

CITY VIEWS

No. 1. January, 1979.

In bringing out this urban newsheet, we hope now and in future issues to focus attention on the type of planning which is shaping our cities and towns. In the first five monthly issues leading up to the Local Elections in June, we hope to bring details of how and why our city and county councillors make their decisions and list how they vote. Included in this first issue are two lists showing how Dublin City Council voted on the revised motorway network for Dublin and how they voted on the preservation of Wood Quay.

It will be of interest to note in these lists that while those who voted for the Preservation of Wood Quay and against the motorway were mainly Community councillors, there was at least a healthy breakaway group from Labour and Fine Gael on the same side, while Fianna Fail party members voted like a flock of sheep to the party whip.

We intend also to highlight the need for public participation in planning. Involvement by the community would in its initial stages take more time but in the end would save endless rows, objections, oral hearings etc. Some day our officials will have to see this and, hardest of all, allow the public for which they work, to help formulate the plans for their cities and towns.

Unfortunately most of our schools and colleges neglect

to educate people as to their rights and duties as citizens, or in the functioning of their city and county councils. Many people still vote either through loyalty to a particular political party, or because they thought the councillor got them a corporation flat or house etc., but not because their councillor would fight for the sort of planning which would improve their lives in a broader sense.

To be fair, many councillors are grossly overworked, doing in many cases, things which people could do themselves if they were taught how to go about doing them. Also doing work which should be done by social workers. *They are elected to make decisions which effect the entire city and tens of thousands of people. They cannot do this properly if they have a hundred niggling jobs to do as well.*

They cannot do the research and study needed to run a city in this age of increasing urbanisation.

Apart from this there are not enough councillors. Maybe all this suits the authorities. If the councillors knew too much, or had more time for planning matters, officialdom mightn't find it so easy to do the type of planning which has turned Dublin into one of the tattiest cities in Europe, with some of the worst living conditions.

This issue is mainly concerned with Dublin but we do not intend to confine ourselves to the problems of the capital. In future issues we'll wander further afield.

CORPORATION REDEVELOPMENT
IN SUMMERHILL — SEAN Mc
DERMOTT STREET;

TRANSPORTATION PLANS FOR
DUBLIN

ART FOR THE PEOPLE

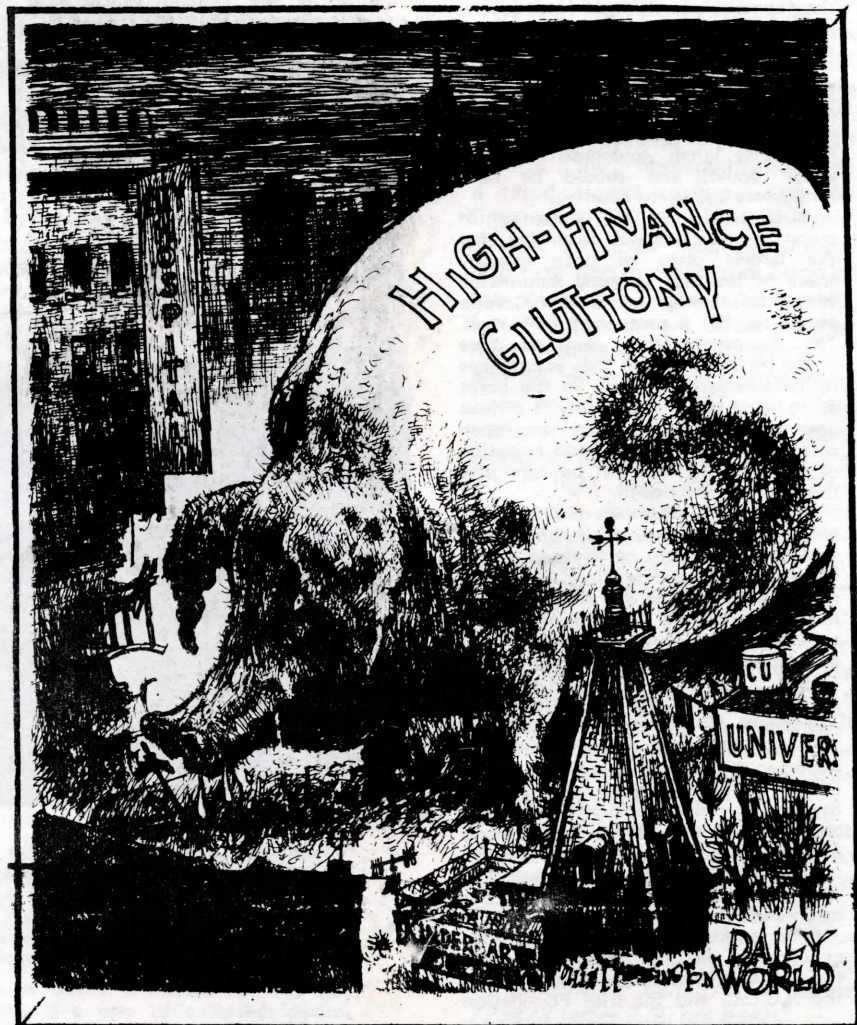
CITY CENTRE HOSPITALS

WOOD QUAY

HOW YOUR COUNCILLORS VOTE

TRAVELLERS IN CHARLEMONT STREET

It is hard to understand why the city authorities cannot look at sites occupied by itinerants and realise that for the sake of the unfortunate people camping there and the people living in the area, it would be a humane and sanitary thing to provide some form of toilets for them and even one weekly skip for them to put their rubbish in. Why should they not have the basic necessities which every other citizen is entitled to, a lavatory and a weekly rubbish collection?



Cartoon courtesy of Daily World (Daily Worker). New York.

CORPORATION REDEVELOPMENT ?

It is an alarming and disturbing thing that the authorities of this city and, indeed, of the country as a whole, seem to consider that the citizens for whom they work, are incapable of thinking for themselves, or of expressing their thoughts or desires or needs in a coherent fashion. It seems they must be planned for — particularly in the poorer areas of the city. It also seems to be no coincidence that the plans for 'improving' the life and living conditions of the people in these areas are mainly done to facilitate the lot of those planning for them and to facilitate the big business interests of the city with the provision of car parks, major roads, space for office blocks etc.

In recent months two plans have been put forward for the Sean McDermott Street — Lr. Gardiner Street — Summerhill area. One by Dublin Corporation and one by the Dublin Chamber of Commerce.

To take the Corporation plan first. *What part did the residents of the streets concerned play in the formation of the plans?* According to Tony Gregory of the North Dublin Community Council, of the 290 families surveyed by the N.C.C.C. only 4 families had been consulted about the plan. These 290 families were 1258 people.

In what way does the plan meet the basic needs of the area in which there are 652 occupied flats, many of only one room. The plan proposes building 60 'town houses'! and the rehousing of occupants in other new property elsewhere!

On looking at the corporation plan and then at the basic needs of an area such as this one can only wonder what the local residents will do with a multi-storey car park, how many of them will get jobs in the 'commercial development' or in the new government offices! These offices, ironically, are to be an extension for the Dept. of Education whose record in education in this area is deplorable. Surely there are more obvious pressing needs, such as employment for the people of the inner city, than government offices, which could, and should be built somewhere else in the country.

And where are the amenities? It seems strange but not surprising that the largest piece of open amenity space in the plan is along Summerhill which is intended by Dublin Corporation to be a heavy arterial road. The Summerhill flats were so close to the carriageway that they would have to be evacuated anyway in the event of it being built. It certainly is a most undesirable place to put an 'open amenity area.' The noise and pollution of heavy traffic will not be conducive to relaxation and health.

The Dublin Chamber of Commerce plan is very obviously made in the hope that the area could be 'cleaned up' to improve the business standing in the area and to safeguard themselves from further 'vandalism'. *Up to now what have these same business interests done for the area? How often are the Squash Courts in the Irish Life Centre given for the use of the many amenity starved youngsters in the streets surrounding it? How many of them have ever had a swim in the Centre's swimming pool? It can be reasonably assumed that if this completely deprived area was cleaned up in the manner that business interests would like to see it, executive type flats of the type now occupied in Irish Life would quickly squeeze out the bulk of the present community.*

The authorities cannot say that this community did not attempt to give their views to the corporation. In 1976 the N.C.C.C. and the Irish Foundation

for Human Development constructed a plan which involved the views of the local people as to how they would like to see their district develop.

It was ignored by the Corporation.

A survey by the Prisoners Rights Organisation in the Sean McDermott St. — Summerhill area, of 50 12-16 year old male offenders highlights several things:—

The hopeless, dismal existence of the children of this area — the vicious circle which seems to exist from generation to generation with little hope of escape — the exaggeration of the type of crime committed by the children and teenagers of this community — most of a type which wouldn't occur if they had a decent environment, a decent education and the prospect of employment. It also highlights something which the authorities always chose to ignore, indeed in many cases, with the present housing priority policy, positively encourages, and that is the size of the families which most of the children in this survey came from. The average family is 8 children. Far in excess of the national average of 4.4 children.

Of the 50 boys surveyed the average school leaving age was 13.

66% could neither read nor write.

84% of their fathers and 74% of mothers were unemployed. 98% of the youngsters were unemployed.

None has entered secondary school or will do so because none of them is qualified to do so.

92% have or have had a brother or father in prison and 94% believe that they themselves will end up in prison.

The report goes on to say . . . The threat of prison is always present for these youngsters. Yet it does not deter them. When the morale of a community is broken and it has become unstable through lack of financial opportunities and social security the internal sanctions in the community which are largely manifested through parental control cease to operate. . . when people live in such disadvantaged circumstances the deterrent effect of prison exists only in the mind of the penologist.

An interesting thing to emerge also from this survey is that most of the crimes were petty larceny. Only 11% of offences concern serious crimes against property i.e. thefts from houses or burglary. Only 4% were assaults against the person.

EDUCATIONAL BUSES

Michael Keating, T.D. Councillor for the area has come up with a novel idea which could help, though not solve, the education problems of the area. That is to bring in buses equipped as schools, and hopefully the novelty of this will attract some children who otherwise would probably not attend school.



Youngsters play among the rubble that was Foley Street. Behind the rubble is a large, dismal, tarmacadamed 'playground' empty of anything that might excite a child's imagination or keep him occupied. Surely one positive, immediate step which could be undertaken, would be to spend a few thousand pounds in equipping this space with hefty play objects, made of concrete if necessary. Even the rubble seems to be a better alternative for the kids.

Dublin's transport future

At a special committee meeting of Dublin City Council on Monday 22nd January, it was decided to accept a transportation plan which is a revised version of the Dublin Transportation Study by An Foras Forbatha. This study recommended 70 miles of motorways, 105 miles of arterials and an eastern crossing of the Liffey. The revision shows very little change.

Having looked through the revisions it seems that the revised version of the scheme simply means four lanes where there were going to be six in some places (though space will be left for six lanes!) Practically speaking for the many people living along the proposed arterials, it won't make much difference, they will still have the noise and dangerous pollution of heavy traffic. Places such as Cuffe Street are now four lane highways, so are Baggot Street, High Street, and many other streets in the city. Who wants that type of revised version? Not, we are sure the people of Bridgefoot Street, Church Street, Summerhill and many other streets with large concentrations of Corporation flat dwellers, who are obviously not considered by Dublin Corporation when they so often state that this transport plan will draw traffic from 'residential' areas! Perhaps some day they will say which residential areas they are considering, because it certainly is not the underprivileged parts of the city.

As we have stated in our introductory article we hope to assist people to make the right choice when they are voting in the Local Elections next June, by listing the councillors and the positions they have taken on the many controversial issues concerning the city or county you live in, which are voted on at council meetings. Below is a list of those who voted for and against the motorway proposals and of those who were absent for this very crucial vote. Though there may be exceptions, it is quite likely that those who absented themselves from this meeting or from the vote do not want to commit themselves, in case of losing votes, and of what use in the running of a city or town is a councillor who sits on the fence?

Revised Version of Dublin Transportation Plan recommending a motorway network for the City

For the Plan

Clr. Ed. Brennan FF
Clr. Tom Duffy Lab.
Ald. Paddy Belton FG
Clr. Paddy Dunne, Lab.
Clr. Eugene Timmons FF
Clr. Tim Killeen FF
Clr. Bertie Ahern, FF
Clr. Alice Glenn, FG
Clr. Danny Bell, FF
Clr. Richard Gogan, FF
Clr. Tom Leonard, FF
Clr. Frank Sherwin, (non-party)
Clr. Ray Fay, FG
Clr. Lauri Corcoran, FF
Clr. Eileen Lemass, FF
Ald. Ben Briscoe, FF
Clr. James O'Keeffe, FG
Clr. Sean Kelly, FG
Clr. Sean Moore, FF
Clr. Gerard Brady, FF

Against the Plan

Ald. Vincent Manning Community
Clr. Sean D.B.R. Loftus, Community
Clr. Johanna M. Barlow, Community
Clr. Pat Carroll, Lab.
Ald. Kevin Byrne, Community
Clr. Michael Keating, FG
Clr. William Cummiskey Lab.
Clr. Paddy O'Mahony, Lab.
Ald. Alexis Fitzgerald, FG
Clr. Dan Browne, Lab.
Clr. Brendan Lynch Community
Clr. Michael Collins, Lab.
Ald. Carmencity Hederman Community
Clr. Mary Freehill, (Lab.)

ABSENT:— Clr. Michael J. Cosgrave FG, Clr. Billy Keegan, Ald. Hugh Byrne FG, Clr. Tom Stafford FF, Ald. Dr. John O'Connell, Lab., Councillor Jim Mitchell FG, Clr. Pat Cummins FF, Clr. Fergus O'Brien FG, Clr. Joe Dowling FF, Clr. Peter Kelly FG.

... and look what's happening in the meantime!

Many people may be under the impression that we have to wait for the city Council to pass the City Plan (Revisions) Not at all. Officialdom, like the proverbial robot, keeps on moving until its physically stopped. A stroll through Dublin by anybody who hasn't been through it since the Revised Development Plan was put on display will see many gaps which weren't there when the people of Dublin were given the so-called choice of whether or not they wanted their city pulled down to make way for major roads.

An example of this is the disappearance of O'Byrnes pub on the Corner of Kevin Street and New Street.

It has been demolished, clearing the way for a continuation of the Cuff St. Kevin Street section of the Dual Carriageway, and thus section of this charming cross roads with its four pubs and group of mature trees, is soon for the hatchet. What's happened to the fighting people of the Liberties? After the long battle to save their area have they finally given up? A quick stroll through this ancient part of Dublin is enough to show that it will take very little further demolition to have all the areas which the corporation needs, cleared for their road network!

TRANSPORTATION ACTION GROUP (TAG)

Recent events at City Hall relating to transportation is enough to make any concerned citizen fear for the survival of our city as we know it. It seems that a number of our City Councillors see transportation only in terms of a vast road network mainly to facilitate the private car. Others, fortunately, who have obviously been concerned enough to study what is happening in other cities of the world, realise that there are other less drastic and infinitely better solutions. We must give these councillors our backing.

The seriousness of the transportation problem and its implications for the city, has prompted the formation of 'Transport Action Group,' or TAG for short. The present 'plan' (sic) envisages motorways to the cost of a half billion pounds, slicing through Dublin from Mount Merrion to Fairview, later filling in the Royal Canal for motorways and making of the Grand Canal a traffic reservation for a dual-carriageway.

TAG has begun to put forward reasonable alternatives to this awful concept, including a change in emphasis to the use of a public transport system. This would involve the implementation of a rapid transit system along the lines of C.I.E.'s 'Dublin Rail Rapid Transit' proposal, with an immediate first step in the introduction of bus routes and busways to ease the lot of the thousands of people who have to depend on public transport, and an immediate very large injection of money into our public transport system. More buses, more workers, more organisation and a bit of fight from the people who are in a position to force the Government into doing this — the men at the top in C.I.E.

While most people in the present day will not be in sympathy with C.I.E. because of the quality of service, a practical and economically viable solution can be realised in a rapid transit system for this city, if the enormous sums of money to be spent on the motorway were to be used for this purpose.

This column has been made available to us, and we intend to provide information regularly on all aspects of Dublin city transportation. All inquiries, offers of assistance etc. to be sent to TAG at 19 Smithfield, Dublin 7 or phone 723473 (after 7.30 pm only).

Gary O'Callaghan

ART FOR THE PEOPLE — A Culture Policy.

Until I brought the issue of culture and art for the people into politics in the General Elections of June, 1977, there were no votes in culture. But because I believed in the idea that culture is the expression of a whole people, a gift to itself, and not something that is the preserve of a few, I faced the voters of Ballyfermot, who may have wondered what art had to do with politics.

I know that certain classes over the centuries have made it their special preserve; for their own vanity, or because they felt they should be the only custodians of it, and that the great mass of the people should be excluded from any involvement in it. As if by contradiction, beautiful and awesome works have been the result, with the great religions as an overall inspiration. Fabulous architecture, heroic and beautiful sculpture, and paintings, the like of which it would seem impossible to excel.

Why then, shouldn't we still leave it to these big people who have a right to do what they like with their money? There may be two reasons here: my own

personal reason, and one dictated by the times in which we live.

My own reason is this: I don't feel they have a right to decorate themselves with art to the exclusion of the people. We live in a society which professes the democratic way of life. Yet we tend to reverse the idea of democracy by thinking that once you are rich you can do what you like — and that democracy is for the poor — who have nothing to share anyway. Another word for this very common view is cynicism.

Art has been one of the casualties of our badly thought out system. Houses and Health have had to be struggled for at all elections. I could be cynical myself and say, that where you see those schemes of houses, there you see the votes that put so many of our representatives into power — and votes may multiply. Dare I say, that because it was the numbers promised in Election manifestos that mattered, that most of those same schemes defy all the laws of decent town-planning, are lacking in cultural and social amenities — many having no shops, recreation centres etc.

Allowing for slum clearances, that necessitated the first of these schemes, most, including recent ones, are thrown there, row on row, with scant consideration for the cultural and social needs of the people.

But since the vast proportion of our people have been housed and rehoused via the ballot box, that is to say, *our own public money financing this policy*, then it is through the ballot box that the gentle hand of culture and the arts will come among us. Those of us who find the pressures of our day as much as they can bear — if they can bear it, will wonder how can art improve our lot. It would take too long for me to state how. I know it will.

How? Briefly, through a Culture Policy implemented by the Government — not only by taking each of the

arts and granting subsidies according to their need, but relating the arts to the deprived areas across the country, with heavily populated Dublin given particular consideration. And talking of consideration; it is class contempt that creates a Summerhill, a Theresa's Gardens, a Fatima Mansions — *a kind of mass-clearance mentality, without a thought for the individual souls who are to be domiciled in those places.*

Culture and the arts have been in the hands of tyrants, gangsters and moneyed cliques of one kind or another for centuries. But if it has, art has always sought to humanise. It has humanised heartless gods. Michelangelo, whose works are known throughout the world, said in one of his letters: *"One day, they (his patrons) will be made to pay for what they are doing to the people."*

The position of the arts themselves in our time is not unlike those deprived areas. The arts have been in a kind of Limbo, subjected to an abrasive anti-art condescension — mainly from commercial interests who pose as phoney patrons. Through mass-circulation tabloid newspapers they encourage prolonged ignorance of the arts — and all finer things. They use the readers' ignorance — an ignorance they foster daily — to lash artists and culture.

Hopefully, in the next election Art for the People will get more votes than in the last election, as the people exert their right to a share in their culture.

James McKenna

CITY CENTRE HOSPITALS

Within the next few years many of our city centre hospitals will be closed down to be amalgamated with larger hospital complexes mostly outside the city. According to Alderman Alexis Fitzgerald, the proposal for the transfer of these hospitals should be a cause for much concern. He says that what may be suffering most in an over generous commitment to general hospital development at this time are the present and future needs of the people who either live or use the city centre, including the vast part of Dublin especially as no provision has been made for the retention of the Jervis Street Accident and Emergency Department which up to November last year had catered for 46,579 patients.

He points out that there is need for high level discussion on the retention of a south city and north city hospital capable of dealing with the community problems that arise, especially in the most densely used three square mile area in the nation.

For those who were not aware of these closures it will be of interest and most likely of concern for them to learn that, Baggot Street Hospital, Sir Patrick Dun's Hospital, Mercers, Jervis Street, and possibly the Meath and Adelaide Hospitals, will be lost to the city centre.

WOOD QUAY FIGHTING FUND

Funds are urgently needed by those fighting to save the historic archaeological site at Wood Quay

They are presently fighting for the preservation of this national monument in the Courts. To continue to fight they must have MONEY. Please send any donations, of any size to:

*The Wood Quay Fighting Fund
c/o Bank of Ireland,
College Green
Dublin 2.*

*Votes on Relocating Civic Offices
and preserving Wood Quay*

Ald. Vincent Manning Community
Clr. Sean D.B.R. Loftus Community
Clr. Johanna M. Barlow Community
Clr. Mrs. Alice Glenn, F.G.
Ald. Kevin Byrne Community
Clr. Michael Keating F.G.
Ald. Dr. John O'Connell, Lab.
Clr. Jim Mitchell, F.G.
Ald. Alexis Fitzgerald F.G.
Clr. Brendan Lynch, Community
Ald. Carmencita Hederman Community
Clr. Peter Kelly FG

Against Preservation

Clr. Edward Brennan FF
Clr. Tom Duffy, Lab.
Ald. Paddy Belton, FG
Clr. Paddy Dunne, Lab.
Clr. Eugene Timmons, FF
Clr. Tim Killeen, FF
Clr. Bartie Ahern, FF
Clr. Luke Belton FG
Clr. Billy Keegan,
Clr. Danny Bell, FF
Ald. Dr. Hugh Byrne, FG
Clr. Richard Gogan, FF
Clr. Tom Leonard, FF
Clr. Pat Carroll, Lab.
Clr. Frank Sherwin, non-party
Clr. William Cumiskey, Lab.
Clr. Tom Stafford, FF
Clr. Ray Fay, FG
Clr. Paddy O'Mahony, Lab.
Clr. Lauri Corcoran, FF
Clr. Eileen Lemass, FF
Clr. Pat Cummins, FF
Clr. Dan Browne, Lab.
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Ald. Ben Briscoe, FF
Clr. Michael Collins, Lab.
Clr. James O'Keefe, FG
Clr. Sean Kelly, FG
Clr. Joe Dowling, FF
Clr. Sean Moore, FF
Clr. Mary Freehill, Lab.
Clr. Gerard Brady, FF.

The Community Government Movement have asked us to announce that they are holding a Church Collection on Sunday, 11th February, to help towards the cost of the Local Elections in June. Anyone who would be willing to help is asked to contact: *Connie O'Reilly, 20 Shanowen Park, Dublin 9. Phone 423709.*

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