first elderly citizen's club in Australia, as far as I know. The Meals on Wheels Service was pioneered a few years later by South Melbourne Council.

The settlement at Carrum Downs for the unemployed was an innovation although his father had had the same idea in the 1890s. After the War it was converted to a village for active elderly people. He pioneered the idea that elderly people needed to be able to be active and be involved. That was the whole ethos of Carrum Downs in those days.

Geoffrey Sambell was concerned there were not legal aid services in Melbourne and he and Professor Norval Morris started a legal advice service here in the 50s, staffed by students and staff from Melbourne University. There was a gap for many years and then the Fitzroy Legal Aid Service was started.

There were no family planning services available, so Geoffrey Sambell again, supported by Peter Hollingworth and Janet Patterson started the first family planning clinic in Australia, in a little old building in Brunswick Street.

In the 1970s, the Brotherhood was working with families with compounding problems. We felt we were just propping them up. Connie Benn and Peter Hollingworth developed the idea that these people could be helped by being given reasonable resources, to be more self sufficient and contribute to the community. The Family Centre at St. Mary's Church had been the base for the Sisters of the Church of England. They wanted to leave and it became a centre for the families involved : the family centre that later became the Action Resource Centre.

There was an Adventure Playground in there before the Council built the one in the housing estate opposite. When the Atherton flats were built it was assumed that a lot of the tenants would be single mothers who would need child services to enable them to work. Child Care Centres in those days were fairly traditional and routine, with staff in starched uniforms. Somebody heard of an idea from Sweden called "family day care", so we got Barbara Spalding, and away she went and started the first Family Day Care service in Australia, which became part of the National Child Care Service. Mothers who did not wish to go to work looked after the children of those who did, with some support.

I was also very concerned with housing. There was nothing for people except the high rise flats or the new housing estates miles out. In England they developed rental housing associations, as a third arm of housing. I had a look at that and brought back the idea. Andrew McCutcheon and Evan Walker supported it and Andrew organised the first Fitzroy/Collingwood low cost rent housing association.

Another thing in the 70s was that we thought we should be smaller organisations that could do the things that we, as a large organisation could not do. So we provided accommodation and other support for some of these agencies including the Tenants Union with Mike Salvaris, housed up there, and Winsome McCaughey who started Community Child Care, while the Ecumenical Migration Centre and others were all supported by the Brotherhood.

That is about it, except that Community Aid Abroad started here ; that was Father Tucker's idea.

The day the Indonesians invaded East Timor, December 7th, 1975, I was asked if I would go to East Timor to see what was happening. I arrived about a week after the invasion. I was bundled out with the other Australians two days later. After the invasion, we held a meeting in the Brotherhood meeting room which formed the Australia/East Timor Association. Tragically, it still has a big job to do today.*

Brian: I'm tempted to say that there are architectural monuments, but there are also monuments like David. Thank you.

Steve Einfeld: I think that it is very important to add to this comprehensive picture given by David to note the role of the

* History of the Brotherhood of St. Laurence.

Brotherhood in giving great leadership in Australia, in spelling out the principles of social justice and the lobbying of government to make policies. I think that has been a very long and effective history of leadership and it continues into the present. I don't need to further enumerate that, but there have been so many improvements and reforms in social policy in Australia which have been attributable to the very fine work in developing and lobbying that the Brotherhood has done.

David Scott: The origins really do go back to Father Tucker, a most extraordinary person who just wouldn't give up. He was very clever in using political intelligence. As for the history, there was a book by John Hanfield called "Friends and Brothers" (unfortunately it has been out of print for about eight years). I've done a little 5,000 word memoir which the Brotherhood will be printing in the near future*. There are some other books about that period which I can tell you about too.

Brian: We'll head around the corner to the Community Health Centre [map no. 28]. I'm standing in front of the Fitzroy Community Health Centre. We talk about fertile ground but again this particular piece of ground has seen a number of organisations in its time. David, I think this was the site of the original Family Planning clinic. It was a tiny little terrace house that was then taken over by Community Aid Abroad. That was pulled down in the mid-80s and Fitzroy Community Health Centre moved in here. That's another story. Like everything else in Fitzroy the Community Health Centre had a long history of struggle. There was community health money available in 1974, through the Whitlam Community Health Program, that was snapped up by St. Vincent's Hospital. There was a struggle by the Fitzroy Community Health Association to get the money out from the control of St. Vincent's Hospital back into some form of community control, a struggle that went on for about five years. Even though, in its own way, St. Vincent's ran a good Community Health Centre, it was hard for it to be more than an outpatient department by the Hospital. With the help of Tom Roper and Barry Pullen, the Commonwealth money became available to begin a community controlled Community Health Centre in Fitzroy.

This started in 1984. It was originally around the corner, in the building that had been Darryl Jackson's office in Brunswick Place. It was then Fitzroy Community Health Centre for a couple of years and is now where the Aboriginal Child Care Agency is based. I was on the Health Centre Board at the time and we were looking around for a more larger and more accessible property without much success. The Victorian Health Department can be a difficult organisation to work with! The Brotherhood then came forward and said they had this old building they were planning to develop, and we made a joint agreement with the Brotherhood of St. Laurence to put up this building. So the ground floor is Fitzroy Community Health Centre and upstairs is the Brotherhood of St. Laurence. We have a kind of a very nice agreement that if one or other of the organisations collapses the other takes it over. Given the parlous state of Community Health, we are very pleased that this is protected by the Brotherhood! Fitzroy Community Health Centre has since evolved into North Yarra Community Health. Anne Horrigan-Dixon was one of the first presidents of Fitzroy Community Health Centre. Anne, I wonder if you want to say anything?

Anne Horrigan-Dixon: The Community Health Centre has been wonderful addendum to everything else that happened in Victoria in the 80s when we had a Labor government. It was a time of creativeness and looking at what else we could do to assist other people. The Community Health Centre had a policy that we never wanted a really big building where we would have a lot of in-house staff. We wanted a smaller building where we would have staff that would outreach into the community. That policy implemented by the original CEO Terri Jackson worked really well. As the Community Health Centre evolved it supported the setting up of the Atherton Gardens Tenants Association. So that instead of the estate just happening along, all of a sudden they had an active management committee over there, with various activities happening on the estate. Tenant workers came on board and there was more help for people who lived on the high rise estate with their problems. At the same time there was a neighbourhood house money around and the Centre was involved in getting the Holden Street neighbourhood House. They worked in a very proactive way with ethnic communities, refugees coming into Victoria. This has continued even after the amalgamation with North Yarra. One of the first things we did was to have t-shirts printed that said "I own a Community Health Centre". I think there are a number of people who still have their t-shirt. They were sold for \$2 each.

Brian: Thank you Anne. Now we are going to move down Brunswick Street towards the Town Hall. As we go along just imagine that the magnificent Wesleyan Church is still there (asks people to check their maps). Barry Pullen will talk about that. When we get to the Town Hall we have invited Paul Coghlan to say a few words. We will also pass by the Hanover Street Centre. Is there anybody here that was involved with that at the time?

David Scott: The story of the Methodist Church is very important. Brian Howe was the Methodist Parson at Eltham, when we started a Community Aid Abroad group out there. He then moved into Fitzroy. The Housing Commission wanted to demolish

* David was speaking before the elections and subsequent events in East Timor.

the block including that magnificent old church. They compensated the Methodist Church and Brian very controversially said “we won’t build another one, we don’t need more buildings. We’ll put the money into establishing CURA, the Centre for Urban Research and Action”. This was to have a very significant input. The Hanover Centre was started by Alan Jordan, with Brian Howe’s and the Brotherhood’s support, as a new way of trying to work constructively with homeless men, often with drink problems. It was started in Hanover Street.

Brian: Let’s start moving on towards the Town Hall. Has anybody been involved in the Fitzroy/Carlton Community Credit Co-op which we are just passing?

David: It started as an initiative of the Family Centre. Later when it had been established, it expanded into a general credit co-operative which I believe has been enormously successful. It goes back to the building in Fitzroy Street.

Brian: Right across the road is where the Wesleyan Church was. It was over a hundred years old when it was demolished. Does anybody here remember that Church?

Val Noone: I remember the Wesleyan Church. A fellow called Mickey Woodward lived on the streets of Fitzroy and he always wore what he called a captain’s hat.

Wherever he was living he accumulated lots of bits of wood. He was building a ship to get out of this terrible place and back to W.A. where he came from. He would be often seen at the Coolibah Club or the Brotherhood Relief Agency. Mickey Woodward lived in the ruins of the decaying Wesleyan Church. I came to know him because down here where the Sacred Heart School is now, there were a couple of terrace houses. I think one of those terraces is where that eviction that Father Tucker fought in the 30s was.

In the late 60s my wife Mary Doyle and my brother Brian, Judy Chow, Chris Tucker and others opened an Open House for homeless people in a terrace in King William Street. That terrace turned out to be next door to the one where Father Tucker had fought the eviction battle. Our open house foundation was founded on the ideas of an American called Dorothy Day, who had started the “Catholic Worker Movement”. If any of you saw the movie “Reds”, it was kind of Catholic overlap with the movement in “Reds” in Greenwich Village, New York. In the 60s the house became the centre for a number of Catholic radicals. It was a period of big changes. Not only was society at large changing, but one of the more massive institutions of western society, namely the Roman Catholic Church was going through a period of big change. This was reflected here in Melbourne in lots of ways. One way was a group of young people coming to work in the area and running the Open House for some seven years, before it later moved over to Gore Street. It also became the meeting place for the Vietnam Moratorium Group in Fitzroy. Mickey Woodward, who I started with, used to come and dine with people at the Open House. In 1970 the movement against the Vietnam War and Conscription reached a new stage. There had been draft resisters and conscientious objectors, and people had gone to jail. But in 1970 there were massive protests on the streets, producing crowds of 100,000. A feature of that that is not often written about, and was certainly not covered in the press, was the unspoken and hidden work of those small groups to do education and organise support for the peace movement. We knocked on doors of every home in the square bounded by Victoria Parade, Johnson Street, Hoddle Street and Nicholson Street to build support. One of the features we held was a festival of radical films, at 124 Napier Street, at what is now the Uniting Church, back then the Presbyterian Church. We held it for six weeks, every Monday night or whatever, our little festival of radical films. We had “The Year of the Pig” a great little documentary made by a radical group in the States, we had films from African Liberation Groups, we had films from Vietnam. That group met here in the Open House in King William Street. Thank You.

Brian: Why don’t we move down to King William Street now. Let’s move down to the Town Hall via the playground. (To Val Noone) Is that where the Open House was? [Map no. 19]

Val Noone: The Open House was between the Hall, which is a former Methodist building. The Catholic Church came very late to this part of Fitzroy only in the 30s. Both these buildings were originally Protestant Churches. That’s a pre-fabricated building made in England and assembled here back 140 or so years ago.

Brian: Could I introduce Barry Pullen to talk about the housing struggle?

* “He who doeth ... a memoir of The Reverend Gerard Tucker”

Barry Pullen: I want to speak about the struggle there was against the building of the high rises in the 1970s. I became involved through the Fitzroy Resident's Association. At that stage Margaret and I had a house, and we feared along with a lot of other people that our house might be claimed and demolished. That was a general fear at the time. In fact, at auctions the critical thing was whether you were north or south of Fenwick Street. Anything south of Fenwick Street could have a demolition order on it, anywhere north you might be OK. I want to make it clear that, at that time, there was a lot of mixed feelings about what was happening. There were very good reasons why people had to address housing needs, and there were a lot of slum landlords. As David said there were a lot of people living in very substandard conditions, without access to bathrooms, without amenities and with enormous overcrowding in very small houses.

I've got a plan here of the original layout of the streets before the Housing Commission came - you can see the Narrows and you can see some very, very small timber houses.

You could understand the feelings of people who wanted to improve on that. They had a vision of providing better, more hygienic housing for people so that families could grow up in better circumstances. In the Fitzroy Residents Association we also had this ambivalence. We weren't sure that some of what was happening wasn't in fact the right thing to do. We didn't see ourselves necessarily as heroes trying to stop this. We were quite confused about what the right thing to do was. In the case of this estate we had a protest on this site here. It centered around trying to preserve the Sunday School part of the Church, which was an older and very important building built out of rubble stone. The mood was growing of a different kind of criticism against the high rise, a criticism not so much because houses were demolished, but because people were being brought into Fitzroy in great numbers and facilities weren't being provided for them. So you had a stream of thought that was not necessarily saying anything important about preserving houses, but was saying if you dump all these people in these new kind of structures, where are the services going to be for the families? Are they going to have a better life in a social context, if only the size of the rooms and the amenities would be better? This was a stream of debate that began at the time.

There was another stream of debate that was really the beginning of urban conservation. People began to argue we were doing the wrong thing, that the historic Victorian streetscapes and dwellings were more important than high rise estates. High rises were built with the promise of more parkland, but the conservationists would argue who would use that parkland - where is the personal space? So the debate was on at least those two levels.

A third stream of debate, which crystallised finally in the struggle in Brooks Crescent, North Fitzroy, was that people who owned houses, most of them migrants, couldn't understand why this was happening. How was their life being improved if they were having a repair order or demolition order put on their house? They were told to move out and something else would be built. They were owners and they were doing up their houses. That probably was the strongest force in the end.

We can tell the story as we saw it, but it is not the story that a lot of people in Fitzroy would tell. There has always been a resistance to people coming and doing things in Fitzroy, "do-gooders", middle class and all such people. That was brought home to me clearly one day. In the early days of the Fitzroy Resident's Association and Alan Jordan and I wandered around on a very warm day taking photographs of interesting things in Fitzroy, buildings and so forth, in order to prepare for the inaugural meeting of the Fitzroy Residents Association. It was such a hot day that Alan and I, with our cameras, went into the Champion Hotel. We were having a drink there and this guy came up to us. He looked like he'd had more punishment dished out to him than he'd dished out, but he looked more than a match for us. He came over and said "What the F'n hell do you two think you're doing taking photographs of us here?" And his mate came over and said "any problems here?". It looked like we were going to be beaten up along with our cameras. Then this guy who had been leaning on the bar (it was a warm day but he was dressed in a great coat) came over and said: "that's Alan Jordan, he's OK I know him from the Hanover Centre, they're alright". So he put in the good word.

We had our inaugural meeting and the FRA was part of the struggle and part of being linked with other people, but I feel uneasy about trying to tell the story as if it was so neat. Because there are a lot of other people whose story was not involved in it. There were a number of people whose houses were affected and would tell the story quite differently and would have some mixed feelings about the roles of people like me and Alan, about whether we were exactly working for them and how it all turned out.

I would like to show some pictures here. Here is the old Wesleyan Church., The protest we organised here was really too late and we didn't save that part of the church. Most of the houses were down and the Church stood in a wasteland. As Margaret

reminded me last night, the people from the Fitzroy Resident's Association and the Mission of Streets and Lanes actually organised some of us to come to the foyer of the new high rise and welcome the tenants to Fitzroy. There weren't hard lines being drawn, and people were still grappling with what was the right thing to do.

In the next picture you can see the church. That protest again wasn't successful and the houses were all demolished, but you can get a sense of what the crowd was like. One of the signs said there are some things too far gone for renewal, the Housing Commission is one of them. This is a picture from Brooks Crescent in Fitzroy. This was the most organised protest and we were able to take action before it was too late. Alan Jordan and I did a survey door to door and asked people what was happening and that really that was the biggest change. It changed me completely. After we had done that for a few weekends and talked to people, it became completely clear, despite all the other abundant arguments, that it could not be right to displace these working class families, these migrant people from their homes. It had to be wrong. A report was collated and written by Alan Jordan and it influenced people. The other important thing was that the resources of the Methodist Church in particular through the involvement of Brian Howe and the creation of CURA, the Centre for Urban Research and Action. This meant a couple of resident advocates Kay Hargraeves and Andrew Burbridge worked directly with the tenants. The difference with the other struggles was that we did try to create an alternative.

Fitzroy Council got involved and CURA was a critical factor in providing resources to the residents in a way that gave them more control of the struggle. It was a different model to the idea of people coming in and trying to do the right thing for other people. It actually tried to empower people, and recognised that the important thing was to make that genuine rather than rhetorical. In fact walking around here today, I feel sort of uncomfortable giving these sorts of speeches in front of people who wonder what is going on. You are on their turf and don't necessarily understand them as well as perhaps you could. Even though I work in Brunswick Street, I still feel an intruder and that I am imposing on people. We still have to work through that.

Brian: Thanks Barry. Why don't we move on to the steps of the Town Hall. While we are walking, look for where CURA was, around in Napier Street at the Presbyterian Church.

Paul Coghlan: One of the important historical features just in this area, apart from the famous Fitzroy Police Station, is that part of the Town Hall building which was actually the Court House. When the building was originally built it was partly funded by the ratepayers and partly by the State Government who always owned this part of the building. That became of significance because Special Branch operated up there for probably the best part of thirty years. At most of the meetings of the ALP someone would move a motion demanding that Fitzroy Council throw Special Branch out of its Town Hall. But it wasn't its part of the Town Hall to throw Special Branch out of.

Val Noone: About the Special Branch. Right where you are standing now there was a reasonably large demonstration against the Special Branch's jailing of a person called Albert Langer, an activist in the anti-war movement, on the occasion of his imprisonment in Pentridge. People of various political persuasions gathered here. I was one of the speakers. There was a line of police all along here. I was involved with homeless people and can remember speaking with the policemen about how the law works in our society. I said that people who were drunk on the streets of Fitzroy were jailed for three months, but people who were drunk on the streets of Balwyn don't get jailed for three months. I have never seen a line of police listen so carefully, because they were aware, and they knew of the social reality behind it. This is the spot of several demonstrations against the Special Branch.

The reason why Langer was jailed was that he made an inflammatory speech on the Yarra Bank at the time of July 4. A Special Branch member by the name of Larkins worked in the police station here. If Larkins came across one of us in this area he would say "I know your name, I've got photographs of you". Langer incited the crowd to try to throw Larkins into the river. That's what they had him up for.

Brian: We are standing on the steps of the old Court House. There was a stone laid here in 1888 by the Hon. Alfred Deakin, who at that time was the Chief Secretary of the State of Victoria. Can I introduce Paul Coghlan, who was mayor of Fitzroy in the 1970s?

Paul Coghlan: Barry in particular touched on one of the things that happened in Fitzroy was that it had become a great place for people to do "good work". So by 1967 there were at least 51 social welfare agencies doing something in Fitzroy, then the

smallest municipality in Melbourne. That led to the commissioning of a report by VCOSS as to how all that might be organised. That became important in its turn because it led in 1969 to one of the most famous public meetings in Fitzroy. Famous it was but also, as most of the public meetings that were held there then, it collapsed in disarray. It was chaired by the then Mayor Les Martin, who I suspect never had control of the meeting. The meeting was then taken over by Clyde Holding, who was the then Member for Richmond and some order was reached.

The purpose of the meeting was to try and get some order out of the welfare chaos but the emphasis of the meeting turned, for the very first time, to question what was going to be the influence of the Housing Commission in Fitzroy. When these blocks were originally built, there were only going to be three. But the Fitzroy Council and others, in the tension that existed with the demolition of slums and the provision of housing for people urged the Housing Commission to build a fourth. The result of that became a promise by the Fitzroy Council to pay \$250,000 to the Housing Commission of Victoria, which they did not have (and which was never paid, despite the Commission threatening to sue us on several occasions!). That became the time when the tension really mounted between "what are we doing about slum clearance?", on the one hand, and "what we were doing for the residents in helping them to tolerate high rise development?" on the other. Brian Howe returned from Chicago, Andrew McCutcheon had come back from England. There was much evidence internationally available that showed that, whatever you did for public housing, high rise housing wasn't the way to go. But there are a number of things about Australia, particularly between the two World Wars and immediately after the 2nd World War. Things came here later than everywhere else, and we had to sometimes suffer the same lessons others had already learnt. And indeed with high rise housing that's just what we suffered.

We didn't know at that time the sort of imperatives that there were. We didn't quite understand that the Housing Commission were absolutely serious in their proposition that if they didn't do 25 acres of block clearing a year, then the Holmesglen precast concrete factory couldn't be maintained. We didn't understand that they were building amazingly expensive units: these units here costing between \$21,000 and \$33,000 in the late 60's without the cost of the land and without the cost of clearance and maintenance. But there were still many that believed (and many Councillors among them) that they were better housing, and that whatever was happening here was better than what people were coming out of. In some ways they were right, as Barry said, and that tension continued over a long period of time. The Methodist Chapel became the first focus about what we were really going to do about preservation of housing. A lot went on from then. What arose out of the VCOSS meeting was the formation of the Fitzroy Council of Social Services and at least some organisation. This led indirectly to the formation of the Social Planning Office. You could keep turning on as much material aid as you like in Fitzroy but it wouldn't be utilised. That was really a problem. It led quite directly to the formation of the Fitzroy Residents' Association. The Carlton Residents' Association had been formed by then and was quite active. The Centre for Urban Action either had been formed or was being formed at about the same time. The Fitzroy Residents' Association was formed in 1969 at a public meeting in the Library. It is interesting to note that it was formed on the basis of having a clause in the constitution which said it could not itself run candidates for public office. That was done basically, I think, to protect the position of a number of people who were then in the ALP.

(Paul points out a phone box in Napier Street.) It is of historical note that, not that phone box, but one that used to be on the other side of the street is the one in which the Fitzroy Branch of the ALP met for many years! The first thing the Fitzroy Residents' Association got involved in was pressure in relation to the Library. The Fitzroy Library Promotion Committee was formed at a meeting which took place in the All Saints Hall, which is the prefabricated one. That, by its very formation, without itself being a remarkably successful organisation, applied a lot of pressure on the Council. The Council reacted with the development of the library facilities.

On 8/11/75 Gough and Margaret Whitlam came to this Town Hall, I suspect for the only time, to attend the All Nations Festival. At that time what is now termed Multi Cultural was taken for granted. The very first All Nations Festivals in Australia took place here in the early and mid-70, later to be hijacked by Carlton and other places - and on the 11th November, 1975, the park around the corner was named Whitlam Place.

The number of meetings that were here at the Town Hall, and the number of meetings which were important would be given different emphasis by different people. One of the matters that became historically important was that it was here for the first time in Victoria that local government truly became open. It is interesting to see that it has been closed again since, because representatives really can't stand the heat! The last thing they want is to be confronted by people who want to have their say. We did spend four and five and sometimes six nights a week here at the Town Hall and other meeting places. We did stay until

3.00 in the morning because people wanted to have a say. It seems a pity to me that all the work that went into that has largely now gone in favour of a different model. I think John Finlayson has a slightly different perspective to the meeting about the formation of the Fitzroy Legal Service than I do, but he is quite right in saying that one of the continuing question about Fitzroy was about why people were coming here looking to this as their place to do good works? Why weren't we struggling for things that were genuinely locally based, with genuine local initiatives? One thing about the Legal Service was that it was a local initiative, as well as based on pressures that were not local. It was interesting to note that the Council gave financial assistance and rental support over a number of years, the provision of accommodation in that room down there, photocopying and some other things. It was always important to the Council that the organisation become locally based, but I'm not sure that I understood then what it means, and I'm not sure I understand now what it means. Barry is right. I don't know whether we were contributors to trying to do something about what had happened or we were just the 52nd joining the other 51 outside bodies.

Brian: Thank you Paul. It is midday, and we are well behind schedule. We'll leave out the Adventure Playground, the Presbyterian Church, St. Marks, the Church of Christ Aboriginal Church. We'll walk around to the Social Planning Office to hear from Anna Fratta. But first John Finlayson would like to say something about Fitzroy Legal Service. The Fitzroy Legal Service started down those stairs there. There was a meeting on the 18/12/72 in the Mayoral office. John Finlayson was 28 at that time and was a youth worker. I've heard various stories about that meeting. One version is written down in a book by John Chesterman but I understand that's the John Finlayson view and I understand there are others!

John Finlayson: Those were very interesting days. The whole of Fitzroy was going through massive social change. However the basis for the formation of the Fitzroy Legal Service was the plight of young people in Fitzroy. Courts were clogged with young people who were unrepresented by lawyers. There was no such thing as Legal Aid of any significance in Fitzroy: you had to wait between ten to thirteen weeks, you had to pay money up front and you had to pay it back later on if you served time and young people under the age of eighteen were ineligible for it. There was an enormous need in the local area. I was employed by the Fitzroy Community Youth Centre in the basement of the Town Hall just here. Eileen Wheeler was the Mayor, and we had this meeting. It took us about three months to organise. A bloke called Michael O'Brien, an articled clerk, a law student called Lou Hill and myself were the basis for it. We had known each other from an organisation called the YCW (Young Christian Workers). I had been a full time worker for the YCW in the 60s and actually worked in the Fitzroy area for three years as an outreach youth worker. So I had some sort of grounding in regard to working with young people.

At that first meeting there was a large number of people. In particular there was somebody who was the treasurer of the Law Institute who was totally opposed to the creation of the Fitzroy Legal Service because I think he and the Law Institute believed that they might go out of business! That wasn't to be the case of course. Fortunately we had a couple of Barristers on our side and the outcome of the meeting was that we created the Fitzroy Legal Service.

I would like to tell you a little story. The basement here, at the turn of the century, was where the Sergeant of the Fitzroy Police and his family lived. It was their residence. My understanding was that one of them contracted pneumonia and died. From that point on the police wouldn't use it as a residence. But we used it while Fitzroy Legal Service were building in Napier Street. Right beside it, in the basement of the Town Hall was the back part of Fitzroy police cells. In the wall between the Fitzroy Legal Service and the police cells was one huge door. One day the echoes from somebody being beaten were going through the doors and we couldn't help but hear it. So we banged on the doors and said we're coming through. But there was lots and lots of padlocks and you couldn't get through. But interestingly enough there was total silence on the other side. Everything stopped. We tried to do a bit of morse code on the door and eventually heard "They're not coming to get us - we'll be right" and then the screaming came again. Those were the days!

After we opened we got on the media very quickly. By the fourth night we were operating from 5.30 to 11.00 six nights a week. The queue of people came up the stairway here and around the corner and past the entrance of the Lower Town Hall. That's how the demand was : people came from all over the place. Obviously we hit a nerve of need and not just a need of Fitzroy. At the initial public meeting there had been thirteen young people under the age of eighteen demanding the creation of such a thing as the Fitzroy Legal Service. They were very exciting days and thankfully enough the Fitzroy Legal Service is still alive.

Brian: Thank you very much John. Lets move on to the Social Planning Office, which I think was set up in 1974. Paul Coghlan mentioned it was a very important initiative of the Fitzroy Council, because it pulled together all the resources and all the organisations and agencies and so on in Fitzroy. I remember this place during the late 70s and it was really quite something.

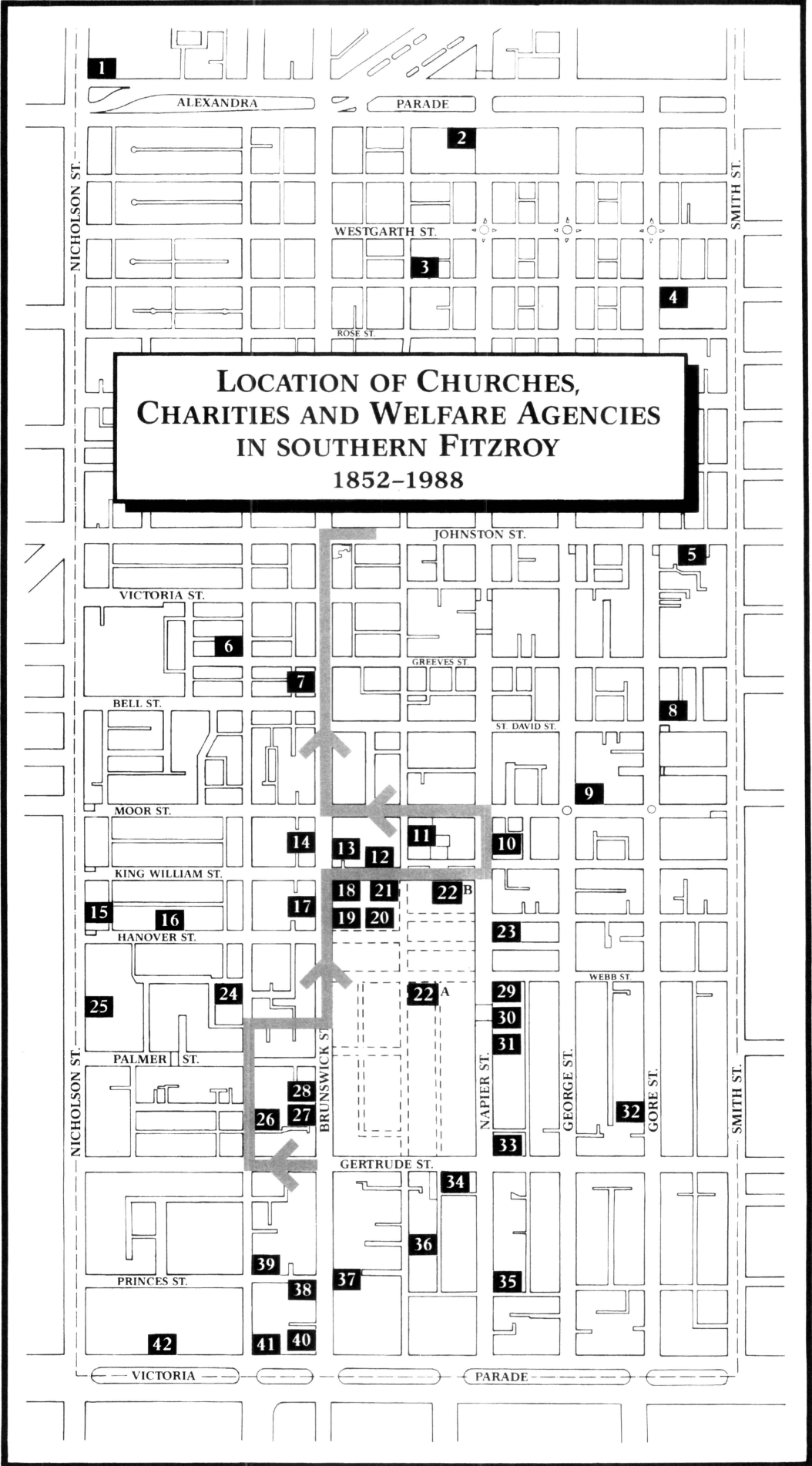
One of the key people involved in those days was Anna Fratta who ran the Fitzroy Advisory Service.

(Group moves down to Brunswick Street, outside the old Social Planning Office. [Map no. 7])

Anna Fratta: I came here before this building looked like this. It was actually a supermarket and in my first days here there was a giant door that you had to lever to open. I sat in that corner over there with a desk and so many of the residents who came past wanted to know "what are you doing in the supermarket?" It was about two years after I started with the Fitzroy Advisory Service. With John Finlayson I started one over at the Youth Centre for a while and then we came here. The Fitzroy Advisory Service was a new initiative, and a trial that came out of some work that was done by Arthur Faulkner and Joan Dugdale. People were very concerned about issues of access to resources and information that Fitzroy people needed, especially with high rise living and all the new things that were happening. So the Advisory Service sought not to take on a social worker type of role but put more emphasis on providing information, seeking access to services, making sure that people were seen once they had made that connection with the resource - the Housing Commission, or whoever. I stayed for about seven years developing various initiatives again: a community newspaper, a couple of directories in the early days. There were a number of simple initiatives that were taken on behalf of the Fitzroy Advisory Service which was supported by the Fitzroy Council at the time. The unique thing about this place here is, as Brian said, it brought together those major services that people needed. What happened was that we took a roster system and each person who worked here, whether you were from Social Security or you were working with Child Care (that was one of the most prominent features and needs of the area). It didn't matter which area you were representing you took the duty roster so that whoever came through this door had to be seen and followed up by whoever it was. There was a lot of work done here liaising with the services, the Brotherhood, the Council, the Legal Service to see how action could be taken to make sure certain issues were developed. In the early days it was Child Care and neighbourhood Houses. The purpose of this place was the bringing together those initiatives of Council and seeking to make them more effective.

I used to do a lot of work with non-English speaking people in this area. One of the things I interested myself in was how people got information if they didn't speak English. There was a group in a Commonwealth Government building in the city that was called the Telephone Interpreter Service and I can remember getting myself a regular group coming to Fitzroy. I used to make them walk the areas of Fitzroy because it's all very well to sit in an office and tell people "first you go to Social Security, then you can go to Fitzroy Legal Service, then go back to Social Security and then go to the doctor, and then pick up the kids from school" and I said you've got to feel that. One of the things that was interesting was I took a group on a very hot day, the garbos were on strike and the garbage hadn't been collected for about eight days, so we got around to about the fourth spot and they said "can we have a rest" and I said no, you've got to keep walking - this is what people have to do! ("You know mum's got three kids and a pram".) I did that on a fairly regular basis to make them understand what people were going through. About four years later I was in Canberra and a guy came up to me and said "I'll never forget you, you made me get blisters on my feet, but I'll also never forget that sort of thinking that I need to put into information when asked for all the details over the telephone.". So a few things really did come to roost. That was a great time. After seven years here of which I enjoyed every moment, I went on to do other things and founded an interpreter service at a State level. The people who've come from here have wonderful vivid memories of all this. Thank you to the Council and thank you to all those who planned and developed the ideas and vision that they saw at the time. Everyone has benefited from those.

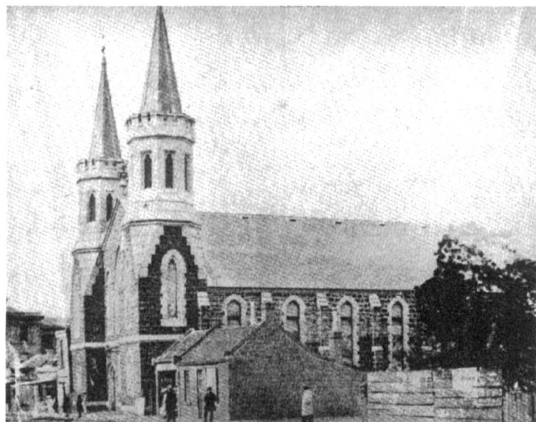
Brian: Lets move around the corner for refreshments at Fitzroy Legal Service in Johnston Street and say goodbye.



KEY TO MAP:**(FOUNDATION DATES IN BRACKETS)**

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 St. Brigid's Church (1870) 2 Old Age Pensioners' Hut (1954) – renamed Elderly Citizens' Centre 3 Fitzroy Presbyterian Mission Kindergarten (1913) – renamed Isabel Henderson 4 Mission of the Holy Redeemer (1890): Alice Lovell Clarke Kindergarten (1919) 5 Mental Health Legal Centre (1987) 6 St. Vincent De Paul Home for Men (1887) 7 Fitzroy Council Social Planning Office (1976) – renamed Community Services Department (1986) 8 Churches of Christ Aborigines Mission (1944) 9 St. Mark's Church (1855) and Settlement (1926) 10 Fitzroy Creche Kindergarten (1914) 11 Fitzroy Baby Health Centre (1923) 12 Wesleyan Sunday School (1865); All Saints' Catholic Church (1938) 13 St. Vincent De Paul Society Mobile Conference (1971) 14 Fitzroy Legal Service (1972) 15 St. Vincent's Hall (1944) 16 Victorian Infant Asylum (1877) 17 St. Mary's House of Welcome (1960) 18 St. Catherine's House (1949) 19 Brunswick Street Wesleyan Methodist Church (1861). Demolished 1969. 20 Hanover Centre (1964). Demolished 1970. 21 Adventure Playground (1974) 22^A Fitzroy Creche and Day Nursery (1954). Demolished 1970. 22^B Fitzroy Creche and Day Nursery (1970) 23 Fitzroy Community Youth Centre (1974) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 24 Christian Israelite Sanctuary (1861) 25 Convent of Mercy and Academy of Mary Immaculate (1857) 26 Mission Church of St. Mary (1923); Brotherhood of St. Laurence (B.S.L. 1933); Mission to Streets and Lanes (1956); B.S.L. Family Centre Project (1972) and Action Resource Centre (1976). 27 Brotherhood of St. Laurence Youth Hostel (1936) and Social Service Bureau (1943); Community Aid Abroad (1961). 28 Fitzroy Community Health Centre (1988) 29 Mission to Streets and Lanes (1972) 30 Annie Todd Kindergarten (1916) 31 Presbyterian Church Napier Street (1871); Fitzroy Ecumenical Centre (1969) 32 Home of Compassion of Missionaries of Charity (1970) 33 United Presbyterian Church (1852). Demolished 1871. 34 Aboriginal Health Service (1973) 35 Epistle Centre (1983) 36 Macedonian Orthodox Church of St. George (1960) 37 Cathedral Hall (1903) – renamed Central Hall; Catholic Women's Social Guild (1916) 38 Aboriginal Legal Service (1974) 39 Depaul House alcohol detoxification centre (1988) 40 Aboriginal Child Care Agency (1979) 41 Congregational Church (wooden 1857; brick 1871). Sold to St. Vincent's Hospital in 1900 and later demolished. 42 Little Sisters of the Poor (1884); St. Vincent's Hospital (1893) – original terrace demolished for Healy Wing (1928) |
|--|---|

From: A MUCH-CHARITIED ACRE, *Laurie O'Brien*
Chapter 8, Fitzroy: Melbourne's First Suburb – F.H.S. (1989 Hyland House)



Designed by Crouch & Wilson, this large Wesleyan Church in Brunswick Street was completed in 1861, not long before this photograph was taken. It was purchased and demolished by the Housing Commission in 1969, in preparation for the construction of the Atherton Estate. (La Trobe Collection, State Library of Victoria)



The Wesleyan Chapel and Sunday School, designed by George Wharton and built between 1849 and 1854 near the corner of Brunswick and Hanover Streets. After the large Gothic style church was built beside it, in 1861, this chapel was no longer visible from Brunswick Street. In the 1960s it was used by pensioner groups for recreation. Despite strong local opposition the Housing Commission demolished the building in August 1971. (Photo Mario Cotela)



SOCIAL JUSTICE WALK OF NORTH FITZROY

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June 2003

THE
FITZROY
HISTORY
SOCIETY

Social Justice Walk of North Fitzroy

Fitzroy has a unique history as a place where many campaigns, innovations and reforms for social justice took place. This is the second Fitzroy History Society walk on social justice. Come on the walk to hear resident's stories

When: 10.15am Sunday 30 June 2002
Where: meet at Brookes Crescent North Fitzroy (off Nicholson St Melways 2C A1)
Finish: 12:30 p.m., Fitzroy Pool (with refreshments)



Barry Pullen, Paul Madden and Andrew Burbidge
 on **Brookes Crescent and the fight with the Housing Commission**

Anne Coghlan and Onella Stagoll
 on the **Isobel Henderson Kindergarten re-location**

Renate Howe
 on the **Freeway Struggle**

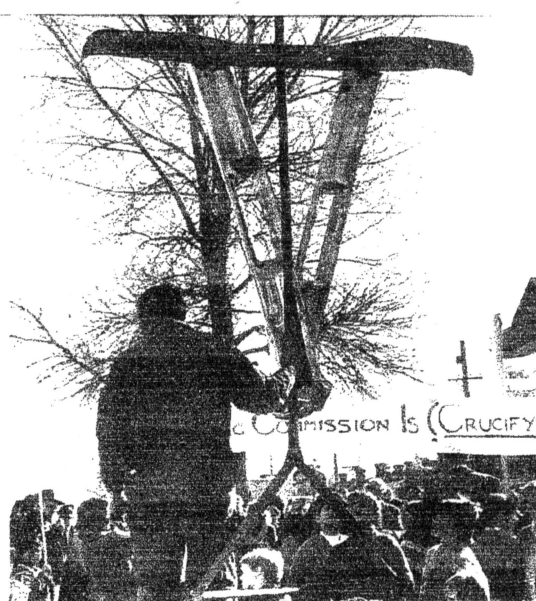
Leigh Hubbard and Steve Watson
 on the **campaign that saved the Fitzroy Pool**

Brian Stagoll and Annabel Barbara will lead the walk for the Fitzroy History Society. We hope to revive these struggles and promote debates about social justice issues in Fitzroy today.

\$2 for Fitzroy History Society members - \$3 for non-members of the Fitzroy History Society
 For further information please contact Annabel Barbara, Convenor, Fitzroy History Society (03) 9419 6186



Freeway protest: Alexandra Parade 1977.



*Jack Strocchi: Brooks Crescent 1972
 Sculpture "They Are Crucifying Us"*

Fitzroy History Society

Social Justice Walk of North Fitzroy - 30 June, 2002.

Brooks* Crescent and the Housing Commission of Victoria 1964 - 1976

The walk commences at Brooks Crescent. (Map reference: 1)

Brian Stagoll: Welcome. I'd like to introduce Barry Pullen who'll be leading the first part of the walk and will talk about the historic struggles in exactly this spot - around Brooks Crescent. You can read the sign on the memorial here. It says "Smile to Your Bad Luck" It was erected to commemorate the struggle of the residents here. The words refer to the Italian translation of the salutation from the letter from the Housing Commission to residents whose houses were being compulsorily acquired. We'll look to Barry and Paul Madden to further explain the meaning of this. Barry first became actively involved in Fitzroy life around that time and has had a very intense involvement in social justice in Fitzroy since then.

Barry Pullen: Thank you Brian. We are talking about events that occurred around here thirty years ago. It's very hard to capture all the things that occurred from the late 60s to the mid-70s. We will do it in two parts. I will give a very local account and Paul Madden will put it in the larger context of other things that were happening in Melbourne.

What happened here is that the Housing Commission had moved its focus from building large estates in the outer suburbs, to focus on working in the inner city and linking the building of new dwellings with slum reclamation. With that development was the move to an industrialised solution to housing in the form of high rise. That pushed the Housing Commission into a situation beyond making small scale changes, to what became known as block clearance. To give you some idea of the scale that emerged: the area that was eventually announced to be completely cleared was an area from Nicholson Street, behind us, to Rae Street and from Church Street to Reid Street. This included all the houses that you see, plus all the factories in that area. It is approximately 151/2 acres. The clearances in this area began in ways that the residents regarded as movement by stealth. When it started, the Commission purchased houses by private treaty from people. Those houses often fell into neglect, as they weren't tenanted, and they were demolished. There was a period from 1966 to about mid 1969 when there was no formal announcement about whether there was going to be any reclamation in this area. But people saw houses going down, houses that were actually quite good by comparison to others. Rumours abounded. Individual people and the Council tried to find out information, but it was very difficult to pin the Commission down or get it to admit what was happening. The neighbourhood response consisted of public meetings in this area, organised by the Fitzroy Resident's Association. All the time the area was subjected to pressure and deterioration. People like myself and others from outside didn't really know what to do. We thought that maybe some of the houses weren't too good and that maybe the Commission needed to do something about them. People also felt that the Commission wasn't so bad in that there was a need for affordable housing and that maybe, in providing more modern dwellings, they were doing good for people.

The outcome of the Fitzroy Residents Association attempts to gain information was the carrying out of a survey of residents. This comprised a questionnaire devised by Alan Jordan and others. People from the Residents Association doorknocked practically every house in the area and tried to find out what people thought. That survey was a pivotal point in many ways. One point was that it showed that the area was quite different to how it was depicted by the Commission. For a start it was something like three-quarters home ownership: most of the houses were occupied by people who had bought them and were trying to make them into decent homes. It was the beginning of the renovation industry in this area. Secondly it revealed that about 60% of the people involved were migrants. That demonstrated that people coming from Europe appreciated the amenity and the quality of the dwellings long before the Australian middle class did. They were buying houses because they were in good locations and were relatively cheap. Another point was that the interviewers who went around speaking to these people became less ambivalent about where we stood. We couldn't reconcile how the clearance was helping people. It seemed contrary to the claims of the Commission. Most of the people who were being thrust out didn't want to leave. They didn't want to occupy a flat and didn't want to go to another locality. A large proportion worked or had connections close to this area.

* Sometime during the rebuilding "Brooks" was changed to "Brookes", which is now the spelling on Street signs and in Melways. But the original struggles took place in Brooks Crescent, so we shall retain this spelling.

BROOKS CRESCENT



A FITZROY RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION REPORT

Eventually the Commission formally announced its intentions of block clearance. By that time there was a lot of activity and the Resident's Association and an Action Group was formed to present arguments to the Commission to try and get them to change their minds. The Commission was on a track that they didn't see any possibility of diverting from. A lot of very good submissions were prepared. One of the most creative aspects of the campaign in Brooks Crescent was the development of a totally alternative proposal based on infill and repair of houses, not high rise development. The architects Maggie and Robin Edmonds were helpful in preparing that. The Commission ignored it completely. A model was made. Publicity was gained but the Commission didn't waiver. It overruled all submissions. Alongside the submissions, what could be described as the political campaign continued. This consisted of the usual activities, but at that stage we were all learning. There were demonstrations, there were posters, there were marches, there was street sculpture, all to try and get publicity.

The other key feature was the court case. A significant difference in this area from others was that some factories were involved and they had more resources than the residents. The factories chose to try and fight the clearances legally. Their commitment was led by one of the factory managers, Norman Yarr, who attended the local meetings. He persuaded the owners of the factories that it was in their interests to obtain the best settlement by working co-operatively with the residents. The two interests combined. That was probably the first time this had happened. When the court case was first heard, Justice Newton was persuaded by the arguments of the factory owners and residents, and granted what is called an interlocutory injunction. The simple meaning was that, in his view, although some houses obviously needed repair, the Commission hadn't made a sufficient case that the only remedy was to destroy all the houses in the area. A date was set for a proper hearing and the Commission was to prepare its case and show that it could make an argument.

That took some time. By now we were moving into the early 70s. The Commission had adopted what were really terrible tactics. Over a period of six or seven years they were still purchasing houses. Because of the uncertainty many people chose to sell. When the Commission purchased those houses they were allowed to fall into disrepair and were demolished on the basis of "public safety". The unions were brought into it and they recognised the case of the residents and put a ban on demolition. But houses were still demolished in the early hours of the morning by scab labour, who would come in and take the roofs off and damage the buildings to such an extent that they were open to the weather and eventually had to be demolished. The Brooks Crescent Improvement Committee was established. People would rally at 4 or 5 a.m. and take photographs and try to scare off the scabs trying to demolish these homes. However, all this took its toll. The area fell into more and more decline. It was a struggle. When the time came for the Court case, more and more pressure was applied for a settlement. The residents were then left in a terrible dilemma because if they proceeded and lost they could be liable not only for their costs but for those of the Commission, which of course were considerable. The residents risked losing everything. At a final dramatic meeting the residents decided they couldn't go on and the Court case was abandoned.

No-one was more disappointed about this than Norman Yarr. Norm and I had worked together to produce a dossier on every house, with a photograph and a detailed analysis of the Commission's records. Because of the Court case and the powers of discovery, Norm was able to obtain details of every dwelling. He found a house which had been declared unfit for human habitation because of peeling paint and problems with the weatherboards: the photographs showed that it was a brick house. He found claims that roofs were rusted and full of holes in the galvanised iron: they had slate roofs. He found what he thought were clear forgeries in many documents, where the record of the first person who saw them had been rubbed out and replaced by someone else. He found many that were not signed and many which had been altered. He was really raring to go and reveal all this in Court. But the residents made what I think was a mature decision, given the vagaries of the Courts and their situation. The fact was that the area had declined over the three years from the first injunction and they were worried that a judgement would be made on their current state and not what had happened at the original time. But in a way the victory was there, because the general feeling was that the residents had been dudded only because of the lack of money. They had been a David being beaten by a Goliath with all the resources. The pressure on the Liberal government of the time became intense. There were other pressures too, including the greater awareness of the historical value of the area.

Eventually we were invited to form a deputation to the Premier of the time, Dick Hamer. When we entered the room, it was clear from the demeanour of the Housing Commissioners, that we'd won. The olive branch that was offered by the Premier was the forming of a joint planning committee which involved the Fitzroy Council and the Commission. That led to the planning and the rebuilding of the area. But a lot of damage had been done both physically and socially over that long period and there were housing gaps everywhere. Where houses were capable of being repaired they were. In other cases they were replaced. This area had originally been totally intact, with quite fine small houses which would command high prices today. And so it was

a compromise, in the sense it was less than what might have been achieved if it had originally been approached in a sensitive and consultative fashion. But it did mark a change and a victory - there was no high rise.

In these struggles sometimes it is difficult knowing when you've won. Sometimes people just keep going on and on. We knew that we'd won, but everybody felt the same exhaustion, and some were very sad at the loss of particular houses. But it did mark the end of block clearance and the end of high rise policy by the housing authority in Melbourne.

Timetable of significant events : Brooks Crescent area, North Fitzroy

1960	Shaw/Davey Report designates areas suitable for block clearance, 20 acres around Brooks Crescent included
1965	Demolition orders placed on 19 houses in Brooks Crescent
1966	Housing Standards Branch draws up plans for area
1967	HCV approves internally prepared plans for area bounded by Nicholson, Church, Rae and Annand St/Salisbury Crescent
1968	HCV commences buying and demolishing properties
2 June 1969	HCV resolves on slum reclamation area but doesn't make it public
August 1969	Fitzroy Residents calls meeting to discuss situation, institutes survey to gauge resident's views
22 April 1970	HCV has statutory meeting with Fitzroy City Council
13 May 1970	First public meeting, North Fitzroy Action Committee formed
27 May 1970	Second Public Meeting
17 February 1971	Supreme Court injunction granted
July 1972	Fitzroy Residents' Association Report
3 September 1973	Court case resumes but residents forced to withdraw through lack of funds
December 1973	Deputation to Premier Hamer
February 1974	Joint Planning Committee set up

Brian: Thank you Barry. This was an immense struggle and as we walk around you realise how vast was the area that was to be cleared. Here we have this overpowering bureaucracy which was the Housing Commission, and bureaucracies were even stronger in the 60s, and it was defeated by resident action. In many ways I think it was the making of North Fitzroy. I would like to introduce Paul Madden who was very active in that struggle and he will talk about the effects this had on government policy on housing and what happened afterwards.

Paul Madden: It is terrific to be listening to Barry's version of such a historic struggle and in front of this plaque which was one of Jack Strochi's requests that some testament of the residents' struggle be built. The plaque took years and years to finally happen, but it did. Jack was the panel beater in Church Street, now deceased, and it is a great testimony to Jack and other working class people in the area.

At the time when Barry finishes his story, it was clear that the policy of slum clearance, which had had its genesis forty years earlier and had been in full steam in the inner suburbs of Melbourne, was dead. The residents here in Brooks Crescent and alongside the ones in Princes Street, Carlton led campaigns that effectively ended the policy. This policy had its genesis in the thirties. It was interrupted by the housing shortage of the post-war period, but kicked off in 1955 again and went full steam ahead. In that time there were forty-seven high rise flats built, along with numerous walk ups. Over three hundred acres of inner city land were proclaimed as slums.

There was enormous social support for this housing policy during that period, led by social concern about the conditions in inner city slums. It is very hard for us to understand that now, but people at the time were raising questions of child malnutrition, poor health, bad family functioning and so on, about people living in these terrible inner city slum areas. It was a very strong theme of social reformists such as Oz Barnett in the 30s. Father Tucker of the Brotherhood of St. Lawrence launched the campaign again in the late 40s, holding large rallies in Melbourne arguing for the government to do something about the slums. In 1952 the Churches launched a big slum abolition campaign. So it wasn't surprising that when the Commission finally developed their

technology for the concrete house project they really launched into it. (They'd bought the venture back in the 1940s and experimented with building concrete forms in low rise out in the middle suburbs of Holmesglen and elsewhere.) And given the level of social support, it was no surprise that one of the first slum clearances in Fitzroy was in Palmer Street. It was called St. Lawrence Estate. Social stigma was attached to the inner suburbs and this really went on until probably only a decade or so ago. There was a widespread view that these suburbs were unpleasant places and not fit for people to live in. Despite all that, we knew that in those suburbs there was enormous solidarity amongst working class communities. It was the sort of social capital which was identified by Wilmot and Young in the working class areas in East London. Houses in the post war period were undergoing enormous transformation, initially with new constructions and then with renovation programs. Houses were beginning to be seen as having an infinite life that lasts through many generations. It was also a fact that Australian cities never really had slums: they never had that kind of abandonment and blight that overseas cities experienced. The Brooks Crescent community were caught up in competing tensions between slum reclamation and preservation. As Barry said, you never know in these struggles when you actually win and you almost need someone to interpret it for you, or some historical precedent to understand it. But it was pretty clear what happened here, where the working class families and communities were really devastated by policies of absolute stealth and arrogance. They were badly undermined by the tactics of the Commission in buying off their properties and knocking them down. It contrasts quite strongly with what happened in Princes Street, where no houses were knocked down and no-one really sold.

Two main points can be made. The residents defeated a major government program. The second thing they did was to demonstrate the weaknesses of bureaucratic planning. As Barry described, the tactics that were used showed how autocratic, insensitive and out of tune with people's needs bureaucracies had become. In that period there was this nasty policy of knocking at peoples' doors and offering them money that was way below what they'd originally paid for those houses, in ways that were informal and kind of anomalous. We went to a process of a joint formal planning committee which ultimately came up with the design for the houses. They went through every property and came up with a plan for it: whether it could be renovated, whether the resident could buy it, whether it be tenanted and so on. That was a major achievement on the part of those residents.

Also, the residents had, experimentally for Melbourne, used advocate planners to act on their behalf. So they used a combination of research, good information, surveys, planning expertise and brought that all bear at the table in the negotiations with the government bureaucracies.

Were they successful? I think the answer is yes. In all social conflicts there is a clash between the social values and interests on both sides of the table. Through the fifties and sixties the support for a particular housing policy was enormous, from business, from the Churches, from bureaucrats and particularly from planners. We know that the Commission had the famous Shaw Davey Report in 1960 that identified 1,000 acres of unfit housing in the inner suburbs. In 1964 Les Perritt produced a report which said there were 400 acres in Carlton that were unfit for human habitation and ready for redevelopment. There were many special interest groups supporting these policies. Against them you had working class suburbs, with lots of local opposition and agitation in the period leading up to these struggles, but very much left on their own, until emerging residents groups and some Labor councils started to take the ball and run with it. That took some time. During the course of that six or seven year struggle we saw Fitzroy Councillor Joe Byrne, who was part of the original negotiations, have a very ambivalent attitude towards the Commission. By the end of the struggle we had luminaries such as Paul Coghlan (who I see here) and Barry and others who got on to Fitzroy Council and turned things around.

The Commission was supported by the public ideology that believed that new houses were better than old ones, and also believed that high densities in the inner cities were needed to stop urban sprawl in Melbourne. They had that modernist belief in the engineering and construction of highrises that had been popular in England and France. During the 60s the Housing Commission gained an enormous international reputation. When Park Towers was launched in 1969 in South Melbourne tens of thousands of people went to the Open Day. This was two or three years before the whole policy was stopped right on this spot, by the Brooks Crescent residents.

Brian: Thank you Paul. We are going to start the walk in a minute. You will get more sense of what happened by just walking around. First Barry wants to say a few words about some of the people involved in the struggle.



"...the Commission has effected the normal procedures used by it in securing house properties from vandalism — that is by ensuring that all windows are locked, that door locks are changed and that the doors are otherwise secured by nailing up." (Minister for Housing, Hansard 31.3.1971.)



"...it is still considered that the area is suitable for reclamation and, as any action by the Commission within the area at this stage could prejudice the hearing of the case, no action will be taken in regard to the properties in question." (Minister for Housing, Letter to Brooks Crescent Improvement Committee 29.4.1971.)

Barry Pullen: Andrew Burbridge sends his apologies. He wanted to mention the pivotal role played by a number of people. We have mentioned Jack Strochi the panel beater, who added enormous enthusiasm. Jack was a war hero from Italy and he saw the Housing Commission as the enemy. He was not at all ambivalent about it. He built a crucifix with barbed wire on the top from chrome bumper bars and the title "They are crucifying us in Brooks Crescent". Norm Yarr, who lived in Doncaster, was the manager and accountant at the Porter's shoe factory. He was a person who transcended expectations. He came to the meetings and became identified more than could be expected from a person from outside the area. He saw an enormous injustice. He told me once that in 1966 the tea lady in Porters told him that she had just sold her house to the Commission because she was told it was the best thing to do. She lived in this area, and she said "I didn't do too badly, I got the same price as I paid for it". She had brought in 1939! But the person who for many people typified the struggle was Daisy Croft. Daisy was a person, summed up in the phrase "Aussie Battler", but she was a very complicated person in many ways. Her courage was an inspiration. Her determination often changed decisions in all sorts of meetings with all sorts of people. A lot of us really relied on Daisy, who came under a lot of pressure when she was identified as an important person by the Commission, receiving attractive offers, better than others, to sell out. But she never wavered. In the end people like Daisy really typified the courage of residents around here that had not expected to be publicly placed in this crucial situation. They were fantastic. Daisy is now deceased but all of us who met her will remember her.

Brian: *Barry is going to take us around to Annand Street.*

Barry, in Annand Street: It is fairly obvious that the Street was originally intact with small interesting houses with the wooden decorations and the cast iron on the other side. Due to the number of houses that were demolished they had to build infill houses. On the right is the Community centre that was built later, not during that period, which is a fine addition. It was a fairly run down sort of factory site that needed a bit of underpinning here and there.

Paul Coghlan (Fitzroy Councillor during the period): It is important to note that there is some importance about the legal case because of the way that it affected people. The true legal significance of your area being declared a slum reclamation area is that the Commission then had the right to compulsorily acquire. People were absolutely terrified of that. The fact they could compulsorily acquire your property made people desperately concerned that they would get practically nothing for their properties. And they were quite right. The point of the struggle about trying to bring some force to bear on the Commission by the law case was to stop the area being declared a reclamation area because of legal consequences that flowed from that.

If you look where the infill houses are, they are all spots where houses were demolished by stealth, sometimes, as Barry said, in the middle of the night. In one spectacular weekend a huge number of houses were demolished. People were forced to live here in what looked like a bomb site. But people did continue to live here. They are the most courageous people I have ever had anything to do with.

Isabel Henderson Kindergarten : 1974 - 1982 (Map reference: 2)

Brian (further down Anne St.): *We are now at Isabel Henderson Kindergarten and I will hand over to Onella Stagoll and Anne Coghlan. Anne was the President, and Onella was the Secretary of the kindergarten at a very vital time in its history. It has a fascinating history that links the Brooks Crescent struggle with the Freeway struggle.*

Anne Coghlan: Yes, Brooks Crescent and the Freeway struggle were connected in many ways, not only in time, but in how the kindergarten came to be here. Onella and I were on the Kindergarten Committee throughout all this. I'm going to concentrate on the time line of the building of the kindergarten. We have a hand-out that you can take home. Onella will then fill in some of the more interesting social aspects of what happened.

The Isabel Henderson Kindergarten was located, from 1949 onwards at the corner of Alexander Parade and Queens Parade "The Island". As you'd appreciate, through the early 70s the traffic volumes and pollution increased to such an extent that in 1974 the parents had become very concerned about what was happening. In that year we first wrote to the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works which, at that time, had responsibility for metropolitan roads. We wrote suggesting that if the Alexander Parade was increased to eight lanes it would not be unreasonable for the MMBW to give us two new kindergartens because of the severance of north and south Fitzroy, one in the north and one in the south. Thereafter began years of discussions, submissions and meetings with a whole range of authorities, trying to do something about the relocation of the



Conflicts between the Housing Commission and residents of slum reclamation areas

Edited by Kay Hargreaves

A Report by the Centre for
Urban Research and Action.

kindergarten. With the opening of the Freeway and what was happening here in Brooks Crescent, one of the recommendations of the Joint Planning Committee was for the establishment of day care and double unit kindergartens. That is how we got to be given this site here in the Brooks Crescent area.

We had approached the Housing Commission in July 1976 for suitable land. Even though land eventually became available we still had a real struggle to get the money to build the kindergarten. Therein lay another story. At the end of 1977 with the opening of the F19 there was so much concern that we decided the kindergarten should move to temporary accommodation in Mark Street (North Fitzroy). We thought this would be temporary, but we were there for four years. Eventually we did get funding. As it turned out the money actually came from the Department of Health - the Child Welfare Section - in the end. We had thought it should be paid by an organisation like the Country Roads Board, which had by that stage had taken over responsibility for metropolitan roads. Before we actually had specific funding we were allowed to engage architects to prepare plans for the site. That is where Darryl Jackson Pty Ltd came into it, as architects who designed this building. Finally plans went to tender and the kindergarten was finally completed in February 1982. It took a period of eight years of negotiations with the Health Department, the Housing Commission, the Crown Lands Department, the Country Roads Board, the Brooks Crescent Planning Committee and the Fitzroy Council to relocate the kindergarten.

Onella Stagoll: I want to give you some background on the social history of the Isabel Henderson Kindergarten. The kindergarten was first established in 1913 and it was run by the Presbyterian Mission in a small building in Leicester Street. At that time the aim was to provide a facility for children to take care of the health problems of the poor, by educating the parents to deal with immediate health needs. Our current understanding of kindergartens and their educational role was certainly different in 1913. By 1949 the kindergarten had outgrown the facilities at the old church and the Presbyterian Mission no longer was prepared to continue to sponsor it. The sponsorship was taken over by the Clyde Old Girls' Association, by women who had gone to Clyde Girls', a very fancy private school in Woodend. If one looks at the names of the committee members right up until the 1970s one sees how it was dominated by women from the Clyde Old Girls' Association. It is interesting to see the way the surnames changed on the committee's membership. By the time the kindergarten opened here I don't think anyone from the Clyde Association remained. The committee was almost entirely comprised of parents and local people. That was very important in effecting the nature of the struggle and the encounters we had with the bureaucracy at that time. I remember very clearly a meeting where Anne and I went to meet with Lou Lieberman who at that time was the Assistant Health Minister. We were no longer the polite Clyde Old Girls. The Minister was thrown off balance by our levels of knowledge, directness and determination. He had expected two clueless Fitzroy mothers. He realised this community would not be a pushover, which was confirmed by subsequent events.

The crucial decision that the Kindergarten made at the time was to relocate from the Island, to Mark Street, a Scout Hall which was fairly primitive, but safe. It was quite a fraught meeting. Relocation wasn't a decision for the Committee, but for the whole kindergarten community. It involved staff, teachers and parents. Many felt at that time that the politically wise thing would have been to stay sitting there with the Freeway surrounding us, four lanes on either side. You could have got a photograph a day to show how difficult it was to reach, how dangerous it was. It very well may have been in our short term interests to stay there. Perhaps we would have got a resolution much faster. But perhaps the kindergarten would have withered away, or been left at Mark Street forever. Parents were already withdrawing their children. The Kindergarten community made a decision that was in the interests of the children and their health and safety. It was not to stay in that dreadful "island" location. And we got our publicity anyway. About two years into our time at Mark Street, just before a State Election (in 1979), a little boy walked out on to Mark Street and was almost hit by a car. This was our desired Alexander Parade effect, and we played it as hard as we could, with headlines in the Sun, etc. (Many people think the boy was knocked over and killed, because of how hard we played it, but the fact of the matter is that he wasn't hit at all!) With the State Election about to happen the money started flowing straight away.

Comment from someone on the walk: The Clyde Old Girls' Association have to this day annually donated the proceeds of their various jumble sales to the kindergarten.

Onella: We do need to recognise the historic contribution of this group.

Isabel Henderson was the first Principal of Clyde Girls School and she was extremely well educated. She had hopes of doing medicine at the time but couldn't get into Melbourne University Medical School. She went on to become a great educator with

enormous interest in kindergartens as well. She was a member of the Free Kindergarten Union, of which this kindergarten was a member, and it was in her honour that the kindergarten was named after her when the Clyde Old Girls' Association took it over. Until fairly recent years it was always called the Isabel Henderson Free Kindergarten, because it was an affiliated kindergarten with the Free Kindergarten Union of Victoria.

Brian: I have a handout prepared by Anne and Onella which contains a history of the Kindergarten. The fight over the Kindergarten was yet another immense struggle which went on for years. The government, as they seemed to do in those days, was forced to honour a promise that was broken. Have a look at the kindergarten building, which also includes the factory. It is the largest kindergarten in the inner city and has been a great community asset for the past twenty years.

Timetable of significant events - Isabel Henderson Kindergarten

1913-49	The Isabel Henderson Free Kindergarten first established by the Presbyterian Mission as the Fitzroy Mission Kindergarten in 1913 at the corner of Young and Leicester Street. The committee members came from Brighton and Malvern Presbyterian Churches. Their mission was to teach "habits of thrift and simple rules of hygiene". Strong emphasis on educating families in child rearing. In a poor and overcrowded area, the Kindergarten played a crucial role in the social fabric of the community.
1949-74	<p>Clyde Old Girls' Association assume responsibility for Kindergarten. Funds raised (£11,400) for a new purpose built building at the intersection of Alexander and Queens Parade. Kindergarten renamed the Isabel Henderson Free Kindergarten in honour of Isabel Henderson, founding Principal of Clyde Girls School and founding member of the Free Kindergarten Union of Victoria.</p> <p>Management Committee comprised mostly of Clyde Old Girls whose support for the Kindergarten was based on a strong social commitment to the "disadvantaged of Fitzroy".</p> <p>To this day the proceeds of the annual jumble sale, organised by the Clyde Old Girls, are still donated to the Kindergarten.</p>
1974	<p>The Committee membership was changing with increasing numbers of local parents joining the Committee. The profile of the children was changing to reflect the changing demographic of Fitzroy.</p> <p>Since the early 70s the Kindergarten's location between two major roads had been emerging as a problem. Newspapers attributed falling enrolments to growing dissatisfaction of attending parents and staff.</p> <p>The Committee, concerned about the impact of the proposed widening of Alexandra Parade, wrote to the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works, which was the body responsible for metropolitan roads, raising its concerns and its re-siting.</p>
1975-76	There were numerous meetings and submissions put by the Committee pressing for some positive response from the Board of Works but with little progress.
1977	The Housing Commission was approached for suitable land in the Brooks Crescent area. Land was available in principle but no formal commitment could be made until the Housing Commission and residents had agreed to a final plan for the redevelopment of the area.
1978	<p>The Kindergarten was faced with a dramatic increase of air and noise pollution at Alexandra Parade, caused by the opening of the F19 freeway in December 1977.</p> <p>A Committee deputation met with Mr Jona, the Assistant Minister for Health on 8 December 1977. The deputation was given a verbal assurance that a double unit kindergarten, to replace the Alexandra Pde building, would be built on a reserved site in Rae Street between Skene Place and Annand Street. Part of that site was still occupied by Carlton Textiles Pty Ltd. Negotiations continued between the company and the Housing Commission in an effort to relocate the factory.</p> <p>The Committee was divided as to the best way of achieving a satisfactory outcome. Political wisdom dictated that the Kindergarten should stay and argue for relocation from the Queens Parade site. However the immediate need of the children overcome political consideration and at a general meeting of the Kindergarten community, it was decided to relocate immediately. Temporary accommodation was found in a safe but cramped location in the Guide Hall in Mark Street, North Fitzroy.</p>

1979	The Kindergarten continued to operate in Mark Street because of the complicated process of actually acquiring the finance from the Government to build a new kindergarten. Meanwhile, the Kindergarten was permitted to brief Daryl Jackson Pty Ltd, architects, to design the new building.
1980	The difficulties in securing finance continued. The architects prepared plans for the new building to be erected on the corner of Rae Street and Annand Street, North Fitzroy. Those plans were finally approved and presented by the Assistant Minister of Health and Treasury for funding allocation. The Kindergarten understood that the funds for the new building came from the Early Childhood Development section of the Department of Health as it then was.
1981	Working drawings for the new kindergarten went to tender in anticipation of the building being completed by the end of February 1982.
1982	After eight years the new kindergarten was completed and commenced operation.
From 1977-1982 the Committee had negotiated and worked with the State Government, the Department of Health, the Housing Commission, Crown Lands Department, the Country Roads Board, Brooks Crescent Planning Committee and Fitzroy Council to relocate the Kindergarten.	

Walk continues down to the corner of Rae and Church Streets. (Map reference: 3)

Barry Pullen: (Pointing to houses on the north-west corner.) That patch of houses was an area where there was a lot of confrontation. Those little timber houses were nearly all lost. One of the arguments put was that there was no adequate fire walls between them. They weren't separated by fire rated brick walls and that was impossible to correct. Next to them are two two-storey brick houses which were left in a very derelict state, almost in a state of demolition as was another house just a little further down. But these problems were not impossible to solve, and as we see now, there has been technology put there to meet the necessary fire arrangements. As you can see those quite unusual set of timber houses were preserved, but it was really touch and go. People fought hard over those houses because it was seen that if houses like that were brought down, it would be a symbolic victory for the Commission. If that quality of house could be taken out, then there wasn't much hope for other houses. But by that stage the Council was becoming much more supportive and putting up notices and preventing demolition until the Court case was held. If you look up Church Street you will see some similar quality houses that were also intended to be demolished, and indeed, some were. Of course all these houses are now very valuable, as prime examples of inner city architecture. They could have all been destroyed.

Bill Peterson

Brian: Our next stop is the Bill Peterson Oval. (Map reference: 4)

I have put some pictures up including a famous one of Bill Peterson, in mayoral robes, being carried off by the police. I have asked Tom Marino who was the mayor of Fitzroy in those days, if he would say a few words about Bill.

Tom Marino: I was elected on Council in 1977 and did a couple of terms. It was a sheer pleasure to work with Bill Peterson. He was really a man of the people. He knew everything and he knew everyone. Bill was sort a bridge between the office staff and the outdoor staff; in those days there was often conflict between these groups. Bill was always there to smooth things out. He was a good man, a terrific leader.

Brian: Bill tragically died in a motor accident a couple of years later and the oval was named after him. There is a small sign here naming the "Peterson Oval" but no details. We wonder if we can't do better. Perhaps we could suggest to Yarra Council that a large meeting of residents endorsed a proposal that a plaque be put up which incorporates the famous photo of Bill being pulled off the Freeway (*general agreement*).

The Freeway Struggle: 1969 - 1977 (Map reference: 5)

Next stop, the plantation dividing Alexander Parade, opposite the Swimming Pool.

Brian: Here we are at the Freeway. I would like to introduce Renate Howe who was involved in the Freeway campaign. Now, as a historian, she is researching urban activism in the 60s.

Renate Howe: As I take over the megaphone I am reminded of the first law that we learnt in the Freeway demonstration. I remember we came down to one of the final big meetings here and the Maoists had got control of the microphone and were haranguing the assembled multitudes. So the first law of community organising - always get control of the microphone!

David Nicholls who is working with me on this research project has prepared a time line outlining the steps towards the building of the Freeway. The plan begins in 1964 in the Melbourne Metropolitan Planning Scheme and then bought in under the Country Roads Board urban group in around 1969. As you can see there was no real consultation in the process towards the building of the Freeway. The time line goes until 1977 when the Freeway was opened. In many ways most of the confrontations came after 1977.

In 1969 when the Freeway was first mooted seriously, the Carlton News had just started. This very soon became the Melbourne Times. The Freeway plans led to the joining together of the various residents' groups for united action, and the Melbourne Times gave voice to these groups. I have here some early copies of the newspaper. Here is a picture of an American freeway and underneath is the famous picture which had heavy thick lines showing where the freeway was purported to go. This seemed to threaten to wipe out North Carlton and North Fitzroy. That really got everyone geared into action. Having the Melbourne Times as a means of communication was very helpful.

My time line ends in 1977 with the opening of the Eastern Freeway. This brought on the most intense period of community protests. My personal recollections are of being a mum with young children at the time. We had a telephone tree which worked fantastically (now we do it all by email). The minute that there was any activity south of the freeway we would call up to get a big group together quickly. In the pre-dawn final struggle, the telephone tree managed to get a large crowd down here even at that early time. Women played an important part in this and I think that needs to be remembered because they were able to provide a lot of the support for the residents' groups in that period. I remember the family days down here, with tree planting and building a wall across the freeway, with everyone bringing some building material. I recently rang my daughter and said "what do you remember about that day?" She said "I remember I got lost with my brick". It is a day I think our kids still remember and we had some great family occasions down here in our efforts to prevent the freeway from opening. I'll now ask Kevin Healy to remember a few of those occasions. He was really in the front line in the period as a Councillor and activist, when we were trying "local socialism" in Fitzroy.

Kevin Healy: The freeway struggle was, I suppose, in the long term, a pyrrhic victory. Down at Brooks Crescent Barry made the point that at the end, the government would not attempt that sort of reclamation or go for High Rise again. But we know here that opposing a freeway here, and delaying it temporarily, hasn't prevented governments from madly wanting to build freeways all over the place. They're still doing it.

Renate outlined some of the things that happened, the tree plantings and the barricades here at Wellington Parade. The barricades were interesting. I remember meeting a bloke I hadn't seen in years on one of those Sunday family days, when the barricades were being erected. He said "I've come along to help you". I said "thanks a lot". After a while he said "I have to go now, see you later" but came back and said "I can't find my car". His little Volkswagen had been put on the barricade! I thought it was a worthy sacrifice.

I know people think this is ridiculous all these years later, but I still refuse to drive on the bloody thing, I always use alternate routes. Ironically, the one time I ever travelled on the freeway was Bill Peterson's funeral because it was the route of the procession to the cemetery.

At the end of 1977 continual meetings with the Council, and towards the end of the campaign we had nightly meetings with the community around here. We were dealing with the government on a daily basis at that stage and the Premier Dick Hamer. We'd go to meetings and say we have agreed to this, and then on the news that night Dick Hamer would be saying something completely the opposite, so the next day we'd go and try again.

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The Dan Ryan Expressway in Chicago. Here sixteen lanes of traffic roar along beside a sad and all too familiar public housing estate.

Vast public opposition to freeways

A packed meeting of over 1,000 people at the Melbourne Town Hall on Monday night proved - if any proof was necessary - the overwhelming opposition to freeways in all parts of Melbourne.

Mr. R. Gardner who chaired the meeting said that the RB had demanded a stepped freeway programme at the same time as the Melbourne Council engineer has said that if we don't reduce off street parking in the city, the city will be choked.

The meeting was called by the United Melbourne Freeway Action Group which incorporates twenty six progress associations throughout Melbourne from Doncaster to Williamstown.

Mr. Gardner pointed out that this meeting was unique in that at the same time in many a similar meeting is being held.

The new Labor Government's spokesmen on urban affairs and transport (Tom Uren and Marie Jones) sent a telegram to the meeting pledging to withhold funds to be spent on inner suburban freeways. They also said that such a policy would be better spent on decentralisation and upgrading the public transport system.

Mr. Gardner said that Mr. Uren, Minister For Local Government, has promised the government will tell the MMBW that it does not support the planning scheme for 4.7 million people living in Melbourne at the end of the

century. However this is some what belated as the freeway plans are with us and they are simply the result of planning without a target and a failure to deal with population distribution. As Mr. Gardner said 'planning in the past has been a toothless tiger.'

There were consistent demands throughout the meeting to put pressure not only on politicians at election time, but also on public servants whom many regard as the real villains of the piece. Public servants are not subject to pressure through the ballot box and they do not have to comply with any regulations except Government Acts - the only real way of changing public service mentality is through massive and united public opposition to policies which they implement.

The speakers emphasised different aspects of the freeway menace.

Mr. Trevor Tyson of the Carlton Association Freeway Action Group and the Melbourne University Department of Town and Regional planning gave the meeting some pretty terrifying facts to ponder.

The 307 miles of freeways proposed for 1985 will cost 2,500 million dollars and will involve the destruction of 20,000 homes. Funnily enough the homes of many freeway officials are near freeways but not one stands in their path.

He showed slides of the incredible desecration of the Yarra Bend National Park and others which showed the immensity of interchanges where two freeways meet. He said that a conventional cloverleaf interchange would take between 50 to 100 acres of land - that's four times the size of the MCG.

Professor Blunden, professor of Traffic Engineering at Sydney, said that freeways may work in the country, but that their criteria of providing rapid transit and isolation from the environment they pass through, both become grave deficiencies in urban areas. He said that in cities

the majority of car trips made are local - to the shops, schools, visiting friends - and that freeways only cut up communities, rather than serving them.

He said that people should use public transport to go to work in the city and the only way to do this was by putting planning restraints on the road capacity available to private transport.

Sociologist Brian Howe felt that there were too many technocrats involved in planning who gave no consideration to social goals.

He said that social mobility was a dangerous myth which provided a justification for

the freeway network and the ensuing destruction. He noted that planning for freeways took no account of the less mobile sections of the community - who stood to lose most from freeways. It is also the poor who are disrupted when technicians do not understand what they are dealing with and the social fabric with which they are tampering.

Professor Charles Robertson of the Melbourne University School of Architecture gave heart to all when he outlined the opposition to the Edinburgh Ring Road. Here sheer weight of public opinion changed decisions

which had already been made. A united action group, effective publicity and imminent elections meant that the quality of life in central Edinburgh was saved.

Public opinion against freeways is growing stronger by the day and it is quite clear that people are prepared to fight on this one. The hat was passed around at the meeting and just under \$1,500 was collected from those present.

Although no resolutions were passed the very numbers indicated a definite vote of no confidence in the government's freeway policies.



The Trans Manhattan Expressway in New York. The interchange here would require an area of land four times the size of the MCG.

Last Melbourne Times for 1972

The Melbourne Times is going on holiday. This issue is the last for the year and we wish all our readers and writers all the best for Christmas and the New Year. We will be back again on January 1st - we hope you can wait without us until then.

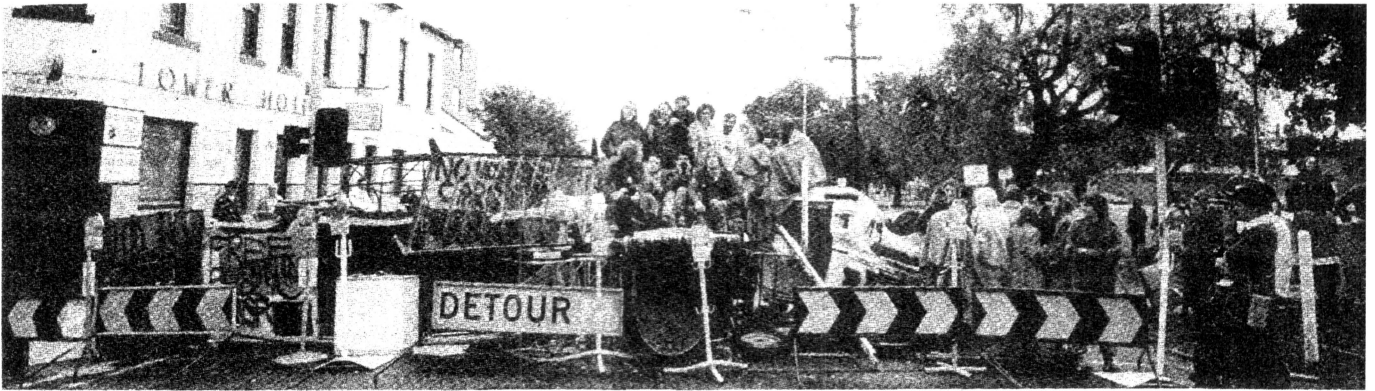
Collingwood and Fitzroy Councils worked very closely on this and they put a lot of money into it. We employed a full time campaigner and brought out a regular paper. One of the things argued for in trying to stop the Freeway was to narrow the road. Of course the Government wanted the very opposite. You might recall that early one morning, in a very secretive campaign, workers from Fitzroy and Collingwood came and actually built a brick wall out from here that narrowed the road down to one lane, as part of our campaign to save this as a residential area. On that very day Alexander Avenue was declared a national highway by the government! It remains the shortest national highway in the world, I would think. But once it was proclaimed by the government, the Council lost all control over it.

One of the more poignant comments made to me much later was from a bloke who taught at Fitzroy High at the time. You might recall that at the time Fitzroy High School's staff was fairly radical. Whenever the telephone tree went off they'd drop the chalk and run down here. But not this bloke. He lived down the other end of the freeway. We all know how Vicroads usually win by "divide and conquer" and they had convinced him that the freeway would help a lot with the traffic congestion from where he lived. It would be a lot better once the freeway was there. Years later I was at a meeting in the Eastern suburbs, where they were protesting about further extensions of the freeway. He was now chairing the anti-freeway group! He said "I wish I'd come down when the telephone tree rang and joined the other teachers, because I now know that freeways benefit nobody".

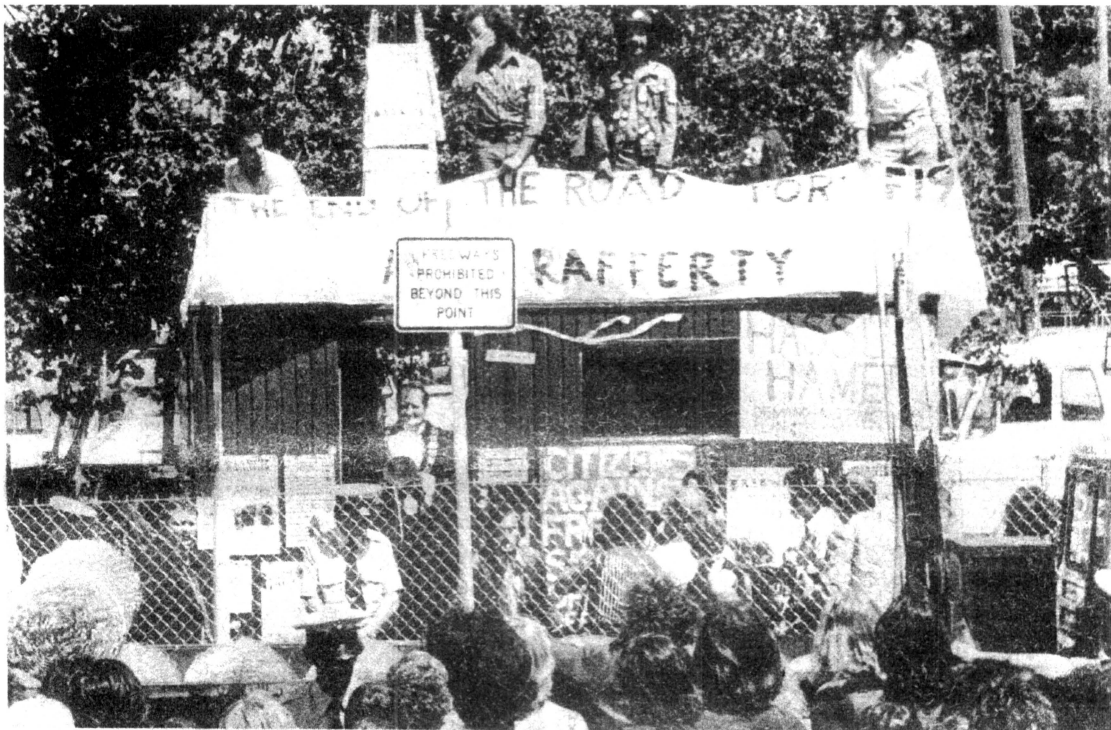
On the day the police came we'd had a tip off that they were coming. We'd had a Sunday gathering down here, and we told people to come down at 5 a.m. the next morning. Hundreds of people turned up at 5 a.m. The police, seeing that many people, didn't bother to come. By about 9 o'clock people had started to filter off to work and there were only a hundred or so of us left. Suddenly a phalanx of cops came marching around the corner like a Roman Legion and took over the place. Their base was up there on the corner of Smith Street and they built a cyclone fence around the area. Once this was built it was declared a construction zone. Any of us who were on the plantation could then be declared to be there illegally, and thrown out. That was the day that the famous picture of Bill Peterson was taken, as he was being duly tossed out of the area. I'd come along at 5 a.m. in the morning in the little car I had at the time and parked it up there somewhere. As it turned out, they couldn't declare it a construction site until they'd completed the fence. The car just happened to be parked in the very spot they needed to complete the fence. They eventually worked out who owned the car. Commander Heyderman, in charge of the police sent his second-in-command to talk to me. This turned out to be the football coach Alan Jeans. He came up and said "Is that your car?" and informed me that Commander Heyderman wanted to speak to me. I said "well I'm here and he can come and talk to me". He said "no you have to go up to him" and I said "Bad luck, I'm here and he can do what he likes". Finally Heyderman came over with a host of microphones and Press between us. It happened that a bloke next to me, Bill Nolan was active in legal aid. (Later on he was to become a magistrate.) The Commander kept saying "Mr. Healy", and I'd say "it's Councillor Healy to you". This went on all the time. He asked if I was going to move my car and I stated that I would have to consult my solicitor and I turned to Bill Nolan. Then he said to Bill "Is Mr. Healy going to move his car" and Bill Nolan said "I'll have to consult my client". This went on and on, with the press having a lovely time. But, in the end, as in all these things, they ended up winning. Commander Heyderman, after all this madness and frustration, gave a signal to a few young cops; who picked up the car and carried across to the plantation and, from a great height, dropped it on the rocks. It wasn't much good after that!

Subsequently, in the period when the freeway came through, the value of houses dropped dramatically. From Hoddle Street to Brunswick Street the Government agreed to double glaze or treat any homes that were left. Beyond that they refused any other assistance. A number of people who lived further down, towards Nicholson Street saw the value of their homes drop dramatically with thousands of extra cars going past their doors. They got no compensation whatsoever. One woman who lived here for many years was like Daisy Croft at Brooks Crescent, the sort of person who whipped out for the television cameras saying "I'm a local resident". She eventually moved. She was very distressed indeed and within about two months of living in a unit in Preston she died. You could say it pretty well killed her.

In the end many of us thought we had had a victory. We even felt that we'd seen the last urban freeway. At that time, you will recall the M2 Reserve from the Hume Highway was planned to come down to join this freeway. They had acquired land at the back of Nicholson Street along the Merri Creek. This plan was dropped. But what we are seeing now is a new freeway at Craigieburn coming through, with pressure over at Westgarth for them to allow more trucks etc. We all know that Vicroads have a long term plan for that. They have not gone away.



The barricade on Monday morning ... after nearly 12 hours of rain and mud



Mayor of Fitzroy Bill Petersen (resplendent in robes and chain) and a group of protestors were "caught" inside the fence when police moved in on Monday. At lunchtime they were all bodily-removed.



The City of Fitzroy lost a keen fighter for residents and a hard working councillor last Sunday morning when former mayor Bill Petersen was killed in a car accident. His death shocked the people of Fitzroy, who paid heartfelt tributes to the man who always helped the ordinary people of the area. But a first hour was during the freeway protest when he was carried off in his mayoral robes by police.
SEE PAGE 3.

Photos from
"The
Melbourne
Times"
November
1977

Another irony I suppose is that, a few years later when they decided to widen the freeway a bit again, there was a campaign which got only a very few people. But running alongside of it at the same time was the pool campaign which got thousands and thousands of people involved. I suspect it reflects some change of attitude in those ensuing years. We certainly thought we had a victory at that time, but there is a lot of work to be done in this area yet. But in the end it was a great campaign, and united this community enormously.

Brian: Thank you very much Kevin. Renate?

Renate Howe: Just to sum up and bring it all together a bit. As I mentioned I'm doing a research project on the 60s activists and I've had to think about what the significance of that period was.

Firstly, government and democracy: in 1996 someone was going to make a film for the ABC on these protests. He'd come from Eastern Europe and his theme was going to be that this situation was very similar in the opposition to an oppressive State. With the lack of accountability of the infrastructure authorities a big issue in Melbourne!. We were fighting State government infrastructure authorities in Melbourne (not private capital, as in Sydney with the Green bans.) The MMBW and the CRB really were terrible in that period, they even had spies! (I don't know if any of you remember some of the meetings where people would leap up to the platform and point to people who they said were spies from the CRB.) The police enforcement and the arrogance towards local government and community groups by those authorities makes the comparison to Eastern Europe not all that far fetched.

Secondly I think it is significant to recall the coalitions for reform that came about. Just re-reading the Melbourne Times has reminded me of the range of people that by the mid-70s were really involved in these protest movements. We had the students, we had the ethnic groups, we had the families, we had tremendous breadth of involvement. Some of the interpretations of the 60s and 70s activists as "self-serving gentrifiers" needs to be put into the broader context that these really were community movements.

The impact of the freeway did divide Fitzroy, as people have pointed out. The north and south of Fitzroy were never again a whole community. The freeway did increase traffic on local roads, which we were told would never happen. We have had more road accidents and there have been substantial health impacts. Last year a report was released which showed the high level of respiratory problems in the inner suburbs. But we did save the Merri Creek, however, a big positive.

In conclusion, as Kevin has said, I think it is good to see this walk as not just a moment for nostalgia and remembering. The struggle continues. The CRB has reinvented itself in VicRoads, with the same culture and is now working to finish off the freeway with the extension to Hoddle Street. The Mullim Creek end is going ahead. That was also something we fought against at that time. As Kevin has pointed out, the Craigieburn freeway, with its impact on the Merri Creek and the Northern suburbs, is also a very significant change. Freeway policy is riding high at Federal and State level with little consideration of an overall transport strategy and the present transport policy of the State government is very disappointing in this regard. It is dominated by VicRoads and a more managerial local government takes little interest in transport policy. Today is not just a get together to reminisce and remember. We have still got plenty of work to do and certainly the freeway issues are alive and disturbing.

TIMETABLE OF SIGNIFICANT EVENTS : THE EASTERN FREEWAY STRUGGLE

1954	Melbourne Metropolitan Planning Scheme proposes new main road from Alexandra Pde Collingwood to Ringwood with major approaches at Hoddle St, Alexandra Pde and Princes St.
1969	Metropolitan Transportation Plan recommends construction of Freeway F19 from Alexandra Pde to Ringwood and also 'westerly across the north of the Central Business District' as well as other connecting routes. October: Public hearing of objections to Eastern Freeway. It is only possible to object to the route of a freeway, not its existence. Ultimately the Board received 270 objections and '700 letters offering advice in one way or another'.
1970	Construction of Eastern Freeway begins. 14 October: Freeway plans front page news for Carlton News, suggesting the 'the time to voice opinions is now!' Of particular concern is the way in which the F19 will bisect Carlton so that 'the southern residential areas would be isolated from the rest'.
1971	October: Victorian Cabinet decides against F1 feeder freeway through East Melbourne. Melbourne Times: 'With the F1 scrapped and the F19 most unlikely to be built Carlton retains its unity'. 27 October: Representatives from Citizens of Northcote, Fitzroy, Richmond, Prahran, St. Kilda, Coburg and Collingwood assemble at Collingwood Town Hall 'for the purposes of consideration of the effects of proposals for the development of Freeway F2 as they are presently known'. December: Freeway Action Group formed under aegis of Carlton Association (Trevor Tyson leading figure). 23 December: Carlton Association calls meeting of protest against 'a Country Roads Board's proposal to bulldoze up to 2000 homes for a freeway linking the F19 in the east with the F12 in the west'.
1972	13 December: Packed meeting of over 2,000 people at the Melbourne town Hall on Monday night opposition freeways - Whitlam ministers pledge end of funding of freeways.
1973	March: Victorian Government announces deletion of large sections of freeway network from 1969 plan, though F19 construction continued. 18 April: Tree planting ceremony on eastern freeway site.
1977	December: Eastern Freeway between Hoddle St and Bulleen Rd opened to traffic.

The Fitzroy Pool Campaign, 1994

Brian: Thank you Renate. Let's cross the road to the swimming pool. When you enter there is a big picture in the doorway of the Fitzroy Pool filled with citizens around 1994. Have a look over your shoulders as you go in. (Map reference: 6)

Inside.

I would like to introduce Leigh Hubbard and Steve Watson who were very active in the struggles of 1994.

Leigh Hubbard: Steve and I have agreed to six minutes each, to leave plenty of time for discussion. Looking around, there are plenty of people in this room who were involved in the Fitzroy Pool campaign, so they probably know more about it than us. It's hard to talk about the Fitzroy Pool campaign as history. It happened eight years ago, but it seems like yesterday. But it is history I suppose. It is really a different era when we think back to 1994 and the Kennett government. Kennett seemed invincible. His government had amalgamated Councils and put Commissioners into every local government area; they had entered into privatisation programs and started school closures. We hadn't had too many victories. Indeed I suppose, apart from Northland Secondary College, which was probably about the first major bounce back of the Kennett government on a major policy issue, the Fitzroy Pool was the second one. It wasn't directly against the Kennett government per se, but it was against the kind of policies they pursued. It was a local campaign and it succeeded admirably because of the kind of people that we had in our community and the emotion around such an institution as the Pool here. Over the six or eight weeks of the campaign, it did take on a broader significance than just a local facility being closed by a cost-cutting Council.

I have put out a range of things on the table, like our application to the Historic Buildings Council to put it on the Register and some of the leaflets that we had, Kaz Cook's cartoon and our submissions to the consultant who finally did the review of the Council's decision to close the pool. When we did the Historic Buildings Application, I found out that the small pool, which is the kids pool today, was originally the women's pool and the large pool was the men's and there was a brick wall that ran down the middle! When it was opened in October 1908 it was a segregated pool and remained so until the 1930s at least. There are some lovely stories about young men and women meeting at the pool by throwing things backwards and forwards over the wall. And that was one of the great things about the campaign, meeting some of the people around Fitzroy who'd grown up here: the John Arrowsmiths of the world and even people like Bert Newton who grew up in Fitzroy and used the pool. The pool was architecturally pretty significant as well. It was one of the first reinforced concrete pools in Australia and the largest of the time. Before that pools had just been brick and cement. I think it was Sir John Monash who actually bought the Patent to the Monier process and it was the first application of that. This was a pretty good reason for keeping the pool and having it as a historic centre piece of the community.

The campaign itself began the year before. The Council of which Labor had lost control in 1985 had some pretty ordinary people on it, who, at that time had tried to privatise the management of the pool. We ran a campaign around that in late 1993. So there was a core of people and preparation for the campaign that was to come about when they announced the closure of the pool in October 1994. About the 12th October, 1994, we had a meeting at the house on the corner of Kerr and George Streets which was affectionately called the "white house" at the time. About twenty people met and planned a campaign. There was then a meeting at the Brunswick Street Oval on the 19th October which drew a couple of thousand people. On the following Sunday there was a march down Brunswick Street of about four or five thousand people. It was the day after that that the Commissioners announced a review of their decision to close the pool. Even the Herald Sun wrote an editorial *"The Commissioners were appointed to prepare the way for the restoration of democratically elected ratepayer representatives to administer the new enlarged councils. But the temporary bureaucrats installed to do this should have no mandate to dismantle unilaterally assets put there at the behest of people who live in the areas. They were not appointed to conduct a scorched earth policy."* For the Herald Sun that was pretty good!

Basically from that time on the campaign involved an enormous amount of people. For Steve and I to get up here is a bit embarrassing because there were probably sixty or seventy people who paid a core part in that campaign. We met in this building shortly after the decision to review. About eighty people were here. One person donated a single donation of \$2,000 towards the campaign. There was enormous enthusiasm. At the time we formed about five committees. One was around publicity and public relations. Another was around the issue of the occupation of the pool, which occurred not long after, within a week of the closure.

The occupation was a great source of both interest and entertainment for the media, so that kept the newspaper articles, particularly at the local level going. It was a very active campaign with many publications that we had, helped by eight graphic designers on the public relations committee. We didn't have a religious committee, but Bishop Challen of the Brotherhood probably would have been on that! We had an enormous variety and range of people - like John Clarke, Kaz Cooke and Rod Quantock, who is here today - who have given their time over many years to causes and are important to the success of campaigns like this.

There is a funny little newspaper clipping over there which has the City of Yarra advertising for expressions of interest from Real Estate Agents to handle the sale of the land and the pool. They were very serious about it and one of their arguments at the time was that the recovery of costs for the Fitzroy Pool didn't meet the national median, which was at the time 67% cost recovery of expenses. As Peter Fitzgerald, who wrote our response to called "Drowning by Numbers" pointed out, it's hard to compare an outdoor pool in Fitzroy with one in Broome or Cairns for how you might recover costs. Peter's estimate was that if you had to shut the Fitzroy Pool you'd be shutting probably twenty or thirty outdoor pools around Melbourne.

Steve Watson: There are a few other points that I'll add to those that Leigh made. I think the point that Leigh made about the sort of pre-campaign that happened in 1993 is pretty crucial. There was a group of about twenty-five people who knew each other and trusted each other, so once the announcement to close the pool happened we were able to arrange a meeting of people who knew that they could work together. As other people came along to get involved in the campaign, they joined a core of people who had worked together. A good thing about this campaign is that everyone who came along could find a way to contribute, even if it was just spending a couple of hours distributing leaflets. I think we letterboxed Fitzroy three or four time

in the three week period. People who have been involved in political campaigns would know what a big effort that was to do, just logistically in terms of printing and all the volunteers. People would just come in off the streets and pick up stuff because they wanted to do something. We were able to involve people in that way.

The pre-campaign that had happened in 1993 really came out of the Fitzroy Council spending a lot of money the previous year that had come from the Federal Government to build the sardine cans, as we called it. They thought that they could develop a very flash gym and improve the financial situation of the pool and it had exactly the opposite result. The Pool was losing something like \$150,000 a year. That is a lot of money but people were never asked whether they were happy to pay that. The consensus once the pool was shut was that two dollars per citizen per year is not much to ask. In any case in the subsequent years, there was a change in demographics and a lot more people interested in fitness (you can see people swimming right now, it never used to open in Winter). Nowadays the pool operates at a break-even point. There was never any exploration by the previous Fitzroy Council or by the Commissioners about how to make the pool work. It has been able to be made to work as a public facility and I think it has a really good future. It was a really short campaign, it took six weeks from whoa to go and essentially the really intense campaigning parts really took about two weeks.

We had a number of very successful media stunts. For example, we took a crowd to Collingwood and jumped in en masse to show that the Collingwood leisure centre would be hopelessly overcrowded. Again it was a very good image for the television, fifty people jumping into the water making a great splash (of course for the TV you do it twice). In the end the Commissioners knew they were beaten. They commissioned an economic consultant to write a report. Economic consultants generally write reports that are wanted. So the consultant said that it was economically justified to keep the pool and it has gone from strength to strength ever since. I think that it was a very good campaign to be involved with. I take Kevin's point that at the same time there was a campaign going on about widening the freeway - for some reason that didn't take off like this did and in terms of the welfare of the people who live here roads and transport are far more important issues - not that access to swimming pools is unimportant.

At the time, we all thought that the Kennett government would last for thirty years in 1994. I thought that if things went really well then my children might get to see a Labor government I didn't expect to see it during my middle age. Maybe the pool campaign, as an initial victory, had some role in turning that around. Certainly in the City of Yarra, the Commissioners basically did nothing for the remainder of their term. I was elected to the first and second Councils and we found that the Commissioners had made no decisions at all after their failed attempt to close the pool. They basically went into a holding pattern. Which was what they should have done all the time. They shouldn't have tried to govern in the way that a democratically elected Council can.

One curious thing about the fact that the sardine can (the nickname for the new building) was federally funded was that the then Minister for Local Government federally, Brian Howe, threatened the Commissioners with asking for the money back. I think it was about \$500,000 and at that time the City of Yarra didn't have \$500,000 to its name. I think one of the reasons that they wanted to develop the site into housing is that swimming pools are ideal for flat development because you don't have to excavate for the car park. You just build a ramp into the base of the pool. But we found a better use than car parking! It was great.

Brian: Thank you very much Steve and thank you Leigh. It is interesting that one of the activists in Brooks Crescent was Brian Howe. We could see on the walk today a cord of continuity. By the time of the Fitzroy Pool there was enormous knowledge in this community about how to run a campaign. If the first campaign took ten years, by the time we got to the Fitzroy pool it took about six weeks.

Leigh Hubbard: That is a very important point. You look around the room and you see the people who are activists. Activists don't just happen, they don't grow on trees. We should value the people like Barry who have been around for a long time because you really need that accumulated knowledge. I just want to say about the Haraxis Report I think that was the great thing about the pool and I think Steve made the point that they wanted to close the pool because it lost money. Haraxis set quite modest targets when he made his report. I think it was something like it wouldn't lose more than I think \$110,000 and it had to have more than I think 55,000 or 60,000 people coming through the gates. And every year since it has broken even within about \$10,000 or \$15,000 and one of the reasons was they lowered the price of entry for children to 50c so that the kids from the flats or wherever could come and use it. Their numbers went up enormously simply because they managed the place better and they

actually looked at the client group that they had. It wasn't that it was a bad pool - it was a case of bad management and in the case of economic rationalism that is often the outcome.

Steve Watson: I think one point to make about the way the pool had been run down by the previous Council and the guys that were running it were terrific blokes but essentially they were parking officers in the winter and they'd come here in the summer and run the pool. There wasn't a lot of thought put in to developing the market.

One other point about the continuity of people involved in the campaign there were people involved in the pool campaign who hadn't been involved in other political activities around the community and that was good. Most of the people at the core of the campaign were people who were really interested in swimming. Leigh and I at that time would swim most days if we could. Another point I would make about the White House where the campaign was coordinated. There not being as much continuity as you'd like - I think within a couple of years of the campaign the house was sold (it was a rental house and all the people who lived there no longer live in Fitzroy, essentially forced out by rising rents) ...

Closing Comments

Brian Stagoll: Today we have been through four major campaigns. We ended up with a very good housing estate, a very good kindergarten. We did, as Renate pointed out, stop the Merri Creek freeway and we kept a wonderful swimming pool. And this was all through struggle by community activists, a number of those people are here today. I'd like to end by handing it back to the community and the activists. Is there anybody whose been involved in any of those campaigns who wants to say anything?

John Senyard: One of the major campaigns against economic rationalism and the cutbacks of the Kennett government was the very protracted campaign to keep the Fitzroy Secondary School site open.

Brian Stagoll: We were going to put that in, but we couldn't fit in the logistics of this walk. I think the next walk!

Anne Horrigan-Dixon: I've been on a lot of campaigns, but I still like to keep fighting. Number one was the Brunswick Street oval grandstand, because Fitzroy Football Club wanted to turn that into glassed-in offices, put a gym downstairs and buy a terrace - I don't know if people remember that. Helen Madden was very involved in that when she was on the Council, I can't remember the year, but I remember it was summer. It was a long campaign but Fitzroy eventually became the Brisbane Lions and disappeared. The other campaign was the library campaign which we in North Fitzroy are still fighting. We still don't have a permanent home for our library and I've been on that campaign since 1989. They are doing another review this year, but that's an ongoing campaign. At one stage they were going to close all the libraries and we were going to have three, one in North Melbourne, one in Carringbush and one in, I think, Fitzroy. That was all the libraries were going to have in the Yarra Council area.

Brian Stagoll: We should add that just recently Fitzroy has become one of the centres for resistance and sanctuary for refugees and Anne and the Fitzroy Learning Network have been a very vital part of that. I hope one day we can talk about how we won that struggle too.

Anne Horrigan-Dixon: On that note, very seriously in this current campaign (it's not even a campaign - that's the tragedy of it all) I've worked very closely with people coming out of the detention centres. I've had more than 300 hundred come through the doors of the Learning Network and most of them are now working and settling into communities, some up in Young, some in the Riverina, some in Dandenong, all over the place. I worked very closely with this young man who is the head of the Huzaras in Victoria. He is a very ill young man because he was tortured by the Iranians, by the Taliban, and then he had a year in detention here. They are the most at risk group of the temporary visitor permit visas, the Afghans, because Ruddock keeps saying that things have changed. When I have been on this walk today and hear the stuff about the freeway, I realise we are in a position that we have one person who's a bully boy, with everyone is scared of him but we don't have an opposition that is actually fighting it. I'm looking at trying to get a group of people together to work in the refugee movement or form a separate group so we can mount a campaign to change, not just public opinion, but to change the Department of Immigration's opinion that Afghanistan is safe.

Kevin Healy. About Brooks Crescent: at that time the Ministry jealously guarded its right to allot people into houses, etc. and usually take them from Dandenong to Broadmeadows, or something. In fact the social planning office here won the right to allot people back into those houses. That was an important victory and their criteria were that 1. People who'd lived there before and 2. People with connections to Fitzroy and so people went back into that area once it was rebuilt on that basis.

Paul Coghlan: There is one thing that should be said about the pool campaign and that is that nobody should accept that economic arguments made by people like councils hold any water at all (no pun intended!). The fact is that public resources are made available to groups in the community for nothing. No bowling club pays rates, operates on public land, is capable of raising money and largely contributes nothing to the community and yet kids that come to use the pool have to pay. The economic argument is nonsense.

Renate Howe: I did mention the research project and David Nichols and myself would like to hear from people who may have photographs or material and also we'll be doing an oral history part of it so you may be contacted.

Dick Wynne: I am humble about being called to close this meeting, there were so many struggles that we have talked about today and there are so many more that have gone on over the last thirty years. As Brian has indicated, there are a number of threads in the work of people like Barry, like Brian, like Renate. So many people who are here today are consistent threads through many of those campaigns. Many of the techniques used in those campaigns are alive and well. The House of the Gentle Bunyip, where opposition to its demolition by the community of Clifton Hill ultimately saw the success of it being turned into social housing, after a blockade of fourteen months. Again, the bringing together of the community and the union movement was fundamental in bringing that success. The Fitzroy High School is again another victory we have had. The community struggled there for two years with a blockade of the building. Ultimately under this Government we see a successful outcome and the school will open again as a High School in 2004. We could talk about the Park Street public housing struggle or the undergrounding of the power line. There are so many of those sorts of struggles that have been so much a part of Fitzroy and North Fitzroy life.

Today, I think is fantastic that you Brian and Annabel and others have brought together this event so that we can not only remember those community struggles but to also understand the enduring nature of what it means to actually stand together to support things that are important to the community. That's part of my job as well, to stand with the community to represent the things that are important to us and on behalf of everybody here I want to thank you and Annabel and all those people that organised what I think has been a great day.

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The Melbourne Times Newspaper