



WOOD QUAY OCCUPATION NEWS

10P.

OUR ELECTION VICTORY.

The news that Lord Mayor Paddy Belton had been sacked by the people of his Dublin constituency was unreservedly welcomed behind the barricades here at the Wood Quay site. No-one in Irish public life has opposed preservation more strenuously than Mr. Belton. There can be little doubt that those who suffered his frequent outbursts in the chamber at City Hall must feel that Irish political life could only be enriched by the passing of Belton into oblivion.

Only once in every five years do the people have an opportunity to intervene directly in the government of their own city. Fortunately such an opportunity was given to them on June 7th, and they were indeed ready to rise to the occasion as they passed judgement on the city Fathers. Across the length and breadth of Dublin the answer was the same. The heartfelt views of the electorate cannot be "ruled out of order;" the people have had their say, Dubliners are proud of their city and care for its good government and the preservation of its cultural heritage.

As I heard the news from the counting-centre in the early hours of Saturday morning, the words of Prof. Kevin B. Nowlan, speaking at the last Wood Quay march came to my mind: "Let us resoundingly say we want Wood Quay saved." Clearly the electors of Dublin had taken up that cry as his Lordship Belton, Ray Fay, Sean Kelly, Laurie Corcoran and others of their ilk fell. May the demand of the people not only resound in City Hall but also penetrate the corridors of power in Leinster House.

Let us hope that June 7th 1979 may mark a turning point in the history of local government in Dublin. If the bureaucrats will not change their priorities the people will change the bureaucrats. The excellent performance of such pro-Wood Quay candidates as Sean Dublin Bay Loftus, Alexis Fitzgerald, Pat Carroll and Mary Flaherty to name but a few, show that the people desire a triumph of right over might. Next week we will see the election of a new Lord Mayor. It is to be hoped that the person appointed will be worthy to be first citizen of our city. All of us who take pride in our national heritage and in the City of Dublin look forward to seeing a new Mayor restore that office to its former pride and integrity.

Our friends who favour the preservation of Wood Quay and the relocation of the Civic Offices have a clear majority in the new City Council. The determination of the occupation force is strengthened by the knowledge that we are in sight of victory.

In conclusion, on behalf of those behind the hoardings of the site at Wood Quay, may we say Thank You to the citizens of Dublin.

NEWS.

A Public Meeting was held on Saturday 9th June at 3.00 p.m. Its main function was to inform the public of the present state of the Wood Quay occupation. Rev. F.X. Martin made a plea for food supplies and support for the manning of the machines and gates on the site. The main speakers were Michael O'Leary, T.D., Sen. Gemma Hussey and Prof. K.B. Nowlan.

The festivity of the occasion was heightened by a display from the Dublin Morris Dancers. A carnival atmosphere hung over the Wood Quay site - colour and gaiety being provided by the numerous flags and banners which had been erected by the occupiers.

Outside the shed a drum of fiery timber
sparked and blazed in tatters of rust.
The heaped offerings of food flickered
inside, where the shadowy People were assembled.

"We have a truce. They have made
every mistake." "You couldn't trust their oath!"
An assenting growl. The tired voice rasped:
"They are not all thugs, remember. But be vigilant!"

The high cranes hung in the dark,
swift hooks and whining spider brains
locked by our mental force.
Disturbed pits and drains trickled with unease.

Where were they, with their talking done,
looking down from what window, the white cuffed
marauders, visages of rapine and arrogance,
stealthy and furious above our circle of firelight?

Thomas Kinsella.

NO DOUBT ABOUT IT.

Dublin has spoken with a clear voice in favour of Wood Quay. The results of the local elections on 7th June leave no doubt on this point. It was a major issue at the ballot box.

The ejection of Paddy Belton as Lord Mayor out into the political wilderness is due, in large measure (on his own admission), to his hostile stand about Wood Quay. The rejection by the people of this prominent political figure was no hasty impulse or accident. It is the price he has got to pay for his opposition to the manifest will of the people. Nor was he an exception. Ray Fay and Sean Kelly were also eliminated, and for the same reason. By contrast, other candidates benefitted to an appreciable degree from the brave stance they took on Wood Quay. Mary Flaherty, the 23-year old teacher from Finglas, who was elected in that same constituency where Paddy Belton was rejected, has stated publicly that it was Wood Quay which clinched her election. We salute you, Mary!

The decision to make Wood Quay a political issue is due to Brian Lenihan, Minister of Fisheries. He was the official spokesman chosen by the Government to make a statement on 14th March 1979, and so took the occasion to declare that the responsibility for a decision rested with the Dublin Corporation Council. The obvious consequence of that statement was that the only way to save Wood Quay was in the Council Chamber of the Corporation. But how to make the city councillors see the light? Fortunately the City Council is an elected body, and is answerable to the people directly, unlike the officials in the corporation offices. The local elections were due on 7th June and this was the golden opportunity to see that councillors with the correct view were elected. Those anxious to save Wood Quay set about it by an unusual, but open and direct method.

A Save Wood Quay Election Committee was formed with Michael O'Brien the publisher as director. He produced a series of election cards for Dublin City, listing the candidates known to be for or against Wood Quay, according to each electoral area. People were explicitly exhorted to "Vote For" or "Canvas Against" the named candidates. It is estimated that some 250,000 such cards were printed and distributed. The rest is history. The results show a clear majority of newly elected Council in favour of saving and cherishing Wood Quay. We go forward from this successful campaign to make the most of what has just been saved.

Just as we go to press more heartening news has been announced. Michael O'Leary has been elected to the European Parliament. Bravo, Michael! He has long been an outspoken and prominent protagonist for Wood Quay. We now have our "Wood Quay" man in Europe.

F.X. MARTIN.

5th June 1979: After a morning of sudden alarms, minor scuffles and occasional moments of confusion all is quiet. The sun is shining warmly, the contenders by unspoken consent, are taking a respite. It is an interlude in which the thoughts do some grazing.

I am sitting in the driving seat of a dumper on Wood Quay, the wall of the old Vicking city a few yards in front, the bulk of the Cathedral reaching above it into the sky, the debris of history allaround and its dust in the air.

In Fishamble Street as every dog in the street knows, Handel's Messiah had its first performance. The Drapier Letters were printed nearby, Grattan was born there. Mangan lodged there at a time when a smoking fire in the office of the solicitor he worked for was daily a suffocating misery. Poor Mangan, who despaired of it all early on:

"I have pleasure in nothing and I admire nothing. I hate scenery and suns. I see nothing but what is fallen and ruined."

Behind me is Winetavern Street, which got its name from the excess of its inns. The innkeepers were free and easy. At some stage they burrowed under the Cathedral to use its vaults to store their wine casks and to serve as shebeens:

Spirits above and spirits below

Spirits divine and spirits of wine.

When I first wandered through it, it was given over almost entirely to the sale of secondhand clothes, and, if I remember rightly, the manufacture of coffins. Wooden awnings projected over the shop windows to protect cast-off garments that were incapable of further deterioration. Flora Mitchell, I think, painted its marchalled awnings and its steep cobbled descent.

High Street and Thomas Street of the late 'Thirties drift through the mind. I have tried to record them elsewhere:

"In the main thoroughfare all was bustle and business; the great drays of Power's distillery and Guinness's Brewery clattered on the cobbles and filled the street with loud trundling and banging as they unloaded their wooden barrels into the open gratings; the drivers of the number 21 trams banged hell out of the footbells at urchins who swore manfully back at them; in the shops the women haggled and bargained over what little they had to spend; assistants with their pencils behind their ears

screwed bills and money together into little cannisters mounted on overhead wires which whirred across the shops when they pulled the lever and delivered their contents to the cashiers, where they were checked, receipted and the change inserted and, when a trigger was pulled, were duly returned again. There wires where the little cannisters crossed and recrossed formed a miniature tramway system overhead.

Outside the dogs nosed for discarded morsels under baskets of fish and vegetables and fruit. Across the road John's Lane Church with its spire high above the crowded pavements kept one watchful eye on heaven and the other on what was going on around it. Its interior, hushed and saturated with devotion, spoke of God in the accent of the poor. The flickering candles begged a thousand favours, the votive lamps, in glass cups of red and blue, bloomed their thanksgivings about the shrines of St. Rita and the mother of Good Counsel. That Church was always busy with the prayers of women with shopping bags or old men aware of the slow trickle of the sand.

There is this strange feeling that, if only I knew where to look, I would see it all going on still.

JAMES PLUNKETT.

NEWS (CONT.)

A solution to the problem of the site flooding was found as a result of negotiations between the leaders of the occupation and John Paul & Co. on Monday 11th. The workmen were allowed the use of the crane to fix the pump, and also to carry out general maintenance work only on the site.

The visits of distinguished Dubliners like Garret Fitzgerald and Sen. Mary Robinson to the site are boosting the morale of the occupiers. Further encouragement is provided by the loud response to the "HOOT FOR PRESERVATION" banner.

THE VOICE OF THE LIBERTIES.

Looking from the main gate on Winetavern Street towards the west, you will see a number of well-kept houses, unfortunately without gardens; further along the road there are many other people living in over crowded conditions without any garden in sight, a park would suit these people down to the ground. There would be no problem turning Wood Quay into a park.

During the past few days it has been pleasant listening and speaking to these real Dubliners from Merchant's Quay, especially the gentleman who brought refreshments and told us all about Winetavern Street and the house that he lived in, no. 23, and the lady whose people had shops and stables further up the street towards John's Lane, and to the other residents who entertained us with songs. These people want Wood Quay saved.

There are many people like these from all parts of the Liberties, they want to stay in an area where they were born and bred. It's houses these people want, not office blocks or a dual-carriageway, that turn communities into dangerous traffic islands.

If you care about Dublin and the inner city, support the Save Wood Quay group, who, by their efforts are trying to make our capital city a more pleasant place to live in the future.

It has been quite clear for some time that the decision taken almost a quarter of a century ago to build the Civic Offices on Wood Quay was a mistake. It is also unfortunate that Dublin Corporation officials and some Councillors refused to listen to the advice given to them to build their offices on one of a number of more suitable sites available in other parts - north and south of the Liffey.

The Wood Quay site is unsuitable for a number of reasons:

- (1) A portion of the site is a National Monument.
- (2) The view of Christ Church Cathedral from the quays will be destroyed.
- (3) Office development on this site will encourage more office development in the surrounding area.
- (4) Many extra motorcars will be driven into this area and will make a very bad traffic problem worse.

We are sick and tired listening to Dublin Corporation officials making excuses for their silly mistakes on Wood Quay. The take-over of this site by some very responsible citizens in an effort to stop destruction of the National Monument is the people's answer to the authorities, and it proves that you can fool some of the people some of the time, but you cannot fool all of the people all of the time.

John Gallagher - Chairman of the Liberties
Association.

SNIPPETS.

The launching of the good ship 'Olaugh' complete with 'Nordic' attachments, was carried out on 'Dubhlinn' on Sunday. A number of trips were made which proved to be a welcome change from the more arduous tasks of the occupation.

Our good neighbours and friends, the Casey family report that their three new-born kittens are named F., X., and Martin.

Tom O'Riordan.

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