MONASH UNIVERSITY

THESIS ACCEPTED IN SATISFACTION OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ON.....7 December 2001.....

.....[redacted]....

Sec. Research Graduate School Committee

Football: the People's Game.

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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April 2001

CONTENTS

SUMMARY

From the non-corporate football fan's point of view developments in VFL/AFL since the 1960s saw the comfortably familiar replaced with economically driven innovation. Football became big because of 'community' support, but the community and the nature of the support that it gave was changing. Economic imperatives forced the League to favour the corporate sector of that community at the expense of the non-corporate. The non-corporate sector engaged in a process of grieving its perceived loss of sovereignty over the Game. There were five stages to this process: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance.

Chapter 1 introduces football as Melbourne's ubiquitous obsession and places this study in its historiographical context. It presents different ways in which community has been understood and shows how these understandings have been applied to football at different times.

Chapter 2 presents the 'barracker' as the central character in this study. It is argued that a psychological dysfunction places the barracker at a disadvantage in dealings with football's more rational administrative sector.

Chapter 3 examines the myth of the 'People's Game' and finds it wanting. It argues that belief in that myth constituted denial of the V.F.L.'s long-standing opposition to attempts by government and community organisations to keep it answerable to the community that made it great.

In chapters 4 and 5 football clubs defy ground managers by relocating to outer suburban grounds, thereby weakening the home ground convention that had been the last bastion of localised understandings of community in football. Ratification of these moves by club members provided further food for denial by creating an impression that consumer sovereignty was alive and well in a turnstile-sufficient football industry.

In chapters 6 and 7, however, it is argued that, as advertising revenue became more important than gate revenue, the strategic site on which the battle for sovereignty over the Game was being fought shifted. Restricted Grand Final access for non-corporates produced anger at a V.F.L. increasingly beholden to the corporate sector. Fans were forced to bargain for a greater degree of inclusion. The cheer squad, however, offered a loophole.

Chapter 8 traces the origins and early history of the cheer squads and the changing nature of their relationship with the clubs and the League. Chapter 9 shows how the VFL and the clubs claimed control over the cheer squads.

Chapter 10 uses Footscray as a case study in the disenfranchisement of the non-corporate fan. It shows how the threat of club extinction was used as emotional blackmail to ensure the cooperation of supporters. It also looks at changing conventions in club nomenclature, interstate relocations and the implications of these for club identity.

Chapter 11 shows a public losing interest in going to the football and an A.F.L. depressingly out of touch with the non-corporate fan. However it offers signs of acceptance in the way in which new conditions produced new expressions of community in football, just as old expressions had been merely a reaction to former conditions.

DECLARATION

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any degree or diploma in any university and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference has been made to it in the text of the thesis.

ALFRED ANDREWS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Firstly I would like to thank my supervisor, Graeme Davison and assistant supervisor, Mark Peel, for their guidance. I also would like to acknowledge the assistance of the History staff at Monash, in particular, Rosemary Johnston.

A number of people helped me to gather research material during the course of this study. Ross 'Twiggy' Dunne from the Collingwood Football Club was very helpful as were the members of the Collingwood Football Club Archives Committee. Ron Reiffel, curator of the Richmond Football Club's museum, gave me invaluable assistance in locating materials pertaining to his club. Col Hutchinson, the A.F.L. media liaison officer, gave me access to important League and club reports. My good friend, Steve Brennan, a postgraduate Psychology student at LaTrobe University, helped me to locate reference material that enabled me to develop a psychological profile of the 'barracker'.

As a significant portion of this study was based on cheer squads I owe a debt of gratitude to the many members of the Essendon, St.Kilda, Richmond, Hawthorn, North Melbourne and Collingwood cheer squads who agreed to be involved.

Finally, I acknowledge that that I could never have completed this study without the support of my best friend, Rosalee Victory. I would like to thank her for remaining my best friend during these often stressful past four and a half years.

ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations have been used during the course of this work.

A.F.L.	Australian Football League
A.N.F.C.	Australian National Football Council
C.C.L.	Combined Cheersquads' League
C.O.C.S.	Collingwood Official Cheer Squad
G.M.A.	Ground Managers' Association
H.F.C.S.	Hawthorn Forever Cheer Squad
M.C.C.	Melbourne Cricket Club
M.C.G.	Melbourne Cricket Ground
O.R.C.S.	Official Richmond Cheer Squad
St.K.C.S.	St.Kilda Cheer Squad
V.C.A.	Victorian Cricket Association
V.F.A.	Victorian Football Association
V.F.L.	Victorian Football League

Chapter One:

INTRODUCTION

The history of Australian Rules football parallels the history of Melbourne. The Game originated in the first decade of Victoria's separation from the colony of New South Wales and shared a common infancy with the Melbourne metropolitan area. Greater Melbourne was essentially shaped by a suburbanisation process which began in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Its indigenous code of football was nurtured during this period, culminating in the formation of the Victorian Football League (V.F.L.) in 1897. While the Game itself attracted participants of various ages and levels of skill to regular organised competition, it was as a spectator sport at its elite level that football became the ubiquitous obsession of twentieth century Melburnians. This obsession, rather than the sport itself, is the primary concern of this study.

Although the League came into existence as a splinter group from the Victorian Football Association (V.F.A.), formed in 1877, it was the League rather than the Association which would produce the Game's elite competition. Although football's popularity extended beyond Victoria's borders, it was the V.F.L. competition, rather than the major football competitions in South Australia, Western Australia or Tasmania, that would attract national attention, even in those states where the Game was not as popular as the international football codes.

Within the broader context of the popularity of elite League football lie the separate strands of allegiance to individual clubs. From 1925 to 1981 the V.F.L. competition comprised eleven Melbourne-based clubs and the Geelong Football Club, each attracting separate bodies of support. These were, to a significant extent, a reflection of the way in which greater Melbourne had grown from John Batman's 'village' on the banks of the Freshwater River. The Australian Football League (A.F.L.), which by the end of the century included clubs from all Australian mainland states, was really an expansion of the V.F.L., renamed in 1990 to reflect its increasingly national status. The ongoing development of this highly sophisticated, professional and corporatised elite competition continued to mirror the development of Melbourne into a great metropolitan centre.

Such a competition could not exist without mass support. An understanding of the nature of this support is crucial to any insights that a study of this mass obsession might provide. Football's ever growing body of literature abounds with homage to the Game's on-field heroes. Among these are club histories, often commissioned by the clubs themselves, which serve as repositories of the kinds of facts and statistics from which many club supporters derive their sense of continuity with their respective clubs' pasts.

One such work is 125 years of the Melbourne Demons by Greg Hobbs. Because Melbourne is the oldest Australian Rules club and its early administrators, Thomas Wills and H.C.A.Harrison, are regarded as the founders of the Game itself, the coverage that Hobbs presents of the club's early history sheds much light

on the early development of this indigenous Victorian winter sport. The bulk of the work, however, is focused on the club's on-field successes. There are sections devoted to past Melbourne premiership teams, Brownlow Medallists, star players and administrators.[1] Father Gerard Dowling's The North story is similarly focused, almost exclusively, on happenings on the field.[2] Rarely do these kinds of histories throw any critical light on the phenomenon of club support itself or the history of the barracking experience.

Some writers of club histories gesture toward the importance of the connection between clubs and their local support. The residential and business population of an area nominally represented by a club is subsumed beneath a notion of community in which locality is the crucial component. These histories become local histories to the extent that they explore that connection. Lionel Frost's The old dark navy Blues includes an introduction that sets the Carlton Football Club's history firmly in the context of the social history of the Carlton area.[3]

Other more readily recognisable local histories, particularly those pertaining to localities with the same name as that of a League football club, explore the connection to some extent. Susan Priestley's history of South Melbourne is one such work.[4] Priestley is not primarily concerned with football or the South Melbourne Football Club but makes some candid

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[1] Hobbs, Greg, 125 years of the Melbourne Demons, Melbourne, Melbourne Football Club, 1984.
[2] Dowling, Gerard P., The North story, Melbourne, The Hawthorn Press, 1973.
[3] Frost, Lionel, The old dark navy Blues, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1998.
[4] Priestley, Susan, South Melbourne: a history, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1995.

observations about the link between business interests and football clubs, attributing at least two of South Melbourne's premierships to certain prominent local business identities. The 1909 premiership was won under the presidency of the controversial publican and subsequent State parliamentarian, Henry Skinner, whose Golden Gate Hotel in Clarendon Street had incurred the wrath of striking maritime workers by catering to 'scab' labour during the 1890 strike.[5] The other great business identity mentioned by Priestley in relation to South was the wealthy grocery store proprietor, Archibald Crofts, whose playthings included racehorses and footballers. He employed 24 of South's 1933 premiership squad, the famed 'foreign legion', which Crofts had recruited mostly from Western Australia with the help of Frank Killingsworth, a jeweller whose shop became the virtual headquarters of the club for a time.[6]

If Priestley's work could be described as a local history that occasionally dabbles in football, Harry Gordon's The hard way provides an example of a football club history which occasionally dabbles in locality. Primarily a narrative history of the Hawthorn Football Club, The hard way at one point digresses from the charisma of John Kennedy, the courage of Peter Crimmins and the Grand Final heroics of Brereton, Platten and Dipierdomenico to examine the club's inability to attract support in Hawthorn itself. Gordon cites a 1953 article by H.A.de Lacy in the Sporting Globe, in which the writer attributed Hawthorn's 'lilywhite approach to football' to a lack of football-mindedness in that leafy middle class

[5] Ibid., pp.214-215.
[6] Ibid., pp.267-268.

stronghold. From Gordon's account it would appear that patrician values are the key to understanding the Hawthorn Football Club's local connection. He describes the Hawthorn City Council as having been the club's 'landlord and virtual master' during the club's early years.[7] Gordon suggests that the council's strong support for the elevation of the club from V.F.A. ranks to League status in 1925 was motivated by a desire to enhance the area's esteem 'from a business as well as a public standpoint.'[8]

The picture of Hawthorn as a leafy middle class stronghold of conservative values is more comprehensively drawn in A history of Hawthorn by Victoria Peel, Deborah Zion and Jane Yule, a local history that touches on football even less comprehensively than Priestley. The writers refer to an essay competition run by the Hawthorn Standard in 1951 on 'Why Hawthorn boys should barrack for the Hawks', in the context of stressing the 'importance of locality as the common denominator for community'.[9]

An understanding of the relationship between locality and community is especially important in any historical analysis of the changing nature of the football public. The American social historian, Thomas Bender, defines community as 'a network of social relations marked by mutuality and emotional bonds'. Importantly, he stresses that community is an experience rather than a place.[10] In popular

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[7] Gordon, Harry, The hard way, Sydney, Lester-Townsend, 1990, p32.
[8] Ibid., p.36.
[9] Peel, Victoria, Zion, Deborah and Yule, Jane, A history of Hawthorn, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press with the City of Hawthorn, 1993, p.198.
[10] Bender, Thomas, Community and social change in America, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press,

discussion, however, when the topic of Australian Rules Football is linked with the notion of community, a strong connection between community and place is almost invariably made. The nostalgically inclined point to a halcyon era when local boys fulfilled their childhood ambitions by growing up to wear the guernsey of the local club they had supported since infancy.

Collingwood club historian, Richard Stremski, one of the few writers of club history to look beyond the on-field heroics, has described the intense territorialism of Collingwood supporters in the early decades of the club's history. He has described how Smith Street, the geographical border between the suburbs of Collingwood and Fitzroy, became the scene of physical and verbal altercations between supporters of the Magpies and the Maroons when the rivalry between the two clubs was at its most bitter prior to World War 1.[11] In explaining the rationale behind his title, Kill for Collingwood, Stremski refers to an ongoing territorial dispute that had long been a strain on the relationship between the two municipalities and had helped to create the football rivalry. By an unfortunate accident of topography, Collingwood's closest neighbouring suburb to the west, Fitzroy, was able to indulge in what was perceived by Collingwood residents to be a relative snobbery at Collingwood's expense. In an era of poor drainage, the low-lying areas of the Collingwood flat were obliged to receive much of the effluent that flowed from the higher country immediately to the west. A bitter inter-municipal dispute raged over the use of an

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1978, pp.6-7.

[11] Stremski, Richard, Kill for Collingwood Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1986, pp.37-38.

abattoir near the notorious Reilly Street drain, which regularly inundated the Collingwood flat with Fitzroy sewerage. Indignant Collingwood councillors refused to allow Fitzroy butchers to use the facility. Any killing at the Collingwood abattoir, with its inevitable resultant stench, had to be done 'for Collingwood'. By creating a football club, whose most bitter rivalry in its early years would be directed against Fitzroy, the population of Collingwood was giving its football team a similar license to 'kill for Collingwood'.[12]

Territorial rivalries of the kind described by Richard Stremski have long ceased to define football allegiances in Melbourne. Demographic changes, developments in mass media technology and economically driven changes in the League's organisational structure have been reflected in changes to the way in which football's mass support manifests itself.

In two papers published in 1998 and 1999, Ian Andrews from the University of Sydney's Department of Behavioural Sciences has called for, and indeed provided, a conceptual framework through which to interpret the changing nature of 'community' as it has applied to elite Australian Rules football since World War 2. He distilled the sociological literature on the subject of community into four distinct understandings of this frequently misused word. The first of these, community as a *geographical locale*, amply illustrated in Stremski's Smith Street border clashes, is clearly at odds with Bender's definition and is quickly dismissed by Andrews himself because it fails to capture the social dimension of what is essentially a sociological concept. From here he moves to the

[12] Ibid., pp.2-3.

palpably more useful understanding of community as a *local social system*. This view perceives community as the networks that arise from social interactions. Those who understand community in this way are divided as to whether or not these interactions need to occur wholly within a particular geographical locale. The territorially static model would tend to belong to a time when people lived, worked and played almost exclusively within the boundaries of a particular suburb or neighbourhood. The more physically mobile the population the less likely these local social systems are to be self-contained entities. The third understanding of community which Ian Andrews noted takes the second understanding a little further by taking into account the quality and content of the social interactions which occur. This understanding goes beyond an objective observation of such interactions towards an interpretation of the *sense of identity or belonging*, sometimes referred to as 'communion', which participants in these interactions can actively shape and experience. 'Culture', which Andrews defines as 'the collection of symbols, values, ideas and beliefs that help us to make sense of our world, as well as our place within it', becomes the direct result of successfully shared communion.[13]

In further exploring culture as an expression of community, Andrews looks to the historian, Benedict Anderson's concept of 'imagined communities', applied by Anderson himself to whole nations, but similarly applicable to social groups of any size. Community, as 'imagined', belongs to the category of cognitive and

[13] Andrews, Ian, 'The transformation of "Community" in the A.F.L. Part One: Towards a conceptual framework for "Community"', in Occasional Papers in Football

subjective phenomena rather than objective reality. It may even be illusory, but its genuineness or otherwise is secondary to the way in which it is imagined. While the size and heterogeneity of a large social grouping would tend to work against communion, the development of mass media has helped to provide common cultural symbols that bring similarities, rather than differences, to the fore. From here, Andrews looks to John Thompson's The media and modernity as an exploration of the way in which the media has become increasingly responsible for the production and circulation of cultural symbols.[14]

The use of the idea of community in an *ideological* capacity represents the fourth understanding that Ian Andrews identified in the literature on the subject. This usage is particularly prevalent in nostalgic reaction to the process of modernisation. Ferdinand Tönnies, in his pioneering work, "*Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*", published in 1887, argued that industrialisation had caused the intimate and meaningful social interactions characteristic of community (*gemeinschaft*) to be replaced by the transient, less personal relationships prevalent in modern society (*gesellschaft*). This theme of loss of community has since been used as an ideological weapon, in various contexts, by people wanting to preserve what they believe to have been an older, simpler way of life in the face of change.[15]

Ian Andrews warns against making too clear a delineation between these four ideal types which, in reality, frequently overlap. While assessment of the

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Studies, Vol.1, No.2, August 1998.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid.

degree of overlap between them may go part of the way to explaining the relative importance of each at any moment, Andrews suggests that a clearer picture of the changing balance of these understandings over time can be gathered by utilising the insights of Raymond Williams. In the course of examining the Marxist concept of hegemony in his 1977 publication, Marxism and literature, Williams proposed that social forces at any given point in time could be seen as either dominant, emergent or residual, with all three exerting some degree of influence over attitudes or events.[16]

The development of a connection between football allegiance and place during the Game's infancy was a product of the local historical context in which Australian Rules football was nurtured. Changing patterns of employment in Melbourne during the latter half of the nineteenth century encouraged a larger, more mobile and increasingly affluent population to settle progressively further from the city centre. Suburbs were formed by new aggregations of people in particular areas.[17]

Initially these suburbs were bureaucratic constructs capable only of giving rise to communities based solely on geographical locale. Only as local networks and institutions were developed could these communities develop characteristics of Ian Andrews's second and third understandings of community. Richard Cashman, in Paradise of sport: the rise of organised sport in Australia, explained that sporting clubs have

[16] Ibid.
[17] Cashman, Richard, Paradise of sport: the rise of organised sport in Australia, Melbourne, Oxford

played a significant role in the development of communion in Australian suburbs. A club formed as a vehicle of local 'togetherness' could help to affirm the esteem of a suburb by engaging in regular competition with similar clubs formed in other localities.[18]

A factor that helped to reinforce the nexus between locality and football allegiance was the development of the electorate system for the recruitment of players. This formal constraint upon a player's choice of club made the virtue of loyalty to one's area a necessity for the men who played the Game and set a continuing example of local patriotism for those who watched. The system was adopted somewhat belatedly by the V.F.L. in 1915[19] and not actually implemented until after World War 1. The idea had been considered by the V.F.A. in the 1890s, but the wealthier clubs, which would soon break away to form the V.F.L., had opposed the idea.[20]

The adoption of the electorate system by the V.F.L. was a response to problems associated with professionalism. League clubs experienced severe financial pressure when leading players were able to play one club's offer off against that of another club in search of the best possible reward for their services. The League did not actually sanction payment to players until 1911, but strict amateurism had proven impossible to enforce. The amateur sportsman represented a middle class ideal, emanating from a

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University Press, 1995, pp.93-94.

[18] Ibid.

[19] V.F.L., Club Districts. Minutes of Special General Meeting, 1 October 1915.

[20] Sandercock, Leonie and Turner, Ian, Up where, Cazaly? London, Granada, 1981, p.52.

mid-nineteenth century ideology derived from athleticism, Muscular Christianity and Social Darwinism, which promoted sport as a form of rational recreation designed to build individual character and enhance social discipline. Protestant churches and elite public schools promoted the idea that participation in team sport would provide a framework for the moral development of society's future leaders.[21] Professional sport, on the other hand, was linked with gambling and tainted by allegations of cheating, bribery and corruption. It was believed that a sportsman motivated by pecuniary gain could not share the noble ideals of the patrician amateur.[22]

In October 1915 the League allotted recruiting territory to each of the eight Melbourne-based V.F.L. clubs, but the withdrawal of some clubs from the competition as a result of the war delayed the implementation of the new scheme. New territories had to be allotted in 1925 when Hawthorn, North Melbourne and Footscray were admitted to the League and there was periodic redistribution over the next sixty years to take account of demographic changes. In 1968, to eliminate the expensive practice of clubs attempting to outbid each other for country recruits, the League introduced zoning over the whole of the State of Victoria.[23]

The development of clubs based on suburbs, a feature of most organised sport in Australian capital cities until the 1980s, was a necessary concession to the distances between Australia's major population

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[21] Ibid., pp.54-55.
[22] Ibid., p.60.
[23] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1968, p.10.

centres. Weekly competition involving interstate travel was simply not feasible.[24]

If it was the League's intention, in introducing the electorate system for the recruiting of players, to uphold some semblance of a middle class amateur ideal, it would seem ironic that the territorial consciousness which this helped to foster in the first half of the twentieth century was strongest in working class suburbs like Richmond, Collingwood and Footscray. The club most easily identifiable with patrician ideals was Melbourne, whose following was drawn largely from the ranks of the Melbourne Cricket Club (M.C.C.) members rather than from any particular territorial base. Essendon, too, had a far-flung following due partly to its consistent success, which gave it an appeal that transcended local boundaries, and the fact that until 1922 the club was based at the East Melbourne Cricket Ground. The club's following was characterised more by class than location until the move to the Essendon Recreation Reserve, later colloquially dubbed 'Windy Hill', which began the belated development of a territorial connection with the suburb after which the club was named.[25]

The irony is perhaps diminished by consideration of the possibility of overlap between Ian Andrews's four ideal types. In the working class communities all four understandings can be simultaneously relevant. A social system centred on a particular geographical area implies the first two. Its very separateness

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[24] Vamplew, Wray, 'Australians and sport' in Vamplew, Wray and Stoddart, Brian (eds), Sport in Australia: a social history, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994, p.9.

[25] Mapleston, Michael, Flying higher: history of the Essendon Football Club, 1872-1994, Melbourne,

encourages communion, which can be galvanised when a sporting club representing that local social system is pitted against a club representing a separate system. Cashman's 'us against them' notions, corresponding to Andrews's third ideal type, then come into play. An inter-community battle played out on the football field can even take on an ideological dimension when the conflict goes beyond the mere tribalism of a match between teams representing similar ethnic, religious and socio-economic constituencies. If, for example, one team representing a predominantly Irish Catholic working class community is opposed to another representing an exclusive club for patrician gentlemen, it is possible that the ideologically inclined could perceive the match as being symbolic of class warfare.

The exclusive club is, of course, a community in its own right. In this case communion, if it exists, must come from something other than common membership of a local social system. It could possibly be the exclusivity, a sense of separateness from the common herd, which provides togetherness. If this is coupled with a sense of superiority or of having been 'born to rule' the ideological dimension is present. Separateness and superiority correspond respectively to the third and fourth of Ian Andrews's ideal types. It is possible that some members of the M.C.C. could experience their community in this way. For others the M.C.C. could simply provide an entitlement to occupy a particular geographical locale, in this case the Members' enclosure at the Melbourne Cricket Ground (M.C.G.), during events at that ground. In this case only the first ideal type is applicable.

Essendon Football Club, 1994, p.12.

Another factor that helped to reinforce a territorial consciousness among supporters of V.F.L. clubs between the two world wars was the convention that a club's home ground be located at or near the particular suburb with which the club was identified. This was almost universal among the V.F.L. clubs by the mid-1920s. Even the exception, the M.C.C. Football Club, adhered to the convention, in a sense, by being based at the cricket club's stadium. The short-lived University club, formed to represent a scholarly community had not only been an on-field failure, but had also failed to capture a substantial following without territorial support and an attempt in 1925 to form a club representing public servants was even less successful.[26]

For those suburbs fortunate enough to share a name with a V.F.L. club, football provided what Richard Cashman has called a 'social cement'.[27] Civic leaders and media people used the football club as a tool for the formation of communities capable of being simultaneously understood in accordance with the first three ideal types.[28] These tightly knit football communities, centred on recognisable football suburbs and displaying a sense of communion arising from identification with a local social system, began to be gradually displaced after World War 2 as a result of the Federal Government's immigration program instituted in 1947. During this post-war period an increasingly affluent and, as a result, predominantly car-owning population was becoming less bound to locality.

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[26] Pascoe, Robert, The winter game, Melbourne, Mandarin, 1996, pp.72-73.
[27] Cashman, op.cit., p.92.

Those imbued with both nostalgic inclination and a predilection for ideologies which make a virtue of the *status quo* could have been excused for thinking that the displacement of those largely self-contained football communities signalled the end of community itself. Indeed it is in the nature of community, understood ideologically, to be constantly under attack from the forces of modernity. This understanding is based on a polarised reading of the *gemeinschaft/gesellschaft* theories of Ferdinand Tönnies. It is a reading that interprets modernisation as the systematic replacement of *gemeinschaft* with *gesellschaft*. Thomas Bender, for one, rejects this interpretation, arguing that Tönnies himself had not advocated it and pointing to the survival of close inter-personal human interactions within essentially impersonal modern contexts.[29] A study of the transition of Australian Rules football from the rough-and-tumble schoolboy amusement of 1858 into the highly sophisticated corporate commodity that it became by the end of the twentieth century would do well to examine a possible sub-plot in which residual strains of *gemeinschaft* survive amidst the *gesellschaft* which surrounds and often threatens to engulf them.

Too strict an application of the *gemeinschaft/gesellschaft* dichotomy to a history of Melbourne is of limited value given that Melbourne was not a village for long. By the time Australian Rules football began to be played, it was well on the way to becoming an industrial metropolis. The spectators who attended the earliest matches, however, were engaging in *gemeinschaft* in its purest

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[28] Ibid.
[29] Bender, op.cit., chapter 2.

form. Only the immediate friends and family of the players attended. Matches were played on open parklands and there was usually no admission fee charged. The spatial divide between player and spectator was largely a matter of informal negotiation. As a result it was not uncommon for spectators to encroach on to the field of play. By the mid-1870s crowds of 10,000 or more were not unknown and the constant invasion of the playing field by spectators was creating serious problems for the conduct of matches.[30] Refinement of the sport would require the fencing of ovals. The rapid escalation in the popularity of the game would present the opportunity for revenue raising by the charging of an admission fee to matches played within the confines of enclosed grounds.

In his 1996 University of Melbourne doctoral thesis, Cricket, culture and consciousness: England and Australia, 1860-1939, Ian Harriss interpreted, among other things, the cultural significance of the design and infrastructure of English and Australian cricket grounds during the period to which his title referred. As Australian Rules football originated as a winter pastime for cricketers and was played, for much of its history, on grounds designed for cricket, Harriss's insights are useful here. Harriss noted that, unlike English cricket grounds that were inclined to relate directly to their environmental setting, Australian grounds were 'based on the principle of closure' so as to keep their surrounds at a distance.[31] He suggested that Australian colonial

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[30] Ross, John (ed), 100 years of Australian football: 1897-1996, Melbourne, Viking Penguin, 1996, p.28.
[31] Harriss, Ian, 'Cricket, culture and consciousness',

culture's origins in both the Enlightenment and early modern capitalism had produced a 'desire to dominate and control nature'.[32] If this is the case, the emergence of football as a marketable commodity provided the ideal catalyst through which those cultural origins could take on a concrete expression.

The provision of a spatial infrastructure for the commodification of the game and the formalisation of an organised elite competition, the V.F.A., in 1877 could, in the polarised interpretation of Tönnies which Bender rejected, be regarded as the end of *gemeinschaft* in elite Australian Rules football. Melbourne itself was no longer a village. Industrial *gesellschaft* had infiltrated its people's way of life. To regard such developments as the overthrow of *gemeinschaft* would be to render discussion of the role of community in football quite barren. The nature of modernisation is such that community, almost inevitably, is seen to be in decline. There can be little point, therefore, in making an arbitrary choice of a particular event to mark its final overthrow. The fencing of ovals, the charging of an admission fee, Ron Barassi's defection to Carlton, South Melbourne's move to Sydney and other developments which popular mythology has identified, from time to time, as the end of 'football as we once knew it' are all symptomatic of the rise of *gesellschaft*. Football administrators have, by necessity, responded to the increasing complexities which *gesellschaft* has brought to bear on their task. What needs to be examined is the way in which the imposition of these responses on the football public has affected the barracking

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University of Melbourne, Ph.D. thesis, 1996, p.40.
[32] Ibid., p.69.

experience, and the ways in which *gemeinschaft* has continued to assert itself within the context of this imposed *gesellschaft*.

If a polarised interpretation of Tönnies renders discussion of community in football redundant, a less extreme approach may be more useful for the social historian determined to press on regardless. Community could be seen as being not so much declining as changing. The trappings which people associate with community, which are sometimes mistaken for community itself, come and go and are frequently mourned in their passing. Even as this is happening, community is evolving new manifestations, which in turn will be mistaken for community itself and eventually mourned in their passing. A simple example of this type of thinking is the perception that television has destroyed football communities by turning passionate supporters into armchair spectators. As television's role in the Game grew in importance, from the provider of humble local 'live' telecasts in 1957 to a vehicle for the development of a national competition in the 1980s and into the 1990s, it lured many football followers away from the terraces. Far from destroying football communities, however, television was instrumental in the production and circulation of the cultural symbols that enabled viewers to imagine their community. Football communities came to include television viewers who had never actually attended a League match. With national coverage, Essendon supporters living at Broome could be as intimately acquainted with happenings at their club as Bomber fans living at Moonee Ponds.

The development of internet technology and its increasing affordability and availability to Australian households through the 1990s opened up new avenues for community formation among fans of the A.F.L. clubs and of the Game itself. At the beginning of the new century, the *Official Australian Football League Website* provided a ready source of information, including results, live score updates, current news stories and match reviews as a free service to football enthusiasts in any part of the world where the technology was available. Copyright for the site was credited to Seven Network Ltd., News Ltd., and the A.F.L. itself.[33]

In addition to free services the site also provided the opportunity for visitors to join its *Premiers Club*, a subscription initiative that enabled its members to access live audio coverage of every A.F.L. match, weekly video highlights, advanced statistical services and competitions. It was described on site as 'footy's first truly international club', a community for 'passionate footy followers all over the world'.[34] Unlike the free aspects of the A.F.L.'s site, which fostered the same essentially passive consumption of the Game that television encouraged, the *Premiers Club* provided its members with the opportunity to participate in discussion with other fans in an ongoing on-line forum.[35]

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[33] *Official Australian Football League Website*. Internet site. Updated 10 April 2000. Accessed 11 April 2000 at http://www.afl.com.au/home/default.htm

[34] *Premiers Club - welcome*. Internet site. Updated 10 April 2000. Accessed 11 April 2000 at http://www.afl.com.au/premiersclub/home.htm

[35] Ibid.

Official A.F.L. club web-sites provided a club-specific variation on the type of services available on the A.F.L. site. The Collingwood site, for example, offered news, player profiles and pictures, club history, coaching tips and streaming audio of the club song. It also provided facilities for the on-line purchase of club memberships and merchandise.[36] With the exception of its free chat room, the Collingwood site did not provide much scope for interactivity. It was primarily a public relations avenue for the club, providing a predominantly passive experience for visitors.

Club supporters seeking to actively shape an internet community centred around allegiance to their particular club had the option of frequenting one of the many unofficial fan sites. One such site was *Nick's Collingwood Page*, set up in 1996 by a teenage Magpie supporter based in Tasmania. Nick's page provided a 'live scoreboard' service on match days, club information, player statistics and a complete database of scores from all Collingwood matches since 1897.[37] It also provided a facility for fans to send email messages to individual players.[38]

The bulletin board, however, was the feature that gave *Nick's Collingwood Page* its strongest impetus as a tool for community formation. Here Collingwood supporters and a handful of dissidents

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[36] *Home of the Mighty Pies, Collingwood Football Club.* Internet site. Updated 10 April 2000. Accessed 11 April 2000 at http://www.collingwoodfc.com.au/index.htm

[37] *Nick's Collingwood Page.* Internet site. Updated 11 April 2000. Accessed 11 April 2000 at http://www.magpies.org.au/nick/

[38] *Nick's Collingwood Page - the Team.* Internet site. Updated 11 April 2000. Accessed 11 April 2000 at

from rival clubs could engage in lively discussion on a range of topics classified under broad forum headings such as 'General Discussion', 'Team', 'Training', 'Match', 'Club' and 'Cheer Squads'. Access to the bulletin board was free to all and discussions were only subject to minimal moderation. Only extreme language and potentially libellous content was censored by the site organisers. Beyond that there was no restriction on topics discussed or opinions expressed.[39]

The replacement of the comfortably familiar with economically driven innovation, particularly over the last four decades of the twentieth century, has changed the nature of community in football significantly and been a source of resentment among football's vast public. Public debate about these changes has been characterised by a number of linked antitheses parallel to the *gemeinschaft/gesellschaft* dichotomy. Football's administrators have been readily demonised for being (allegedly) out of touch with the football public. They have been seen to court favour with football's increasingly important 'corporate' sector at the expense of the 'real' football fan. Changes made to this end are seen to have been at the expense of 'tradition'. Although, in practice, these parallel dichotomies are not absolute, they are often treated as such as debate become emotionally heated and polarised.

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http://www.magpies.org.au/nick/team.htm

[39] *Nick's Collingwood Page - Bulletin Board.* Internet site. Updated 11 April 2000. Accessed 11 April 2000 at http://www.magpies.org.au/nick/ubb-cgi/ultimate.cgi

This thesis is primarily concerned with the historical interplay between the corporate and communal aspects of Australian Rules football at its elite level. It is therefore to be expected that the dichotomies set out above will come into play. It is also to be expected that a sharpening of the focus on these linked antitheses will reveal a blurring of the boundaries between them, suggesting that they are based on an over-simplification of reality. While this is unlikely to surprise academic theorists it would seem to go against much of the rhetoric which flavours public debate on these issues. The dichotomies themselves are neither remarkable nor unique to football. It would be reasonable, if perhaps a shade mischievous, to say, ideologically of course, that they have been around for as long as community has been declining. It has been particularly since the 1960s, however, that changes in the marketing and presentation of football have intensified debate. It is this period, therefore, which will receive most scrutiny.

Notwithstanding due recognition that the parallel dichotomies represent an over-simplification of the objective realities at work, the existence of a subjective perception among many of the Game's disaffected supporters that the Game has been hijacked by corporate interests is unmistakable. For the purposes of this discussion it would be useful to clarify the difference between the corporate football supporter and the non-corporate fan.

A non-corporate football fan is one whose financial commitment to the Game extends only to an annual expenditure on membership dues or, alternatively, the payment of cash admission charges

each week, possibly in addition to the cost of club merchandise and individual or family participation in relatively inexpensive club functions. Very roughly speaking, on the basis of 2000 prices, it is likely that such a supporter's personal annual expenditure on football would be a matter of hundreds of dollars. This is significantly less than the thousands, tens of thousands, or even hundreds of thousands that a club or League corporate sponsor might plough into the Game. The ability, quite apart from the matter of willingness, to make a corporate commitment to the Game or to a club is therefore dependent to a very large degree on the financial resources at one's disposal. Clearly, a person on a low income or otherwise lacking in financial assets is in no position to become part of football's corporate sector.

The word 'corporate' is being used here as a catch-all to describe that section of the football community whose financial resources, and willingness to channel them into football, enable them to make a level of financial commitment which encourages football authorities to grant them privileged status. Used in its strictest sense the word would apply exclusively to the affairs of corporations. As such it would have a specific meaning in the vocabulary of business. However, the term is used in the present discussion from the point of view of the supporter whose commitment to football is merely a personal one, as defined in the previous paragraph. Such a supporter may not know, or want to know, the difference between a corporation, a company, a propriety limited or any other of the myriad terms which have specific meanings to those whose business it is to know them. Football's

'corporate sector', therefore, is a term in discourse rather than an easily definable social category. As such it represents something of a mysterious and largely misunderstood presence in the Game's culture. Its denizens are loosely identified and demonised as the 'suited brigade', to use a term coined by one of the persons interviewed as part of the oral research component of this study.[40] Its spatial territory is defined by corporate boxes and other areas from which the non-corporate supporter is normally excluded. Nowhere is the dichotomy between the corporate and the non-corporate supporter more apparent than in the privileged access that the corporate sector receives for the purchase of Grand Final tickets. For this reason the evolution of the current system of Grand Final ticket distribution will be examined thoroughly in later chapters.

Partisanship is an essential feature of Australian football, including its history. It is as well to confess from the outset that my own sympathies lie with the endangered remnant of traditional club supporters rather than the A.F.L. executives and their big business allies who increasingly control the Game. While I have striven to avoid polemic, I cannot claim to be an impartial witness of the recent history of the Game. I recognise that corporatisation is now a *fait accompli*. So this history is not a nostalgic cry for the return of the good old days of club football. Nevertheless, in concentrating attention on the activities and outlook of the remnant of traditional club supporters, I have necessarily sought to convey

[40] Research interview, Pam Mawson, 21 August 1998, p.9.

the sense of powerlessness and alienation felt by many towards the modern version of the Game. Their subjectivity is an objectively important subject of analysis. That I share something of their outlook is, I hope, an aid to empathetic understanding, not a professional disqualification.

The powerless and alienation referred to above contrasts with the quaint democratic notion, believable in the days of low admission prices and little corporate involvement, that the Game was, in a sense, public property. The validity or otherwise of this notion will receive more detailed scrutiny in Chapter Three of this dissertation. As a perception, however, it coloured much popular wisdom and, when challenged by the alienating and disempowering influences of corporatisation, it produced a sense in which something seemed to have been lost.

This sense of loss is not unique to football. Indeed it has been very much at the core of opposition to economic rationalism and globalisation in broader Australian society. In the 2000 Hugo Wolfsohn Memorial Lecture at La Trobe University, Judith Brett called upon the work of the then-recently deceased Graham Little to articulate a plea on behalf of those people who saw themselves as the losers in the move toward the internationalisation of the Australian economy. She urged Australian political leaders to recognise that, even given the inevitability of globalisation, the loss that many people were experiencing was real, as was the need to mourn. 'Recognise our loss and give us time to

mourn,' she urged. 'Don't just berate us as slow learners and yesterday's people.'[41]

The situation facing the non-corporate football supporter at the beginning of the twenty-first century presents a microcosm of many of the problems associated with the sense of loss resulting from these broader social changes. With comfortably familiar popular understandings of football under constant attack from the forces of modernisation, the reaction of football's disaffected non-corporate public could well be seen as a process of grieving the loss of football as they once knew it and their previously assumed sovereignty over the Game.

Elizabeth Kübler-Ross, a Swiss-born psychiatrist who studied dying patients in America in the 1960s, provided a useful metaphorical framework for understanding this reaction. Her studies revealed five stages in the psychological responses of the terminally ill to their impending deaths. The five stages that she identified were denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance.[42] These five stages should not be interpreted too rigidly, but treated instead as ideal types, each one representing the predominant defence mechanism in place at particular points in the dying process, providing for the dying patient a 'coping mechanism to deal with [an] extremely difficult situation.'[43]

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[41] Brett, Judith, 'From mourning to hope: Graham Little, emotional literacy, and why John Howard can't say sorry,' 15th Hugo Wolfsohn Memorial Lecture, La Trobe University, 18 October 2000, in La Trobe Forum, No.17, December-February 2000-1, p.21.
[42] Kübler-Ross, Elizabeth, On death and dying, cited in Phipps, William E., Death: confronting the reality, Atlanta, John Knox Press, 1987, p.49.
[43] Kübler-Ross, Elizabeth, On death and dying, New

These ideal types can and do overlap. In his critique of Kübler-Ross, John S. Stephenson warned against the practice of her 'true believers' who rigidly interpret her work as meaning that the only 'good death' is one in which the deceased has passed neatly and sequentially through all five stages as set forth by Kübler-Ross.[44] One would do well to heed Stephenson's advice so as not to be guilty of using, as Stephenson put it, a 'fine conceptual instrumental' as a 'dogmatic sledge hammer'.[45] The warning is even more appropriate given that this model is being applied in the present project to a situation merely analogous to that for which it was originally devised.

The title of this thesis has been chosen with a sense of irony. Belief in popular ownership of the Game is the very concept that has become the object of mourning. During the period with which this project is primarily concerned elite Australian Rules football ceased to be turnstile-sufficient. In particular it was escalating player payments that made it necessary for the football industry to look beyond the paying spectator in order to make ends meet. The greater the shortfall between gate revenue and the costs of running the Game the more reliant football became on the corporate sector.

Dr.Shayne Quick from the Department of Human Movement, Recreation and Performance at Victoria University, reacted to the failure of moves to merge the Melbourne and Hawthorn clubs at the end of the

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York, MacMillan, 1969, p.122.

[44] Stephenson, John S., Death, grief and mourning, New York, MacMillan, 1985, p.92.

1996 season by lamenting the 'disproportionate influence' that the 'subsidised fan in the outer' had been exerting over the way the Game was delivered.[46] Dr.Quick's comments give an economic rationalist's perspective of the non-corporate supporter's position. Subsidised status is a far cry from ownership. Non-corporate football supporters could be forgiven for failing to realise that the ever increasing admission and reserved seat prices that the A.F.L. demands from them represent only a fraction of the cost of presenting the Game to them. Many would be indignant at the suggestion that they were being subsidised.

Although the success of the rearguard action on the part of the anti-merger forces in 1996 was a mere hiccup in the ongoing rationalisation of the A.F.L. competition, this momentary reprieve would have served to perpetuate the myth of popular ownership. It is on the strength of this myth that the denial phase of the grieving process rests. When irresistible emergent forces once again assume control, mounting losses to the non-corporate sector turn denial into anger.

At Kübler-Ross's third stage, her patients sought to negotiate a delay to their inevitable fate.[47] This bargaining phase, applied to the football situation, makes the consumer susceptible to exploitation. Individuals keen to keep what once seemed to be theirs by right pay exorbitant prices

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[45] Ibid.

[46] Quick, Shayne, 'Paying to win: the business of the A.F.L.' in Bulletin of Sport and Culture, No.9, December 1996, pp.1-2.

[47] Kübler-Ross, op.cit., p.72.

for whatever privileged consumer status the authorities are willing to sell to them.

The payment of an ever-increasing premium in order to maintain privileges once taken for granted is as unsustainable for the football supporter of modest means as is the bargaining phase for Kübler-Ross's dying patients. When the bargaining phase can no longer be sustained, depression sets in. Kübler-Ross identified two aspects of the depression phase. *Reactive* depression was a response to losses incurred as a result of the patient's declining condition.

> With the extensive treatment and hospitalisation, financial burdens are added; little luxuries at first and necessities later on may not be afforded any more.[48]

The applicability of this analogy to the situation facing the football fan seems clear. The depression stage also has a *preparatory* aspect. Kübler-Ross referred to the 'preparatory grief that the terminally ill patient has to undergo in order to prepare for his final separation from this world.'[49] For the football fan, a mounting history of injustice produces the expectation of further injustice and a sense of futility. The depression phase purges the barracker of any remaining resistance and acceptance becomes possible. Kübler-Ross suggests that acceptance should not be mistaken for contentment.

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[48] Ibid., p.75.
[49] Ibid., p.76.

She describes it as a state 'void of feelings … as if the pain [has] gone, the struggle is over.'[50]

The question as to whether football is sufficiently important to warrant such a study could, and perhaps should, be asked. Football's significance to a local history of Melbourne lies in its ubiquity and its bigness. It became, and remains, big because of community support. Without that it is merely a game, albeit a great one. The community that supported and continues to support football is an ever-changing entity. Far from being in decline, it is an ongoing reflection of life in the city of football's birth. Its injustices are those to be expected in a post-industrial capitalist society. The way in which football fans have reacted to injustice, real or imagined, is the subject matter through which the human condition can be studied. I can think of no better laboratory for a study of the human condition than my adopted and much-loved home metropolis of Melbourne and no better context in which to study it than that city's ubiquitous obsession.

[50] Ibid., p.100.

Chapter 2:

THE BARRACKER

At the end of the twentieth century football supporters found themselves caught between two worlds and two languages. Football, in the eyes of its traditional supporters, was an expression of a 'community', once bounded geographically, now increasingly virtual. Control of the game, however, now lay in the hands of officials, sponsors and businessmen for whom football was not a community but a commodity. Its fortunes were governed by market forces, not sentimental loyalties, and its supporters were consumers not participants. When supporters grieved for the loss of 'community' they were not just regretting the loss of their 'market sovereignty', their capacity as consumers to influence the conduct of the game, but something more. If they were only consumers it would be hard to explain why it was they, rather than the proprietors of the game, who experienced the sense of loss, or why the path to the acceptance of their position was as long as painful as it was.

Grieving, the metaphor I have adopted from Kubler-Ross to explain this painful process of adjustment, is not something that is experienced individually by every football supporter. For most of us there are far more serious causes for grief than the fate of a game. I use the idea of grief to describe a collective process, or set of attitudes, that transcend the sum of individual sorrows.

According to popular rhetoric, Australia is a sporting nation, of which Melbourne is the capital. Australia's sporting market is highly competitive with Rugby League, Rugby Union, Soccer and Australian Rules, to name just the football codes, vying for public patronage. Even in Melbourne, the primacy of Australian Rules football has come under threat. International Rugby Union tests drew large crowds to the M.C.G. in 1997 and 1998. A World Cup Soccer qualifying match between Australia and Iran in 1997 drew 85,000.[1] A.F.L. chief executive officer, Wayne Jackson, acknowledged the threat that rival football codes posed during a television interview on the evening following Melbourne Storm's win in the 1999 National Rugby League premiership.[2]

Elementary market economics would suggest that such a healthy level of competition would have ensured consumer sovereignty in Melbourne's football market. Consumer sovereignty, in this case, should have been a simple matter of voting with one's feet. Football supporters, however, were not consumers in the same sense as buyers of tangible products. Football's paying customers not only bought the right to witness a game of football but, in a sense, they also bought an emotional stake in the outcome, not only of the immediate match, but also of a series of matches which comprised a season. This emotional dimension was intensified when on-going allegiance to a particular club created a sense of being part of a community, however that community was understood by the individual. An emotional stake led to an extremely inelastic demand. From a position of strength the

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[1] Sunday Age, 30 November 1997, p.1.
[2] HSV7, 'Talking Footy', 29 September 1999.

A.F.L. could make unpopular decisions knowing that its customers' attraction to the Game was based on something more compelling than simple, rational consumer preference for one product over another. Even those who boycotted the 'live' product often still watched it on television. Their admission price was paid by virtue of their subjection to advertising. There was no evidence to suggest that their emotional stake in the outcome was any more or less than that of those at the ground.

This chapter will draw upon a diverse collection of media images and anecdotes, secondary sources, as well as comments from individual supporters themselves to construct a picture of non-corporate football supporters. It will examine what it is about these people which enables their sovereignty, as consumers, to be subverted in this way. The prevailing figure that will emerge will be the sometimes comical and frequently passionate figure of the 'barracker'. Admittedly this is the face of a stereotype, but if treated as an expression of the *zeitgeist*, it provides an image of a soul worthy of analysis.

On 21 April 1928 an article in the Australasian heralding the beginning of the new V.F.L. and V.F.A. seasons paid tribute to one of the Game's founders, H.C.A.Harrison, then 92 years old and in failing health. He was hailed as 'the founder of a new religion, whose [sic] name is the Australian game of football.' The article observed that although in football, 'as in other forms of worship many of its devotees stray from the straight and narrow path, that

is the fault of the individual and not of the game.'[3] The Game itself was sacrosanct. Love of the Game was central to the genteel orthodoxy that the article seemed to be ascribing to Harrison. The writer continued his glowing appraisal.

> There has never been a sweeter dispositioned old man than the father of the game, as he thought ill of no one, reckoning that every man on the ground was playing the game in a proper manner, and that the umpiring was above reproach.[4]

These comments were made in the context of an article lamenting the 'power of the purse' to influence the dynamics of the relationship between the V.F.L. and the V.F.A. The parochial concerns of 'too many paid secretaries of clubs acting as League delegates' was undermining the interests of the Game as a whole and threatening to erode the 'foundation laid down by men of a former generation', meaning, presumably, Harrison's generation.[5] Harrison's orthodoxy was part of the gentlemanly amateurism which middle class idealists sought to uphold on the sporting field. Its opposite found expression in the mercenary attitudes of players determined to maximise their remuneration. It was also visible in the attitudes of their accomplices, the paid club administrators responsible for the existence of 'too

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[3] Australasian, 21 April 1928, p.34.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid.

much money in the game'.[6] Significantly, for the purpose of this discussion, it could also be seen in the partisan demeanour of the barracker, whose love for Club seemed greater than love for the Game and whose insatiable demand for victory at any cost was not inhibited by bourgeois notions of fair play.

Geoffrey Blainey, in A game of our own: the origins of Australian football, examined the origins of the term 'barracker' and cited a definition of the verb 'to barrack' from the 1892 book, Shall I try Australia, written for an English readership by G.L.James. James explained that young men in Victoria formed strong allegiances to their particular favourite football teams. The act of barracking was to:

> audibly encourage their own favourites and comment disparagingly upon the performance of their opponents, a proceeding which leads to an interchange of compliments between the rival barrackers.[7]

The term first became popular in the 1880s and was originally unique to Australian football, later spreading to other sports in Australia and eventually to England. Considering various explanations for the origin of the term, Blainey made a strong case that it arose as a result of matches involving soldiers based at Victoria Barracks in the 1860s. British

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[6] Ibid.

[7] James, G.L., Shall I try Australia, cited in Blainey, Geoffrey, A game of our own: the origins of Australian football, Melbourne, Information Australia, 1990, pp.53-54.

troops based in Melbourne after the wars against the Maoris in New Zealand engaged in competition with local football teams. With little understanding of the 'Victorian Rules' code, the British had scant regard for the niceties of the Game and resorted instead to brute force, verbal abuse of opponents and exhortation of their own players to acts of outright violence against opponents.[8] The barracker could thus be defined as one having no understanding or appreciation for the Game and no sense of fair play. The Australian National Dictionary presents various shades of meaning, each of which documents qualities ascribable to the popularly understood notion of the Australian football barracker. These include the use of 'provocative or derisive language', being 'boastful of one's fighting powers', giving 'support or encouragement to (a person, team, etc.) … by shouting names, slogans or exhortations' and 'argu[ing] or agitat[ing] for a cause.'[9]

In the Australasian's 1928 defence of patrician amateurism the writer established another set of parallel dichotomies. Those with the interests of the Game at heart were gentlemen amateurs imbued with a strong sense of fair play. Clubmen, on the other hand, were uncouth professionals chasing victory at any cost. It would seem to be one of history's ironies that, in the 72 years between the Australasian article and the end of the century, professionalism would change sides in the dichotomy, becoming the over-riding ethos of those charged with the administration of the Game. The existence of 'too

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[8] Blainey, op.cit., pp.51-52.

[9] Ramson, W.S. (ed), The Australian national dictionary, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1988,

much money in the game' would, in time, become a thorn in the barracker's side. Explaining away this irony is possibly the ke to understanding the barracker's fatal flaw. The desire for victory at any cost produced the very professionalism that created the economic imperatives that have made the corporate sector so important to football. For the barracker victory came at a very high cost indeed, that being the metaphorical death of consumer sovereignty over football.

While much popular wisdom sees organised spectator sport as an outlet for the pent-up aggression of the over-stressed individual, behavioural studies by Siegman and Snow, released in 1997, suggest that this view is a misconception. In these studies the researchers tested the effects of both the outward expression of anger and the inner experience of it on cardiovascular reactivity. Subjects experienced anger-arousing stimuli in three different ways. The 'anger out' response involved an immediate and extroverted reaction to anger-arousing events, while 'anger in' was a more reflective, internalised way of dealing with the situation. A third response, 'mood-incongruent speech' involved subjects verbalising their anger slowly and quietly. Findings revealed that the anger-out condition produced pathogenic levels of cardiovascular reactivity in direct contrast to the negligible physiological ramifications of the mood-incongruent response. The anger-in condition produced a moderate reaction roughly half-way between the two extremes.[10]

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p.40.

[10] Siegman, Aron and Snow, Selena, 'The outward expression of anger, the inward experience of anger

Nevertheless, the popular 'safety valve' theory on football crowd activity, buoyed by the findings of researchers such as S.Feshbach, who found strong correlation between pent-up anger and high blood pressure,[11] encourages a degree of tolerance for terrace behaviour of a kind not normally tolerated in polite society. John Rocke, of Leopold via Geelong, gave a graphic description of the football barracker in a letter to the Herald in 1962 which presented a striking contrast to the Australasian's portrait of Harrison.

> A 'barracker' is a red face, stentorian bellow, and one eye. He is a windbag obsessed by a bag of wind. A 'barracker' is a creature of violent likes and dislikes. He likes his team supporters, hot dogs, canned beer and the 'man in the know'. He beams on members of his team. He dislikes umbrellas, his team's opponents, and the man in front of him. He hates the other team's supporters and the umpire ... He glories in victory as if it was self-accomplished and loud are his praises of the mighty. In defeat he is pitiful as he writhes in misery ... A barracker runs the gamut of emotions in one afternoon. He knows hope, fear, exultation

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and CVR: the role of vocal expression' in Journal of Behavioural Medicine, Vol.20, No.1, February 1997, pp.29-45.

[11] Feshbach, S., 'Reconceptualisations of anger: some research perspectives' in Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, No.4, 1986, pp.123-132.

and sorrow. But win, lose or draw the truth is not in him.[12]

If Harrison represented an orthodoxy based on the old patrician amateurism, John Rocke's barracker was clearly the most damnable of heretics. His malaise had a physical dimension. In direct contradiction of Feshbach, his red face implied high blood pressure, evidence of high cardiovascular reactivity further intensified, no doubt, by his poor diet of hot dogs and canned beer. His mental health was an even greater cause for concern. The bipolarity of his vicariously experienced emotions, his violent tendencies and obsessive nature would inspire an interesting diagnosis. Rocke's *coup de grace*, however had spiritual connotations. 'The truth is not in him'. Though he may have been a quite affable fellow in everyday life, at the football in his guise of the barracker he was capable of intense hatred of his fellow human beings.

It is worth considering the possibility that the sense of loss being felt by barrackers is largely a result of their own inherent shortcomings. It could be argued that an insatiable addiction to victory is one of the hallmarks of the barracker. Addiction carries connotations of physical, mental and spiritual malady. In this light, it is possible to see partisan football allegiance as a disease.

This notion of football allegiance as an unhealthy obsession can be given further scholarly credibility if it is considered in comparison to the

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[12] Herald, 1 October 1962, p.4.

more lethal malaise of nationalism. Benedict Anderson, in Imagined communities, presented a quote from Tom Nairn's The break-up of Britain, in which Nairn presented nationalism in terms comparable to the rather bleak picture of football allegiance presented in the previous paragraph.

> 'Nationalism' is the pathology of modern developmental history, as inescapable as 'neurosis' in the individual, with much the same essential ambiguity attaching to it, a similar built-in capacity for descent into dementia, rooted in the dilemmas of helplessness … and largely incurable.[13]

Anderson made this quote in the context of some generally unfavourable observations about the nature of nationalism that would perhaps strike a chord with observers with a similarly condescending predisposition towards the phenomenon of football club allegiance. Anderson noted three perplexing and irritating paradoxes bound in the concept of 'nation', all of which have their equivalent in traditional notions of 'club'.

The first of these was what Anderson called, 'the objective modernity of nations to the historian's eye vs. their subjective antiquity in the eyes of nationalists'.[14] While supporters of football clubs make much of the perceived longevity of their clubs, their lack of the historian's eye for the 'big

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[13] Nairn, Tom, The break-up of Britain, quoted in Anderson, Benedict, Imagined communities, London, Verso, 1983, pp.14-15.

picture' blinds them to the truth that their clubs are very recent developments when viewed from the perspective of a greater history of humanity. Any attack upon the 'tradition' generated by the essentially brief existence of football is catastrophised beyond proportion. Traditions dating back mere decades are eulogised in their passing, despite the reality that they were often forged at the expense of earlier traditions.

The second paradox that Anderson noted was that of the 'formal universality of nationality as a socio-cultural concept' in contrast to the 'irremediable particularity of its concrete manifestation'.[15] In a world split into nations, every person 'can, should, will "have" a nationality, as he or she "has a gender"' and, yet, a nation such as Greece may have ethnic divisions so strong as to be regarded as transcendent of a national identity.[16] Translated to the culture of football, it could be said that every football fan 'can, should, will "have" a club of choice', but a club may have factional or class divisions that may over-ride any sense of unity. For example, the division between the corporate and the non-corporate supporters of one club may be so great that the club's more moneyed elements may be perceived as sharing a closer relationship to the corporate supporters of rival clubs than to the rank-and-file members of their own clubs.

Thirdly, Anderson drew a sharp contrast between the political power of nationalism and its 'philosophical poverty and even incoherence'. 'Unlike

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[14] Anderson, op.cit., p.14.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid.

most other isms,' Anderson observed, 'Nationalism has never produced its own grand thinkers; no Hobbses, Tocquevilles, Marxes or Webers.'[17] Football, despite its ubiquity in Melbourne culture throughout the twentieth century, has only relatively recently been legitimised as a topic worthy of academic analysis. Its most recognisable public figures have not been what Anderson would have regarded as 'grand thinkers', but instead have tended to be retired players pursuing careers in the media.

Disease or 'neurosis' implies powerlessness. If football allegiance is a malady comparable to nationalism, it may be possible for the sufferer to take steps toward recovery, which in due course may alleviate the suffering, but in the interim at least, afflicted persons are dealing with forces more powerful than themselves. Diseases of obsession or compulsion are characterised by a lack of control over one's behaviour. Viewed spiritually these can take the form of demonic possession.

Writing in the Age in 1996, Robert Pascoe presented a portrait of the passionate supporter that suggested that football allegiance nurtured an inner demon capable of overshadowing existing civility or gentility. His observations pertaining to the emphatic rejection by supporters of the Hawthorn and Melbourne clubs of moves to merge the two clubs in 1996 revealed the capacity of parochial club allegiances to subvert the mildest of middle class manners. Referring specifically to Melbourne supporters at a meeting called to discuss the merger proposal, Pascoe wrote:

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[17] Ibid.

> Although the club does now have a broad social base, the crowd that night were overwhelmingly middle-aged and middle-class. Many of them had never participated in a demo before (they were too old for Vietnam), but their florid faces and clenched fists said a great deal about their passion.[18]

There was the hint of a 'Jeckyll and Hyde' syndrome, the same phenomenon which prompted 'ROMAN HOLIDAY' of Vermont, in a letter to the Sun dreading the impending opening to the 1964 season, to share this traumatic childhood memory with readers.

> Taken to my first League match at the age of eight, I saw my wonderful father suddenly become, to my childish mind, a bloodthirsty, terrifying savage and my beautiful, gentle mother turn into a screaming virago.[19]

Vince Wardill, a St.Kilda Cheer Squad member interviewed in 1998, provided similar evidence of a football-induced personality disorder by admitting to becoming an 'animal' at the football, 'screaming at the top of [his] lungs' to such an extent that his more subdued partner, Danae McGaw, could barely recognise him.[20] Another cheersquad member, Hawthorn's Brian Stephensen, asserted that passionate support for

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[18] Age, 25 September 1996, p.A15.
[19] Sun, 30 March 1964, p.15.
[20] Research interview, Vince Wardill, 25 August 1998,

a football team was a form of madness inasmuch as it required a 'streak of madness' to be passionate about anything.[21]

Passion, according to Richard Hinds, in an article strongly critical of what he called the 'social engineering' behind the Hawthorn-Melbourne merger bid, made the A.F.L. uncomfortable.

> [The A.F.L.] prefers to strap its 'audience' into a bucket seat at the M.C.G. and give it just enough room to politely applaud the pretty skills of the 'great game'.[22]

He argued that football's lifeline, 'its passionate grass roots support', was derived more from love of club than love of the Game. In its role as the guardian of the Game, the A.F.L. had lost touch with the sentiments of the barracker, for whom the interests of club were paramount.[23]

Because love of club and love of the Game are not mutually exclusive, their adversarial relationship within this second group of parallel dichotomies should not be seen as absolute. A member of the Hawthorn Forever Cheer Squad, identified as 'MARK WALTERS' for the purpose of this study, blurred the distinction. He described himself as 'a football supporter more than anything' in explaining what he admitted was his unusual position, in the culture of

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pp.1-2.

[21] Research interview, Brian Stephensen, 9 September 1998, p.14.

[22] Sunday Age, 22 September 1996, SPORTSWEEK, p.23.

[23] Ibid.

football barrackers, of having 'two favourite teams', Hawthorn and Essendon.[24] Nevertheless, Walters still described himself as a 'loud passionate supporter'.[25] His professed love for the Game as a whole did not preclude the possibility of 'some order of preference as to which teams win and which teams don't,' Adelaide being one of those clubs which he normally preferred not to win.[26]

There is a sense, too, in which an interest in the Game as a whole becomes an inevitable by-product of passionate support for one team. Ricky O'Meara of the Essendon Cheer Squad put the interests of his club ahead of the interests of the Game as a whole in that he preferred to see a match in which Essendon won running away than a close finish.[27] In his early years as an Essendon supporter he was not concerned with the outcome of matches in which his team was not playing, but as he became more involved he came to realise that the Bombers' position on the premiership ladder often depended on the results of other matches. His interest in the outcome of non-Essendon matches grew accordingly.[28]

Such was his emotional stake in his club's performance, that anxiety at the outcome of an Essendon match could have a detrimental effect on his ability to appreciate a game objectively. For this reason he welcomed the modern trend for rounds of matches to be split over several days of a weekend because it gave him an opportunity to attend matches

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[24] Research interview, 'MARK WALTERS', 8 September 1998, p.1.
[25] Ibid., p.5.
[26] Ibid., p.2.
[27] Research interview, Ricky O'Meara, 24 July 1998, p.4.

in which Essendon was not playing. He claimed that he actually enjoyed a game more if Essendon was not playing because of the absence of anxiety.[29] O'Meara's objective enjoyment of a non-Essendon match indicated a love for the Game. It was a love, however, that flourished best when Essendon was not playing. Ricky O'Meara would appear to provide an example of an inner conflict between the rational objective lover of the Game and the anxiety-afflicted lover of club.

To continue the analogy of football barracking as madness, it could be proposed that delusions of *grandeur* are part of the condition. The allegation that barrackers experience an over-inflated sense of their own importance is contestable. It hinges firstly on the degree to which barrackers are important to the Game, and secondly on whether barrackers have a realistic perception of this importance.

Apart from a recognition of the importance of a large and loyal membership base in sustaining a club's financial viability, football's cynics have been inclined to dismiss a crowd's influence on a game of football. Malcolm Blight, as Adelaide coach in 1997, in response to sceptics who doubted his team's ability to win a Grand Final without the help of a parochial home crowd, told reporters, 'I've never known a crowd to get a kick.'[30] A less prosaic assessment came from the novelist, Chester Eagle, whose account of a Collingwood-Essendon clash at Victoria Park referred to the crowd's 'hypnotic power over events'.[31]

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[28] Ibid., p.2.
[29] Ibid., pp.16-17.
[30] Herald Sun, 24 September 1997, p.73.
[31] Eagle, Chester, Four faces, wobbly mirror, Melbourne, Wren, 1976, p.82.

Isolated incidents have shown that the crowd's power is not always merely 'hypnotic'. Essendon football historian, Michael Mapleston, described an occasion at Windy Hill when a crowd invasion prevented a Melbourne player from scoring from a set shot after the siren.[32] Oval invasions immediately after the final siren were commonplace at League matches until the introduction of the 'second siren'. Although it sometimes affected the final score it was rare for it to mean the difference between a team winning or losing. However, a Fitzroy-South Melbourne encounter in 1933 gave the lie to Malcolm Blight's assertion. On this occasion a shot for goal after the siren deflected off a boy running on to the oval, through for a goal.[33] A Collingwood-St.Kilda match in 1973 ended in a shambles after a foghorn sounded by a fan in the Outer was mistaken for the final siren, prompting an invasion of the ground by spectators.[34]

Notwithstanding these examples, more dysfunctional than typical as they are, evidence of a crowd's ability to influence a match is based more on perception than objective reality. Ricky O'Meara explained that although cheersquads invariably waved their floggers in an attempt to distract opposition forwards shooting for goal, it was generally accepted among them that it didn't work. If anything, he suggested, it actually helped the player shooting for goal by giving him some indication of the wind direction. Hawthorn's champion full-forward of the late 1960s and early 1970s, Peter Hudson, would probably suggest that the waving of floggers neither

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[32] Mapleston, op.cit., pp.275-276.
[33] Sun, 26 June 1933, p.20.
[34] Age, 26 April 1973, p.26.

helped nor hindered full forwards. Prior to the 1971 season, amidst controversy over the activity of cheersquads, Hudson told readers of the Sporting Globe:

> Maybe some supporters feel they are doing their side a good turn jumping up and down, waving and throwing streamers as their opposition full-forward kicks for goals. I'll give them a tip. Full-forwards don't line up on a point close to the fence - they line up on a much higher trajectory.[35]

Nevertheless, Ricky O'Meara suggested that a supporter's subjective sense of being 'part of the game' was not diminished by a more sober recognition of such realities.[36] This apparent contradiction was perhaps better explained as wishful thinking on the part of the barrackers. They needed to feel that they were having an impact on the outcome of the match even though they knew that they probably were not.

While this fell well short of delusions of *grandeur*, an amusing anecdote from Brian Stephensen possibly didn't. To Stephensen's way of thinking at least, a crowd's performance could, under some circumstances, directly affect events on the field. The story concerned a wet afternoon at Waverley in either 1997 or 1998. As their team succumbed to the inevitability of crushing defeat, the Hawthorn faithful were left to brave the tempest with only their own madness, or passion, to sustain them.

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[35] Sporting Globe, 31 March 1971, p.1.
[36] Ricky O'Meara interview, p.6.

Torrential rain had driven the whole crowd under cover, except for a hard core of about 20 cheersquad members behind the goal, 'chanting like it was a Grand Final and [they] were 20 goals in front'.

> We were just going off tap, because it was freezing cold and it was pouring rain and the only way you could keep warm was screaming … We were miles behind and it was the last quarter, and there was a free kick given just outside the goal square … and we screamed for a 50. And I swear the umpire looked straight at us, shrugged his shoulders and went, 'Yeah. All right … If you blokes are mad enough to stand here in the pouring rain cheering your guts out, and you're screaming for a 50, bugger it. I'm going to give you one.'[37]

Whether or not Stephensen's sense of *grandeur* constituted a delusion will have to remain a secret known only, perhaps, by the umpire in question.

In 1990 at Princes Park, a young boy may have played some part in Collingwood's fortunes for the day, or at least in the performance of Ronnie McKeown. Scott Morgan was enjoying his first season as a member of the Collingwood Official Cheer Squad (C.O.C.S.). He had been accorded the rare privilege, for a squad newcomer, of being allowed to sit in the front row. Prior to the match the Collingwood players were warming up with the usual kick-to-kick at the same end

at which the cheersquad was located. Eleven-year-old Scott Morgan had possession of a ball that had been kicked into the crowd. He was about to handball it to McKeown, a Collingwood player, who was walking towards him, when a ball kicked by another player sailed through the air in the direction of McKeown's head, unseen by the player. Scott Morgan earned a friendly pat on the head and a word of thanks from his hero when he warned him, just in time, that the ball was about to hit him. For Scott Morgan it was such a big moment that he still remembered it when interviewed eight years later. As he put it, 'When you're that young you feel really big.'[38] It is unlikely that McKeown would still remember the incident, but if the ball had hit him in the wrong part of his head it would certainly have hurt and may have affected his performance on the day. An eleven-year-old boy in the crowd may have possibly affected events on the field in a small way. Collingwood won the match, defeating Fitzroy by 45 points, and although McKeown was not included in Inside Football's best players, his eight kicks, eight handballs, six marks, one tackle and one hit-out would have had some bearing on the outcome.[39] The extent of Scott Morgan's contribution will never really be known but the boy's sense of self-importance, at least at the time, is demonstrable.

A perception that spectator support played an important role in a club's fortunes was apparent in the (Footscray) Advertiser's preview of the local club's home game against Collingwood in 1928. It was

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[37] Brian Stephensen interview, p.14.
[38] Research interview, Scott Morgan, 7 August 1998, p.8.
[39] Inside Football, 23 May 1990, p.27.

the first time, in the club's history that it had appeared in a V.F.L. 'match-of-the-day'.

> Footscray's supporters are expected to play their part - and it is a big part on an occasion such as this. By their concerted barracking at Carlton they made a name for themselves, and they should gain further honours in this direction this afternoon. A well-sustained cheer as the team takes the field is especially desired.[40]

Not only was there a sense of the way in which a body of supporters actually played a role in determining the outcome of a match, but also that a club's supporter base itself had an identity worth developing.

While a crowd's ability to influence the outcome of a match is questionable, the above anecdotal evidence indicates that there is, at the very least, willingness on the part of some members of the crowd to believe that such an influence exists. There can, however, be little argument against the notion that the crowd makes a difference to the game as a spectacle. It is a difference which, while impossible to quantify, has become easy to illustrate since the spread of the national competition has increased the incidence of matches at which crowd support has been significantly biased in favour of one team. When two teams from different States are opposed, a goal to the

home side is usually greeted with an eruption of noise and colour in sharp contrast to the near silence that tends to accompany a successful manoeuvre by the visitors.

Journalist Martin Flanagan's claim that 'it takes two voices to make a footy crowd, two opposing voices', [41] evinced a nostalgia for the days when every match was an all-Victorian 'derby'. The League football crowd of the 1990s was more often comprised of one voice, alternately raised or silent according to the home side's fate. The 1998 A.F.L. home-and-away fixture included only 71 matches, out of a total of 176, in which the opposing clubs were based in the same State.[42]

Alessandro Portelli, commenting on the behaviour of European soccer crowds, accepted an underlying assumption that the crowd ordinarily had no influence on the outcome of events on the field of play. Portelli suggested that the 'visual and oral creativity of banners, fireworks, choreography, slogans [and] chants' was the fans' attempt to overcome their powerlessness over this event, in which they held such a 'huge emotional stake', by 'becom[ing] the event themselves'.[43]

Portelli was probably overstating the case. Only, perhaps when the match became secondary to a terrace tragedy of the magnitude of the riot involving

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[40] Advertiser, (Footscray) 23 June 1928, p.1.
[41] Flanagan, Martin, Southern sky, Western Oval, Melbourne, McPhee Gribble, 1994, p.10.
[42] A.F.L. season fixture, 1998, printed in Age, 28 November 1997, pp.D10-11.
[43] Portelli, Alessandro, 'The rich and the poor in the culture of football' in Redhead, Steve (ed) The passion and the fashion: football fandom in the new Europe, Aldershot, U.K., Avebury, 1993, p.83.

Juventus and Liverpool supporters in Brussels in 1985 or the 1989 Hillsborough Stadium collapse could the crowd seriously be considered to have 'become the event' *in toto*. Beyond the extraordinary and/or dysfunctional, however, the crowd was as important to the success of a sporting event as a spectacle as the extras were to the success of Cecil B. de Mille's movies. The A.F.L. acknowledged this early in the 1998 season when the M.C.C. briefly adopted a policy of closing the Ponsford Stand at matches expected to draw fewer than 35,000 spectators. The League regarded the sight of empty space behind the western goal as poor presentation of its televised product.[44]

Although the A.F.L.'s attitude in the above example showed that it considered the crowd important to the Game as a spectacle, the inconclusive nature of evidence as to the crowd's impact on on-field events leaves doubt as to whether the crowd should be regarded as a main player, supporting actor, or simply as a group of unpaid extras on the 'set'. For this reason it is debatable as to whether barrackers' perceptions of self-importance should be regarded as a delusional or entirely appropriate.

The main problem with categorising particular attitudes or behaviours as madness is that madness is fundamentally in the eyes of the beholder. Compulsive attention-seeking behaviour is perhaps more likely to be regarded as eccentricity than outright madness. Eccentricity or deviance exists only in relation to arbitrarily imposed norms. Since 1957, television coverage of League football has encouraged a form of attention-seeking behaviour that could perhaps be regarded as insanity by more conservative observers.

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[44] Herald Sun, 28 April 1998, p.75.

Although newspaper reports and film footage leave no doubt as to the passionate enthusiasm of V.F.L. crowds prior to 1957, the arrival of the television cameras in that year presented a new avenue of exposure for the collective crowd 'performance'. It also provided an opportunity for the eccentric individual barracker to achieve an occasional fleeting moment of fame by attracting the attention of the cameras with an ostentatious display of enthusiasm. To the sober, rational beholder such behaviour may well have appeared symptomatic of mental instability.

As the 'live' last quarter telecasts of the late 1950s gave way to more sophisticated video-taped replays in the 1960s, groups of enthusiasts, united by love of Club and the common desire to be seen, formed 'cheersquads'. After beginning as informal and spontaneous expressions of support by groups of like-minded people, cheersquads became organisations with formal memberships in the early 1960s. Some of the more controversial activities of the cheersquads, particularly in the 1960s and early 1970s, placed them firmly at odds with football administrators, and established their status as 'deviant' in relation to more conventionally behaved barrackers. Not only was the cheersquad phenomenon of this time a form of deviance, but the squads themselves provided, and indeed continue to provide, a microcosm in which many of the more eccentric qualities of the barracker can be readily observed. For this reason, much of the primary research associated with this project has been in the form of interviews with members of official club cheersquads. Their 'official' status, ratified in the form of recognition from their respective clubs, makes them part of football's *gesellschaft*. However,

because the squads consist primarily of non-corporate supporters of modest means they also provide examples of football's residual *gemeinschaft*. Thus the cheersquads blur the parallel dichotomies set out in Chapter One by providing a corporate home for a communal spirit. The status that the squads enjoyed at the end of the twentieth century is reflected in the devotion of chapters eight and nine of this study to a history of the cheersquads and their relationship with football's governing bodies.

Throughout Melbourne's history Australian Rules football has played a pivotal role in community formation. The Game itself has attracted a clientele that is constantly changing to reflect changes in Melbourne and Australian society and the organisation of the Game itself. The clubs that compete in the elite A.F.L. competition each have their own group of supporters drawn together by a common love of club. Parochial love of club frequently overrides considerations of what is in the best interests of the Game as a whole.

In its popularly perceived role as a social safety valve, football has provided barrackers with an outlet for dysfunctional behaviours and attitudes usually suppressed. Normally sane citizens allowed themselves to display symptoms of an apparent madness where football was concerned. Economic imperatives decreed that football administrators had to take on the more sober, rational qualities associated with the business world. The relative emotional instability of barrackers placed them at a disadvantage in their on-going conflict with football authorities over the way football was made available

to them. Despite their theoretical sovereignty as consumers of the Game, barrackers became the losers as the Game changed to accommodate social change. The next chapter examines the basis of the popular belief, among barrackers, that the Game belonged to them and provides evidence that this belief was based upon a fundamental falsehood.

Chapter Three:

THE PEOPLE'S GAME

Since its humble beginnings in 1858, Melbourne's indigenous code of football has been central to the development of various manifestations of community consciousness, initially in the metropolitan area of Melbourne and later throughout Australia. It has thrived on the strength of its ability to attract ongoing support from a 'football public' drawn from a wide cross-section of Melbourne, Victorian and Australian society. Changes observable in the composition of football's public in the closing decade of the twentieth century were a reflection of a wider society that tolerated increasing inequality between its richest and poorest constituents.

It has been suggested in the preceding chapters that football's disaffected non-corporate barrackers, increasingly excluded from privileges once taken for granted, have been engaged in a process of mourning the loss of their sense of ownership of the Game. Belief in popular ownership was encouraged by the cheapness and availability of football to all people in Melbourne. In an article in the Herald in 1931, the journalist T.Kelynach, alias 'Kickero', declared football to be 'the cheapest sport in the world, giving the people, the real people, a magnificent spectacle for ninepence.'[1] Kelynach's definition of 'the real people' would, by implication, embrace all persons who could afford this amount.

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[1] Cited in V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1931, pages not numbered.

In order to form any worthwhile conclusions regarding the affordability of football from one era to another it is necessary to measure changes to admission prices over time against a standard that will take account of changes to the real value of the currency. Football admission prices in any era vary according to the degree of comfort and exclusivity demanded by the consumer. Reserved seating costs more than general admission and prices can vary from one enclosure to another. In Kickero's era, and for most of the V.F.L.'s history as a suburban competition, admission to the Grandstand enclosure was more expensive than entry to the Outer. The 'ninepence' to which Kickero referred was the Adult general admission price to the Outer in 1931. When Kickero wrote his article unemployment was causing severe hardship for many working class families. No doubt, many of the unemployed would have found even so nominal a price as ninepence unaffordable. It would seem a fair assumption that, by 'real people', Kickero meant Melbourne's lowest paid employed workers.

Arising from a decision, in 1907, by the president of the Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration, Mr.Justice Higgins, the concept of the 'Basic Wage' was used as a computation of the minimum amount necessary for the average family breadwinner to support his family in a manner considered appropriate to Australian standards.[2] Until the concept was abandoned at the 1967 National Wage Case, the Basic Wage provided a useful measure of the lowest wage normally payable to unskilled Australian

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[2] Victorian Year Book, No.78, 1964, Melbourne, Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, Victorian Office, 1964, p.489.

male workers employed full-time. The court recognised that the cost of living varied from city to country and from State to State and therefore set rates of pay specific to each capital city and major regional centre.

It is proposed that an effective measure of the affordability of League football to the 'real people' from the time of Kickero's comment until 1967, would be based on the Adult general admission price to the Outer for home-and-away matches, expressed as a percentage of the Basic Wage for Melbourne-based workers. From 1922 to 1953 the Basic Wage was adjusted quarterly. After 1953, adjustments were made at irregular intervals and times of the year. Home-and-away admission prices were set on a season-by-season basis. For the sake of consistency it is suggested that the Basic Wage against which each season's admission price should be measured is the one applicable in May of the season under consideration. Where an adjustment to the Basic Wage was made in May, the newer rate should be the one used for the calculation. Football admission prices, from time to time, were subject to an Entertainment Tax. This tax, when applicable, should be included in the price.

In May 1931 the Basic Wage in Melbourne was £3/8/5.[3] The 9d admission price was 1.0962% of this amount. For most of the period between 1931 and 1967 the percentage fluctuated between 0.8696% in 1948 and the 1956 figure of 1.2931%.[4] Only in 1962 did it pass 1.3% for the first time, trending upwards in the last

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[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid. (for Basic Wage figures). V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1948, p.18. (for 1948 admission prices) V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1956, p.6. (for 1956 admission prices)

few years of the Basic Wage system to reach 1.8349% in 1967.[5] Despite this demonstrable upward trend over time, a price of less than 2% of one's income for a Saturday afternoon's entertainment would have been regarded by most as a peppercorn figure. In the last three decades of the twentieth century, however, rises in the cost of attending the football would outstrip inflation by roughly two to one.

After the abandonment of the Basic Wage system, the direct comparison made above between football prices and the wages of Melbourne's lowest paid workers is no longer possible. However, some indication of the extent of the rising cost, in real terms, of attending football can be gleaned from a comparison between movements in the general admission price over time and changes in award rates for various occupations over the same period. For the purposes of this comparison, I have opted to use minimum pay rates for occupations at the lower end of the pay spectrum. This policy has been adopted deliberately in order to examine the way that football prices have impacted specifically on the poorest sections of the public. I have also considered movements in average weekly earnings over the same period, but I use this figure with some caution. I am not so much concerned here with the affordability of football for the 'average' person as I am for that of people at the bottom end of the economic scale.

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[5] Victorian Year Book, No.84, 1970, Melbourne, Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, Victorian Office, 1970, p.189. (for Basic Wage figures) V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1962, p.12. (for 1962 admission prices) V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1967, p.10. (for 1967 admission prices)

In 1967, the Adult Outer admission price set by the V.F.L. was 60 cents.[6] By 1997, the A.F.L. was charging $12.50,[7] a rise of 2,083.33%. Over the same period, the average weekly total earnings for employed males in Australia rose from $60.70[8] to $686.30.[9] This increase (1,130.64%) covered barely half the increase in the football admission prices, but it was still significantly higher than the percentage wage increases awarded to many of the lower paid sections of the workforce. Using the weighted average minimum weekly rates payable for a full week's work, excluding overtime, as published in official federal government statistics over the period in question, it can be shown that workers in the textiles, clothing and footwear industry, the retail trade industry and the community services industry were significantly worse off in their ability to absorb the price increases for football than those receiving average weekly earnings.

Official statistics for 1967, show the weighted average minimum rate for the textiles, clothing and footwear industry as $42.40. The corresponding figure for retail trade workers was $44.78 while, for those employed in public authorities and community and business services, the figure was $45.49.[10] By 1997, the weighted averages had risen to $422.48, $447.30 and $418.43 respectively.[11] Pay rates in textiles,

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[6] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1967, p.10.
[7] Sunday Herald Sun, 30 March 1997, p.5.
[8] Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia, No.54, 1968, Canberra, Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, p.287.
[9] Year Book, Australia, No.80, 1998, Canberra, Australian Bureau of Statistics, p.203.
[10] Commonwealth Year Book, 1968, p.281.
[11] Year Book, Australia, 1998, p.202. The figures shown in this source are expressed as index numbers based on the corresponding wage rates applicable in

clothing and footwear were 996.42% of what they had been 30 years earlier. For retail workers the figure was 998.88%, while people employed in community services were getting 919.82% of their 1967 figure.

These figures, however, almost certainly understate the extent of the increase in the monetary burden placed on poorer members of society wishing to attend A.F.L. matches. The earlier figures apply to a time when Australia was experiencing close to full employment. Not only did the intervening years produce a significant increase in levels of unemployment, but there was also a trend away from full time employment in favour of casual and part-time employment. These changes complicate any measurement of the affordability of league football over time because of the absence of a consistent measure of low-income wage rates.

Another factor not taken into account in this analysis is the effect of a growing need for reserved seating and pre-booking of tickets to A.F.L. matches. Where reserved seating had once been the luxury of those who could afford it, the A.F.L.'s policy of allocating matches to venues barely big enough to hold the expected crowd has put increasing pressure on fans to ensure their admission by booking reserved seating in advance. This entails not only paying the additional cost applicable to reserved seating, but also the booking fee payable to the agent handling the transaction.

1985. The 1985 figures had been indexed against the figures fo 1976, which was the last year for which these rates were shown as actual dollar amounts. The rates I have given have been calculated from the official figures.

In 1964, however, admission costs were still low enough for football to be widely seen as a birthright for Melburnians. Although the Adult Outer admission price of 5/- represented a relatively steep 1.7422% of the Basic Wage of £14/7/-, compared to what it had been up to the end of the 1950s, it is fair to suggest that football fans of the mid-1960s would have still been operating on an inherited assumption that the Game belonged to them.

The V.F.L. competition had experienced four decades of stability. With the exception of the war years, the same eleven Melbourne-based clubs, plus Geelong, had competed since 1925. All clubs were named after localities and located at or near those localities. A sense of community based on local social systems had grown out of strong connections between football clubs, local councils and other local sporting clubs, particularly cricket clubs. Any person born after 1925 could have been excused for assuming that the twelve-team suburban V.F.L. competition had always existed and would always exist. Although an undue amount of control by cricket clubs over their football counterparts produced some injustices for football clubs and their supporters, this residual anachronism was a 'tradition' grudgingly accepted by virtue of its having always existed. A perception of continuity with the past ensured no sense of loss.

There were, however, developments undermining the public ownership assumption in the period between Kickero's comment and the V.F.L.'s controversial period of suburban expansion in the 1960s. Although these developments had been well advanced in broader society since World War 2, football was very slow to embrace changes that would challenge its sense of

tradition. Early indications of the poor health of barracker sovereignty were easily denied on the strength of football's continuing turnstile sufficiency, which still afforded the consumer a measure of control over the market. Football clubs in mid-1960s derived 95% of their income from spectators' admission revenue. Sponsorship and merchandising at the club level were virtually non-existent.[12]

Radical changes to the nature of Australian society since World War 2 were presenting a challenge to football administrators. The arrival of large numbers of eastern and southern European migrants had challenged Australia's ethnic and cultural homogeneity. At the same time, the economic prosperity of the 'Long Boom' had promoted a lifestyle of consumerism and home ownership. As the population became more suburbanised the private car came to be seen as an increasingly essential item. A more affluent, mobile and culturally diverse population, with more leisure time in which to live an increasingly flexible lifestyle, would not automatically assimilate into the football communities.[13] Faced with growing competition from these new cultural influences the League was forced to court its public, to an extent, by providing better facilities. Moves by football clubs and the League itself to outer suburbs in the 1960s was, in some ways, an attempt to woo a changing demographic. Under these conditions barrackers could vote with their feet and the League would take notice. However, the

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[12] Andrews, Ian, 'The transformation of "Community" in the Australian Football League. Part Two: Redrawing "community" boundaries in the post-war A.F.L.' in Football Studies, Vol.2, No.1, 1999.
[13] Ibid.

dynamics of the relationship between football authorities and fans had been changing since the 1930s in ways not obvious to a 1960s football public blissfully unaware of the potential weakness of its position.

This chapter tells the story of how precedents were gradually established to undermine the football public's erroneous assumption that it owned the Game. Innovations, invariably presented as being in the cause of providing a better deal for the paying customer came inevitably at a price. Although the changes were barely perceptible in the thirty or so years after Kickero, subtle increments in admission prices in the name of an economic necessity wrought by the Game's growing administrative complexity would provide the groundwork for a more savage exploitation in later years.

To an increasingly affluent Melbourne population in the early 1960s, the spartan facilities at most V.F.L. grounds had begun to appear inadequate for the presentation of an elite sporting competition. As most V.F.L. venues were located on Crown lands, it had become the practice for disputes between football clubs and ground managers to be referred to the Minister of Lands. A series of landmark rulings, identified by reference to the particular minister responsible at the time, apportioned rights of access and revenue between football clubs, their respective ground managers and other sporting clubs sharing venues with them. Grounds managed by cricket clubs were an especially fruitful source of conflict. Contentious issues included the priority given to one sport over the other in the use of the ground,

particularly during the changeover period between the football and cricket seasons, and the rights of cricket club members to utilise their clubs' facilities on football match days. Other problems general to the relationship between football clubs and ground managers included the way in which the proceeds from football matches were distributed and the method of raising funds for ground improvements.

The period between the two world wars was one in which the dominant expression of community in football was fiercely territorial. A League football club represented a clearly definable geographical locale. Notwithstanding the possibility of players being imported from country areas or from other states, or the occasional practice of a club clearing a player to play for another club, the electoral player recruitment system bound metropolitan-based players to the club representing the area in which they lived. By providing a recreational outlet for players and entertainment for spectators, the football club was part of a local social system. Its activities were not wholly confined to its respective geographical locale, required as it was to visit the locale of another club every second week of the home-and-away season. Its commanding presence at home, however, made it a pillar of the local community and a rallying point for the development of a communion that thrived in the face of opposition from clubs representing other localities.

The capacity crowds that crammed into suburban grounds during the inter-war period provide the most immediately convincing evidence of the degree to which communities embraced football clubs. The reciprocity of the relationship is examinable in the degree to which football could comfortably coexist with councils

and other sporting clubs representing the same locale. As the body charged with the administration of the Game's elite competition, the V.F.L.'s interests did not always coincide with those of its individual clubs. However, in the following account of the long battle for rights and revenues between the Ground Managers Association (G.M.A.) and the V.F.L., fought under the jurisdiction of the Department of Lands, the League's role should be seen as being representative of the interests of the twelve clubs. The League's decision making process during this period was based on the collective opinion of delegates from each club. Observations pertaining to the League's attitude towards the community that supported it and, by implication, the clubs' attitudes towards the communities that supported them, are drawn primarily from V.F.L. annual reports between 1930 and the watershed year of 1964.

A ministerial ruling effective from the beginning of the 1931 football season was greeted enthusiastically by the V.F.L. The Bailey Award allocated the use of grounds to football clubs for 25 weeks of each year. Football finals were to be completed not later than the second Saturday in October. In return for the right of their members to attend football matches at their ground, cricket clubs were required to make an annual payment to the appropriate football club of £20 for every 100 members.[14]

Acceptance of the Bailey Award, however, barely concealed the League's resentful recognition that other bodies were thriving on its exertions. The

League did not begrudge its contribution to employment in the difficult economic circumstances that prevailed during the 1931 season. Nor did it appear to mind that its patrons were making a significant contribution to railway and tramway revenue. Neither did the League regret its decision to 'tax' its own income by providing 'substantial annual donations' to charities, though it must be noted that the League felt the need to devote some space in its 1931 Annual Report to trumpeting its own philanthropy.[15] However, the self-congratulation with which the League documented its role in the upkeep of grounds came somewhat at the expense of the councils and the cricket clubs.

> Ground managers must acknowledge that without revenue from football the people would not enjoy the use of such splendidly equipped grounds. With the exception of the Melbourne ground, football profits provide practically the whole of the finance needed for ground improvements and maintenance.[16]

Football was, apparently, happy to reciprocate the support bestowed upon it by the community, but its attitude of benevolent superiority betrayed aloofness. Football was something above community and it was important that community recognised the fact. During the 1930s the V.F.L.'s style of altruism was one in which its left hand was abundantly aware of what its right hand was doing. Its public relations policy was

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[14] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1930, p.4.
[15] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1931, pages not numbered.

to ensure that the public was similarly aware. Faced with an Entertainment Tax in 1932, the League opted to bear the additional expense without increasing admission charges. The Annual Report for that season bragged that football was the only form of entertainment that did not pass the expense on to its customers, but ruefully recorded that the League's generosity had cost it £118 on one match alone.[17]

The League's relationship with cricket authorities showed that a capacity for cooperation existed despite the ongoing strains. When 'vagaries of the calendar' in 1934 would have resulted in football being allotted one less Saturday than usual, the Victorian Cricket Association (V.C.A.) agreed to change its program of matches to give the V.F.L. its correct number of Saturdays. However, wet weather during the cricket finals required the extension of the cricket season to 21 April. The V.F.L., in turn, cooperated with the V.C.A.'s request for an extension.[18] This spirit of cooperation was formalised in 1936 with the formation of a standing committee, consisting of three representatives from the V.C.A. and three from the V.F.L., to confer on match programming, occupancy of grounds and any other 'matters of mutual interest'.[19] The following year, the League reported that the V.C.A./V.F.L. Standing Committee was working effectively and amicably.[20]

In 1939, the League and the various ground management committees agreed to form a similar standing committee to confer on matters relating to

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[16] Ibid.
[17] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1932, p.11.
[18] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1934, p.18.
[19] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1936, p.20.
[20] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1937, p.23.

ground management. Utilising the same model as that employed by the V.C.A./V.F.L. Standing Committee, this body would consist of three representatives from the V.F.L. and three from the ground managers.[21]

It is unlikely that the increase in the Outer admission price to 1/- in 1939 would have changed Kickero's opinion as to the value which football provided for its paying customers. At 1.2658% of the Basic Wage,[22] the new price was unlikely to have had any impact on the public's sense of ownership of the Game. Closer examination of the rationale behind the 3d increase, however, reveals a subtle shift in the League's thinking. One penny represented a tax component. For the first time the League was openly requiring the paying public to foot the bill for a government impost. The expensive lessons of the past had taught the League that altruism must have its limits. Its position as an organisation responsible for delivering the Game to the public at an affordable price needed to be tempered by a 'user pays' philosophy. The remaining 2d of the increase was to be paid into the newly created Outer Ground Improvement and Maintenance Account. This would indicate the beginning of a vision for providing a greater level of comfort for the spectator. Again, the 'user pays' ethos decreed that any such improvement would have to be directly paid for by the customer. The League and the ground managers agreed that each club and its respective ground management committee should form another committee to oversee an ongoing program of improvements to the Outer ground areas of League

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[21] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1939, p.23.
[22] Victorian Year Book, 1964, p.494. (for Basic Wage figures) V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1939, p.23.

football venues. The program would be financed by the aforementioned account.[23] Although the outbreak of World War 2 delayed the implementation of the program, this apparent mania for creating committees was an indication that football administration was becoming more complex.

The 1946 Annual Report noted that, with the end of war-time conditions, football was about to settle back 'into its natural groove, but with increased patronage and administrative responsibilities'.[24] Among the new initiatives further complicating the task of administering the sport was a retirement benefit scheme for players. It was initially intended that the proceeds of one round of matches each season would be set aside for this Provident Fund.[25] However, in 1949 the system was changed to allow a small deduction to be made from the Adult admission fee each week rather than the complete allocation of one week's proceeds.[26]

By 1947 the relationship between the V.F.L. and the G.M.A. was showing signs of strain and the Minister of Lands was called upon to arbitrate. The fund for Outer ground improvements was proving inadequate for the purpose and increased administration costs for the League required a new approach to the way in which revenue was distributed. A series of conferences between the ground managers and the League failed to reach agreement.[27]

On 9 March 1948 J.G.B.McDonald, Minister of Lands, in response to submissions from the V.F.L. and

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(for admission prices)

[23] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1939, p.23.

[24] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1946, p.20.

[25] Ibid., p.18.

[26] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1949, p.18.

[27] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1947, p.17.

the G.M.A., delivered a new set of occupancy conditions, binding for ten years. In an apparent attempt to uphold a populist position which would not preclude the possibility of exploiting the Game's popularity for taxation revenue, the Minister took a stand that favoured the Outer fan at the expense of the League's ability to maximise its own revenues. The McDonald Award was formulated with a view to keeping admission prices as low as possible. The Minister's report expressed the view that any increases to pre-tax admission prices would be 'unduly severe' on the Outer patrons, in view of a new 3d amusement tax. He was not quite so protective of the interests of the patrons of the Grandstand enclosure, allowing a price increase from 2/5 to 3/-. These prices included a tax component of 9d. Inevitable though taxes may have been, and notwithstanding the Minister's stated opinion that increased charges were 'inevitable in view of the substantial rise in costs brought about by post-war conditions', the Outer patrons' hardships would be minimised by forcing the largest part of the burden on to the presumably wealthier Grandstand patrons.[28]

The League's opposition to the McDonald ruling on admission prices, stated in its 1948 report, could be taken as a suggestion that the crack that divided its interests from those of its customers was getting wider. Alternatively, one could eschew the notion of conflict of interest by seeing the relationship between the V.F.L. and the football public as something akin to Tönnies's concept of '*gemeinschaft* between master and servant'. Importantly, under this

[28] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1948, p.18.

model, the League is 'master' rather than 'servant'. As Tönnies himself put it:

> A superior power which is exercised to the benefit of the subordinate and which, because in accordance with his will, is accepted by him, I call dignity or authority - *gemeinschaft* between master and servant.[29]

While the League's role is thus 'dignified' as that of a benevolent dictator serving the interests of its subjects, its executive authority as the initiator of policy indicated that it ruled rather than served. Full-blown conflict of interest, as in the market relationship between buyer and seller, may not have been present in the immediate post-World War 2 football environment. However, a precedent for later conflict had already been well established in the demonstrable attitude of enlightened superiority that football administrators had been adopting in their dealings with the public as early as 1930.

The League, in 1948, argued that football was a much cheaper form of entertainment than theatre, racing, trotting or boxing. It regarded its charges as 'ridiculously' low by world standards. As noted earlier, the 1948 figure was low even by League football's standards. If grounds were to receive much needed improvements, the League argued that admission prices would have to be increased. Since the war, 2d from daily Adult Outer admission receipts and 1/- from

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[29] Tönnies, Ferdinand, Community and association (*Gemeinschaft und gesellschaft*), translated and supplemented by Charles P. Loomis, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1955, p.47.

each season ticket had been paid into the Outer Ground Improvement and Maintenance Account.[30]

Commendable though the League's concern for the comfort of its Outer patrons may have appeared, the McDonald Award had addressed the issue of ground improvements by placing an increased burden on season ticket holders. This involved a substantial increase in the cost of season tickets to include a pooled component to be shared between all ground managers and football clubs, as a way of reimbursing the home club and its ground manager for the attendance of visiting season ticket holders. Prior to this provision, clubs with small memberships and, more to the point, their ground managers were disadvantaged by having to provide for a relatively large number of visiting members without monetary compensation. The Minister directed that the ground managers' share of the new pool be paid into the Outer Ground Improvement and Maintenance Account.[31]

While the League acknowledged that the McDonald Award would now provide additional revenue for ground improvements, the tone of its report suggested that still more money was needed and that it would need to come from a broader base than that indicated in the award. A post-war boom in the popularity of the Game was tempting the League to exploit that popularity, albeit for demonstrably altruistic reasons. Any tampering with the admission price would undermine the very basis of the public's sense of ownership of the Game. The Government had cleverly positioned itself as the champion of the common people and the League was left fuming. During the ten years' currency of the

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[30] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1948, p.20.
[31] Ibid., p.18.

award, ground managers and governments would inhibit any V.F.L. agenda to exploit, for whatever reasons, its own popularity.

The McDonald Award was not all bad news for the V.F.L., however. It provided for a significant increase to what had been the scandalously low price for which cricket club members and associates could attend football matches. Under the Bailey Award, a payment of 4/- per cricket member entitled that member and two ladies to attend all League football matches played at that cricket club's ground for one season. The new award required the cricket club to pay the football club 3/6 for each person to whom a ticket entitling football admission was issued. Thus, the 'member and two ladies' package, previously costing the cricket club 4/-, would now cost it 10/6.[32]

Although the McDonald Award represented a government intervention in an ongoing conflict between ground managers and football administrators, there was a provision for the involved parties to formulate their own decisions if agreement could be reached. Despite the Minister's reluctance in 1948 to see Outer admission charges increased to 1/3, that figure became the admission charge in 1949, despite the removal of Entertainment Tax. A breakdown of the new charges reflected the growing complexity of post-war football administration. From the new charge, 4d went to the ground manager, 1d to the players' Provident Fund, 2d to the Outer Ground Improvement and Maintenance Account and 1d to an Australian National Football Council (A.N.F.C.) levy for the national propagation of the Game. The remaining 7d was divided between the

[32] Ibid.

competing clubs.[33] Although the League itself was not a profit-making organisation and given that football remained, even at the new price, a relatively inexpensive form of popular entertainment, it was clear that it was the V.F.L.'s intention to make the public pay for the League's administrative initiatives.

In 1951 a new spirit of cooperation between the League and the ground managers was apparent. The latter agreed to the League's request that the Outer Ground Improvement and Maintenance Account not be allowed to accumulate for the purpose of providing major works, but rather be used progressively to provide improved comfort and safety for Outer patrons.[34] The 1951 season also saw steep increases in all admission charges over and above the reimposition of Entertainment Tax, with no sign of apology, remorse or attempted justification in the V.F.L. Annual Report. The new charge of 2/- included 4d tax. It represented 1.1299% of the Basic Wage (£8/17/-), up from 0.9124% in 1950, when the basic wage was exactly £2 less. The new Grandstand price of 4/- included 8d tax. Members tickets increased by 5/- to 18/6, from which 3/- went into the special pool instituted in 1948. Cricket clubs would now be charged 5/- per season for each member or associate to attend football.[35] The late 1940s and early 1950s was a period of high inflation in Australia, with the Basic Wage more than doubling from 1948 to 1953.[36] While price increases were to be expected, the League's 1951

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[33] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1949, pp.19-20.
[34] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1950, p.15; Season 1951, p.15.
[35] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1951, p.15.
[36] Victorian Year Book, 1964, p.494.

increase suggested that it could, and would, charge whatever it liked as long as the G.M.A. agreed. The 1952 season saw further increases in both tax and basic charges. Outer patrons who had paid 0.8696% of the Basic Wage to attend football in 1948 were expected to pay 2/6, or 1.1792% in 1952, including 5d tax.[37]

The paying customers were given a brief respite in 1954 when the Entertainment Tax was again removed, but only because of a resumption in hostilities between the League and the ground managers. An attempt by the League to increase its prices by the amount of the removed tax was refused by the State Government after details of the League's plans were leaked to the Government by the ground managers. The League regarded the leak as a breach of faith and the matter caused a rift within the V.F.L./G.M.A. Standing Committee.[38] As a result, the League dissolved the committee and ordered that future negotiations be conducted between representatives of all League clubs and all individual ground managers. The League was also forced to wait another year for the opportunity to pocket the proceeds of the removal of the tax. In December 1954, a conference of all clubs and ground managers belatedly gave the League approval to redirect the benefit of the removal of the tax from their customers to themselves.[39]

That the League regarded the McDonald Award as a nuisance was made clear in its 1955 Annual Report, in which the League revealed that it was making approaches to the State Government to have the

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[37] Ibid. and V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1952, p.16.
[38] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1954, p.4.
[39] Ibid., p.5.

'outdated' award replaced. Because the League and the G.M.A. had, on occasions, failed to 'reach agreement on numerous matters affecting grounds occupancy' the League considered that 'the avenue of negotiation on general matters [had] been exhausted'.[40] The report revealed that G.M.A. correspondence with the League, dated 27 September 1955, had said, 'Until such time as the V.F.L. is prepared to help itself we as ground managers are not prepared to consider any proposals from the V.F.L.'[41]

It seems the 'outdated' nature of the award could not stop the rise in prices. Within the framework of the award, the League and the G.M.A. agreed to further price increases for the 1956 season, pushing Adult Outer admission prices to an unprecedented 1.2931% of the Basic Wage.[42] The relationship was volatile, however, and as the award approached its expiry date the League sought a surer path to economic self-determination. Its proposals to the State Government prior to the determination of the new award included a request for the League to have the sole right to fix admission charges for home and away matches.[43]

Outer patrons escaped any price increase in the 1957 season. Grandstand prices increased by 6d, partly to accommodate a 2d increase in Entertainment Tax. The League endeavoured to use 1d of the net increase of 4d to create a Provident Fund for umpires, the remaining 3d to be distributed equally between the two competing clubs and the ground manager. Inexplicably the G.M.A. opposed the creation of an umpires' fund but allowed

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[40] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1955, p.4.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Victorian Year Book, 1964, p.494 and V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1955, p.4.
[43] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1957, p.9.

the penny in question to be paid into the players' Provident Fund. The ground managers' veto further convinced the League of the need for a complete revision of the award.[44] In addition to autonomy over pricing and a complete revision of the method of distribution of receipts, the League sought to make cricket club members and associates pay full Outer admission prices to watch football, albeit from the comfort of the Members' enclosure. It also recommended that the maintenance of Outer ground areas, as distinct from improvements, become the responsibility of each individual ground management committee and, therefore, be financed from the ground manager's share of gate receipts, rather than from the account. Accordingly, it recommended that the name of this fund be changed to the 'Outer Ground Improvement Account'.[45] Faced with the advent of television, the League sought also to ensure that competing clubs each receive a third of all television and broadcasting rights, with the remaining third going to the ground manager. The League wanted full control over the granting of these rights and the terms and conditions applicable to them.[46]

The new award, announced by the Minister of Lands, Keith Turnbull, on 11 April 1958, simplified the process by which the ground manager's share of gate receipts was determined. Instead of separate deductions from Outer and Grandstand admissions, the amount was calculated as 26% of the remainder from all admissions, after deductions for tax, match expenses and the Outer Ground Improvement Account.

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[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid.

Contributions to the account continued to be calculated as a deduction from Outer ground admissions but were now expressed as a percentage thereof. The rate was determined at 15%. The Turnbull Award acceded to the League's request in regard to television and broadcasting rights. It accommodated, also, the League's request that Outer maintenance, as distinct from improvements, be paid for by the ground managers out of their 26% share of net takings, rather than from the account. Admission charges for home-and-away matches were to be determined by the League but the G.M.A. could appeal to the Minister of Lands if aggrieved. The League, however, received no joy in its bid to make cricket club members pay full price. Turnbull ruled that cricket club members and associates would be charged one third of the cost of a football club membership ticket for their football viewing rights.[47]

At Victoria Park the Turnbull Award impacted more severely on the cricket club than at other grounds. Although the football club was the principal tenant at the ground, Cr.Seddon, a municipal official with strong pro-cricket sympathies, had been a thorn in the football club's side in its dealings with council since assuming the presidency of the Collingwood Cricket Club in 1939. Through Seddon's influence a long-term occupancy agreement at the ground had included provision for cricket club subscriptions to entitle members to football admission. In return, a mere 25% of cricket membership revenue would be paid back to the football club. The Turnbull Award overrode this agreement, raising the prospect of a sharp increase in the price of cricket membership. After

[47] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1958, pp.13-14.

declining the football club's offer to amalgamate the two bodies, the cricket club opted to amend its rules so as to remove football admission entitlements, other than the right to purchase specially endorsed football season tickets. Its decision resulted in an immediate halving of cricket club membership figures and precipitated a further gradual decline in cricket membership and patronage.[48]

The Turnbull Award, which was to be effective for five years, carefully delineated the periods in the year during which grounds were available for cricket and football. Football's home-and-away season would extend from the third Saturday in April to the last Saturday in August. Clubs involved in the finals would have full and unrestricted use of their respective grounds for training until eliminated. The League expressed its satisfaction at this ruling.[49]

An absence of negative comments on conditions of ground occupancy in V.F.L. annual reports from 1959 to 1962 indicate that the League was reasonably satisfied with the Turnbull Award, but the ground managers, who had suffered under Turnbull eagerly awaited a new opportunity to redress the balance. As the five years drew to a close, the rift emerged anew and this time it would be the ground managers who would get the better of the deal.

A new award, effective from the beginning of the 1963 season, provided an impetus for revolt. Its perceived injustices would prompt the League and its clubs to adopt a far more assertive approach in its dealings with the ground managers than had previously been attempted. The V.F.L. reported that discussions

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[48] Stremski, op.cit., p.188.
[49] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1958, pp.13-14.

prior to the determination had been 'almost fruitless'.[50]

The ensuing award, in addressing a common perception that more funds were needed for Outer expenditure, opted to place the additional burden on to the League by increasing the percentage of Outer admissions allocated for this purpose from 15% to 25%. At the same time it eased the burden on ground managers by once again allowing expenditure on maintenance to be drawn from the account.[51] While both the League and the ground managers agreed that conditions for Outer patrons needed to be improved, the League's proposal to address the issue suggested that it had much more ambitious plans for the comfort for patrons than the G.M.A. It wanted the Minister to approve the creation of trusts for each venue, with the power to borrow money for major works. It argued that 'revenue alone' would not provide the facilities needed and that, therefore, the allocation of an increased proportion of receipts to the account would eat unnecessarily into football club funds without achieving anything worthwhile.[52] This could be interpreted either as a grandiose vision on the League's part or as a fiscal irresponsibility bordering on stupidity, depending on how charitable one wants to be to the League. The League's report neglected to indicate which source, other than 'revenue alone' could be drawn upon to repay any monies borrowed. In fairness, perhaps, it should be noted that new forms of income were becoming available. Television coverage, though still in its

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[50] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1963, p.9.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid.

infancy, was beginning to provide a source of funding which was blurring older understandings of the term 'revenue' and making it possible for the League to think in bigger terms than ever before.

A perception that ground managers were receiving a very generous share of football revenue at the expense of the clubs was understandable. Their 26% share of gate receipts was calculated after the deduction of sundry items listed as 'match expenses'. Included in these expenses were the wages of ground staff, gatekeepers and ticket sellers and the hire of coats for coated officials, expenses that could reasonably be expected to be met by the ground managers. This double-dipping did not pass unnoticed in the V.F.L. report.[53] The new award had relieved the ground managers of the financial burden of maintenance, this cost being met from an increased contribution to the account which was coming from the clubs' share of takings rather than the ground managers' share. Although the account itself did not constitute revenue for the ground managers, tied as it was to a specific purpose, this fact was often lost in the rhetoric of popular press reports, which were inclined to portray ground managers as parasites.

The press, in its simplistic populism, had no need to be overly analytical in its interpretation of the dispute. It was easily demonstrable that the 25% Outer ground deduction was money that the football clubs did not receive. Neither did the clubs receive the amounts set aside for the players' Provident Fund, the A.N.F.C. levy for the propagation of the code or a new levy set aside for the League's most grandiose vision to date, the development of a new stadium at

Waverley. Using some highly questionable arithmetic, the Sporting Globe produced a breakdown of figures from a match between Melbourne and Fitzroy on 11 May 1963, at which a crowd of 25,550 generated gate receipts of £2,376. After all deductions had been made, each club was left with £420 pounds with which to meet its own considerable expenses.[54]

As Melbourne emerged from the austerities of the Great Depression and World War 2, the ubiquity of interest in League football ensured the Game's prominent position in the enthusiastically embraced affluence of post-war society. Steady increases in the price of admission did nothing to dampen the public's enthusiasm for a form of entertainment still very affordable and accessible to almost all Melburnians. Football was one of the underlying assumptions behind the way Melbourne lived and was treated as a meal ticket by the local councils and cricket clubs that controlled most of the venues at which it was played. The men charged with the administration of the Game could be excused for thinking that football carried the community and that it was entitled to a greater share of the revenues that it generated.

To others, however, the Game was a product of the community that supported it. Governments felt bound to

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[53] Ibid., p.11.

[54] Sporting Globe, 5 June 1963, p.1. This poorly written article is riddled with ambiguities and contains arithmetical calculations that defy comprehension. For example, match expenses for the Melbourne V Fitzroy match are shown as: Police: £41; Ground staff: £218; Advertising: £7; Sundries (cash to bank etc.): £26; Payroll tax: £5; Curtain-raiser expenses: £18; Footballs: £20; Hire uniforms: £4. Inexplicably, the total match expenses are shown as £385.

be seen to act in a manner that would keep football in the public domain. The perceived existence of a public domain was, however, illusory. By the early 1960s, full employment and a strong union movement, operating in a context of conservative government at both the State and Federal level, had delivered affluence to ordinary Melburnians. Australia and Victoria had embraced a consumerism firmly rooted in capitalism. Belief in the public ownership of football constituted a denial of the nature of private enterprise. At the peak of the Long Boom such denial was understandable, but changing economic conditions would, in time, shatter the myth on which it was based.

The V.F.L. in the early 1960s was only an embryonic version of what would become an all-devouring A.F.L. Even football administrators gave lip service to vague notions of popular sovereignty over the Game. An A.N.F.C. booklet containing the laws of Australian Rules football, distributed by the V.F.L. *circa* 1964, displayed the maxim, '*populo ludus populi*', a Latin phrase meaning 'the game of the people for the people' on its back cover.[55] This presented a completely different message to the impression given by an official A.F.L. promotional booklet published for the 1999 season. The latter booklet, claiming to be 'the essential guide to understanding Australian Football', was called A.F.L.:

[55] 'Laws of the Australian national game of football', booklet published by the Australian National Football Council and distributed by the V.F.L., c.1964, cited in Sunday Herald Sun, 23 April 2000, Sport p.2. Exact year of publication not given in newspaper article. I am relying, for the approximate publication date, on my own memory of having possessed a copy of this booklet as a child.

the great Australian game.[56] The title implied that the Game's foremost controlling body had transcended a mere usurpation of ownership of the one-time '*populo ludus populi*'. By confusing its own name with that of the Game itself, the A.F.L. was erroneously and arrogantly claiming to *be* the Game, as distinct from merely owning or controlling it.

The precedent for such arrogance had been set as early as the 1930s, when the League's rhetoric showed that, despite its benevolence, it considered itself above community. Since then its penny-pinching battles with ground managers had been fought on a consistent assumption that it was the League's role to wrench as much from the public as its adversaries or the arbitrators would allow it to. Its justification, then as later, was the ever-increasing cost of accommodating a vision of providing an improved product for its customers. An improved product, however, is usually a more expensive one and therefore affordable to fewer people than the inferior product. The end of the Long Boom would reveal the illusory nature of Australia's affluent egalitarianism. By the end of the century an increasing number of people on the wrong side of the growing chasm between the rich and the poor would be excluded from the League's vision. While the product may have improved in many ways, its exponentially increasing price meant that only a diminishing elite could afford to consume it.

The ground managers, for the most part, inhibited the League in its empire building ambitions. While their arguably parasitical relationship with football made them an easy target for populist scorn, the

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[56] 'A.F.L.: the great Australian game'. Promotional booklet, A.F.L., 1999.

councils and cricket clubs were, in many ways, representing localised social communities determined to put the V.F.L. in its place. An unsatisfactory outcome to the ministerial determination in 1963 made the V.F.L. hungry for a fight and war was about to erupt. St.Kilda, Moorabbin, North Melbourne and Coburg in particular were about to become theatres in a war that would have major ramifications for understandings of community in football.

Chapter 4:

IMPERIALISM IN SUBURBIA

From World War 2 to the early 1960s admission prices to League football increased steadily. The increments however were barely perceptible. The football public's sense of sovereignty over the Game was protected by a readily excusable and understandable denial. Ground managers and successive Ministers of Lands had, wittingly or unwittingly, helped to protect the illusion by inhibiting, to an extent, the League's strategy of placing an ever-increasing burden on football barrackers in order to finance the increasingly complex task of delivering its product. At the 1964 Adult Outer admission price of 5/- (1.7422% of the Basic Wage) League football remained an affordable commodity for all but the most destitute of Melburnians. Its popularity ensured that, even at this tokenistic price, it was a prolific source of revenue and the V.F.L. had been at loggerheads with the G.M.A. over how that revenue should be distributed since at least the 1930s. From the League's point of view, there had been a horror outcome to the 1963 ministerial determination. This had created a climate for change.

The nature that the impending change would take was influenced by other broader social changes. Federal immigration policies had increased Melbourne's population. Coupled with increasing affluence and mobility, this had produced a demographic drift of Melbourne's traditional locality-based football communities into outer suburbs. As relationships between football clubs and

ground managers deteriorated, many V.F.L. clubs began to look for alternative accommodation away from their traditional home grounds in inner metropolitan areas. The League itself, determined to be free from exploitation by the M.C.C., was planning to build its own stadium in the outer eastern suburb of Waverley. The traditional home grounds, like the inner suburban place names on which the identities of all V.F.L. clubs except Melbourne and Geelong were based, were a reflection of residual forces continuing to shape Melbourne's football communities despite the already predominantly outer suburban nature of Melbourne's football-going population. The persistence of these forces through a period of emergent suburbanisation in the late 1940s and the 1950s had delayed the inevitable clash between demographics and tradition that would soon challenge existing understandings of community in football.

The League's choice of an outer eastern suburb as the place in which to build the stadium that it hoped would eventually make the M.C.G. redundant as a football venue was part of the League's push to provide what it considered a better deal for its customers. Waverley was being hailed as the future demographic centre of metropolitan Melbourne. From a rural market gardening area at the end of World War 2, the Shire of Mulgrave had grown into the City of Waverley. In the mid-1960s it had become the eastern frontier of Melbourne's suburban expansion.[1] A three-fold population increase resulting from an influx of

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[1] Dingle, Tony, 'People and places in Melbourne' in Davison, Graeme, Dingle, Tony and O'Hanlon, Seamus (eds), The cream brick frontier: histories of Australian suburbia, Clayton, Vic., Monash University Department of History, 1995, p.27.

young married couples between 1947 and 1954 and, in consequence, a birth rate more than double the Melbourne metropolitan average had gone hand in hand with a boom in home building in the area.[2] Although the growth rate slowed, merely doubling over the next seven years, the 'Baby Boom' had provided a ready market for football's immediate future. A birth rate still about 50% higher than the Melbourne average[3] ensured that this market would continue to grow.

The League saw the move to Waverley as a way of taking the Game to the People, part of an enlightened and benevolent sovereignty that the V.F.L. saw as its role in the administration of its Game. It was the same enlightened sovereignty that would relocate South Melbourne to Sydney in 1982 and merge Fitzroy with Brisbane in 1996. At Waverley the V.F.L. was pandering to the consumer, provided of course that the consumer either lived within easy reach of the new demographic centre or owned a vehicle capable of getting them there.

Since World War 2 Melbourne's political and business leaders had embraced a dominant American ideal in urban planning, a vision of what Graeme Davison described as 'sweeping ribbons of carriageway, with their overpasses, clover leafs, underpasses, and exchanges, crowded with motor cars, each self-directed yet moving in swift tidal flows.'[4] The private car and the freeway promised the individual freedom from the

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[2] Ibid., p.37.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Davison, Graeme, 'Driving to Austerica' in Bolitho, Harold and Wallace-Crabbe, Chris (eds), Approaching Australia: papers from the Harvard Australian studies symposium, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Committee on Australian Studies, 1998, p.172.

perceived tyranny of public transport timetables.[5] A small minority dependent on public transport, however, would find a trip to Waverley far more daunting than a trip to the M.C.G., even if they lived geographically closer to the former. For these early victims of the League's response to economic imperatives, denial may have possibly given way to an anger similar to that with which many Swans and Lions supporters would later greet the South Melbourne and Fitzroy relocations.

In the 1960s, visions of interstate relocations would have seemed comfortably futuristic. Strained financial relations between football clubs and their respective ground managers, however, were painfully contemporary. In March 1964 only the Geelong and Collingwood football clubs controlled their own grounds. The Fitzroy, Richmond, St.Kilda and South Melbourne grounds were controlled by the respective cricket clubs, while local councils controlled the home grounds of Essendon, North Melbourne, Footscray and Hawthorn. The Carlton Recreation Reserve Committee administered the Blues' home at Princes Park while the M.C.G. Trustees were in charge of the Demons' ground that also served as the venue for the finals series. A report in the Sporting Globe claimed that £122,000 of football-generated revenue had found its way into the coffers of these organisations during the 18 home-and-away rounds of the 1963 season,[6] under a system described as 'archaic and farcical' in the St.Kilda Football Club's Annual Report.[7]

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[5] Ibid.
[6] Sun, 28 March 1964, p.15.
[7] Feldmann, Jules and Holmesby, Russell, The point

St.Kilda's home ground at the Junction Oval in Fitzroy Street, St.Kilda, was a popular venue with football fans because its facilities were generally regarded as the best of all the V.F.L. venues other than the M.C.G. and because its location was convenient for users of public transport. The problem, from the football club's point of view, was that the ground manager's share of gate receipts went to the St.Kilda Cricket Club. It had only been the cricket club's decision to commit itself to over £7,000 worth of clubroom renovations that had dissuaded the football club from moving to Elsternwick Park in 1960. Although there was subsequently some dispute as to the exact nature of any agreement between the two bodies, it would appear that the cricket club, at least, was under the impression that the football club had committed itself to the Junction Oval until 1970.[8]

St.Kilda's flirtation with the Elsternwick Park idea was one of a number of similar considerations by V.F.L. clubs in the early 1960s in their fight against the perceived injustices of the ground control arrangements. The Richmond Football Club considered a move to Oakleigh, eventually abandoning the idea because it regarded the ground as too small.[9] Fitzroy also became restless in the summer of 1961-62. The Lions' ground manager, the Fitzroy Cricket Club, enjoyed a permissive occupancy at Brunswick Street, which enabled it, in effect, to act as an entrepreneur between the football club and the council. Until October 1961, the cricket club paid the council a

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of it all: the story of St.Kilda Football Club, Melbourne, Playright, 1992, p.167.

[8] Sporting Globe, 1 April 1964, p.1.

[9] Sun, 25 March 1964, p.51 and Sporting Globe, 28 March 1964, p.1.

peppercorn figure of £100 *per annum* for this lucrative privilege. When Fitzroy Council suddenly demanded that the cricket club pay a more realistic £1500, ground control arrangements were thrown into confusion. The football club's response to the uncertainty was to negotiate with Preston Council for the use of its ground.[10]

Fitzroy's attempt to take over the ground, home of the V.F.A. club, Preston, illustrated an emergent bridging force between Ian Andrews's second and third understandings of community, the consolidation of a sense of communion that transcends the local social system in which it is nurtured. As suggested earlier, football lagged behind broader society in its accommodation of these forces, weighed down as it was by traditions based on localism. While economic imperatives appear to have driven the Lions' attempt to move, much of the club's justification was based on a recognition that its following was no longer confined within Fitzroy's municipal boundaries. According to a report in the Sporting Globe, 70% of registered Fitzroy members lived in the Preston area, which also produced 24 players from the club's 1961 list.[11] This implies that something more sublime than a locality-based social system held the Fitzroy football community together, especially when seen in light of the club's subsequent nomadic nature. In the last four decades of the century the club known as 'Fitzroy' would call Princes Park, Junction Oval, Victoria Park and Western Oval 'home' at various times. It was only when the club was subsumed beneath a so-called 'merger' with Brisbane in 1996 that its identity, as

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[10] Sporting Globe, 17 March 1962, p.1.
[11] Sporting Globe, 3 March 1962, p.7.

Fitzroy, was lost. Significantly, the issue of identity was the block over which Fitzroy's negotiations with Preston would stumble.

Fitzroy's approach to Preston came to light in media reports in February and March 1962. Dr.O.Lipson, president of the Preston Football Club told radio 3DB that the Lions had approached his club in November 1961 with a proposal that Preston play its home matches on Sundays, leaving the ground available for Fitzroy to use on Saturdays. Preston Football Club had rejected the proposal but Fitzroy had approached the council without the club's knowledge. Dr.Lipson said that Preston had told the council that it was opposed to the proposal and was confident that the council would take the local club's side.[12]

The ground itself and its environs needed considerable improvements to reach League standard. In addition to enlarged mounds, more turnstiles and additional toilet facilities to accommodate V.F.L. crowds, Fitzroy also wanted the ground to be widened by 10 yards. The Sporting Globe's Peter Bye did not consider this likely to happen in view of the fact that adjacent Mary Street, which had only recently been sealed, would need to be dug up again to accommodate Fitzroy's wishes.[13]

Despite these practical obstacles to Fitzroy's proposal, Peter Bye conceded the possibility of council taking a more sympathetic view if Fitzroy were willing to change the club's name to Preston. He even quoted Dr.Lipson as saying that Preston Football Club would be 'delighted to negotiate' if the name change

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[12] Sporting Globe, 17 March 1962, p.1.
[13] Sporting Globe, 17 March 1962, p.1 (cont. p.7).

were part of the equation.[14] Preston Council's ultimate support of the Preston Football Club indicated that club and council agreed that Fitzroy would owe more to Preston, if the club changed grounds, than Preston would owe to Fitzroy. The kudos available to a local community in having its name linked to a V.F.L. club was, however, a significant bargaining chip. If the Lions wanted Preston's ground they would have to take the name too. They could not have one without the other. Significantly, they rejected both.

In 1963, both Richmond and Fitzroy were involved in negotiations for the use of a football ground in the thriving south-eastern suburb of Moorabbin.[15] Moorabbin was home to a population of over 100,000 and an upwardly mobile football club that had left the Federal District League to join the V.F.A. in 1951. Unlike Preston, the Moorabbin Football Club and the local council adopted a pro-active approach to establishing a V.F.L. presence in their area. An application by the club, in 1963, for membership of the V.F.L. in its own right had been unsuccessful. Unperturbed, club and council agreed to support each other in moves to bring V.F.L. football to Moorabbin.[16] The League may not have been willing to accommodate Moorabbin in its ranks, but Moorabbin was more than willing to accommodate the League.

Open flirtation with the V.F.L. was a dangerous pastime for an Association club. A long-standing enmity existed between the two bodies. Any breach of V.F.A. solidarity would have to be perpetrated discreetly. When the Sporting Globe revealed, in

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[14] Ibid., p.7.
[15] Sun, 24 March 1964, p.52.
[16] Moorabbin News, 8 April 1964, p.20.

September 1963, that Fitzroy and Richmond had both been involved in merger and relocation discussions with Moorabbin, Ian McDonald could write only of 'rumours'. He had been 'reliably told' that Moorabbin Football Club officials had approached the two League clubs and that 'at least five Moorabbin councillors' had been involved.[17] The wording implied that the club was the instigator and that council was a fellow traveller. Subsequent attempts by the football club to clear itself of accusations of disloyalty to the V.F.A. cast some doubts upon the reliability of McDonald's source. It is clear that a ground management and amalgamation deal was offered, whether at the instigation of council or club, to both the Lions and the Tigers to lure them from the inner suburbs to a new habitat. Bait was believed by McDonald to have included the promise of a liquor licence, £100,000 in ground improvements, parking space for 10,000 cars, and a 20-year lease with rent pegged at £50 per week for the first five years.[18]

McDonald reported that the Fitzroy committee had voted narrowly against the proposal. He believed that there was a faction within the club that had not entirely given up on the move to Preston.[19] On Peter Bye's figures, Preston was the Fitzroy heartland. Moving there made considerably more sense than shifting to Moorabbin. Although the locality-based football communities were fragmenting, the radial pattern of much of Melbourne's post-war intra-urban migration meant that supporters of particular clubs were still more likely to live in some areas than

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[17] Sporting Globe, 11 September 1963, p.20.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.

others. If support for Fitzroy were as strong in Preston as Peter Bye's figures suggest, it would seem that the old Fitzroy football community had not so much disappeared as been displaced. The further outward these communities were displaced, however, the more likely they were to share the same locality as the similarly displaced communities of other clubs. Mere location would not be enough to sustain a sense of communion. Club identity was therefore crucial. For a change of name to Preston to reproduce a new version of the old locality-oriented Fitzroy consciousness it would need to overcome, in particular, residual Collingwood loyalties also strongly represented in the Preston area.

Richmond's committee met at the beginning of October to consider the Moorabbin offer. The future of the club's ideally located, but cricket controlled, ground had been clouded for some time by the prospect of road-widening operations on Punt Road.[20] The magnificent M.C.G., only two good drop-kicks to the west, was a bastion of cricket and Oakleigh was too small. By the time the Tigers' committee eventually rejected the proposal the matter was no longer one of whispered rumours. Kevin Hogan, reporting for the Sun, was able to cite real people rather than 'reliable sources'. Richmond Football Club secretary, Graeme Richmond, outlined the reasons for the committee's decision. The Moorabbin proposal had contained the same provision that had stopped Fitzroy's move to Preston. Moorabbin Council was insisting that the club change its name to incorporate Moorabbin. This was not

[20] Hansen, Brian, Tigerland: the history of the Richmond Football Club from 1885, Melbourne, Richmond Former Players and Officials Association, 1989, p.22.

permitted under Richmond's constitution. The committee was also concerned at what it regarded as poor transport facilities between Moorabbin and the club's newly allotted recruiting zones in Waverley and East Malvern. The Moorabbin district itself had not been zoned to any club by the V.F.L.[21] The allocation of Waverley as part of Richmond's recruiting territory fuelled press speculation that the Tigers would eventually become the tenant at the new stadium. In March the following year, Graeme Richmond himself was quoted as saying that the club was 'examining the possibility of playing out that way'. He said that the new ground's location, not only in 'one of the most rapidly expanding areas in Australia', but also in the Tigers' recruiting district, was influencing the club's thinking.[22]

That the V.F.L. and its constituent clubs considered themselves above community was evident in the complete lack of regard that they had for the consequences of their actions in targeted areas. Oakleigh, Moorabbin, Preston and Waverley were all represented in the V.F.A. competition at this time. The Association in 1964 was still harbouring its 1897 grudge against the League for having come into existence. A delicate balance of territorial sovereignty existed between the two bodies, with the League, generally speaking, controlling the city and the long established inner suburbs and the Association holding sway in more marginal areas.

In the 1981 publication, Urban development in Australia, Max Neutze developed a model to explain

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[21] Sun, 2 October 1963, p.54.
[22] Sporting Globe, 28 March 1964, p.1.

the life-cycle of the Australian suburb. From a graphical representation of the population of any given urban sub-area over time, Neutze was able to identify various stages in that area's cycle based on an interpretation of the shape of the curve. A remote outer suburb's initial growth tended to be moderate over a small base, but passed into a period of rapid acceleration as it became an 'outer', as distinct from a 'remote outer' suburb. As this was happening, newly settled areas further still from the central city became the new 'remote outer' suburbs. By the time these new 'remote' areas had become 'outer' suburbs, the original suburb in question had graduated to 'middle' suburban status. In this middle phase, growth was still substantial but the actual rate of growth began to decline at some point, leading into the next stage, at which this once 'remote' area could be considered 'inner' suburban. This period in the cycle was characterised by a tapering off of the growth rate until it reached negative growth. Population decline was characteristic of central cities. Decline would be continuous unless arrested or reversed by some form of urban renewal, such as an extensive program of flat building or gentrification.[23] After World War 2, areas that had been marginal became established. Moorabbin experienced a population increase of 5.7% from 1947 until 1971, when it too entered negative growth.[24] The V.F.A., however, clung jealously to what

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[23] Neutze, Max, Urban development in Australia, 1981, cited in Dingle, 'People and places ...' in Davison *et al*, The cream brick frontier ..., pp.28-30.
[24] Dingle, 'People and places ...' in Davison *et al*, The cream brick frontier ..., p.34, p.31.

it saw as its dominions. Any takeover of the outer suburbs by the League would have ramifications.

The V.F.A. board of management regarded Moorabbin's dealings as evidence of its disloyalty to the Association. Moorabbin had emerged, in its short history, as a powerful force in the V.F.A., winning the 1957 and 1963 premierships. Now it seemed that the club considered itself to have already outgrown the Association. The V.F.A. board called a vote late in 1963 to determine Moorabbin's future in the competition. A move to have the club expelled because of its alleged overtures to Fitzroy and Richmond failed by only one vote.[25]

That the club survived this attempted expulsion was due primarily to its plea that the V.F.L. clubs had negotiated with the Moorabbin Council rather than the football club. Bill Leng, football correspondent for the Moorabbin News, suggested that the campaign had been driven more by media reports than hard evidence against the club.[26] The degree of the club's complicity in the council's machinations would become the crucial consideration in determining the V.F.A.'s treatment of its 1963 premier when the St.Kilda Football Club and the Moorabbin Council announced a merger in March 1964.

The announcement would not have taken everybody by surprise, certainly not V.F.L. treasurer, Phonse Tobin. Two days prior to the fateful meeting between Moorabbin Council and the St.Kilda Football Club, the Sporting Globe published an article in which Tobin, a North Melbourne delegate, predicted changes which he considered likely to happen in the coming decade or

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[25] Sun, 25 March 1964, p.51.
[26] Moorabbin News, 1 April 1964, p.16.

so. In his opinion some V.F.L. clubs would need to move out to the newly developing suburbs. He specifically named the North Melbourne, Richmond, Fitzroy and South Melbourne clubs,[27] all of which were based in suburbs that had been experiencing population decline since at least the 1947 Census.[28] He suggested that the Sunbury-St.Albans and Dandenong regions would be fertile areas for V.F.L. expansion and that 'progressive strong clubs like Moorabbin' could be brought into the League.[29] Tobin observed that 'many thousands' of his own club's supporters had left the North Melbourne area for the newer suburbs in recent years. By remaining locked into its inner-city stronghold the club was not catering to its supporters. He felt, however, that the time had not quite arrived for the changes. The mobility required for outer suburban living was dependent upon the development of freeway systems still in the planning stage.[30]

His comments reflected the influence of transport technology on Melburnian thinking during this era. Not only was post-war immigration forcing a demographic shift outward, but increasing affluence was making a car dependent metropolis appear both possible and desirable. This presented problems however. The weekend following Tobin's comments, the Sun reported the 'heaviest Easter traffic in memory' as Monday holiday traffic returning to Melbourne from the east of the State was banked up as far as Drouin, 60 miles

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[27] Sporting Globe, 21 March 1964, p.15.
[28] Dingle, 'People and places ...' in Davison *et al*, The cream brick frontier..., p.31.
[29] Sporting Globe, 21 March 1964, p.15.
[30] Ibid.

from Melbourne, at 6p.m.[31] Nevertheless the prevailing faith was that the super freeways would solve the problem. Melbourne was committing itself to a car dependent suburban future. The V.F.L.'s decision to build its new stadium at Waverley indicated that it, too, embraced this emergent vision. In neighbouring Dandenong the General Motors Holden plant produced the very commodity that shaped the character of the expanse of low-density suburbia along Dandenong Road to its immediate north-west. Australia's first 'drive-in' university, Monash, had been founded in 1961 next to the drive-in theatre that would become its car park. A further short drive away was Melbourne's first motel and its first regional drive-in shopping complex at Chadstone.[32]

Like North Melbourne, the St.Kilda Football Club was affected by the suburban sprawl and the growing dominance of the motor car. In 1964 approximately 75% of its members lived south of Elsternwick. Of its playing staff, only one was recruited from the City of St.Kilda.[33] Quite apart from ground management problems, the ongoing viability of the Junction Oval as a home base was threatened by a proposed widening of Queen's Road. Traffic congestion at St.Kilda Junction had necessitated extensive road works in the vicinity of the ground. At the time, it was believed that plans to widen Queen's Road would have had to involve cutting off a significant portion of spectator space from the stadium.[34]

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[31] Sun, 31 March 1964, p.5.
[32] Davison, 'Driving to Austerica' in Bolitho and Wallace-Crabbe (eds), op.cit., p.165.
[33] Feldmann and Holmesby, op.cit., p.173.
[34] Sun, 25 March 1964, p.27.

Nevertheless, it would appear that economic considerations played a greater role than social change in St.Kilda's decision to leave its traditional home. The new ministerial award increased the contribution payable to the Outer Ground Improvement Fund from 15% to 25%, calculated on Adult Outer admission revenue after expenses. This was wrongly represented in many press reports as a windfall for the ground managers when, in fact, a separate committee administered the fund. This committee included representatives from all involved parties, including the football clubs. Nevertheless, the increased deduction represented further erosion of the competing clubs' share of gate takings. North Melbourne secretary, Leo Schemnitz, complained that the cricket clubs and ground managers were receiving preferential treatment from the Government.

> The award is so ridiculously stacked, financially, against the football clubs regarding occupancy that both the Minister and the ground managers have gone beyond all reason and have killed the goose which has been laying the golden eggs. It has reached the stage where the football clubs must receive better treatment or move to outer grounds.[35]

For St.Kilda, the time had come to take action. At a secret meeting between the St.Kilda Football Club and the Moorabbin Council on 23 March 1964, the two parties negotiated a deal whereby St.Kilda would

amalgamate with the Moorabbin Football Club. The new club, to be known as 'St.Kilda-Moorabbin' for the first ten years of its existence and simply as 'Moorabbin' thereafter, would play its home matches at the Moorabbin football ground from the beginning of the 1965 season. The club itself would manage the ground which it would rent from the council on terms considerably more favourable than the existing arrangements at Junction Oval.[36] The council agreed to spend over £100,000 on ground improvements, including a new grandstand, increased and improved parking space, terracing of the outer and extensions to the existing covered area.[37]

Initial press reports of the new arrangement emphasised the positive aspects of the deal. The Moorabbin ground was said to be 'well drained, ideally sited and lending itself readily to big development.'[38] The Sporting Globe devoted considerable space to putting the case in favour of football clubs becoming their own ground managers. It used crowd and gate receipt figures from the 1963 opening round fixture between St.Kilda and Melbourne at the Junction Oval, boosting the receipt figures slightly to allow for the increase in admission charges about to come into force for the 1964 season. The Sporting Globe concluded that the club would have been £1,448 better off under the new deal than the old on this one game alone, essentially because the club would have received payment as ground manager in addition to its payment as a competing club. The figure was further enhanced by some creative accounting on the writer's part,

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[35] Sporting Globe, 28 March 1964, p.1.
[36] Sun, 24 March 1964, p.52.
[37] Moorabbin News, 26 March 1964, p.1.

showing the Outer Ground Improvement Fund, some £788 in the example given, as a new source of income for the club. St.Kilda Cricket Club secretary, Gordon Tamblyn, refuted this misleading use of figures when given space for rebuttal in the next issue.[39]

The Sun, in its enthusiasm to take the football club's side in the argument, was also liberal in its use of figures. The St.Kilda Cricket Club had received one-third of the television and radio rights for coverage of matches at Junction Oval in 1963, in addition to one half of the catering rights. The football club had paid the cricket club £8,000 in ground manager's fees during the season. Furthermore the 7,000 members and guests of the cricket club were able to attend the nine St.Kilda home matches for a season payment of 15/-, compared to the 45/- paid by football club season ticket holders.[40] Again the cricket club questioned the accuracy of claims made on the football club's behalf. Tamblyn argued that the amount, approximately £5,000, paid to the football club by the 7,000 cricket members and their guests should be considered as having partially offset the £8,000. He said that it would therefore be more accurate to say that the football club had paid only £3,000 for the use of the ground. Even this figure, he felt, was an overstatement, since the members' facilities at the Junction Oval would not accommodate more than 50% to 60% of the cricket members and guests at any one time.[41]

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[38] Sun, 25 March 1964, p.27.
[39] Sporting Globe, 28 March 1964, p.13 with cricket club's rebuttal on 1 April 1964, p.1.
[40] Sun, 28 March 1964, p.15.
[41] Sporting Globe, 1 April 1964, p.1.

The cricket club's argument was steeped in a denial comparable to the popular ownership myth. It was based on the taking for granted of privileges that placed the cricket club member above the realities of the market place. It was an argument that chose to ignore the fact that the cricket members were consuming a product, i.e. football, for one third of its retail value. Using a curious mix of elementary market theory, populist rhetoric and informed historical scholarship, the Sun's Lou Richards argued that League football was a 'seller's market' and that the football clubs had a duty to their long-suffering supporters to drive the hardest possible bargain with ground managers. He claimed that the 'gladiators got a better deal 2,000 years ago at the Colloseum' than football's paying customers were receiving in the early 1960s. Football had been 'carrying' the cricket clubs and local councils for too long and there was no shortage of outer suburban councils that would relish the prospect of having a V.F.L. club attracted to its area.[42]

Tamblyn's rebuttal chose also to ignore the one-third share of television and radio rights that the cricket club received. In its rejoinder the football club refused to budge from its claim that the club was paying £8,000 for the privilege of using Junction Oval. It now claimed to have paid the cricket club £12,995 in gate receipts, levies and media rights and to have received only £4,733 from the cricket members for their right to watch football.[43] With the beginning of the new season, as goals and behinds became more newsworthy than pounds, shillings and pence, readers

[42] Sun, 28 March 1964, p.15.
[43] Sporting Globe, 8 April 1964, p.19.

of the Sun and the Sporting Globe were spared the tedium of further squabbling over financial minutiae.

Interspersed with the financial claims and counter claims of the respective sides was a legal wrangle over whether or not a formal agreement had been made that the football club would remain at Junction Oval until 1970. Cricket's occupation of the legal high ground in this matter would ultimately give fellow-travelling traditionalists in the football club some leverage in subsequent negotiations. Tamblyn produced a letter, dated 5 August 1960 and signed by St.Kilda Football Club secretary, Ian Drake, in which the football club agreed to stay put until 1970 provided the cricket club built new clubrooms for them. These works had subsequently been completed at a cost of £7,500.[44] The football club was claiming that the matter had been discussed, but that no agreement had ever been formulated.[45] As the respective lawyers prepared for battle, St.Kilda supporters debated matters pertaining to identity and community.

In moving to Moorabbin, St.Kilda was embracing what it recognised as its new heartland, the bayside and peninsula suburbs south-east of its original home. Post-war St.Kilda underwent significant changes in character and demography. Family homes had largely given way to a surge in flat building in the area.[46] Children under 15 were significantly under-represented (14.7%) in the population when compared

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[44] Sporting Globe, 1 April 1964, p.1.
[45] Sporting Globe, 8 April 1964, p.1.
[46] Troy, Patrick N., 'Environmental quality in four Melbourne suburbs', Urban Research Unit, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University, 1972, p.49.

to the same age group in Melbourne generally (24.7%), based on figures from the 1966 Census. The area also had a significantly higher proportion (17.7%) of its residents from 'other European' origins, meaning from European countries other than Italy or Greece, than Melbourne generally (7.5%).[47] This group would have accounted for the significant Jewish influence in St.Kilda. It was also suggested, in Patrick N. Troy's 1972 Australian National University report, 'Environmental Quality in Four Melbourne Suburbs' that migrants in the St.Kilda area were more likely to be newly arrived than those in the rest of Melbourne.[48]

Tony Dingle, using the Max Neutze model for the developmental cycle of Australian suburbs explained earlier, and utilizing Lyn Richards's research in Nobody's home: dreams and realities in a new suburb, suggested that settlers in the frontier suburbs were recruited from out-migration from the inner and middle suburbs along well-established radial axes.[49] With the St.Kilda area, since World War 2, taking on a more cosmopolitan character less oriented towards traditional Australian suburban life, the bayside and peninsula suburbs to its south-east came to be populated by the descendants of what had been the St.Kilda Football Club's natural local constituency.

Embracing this change was to involve a change of the primary component of a club's identity, name. Originally conceived and presented to the public as an amalgamation with the Moorabbin Football Club,[50] it

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[47] Ibid., p.54.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Dingle, 'People and places ...' in Davison *et al*, The cream brick frontier..., p.35.
[50] Sun 24 March 1964 p52.

was hailed by the Sun as the 'first breakaway in League history'.[51] Since there was no suggestion that St.Kilda was intending to leave the V.F.L., this interesting choice of words probably referred to the fact that the club was breaking away from the shackles of cricket club domination. The use of the word 'first' implied that the Sun expected this to be the forerunner to similar moves at other clubs.

Although it would not have been obvious at the time, given that the club was expected to change its name to reflect its new location, the move can be seen, in hindsight, as a significant breakaway from localism. The dominant convention that a club be located at or near the locality after which it was named reflected an understanding of community that had already become merely residual. There had been exceptions in the past. Essendon Football Club had been based at East Melbourne until 1922 and the long-defunct University club had never been linked to a particular locality. Military occupation of particular grounds during World War 2 had forced clubs to move temporarily.

In 1964, however, all clubs conformed to the convention. Even the club known popularly as 'Melbourne' and officially as the M.C.C. Football Club, although not linked to a particular suburb, was based at the headquarters of the organisation after which it was named. St.Kilda's relocation could not conform to the convention unless it was accompanied by a name change. Understandably, Moorabbin Football Club president, Don Bricker, was delighted with developments. Claiming that a 'large percentage' of St.Kilda's supporters lived in Moorabbin, he pledged

[51] Sun, 25 March 1964, p.52.

his club's support to the council-brokered merger and its accompanying name change.[52] However, a correspondent to the Sun, a South Yarra resident writing under the pseudonym, 'ONE-EYED', felt that the merger was more a case of Moorabbin buying itself a place in the V.F.L. than St.Kilda finding itself a home ground closer to its true constituency. 'ONE EYED' argued that a St.Kilda side could only represent St.Kilda if it continued to be based in St.Kilda.[53] The Sun conceded the point, predicting that future generations of Moorabbin supporters would wonder where the club got the nickname, 'Saints'.[54]

A Sporting Globe correspondent, 'D.M.' from Elwood, argued that the breakaway was 'highly commendable' as a way for the club to control its own destiny, but that the move should have been made to somewhere closer to home.

> Here is a club ... which (is) ... going to be transferred not to an adjoining suburb such as Prahran, Windsor, Elsternwick, Elwood or even Brighton, but to one several miles away with, according to the figures in the press, a population of over 100,000 compared to St.Kilda's 50,000-odd. Under those conditions how long is it going to be before members of this St.Kilda-Moorabbin Club will consist of a Moorabbin-minded majority.[55]

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[52] Sun, 26 March 1964, p.40.
[53] Sun, 28 March 1964, p.17.
[54] Sun, 28 March 1964, p.15.

D.M. feared that the move would result in the 'ultimate sinking' of the club's identity.[56] There was even reported to be talk, among St.Kilda Cricket Club members, of forming a new 'St.Kilda' football club and seeking affiliation with the V.F.L.[57]

Another concern raised by 'ONE-EYED' was the lack of consultation by the St.Kilda Football Club committee with its rank and file membership.[58] This was not a lone voice. 'Don't St.Kilda football members have any say?' asked J.Frazer of Elwood.[59] 'SAINT', also of Elwood, reiterated the question and expressed disapproval at the prospect of St.Kilda supporters having to transfer their home allegiance to Moorabbin.[60]

The chorus of resentment which greeted the committee's decision was by no means unusual in football club politics, or indeed in any political system under which democracy is considered to have been observed as soon as the ballot papers have been counted. Most football clubs operated on the understanding that their members elected a board or committee authorised to make decisions on their behalf. The St.Kilda-Moorabbin controversy prompted calls for a plebiscite on the issue, but president, Graham Huggins, claimed, 'Under the constitution, the committee has the right to do what it thinks is in the best interests of the club and the members.'[61] A Sporting Globe report on 4 April suggested that many

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[55] Sporting Globe, 4 April 1964, p.10.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Inside Football, 3 May 1989, p.26.
[58] Sun, 28 March 1964, p.17.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Sporting Globe, 4 April 1964, p.1.

vote.[69] Cricket's upper hand in the legal wrangle over the Junction Oval agreement between the football and cricket clubs enabled a loose alliance of cricket interests and football traditionalists to drive the bargain, up to a point. However the vote, conducted by mail, resulted in 2,862 votes in favour of the move to Moorabbin and 697 against.[70] On 28 September 1964, the St.Kilda Football Club moved into its new home. In round one of the 1965 season, the Saints played their first match at Moorabbin.[71]

On 11 April 1970 St.Kilda made a triumphant return to the Junction Oval, albeit as the visiting side, crushing the new tenant, Fitzroy, by 110 points. A new St.Kilda tradition was emerging with the help of an unprecedented period of on-field success. The genteel surroundings of the old ground were becoming foreign territory to a new breed of St.Kilda supporters. With its ample, functional but unattractive grandstands and large terraced outer, the Moorabbin ground would itself become an object of reverential nostalgia when St.Kilda's home matches were moved to Waverley in 1994. By this time the Saints had become a 'Moorabbin' football club in all but name. The club's training and administrative base remained at Moorabbin, which was bathed in a nostalgic glow on Thursday, 25 September 1997, when an estimated 12,000 fans watched St.Kilda's final training session before the 1997 Grand Final.[72] Ironically, St.Kilda's opponent, Adelaide, held its final training session on the Friday afternoon at Junction Oval.

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[68] Ibid.
[69] Inside Football, 3 May 1989, p.26.
[70] Feldmann and Holmesby, op.cit., p.169.
[71] Inside Football, 3 May 1989, p.26.
[72] Age, 26 September 1997, p.A1.

As St.Kilda became the unofficial 'Moorabbin' football club during its golden era, playing in three grand finals, with one premiership, between 1965 and 1971, the official Moorabbin Football Club became the victim of the V.F.L.'s intrusion into V.F.A. territory. Betrayed by its fellow conspirators who had promised it a V.F.L. identity and given it nothing, the 1963 V.F.A. premier was about to pay the ultimate price for its perceived disloyalty to the Association. Tempering his otherwise enthusiastic support for St.Kilda's move, Lou Richards had one reservation. 'I think it would be a tragedy if the Moorabbin Association side went out of existence', he said shortly after the merger announcement.[73] An opponent of the move, J.Frazer of Elwood, took a wildly different tack, suggesting that the other eleven V.F.L. clubs should refuse to play at Moorabbin. Frazer suggested that the St.Kilda Football Club should be banished to what was now its 'right place' in the V.F.A.[74] Frazer's suggestion would have possibly been welcomed as an antidote to the concern raised by 'ONE-EYED' that Moorabbin Council had 'bought ... a place in the League'.[75]

In the aftermath to the agreement between St.Kilda Football Club and the Moorabbin Council, as the Saints' committee was forced to compromise with dissenting voices within the club, the Moorabbin Football Club emerged as the big loser. The proposed amalgamation would become, in effect, a takeover. The club was left friendless as the V.F.A. board of

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[73] Sun, 28 March 1964, p.15.
[74] Ibid., p.17.
[75] Ibid.

management debated how to deal with it. On 3 April, Moorabbin was suspended from the V.F.A. competition for the duration of the 1964 season on the grounds of disloyalty to the Association. On 2 October 1964 the board finally expelled the club from the V.F.A. The reason given for the expulsion was that the club did not have a home ground.[76] Part of the original council-brokered agreement was that the council would provide the Moorabbin V.F.A. club with another ground if it wished to continue in Association ranks.[77] The V.F.A., in its 1964 Annual Report, suggested that the council's breach of promise was caused by its over-commitment to ground improvements at Moorabbin, which left it with insufficient funds to bring another ground up to the standard required of a V.F.A. venue.[78] After nineteen seasons in exile, Moorabbin was readmitted to the V.F.A. as a second division side in 1983, in a ground-sharing arrangement with St.Kilda at the Moorabbin Oval. [79]

The V.F.A.'s reaction suggested that it regarded the matter as a territorial dispute. In its ongoing conflict with the League, the Association felt that its control of football in the more sparsely populated outer areas of metropolitan Melbourne had given it some claim to being the champion of 'community' football. The basis of this ideological adaptation of localism lay in the idea that the V.F.L. communities had become so fragmented by the pressures of *gesellschaft* that they were no longer recognisable.

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[76] Inside Football, 3 May 1989, p.26.
[77] Sun, 25 March 1964, p.52.
[78] Fiddian, Marc, The pioneers: 100 years of Association football Melbourne, Victorian Football Association, 1977, p.36.
[79] Fiddian, Marc, The roar of the crowd, Melbourne,

The rarefied air of outer suburbia, on the other hand, had preserved a pristine *gemeinschaft*. This claim, valid or otherwise, had become the V.F.A.'s greatest strength. Preston had bravely resisted the advances of Fitzroy, two years earlier. Oakleigh had felt the pressure of Richmond's wandering eye. Now, suddenly, Moorabbin had been annexed and the club was seen to have sided with the enemy. The neighbouring Sandringham Football Club began to be pessimistic about its drawing power now that it had to compete with a V.F.L. ground less than two miles away.[80]

St.Kilda's relocation provided the V.F.A. with ample evidence that fears of an invasion of its territory were not groundless. Public statements by Don Bricker to the effect that the Moorabbin Football Club committee were supportive of the Moorabbin Council's negotiations with St.Kilda provided the Association with an obvious and immediate scapegoat. Controversy following Moorabbin's suspension revealed that local support for the 'amalgamation' had been far from unanimous. Bill Leng, in the Moorabbin News, placed the blame for the club's fate squarely on the club itself and the council. The council had acted, initially, without reference to either the football club or its own ratepayers. The club had subsequently supported the merger which Leng felt could be of no benefit to the 'Moorabbin Football Club as we know it'.[81]

> The move means one senior football club replaces two - and it doesn't take much

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Victorian Football Association, 1987, p.81.

[80] Sun, 25 March 1964, p.51.

[81] Moorabbin News, 8 April 1964, p.19.

> imagination to determine which club it will be that will fade into extinction.[82]

He believed that if the club had been more patient it might well have been admitted to League ranks in its own right.[83]

The council also came under fire in a letter to the Moorabbin News by J.O'Mara. The writer complained that the council had recently reduced its borrowings by £100,000 because it had been revealed that a quarter of all rate revenue was being used to service existing loans. Now it was committing itself to expenditure of £100,000 on ground improvements.[84] Another correspondent, J.Anderson, criticised the council for being concerned only with the extension of sporting facilities. At the time of the St.Kilda-Moorabbin controversy, a proposal for the rezoning of a 10-acre site on Healy's Paddock, adjoining the Nepean Highway, south-east of the railway station, to allow the building of a new shopping centre was before the council. There had been press speculation that the council was likely to reject the proposal.[85] Anderson felt that the council's priorities were wrong.

> The council apparently intends to pour many thousands of pounds into the Moorabbin football ground which will be used for nine major matches each year. People go shopping almost every day of the year ... If the proposed shopping centre is allowed to

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[82] Ibid.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Moorabbin News, 8 April 1964, p.2.

proceed now, the parking facilities provided could also be used for the football ground.[86]

Council subsequently gave first-stage approval to the £1,000,000 project, which was to have been undertaken by Hammerson Trust Ltd.[87] It was shelved, however, when Myer Emporium Ltd. announced its £10,000,000 Southland project, also on the Nepean Highway, less than 3 kilometres away at Cheltenham.[88]

Even within the Moorabbin Football Club, support for the merger was not unanimous. Club vice-president and Moorabbin's delegate to the V.F.A., Jim Nixon, was faced with the unenviable task of trying to persuade the Association to allow Moorabbin to continue in the competition. Claiming to be 'a Moorabbin man from [his] boots to the top of [his] head', Nixon blamed the merger on 'a number of men' acting 'without thought of what they were entering into.' He claimed that Don Bricker had not been involved in the original secret meeting between Moorabbin Council and St.Kilda Football Club and had only subsequently become involved in negotiations to ensure that the club's interests were protected.[89]

Council, too, sought to indemnify the club against allegations of complicity in the deal. Cr.Reg Butler successfully moved that the council inform the V.F.A. that it did not, at any time, negotiate with

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[85] Moorabbin News, 1 April 1964, p.1.
[86] Ibid., p.2.
[87] Moorabbin News, 8 April 1964, p.1.
[88] Cribbin, John, Moorabbin: a pictorial history, 1862-1994, Moorabbin, Vic., City of Kingston, 1995, p.178.

the Moorabbin Football Club for the purpose of bringing V.F.L. football to the City of Moorabbin.[90] Neither the pleadings of the council nor those of Jim Nixon cut any ice with the V.F.A. board. Don Bricker's very public support for the merger had laid the club wide open to allegation. V.F.A. president, A.Gillan, explained that the decision to suspend the club had been made because the club had allowed its name to be associated with the merger. He stressed the importance of V.F.A. unity.

> The V.F.A. is on the verge of its best era. Last year was our most financial in 87 years. We must not permit any individual or any club to undo our work for the future. We will only rise with loyalty. We cannot prosper while there is somebody in our midst we are unable to trust.[91]

Some of Moorabbin's more militant supporters were not willing to accept that their club was to blame for its suspension. In apparent denial, to use the Kübler-Ross terminology, of Moorabbin's ambitious complicity, they made St.Kilda the target of their anger. An incident on the Saturday following the V.F.A.'s decision to suspend the club illustrated not only their powerlessness, but the smugness of the V.F.L. club that had used Moorabbin for its own ends. A group of irate Moorabbin supporters invaded Graham Huggins's home at Beaumaris, threatening the St.Kilda president

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[89] Moorabbin News, 8 April 1964, p.14.
[90] Ibid., p.1.
[91] Ibid., p.20.

with violence. In the Sporting Globe, Ian Drake leapt to Huggins's defence, claiming that it was 'completely unfair' to blame St.Kilda for the V.F.A.'s decision.

> Before the arrangement was finalised the Moorabbin Football Club was fully aware that we were going there. We made sure of this so they could decide themselves whether they would merge with St.Kilda or stay in the VFA ... It was all up to them. Their destiny was in their own hands.[92]

The St.Kilda Football Club, said Ian Drake, had no desire to 'enter into the murky mud of V.F.A. politics'. He said it had been one of the conditions of St.Kilda's agreement with the council that the club would not be given the use of the ground without first coming to an agreement with the Moorabbin Football Club. 'The Football Club deferred their [sic] decision but were quite happy with the arrangement,' he said.[93] Don Bricker protested that the V.F.A. had, in effect, suspended the club merely for backing its own landlord, the Moorabbin Council.[94]

The deep-seated rivalry between the two principal controlling bodies of senior football in Victoria was an obstacle in the way of any resolution to anomalies between the concentration of V.F.L. clubs in the inner suburbs and the demographic realities of metropolitan

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[92] Sporting Globe, 8 April 1964, p.1.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Sporting Globe, 4 April 1964, p.1.

Melbourne in the early 1960s. The *status quo* was held in place by the considerable weight of tradition. In the minds of many football administrators, tradition had come magically into existence when the last of the twelve V.F.L. clubs were admitted to the competition in 1925 and had remained unchanged ever since. A 'progressive' faction had made a bold leap into suburbia with the purchase of land at Waverley and some clubs were looking outward. The possibility of one body promoting a football competition between clubs that were a valid expression of local communities embracing the greater Melbourne metropolis, however, depended on a resolution, either by conquest or cooperation, to the perennial conflict between the League and the Association.

Given the intractability of the V.F.A. the issue could, realistically, have only been resolved by conquest. Whether St.Kilda ever seriously intended to change its name to Moorabbin or simply went along with Moorabbin Council's condition merely to get a 'foot in the door' is difficult to determine. Whether Moorabbin Council would have backed down if either Richmond or Fitzroy had initially accepted the amalgamation and name-change proposal and subsequently 'discovered' that the change of name was unconstitutional is also problematical. The St.Kilda experience suggests that the council would have done so, but there is also the possibility that the backdown, in this case, only occurred as a reaction to the collapse of negotiations with the Lions and the Tigers. The council may have decided that it needed to be more flexible, willing even to sacrifice the kudos of having its name associated with a V.F.L. club in order to secure the

St.Kilda members were not happy to endure enlightened despotism until the next election.[62]

Even the despots, themselves, were not unanimous in their desire to move the club to Moorabbin. Respected committeeman and former St.Kilda player, Wells Eicke, shocked the club shortly after the announcement of the move by tendering his resignation. An excerpt from his letter of resignation appeared in the Sun:

> I consider the transfer to Moorabbin a grave mistake and unacceptable to a large proportion of St.Kilda Football Club members who undoubtedly should have been consulted.[63]

The democratically elected committee was, in fact, rapidly disappearing. Earlier in the year, two other committeemen had resigned. The same St.Kilda Football Club constitution by which Graham Huggins felt empowered required that vacancies on the committee be filled within 42 days. That time limit expired at the end of March, only a few days after the St.Kilda-Moorabbin announcement. Eicke's resignation created a third vacancy.[64]

If St.Kilda's constitution did not provide an avenue for a plebiscite on a contentious issue, the need to fill vacancies on the committee would, at least, give an opportunity for opponents of the move to stand for election. The Sporting Globe reported moves within the club to bring about such a defacto

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[62] Ibid.
[63] Sun, 30 March 1964, p.32.
[64] Sporting Globe, 4 April 1964, p.1.

plebiscite, but Ian Drake's reply to the mounting pressures to call a by-election indicated that the St.Kilda constitution was in a state of disrepair.

> We're aware that the by-elections should have been held but we haven't gone ahead with them because of legal advice. Our legal advisers have found a flaw in our constitution which says we can't elect committeemen except at an annual meeting. The constitution is being redrafted to get rid of this and other anomalies and we will put them to a general meeting.[65]

The sagging constitution could not, of itself, be used to stop the committee from moving the club to Moorabbin. However, there was a provision that the club could not change its name or be dissolved without the support of three-quarters of the members present at a special meeting with a quorum of no less than 10% of the total club membership.[66] A confrontation loomed when a club member, John Sist, took out a Supreme Court writ against both the name change and the move to Moorabbin.[67]

The prospect of prolonged litigation proved unattractive to both sides. The writ was withdrawn when a compromise was reached. On 28 April the football club announced that it would pursue the change of name no further.[68] It was also agreed, as part of the compromise, to put the Moorabbin move to a

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[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Feldmann and Holmesby, op.cit., p.168.

economic benefits of having nine major sporting fixtures in its district every year.

Whether or not St.Kilda's initial breach of its own constitution was an honest mistake, it can still be said that the League stole Moorabbin from the Association. The Saints had more to offer the local community, in economic terms at least, than the local V.F.A. club could ever hope to give, no matter how successful it was. The V.F.L. was simply too powerful, by virtue of its popular appeal.

In 1964, the outer suburbs appeared ripe for the League's plucking. V.F.L. secretary, Eric McCutchan, hailed the St.Kilda move as a sign of things to come.

> I'm sure that in the future other clubs will leave their present locations for the outer perimeter districts where League football is not provided at present. Supporters have moved from the inner suburbs and they want to take their football teams with them ... You have to have your ground in the population centres, and that isn't the inner suburbs any more.[95]

He indicated that the League would soon take possession of the 200 acres of land it had bought at Waverley two years earlier, making what proved to be an overly optimistic prediction that League football would be played there within 'a year or two'. He said that the secretaries of the Richmond and Hawthorn clubs had told him that, although they were reasonably happy at their existing grounds, they would demand

tenancy at the new ground when it was ready.[96] The Sporting Globe's Ian McDonald regarded Richmond as 'odds on' for tenure of Waverley, and suggested that Hawthorn would have taken Moorabbin if St.Kilda had not. The Hawks, he said, were now looking towards the Nunawading area as a likely home.[97]

Hawthorn secretary, Ron Cook, assured McDonald that nothing had been done to move the club away from Hawthorn. The 1961 premiership and a Grand Final appearance in 1963 had raised the club's profile, however. McDonald speculated that the Hawks' new status as 'one of the glamour sides of the League' would force the club out of Glenferrie Oval, which he regarded as inadequate 'for the needs of the rapidly growing eastern suburbs'.[98] The ground was, as Harry Gordon put it, 'a prisoner of its own geography'. Bordered by a shopping centre, parklands, housing and a railway line, its facilities were incapable of expansion. Surprisingly, however, the club negotiated a long-term ground management deal with Hawthorn Council in 1966, after negotiations with Nunawading Council had faltered.[99]

One person naïve enough to believe in the possibility of cooperation between the League and the Association was 'E.C.', a Kew resident and reader of the Sporting Globe, whose suggestion for the re-unification of Victorian football was given abundant space in that publication on 23 November 1963. 'E.C.' sought to address a number of problems caused by the continuation of the competition's existing structure.

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[95] Sporting Globe, 28 March 1964, p.15.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Ibid., p.1.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Gordon, op.cit., p.137.

By remaining locked into suburbs within the 'inner circle', the V.F.L. was not only neglecting the newly developing areas but was also continuing to commit itself to areas which were declining in population as a result of industrialisation. The twelve-team competition was mathematically unwieldy when the season's structure permitted only 18 home-and-away rounds. It was not possible, under these circumstances, to have a balanced competition in which clubs played each other twice. The restriction of finals participation to only four out of twelve competing clubs meant that many of the clubs lost all hope of making the 'final four' well before the completion of the home and away matches. As a result, many supporters lost interest before the season was over.[100]

The solution that 'E.C.' proposed involved the expansion of the V.F.L. to a twenty-team competition, split into two divisions of ten teams each. At the end of each season the two top clubs from second division would be promoted at the expense of the two bottom teams from first division. Two existing League clubs would be forced either to disband or amalgamate with outer suburban V.F.A. clubs. The remaining ten League clubs would initially comprise the first division, while ten outer suburban clubs, the existing V.F.A. clubs of Coburg, Sunshine, Williamstown, Oakleigh, Dandenong, Sandringham, Moorabbin, Preston, Waverley and Box Hill, with or without merger partners from the V.F.L., would make up the second division. Thus, greater Melbourne, as it then existed, would be represented in the one competition. The ten-team structure of each division would enable all teams to

[100] Sporting Globe, 23 November 1963, p.13.

meet twice in 18 rounds. The battle to avoid relegation would maintain the interest of supporters from unsuccessful first division clubs until the end of the home and away rounds.[101] This suggestion was made prior to the St.Kilda-Moorabbin negotiations. The unsuccessful outcome to talks involving Richmond, Fitzroy, Preston and Moorabbin, however, should have alerted 'E.C.' to the unrealistic nature of the expectation that two V.F.L. clubs would be willing to have their respective identities subsumed beneath an outer suburban amalgamation.

The idea of a merger between the V.F.L. and the V.F.A. was not new. As recently as 29 July 1961, the Football Record had presented a proposal similar to the one put forward by 'E.C.' The article said that the League had proposed a joint multi-divisional V.F.L./V.F.A. competition, with promotion and relegation provisions, in 1944 but that the V.F.A. had rejected the idea.[102]

The incongruity between the location and identity of the St.Kilda Football Club, after its departure from Junction Oval at the end of 1964, was symptomatic of a greater over-riding anomaly between V.F.L. iconography and Melbourne's demographic realities. The twelve V.F.L. clubs endured, seemingly oblivious to the mass relocation of the people who supported them. Some administrators, like McCutchan and Tobin, sensed that the contradictions were moving towards resolution. They believed that V.F.L. clubs would inevitably change to provide a more meaningful

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[101] Ibid.
[102] Sporting Globe, 7 December 1963, p.7.

reflection of greater Melbourne as it had evolved. While the St.Kilda move, North Melbourne's decision to move to Coburg, speculation linking other clubs with other outer suburban areas and the emerging Waverley experiment supported their predictions at the time, present hindsight suggests that the contradictions were never resolved. The V.F.L. and the V.F.A. were incapable of working towards a resolution because their separate agendas precluded the possibility of collaborative effort.

In any case the realignment of an old localism to reflect a new one would have been a redundant exercise given that a new understanding lay at the basis of post-World War 2 football communities. The refusal of St.Kilda, Fitzroy and Richmond to change their respective names to reflect new, or proposed new, locations asserted the primacy of club identity in the sense of communion that held V.F.L. clubs together. Seen in this light, the territorial anomalies became a non-issue. The emergent bridging force, referred to earlier, between Ian Andrews's second and third understandings of community was the notion that people who barracked for a club were part of a community regardless of where they lived geographically.

The fact that the St.Kilda-Moorabbin issue found its way to a vote by St.Kilda members indicated that football club democracy was still alive in 1964. However, that the poll came about only as the result of pressure from disaffected traditionalists with cricket club sympathies suggested that it was under threat. The club's clandestine dealings with Moorabbin were ratified only retrospectively by the club's membership. Administrators had set the agenda.

They only made themselves accountable because they were forced to. Their aggressive determination to pursue their agenda regardless of opposition was also evident in the smug arrogance of their attitude towards the Moorabbin club and its supporters after the 'merger' had degenerated into a takeover. St.Kilda's aggression reflected that of the V.F.L. itself in its disregard of the V.F.A.'s unwritten territorial sovereignty in the outer suburbs. The League's imperialism in suburbia indicated that the ruthlessness it had developed in its long battle with the G.M.A., State governments and the football public was becoming a more pronounced feature of the way in which the League conducted itself. Where it had once merely resented the fact that others thrived from its exertions, it now actively plundered and devoured.

In its annexation of Moorabbin, St.Kilda was aided and abetted by a council so bedazzled by the lure of League football that it was willing to incur levels of debt it would have considered unreasonable in other contexts. Sheer weight of popularity put the League club streets ahead of the V.F.A. club in the consideration it received from Local government. In contrast to the localism of the Moorabbin News, Melbourne's populist and football-mad daily and sporting press helped St.Kilda Football Club and the V.F.L. to convince its impressionable readership of League football's divine right.

Chapter Five:

SUBURBAN RESISTANCE

St.Kilda's move to Moorabbin was one of three changes of home ground by V.F.L. clubs that came into effect in season 1965. It represented not only a bold challenge by a League club to an exploitative ground manager but also a break from the convention of localised home grounds that had been all but universal for over forty years. During this period, the convention had helped to reinforce territorial understandings of community among supporters of V.F.L. clubs. Even as these understandings were being undermined by changing post-World War 2 demographics, the territorialism inherent in the home ground tradition continued to exert a residual influence. The departure from Junction Oval would redefine the nature of St.Kilda's football community without destroying it. Moorabbin would become the rallying point for a new regional St.Kilda identity. Three decades later its passing as a match day venue would be mourned with the same sense of loss with which traditionalists lamented the Junction Oval exodus.

The St.Kilda administration's 1964 decision was driven by the possibility of a perceived economic benefit. Although ultimately supported by the membership, officials alienated and angered a significant minority within the club by placing rational business considerations ahead of long-standing tradition. That the administration was held accountable to the membership at all was symptomatic of a dominant democratic ethos evident in the

relationship between football administrators and the public at this time. By the end of the century this ethos would become an anachronism to be circumvented whenever necessary by club boards or League commissioners driven by more pressing economic imperatives than those confronting the St.Kilda Football Club committee in 1964. St.Kilda members gave retrospective support to their committee's economically driven agenda at a time when turnstile sufficiency allowed the football consumer to at least appear to hold sway.

The move undermined the V.F.A.'s perception that it held territorial sovereignty in Melbourne's outer suburbs. League football's popularity, in comparison to that of the V.F.A. alternative, made St.Kilda's aggressive approach feasible and seemed to set the precedent for further takeovers. It appeared that the market would decide the issue and, at this time, the football public's control of the market was such that it could easily be mistaken for ownership of the Game. Only minority groups, like St.Kilda traditionalists and disaffected supporters of the betrayed Moorabbin Football Club had moved from denial to anger.

Predictions that the St.Kilda move would inspire other clubs to follow suit were quickly vindicated when Phonse Tobin's club, North Melbourne, decided to leave its famous gasometer ground in Arden Street for the City Oval at Coburg. Not only was North invading V.F.A. territory, but it was also encroaching on an area in which its V.F.L. neighbour, Carlton, held strong support. The move would be short-lived, unlike the St.Kilda move and the other relocation of 1965, Richmond's move to the neighbouring M.C.G. The Tigers

were merely changing their home match venue while retaining their Punt Road headquarters for training and administration. North and St.Kilda, on the other hand, were relocating their entire operations.

The agreement between North Melbourne Football Club and Coburg City Council, announced early in November 1964, was prompted by a rationale similar to that behind the St.Kilda-Moorabbin venture. The council, seeing an opportunity to convert its best sporting facility from a financial burden into an income-producing asset, instigated negotiations with the football club during the winter of 1964. As an Association venue, the City Oval had returned only £1,300 to the City coffers over the previous five years, during which time the council had spent £15,000 on ground improvements. The council offered the League club a forty-year deal in which the City would provide £80,000 for ground development, in return for an annual rental of £4,000. The Moorabbin deal had been for £100,000 over 75 years at £5,000 annual rental.[1]

As in St.Kilda's case, North Melbourne's action was given rank-and-file assent. The importance of both these ventures to an analysis of the interplay between League football administrators and club supporters is perhaps best illustrated in the dynamics of the relationships between these clubs and the V.F.A. clubs affected in each instance. The League's encroachment into V.F.A. territory evinced a similar dynamic to that illustrated in the more recent encroachment of the corporate sector into the domain of the barracker. As victims of V.F.L. expansion in the 1960s, the Coburg and Moorabbin football clubs and the V.F.A. itself are comparable to non-corporate supporters in

more recent times, displaying many of the characteristics of Kübler-Ross's five stages in their responses.

As at Moorabbin, the local V.F.A. club would be banished from its home, the Coburg Council offering it the hopelessly undeveloped Morris Reserve at Pascoe Vale South as consolation. The Coburg Football Club was predictably unimpressed. Secretary, Noel Brady said:

> We have represented Coburg in senior football for 39 years, but have been treated shabbily and pushed to a ground no better than a backyard.[2]

Cr.J.P.Esslemont was sympathetic to the club's plight. He suggested that it could possibly be necessary to spend in the vicinity of £40,000 to bring the Morris Reserve up to V.F.A. standard and that the Coburg Football Club may have to be reimbursed for money it had spent on the City Oval.[3] The Liberal M.L.A. for Essendon, Mr.K.H.Wheeler, denounced Morris Reserve as a 'pretty paltry' replacement for City Oval and suggested residents in this 'quiet select area' would find regular disruption to their privacy on Sunday afternoons unacceptable.[4] Wheeler had read the mood correctly. Under the pressure of complaints from both the Coburg Football Club and local residents in

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[1] Sun, 3 November 1964, p.34.
[2] Sun, 5 November 1964, p.66.
[3] Sun, 3 November 1964, p.34.
[4] Coburg Courier, 10 November 1964, p.6.

Pascoe Vale South, Coburg Council withdrew the offer of Morris Reserve on 16 November.[5]

The council's decision to allow North Melbourne to use the City Oval had been far from unanimous, coming only after heated discussion. Mayor, Cr.A.W.Sanger, reminded Council that under the provisions of the Local Government Act, the agreement could not be signed until a formal call for tenders had been advertised.[6] If Council's acceptance of the proposed agreement with North Melbourne indicated that any call for tenders would be regarded as a mere formality, the wording of the advertisement was plainly ludicrous and prompted noisy scenes in Council chambers on 16 November. The advertisement had stipulated that the ground must be used for Australian Rules football 'within the framework of the Victorian Football League'. The threat of legal action from the V.F.A. and the Coburg Football Club prompted Council to agree to call fresh tenders without this blatantly discriminatory stipulation.[7]

A week earlier the Coburg Football Club had presented a petition signed by 1,100 people, asking for a referendum to decide occupancy of the City Oval. The V.F.A. had also applied to the council for a deputation to be heard to discuss the matter. The Association's approach included the dire warning that the Coburg Football Club could suffer the same fate as Moorabbin if it were not provided with a ground of suitable standard.[8] This belligerence was puzzling given the club's strident opposition to the North-Coburg deal and its non-involvement in any of the

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[5] Coburg Courier, 17 November 1964. P.14.
[6] Coburg Courier, 3 November 1964, p.6.
[7] Coburg Courier, 17 November 1964, p.1 (cont. p4).

negotiations bringing it about. It is possibly best interpreted as an act of bargaining aimed at shaming the Council into changing its mind, all the while in complete denial of the plain fact that the V.F.A. club itself would be the victim of any sanctions imposed by the Association. There was no quarrel, at this stage, between the Coburg Football Club and the V.F.A. and yet the latter chose to spite the former as punishment for the council's treachery. Rather than seek an amicable ground-sharing arrangement, the Association opted for a sabre-rattling exercise that, within a month, would drive the Coburg Football Club into amalgamation with North.

The club's petition for a referendum was discredited in the chamber by Cr.Cox who claimed to have investigated the *bona-fides* of some of the signatories and found them wanting after receiving advice that the petition had been signed largely by high school students. Both the petition for a referendum and the V.F.A.'s request for a deputation to be heard were rejected by the council, five votes to four.[9]

The issue also prompted lively discussion at V.F.L. headquarters, Harrison House, where delegates from both the A.N.F.C. and the Carlton Football Club strongly condemned North's move, albeit for different reasons. As an arbiter of fair play in relations between the various controlling bodies of Australian Rules football, the A.N.F.C. regarded the infiltration by a V.F.L. club into the domain of a V.F.A. club as a case of the strong overpowering the weak. Tobin sought to deflect the blame for this imperialism away from

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[8] Sun, 10 November 1964, p.55.
[9] Ibid.

his club by stressing the pro-active nature of the council's role in instigating the deal. If the Coburg Council found League football a more attractive proposition into which to channel its capital than the much less popular Association alternative, Tobin argued that North could scarcely be blamed for accepting the council's offer.[10]

Carlton delegate, C.Davey, expressed concern that North Melbourne's move was an 'intrusion into a Carlton stronghold' While Moorabbin had been *terra nullius* as far as the V.F.L. clubs were concerned prior to the St.Kilda takeover, Coburg was already accounted for. Davey pointed out that three-quarters of the Coburg area, including the City Oval itself, was part of Carlton's player recruitment district. The same area accounted for 18% of the Carlton Football Club's membership. The move would also have a detrimental effect on the Northern Junior Combined Football Association, sponsored jointly by the Carlton and Coburg football clubs.[11]

Former North Melbourne player and later club president, Allen Aylett, defended his club's action in an article in the Sporting Globe. He argued that the move was necessary to ensure the club's survival. Attendances at Arden Street were suffering as a result of poor public transport facilities. Despite the oval's close proximity to the city the nearest public transport was more than half a mile from the ground. The Coburg ground, on the other hand, was well served by trams, trains and buses. He claimed also that the ground was physically closer to the homes of 80% of

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[10] Sun, 5 November 1964, p.66.
[11] Ibid.

the club's members than the Arden Street ground.[12] North Melbourne itself had a declining population, of which the under 15 component made up 23.9%, compared to the Melbourne metropolitan average of 27.4%.[13] With few public open spaces other than Royal Park, which required the crossing of the very busy Flemington Road to reach,[14] the area was not conducive to the affluent family-oriented lifestyle available in areas more distant from the city centre. A feature of the area was the large number of boarding and rooming houses, making North Melbourne particularly accommodating to single men.[15]

The £80,000 that the council was making available for ground improvements would ensure that the new League venue would provide amenities far superior to those at the old oval. However, Aylett's strongest selling point for the new ground was the ground management deal that the council had offered to North. At Arden Street in 1964, the ground manager, the Melbourne City Council, had collected approximately £8,000 in revenue from football levies, catering and T.V. rights, monies that would, in future, go to the Kangaroos. After allowing for the £4,000 rental to be paid to the Coburg Council, the club could expect to be roughly £4,000 *per annum* better off.[16]

Aylett's article also carried a message for those concerned with North's invasion of V.F.A. territory. He suggested that, as ground manager, North would be willing to make the Coburg ground available to the Coburg Football Club for home matches on Sundays if

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[12] Sporting Globe, 11 November 1964, p.20.
[13] Troy, op.cit., pp.27-28.
[14] Ibid., p.25.
[15] Ibid., p.27.
[16] Sporting Globe, 11 November 1964, p.20.

the V.F.A. were willing to cooperate. He blamed the 'lack of clear thinking on the part of the V.F.A.' for Moorabbin's suspension, which he felt could be avoided in the case of the Coburg club if the Association were to adopt a more cooperative attitude.[17] In reply to Carlton's complaints, Aylett chose to justify his club's actions in terms of inter-club rivalry.

> Carlton claim that we're moving in to their area. This may be so but to remain at North would mean extinction and I don't reckon Carlton would do a darn thing about it.[18]

The V.F.A. was not about to change its attitude to the League's encroachment into its domain. In a Supreme Court writ, the Association claimed that the Coburg Council had exceeded its powers in leasing the ground to North. With the circularity of Orwellian *double-think*, the V.F.A. argued that, by virtue of its long-term use of the ground, the Coburg Football Club was entitled to occupancy[19] or, at least, six months' notice prior to the termination of its occupancy.[20] If sustained, this claim would have ruled out any possibility of North Melbourne taking over the ground in time for the beginning of the 1965 season. The Council argued that the V.F.A.'s action was 'vexatious and an abuse of the Court', based as it was on the proposition that the Coburg Football Club had a tenancy. Council argued that, as an unincorporated body, the Coburg Football Club had no standing in law.

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[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Coburg Courier, 8 December 1964, p.19.

On 4 December, Justice Adam ruled in favour of the council.[21]

The prospect of a long legal appeal process eroded much of the Coburg Football Club's determination to retain its ground. Depression was forestalled by the emergence of a reluctant pro-North faction willing to bargain. It was headed by club president, Jack Beyer, who saw a merger with North as the only realistic option. An apathetic response by local sporting clubs to a meeting called by the football club to discuss its position had convinced Beyer that the local community was 'just not interested in the welfare of the Coburg Football Club'. The League product simply had more appeal to the market. If Coburg could not beat the V.F.L., it would have to join it. Peaceful coexistence in the context of a ground-sharing arrangement was not an option because the V.F.A. did not share Beyer's spirit of resignation.[22] Bargaining, at least with the V.F.L., was not on the agenda of an Association blinded by denial and intoxicated by 67 years of anger.

At an emergency meeting between the Coburg committee and the V.F.A. executive on 6 December, V.F.A. president, A.Gillan, warned Coburg that amalgamation would mean the annihilation of the club. A meeting had been planned, two days hence, at which representatives from North and Coburg would discuss the possibility of a merger. Gillan vehemently urged the committee to boycott the discussions, adding the ultimately toothless threat of a V.F.A. suspension against any Coburg committeeman who accepted a

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[20] Sun, 19 November 1964, p.62.
[21] Coburg Courier, 8 December 1964, p.19.
[22] Sun, 3 December 1964, p.66.

position on the North Melbourne committee.[23] It was clear that the V.F.A.'s determination to carry the torch for community football was matched only by its steadfast refusal to accept the reality of its own powerlessness.

Despite Gillan's admonition, Coburg not only attended the meeting but entered into a merger agreement with North Melbourne after a heated four-hour discussion, with the Coburg committee split into pro-North and anti-North factions. The agreement provided immediate places for two Coburg representatives on the North committee, with the promise of three more pending the acceptance of constitutional changes creating these positions at the forthcoming annual general meeting of the North Melbourne Football Club. In addition there would be three Coburg representatives on the ground control committee, four more on the committee to run the reserves side and positions on the social committee for any member of the existing Coburg committee still without a portfolio. The merged club would recognise Coburg life membership and would preserve and maintain Coburg's honour boards in the clubrooms. All Coburg players would be invited to pre-season training and Coburg training staff would be given the opportunity to join the training staff at the new North Melbourne club.[24]

At North Melbourne's annual general meeting, held on 16 December, a resolution endorsing the move to Coburg was supported by about 90% of the 250 members present. The constitutional amendment creating three new places on the committee was passed,

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[23] Sun, 7 December 1964, p.48.
[24] Sun, 9 December 1964, p.64 (cont. p.63).

notwithstanding the objections of E.Walsh who expressed concern that North Melbourne was being 'taken over by a broken down and busted Association club'. Gillan's warning to Coburg equating amalgamation with 'annihilation' would have rung ominously true to any Coburg eavesdropper who happened to hear North president, Jack Adams's response to Walsh's concerns. Adams assured the gathering that the new committeemen would be appointed by the present North committee and each would, in turn, have to retire and face an election over the next three years. He concluded:

> I don't think there is any chance of North being swamped by Coburg people ... Instead we are swamping them.[25]

As had been the case at Moorabbin, the move of a V.F.L. club into Coburg territory produced a strong groundswell of local resentment. The pro-North factions in both the council and the V.F.A. club had predominated by the barest margins. That the losers in the Coburg struggle were ultimately able, unlike their Moorabbin counterparts, to regroup and regain their lost territory was due to a wisdom in hindsight that the Moorabbin experience had given them. As the pleadings of Moorabbin vice-president and delegate, Jim Nixon, against suspension of his club by the V.F.A. indicated, there was a significant anti-St.Kilda faction at the Moorabbin Football Club. Had this group been as strident in proclaiming its opposition to the V.F.L.'s imperialism as the anti-

North group at Coburg was, it may have received the same support from the V.F.A. that enabled the substantial minority at Coburg to keep the club alive while North Melbourne's suburban experiment ran its ill-fated course. North's hold over the Coburg Council was considerably more precarious than the pro-V.F.L. sentiment at Moorabbin, possibly because the outcome of the St.Kilda-Moorabbin identity issue had provided strong evidence in support of Gillan's 'annihilation' theory. In Coburg the waters were further muddied by Carlton's well-established popularity in the area. It would not take much to swing the democratic balance back in favour of the Coburg V.F.A. club if only it could survive in the interim.

In mid-December the V.F.A. moved to mobilise the anti-merger forces at Coburg by inviting all Coburg committee members and players opposed to the merger to meet with the V.F.A. executive. The ten committeemen and life-members, along with fourteen players who responded formed a committee to challenge the constitutionality of the club's decision to merge with North and to apply for the lease of the Coburg ground. The council had decided to call fresh tenders to avoid the threat of legal action.[26]

Jack Beyer, in turn, challenged the constitutionality of this breakaway Coburg committee. His claims provoked the V.F.A. to make good its earlier threat to suspend any Coburg committeemen who accepted positions on the North Melbourne committee. This suspension included Beyer himself, along with vice-president, J.Brophy, secretary, N.S.Brady, Assistant Secretary, J.Betson and committee member,

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[25] Sun, 17 December 1964, p.59.
[26] Sun, 18 December 1964, p.51.

J.E.Jones.[27] As committeemen of the newly merged V.F.L. club they were no longer subject to V.F.A. rules anyway, but the suspensions not only served as a gesture of censure but also as a device for the removal of the pro-North influence from what remained of the Coburg Football Club. Whether, at this stage, the residual 'Coburg' was an actual club or merely a concept dwelling in the hearts of V.F.A. traditionalists is subject to the debate over the constitutionality, firstly, of the North-Coburg merger and, secondly, of the new breakaway 'Coburg' committee. In any case, the concept of a Coburg football club, separate from North Melbourne, was kept alive by the V.F.A. executive and a group of Coburg loyalists.

On Monday 11 January 1965 Coburg Council accepted North's tender for the use of City Oval but insisted that the lease not be signed until it had been given the opportunity to examine possible amendments to the agreement. At issue, in particular, was the length of the lease. Cr.G.A.James insisted that his colleagues were virtually giving the oval away for 40 years. He also expressed misgivings about the ground manager's role being given to North. He argued that the proposed £4,000 rental would be inadequate to meet the interest on the £80,000 loan for ground improvements and doubted North's ability to meet even this modest commitment, given the club's precarious financial position.[28] Pending consideration of amendments,

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[27] Sun, 24 December 1964, p.27.
[28] Coburg Courier, 12 January 1965, p.1 (cont p9).

Council granted North day-to-day use of the ground for £10 per day.[29]

Meanwhile the future of the Coburg Football Club rested on the whim of the V.F.A. In early January a meeting of about 140 rank-and-file members of the former club declared its opposition to the merger of Coburg with North Melbourne and supported the V.F.A. in its suspension of the 5 pro-North committeemen.[30] North Melbourne Football Club secretary, Leo Schemnitz, offered the explanation that North had deliberately avoided involving the Coburg Football Club in its original negotiations with Council to protect the club from the V.F.A.[31] Taken at face value, this would appear to be another example of the attitude of enlightened sovereignty that the V.F.L. and its constituent clubs were inclined to adopt when dealing with people or organisations in a strategically weaker position than themselves. It was on par with the paternalistic attitude of the St.Kilda Football Club to its own members over the Moorabbin venture and the V.F.L.'s evangelical mission to take football to Melbourne's demographic heart. Read more cynically, the statement could be seen as a sham designed to hide the League club's callous disregard for the victims of its imperialism. With local opinion only marginally in its favour, North needed to be seen to make the right noises regarding the fate of the local V.F.A. club. Taken either way, the statement by Schemnitz would have done little to enhance relations between the V.F.L. and the V.F.A. When the V.F.A. voted, on 4 February, to allow the Coburg Football

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[29] Coburg Courier, 2 February 1965, p.5.
[30] Coburg Courier, 12 January 1965, p.9.
[31] Coburg Courier, 2 February 1965, p.5.

Club to remain in the Association, it did so on the basis that the club would relocate to another established V.F.A. venue rather than share the City Oval with the V.F.L. club.[32]

Although the pro-North faction held the numbers in Coburg Council, repeated instances of disorder in Council chambers during the long period of debate over the matter suggested that North's newly won tenure would not be a peaceful one. Suggestions that the move would be a financial imposition on Council were the basis of vitriolic exchanges between Coburg's civic representatives. The move had strong support from local business identities, among them Jack Scanlon, a former secretary of the Coburg Football Club.[33] The V.F.L. could not approve the relocation until negotiations between North and the council were complete. Rowdy public galleries forced Council to discuss the matter in committee behind closed doors. On 15 March, the council-in-committee arrived at what it regarded as a compromise agreement under which North Melbourne's lease would be granted for seven years instead of 40.[34] The new deal was finally passed by Council and signed at the end of March. It required North to pay rental of £2,000 for the first year, a further £5,500 in 1966 and £5,900 for the remainder of the lease. In addition, Council was to receive a further £2,500 a year for the whole 7 years in return for ground improvements. Council would be required to spend £75,000 on a grandstand prior to the 1966 season and another £25,000 before the start of the 1967

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[32] Coburg Courier, 9 February 1965, p.7.
[33] Coburg Courier, 23 February 1965, p.1. More examples of local business support are on p5.
[34] Coburg Courier, 16 March 1965, p.1.

season.[35] Ground management was in the hands of a group of seven trustees, comprised of the Mayor of Coburg, three councillors and three representatives from the North Melbourne Football Club.[36]

As expected, the V.F.L. gave its approval for the use of the Coburg ground in time for the start of the 1965 season. The new venue received a baptism of water on 21 April, when the new home side went down by 10 points to South Melbourne in a 'scrambly slogging battle' played in atrocious conditions.[37] The crowd of 13,774 compared favourably to the 11,773 that attended the North-South fixture at Arden Street in Round 9 the previous year, both in raw terms and as a percentage of the average attendance at matches on the day. Both matches were played as part of split rounds. On the day in question in 1964, 129,344 people attended three matches, the North-South crowd accounting for only 27.3% of the average crowd of 43,115. Poor weather on the day of North's debut at Coburg kept crowds at the three matches down to 73,289. North's crowd represented 56.4% of the day's average of 24,430.[38]

In the meantime the V.F.A. chose to maintain its rage. In March it refused the Sandringham Football Club permission to play a trial match against St.Kilda and announced that its suspension of the five former Coburg officials would continue until such time as they appeared before the V.F.A. board to answer charges of 'conduct prejudicial to the interests of

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[35] Coburg Courier, 30 March 1965, p.1.
[36] Sun, 30 March 1965, p.51.
[37] Sporting Globe, 21 April 1965, p.2.
[38] Raw crowd figures taken from Bartrop, Paul R., Scores, crowds and records: statistics on the Victorian Football League since 1945, History Project Incorporated, University of N.S.W., 1984.

the Association'.[39] To its credit, however, the Association did not allow its attitude to the miscreants to affect its relationship with the Coburg loyalists. The club, which had temporarily ceased to exist, was reborn with the support of the V.F.A. and the Port Melbourne Council who reached an agreement with Coburg to allow it to play home matches at Port Melbourne in 1965. Although the club's on-field performances suffered during this period of exile, a more substantial revival was at hand. For the conquerors, victory would not prove to be as sweet as first imagined. The encouraging public response to North's debut at Coburg proved to be the exception rather than the rule. The average attendance at North Melbourne home matches at Coburg in 1965 was 12,909, a significant drop from the 16,733 average attendance at Arden Street the previous season.

Comparison of raw crowd figures from one season to another can be misleading for a number of reasons. If success attracts support, the use of attendance figures to gauge the relative popularity of the two venues will be prone to distortion by changes in the club's on-field fortunes. North Melbourne, however, was a consistently unsuccessful club during the period in question. While its 1965 season was less successful than its previous year in terms of matches won, five out of 18 in 1965 compared to eight out of 18 in 1964, the club finished only one position lower on the premiership table, ninth in 1965 compared to eighth. It is difficult to determine the extent to which these differences in fortune would have affected the crowd figures. Declining attendances toward the end of the 1965 season suggest the possibility that the club's

[39] Sun, 6 March 1965, p.55.

hopeless position in relation to the final four may have had some bearing on the poor crowds. It is to be expected that unsuccessful clubs would pull bigger crowds early in a season before the hopelessness of their cause became apparent to their supporters. This factor, in addition to a curiosity or novelty motive could explain the relatively good attendance at the first Coburg match. North's home attendances became progressively less flattering as the season progressed.

Another pitfall in the use of raw crowd figures as a method of comparison is the effect of such extraneous imponderables as weather, public transport strikes or alternative attractions on any given day. It is also to be expected that a match played as part of a split round would attract a number of neutral spectators whose usual club of choice was not playing that day.

Perhaps the most important factor of all, in considering a club's attendances at different matches, was the popularity of the opposing club. The crowd of 13,774 at North's round one home match against South Melbourne was considerably less, in raw terms, than the 21,626 at the round ten home fixture against Collingwood. Allowing for the huge popularity of Collingwood in comparison to that of South, however, the attendance at the South match would have been more encouraging, from North's point of view, than the crowd at the Collingwood game.

In determining the popularity of North's move to Coburg, it would be possible to make a very strong case against the popularity of the Coburg ground if the decline in attendances apparent in the raw figures were reinforced by statistics which, after making

allowances for the extraneous imponderables previously mentioned, showed a similar downward trend. One such approach would be to take the crowd at each 1965 home match individually and compare it to the crowd at the corresponding fixture, i.e. the home match against the same club, at Arden Street in 1964. As well as considering the raw crowd figure in each case, it would be possible to consider a relative crowd figure indexed against the average crowd at V.F.L. matches played on the same day and expressed as a percentage of that average. This would, to a large extent at least, allow a comparison free from the distortions caused by such things as weather, split rounds, alternative attractions or transport strikes. In this case only seven such comparisons would be possible because the 18 round season allowed each club only nine home matches per season. In 1964 North Melbourne did not play home matches against Geelong or Richmond. The following year neither Footscray nor Hawthorn were assigned matches at Coburg. North's home matches against the other seven clubs, however, can be considered, with other relevant factors specific to each individual case, such as the relative fortunes of the particular opposition club in each of the two seasons in question, taken into consideration. Such specific circumstances may extenuate the findings, thereby weakening the case to some extent. On the other hand, the observed trend may be seen to have occurred in spite of a specific circumstance. In this instance the case would be further vindicated.

After the opening match against South Melbourne, the next match allowing a comparison was the round six match against St.Kilda. The two sides had met at Arden Street in round eight of the 1964 season, drawing a

crowd of 19,620, which equated to 85.1% of the average crowd for the day. The 1965 clash at Coburg attracted only 13,291, or 54.6% of the day's average. Despite the fact that St.Kilda was *en route* to the most successful season in the club's history to that time, the crowd figure at Coburg was significantly lower in both raw and absolute terms. The case against Coburg was further strengthened by the figures for the round eight clash with the eventual premier, Essendon, which attracted a crowd of only 12,828, or 52.9% of the day's average. In 1964, a year in which the consistently successful Essendon club also played in the finals, the figures had been 15,878 and 94.4% respectively.

In round ten North Melbourne met Collingwood, a club that also made the finals in both seasons under consideration. This time the raw figures showed a slight increase, 21,626 in 1965 compared to 21,096 the previous year. When converted to relative terms, however, the trend was again downward. The indexed figure for Coburg was 85.9% compared to 101.1% at Arden Street. Supporters of the Coburg move could take little or no comfort from these figures.

The Coburg ground was not only proving to be unpopular with the public, but it was not helping North's fortunes on the field either. When the club finally broke through for its first home win for the season, in round 13 against the reigning premier, Melbourne, it did so in front of a paltry 8,312, only 40.9% of the day's average. In round two the previous year the two clubs pulled 15,914 to Arden Street, or 58.7%. It is possible, however, that the dramatic sacking of champion Demons coach, Norm Smith, on the eve of the match may have adversely affected the

attendance. For this reason no conclusion in relation to the Coburg-Arden Street issue should be drawn here.

If ever a match should have drawn a packed house to the Coburg ground it was the round 15 clash between North and Carlton but, despite the fixture's potential as a great local 'derby', the match attracted only 11,474, or 66.0% of the day's average crowd. In round 12 the previous year, the corresponding match at Arden Street had pulled 16,020 or 79.7%. The fall occurred despite the fact that Carlton, after a dismal season in 1964, was undergoing a revival under new coach, Ron Barassi, whose controversial departure from the Demons during the summer of 1964-65 had created intense public interest in the Blues' fortunes.

The following week the Kangaroos played host to the consistently unsuccessful Fitzroy in the last of the matches that enabled a close comparison of crowds at Coburg and Arden Street. In this match the raw crowd figure increased slightly from 7,584 in round 17 the previous year to 7,738. However, the relative crowd figure showed a decrease from 38.0% to 31.7%.

There was no doubt by now that the move to Coburg had failed to attract increased patronage. On raw figures alone, Arden Street had been more popular in four out of the seven games. Using the more appropriate measure of the popularity of the two grounds, the indexed percentage, the score was six to one in favour of Arden Street, the only exception being the opening match with its obvious novelty appeal. While the South Melbourne match was an obvious 'win' for Coburg, from both the raw and the relative points of view, the St.Kilda, Essendon and Carlton crowds all came out even more decisively in favour of Arden Street. Conflicting messages between raw and

relative figures at the Collingwood and Fitzroy matches make these games inconclusive for the purposes of comparison. Apologists for Coburg could argue that the extenuating circumstances surrounding the Melbourne match would justify the negation of the otherwise obvious pro-Arden Street message coming from the figures on the North Melbourne versus Melbourne fixture. A final verdict that ruled three votes to one in favour of Arden Street, with three votes indecisive, would be conservative but not unreasonable. If anything, this verdict would be affected by a pro-Coburg bias. While a short-term fall in attendances was perhaps to be expected as part of the process of re-establishing in a new area, the overwhelming extent of the drop in the crowds at the St.Kilda, Essendon and Carlton matches suggested a strong supporter backlash against the move.

A similar analysis of St.Kilda home crowds over the period in question produces a much less decisive conclusion. The largest crowd to attend Moorabbin in 1965 was the 51,370 in the opening round. This excellent attendance, more than 11,000 in excess of the next highest, was most likely the result of a combination of the novelty appeal of the new venue and the fact that the Saints' opponent was Collingwood. The figure cannot be used for comparison because the Magpies did not play at Junction Oval in 1964.

The first match enabling a comparison, the St.Kilda-Footscray fixture in round four, was a decisive win for Junction Oval, which attracted 33,600 in round two of the 1964 season. This was 123.9% of the day's average crowd. At Moorabbin the two sides attracted only 14,454 or 87.1%. At the following week's home fixture against Essendon, the Saints drew

39,965 to Moorabbin, 8,865 more than the previous year, but less in relative terms (144.6% at Moorabbin compared to 149.8% at Junction Oval). Given the conflicting evidence in these figures, this is probably best interpreted as an indecisive result. The round seven figures, 18,670 (74.9%) for the match against Fitzroy were not as good as the Junction Oval's 20,900 (91.6%), clearly another victory for Junction Oval, while the St.Kilda-Hawthorn figures for round ten were indecisive. Moorabbin drew more spectators, 20,010 as opposed to 18,600, but a lesser percentage of the day's average crowd, 79.5% against 110.6%. Moorabbin's most impressive comparative figures came in the round 11 St.Kilda-Carlton clash and the round 14 St.Kilda-Richmond fixture. The Carlton match pulled 35,784, over 10,000 more than the previous year. The relative figure was an impressive 165.6% compared to 91.4%. The encounter with the Tigers drew 34,076 (160.2%), well up on the 16,700 (67.1%) at Junction Oval. In between these two examples, the only other comparable fixture, the St.Kilda-South Melbourne match produced conflicting figures, a slightly lower crowd in raw terms but slightly higher in relative terms.

Unlike the North Melbourne figures, which provided a fairly convincing argument against the public's acceptance of the Coburg ground, the St.Kilda crowd figures for the 1964 and 1965 seasons were inconclusive as a measure of the relative popularity of the Moorabbin ground compared to Junction Oval. A simple comparison of raw figures at the seven comparable fixtures comes out four to three in favour of Moorabbin. Comparison of relative figures, however, favours Junction Oval by four to three. In three of

the seven fixtures a comparison of the raw and relative figures produced conflicting messages. If these cases were deemed inconclusive the result would be a two-all draw between the two venues.

At the same time as the football public was voting with its feet against what was looking very much like North's mistake in moving to Coburg, the tide of local opinion in Coburg was beginning to turn back in favour of the V.F.A. club. This was reflected in a change in the composition of Coburg Council as a result of the August election. North Melbourne had secured its seven-year lease in March by seven votes to five but only four pro-North councillors survived the election.[40]

With two-thirds of the council offside North was beginning to feel unwelcome. No progress had been made on the promised new grandstand and the new council, although bound by the agreement, seemed unwilling to do anything about it.[41] It could afford to ignore its obligations because it was obvious that things were not working out for North at its new home. North wanted to leave as much as the council wanted it to leave. The seven-year lease was falling apart due to mutual dissatisfaction.

On 28 September in the Mayor's Room at the Coburg Municipal Offices, Coburg Football Club, North Melbourne Football Club and Coburg Council representatives held a 'round table' conference at which they agreed to terminate the occupancy agreement.[42] The move to Coburg had cost the club 1,100

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[40] Sporting Globe, 1 September 1965, p.24.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Dowling, Gerard P., The North story, Melbourne,

members.[43] On the same evening, a reform group of North Melbourne supporters, unhappy with the situation at Coburg but unaware of the 'round table' conference, met to discuss plans for exerting pressure on the Melbourne City Council to secure a better deal for the Kangaroos at their old ground. The mood also put pressure on the club's hybrid committee, itself a visible reminder of the now discredited merger, to save its own skin by supporting the move back to Arden Street.[44]

Gerard P. Dowling, in his club history, the North story, suggested that Melbourne City Council needed the Kangaroos back at Arden Street as much as the club needed to return. Only V.F.L. football could provide worthwhile financial revenue from the ground.[45] On 27 October, a meeting of North Melbourne football and cricket representatives and the Melbourne City Council's Parks and Gardens Committee unanimously agreed that it was 'favourably disposed' to drawing up an agreement for the club to return. All that was needed was the approval of North Melbourne members at the upcoming annual general meeting.[46]

Significant dissenters among the North hierarchy were vice-president, Phonse Tobin, and long-standing committeeman, Laurie English, who saw a return to Arden Street as retrograde. Tobin lamented the fact that while Collingwood was able to send its players to Japan for an end-of-season trip, North could not afford to send its team 'up ... the Maribyrnong'. He felt that going back to the old ground would ensure

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Hawthorn Press, 1973, p.204.
[43] Sun, 2 December 1965, p.66.
[44] Sporting Globe, 22 September 1965, p.24.
[45] Dowling, op.cit., pp.204-205.
[46] Ibid., p.205.

that the club would remain locked into a cycle of poverty.[47] Despite the North committee's agreement with Melbourne City Council, Tobin and English entered into unauthorised negotiations to relocate the club to Junction Oval. Keen to lure League football back to its ground, the St.Kilda Cricket Club was offering a package more generous than the one that had driven the Saints into suburbia.[48]

Confident that the new St.Kilda deal would receive rank-and-file assent, Tobin arranged an unofficial referendum. He sent out 1,100 circulars to members asking them to choose between Arden Street and the Junction Oval and arranged to have the votes counted on air during H.S.V.7's World of Sport program on 28 November, the Sunday prior to the club's annual general meeting.[49] The poll, which resulted in a vote of 453 to 182 in favour of Junction Oval, proved to be no more than a futile exercise in populism.[50] It was declared 'doomed' by the Sporting Globe even before the votes had been counted. Any move by a V.F.L. club to a new ground would require League approval. This was unlikely because the 1966 season's fixtures had already been arranged with North Melbourne and South Melbourne home matches clashing on four occasions. Programming matches at Lakeside and Junction Oval on the same day was unacceptable because of the likelihood of severe traffic congestion in the area.[51]

Another reason, perhaps, why Tobin's supporters would have been entitled to feel pessimistic was linked to the nature of football club democracy. The

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[47] Sun, 2 December 1965, p.66.
[48] Sporting Globe, 24 November 1965, p.20.
[49] Sporting Globe, 27 November 1965, p.1.
[50] Sporting Globe, 1 December 1965, p.20.
[51] Sporting Globe, 27 November 1965, p.1.

North committee's decision to return to Arden Street was to be put to the members at the annual general meeting but such meetings are rarely conducted in strict accordance with democratic procedures. The meeting gave its assent to the move back to Arden Street, leading to the resignations of Tobin and English. Tobin later claimed that the meeting had been 'stacked' with numerous non-members of the club and that some voters at the back of the hall had put up both hands instead of one when the vote was taken. He also claimed that important correspondence relating to the issue had not been permitted to be read.[52] A ruling clique that set a meeting's agenda with an astute control of the floor could often ensure the endorsement of its policies under conditions such as these.

A North move to St.Kilda at this time would have also flown in the face of the V.F.L.'s quest for independence from cricket authorities. By the mid-1960s the League had become obsessed with the Waverley project. The development of football's own stadium would enable the V.F.L. to thumb its nose at the custodians of the summer game. It was this prevailing anti-cricket attitude that made the eventual decision to allow Richmond to move to the M.C.G. a little puzzling.

The Tigers had previously considered moves to Oakleigh and Moorabbin and had indicated that they were not averse to the prospect of being a Waverley tenant, but such considerations do not appear to have been prompted by poor relations with the Richmond Cricket Club. A dispute prior to the 1963 season over the use of the Punt Road ground for practice football

[52] Sporting Globe, 8 December 1965, p.1.

matches during the cricket finals had eventually been resolved in an amicable compromise.[53] Indeed Richmond's desire to accommodate its cricket fraternity was, if anything, an obstacle to the ultimately successful campaign to move the Tigers' home matches across the park.

Brian Hansen, in his club history, Tigerland, attributed Richmond's decision in favour of the M.C.G. to a desire to develop a style of play that would be suitable for finals.[54] If this was the case, the club's success over the next decade certainly vindicated its decision. Another strong argument advanced in favour of the move to the M.C.G. was the possibility of Richmond attracting the 'floating' supporter, the person who would rather watch a game in comfort than follow one particular team from one wet, windswept, over-crowded suburban ground to another.[55] Whether by virtue of Richmond's improved on-field fortunes or because of the effect of floating supporters, total attendances at Richmond matches soared from 174,540 in 1964 to 321,237 in 1965.[56]

A comparison of crowds at Richmond's home games at the M.C.G. in 1965 with those at comparable matches at Punt Road in 1964 comes out overwhelmingly in favour of the new venue. All seven comparable M.C.G. fixtures - against St.Kilda (round three), Hawthorn (round five), North Melbourne (round seven), Fitzroy (round eight), South Melbourne (round 11), Collingwood (round 13) and Essendon (round 15) produced significantly higher crowds, in both raw and relative terms, than the corresponding matches at Punt Road in

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[53] Sporting Globe, 30 March 1963, p.8.
[54] Hansen, op.cit., p.122.
[55] Sporting Globe, 4 July 1964, p.9.

1964. Crowds at the Hawthorn and North Melbourne matches more than doubled, in raw terms, and the St.Kilda crowd almost trebled. The most impressive relative figures were produced by the Collingwood match (277.4% compared to 150.1% at Punt Road) and the Essendon match (184.2% compared to 100.7%). While this unambiguous endorsement of the M.C.G. may have been affected by Richmond's improved form, the overwhelming weight of these figures suggested that this was much more than the fair-weather emergence of fickle fans from the proverbial woodwork.

League approval for the move came slowly. The Richmond cricket and football clubs were reported in October 1964 to have reached an agreement with the M.C.C.[57] Although this was enthusiastically endorsed at the club's annual general meeting in December,[58] the move did not receive the V.F.L.'s sanction until early March 1965, and then only after some modifications.[59] The League's objections were two-fold. Richmond had negotiated a ten-year lease. It had been reported in the press that some senior V.F.L. officials were keen to have Richmond as a tenant at Waverley, which would be opened long before that agreement had expired.[60] Subsequently the League adopted a policy of rostering selected home matches of all clubs to the new stadium, but in 1964-65 there was still a strong desire among some at Harrison House to find a permanent tenant or tenants. There were also objections to the provision

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[56] Hansen, op.cit., p.123.
[57] Sporting Globe, 31 October 1964, p.11.
[58] Sun, 3 December 1964, p.66.
[59] Sun, 4 March 1965, p.56.
[60] Sporting Globe, 31 October 1964, p.11.

that entitled Richmond Cricket Club members and ladies to attend matches for £1 per season.[61]

V.F.L. club delegates were reported to be divided over the issue. Although Eric McCutchan refused to give details of the final vote in favour of Richmond's move, the Sun reported that Hawthorn, Carlton, St.Kilda and Footscray were opposed and that North was undecided.[62] After lengthy discussion the delegates accepted a compromise which reduced the duration of the lease to three years and provided for a payment of £150 to be paid to all visiting clubs as compensation for the rights of Richmond Cricket Club members to attend.[63]

The Melbourne Football Club, in particular, was scathing in its denunciation of those clubs that had opposed Richmond's move. An article included in a program sold at a practice match on 13 March asserted that this opposition had been 'based on antagonism and prejudice - attributes that have no place in sporting administration'. It argued that a visiting club playing Richmond at the M.C.G. could expect significantly more in gate revenue than it would receive if the match were played at Punt Road.[64] In the Sporting Globe, Ian McDonald reported that he knew of three M.C.C. members who were concerned at the V.F.L.'s antagonism and did not wish to be seen to 'take advantage' of Richmond's playing at the M.C.G. They had each sent Graeme Richmond a cheque for £3 for Richmond football membership even though their M.C.C.

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[61] Sporting Globe, 24 February 1965, p.20.
[62] Sun, 3 March 1965, p.56.
[63] Sun, 4 March 1965, p.56.
[64] Article reported in Sporting Globe, 17 March 1965, p.20.

memberships would have entitled them to free admission anyway.[65]

Notwithstanding the parochial objections of particular clubs, Richmond's change of venue from Punt Road to the M.C.G. received overwhelming support from the press, the public and even the State Government. Premier, Henry Bolte, felt that it was a 'tragedy' that the M.C.G. should stand vacant every second week. He appealed to the 'good sense' of the League delegates in urging them to rule in Richmond's favour.[66] John Rice of the Sporting Globe urged the League to put the interests of the paying public to the fore in its decision. He argued that the M.C.G. would give Richmond supporters better value for their money in the form of comfort and amenities not provided at Punt Road.[67]

The Richmond relocation caused none of the community trauma associated with the moves of St.Kilda and North Melbourne. This was partly because no dislocation of an existing tenant was involved. The Melbourne Football Club was happy to share the ground with its neighbour. There was none of the subterfuge of the St.Kilda-Moorabbin 'amalgamation' and none of the factionalism that plagued Coburg. There was also no significant geographical move away from an existing base and, as Richmond club stalwart, Des Rowe, pointed out, there was no identity crisis associated with the Tigers' move. Like the Punt Road ground, the new venue was within the boundaries of the City of Melbourne.[68]

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[65] Sporting Globe, 17 March 1965, p.20.
[66] Sporting Globe, 3 March 1965, p.24.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid.

Although a growing outer suburban population, coupled with a decline in the population of old inner-city and inner-suburban areas was typical of most cities in the developed world after World War 2, the tendency was partially offset in Melbourne by the inflow of migrants into cheap inner-suburban housing. Richmond was one of the areas in which this occurred.[69] Rowe argued that the move could only strengthen ties with the local community by providing the sort of comfortable accommodation likely to attract new supporters from among this new potential local constituency.[70]

Where the Richmond outcome proved satisfactory for all concerned, the other two relocations produced winners and losers. At Moorabbin and temporarily at Coburg, advocates of a localised notion of community were left feeling defeated. The majority of the supporters of the two League clubs involved, however, had moved beyond such territorialism and would, if anything, have felt empowered in the understanding that their vote, whether at the turnstile or at the A.G.M., was exerting a decisive influence over club policy. That the agenda was being set by despots who considered themselves enlightened may have escaped their notice because, on the surface at least, football belonged to the People.

Anger belonged not to the barracker but to a demonstrably irrational, unreasonable and unrealistic V.F.A. Its losing battle made it a useful 'model victim' for the historian. Its reaction, and the all-powerful V.F.L.'s attitude to it, was setting a

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[69] Dingle, 'People and places ...' in Davison, Dingle and O'Hanlon (eds), op.cit., pp.30-32.
[70] Sporting Globe, 3 March 1965, p.24.

pattern that would be repeated in later decades in the barracker's similarly losing battle with a more corporatised A.F.L. The modern barracker would enjoy minor triumphs, like the defeat of the Hawthorn-Melbourne merger in 1996, just as the V.F.A. reversed its fortunes in the battle for Coburg. The momentum, then as at the turn of the century, however, was with economics rather than populism, democracy or tradition. In 1965 the strategic site happened to be the turnstile, controlled to a large extent by the barracker. As its economic importance diminished so too did the influence of the barracker.

Even then, evidence existed that might have served as a warning against complacency and denial in the populist camp. Changing demographics and new cultural influences in Melbourne had created an environment in which the League could no longer take the turnstile for granted. At finals time, however, the demand for football was so great that the League could afford to alienate a significant section of its clientele and still be sure of filling the M.C.G. to capacity. Final's ticket distribution represented a site of even greater strategic importance than the turnstile. It was here that the League's real sovereignty over the Game was already being asserted.

Chapter 6:

THE GRAND FINAL

At first sight, club members' acceptance of the St.Kilda, North Melbourne and Richmond relocations of 1964 and 1965 suggested that popular sovereignty over League football, based on a combination of the barracker's clout as a consumer and the club member's power as a voter, remained unbroken. The V.F.L. and the clubs were forced to court public patronage by making the Game as universally accessible and attractive as possible. Their success or otherwise was readily measurable, week by week, in turnstile clicks. Every September, however, the dynamics of the market were apt to change.

For the dedicated supporter of a League football club, a football season was like an emotional roller-coaster as the club's fortunes rose and fell from week to week. A club's overall success could be measured each week by its position on the premiership ladder. For many supporters the ride ended when the home-and-away series ended. Supporters of clubs at the bottom end of the ladder had to put their hopes on hold during the spring and summer months to come. Some adopted another club temporarily during September. In 1990 for example, members of the Carlton, St.Kilda and North Melbourne cheersquads helped to bolster the numbers of the West Coast Cheer Squad during the Eagles' finals campaign.[1] Many other supporters of non-finalists turned their weekend attention to other things.

For the supporters of the more successful clubs, the last four weeks of the League football season represented the culmination of a year of fluctuating emotions. The quest for premiership success became intensified as the emotional stakes rose with each week that a club survived the finals. Under the final eight system, introduced in 1994 and modified prior to the 2000 season, each of the first three weeks of the finals series brought the premiership aspirations of two more clubs to an abrupt halt. Eventually only two clubs remained for the ultimate event. Previous finals systems differed in detail but all systems since 1931 have been based on the idea of the gradual elimination of teams until only two remained for a final showdown.

While casual football spectators were generally free to exercise their freedom as consumers by choosing whether or not to attend football week by week, many football followers could not be labelled 'casual'. Football clubs attracted a 'die-hard' element for whom attendance was almost a non-negotiable obligation. Only circumstances beyond their control would have kept them from their weekly observance. They tended to be season ticket holders because the season ticket was a less expensive option over a full season than week-by-week admission. Such people would not willingly have missed a single match played by their favourite club, let alone an appearance in a Grand Final. To watch the match on television would not have fulfilled their perceived obligation. Actual attendance was essential.

The Grand Final, however, was played in a stadium of finite capacity. Tickets were scarce relative to the demands of people, casual or

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[1] Research interview, 'Teresa', 20 August 1998, p.1.

otherwise, wishing to attend. This scarcity became acute, particularly for football supporters of modest means, in the last decade and a half of the twentieth century. A media generated boom in the popularity of the Game raised demand for football. At the same time, the spectator capacity of the Grand Final venue decreased as a result of the replacement of standing areas with bucket seating and the provision of lavish facilities for the Game's corporate contributors. Outrage at the inability of season ticket holders from the competing clubs to gain access to Grand Final tickets became part of the annual Grand Final week ritual. The celebrations by supporters of the successful Preliminary Finalists frequently erded in despair on the following Monday when those clubs' ticket allotments were sold out. Long queues of empty-handed die-hards expressed futile rage at the A.F.L., their own clubs and those who had used their wealth or their corporate connections to obtain privileges beyond the reach of most people. A willingness to spend several days in a queue had once been sufficient test of a supporter's loyalty to ensure a ticket to the Game's ultimate event. However, the testimonies of disappointed supporters, which appeared annually in the popular press in the week leading up to the Grand Final, suggested that this was no longer the case.

Prior to 1957 a section of the M.C.G. was set aside during the finals series for seats which could be reserved. The remainder of the stadium, both seating and standing room, was available to the general public on a 'first come, first served' basis.[2] The practice whereby members of any V.F.L. club could

use their season ticket to gain admission to any finals match at no further charge was discontinued in 1926.[3] Season ticket holders, however, received fluctuating degrees of priority in the purchase of finals tickets since the expansion of the pre-booking system for finals matches in 1957. Although membership of all League clubs increased significantly during the late 1980s and the 1990s, competing club members could still feel reasonably confident of obtaining access to Qualifying, Semi and Preliminary Final tickets, at least when the match was played at the M.C.G, during this period. The season ticket, however, became close to worthless for securing an option to purchase a Grand Final ticket by the end of the century. It was the League's control over the distribution of tickets to its ultimate event that would make the League's sovereignty over the Game more transparent. As a result, football barrackers, like Elizabeth Kübler-Ross's patients, would no longer be 'able to maintain a make-believe world'. Instead, their denial of any threat to their perceived sovereignty over the Game would be 'replaced by feelings of anger, rage, envy and resentment'.[4]

In 1933, after a then-record crowd of 75,754 had attended the Grand Final between South Melbourne and Richmond, the Trustees of the M.C.G. received permission from the State Government to increase the

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[2] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1957, pp.5-6.
[3] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1987, p.39. (taken from the section 'Progressive growth of Australian Football: 1858 to 1986', an official chronology of the Game's development up to that time, which was a regular feature in V.F.L. Annual Reports).
[4] Kübler-Ross, op.cit., p.44.

capacity of the ground to 100,000.[5] Already the public's enthusiasm for V.F.L. football was over-taxing the largest available Grand Final venue. Ian Harriss, in his comparative study of the cultural significance of cricket in England and Australia, described Melbourne's famous ground as 'remarkably democratic and egalitarian'. After the significant upgrading of facilities in the mid-1930s, the M.C.G. provided 'very large numbers of people [with] accommodation of a much higher standard than anything available to the general public in England.'[6] The improved ground proved to be more than adequate to meet popular demand for cricket and the vast majority of football matches. These and further improvements to the ground over the next thirty years, however, served only to prove that the demand for finals football, particularly the Grand Final, would continue to increase to fill whatever space the M.C.G. Trustees made available.

The 1937 Grand Final provided the first occasion to put the newly improved stadium to the test. Although construction of the Southern Stand had increased the ground's capacity significantly, the availability of spectator accommodation fell well short of the 100,000 hoped for. A new crowd record was set when 88,540 (approximately one twelfth of the population of Melbourne) attended Geelong's victory over Collingwood. Demand clearly continued to exceed supply. An estimated 10,000 latecomers were turned away when the Department of Health ordered the closure of gates ten minutes prior to the start of the match. Facilities were still taxed beyond their limit. An

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[5] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1933, p.14.
[6] Harriss, op.cit., p.86.

'overflow of thousands' of spectators sat precariously on the grass between the fence and the boundary line.[7] Officials managed to squeeze an extra 8,294 spectators into the ground the following year for the Carlton-Collingwood Grand Final, but people were still turned away when the gates were closed 15 minutes prior to the match.[8]

During the first half of the 1940s, attendances fell as many of the Game's greatest players and a significant portion of its potential paying public forsook club colours for khaki. The M.C.G. itself was taken over for military purposes from 1942 to 1945, forcing finals matches on to suburban venues incapable of accommodating the steadily growing crowds which had been attending finals football during the 1930s.

When the war ended, football entered an era of unprecedented popularity and prosperity. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, lockouts at Grand Finals became normal. There were, however, significant variations in the actual numbers of spectators admitted. In 1951 the attendance had reached only 85,795 before the Department of Health intervened.[9] This was significantly lower than the 96,834 who were able to gain admission in 1938.[10]

There are several possible explanations for these variations. One is that Health Department officials may have been more zealous in their duties, or more generous in their estimation of the amount of space needed, per spectator, in some years than in others. Variations in the number of vacant seats in the M.C.C.

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[7] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1937, p.17.
[8] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1938, p.6.
[9] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1951, p.3.
[10] Atkinson, Graeme, The complete book of A.F.L. finals, Melbourne, Five Mile Press, 1996.

members' reserve would also explain how a 'capacity' attendance could vary so noticeably from one year to the next. Another explanation, significant in the light of the subsequent development of a pre-booking system and the extension of reserved seating areas, could be that crowds made better use of the available space in some years than others. Under a first-come, general admission system, persons arriving early who chose to occupy aisle seating before the space in the middle of the seating bay had become occupied would have been in the way of those arriving later. This could have possibly provided a mild psychological disincentive for those newcomers to sit in that particular row. As a result some rows may have been more fully occupied than others depending on whether the earliest arrivals had chosen to sit mid-bay or on the aisle. What might have appeared to be a full house to Health Department officials could have contained many vacant seats not immediately apparent to a person making a cursory visual scan of the entire crowd.

In 1954, construction works in preparation for the 1956 Olympic Games exacerbated the inadequacy of available spectator space at the Grand Final. During construction of the Olympic Stand, a section normally used for reserved seating was unavailable.[11] As a result, a mere 80,897 people witnessed Footscray's win over Melbourne. Many of these were seated between the fence and the boundary line.[12] Faced with the loss of its reserved seat revenue, the V.F.L. successfully applied to the State Government for permission to make

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[11] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1954, p.3.

[12] Lack, John McConville, Chris Small, Michael and Wright, Damien, A history of the Footscray Football Club: Unleashed, Melbourne, Aus-Sport Enterprises, 1996, p.183.

the Outer patrons foot the bill. Adult Outer admission prices were increased by 33.3% (from 3/- to 4/-). Even so, the gate receipts of £12,715/2/4 fell well short of the record established the previous year, when 89,060 spectators paid £14,537/1/10.[13] A section of the partially built Olympic Stand was used as standing room for the 1955 finals series and the M.C.C. helped by making part of the Members' enclosure available to the general public.[14]

The following year non-members again gained access to the enclosure, but this time by force. The increased capacity of the stadium as a result of the completion of the Olympic Stand, had fuelled optimism that the M.C.G. could finally cope with the accommodation demands of a Grand Final crowd. However, a new record crowd of 115,802, the largest in Australian sporting history to that time, caused another lockout.[15]

Sporting Globe reporter, John Monks, suggested that the official crowd figure was thousands short of the real number. It did not count those who forced their way in by crashing through gates and climbing fences after gates were shut at 12.45 p.m. Crowds huddled 'within inches of death' 80 feet above the ground on concrete 'pill boxes' on top of the dangerously overcrowded Olympic Stand. Ambulance and Police staff were kept busy 'hand[ing] fainting men, women and children over the heads of the crowd to the arena' as the pressure of the crowd crushed people against fences. At 1.10 p.m., Police were powerless to stop the crowd from spilling over the fence to take up

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[13] V.F.L. Annual Reports, Season 1953, p.3 and Season 1954, p.3.
[14] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1955, p.3.

vantage points between the fence and the boundary line. Meanwhile thousands of would-be patrons, denied access to the ground, were 'stalking from one closed gate to another', seeking entry. John Monks reported that a chant of 'Let's storm the Members' arose outside the ground, while patrons inside who wished to leave could not do so because of the locked gates. Men and women needing to use toilet facilities were faced with queues 100 yards long.[16]

With many empty seats remaining in the Members' enclosure, the members had been spared the chaos that was reigning in the Outer. This was to change, however, when the opening of a gate outside the ground to allow a military band to enter for the pre-match entertainment gave a mob of 'punching, kicking men' the opportunity to force entry. Hundreds more poured into the enclosure by scaling the fence of the bowling green. Before long the 'exclusive' enclosure was as crowded as the Outer and the elite were forced to endure a plebeian presence for the remainder of the afternoon.[17]

The 1956 Grand Final was the last Grand Final at which the option of cash admission was available to customers. Prior to the building of the Olympic Stand, reserved seating had been available in the area subsequently occupied by that stand. The reservation system was not used in 1954 and 1955, during which accommodation at the ground was restricted as a result of construction works. During 1956 the V.F.L. applied to the Trustees to have 13,000 seats set aside for reservation. The Olympic Games Organising Committee

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[15] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1956, p.3.
[16] Sporting Globe, 15 September 1956, p.1.
[17] Ibid.

had indicated to the League that it was willing to mark out the seats in accordance with the Olympic Games box plan in time for the football finals. The Trustees, however, would approve the setting aside of just 5,000 seats in the new stand for reservation.[18] The chairman of the Trustees and subsequent Federal A.L.P. leader, Arthur Calwell, issued a press statement shortly before the finals denying that the Trustees had exercised a discretionary power in declining the League's offer to arrange the reserved seating in collaboration with the Games organisers. According to Calwell it was not possible for the Trustees to hand this responsibility to the League without the passing of a special Act of Parliament.[19] Nevertheless the League's frustration with its relationship with the Trustees was apparent in its Annual Report, in which the League stressed that it could accept no responsibility for the decision to provide only 5,000 reserved seats instead of 13,000.[20]

Under the terms of the occupancy agreement between the V.F.L., the M.C.C. and the M.C.G. Trustees, which applied for the 15 year period to the end of the 1956 finals series, the chairman of the Trustees had the ultimate say in any disputes concerning the V.F.L.'s use of the M.C.G.[21] A new occupancy agreement, for the 15 year period commencing in 1957, gave that authority to an independent person nominated by the chairman of the Victorian Bar Council.[22] An amendment to the Melbourne Cricket Ground Act that year provided for the V.F.L. president, along

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[18] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1956, p.3.
[19] Age, 24 August 1956, p.19.
[20] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1956, p.3.
[21] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1957, p.14.
[22] Ibid.

with his V.C.A. counterpart, to be appointed as a Trustee.[23] The new agreement came about as the result of what the League described as 'long and, at times, difficult and frustrating discussions' between February and December 1957.[24]

In the meantime, the success of the pre-booking system which applied during the Olympic Games, following closely on the heels of crowd chaos at the 1956 Grand Final, had convinced all responsible parties of the merits of the League's desire to provide as much reserved seating as possible at finals matches. With the approval of the M.C.C. and the Trustees, a new scale of admission charges was drawn up for the 1957 finals, providing for individual seating, block seating and standing room in both the Outer and Grandstand enclosures, all to be pre-sold. Despite general agreement as to the desirability of the new ticketing arrangements, ongoing disputes over the terms and conditions of the new occupancy agreement delayed the organisation of the new booking arrangements until less than two weeks prior to the commencement of the finals. Allans' Box Office was appointed as the agency for the distribution of tickets. The hastily arranged ticketing plan worked smoothly enough to convince the League that it had taken the right course of action.[25]

The V.F.L. proposed to call all parties together early in the 1958 season to resolve problems involving the system of block reservations and the provision of an adequate supply of tickets for members of the

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[23] Ibid. p15.
[24] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1957, p.14.
[25] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1957, p.5.

twelve V.F.L. clubs.[26] These problems were addressed, to an extent, the following year. Seating in what had been the block reservation areas was marked into individual seats for reservation. The League obtained a quota of tickets for distribution to football club members but reported that the number of tickets available for this purpose was insufficient to meet demand.[27] For the next several seasons the League and the Trustees would clash annually over the matter of who should actually decide to whom finals tickets were made available, the League arguing that members of its clubs should be given priority access over the general public.

Introduced ostensibly for the benefit of patrons as an antidote to problems of overcrowding and related disorder, pre-booking impacted on football culture in ways not immediately foreseeable. It is unlikely that scholars will ever find a reliable way to measure crowd 'atmosphere' at a sporting event. The historian is even more poorly placed in this regard, being forced to rely on the subjective recollections of eye-witnesses, or worse still, themselves, in trying to determine what it actually 'felt like' to be at a sporting event in a bygone era. Journalists, such as the Herald Sun's Ross Brundrett, have argued that modern developments have turned football fans into 'theatregoers'. Pre-booking, along with related developments such as ground rationalisation, reserved bucket seating, corporate boxes and the influence of

[26] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1957, p.5.
[27] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1958, p.6.

television has allegedly taken much of the 'passion' out of football crowds.[28]

Notions such as 'passion' or 'atmosphere' defy objective definition or measurement. However, comments made by Collingwood's 1958 premiership acting captain, Murray Weideman, in an article which appeared in the Sporting Globe in 1963, showed that at least one prominent football identity had come to the conclusion that pre-booking had killed the partisan atmosphere at Grand Finals. Weideman recalled Collingwood's previous premiership in 1953 and asserted that finals crowds had been more partisan in those days.[29] With a significant number of Grand Final tickets sold well before the two competing clubs had been determined, it seems likely that there would have been a greater number of neutral spectators at the match than there would have been if all spectator space were simply made available to those who arrived first on the day of the match. In order to ensure that more 'dyed-in-the-wool' supporters of the competing clubs attended, Weideman suggested that only the Olympic Stand and two bays of Southern Stand be pre-sold, the rest of the Outer being made available to first-comers.[30]

Weideman's comments debunked a popular Australian sporting myth concerning Grand Final 'atmosphere'. During the 1990s the A.F.L. Grand Final received saturation coverage in all branches of the media. Since Weideman's day the pre-match entertainment had become progressively more extravagant. Tickets had become more expensive and harder to obtain. While popular mythology made it the most significant event

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[28] Herald Sun, 28 October 1996, p.19.
[29] Sporting Globe, 2 November 1963, p.13.
[30] Ibid.

on the Australian sporting calendar, the occasion was over-rated according to St.Kilda Cheer Squad (St.K.C.S.) president, Pam Mawson. In a 1998 interview she remarked that the crowd atmosphere at the 1997 Grand Final had been 'as dead as a dodo'. The previous week she had attended St.Kilda's Preliminary Final win over North Melbourne. The raising of the cheersquad's run-through on that occasion had 'made the hair stand up on the back of [her] neck.'[31] All St.Kilda and North Melbourne season ticket holders had been given the opportunity to purchase tickets prior to sales to the general public. As a result, a large percentage of the crowd held a strong emotional stake in the outcome of the match. The following week, however, Pam Mawson's feeling was completely different. The small St.K.C.S., only 120 of whom had been able to take up the option of the purchase of a ticket, was surrounded by a combination of Adelaide supporters and what Pam Mawson called the 'suited brigade', Melburnians who had used their corporate connections to obtain tickets to what she suggested was the only game of the year that many of them had attended. 'They weren't the St.Kilda supporters. They were people who go to the Grand Final', she explained. The passionate few who had been able to obtain the 6,400 tickets allocated to St.Kilda members were nearly all seated at the top of the Great Southern Stand. Although St.Kilda was competitive, leading for a significant portion of the match before succumbing to the Crows' onslaught, the St.K.C.S. had been unable to generate strong vocal support for their team at ground level.[32]

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[31] Pam Mawson interview, pp.9-10.
[32] Ibid.

The pre-selling of Grand Final tickets became a permanent feature since its introduction and the manner in which those tickets were allocated provided a fruitful source of outrage and controversy. Much of the sense of injustice sprang from a perception that the people who most wanted tickets were often least able to obtain them, and that many of the available tickets had been bought by people who were less than passionately concerned at the outcome. The 1960 Grand Final attendance provided evidence to support this contention. Although all tickets were sold out by the morning of the match, only 97,457 attended. The V.F.L. reported that 6,152 tickets were not presented on the day,[33] meaning that 6,152 people who may have wanted to attend the match missed out for the sake of people who did not bother to turn up. A similar sense of injustice arose when there were empty seats in the Members' enclosure.

In 1962 the V.F.L. asserted its support for the principle of pre-booking of finals seats. It argued, somewhat circularly, that the 'remarkable demand for tickets' was proof that the system was accepted by the public,[34] while failing to mention that the public had no other option if it wished to attend the matches.

Meanwhile the League continued its battle with the M.C.G. Trustees over the allocation of tickets for the exclusive sale to football club members. In 1962 there were 52,126 Adult and 21,881 Junior members divided among the twelve V.F.L. clubs. The League felt that these members should be given priority over the general public in the purchase of finals tickets. However, their attempts to have a more substantial

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[33] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1960, p.5.
[34] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1962, p.6.

number of tickets set aside were thwarted by the M.C.G. Trustees who preferred to have as many tickets as possible for sale to the general public.[35] In 1957, when pre-booking began, the Trustees had allocated 36,000 tickets, out of the 85,000 tickets available for non-M.C.C. Members' accommodation, to the League for sale through the football clubs. These consisted of 19,000 tickets for seating and 17,000 for standing room. The allocation represented only about half of the total number of football club members.[36]

From a 2000 perspective, the M.C.G. Trustees of the 1960s appeared quite generous in their allocation of tickets to football club members, certainly more generous than the A.F.L. appeared to be in the 1990s. From the same perspective, the League in the 1960s appeared to have been the champion of the rights of the die-hard football supporters over those of the casual patron. Through the 1990s, the A.F.L. was condemned by observers such as Dave Nadel for favouring corporate 'theatregoers' over barrackers.[37] Conditions in the 1990s, however, were so different from those of thirty years earlier that simple comparison or contrast of the League's propensity to look after the 'real' fan can be misleading. By the end of the twentieth century the League had long since assumed control of the distribution of tickets to its own fixtures. Club memberships, however, had increased to such an extent that the League could not accommodate members of the competing clubs at the Grand Final, let alone the members of all clubs. The

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[35] Ibid.
[36] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1957, p.5.
[37] Nadel, Dave, 'What is a football community?' in Occasional Papers in Football Studies, Vol.1, No.1, January 1998, p.66.

general public, whose rights the Trustees of the 1960s had upheld with such determination, was no longer part of the equation, while season tickets had become too common to guarantee their holders an invitation to the Grand Final.

The 1962 Grand Final was the first V.F.L. match televised in full. When all tickets had sold out, the League agreed to allow television stations to record the entire match on video-tape for subsequent screening. Previously, stations had been restricted to showing only half an hour of any one match.[38] Although live Grand Final telecasts were still 15 years away, this 1962 decision by the V.F.L. set an important precedent in the development of the Grand Final, and indeed of football generally, into an event for television. By the end of the century, watching the television coverage would be as close as most Australian Football fans would be able to get to seeing a Grand Final.

In 1963 the League opted to have ticket sales centralised at the one outlet, the M.C.G. itself, in preference to having several selling points around the city. Allen's Pty. Ltd. was still the selling agent[39] but its Collins Street box office would only see action if tickets remained unsold after the two days set aside for selling at the M.C.G. This system provided for one day of sales to football club members and another for the general public.

In 1965, Monday 16 August was the day allocated for sales to football club members. All tickets for seats were to be sold as a series covering the four finals matches. An allotment of 630 of these was made

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[38] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1962, p.6.
[39] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1963, p.5.

available to each of the twelve clubs. Standing room series tickets were also available. Six entrance gates to the ground were designated as selling points, with two clubs sharing each selling point. Geelong members received special consideration. The Cats' allotment of tickets was split between Northern Stand entrance number 12, which it shared with Footscray, and a selling point at Kardinia Park. The following Wednesday, 18 August, was set aside for the sale of 16,000 series seating tickets to the general public. Standing room series tickets could also be purchased. Patrons were asked to queue at one of 13 selling booths, each covering the sale of tickets for seating in a particular area of the ground.[40]

The system did not go close to satisfying the demand. Club members who missed out on the Monday were faced with the prospect of queuing again for the Wednesday sales. St.Kilda secretary, Ian Drake, echoed the sentiments of most League clubs by describing the system as a 'farce'. His South Melbourne counterpart, Alby Goodall, whose club used the same selling point as St.Kilda, told of a St.Kilda supporter who had spent 12 hours in the Saints' queue only to miss out. Melbourne secretary, Jim Cardwell, suggested that clubs actually competing in the finals should be given a greater allocation of series tickets than those not competing.[41] The League already gave some priority to competing club members by making a special allotment of 1,000 tickets available to each competing club for the four individual finals matches.[42] This would have

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[40] Age, 3 August 1965, p.20.
[41] Age, 17 August 1965, p.22.
[42] Age, 3 August 1965, p.22.

still been inadequate, particularly for more popular clubs, such as Collingwood.

Spending long periods of time in queues was a regular part of the lifestyles of many dedicated football supporters in the 1960s. In 1965, queues for the Monday ticket sales to club members began forming on the preceding Friday. The Age reported that 1,500 people had spent the Sunday night queuing in steady rain. Some of the better-prepared enthusiasts had brought tents or tarpaulins to make their vigil a little more comfortable. Some even had beds.[43] Although many fans endured the night with a stoicism born of necessity, others found ways to make a virtue of the same necessity. Essendon Cheer Squad member, Margret McKee, interviewed in 1998, recalled such occasions with fondness.

> You'd just be in this queue and people would bring their guitars and they'd be singing. It was just a real party thing. I mean, we just had the best times.[44]

Not everybody shared Margret McKee's sense of fun. The V.F.L. wanted full control of ticket sales and approached the State Government for help. Acting Premier, Mr.Rylah, called upon the Under-Secretary, Mr.J.V.Dillon, to investigate whether the ticketing system could be improved.[45] When Dillon canvassed the public for suggestions, he received, instead, a barrage of complaints. There were reports of gangs of youths pushing in at the head of queues, in some cases

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[43] Age, 16 August 1965, p.1.
[44] Research interview, Margret McKee, 29 July 1998, p.4.

doubling back into the queues after they had been served in order to buy more tickets. Other complainants mentioned poor hygiene resulting from inadequate toilet facilities outside the ground.[46]

A meeting of representatives from the Police, the Melbourne City Council, the Health Department, the V.F.L. and the M.C.G. Trustees, called by the Under Secretary, expressed concern at the method of ticket distribution and the conditions under which people were queuing. The conference concluded by inviting the League to submit a proposal for an alternative system of selling tickets to the M.C.G. Trustees for consideration. The League used the opportunity to continue its push for an increased allotment to club members, suggesting also that many of the problems would be avoided if the majority of tickets were sold at the various League grounds rather than at the one centralised location.[47]

Although the League's stand against the Trustees placed it, ostensibly, as the champion of the hard-core football supporter over the general public, the squabble between the two bodies needs to be seen in the context of larger ground management issues. The League, by now, was flexing its muscles and was determined to assume greater control over its own destiny. The League at this time saw the Waverley development as the future of football. Along with St.Kilda's breakaway from what it regarded as a poor deal at the Junction Oval, it had weakened cricket's control. Entrenched privilege, built upon the staid conservative traditions that characterised the summer

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[45] Age, 19 August 1965, p.22.
[46] Age, 21 August 1965, p.18.
[47] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1963, p.5.

game, had maintained cricket's hegemony long after the populism of the sporting market place should have removed what Ken Rigby, much later, described as the 'nineteenth century anachronism' of cricket's control over Melbourne's sporting culture.[48] A progressively more assertive V.F.L. was demanding:

> … that as the body presenting V.F.L. matches, it should enjoy the right to determine the manner in which tickets for its own fixtures are made available to the public.[49]

The League's proposal, submitted in response to the conference called by the Chief Secretary in 1965, was that the League be responsible for the distribution and sale of all finals tickets, for both the general public and for football club members. The Trustees responded by granting the League control of only 55% of the available tickets, the other 45% remaining under the Trustees' control for sale at the M.C.G.[50] Despite regular submissions from the V.F.L. to have the League's quota increased, the Trustees refused to budge during the remainder of their contract with the League which expired in 1971.

Faced with the Trustees' intransigence, the League opted to make better use of the tickets available. In 1968 it decided to set aside, out of its allocation, a sufficient number of tickets for every finals match to ensure that every Adult and Junior member of the two competing clubs would have the opportunity to purchase

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[48] Age, 24 September 1997, p.A14.
[49] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1966, p.5.
[50] Ibid.

a ticket.[51] For the first time since the removal of finals entitlements from season tickets in 1926, club members had guaranteed access to their own club's finals engagements at standard prices.

By the time the occupancy agreement expired the Waverley project had progressed to the point that the V.F.L. was able to negotiate with the Trustees from a stronger position than previously. A new agreement for seasons 1972 and 1973 gave the V.F.L. control of the sale of tickets for all accommodation outside of the M.C.C. Members' enclosure, on the proviso that 25% of that seating be made available to the general public.[52] In order to deter the speculative on-selling of tickets on the black market, the League in 1971 prepared a composite ticket covering all four finals matches, instead of separate tickets. The crowd at the two Semi Finals dipped below 100,000 for the first time since the 1968 1st Semi Final and the Preliminary Final crowd of 102,494 was 5,721 less than the previous year and the lowest since 1967.[53] The 1971 figures went against the trend of soaring attendances in the three seasons following the completion of the Western Stand in 1967. The League explained this slight drop in attendances at the first three matches of the 1971 finals by suggesting that ticket holders who did not wish to attend a particular lead-up final themselves were generally unwilling to part with a ticket that also entitled the holder to Grand Final admission.[54]

The League's decision to change to a final five system in 1972 presented new challenges to the finals ticketing system. The new six-match finals format

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[51] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1968, p.1.
[52] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1971, p.7.
[53] Atkinson, op.cit., pp.282-300.

involved simultaneous matches at the M.C.G. and Waverley on the first two Saturdays of the series. The most noticeable impact of the new system was to reduce the size of the crowds at the individual matches in the first two weeks of the series. Although the total attendance at the first week of the 1972 finals series (144,399) was well ahead of the all-time 1st Semi Final record of 104,239 in 1970,[55] the splitting of finals patronage into two crowds at separate venues meant that facilities at the two grounds were not fully taxed. At the M.C.G. under the old final four system, near capacity crowds had become commonplace at all finals matches. Both the 52,499 who attended the St.Kilda-Essendon Elimination Final at V.F.L. Park and the 91,900 who attended the Richmond-Collingwood Qualifying Final at the M.C.G. on the same day[56] were well within the capacities of the respective venues.

In 1975 the League noted that it was becoming more difficult to sell standing room tickets, particularly in the first two weeks of the finals.[57] The following year it reported that ticket supply to clubs was actually exceeding demand for some matches.[58] By extending finals participation to the club finishing fifth at the end of the home-and-away series, it could be argued that the League had unwittingly 'cheapened' finals football. Although total crowds were clearly higher with six games instead of four, significantly fewer people were attending individual finals matches. Crowds of over 100,000 at matches other than the Grand Final became a thing of the past when the final five

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[54] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1971, p.3.
[55] Atkinson, op.cit., pp.295-306.
[56] Ibid., p.304.
[57] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1975, p.3.
[58] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1976, p.5.

system commenced. In the period from 1972 to 1983 inclusive, prior to the introduction of Sunday finals matches in 1984, the largest attendance at an Elimination, Qualifying or Semi Final was the 94,451 who saw Collingwood defeat Carlton in the 1980 1st Semi Final. Although crowd figures for the 1972 finals series were still in excess of 90,000 for all matches played at the M.C.G., this first year of operation of the new system proved to be the exception rather than the rule. Of the 44 finals matches played in the first two weeks of the finals series from 1973 to 1983, only two matches attracted in excess of 90,000 spectators. Both matches were between the two most popular clubs of the era, Carlton and Collingwood.[59]

While these observations may seem unremarkable in light of the fact that simultaneous finals matches were being played on the Saturdays in question, Preliminary Final crowds dwindled during this period. After crowds of 92,272 and 98,652 in 1972 and 1973 respectively, crowds at the League season's penultimate fixture trended downwards. A significant factor was obviously the change of venue from the M.C.G. to V.F.L. Park from 1975. The 75,526 crowd at the Geelong-Collingwood clash in 1980 should be regarded as a capacity crowd, as could the crowds in excess of 70,000 in attendance at the Preliminary Finals at Waverley in 1975, 1978 and 1979. The other five Preliminary Final crowds show a clear downward trend. Five of the nine Preliminary Finals at V.F.L. Park from 1975 to 1983 inclusive failed to attract a benchmark figure of 70,000. This was in spite of there being no other V.F.L. fixture played on the same day.[60] This lends further support to

[59] Atkinson, op.cit., pp.304-374.
[60] Ibid.

the view that finals football was cheapened by the inclusion of the extra finalist.

Given that finals football was a major source of revenue for the League, it is not surprising that the V.F.L. opted for a system that would increase the quantity of finals football being played. Seen in this light, the introduction of the final five system would seem a sound economic move on the League's part. From another perspective, however, the resulting reduction in the number of sell-out finals matches, particularly in the first two weeks of the finals series, created a buyers' market on those weeks. In a situation where supply of spectator accommodation was well in excess of demand, football fans were given an opportunity to send a message to the League. In its 1977 Annual Report, the V.F.L. noted that patrons were tending to boycott standing room accommodation. The League took this as an indication that its public was demanding better facilities than had previously been provided. A V.F.L. Finals Tickets Sub-committee successfully lobbied the M.C.C. for the introduction of additional seating areas to replace some of the standing room accommodation.[61]

Finals crowd figures during the boom years of the 1960s can be misleading, affected as they were by a 'captive audience' phenomenon resulting from the emphasis on series ticket sales. Under this system, a large percentage of the patrons who obtained Grand Final tickets did so as part of a series covering all four finals matches. With tickets already paid for, there was a strong incentive for such fans to attend Semi and Preliminary Finals, whether or not their club of choice was involved. Alternatively, they could sell their ticket to someone who wanted to attend. As

booming Grand Final attendances trended towards the all-time high of 121,696 in 1970, crowds at the lead up finals matches were not far behind, never falling below 90,000 in the six years from 1966 to 1971 inclusive.[62]

The significant drop in attendances at lead-up finals matches after the introduction of the final five was not matched by a similar drop in Grand Final attendances. From 1972 to 1983 inclusive there were 13 Grand Finals played, only 4 of which failed to attract more than 110,000 spectators. One of these was the 1977 replay, which was the only Grand Final in this period that failed to produce an attendance above 100,000.[63] The relative stability of Grand Final crowds in this era, compared to the significant fall in attendances at lead-up finals, illustrated the pre-eminence of the Grand Final in a way that it had not been illustrated before.

The Grand Final had been football's premier event since the introduction of the Page system of playing finals matches in 1931. This system guaranteed that a Grand Final would be played every year as the culmination of a finals system which provided incentive for all clubs competing in the finals to try to win all finals matches in which they were engaged. Under the previous system, the right of challenge granted to the minor premier reduced that club's incentive to play to the best of its ability in lead-up finals. A Grand Final, as such, did not exist. The premiership was awarded to the minor premier if it went on to win the 'Final'. Failing that, a 'Challenge Final' was played between the winner of the Final and the minor premier

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[61] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1977, p.13.
[62] Atkinson, op.cit., pp.276-300.
[63] Ibid., pp.304-374.

to decide the premiership. The Page system provided a greater sense of drama. Although a club finishing first or second had the 'double chance', its route to the premiership was much easier if it won the 2nd Semi Final than if it lost it, a week's rest being clearly preferable to a bruising Preliminary Final encounter with the winning 1st Semi Finalist. A definite Grand Final to decide the premier had a greater sense of finality than a 'Final' which may or may not have been the ultimate final, depending on the result. The final five system gave the minor premier the privilege of guaranteed passage to the 2nd Semi Final but maintained the incentive for each club to try to win every match and continued to guarantee a definite Grand Final.

The success of two relatively unpopular clubs, Hawthorn and North Melbourne, in the middle to late 1970s is fortuitous for the historian in that it provides evidence of the establishment of a new level of pre-eminence for the Grand Final. The two clubs met in the 1974 Qualifying Final at the M.C.G., pulling a crowd of only 77,519, well below the 91,900 attendance at the inaugural Qualifying Final between Richmond and Collingwood in 1972 and the 86,386 at the Carlton-Richmond clash in 1973. The Hawks and Kangaroos met again in the Preliminary Final. Although the crowd of 88,262 was significantly higher than the Qualifying Final attendance, it was the lowest Preliminary Final crowd since 1964. A poor 2nd Semi Final crowd of 52,076 at V.F.L. Park in 1975 provided further evidence of the lack of popularity of the two clubs. Nevertheless the rematch in the Grand Final two weeks later pulled the quite respectable figure of 110,551. The 1976 and 1977 Qualifying Finals, both played at the M.C.G., saw the two clubs opposed again. The crowds of 64,148 and

64,052 respectively would have left plenty of empty space in Melbourne's premier sporting venue. The Preliminary Final crowd of 61,242, which attended V.F.L. Park to see yet another clash between the two clubs in 1977, was a respectable figure for the venue but still well short of capacity. The 1978 2nd Semi Final between the same clubs at the same venue pulled a paltry 48,716. Despite this easily illustrated lack of drawing power on the part of the Hawthorn and North Melbourne clubs, the 1976 and 1978 Grand Finals, which they also contested, pulled 110,143 and 101,704 respectively.[64] From these figures it is clear that it was the occasion itself which attracted crowds to the Grand Final rather than the competing clubs. It would seem reasonable to assume that crowds of 100,000 or more would have attended Grand Finals in this era regardless of which clubs were playing. The difference between Grand Final crowds attracted by popular clubs and unpopular clubs was marginal. Collingwood and Carlton attracted 113,545 in 1979 and 112,964 in 1981. The only clashes between the Magpies and the Blues in lead-up finals at the M.C.G. between 1972 and 1983 were the 1st Semi Finals in 1978 and 1980, which pulled 91,933 and 94,451 respectively.[65] Clearly attendances at lead-up finals between 1972 and 1983 were, to a significant extent, determined by the drawing power of the clubs competing. The Grand Final had become an event in its own right, which transcended the popularity of the competing clubs.

In 1977 the V.F.L. entered a new era in its presentation of the Game. This was particularly evident

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[64] Ibid., pp.304-342.
[65] Ibid., pp.304-374.

in the build-up to the Grand Final, with a motorcade of the competing teams through city streets on the eve of the match.[66] The Grand Final parade became an annual event. In another innovation, the League invited popular Australian entertainer, Barry Crocker, to sing 'The Impossible Dream' and 'Advance Australia Fair' in a pre-match mini-concert.[67] Although some form of entertainment had been provided for Grand Final spectators previously, the Barry Crocker performance was the most ambitious and extravagant show undertaken at a Grand Final to this time. It set a precedent for what has since become a tradition of providing elaborate pre-match entertainment on Grand Final Day, with each year's effort appearing to be an attempt to outdo all previous efforts.

The 1977 Grand Final set another precedent by being the first Grand Final to be televised live in its entirety in Melbourne. With sell-outs virtually guaranteed, the idea of televising the Grand Final had been under consideration for several years but the stumbling block had always been negotiations over the price payable by the television networks to the League. In 1977 this was resolved and the result of the match could not have been better if it had been scripted. Indeed a cynic may well have suspected that the result had been pre-arranged when the famous Collingwood-North Melbourne draw provided not only riveting television but also the windfall of another sold-out Grand Final, and another 'live' telecast, the following week.

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[66] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1977, p.2.
[67] Ibid.

The League's decision in the late 1990s to abandon its ground at Waverley, once hailed as football's new frontier, in favour of the significantly smaller Colonial Stadium in the near-city Docklands precinct was greeted with puzzled incredulity by those who realised that the new venture would make pre-booking of seats essential for many home-and-away matches. However, when seen as a logical extension to the pre-booking system for finals seats, introduced in 1957 in response to a serious excess demand for finals football, the League's motives are easier to understand. By gradually wresting control of finals ticket distribution away from the obstructive M.C.G. Trustees, the League laid claim to a site strategically essential to its sovereignty over the Game. The greater the disparity between supply and demand for Grand Final tickets the stronger the League's control of that site would become. The Docklands move was simply an extension of the same principle. A deliberate under-supply of seating through the home-and-away round would neutralise the public's week-to-week turnstile sovereignty, thereby reinforcing the notion that football was the A.F.L.'s Game.

At the end of the 1970s, however, a kind of equilibrium existed in the power struggle. While excess demand for Grand Final tickets was inevitable, the system of priority access for season ticket holders from the two competing clubs ensured that the die-hards would not be excluded from their clubs' most important matches. In turn, the possibility of a club making the Grand Final helped to sell memberships. Supporters who did not commit themselves

for the full season ran the risk of missing out when it mattered most.

Meanwhile, the Grand Final continued to grow in stature and pre-eminence, despite a general decline in football attendances during the 1970s and early 1980s. Although the V.F.L. was forced to court patronage for most of the season, its licence to exploit the Grand Final knew no bounds. Corporate forces would soon upset the equilibrium. The League's control of finals ticket distribution had set the precedent for a more savage exploitation in the last decade and a half of the century, when a surge in membership numbers and a growing reliance on corporate support would significantly devalue the season ticket. Pre-booking, originally introduced in the public's interest as the League's response to the mid-1950s crisis in Grand Final spectator accommodation, would become the League's most potent weapon for the subjugation of its public. The class privilege subverted by the storming of the Members' enclosure in 1956 would pale into insignificance in comparison to the chasm that would divide football's corporate and non-corporate sectors four decades later.

Chapter Seven:

TICKET RAGE

In earlier chapters, I have likened the reaction of football followers to the transformation of 'their' Game to a process of grief and mourning, much like Elizabeth Kübler-Ross's paradigm of denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, as at other times, the depth of grief varied from one barracker to the next. An important factor helping to determine which of Kübler-Ross's stages a barracker had reached was the individual barracker's level of commitment. Casual followers paying week-by-week admission may well have maintained denial until their club made a Grand Final. When this happened their inability to obtain a ticket would have made their lack of power glaringly obvious, provoking reactions ranging from anger to acceptance, depending on the temperament of the individual in question. Some may have even experienced depression. It is to be expected that wide variations would have existed in the extent and duration of the various stages, some experiencing little or no anger or depression, consoled by the apparent inevitability of live television coverage.

Those with spare funds had the option of indulging in some bargaining by purchasing or attempting to purchase tickets on the black market. Perceptive hagglers would have interpreted the exorbitant price of tickets bought in this way as evidence that, at Grand final time, the week-by-week supporter was priced out of the market. Market forces

at this time of the year were distorted by a distinctly uneven playing field on which people unable to obtain tickets at the official price were seriously disadvantaged in their dealings with those who could.

Although the V.F.L. could claim no royalty from the black marketeer's profit margin, its control over the distribution of such a widely sought commodity enabled it to get away with hefty annual increases in the official price. The clubs also benefited from the acute scarcity of Grand Final tickets. A more dedicated category of barracker would not make the transition to acceptance as easily as the casual fan. Club membership, which offered the die-hard a guarantee of immunity from black market exploitation, would in time become a form of exploitation in its own right. From 1968 until the mid-1980s, however, it offered committed supporters a lower-priced alternative to weekly cash admission and an effective insurance policy against the excessive demands of finals ticket profiteers. At the same time it provided a guaranteed income for the clubs.

Effectively, the purchase of a club membership was an exercise in bargaining. Just as Kübler-Ross's dying patients attempted to negotiate a postponement of the inevitable by promising God that they would change their behaviour in some way for their remaining days,[1] the die-hard barracker agreed to commit an annual lump sum to the club in return for privileges denied to non-members. While these privileges may have helped club members to preserve a sense of ownership of their clubs and of the Game, changing conditions in the last decade and a half of

the century would make the fleeting nature of these privileges apparent.

Press reports pertaining to the sale of tickets in the week leading up to the 1997 Grand Final indicated how far the bargaining position of football club members had deteriorated since the mid-1980s. On the Friday night of Preliminary Final weekend the St.Kilda Football Club qualified for its first Grand Final for 26 years by defeating North Melbourne. Queues which had been forming at Moorabbin even before the Preliminary Final quickly grew in anticipation of Grand Final tickets going on sale the following Monday.

On the Saturday afternoon the Western Bulldogs and Adelaide met to determine St.Kilda's opponent. At three-quarter time, with the Bulldogs well in control of the match, Bulldog supporters began to leave in order to join the queues at the various ticket outlets. One of them, Frank Vetrone, a schoolteacher from East Keilor, listened to the final quarter on his Walkman radio. By the time he reached the ticket outlet the complexion of the game had changed. In a stirring finish the Crows stole a Grand Final berth from the devastated Bulldogs. Frank Vetrone's quest for a Grand Final ticket, organised with military precision, was in vain. He and his fellow Bulldog devotees left the queues to be replaced shortly afterwards by elated Adelaide supporters on the same quest.[2]

In little more than a decade, committed football club supporters had gone from being guaranteed the

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[1] Kübler-Ross, op.cit., pp.72-73.
[2] Sunday Herald Sun, 20 September 1998, Sport, p.11.

option to purchase a ticket if their club made the Grand Final to the absurdity of having to leave a Preliminary Final early in order to take a position in a queue. Had the Bulldogs managed to hold on for a narrow victory, Frank Vetrone would have been forced to experience his club's greatest triumph since the 1961 Preliminary Final through the headphones of a Walkman radio. The A.F.L.'s system of ticket allocation allowed only 19,600 seats out of the 98,400 seats available at the M.C.G. to be sold to ordinary members of the competing clubs. Of the remaining seats, 48,000 were allocated to members of the M.C.C. and the A.F.L. Another 12,800 seats had been allocated as part of finals series ticket packages distributed equally among all 16 A.F.L. clubs. Another 11,200 tickets, for the Grand Final only, had been similarly distributed among the 16 clubs. Customarily, clubs distributed these tickets through the corporate sector as part of special package deals, rather than make them available as basic match tickets for their members. The A.F.L. had also set aside a further 6,800 tickets for distribution to its own staff, tribunal members, umpires, sponsors, the media and other insiders. The 19,600 tickets allocated to the competing clubs included 300 to each official cheersquad and 1,000 to each club for in-house distribution. The remaining 17,000 were made available to season ticket holders from the competing clubs on the basis of a formula that allowed a minimum of 4,000 tickets for each club, with the remainder allocated on a pro-rata basis according to the number of members in each club.[3] St.Kilda was allotted 6,400 tickets for

[3] Age, 23 September 1997, p.B11.

sale to its 16,000 members, while Adelaide was allocated 10,600 tickets for 40,000 members.[4]

Articles and correspondence appearing in the popular press during the build-up to the match explored issues relating to Grand Final ticket allocation. The strongest theme emerging was that of the injustice of a system which snubbed the overwhelming majority of a football club's regular supporters when that club was successful enough to be involved in the most important match of the season. The Age reported that angry fans at Moorabbin felt they had been 'taken for mugs'. Heather Colley, a 38-year-old life-long Saints supporter, did not think that the club or the A.F.L. cared about hard core supporters.

> We're the mugs who went to [the] Save Our Saints campaign and kept the club afloat and we can't even go and see them in a grand final.[5]

Another 38-year-old supporter, Les King, complained that although clubs constantly stressed the importance of club membership there was no reward for the loyalty of those who did become members. To him it appeared that while many tickets were 'given away' to corporate supporters, St.Kilda members received no more than a newsletter from the club telling them how valuable they were.[6]

St.Kilda Football Club's chief executive officer, Don Hanly, defended the corporate sector's ticket

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[4] Herald Sun, 23 September 1997, p.7.
[5] Age, 23 September 1997, p.B11.
[6] Ibid.

supply by explaining that business support had rescued many clubs from financial difficulties. He sought to shift the focus on to the M.C.C., whose members customarily did not fully utilise the 24,000 seats available to them. He felt that M.C.C. members should be required to book their seats for major events at the M.C.G. so that surplus seating in the Members' enclosure could be made available to others.[7] Ken Rigby of Blackburn, in a letter to the Age, went further by demanding that the Government intervene to bring an end to the M.C.C.'s privileged position.

> [The Government] should ask why the greatest arena in the land is not a genuine people's ground, but is basically a private club. It should ask what justification there is for a 19th century anachronism like the M.C.C. to dominate the sporting culture of this city in the way that it does.[8]

An M.C.C. member was guaranteed the right of admission to the Grand Final regardless of which teams were competing, while a football club member's right merely to queue for a ticket hinged on the club's ability to qualify for the match. Rigby's plea for justice was also directed against those people who had not seen a football match all season but who would be 'swanning into the M.C.G.' on Grand Final day because they had bought 'airline packages and other deals' or because they had the 'right corporate connections'.[9] He felt

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[7] Ibid.
[8] Age, 24 September 1997, p.A14.
[9] Ibid.

that because the A.F.L. had done nothing to end the 'annual scandal of Grand Final ticket distribution,' State action was warranted.

> [The Government] should … ask why the system does not allow participating clubs in a Grand Final to guarantee a seat to every paid-up member … instead of the deplorable situation we now have, where members have to line up days ahead in acute discomfort, only to be told, 'Sorry'. It might make for picturesque stories about the lifeblood of football, but what it really reveals is the patronising indifference and snobbery of football's decision-makers.[10]

Although the Melbourne press focussed on the injustices experienced by St.Kilda supporters, the ticket supply for Adelaide members was also pitifully inadequate, with only about a quarter of the club's membership able to buy tickets. The Age reported that Adelaide Football Club's chief executive officer, Bill Sanders, was considering the introduction of a new level of membership which would give priority access to finals tickets.[11] At Moorabbin, members of the Social Club were given priority. The Herald Sun reported that no St.Kilda Social Club members who wanted tickets missed out.[12]

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[10] Ibid.
[11] Age, 23 September 1997, p.B11.
[12] Herald Sun, 23 September 1997, p.7.

A level of membership that provided a 100% guarantee of Grand Final ticket access must have, by implication, devalued non-priority membership. With a large portion of the already inadequate ticket supply allocated to priority members, the base-level membership, which represented the vast majority of a club's members, was left to battle for the leftovers. The odds against individual St.Kilda season ticket holders with no priority access receiving a ticket to the 1997 Grand Final were considerably worse than the allocation of 6,400 tickets to 16,000 members would have suggested. As the Adelaide chief clearly recognised, the declining value of the season ticket as a guarantee of Grand Final ticket access provided a window of opportunity for football club administrators to maximise revenue by exploiting the barracker's willingness to bargain.

Photographs in the Age on the Tuesday provided a stark contrast between the joy of those who succeeded and the despair of those who failed in the quest for a Grand Final ticket. One man, who had queued since the Saturday night was seen clutching his tickets with the sort of glee usually confined to winners of Tattslotto. On the same page an obviously unsuccessful couple on the verge of tears provided evidence of depression.[13]

On the same day the Herald Sun showed a young woman, dressed only in two strategically placed St.Kilda scarves, standing by the side of the Nepean Highway with a sign offering $400 for two Grand Final tickets.[14] Her offer, however, was well below the prevailing black market rate. It was customary during

[13] Age, 23 September 1997, p.B11.
[14] Herald Sun, 23 September 1997, p.9.

Grand Final week for the classified advertisement section of the Herald Sun to devote a section exclusively to advertisers wanting to buy or sell Grand Final tickets. On the Wednesday more than two columns of advertisements appeared. Most sellers' prices were not quoted, but the going rate among those who did elect to give a definite quote was between $750 and $1,200 per ticket.[15] Elsewhere in the same edition, the Herald Sun reported that some profiteers were asking as much as $2,500 for a ticket.[16] The official Adult price for 1997 Grand Final tickets obtained through A.F.L.-approved channels had been $70.[17]

Profiteering on the buying and selling of tickets to an event would appear to have been inevitable whenever demand was significantly in excess of supply. Grand Final week in Melbourne provided the occasion for the emergence of a mini-industry in which the privileged few attempted to capitalise at the expense of the desperate many. The Herald Sun classifieds contained advertisements in which seats in the A.F.L. Members' section, a non-transferable entitlement of A.F.L. membership,[18] were brazenly offered for sale. Other abuses of privilege were apparent in offers of multiple tickets grouped together. One advertisement offered 10 prime seats together in a row. Another seller offered eight seats for $8,000, but only on the condition that a single buyer purchase all eight.[19] To

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[15] Herald Sun, 24 September 1997, p.63.
[16] Herald Sun, 24 September 1997, p.5.
[17] Herald Sun, 22 September 1997, p.89. (advertisement)
[18] 'A.F.L. Membership: the face of the future', information booklet, Australian Football League, 1998, pp.14-15.
[19] Herald Sun, 24 September 1997, p.63.

have obtained these tickets in the first instance, the profiteer would have needed connections within either the A.F.L., one of the clubs or one of the corporate sponsors associated with either the League or a club.

Profiteering, or 'scalping' as it was commonly known, could be risky. Not all buyers were desperate life-long supporters of one of the competing clubs. Some were in fact scalpers themselves, merely holding possession of a ticket in the expectation that the black market price would rise. A poorly timed purchase or sale by a scalper could prove costly as one 'self-proclaimed king of the scalpers' found when he was forced to sell a ticket, which he had obtained for $800, for $650 on the morning of the match.[20] Prices customarily gathered momentum on the Monday or Tuesday, as soon as all competing club members' tickets had sold out. Panic buying forced the price to a peak later in the week. Profiteers still holding tickets on the morning of the match did not enjoy the same market advantage as those advertising in the mid-week classifieds. As the match drew closer, they became aware that their tickets were declining in value. The truly desperate had already succumbed to midweek extortion. Fans willing to forego the pre-match entertainment could sometimes obtain last-minute bargains. While the advertising of tickets in newspapers was not illegal, scalpers operating outside the M.C.G. on Grand Final day in 1997 risked fines of at least $200 and the confiscation of their tickets under Melbourne City Council by-laws.[21] Such risks tended to make sellers more willing to part with their wares quickly, thereby weakening their control of the

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[20] Sunday Age, 28 September 1997, p.2.
[21] Age, 27 September 1997, p.A4

market to an extent. Despite Council by-laws, the trade in tickets at the 1997 Grand Final continued outside the ground right up to the start of the match. The prevailing match day price was reported to have fluctuated between $300 and $400. However, one St.Kilda supporter determined not to pay over $200 had refused two offers of tickets for $220. Ten minutes after the start of the match the area outside the ground was almost devoid of hagglers.[22]

The profiteering activities of scalpers '[took] the gloss off Grand Final week', according to St.Kilda president, Andrew Plympton, who accused them of 'bleeding the fans' and labelled them as 'repulsive'.[23] The State Opposition made what would have probably appeared a politically safe call for scalping to be stamped out.[24] The 'big grab', as the Herald Sun labelled scalpers' demands,[25] would have added further weight to Ken Rigby's argument that the Government should act to reform the inequitable ticket distribution system which created an environment in which ticket speculation could flourish. Rigby, however, would have received no comfort from Sports Minister, Tom Reynolds's rejection of the Opposition's call for a clampdown on scalping. The Minister argued that if people were willing to pay $700 or $1,000 for a ticket they were merely exercising their 'choice'.[26] This reply suggested that the Kennett Government saw the booming prices for Grand Final tickets as evidence of a thriving free enterprise economy, but there could be little argument against the proposition that some

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[22] Sunday Age, 28 September 1997, p.2.
[23] Herald Sun, 24 September 1997, p.5.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.

citizens were more 'free' than others to engage in this 'enterprise'.

Unwilling to entertain the possibility that his League's system of ticket allocation was in any way responsible for what Rigby called the 'annual scandal', A.F.L. chief executive officer, Wayne Jackson, identified the M.C.C.'s seating arrangements as a potential area for reform. To support his view he recalled the sold-out Bledisloe Cup Rugby Test, which had been played at the M.C.G. for the first time in July that year. On this occasion approximately 10,000 M.C.C. Members' seats had remained vacant while many potential paying customers were left without tickets. He suggested that more public seating could be made available if the M.C.C. adopted a system whereby members had to book seats in advance. Under this system, surplus members' seating could be readily identified and offered for sale to members of the competing clubs. Jackson announced that a pre-booking system would apply in the A.F.L. Members' reserve for the 1998 Grand Final.[27] Although the tone of Wayne Jackson's appeal to the M.C.C. suggested pessimism at the prospect of change to hallowed M.C.C. tradition, a change of heart came earlier than expected. The following day the Herald Sun reported that the M.C.C. had made 816 seats available for sale to competing club members who had missed out previously.[28]

The 816 seats were scarcely a windfall. That they represented a mere drop in the ocean was obvious when Ticketmaster, the agency handling the tickets, received a reported 100,000 inquiries.[29] Although the

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[27] Herald Sun, 25 September 1997, p.84.
[28] Herald Sun, 26 September 1997, p.9.
[29] Sunday Herald Sun, 20 September 1998, Sport, p.11.

majority of these calls must have been from people who were not members of the competing clubs, these figures provide stark evidence of the gaping chasm between supply and demand where Grand Final tickets were concerned. It was this discrepancy that made some form of inequity inevitable. Any pre-booking system that involved ticketing was prone to scalping, with or without the Government's blessing. An alternative system of cash payment at the gates would have discriminated against persons who, either because of age, infirmity or any other reason, were unable to queue for long periods.

Finals ticket distribution was streamlined in the late 1970s when the League enlisted the services of the Statewide Building Society with its network of city and suburban branches.[30] The V.F.L.'s success in obtaining a greater degree of control over ticket distribution in 1971, along with its 1968 decision to give preferential treatment to members of the competing clubs, made Grand Final ticketing in the 1970s and early 1980s relatively trauma-free. The annual price hike would have, no doubt, caused the odd grumble and the allocation of most of the prime seating on the Northern wing to M.C.C. Members may have prompted some resentment in the Outer, particularly on those days when the glare of the afternoon sun was more extreme than usual. Compared to the situation which evolved from the mid-1980s and through the 1990s, however, it is fair to say that football club members of the 1970s and early 1980s who failed to obtain a ticket to the Grand Final when their club was playing had probably not tried very hard. The howling injustices of more recent times can be traced to 1984, when the League was forced to abandon plans to

move its ultimate event to Waverley.

Post-World War 2 demographic changes in metropolitan Melbourne and a long history of dispute between the League and the M.C.G. Trustees persuaded the V.F.L., in 1959, to plan its own stadium in the sprawling eastern suburbs. Free of the greed and tyranny of cricket-oriented ground managers, the League would enjoy the fruits of its own labours, presenting its product to comfortably seated crowds of a magnitude never seen in Australian sport before. In 1962 the League purchased 200 acres of land in the City of Waverley.[31] Two years later the League obtained vacant possession of all houses and land at the site which, by now, was being referred to as 'V.F.L. Park'.[32] The development of the new ground became an obsession for the V.F.L. during the 1960s, a deduction from gate takings at all V.F.L. matches being allocated directly to the project. In August 1967 the League's publication, Football Life, predicted 'the start of something big'. The stadium, the article said, would eventually hold 166,000 spectators, with parking for 25,000 cars.[33] An 'artist's impression' of the proposed stadium, which looks futuristic even from a 2000 perspective, accompanied the photograph.

Unlike the M.C.G., the new stadium would not be required to devote its prime seating, or indeed any of its seating, to members of the M.C.C. Instead the League developed a membership package for football fans wanting to reserve their rights and privileges at the

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[30] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1980, p.21.
[31] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1987, p.41, official chronology.
[32] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1964, p.8.
[33] Football Life, August 1967, p.20.

new stadium. Membership numbers were strictly limited but the ceiling on numbers grew as the stadium grew. The League had no difficulty in obtaining subscribers as its commitment to the new project left little room for doubt that it saw V.F.L. Park as the future of football. In 1981 the League felt that the future had almost arrived. The board of directors voted to move the Grand Final from the M.C.G. to V.F.L. Park from 1984. The ground had been used for matches since 1970 and its capacity had reached 75,000. The new plan involved building works to extend the stadium's capacity to 104,000,[34] not quite the figure imagined 14 years earlier, but one which compared more than favourably to what remained of the M.C.G. after the Members had been accommodated. All that was needed was State Government approval for the extension works to go ahead. This did not prove to be as simple as anticipated.

The removal of the Grand Final from what was perceived by many as its traditional home to a distant outer suburb poorly serviced by transport infrastructure brought the V.F.L. into direct confrontation with a State Labor Government keen to champion what it interpreted as a popular cause. Although V.F.L. Park was closer to the demographic centre of metropolitan Melbourne than the M.C.G., its lack of train or tram facilities placed great strain on the road system in its vicinity. The central business district was still the hub of Melbourne's public transport network and the M.C.G. was well served by trams, trains and buses. The League's original decision to build its stadium at Waverley had been guided by assurances from the State Government of the time that

[34] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1981, p.6.

the area would be provided with transport facilities to match its status as a fast-growing residential area.[35] That and subsequent administrations had failed to deliver such facilities.

Early in 1982 the League's bid to move the Grand Final to Waverley was in jeopardy when the Cain Government refused to approve the extensions to spectator facilities at the Waverley ground.[36] Throughout 1983 the League was involved in heated negotiations with the Government, the M.C.G. Trustees and the M.C.C. to try to resolve the dispute. The League's Annual Report at the end of 1983 expressed concern at proposed legislation that would give the State Government the ultimate say in where the Grand Final was played.[37] The threatened legislation would have declared the Grand Final a 'major sporting event' and given the Government the right to intervene, through court injunction, in any move to have it played at what the Government regarded as an inappropriate venue.[38]

The threat forced the V.F.L. into compromise. At the heart of the League's expressed concerns were the entitlements of its 33,000 V.F.L. Park members, whose subscriptions had been contributed on the understanding that the venue was to become League football's principal venue. The membership scheme had been instituted in 1966, four years before the venue had been opened for matches, and had grown steadily since then in anticipation of what appeared to be an inevitable move of football's centre of gravity. The League felt obliged to ensure that its subscribers'

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[35] V.F.L. Annual Report, 1983, p.3.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.

entitlements at the M.C.G. were on par to those that they would have enjoyed had the game been played at Waverley.

When it became obvious that the Government was willing, if necessary, to coerce the League into keeping the Grand Final at the M.C.G., much of the fine tuning of the compromise agreement centred on the respective rights of M.C.C. and V.F.L. Park members to special seating areas on the day of the match. The League proposed a scheme under which it would lease the M.C.G. for the day of the match. V.F.L. Park members would have exclusive use of the area normally set aside for M.C.C. members. The latter would be given priority access to the purchase of tickets to reserved seating in the Olympic Stand. In November 1983 the M.C.C. submitted the League's proposal to a vote of its members. Not surprisingly, the M.C.C. members were not willing to relinquish what they regarded as an inalienable entitlement of M.C.C. membership. The eventual compromise, accepted by the League in February 1984, provided for a greatly enlarged members' enclosure, to be shared by M.C.C. and V.F.L. Park members.[39]

The new arrangement was sufficiently acceptable to the League for it to agree to the 1984 Grand Final being played at the M.C.G. It included a provision under which the M.C.C. would have to compensate the League for shortfalls in revenue resulting from the allocation of what had previously been public seating to M.C.C. members. Although the League regarded this as adequate compensation for any financial disadvantage incurred on Grand Final day itself, it felt that there

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[38] Age, 9 February 1984, p.28.
[39] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1984, p.9.

were larger issues at stake. In particular it was concerned that the continuation of the tradition of playing the Grand Final at the M.C.G. would impact unfavourably on its ability to retain subscribers to V.F.L. Park.[40] In November 1983, V.F.L. president, Dr.Allen Aylett, had sent a letter to all V.F.L. Park subscribers advising them that, regardless of the outcome of negotiations over the venue for the 1984 Grand Final, the League still hoped to play the Grand Final at Waverley from 1985 onwards. The letter was sent as part of a mail-out that included V.F.L. Park membership renewal notices.[41] A cynical cartoon in the Age showed Aylett standing next to two large piles of letters, one labelled 'Letter to V.F.L. Park members' and the other labelled 'V.F.L. Park renewal notices'. Aylett was shown instructing his mailing clerk to send the letters to members before sending the renewal notices.[42] Because of its ongoing desire to keep faith with its own subscribers, the V.F.L. was still not willing, in February 1984, to commit itself on the matter of the Grand Final venue beyond 1984.[43]

The new arrangements for members' access meant that 18,000 fewer Grand Final seats would be available to persons without M.C.C. or V.F.L. Park medallions. The holders of finals series tickets to the Northern Stand would be entitled to a seat only at the lead-up finals. On Grand Final day they would be forced into standing room accommodation.[44]

While the decision to allow M.C.C. and V.F.L. Park members to share an enlarged members' enclosure

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[40] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1984, pp9-10.
[41] Age, 17 November 1983, p.34.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Age, 9 February 1984, p.28.
[44] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1984, p.10.

safeguarded the entitlements of the members of both organisations, it effectively excluded non-members of those bodies from over 40% of the available seating. It also had the effect of making the size of Grand Final crowds less predictable than they had previously been because the enlarged reserve meant that a much larger area of the ground was given over to patrons who were free to attend at their own discretion on the day. When the crowd figure for the 1984 Grand Final reached only 92,685 it was the first time since 1962 that it had fallen below 100,000. A glaring 'bald spot'[45] on the top deck of the Northern Stand was a source of embarrassment for all parties to the agreement. Though the shame belonged to all, the blame was negotiable. Premier Cain was the most obvious target for League president, Dr.Aylett. His insistence on the match being played at the M.C.G. had led to the 'catastrophe' of 10,000 empty seats.[46] Opposition leader, Jeff Kennett, was similarly inclined to target his political adversary. Cain had interfered in what was essentially the League's business using the threat of legislation, thereby denying '8,000 to 10,000 Victorians' the chance to see the match.[47] Cain preferred to blame the V.F.L. for overestimating the requirements of V.F.L. Park members. He said that the area set aside for members had been based on a predicted attendance of 23,000 V.F.L. Park members and 16,000 M.C.C. members and had been determined on the basis of negotiations between the two bodies.[48] Although he chose to target the League, his vitriol could as easily have been directed

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[45] M.C.C. News, No.71, February 1985. (pages not numbered)
[46] Age, 1 October 1984, p.1.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid.

at the M.C.C., whose secretary, John Lill, took the more diplomatic approach of blaming the weather.[49]

The embarrassing spectacle of unoccupied seating in the Members' enclosure was not new, but the significant enlargement of the 'discretionary attendance sector'[50] since 1984 exacerbated the problem. The concentration of empty seats on the upper deck of the Northern Stand suggested that more 'traditional' members' areas were filled to capacity. John Lill felt that many M.C.C. members had been deterred from attending in 1984 by the prospect of a 'crowded and uncomfortable day, particularly in their traditional Pavilion areas'.[51]

In an article for the Age, Garrie Hutchinson observed that the crowd in the Members' reserve at the 1984 Grand Final was made up of two distinct categories of members, 'Real' and 'Other'. The Real members 'had been forced to share the privileges of the Smokers' Pavilion with the hordes from V.F.L. Park'.[52] As Hutchinson saw it, the Other members were, by and large, oblivious to the traditions of the hallowed ground which they had been permitted to occupy for the day.

> To most of the Other Members social niceties such as paying obeisance to an older culture, visiting something like the Long Room where you had to wear a 'visible tie or cravat' were beside the point. The point was

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[49] M.C.C. News, No.71, February 1985. (pages not numbered)
[50] M.C.C. News, No.77, November 1987. (pages not numbered)
[51] M.C.C. News, No.71, February 1985. (pages not numbered)

> to watch the Bombers tear the feathers off those sportsmen, the Hawks.[53]

The territorially strained relations between 'Real' and 'Other' members at Grand Finals from 1984 until 1990, in addition to the need for seating to be seen to be occupied, led to suggestions that a system of reserved seating be instituted in the Members' reserve. The M.C.C. committee, however, was not prepared to tamper with its members' entitlements to discretionary access. Prior to the 1987 season the M.C.C. News suggested that Grand Final seats would continue to be occupied on a 'first in, best dressed' basis and defended the situation by appealing to the self-interest of members.

> A point to ponder: If reserved seats were allocated by lot, as would appear the only fair means, would you accept the luck of the draw if your seat was in the top deck of the Northern Stand.[54]

By the end of the season, however, an arena-level section of the Northern Stand, comprising 3,400 seats equally divided between the V.F.L. and the M.C.C., had been set aside for reservation by members.[55]

While members of the two bodies fussed over preferred location of seating, other members of the

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[52] Age, 1 October 1984, special liftout, p.7.
[53] Ibid.
[54] M.C.C. News, No.75, March 1987. (pages not numbered)
[55] M.C.C. News No.77, November 1987. (pages not numbered)

sporting public were more concerned at whether or not they would be able to obtain admission to the Grand Final at all. From the promulgation of the first M.C.G. Act in 1933, the cricket club had been entrusted with the role of guardianship of the stadium 'in the interests of the general public'. The privileges of its members were enshrined as reward for that duty.[56] The M.C.C. Members Pavilion, built in 1927, survived long enough to achieve heritage status simply because major ground improvements, such as the building of the Olympic Stand in the mid-1950s and the Western Stand, later named the 'Ponsford Stand', in the mid-1960s, were geared towards increasing the accommodation capacity for the general public.[57] The M.C.G. Trustees' battle with the League, from 1957 to 1971, over control of ticket sales for the Grand Final had been fought on an assumption that the Trustees were looking after the interests of the general public. A change of emphasis occurred in the M.C.C. during the 1980s toward concern for the quality of accommodation at the ground, as distinct from (indeed at the expense of) quantity.[58]

The V.F.L., on the other hand, had been primarily concerned, during its battle with the Trustees, to protect what it regarded as football's hard core supporters, the club members. Its 1968 decision to give the members of the competing clubs priority access to Grand Final tickets had ensured that a club's most loyal supporters would not be excluded from sharing in their clubs' most treasured moments. It also had the effect of making club membership increasingly attractive, particularly for supporters of consistently

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[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid.

successful and popular clubs such as Carlton and Collingwood. By the mid-1980s, however, competing club membership no longer provided guaranteed access to a Grand Final seat. Public spectator capacity was shrinking as a result of the greater emphasis on comfort and the enlargement of the area set aside for discretionary access to M.C.C. and A.F.L. members. Club membership, increasingly perceived as essential for guaranteeing a fan's entitlements, was becoming more popular. These factors combined to produce serious shortfalls in the availability of Grand Final tickets for members of the competing clubs. At the same time, clubs were becoming more reliant on corporate sponsorship for meeting the escalating costs of putting their respective teams on the field. Tickets allotted to all clubs, previously sold to rank-and-file members of those clubs, were now beginning to be used to reward sponsors for their support.

The scalping industry was testimony to the fact that some recipients of tickets were willing to part with their coveted wares if the right price could be obtained. Scalping, however, was not a new phenomenon. It had been incurring the wrath of journalists, politicians and the football public ever since pre-booking of Grand Final seats began. Up to the mid-1980s most media criticism of Grand Final ticket injustice had concentrated on the profiteering activities of scalpers. In 1985 they were labelled as 'parasites' by the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Peter Spyker,[59] who waged an ultimately unsuccessful crusade against ticket profiteering for much of the decade.

While scalpers' exorbitant demands remained a popular subject of Grand Final week journalism for the

remainder of the century, there was increasing criticism levelled at the system of ticket distribution itself, and the resulting difficulty that devotees of competing Grand Finalists invariably experienced in obtaining tickets. This problem became serious enough to attract widespread media coverage in 1987, when members of the Carlton Football Club reacted angrily to ticket shortages at Princes Park on the Tuesday prior to the Grand Final. While much of the problem in 1987 was caused by poorly organised distribution of tickets between the various outlets catering for Carlton members, the root of the problem was that 12,000 members were trying to buy 7,500 tickets. The club's paltry allocation was sold out within an hour of going on sale, leading to what the Sun described as a 'near riot'. To appease the masses, Carlton's chief executive officer, Ian Collins, successfully approached the V.F.L. for the release of several hundred tickets for seats with restricted views normally sold only in an emergency.[60] Even so, many of the Carlton faithful were left without tickets.

The burden of the shortage fell most heavily on those members who had chosen to queue at Princes Park itself, rather than at other BASS outlets where tickets were being sold. A breakdown of the BASS computer at Princes Park resulted in members at other outlets being given a 40-minute head start over those queued at the club's home ground. To make matters worse for Carlton staff, buyers at other outlets were advised to go to Princes Park when ticket supplies at those outlets were depleted.[61]

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[59] Herald, 26 September 1985, p.3.
[60] Sun, 23 September 1987, p.2.
[61] Ibid.

The Carlton Football Club and Ian Collins were the obvious villains to many of the disappointed supporters denied access to tickets. Some claimed that the club had previously assured them that all season ticket or medallion holders would be able to get a ticket.[62] Whether or not such an assurance was made is difficult to determine. It is possible that those making the claim may have misunderstood what they were told by the club. It is also possible that the assurance may have been made before the number of allocated tickets was known. It may well have been based on past experience and a perception that competing club members' rights to a Grand Final ticket were sacrosanct. Perception carried considerably more weight than reality to a club member denied a Grand Final ticket. Elizabeth Kübler-Ross reported that her patients, at the anger stage, were inclined to project their anger 'on to the environment almost at random'.[63] This tendency would appear to have been present among these Blues fans so rudely shaken from the denial apparent in the belief that they had an inalienable right to purchase a ticket. The Carlton Football Club was clearly not to blame for the ticket shortage. However, Ian Collins's reported reply to angry supporters that they should have purchased finals series tickets when they had gone on sale several weeks beforehand[64] would not have endeared him or the club to those supporters.

Scalpers, as usual, used the classified advertisement sections of daily newspapers to advertise their wares at prices generally three to six times the

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[62] Ibid.
[63] Kübler-Ross, op.cit., p.44.
[64] Sun, 23 September 1987, p.2.

official price.[65] A superficial attempt by the Herald to investigate the sources of ticket supply to the black market was hampered by a general reluctance on the part of ticket profiteers to reveal details of their activities. Most advertisers approached by Herald reporters hung up when asked where they had got their tickets. The few who were willing to reply said that they had obtained their tickets either through BASS, the football clubs or from Melbourne supporters who had decided that they no longer wanted to go.[66] Melbourne had lost the Preliminary Final to Hawthorn the previous weekend.

It was unclear, from the sketchy details revealed in the Herald, where the 'Melbourne supporters' referred to in the article had obtained their tickets. One possibility was that they were series ticket holders who had decided to ease the pain of their own club's failure to make the Grand Final with some financial compensation. When used in this way, a finals series ticket became an investment that could serve as an emotional insurance policy. If one's club made the Grand Final it could be regarded as money well spent in its own right. If the club failed to qualify it became an opportunity for easy profit.

Another possibility, arising from the specific reference to 'Melbourne supporters', was that some M.C.C. members were willing to transfer their officially non-transferable entitlements for profit. In this case the 'ticket' would have been made of metal rather than paper. The Melbourne Football Club has deep historical roots in the M.C.C. Until 1981 it was officially the 'M.C.C. Football Club'. In 1986 an

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[65] Herald, 23 September 1987, p.2.
[66] Ibid.

article in the M.C.C. News asserted that although it was no longer a part of the cricket club, the Melbourne Football Club 'continued to enjoy [the M.C.C.'s] active support'.[67] As recently as 1993, a survey conducted by the M.C.C. revealed that Melbourne was still the favoured football club of 32% of its members, well ahead of its nearest rival, Essendon, supported by 11%.[68]

The M.C.C.'s concern at the lending of membership medallions to non-members is well documented in the pages of the M.C.C. News. The club regularly appealed to its members not to abuse their privileges in this way. At the 1983 Grand Final the club conducted its own research to ascertain the extent of the abuse. Eight hundred members, chosen at random, were asked to sign their names against the numbers of their medallions. A subsequent check against club records revealed 50 suspect signatures, of which 25 were regarded as definite forgeries.[69] On those figures, it is fair to suggest that at least 3%, and possibly as many as 6% of the spectators in the M.C.C. members' reserve at the 1983 Grand Final were there on false pretences. A similar campaign of random signature checks at the 1984 finals led to the suspension of ten members, for periods ranging from one to three years, for misuse of medallions.[70] Despite these measures, the abuse of M.C.C. members' privileges continued. A decade later, 12 members were similarly suspended during the course

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[67] M.C.C. News, No.73, February 1986. (pages not numbered)
[68] M.C.C. News, No.93, April 1993. (pages not numbered)
[69] M.C.C. News, No.69, February 1984. (pages not numbered)
[70] M.C.C. News No.71, February 1985. (pages not numbered)

of a financial year.[71]

Although impossible to ascertain, it was unlikely that M.C.C. medallion abuse was normally perpetrated for profit. The M.C.C. News, in 1984, warned members specifically against lending their badges to friends.[72] It said nothing of the possibility that members would transfer their entitlements for profit. Simple logistics would have deterred such transactions, but would not have removed the possibility altogether. Members selling their badges to strangers would have forfeited their entitlements for the rest of the membership year. In doing so, such members would have relinquished their cricket entitlements for the duration of the season to come. Lending a medallion to a stranger for a price would have been risky for the lender because of the strong possibility that the medallion would not be returned. Lending to a friend, for a price, would have called into question the nature of the friendship. Nevertheless a potential existed for profit to be made from the illegal transfer of M.C.C. members' medallions and it is not unreasonable to suspect that some, albeit few, members may have done so from time to time.

Any consideration of the scalping industry would be incomplete if it did not recognise the influence of the discretionary attendance sector on the market. The extension of the Members' reserve in the 1980s to accommodate V.F.L. Park members effectively doubled the influence of this sector. It could be argued that the free loan of a medallion to a friend exerted the same inflationary pressures as a medallion sold for

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[71] Melbourne Cricket Club, Annual Report, 1994-95, p.12.

[72] M.C.C. News, No.69, February 1984. (pages not

financial gain. Whether the corrupt member was paid in money, or simply in the satisfaction of having done a favour for a friend, the illegal presence of the non-member would have artificially inflated future expectations of members' accommodation requirements. The experience of the Northern Stand's 'bald spot' in 1984 provided evidence that an over-estimation of the number of members expected to attend could deprive other would-be spectators of accommodation. Medallion abuse at previous Grand Finals, reckoned by the M.C.C.'s 1983 research to account for between 3% and 6% of attendance within the enclosure, would have contributed to that over-estimation of the amount of space required. Reductions in the amount of space available to the pre-booking sector exerted inflationary pressure on black market prices, thus contributing further to the injustice experienced by competing club members unable to obtain tickets through officially sanctioned channels.

The long battle over where the Grand Final should be held was resolved in 1988 as the result of a proposal submitted by V.F.L. chief commissioner, Ross Oakley, which acknowledged the M.C.G. as football's principal venue. Part of the agreement between the M.C.C. and the V.F.L. was the provision of a separate enclosure for the League's subscribers in the new grandstand planned to replace the old Southern Stand.[73] At the time of the agreement it was envisaged that the creation of the Great Southern Stand would increase the stadium's capacity to 110,000 but this proved to be optimistic. The actual seating capacity at the M.C.G.

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[73] M.C.C. News, No.80, December 1988. (pages not numbered)

after the completion of the new grandstand in 1992 was approximately 98,000. With two separate members' enclosures for the M.C.C. and what later became the A.F.L., each holding approximately 24,000 people, the discretionary attendance sector at Grand Finals for most of the 1990s was just below 50%. The decline in the number of seats available to the pre-booking sector created an environment in which the scalping industry flourished as never before.

The scalper, as presented by the popular media, was an enigmatic character with a social standing somewhere between that of a drug dealer and a seller of used cars. Newspaper reports invariably placed much emphasis on the prices that scalpers demanded for tickets and the desperation of their customers. Those same newspapers that took the moral high ground in their reporting of ticket speculation also printed several columns of classified advertisements throughout Grand Final week for people wishing to buy or sell tickets.

The integrity of the mass media aside, its treatment of the scalper as neo-criminal, was on par with the shaming and marginalisation of medallion abusers in the pages of the M.C.C. News. Such attitudes provided a glaring illustration of double standards when seen in light of the existence of the scalping industry's more 'respectable' face, the 'package deal' available through readily identifiable commercial sources. In 1987 Peter Spyker's crusade against ticket profiteering brought him into public disagreement with his party leader and Premier, John Cain. In 1987 V/Line offered country rail travellers a Grand Final ticket as part of a package which included a three-course meal on the train followed by drinks and entertainment under a

special marquee at the ground for $220, more than eight times the official price of an undercover seat. The offer was condemned by Spyker as 'awfully expensive and elitist.' John Cain, however, defended V/Line, arguing that it was 'simply acting as a commercial operator'.[74] His comments, quoted in a report in the Herald headed 'V/Line not scalping seats - Cain', that his Government was not responsible for the manner in which football clubs disposed of their Grand Final tickets,[75] implied that V/Line's tickets were obtained through one of the V.F.L. clubs. Just exactly how V/Line's commercial activities differed from garden variety scalping was not made clear, either by Cain or the Herald reporter. While some forms of scalping may have had a veneer of respectability that other forms did not have, the impact on the overall availability and price of Grand Final tickets for committed supporters of competing Grand Finalists was the same. The effect was the same whether the scalpers were comically circumspect neo-criminal figures, advertising their wares through the corners of their mouths and selling them from the inside pockets of their black overcoats, or fashionably-suited travel agents offering five-star accommodation and champagne breakfasts.

In 1989 Spyker attempted to outlaw scalping by introducing legislation, supported by his party, which would have made it illegal to offer for re-sale a ticket for a 'proclaimed' event at more than the 'proclaimed' price. The Minister for Prices would be the person empowered to proclaim both the event and the price.[76] The legislation was expected to become law in

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[74] Herald, 23 September 1987, p.2.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Sunday Herald, 24 September 1989, p.34.

time for the 1989 Grand Final but was defeated in the Liberal-dominated Legislative Council. Similar legislation appeared during the 1990 finals series. On this occasion the Upper House President, Mr.Hunt, a Liberal Party Member, refused to allow the legislation to be debated because of its similarity to the previously rejected Bill. Premier Joan Kirner asserted that the Opposition had 'for some spurious arguments about free enterprise' prevented Victorians from getting a fair deal on the price of Grand Final tickets. The Opposition accused the Government of grandstanding on scalping by presenting a Bill that had no chance of being passed.[77] In light of the procedural futility of presenting similar bills to the Council within the life of the one Parliament and the timing of the two attempts to coincide with the finals series in two consecutive years, the charge of grandstanding should be taken as proven. Labor's attempt at price control was distinctly unfashionable in an era in which even Labor governments were removing regulatory constraints in other areas of business.

Legislation aside, an effective anti-scalping measure would have been to cut off the supply of tickets to the scalpers themselves. The League's practice of allocating tickets to the clubs effectively washed the League's hands of the matter of ensuring that Grand Final ticketing privileges were not abused. It also presented the opportunity for substantial revenue-raising, either for the clubs themselves or for the servants of those clubs entrusted with the responsibility of distributing those tickets. An air of secrecy, which the clubs themselves made little attempt to clear, hung over the Grand Final ticket distribution

[77] Herald, 2 October 1990, p.3.

activities of the clubs. Collingwood, in particular, attracted suspicion. Faced with allegations that hundreds of 1989 Grand Final tickets allocated to the Magpies had fallen into the hands of scalpers, club president, Allan McAlister attempted to declare the matter a 'dead issue'. He claimed that investigations had failed to produce any evidence of deliberate malpractice in Grand Final ticket distribution at Collingwood.[78]

The club's activities came under greater scrutiny the following year, when Collingwood made its first Grand Final appearance since 1981. An A.F.L. advertisement for Grand Final tickets at the beginning of Grand Final week announced details for the sale of the 14,000 tickets being offered to competing club members. Essendon's allocation of 6,610 tickets included 2,500 for internal sale while Collingwood's 7,390 tickets included 3,000 internals. The definition of 'internal' differed noticeably, however, from one club to the other. Essendon regarded its Social Club members as internal whereas Collingwood did not. The 3,000 tickets that Collingwood allocated to club insiders catered for club staff, the cheersquad, players' families, sponsors, voluntary workers and coteries. Collingwood Social Club members received no priority over the rest of the club's season ticket holders in the purchase of the remaining 4,390 tickets.[79] An A.F.L. investigation earlier in the series resulted in Collingwood becoming the first club to be charged by the League with ticket scalping. The League's finance director, Greg Durham, acting on information received, bought $2,000 worth of tickets

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[78] Sun, 26 September 1989, p.2.
[79] Age, 1 October 1990, p.23. (advertisement)

from a scalper based in Lalor and, using the ticket numbers, traced them back to Collingwood. The club was fined $50,000.[80]

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, football entered a new era with the demise of the Waverley ground and the opening of the Colonial Stadium in Melbourne's Docklands precinct. Many of the Game's most enthusiastic and dedicated supporters became pessimistic about the possibility of being able to continue to support their clubs in the manner to which they had become accustomed. The prevailing mood was not unlike the reactive depression experienced by Elizabeth Kübler-Ross's patients who found that the treatment and hospitalisation that they required exerted a financial burden that left them unable to afford 'little luxuries at first and necessities later on'.[81] Although the general admission price at home-and-away matches still compared favourably to most other alternative forms of popular entertainment, the trend towards smaller 'boutique' stadia was tending to make the pre-booking of reserved seats essential at many games. It made sound business sense for the A.F.L. to schedule matches at grounds with only barely enough capacity to hold the expected crowd. The closure of the Waverley, a venue rarely filled to capacity, would appear to have been a ploy by the A.F.L. to phase the general admission cash spectator out of physical presence at matches.

General admission spectators were excluded from the Grand Final after 1957. After 1977 they were appeased by the provision of 'live' television coverage

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[80] Linnell, Gary, Football Ltd.: the inside story of the A.F.L. Sydney, Ironbark, 1995, pp.282-283.
[81] Kübler-Ross, op.cit., p.75.

of the event. The increasing availability of this armchair option did much to induce a state of acceptance among fans who no longer found actual attendance at matches viable. It was clear from the A.F.L.'s embrace of the Colonial Stadium concept that it was willing to forego the direct patronage of this section of the market altogether, preferring to allow this group to make its contribution to football indirectly, through its willingness to be exposed to television advertising.

Football supporters of modest means, who chose to pay the additional amounts required to attend matches in the modern era, were faced with the prospect of armchair status if their team was good enough to make the Grand Final. Some bargained against this possibility by taking out priority membership, usually at more than double the price of standard season ticket membership. The prospect of this continuing to guarantee Grand Final ticket access depended on a ceiling being placed on the number of members allowed into these 'Social Club' or 'Gold Member' categories. Trends suggested that, in time, only members of higher-level coteries and those holding corporate sponsor status would be able to feel confident of being able to attend a Grand Final in which their favoured club was playing.

A more secure alternative to Social Club or Gold membership was A.F.L. or M.C.C. membership. Subscription rates to these organisations were considerably less than the financial commitment required for corporate sponsorship of a club or membership of most coterie groups. Joining the M.C.C. or the A.F.L., however, normally involved a long waiting period. In April 1990 the M.C.C. encouraged its

members to nominate their children or grandchildren for club membership at birth for a fee of $10. There were over 73,000 people on the waiting list at the time and it was estimated that new nominees would have to wait 27 years to become full members.[82] No waiting period applied, of course, on 15 November 1838, when five men paid one guinea each to subscribe to the club which they had just formed.[83] Tradition born of longevity and the privileges which go with membership of a club which enjoyed a pre-eminent position in Melbourne's sporting culture, made M.C.C. membership what the M.C.C. News, in no idle boast, described as 'the sporting world's most prized possession.'[84]

A.F.L. membership had almost 130 years less to generate a waiting list, beginning, as it did, in 1966 with the V.F.L.'s subscription plan to help finance the building of V.F.L. Park. It wasted no time in catching up, however. In 1998 the A.F.L. had 34,505 full members. A further 17,442 enjoyed restricted membership status, with another 15,000 on the waiting list. A report in the Herald Sun in May 1999 estimated that new applicants would need to wait between 15 and 20 years to become full members.[85] On those figures, A.F.L. membership, like M.C.C. membership, would not appear to be an option for an individual wishing to guarantee access to Grand Final ticket sales in the short term. Estimation of waiting periods is naturally fraught with uncertainties. For example, if the M.C.G. suddenly ceased to be the Grand Final venue it is quite likely

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[82] M.C.C. News, No.84, April 1990. (pages not numbered)
[83] M.C.C. News, No.77, November 1987. (pages not numbered)
[84] M.C.C. News, No.89, November 1991. (pages not numbered)

that membership of the M.C.C. would fall away to a figure more befitting that of the district cricket club which Melbourne essentially is. The thought of a waiting list for membership of any district cricket club other than Melbourne would be laughable. It was only the club's occupancy of Melbourne's largest and most popular sporting venue that made membership a 'prized possession'.

In May 1999, the A.F.L. decided to allow 5,000 Colonial Stadium subscribers effectively to jump the queue into full A.F.L. membership, effective from Season 2000. No longer would the mere passage of time guarantee the option of A.F.L. membership to any person with either the patience to endure the long waiting period, or forebears with the foresight to have previously nominated them. The 'Medallion Club', as this initiative of the A.F.L. and Channel 7 was known, provided subscribers with prime seating at Colonial Stadium as well as access to matches at the M.C.G., including the Grand Final. Each member had to commit to an initial $5,000, plus annual fees of up to $5,000 for five years, a 'bargain' clearly beyond the reach of most football supporters. In announcing the decision, Wayne Jackson stressed that the 5,000 Grand Final seats would come out of the A.F.L. members' allocation rather than that of the A.F.L. clubs.[86] It seemed, however, that some club members did not hear his assurance. A group of Kangaroo supporters, members of the priority membership category, 'Pagan's Patrons', interviewed by the Herald Sun on the day of the announcement, feared that the League's decision had seriously reduced their chances of being able to buy tickets if their club were

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[85] Herald Sun, 21 May 1999, p.118.
[86] Ibid.

to make the Grand Final.[87] Their fears, groundless though they were, were based on past experience of the A.F.L.'s elitism and a perception that such elitism would inevitably continue and get worse. As 'Pagan's Patrons' member, Colin Dickson, put it:

> It's another example of the A.F.L. not looking after the ordinary supporter ... They're pushing for clubs to get more members but they're leaving us less and less tickets.[88]

While Dickson's concerns were based on incorrect detail, they would certainly have struck a chord with the A.F.L.'s restricted members and people on the waiting list, who were the real victims of the decision. In any case, as stated earlier, perception was a stronger influence than fact in determining the attitude of a club member denied a Grand Final ticket. For a supporter such as Colin Dickson it was as if experience of past injustices had created the expectation that injustice would continue. This produced a 'preparatory depression' of the kind referred to by Kübler-Ross, whose terminally ill subjects entered just such an attitude in order to prepare themselves for their 'final separation from this world.'[89]

The fanzine, Hot Pies, an unofficial monthly publication for Collingwood supporters which, by its own admission, was not 'burdened by truth or fact in

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[87] Ibid. p.15.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Kübler-Ross, op.cit., p.76.

the compilation of any article',[90] was also free of the burden of both A.F.L. censorship and the bourgeois sensibilities of the Herald Sun or the Age. As such it provided the perfect vehicle for this perception-based outburst by one of its writers incensed by the A.F.L.'s Medallion Club decision. Its tone, however, suggested regression from the depression stage back into naked anger.

> I wouldn't want to be the ticket girl at Lulie Street who tells me there aren't any tickets left after I've been sleeping outside the ground for three months. The thought of five thousand sushi-eating, hatchback-driving, apartment-living, homeware-buying yuppies and their chunky arsed girlfriends seeing Collingwood win next year's Flag instead of me is perverse. Docklands memberships are destined to become yet another wanky outer-directed status symbol carried by people who cheapen everything they touch. The prohibitive and restrictive realities of Docklands are about to slap real footy fans in the face.[91]

For die-hard supporters without the financial resources to commit thousands of dollars a year either to their particular club or to the League, basic club membership provided little or no chance of being able to attend the Grand Final. While priority membership still served as an insurance policy against Grand Final

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[90] Hot Pies, Issue 3, July 1999, p.3.
[91] Ibid. p.5.

ticket disappointment, the premiums were high, and claims were, of course, only payable when the particular club defied the seven-to-one odds against making the Grand Final in a 16-team competition. Considering these odds, buying a ticket from a moderately greedy scalper when one's club qualified for the Grand Final could have been regarded as a more astute act of bargaining than paying for Social Club membership year after year. In any case, the viability of the priority membership option as a guarantee of Grand Final ticket access appeared certain to be eroded as memberships of these categories continued to grow. With corporate coteries and elites such as the Medallion Club gradually taking a larger portion of the available seating, the future of the Social Club as a Grand Final ticket guarantee seemed limited.

Essentially the League's attitude at the turn of the millennium was the same as it had been during its battle, on behalf of club members, against the M.C.G. Trustees in the 1950s and 1960s. The League still considered grand finals to be primarily for 'insiders', not the general public. In 1968, 'insider' status could be bought for the price of a season ticket. In 2000 the cost was much higher and rising. A new schedule of membership categories and fees drawn up by the Collingwood Football Club for Season 2000 failed to provide Social Club members with any guarantee of access to a Grand Final ticket in the event of the club making the Grand Final. Only members prepared to commit to a reserved seating package covering 16 home-and-away matches in Melbourne for $495, compared to the basic Social Club membership fee of $255 for 11 matches or

$310 for 16 matches, were guaranteed access.[92]

Using the Ian Andrews framework, football's insiders could themselves be said to comprise a community. Such a community would fit the third understanding, its members' sense of belonging being based on a common feeling of having made an indispensable contribution to the ongoing viability either of a club or of the League itself. The right to attend the Grand Final could be seen as a badge of insider status, transferable as a corporate favour to people 'in the know' who were thereby granted honorary membership of the community for a day.

In view of the financially driven criteria for insider status, which a breakdown of Grand Final ticket allocation revealed, it seemed anomalous that the official cheersquads of the competing Grand Final clubs were each given access to 300 tickets. Cheersquad members paid an annual fee that varied from cheersquad to cheersquad. On 1998 prices, adult members of the St.K.C.S. paid $15 for their first year's membership and $10 per year thereafter. Club membership was optional, but a season ticket was required for access to the cheersquad's finals ticket supply.[93] The annual subscription to the Official Richmond Cheer Squad (O.R.C.S) was only $5, but a season ticket was required for access to the squad's roped-off area at home-and-away matches.[94] Proceeds from cheersquad membership dues were revenue for the squads, not the clubs. While squads sometimes donated surplus funds back to their

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[92] 'Membership: loyalty, commitment, tradition, passion, strength forever', membership brochure, Collingwood Football Club, Season 2000.
[93] Research interview, Barry Ross, 20 August 1998, p.6.
[94] Research interview, David Norman, 30 September

clubs at the end of the season, most squads' expenses were either paid in full or subsidised by the club or its sponsors. The Essendon Cheer Squad, in 1998, received $14,000 from the club to cover its expenses for the year.[95] Although it did not provide a fixed annual budget, the St.Kilda Football Club met all expenses for crepe paper and sticky tape used in the making of its cheersquad's weekly banners.[96] In net terms, most cheersquads were a financial liability to their respective clubs.

For most supporters, insider status was a reward for philanthropy, but those who joined cheersquads were regarded as insiders by virtue of an apparent loophole, which rewarded dedication rather than financial commitment. For most squads, 300 tickets were not enough to cover the entire membership. Squad leaders were therefore usually required to make decisions as to which squad members should be given access to tickets. Essendon Cheer Squad president, Shayne Honey, kept records during the year of those squad members who assisted in fund-raising and banner-making. He estimated that this would have accounted for approximately 50 of the 300 tickets. The remainder of the tickets would have gone to those members he recognised as having been regularly in attendance at matches during the home-and-away series.[97]

The immunity which cheersquads enjoyed, and (at time of writing) still enjoyed, from what Ken Rigby described as the 'patronising indifference and snobbery

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1998, p.15.

[95] Research interview, Shayne Honey, 24 July 1998, p.5.

[96] Pam Mawson interview, p.4.

[97] Shayne Honey interview, p.8.

of football's decision makers'[98] may well have been an anachronism destined for imminent correction. The persistence of this anachronism through the market-driven 1990s, however, made the cheersquad phenomenon of the last forty years of the twentieth century a compelling topic for detailed study. This will be taken up in the next two chapters.

The remainder of football's common herd became, in effect, a victim of its own emotional attachment. Elite Australian Football was as much a spectacle as a game. The spectacle was, to a large extent, a product of football's immense popularity. Competitive professionalism on the field could only be sustained by considerable financial input from the other side of the pickets. Since the 1970s popular support was not enough. Corporate support met the shortfall and fuelled further professionalism, widening the gap between the clubs' financial needs and the funds that could be derived from the non-corporate sector. Mindful of their reliance on business, football authorities courted the corporate sector at the expense of the public, possibly losing sight of the fact that it was as much the spectacle as the Game itself that made football attractive to sponsors. The ordinary supporter was welcome, space permitting, but space at Grand Finals was scarce and the League could afford to be choosey with its invitations. Naturally it favoured the business sector, from which it derived the bulk of its revenue. The result was a Grand Final ticketing system inadequate for the demands of the non-corporate sector. It was a system that enabled abuses such as scalping. Governments and Oppositions made occasional populist

[98] Age, 24 September 1997, p.A14.

gestures against scalping but were collectively loath to interfere with what were essentially exercises in speculative capitalism. The system also provided incentive for rank-and-file members willing and able to part with extra money to upgrade to priority memberships, while banishing the rest to the armchair. With many die-hard club supporters thus excluded from physical presence at the match, the Grand Final became a kind of corporate networking party with an atmosphere vastly different to that of a home-and-away match. For most members of the football public the Grand Final was an event to be watched on television and read about in newspapers. In recognition of the vastness of its audience, the electronic and print media gave the event a build-up rarely matched by its coverage of any other sporting or cultural event. Grand Final week brouhaha became a media-driven extension of the public's interest in football's ultimate event. The festivities, however, provided little solace for the club member unable to purchase a ticket to the match itself. Such victims needed to blame and few could understand that they were, in effect, victims of their own passion. So, they blamed the A.F.L., they blamed the M.C.C., they blamed the Government and they blamed their own clubs. Grand Final ticket rage thus provided a glaring annual illustration of the growing chasm between football and the public whose support made the corporate sector's transformation of the Game into an industry viable.

Chapter 8:

INTRODUCING THE CHEERSQUADS

The ticket rage experienced by Carlton members in the week leading up to the 1987 Grand Final represented a shift from denial to anger in the reaction of football barrackers to recognition of their lack of sovereignty over the Game. Barrackers' denial of their powerlessness had been rooted in assumptions and expectations formed during an era of consumer sovereignty, when privileges readily available were interpreted as rights and demanded accordingly. Each year, as the ticket shortage became more acute, anger increased accordingly while attempts at negotiating a greater sense of ownership of the Game became more common. In most cases this bargaining process involved the spending of ever-increasing sums of money on priority levels of membership, making the Game look more like a consumer commodity and less like a community birthright. As Ferdinand Tönnies observed of the *gesellschaft*, 'All goods and services [were] conceived to be separate, as [were] also their owners. What somebody [had] and [enjoyed], he [had] and [enjoyed] to the exclusion of all others.'[1]

Although privileged consumer status in the football industry was normally bestowed in return for money, there remained one area where the League and the clubs rewarded a commitment based more on loyalty and love of club than financial outlay. The A.F.L. at the beginning of the twenty-first century continued to treat official club cheersquads differently from the

rest of the non-corporate public. If the 'official' status of the cheersquads was taken to define them as part of corporate football, their privileged treatment would seem scarcely remarkable. However, a study of the cheersquad phenomenon, a highly visible feature of the football scene since the late 1950s, would suggest that cheersquads had more in common with the non-corporate sector than the corporate. With this in mind, the treatment they received from the League seems puzzling.

It was in the area of finals ticketing that the cheersquads' privileged treatment was most obvious. In a 1998 interview, the president of the O.R.C.S., David Norman, recalled his club's successful era in the 1970s, when Tiger supporters often queued for finals tickets. In order to stop queues of optimistic supporters forming weeks in advance, the Richmond Football Club adopted a policy that its cheersquad must be at the head of any queues formed. Non-members of the cheersquad were not permitted to start queuing until the cheersquad had taken up its position at the head of each queue.

> There used to be three queues and there used to be 15 people from the cheersquad in each queue. So 45 of us had to go and, of course, we were allowed to buy the four or six tickets, or whatever it was, each. And all the supporters knew we were there to get that bay behind the goals. We weren't pinching their seat.[2]

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[1] Tönnies, op.cit., p.75.
[2] David Norman interview, pp.6-7.

David Norman regarded this privileged treatment as fair to all other Richmond members because the cheersquad members were members of the club and were queuing just like other members. He reasoned that this policy was necessary to ensure that the colour and organised vocal support that the cheersquad alone could provide would be present behind the goals. He also felt that it served the interests of commonsense. 'Otherwise, let's face it, you'd have people queuing in January.'[3]

Richmond's commonsense approach was really a formal recognition that the cheersquads had, by custom, established themselves as the vanguard of supporter enthusiasm. A decade prior to Richmond's halcyon era, the Sun's Patrick Tennison reported that a small group of 'fanatically pro-Essendon' supporters had begun assembling outside the Brunton Avenue entrance to the M.C.G. from 4 a.m. on the Thursday prior to the 1962 Grand Final.[4] With tickets pre-sold, the purpose of this embryonic Essendon Cheer Squad's vigil was not the purchase of tickets, but the securing of the squad's favoured position behind the goal posts at the Jolimont end. In 1962 the Jolimont goal was still a general admission area. Using bags, blankets, coats and other items to mark their territory, they had set up camp in order to ensure that a similar group of Carlton supporters, rumoured to have set its sights on the same position, would not get in first. To this end, a hard-core group of 'about 12' teenagers was working in shifts to guard the position at the gates on behalf of the rest of the

[3] Ibid., p.7.
[4] Sun, 28 September 1962, p.27.

cheersquad which, 'with relatives added', was said to number about 50.[5]

The sketchy information that Tennison provided gave some insight into the nature of this group as a community. There was some indication of a residual localism. About half of the group was reported to live in Essendon. The earlier reference to relatives and the explanation from one member of the group, a Sandringham resident, that he barracked for Essendon because his mother was a long-term Essendon supporter, implied a sense of belonging based on kinship. It could be reasonably assumed that all members were simultaneously a part of a wider society outside of football but only one member's occupation was mentioned. Lorraine Taylor was described as a '17-year-old P.M.G. draughtswoman'.[6]

Further snippets of information give examples of the dedication to the squad shown by individual members. In at least one case commitment to the cheersquad community overrode broader social responsibilities. This person gave the impression of having taken unauthorised 'leave' from employment in order to join the queue. She had timed her annual leave to coincide with the Grand Final but the unexpected draw between Carlton and Geelong in the Preliminary Final, two weeks earlier, had upset her plans. Nevertheless she was in the queue when Patrick Tennison conducted his interview on the Thursday and was intending to be there on the Friday also. Another squad member, Barry Atkinson, who had arrived at 4 a.m. but was sleeping at the time of the interview, had earned the admiration of his fellow squad members

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[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.

with his capacity to endure discomfort for football's sake. His normal routine for an ordinary home match at Windy Hill involved leaving his home at Dingley in the outer eastern suburbs at 3 a.m. and walking three miles to Springvale to catch the first train in order to arrive at Essendon at 6 a.m.[7] Merely barracking for Essendon did not ordinarily require a person to be in attendance hours, or even days, prior to the opening of the gates; such dedication was the hallmark of the dedicated cheersquad member.

Fanatical cheersquad members in the 1960s were using the vigil to stake a territorial claim that clubs and the League would gradually come to recognise and enshrine. Embryonic cheersquads of the kind that attended Essendon's 1962 Grand Final had no official status and earlier examples of cheersquads uncovered in the course of this research appear to have been even less organised. 'CHRISTINE', a long-term member of the C.O.C.S., threw some light on the informal origins of that organisation in the late 1950s.

> We used to sit in an old wooden stand, where the Sherrin Stand is today. I used to stand on a seat and flick a towel and everybody would start chanting.[8]

At this stage, she explained, the cheersquad was not a formal entity, simply a section of the crowd that would respond to her signal by chanting. As she put

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[7] Ibid.
[8] Research interview, 'CHRISTINE', 10 August 1998, p.1.

it, 'We were just a whole lot of mad people who made a noise.' There was no president, vice-president or committee and no money involved.[9]

There has never been any shortage of 'mad' people at V.F.L. matches. Exactly when two or more mad people first decided to chant in unison at a football match will probably have to remain a mystery. A University of Wisconsin internet site, *The History of Cheerleading*, presents a possible theory.

> It all began at a Princeton University football game. Thomas Peebler gathered 6 men who led a yell on the sidelines in front of the student body. In 1884, he took the yell to the University of Minnesota campus. On November 2, 1898, a cheerleader by the name of Johnny Campbell got so excited that he jumped out in front of the crowd. In the 1870s, the first pep club was established at Princeton University and the following decade brought about the first organised yell recorded at Princeton University. In the 1890s, organised cheerleading was first initiated at the University of Minnesota, as well as the first school 'fight song'.[10]

Cheerleaders started using megaphones in the 1900s. Drums and other noisemaking devices began to appear in the 1920s. Gymnastics, flash cards and pom-pom

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[9] Ibid., p.2.

[10] *The History of Cheerleading. University of Wisconsin, River Falls*. Internet site. Updated 17 February 1998. Accessed 13 May 2000 at http://www.uwrf.edu/uca/history.html

routines were gradually introduced during the 1920s and 1930s. Another very significant innovation during this period was the involvement of women. In the 1940s, as young men went to war, cheerleading came to be a predominantly female activity. After the war it became a sport in its own right with the foundation of the National Cheerleading Association. The first cheerleader camp was held at Sam Houston University in 1948 and workshops began to be conducted in colleges in the 1950s. Professional cheerleading squads emerged in the 1960s.[11]

David Norman was not born at the time of the early informal V.F.L. cheersquads, but based his knowledge of his squad's history on conversations with Alice Wills, its founding chairman. According to Norman's information the O.R.C.S. originated from a group of young Tiger supporters who would follow the full-forward from end to end at matches at Punt Road.[12] The change of ends during quarter breaks may well have been difficult on days when the tiny Richmond ground was full to capacity. The practice of cheersquads changing ends during breaks was not possible in a later era of specially regulated seating areas, but the custom was still observable at the end of the twentieth century at South Australian National Football League matches, where crowds were smaller and cheersquads were not subject to the regulations imposed on their A.F.L. counterparts.

Although no expert on the origins of organised, concentrated support, David Norman made the reasonable guess that the idea was imported into Australia by

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[11] Ibid.
[12] David Norman interview, p.8.

someone who had witnessed Soccer crowds in England.[13] Although these early V.F.L. club cheersquads borrowed something from American and British models of supporter enthusiasm, they represented a synthesis of these influences unique to Australian Rules football. Their style of chanting and the use of 'floggers' borrowed something from the American 'organised yell' and pom-pom routines. By the early 1960s highly organised units such as the 'Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders' and the 'Pittsburgh Steelerettes' were cheering and providing entertainment at American professional football matches. With the permission of team owners they used energetic dance/gymnastic routines to help to maintain the enthusiasm of crowds.[14] V.F.L. cheersquads, without official sanction to enter the playing arena, were confined to performing their routines outside the oval fencing. This allowed little scope for choreographed movement beyond the waving of floggers and the use of flash cards spelling out the club's name. In time squad members would develop their own informal 'uniform' of duffle coats with sewn-on badges. Unlike the squads of 'pom-pom girls in skimpy uniforms', as one original Steelerette described the more risque Dallas group,[15] the V.F.L. squads eschewed American-style regimentation of dress in favour of an informality closer to that of English Soccer crowds.

The emerging Australian squads in the 1960s became a smaller-scale expression of the rebellious pop music culture that transformed English crowds.

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[13] Ibid., p.9.

[14] *The 1961 Steelerettes*. Internet site. Updated 12 January 2000. Accessed 20 April 2000 at http://www.geocities.com/PicketFence/2303/1961.htm

[15] Ibid.

Communal singing, influenced by hymn-singing at Welsh Rugby matches, had long been a feature of English Soccer. Norwich City supporters had been singing 'On the ball' since it had been written, reputedly by Albert Smith, who was a club director from 1905 to 1907.[16] Birmingham City's 1956 F.A. Cup Final appearance was accompanied by the strains of supporters singing 'Keep Right On to the End of the Road'.[17] But it was in Liverpool in the early 1960s, where Beatlemania produced a new pop music culture that would soon transform the western world, that the terraces first became a vibrant expression of youth creativity. The Mersey-side city had its own unique sound, the Mersey-beat, a peculiarly British variation on American rhythm and blues popularised by indigenous Liverpudlian bands such as the Beatles, Gerry and the Pacemakers and the Searchers.

Although the Australian cheersquads predated Beatlemania, a strong Mersey-side influence helped to shape their particular expression of football culture as they became more organised in the 1960s. The rise of the Beatles in 1962 coincided with the promotion of the Liverpool Football Club to English Soccer's first division. During the summer of 1962 the English football public had experienced television coverage of the World Cup held in Chile. The Brazilian team, the eventual Cup winners, attracted much attention in the

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[16] *Alt Canaries, The Club: Norwich City FC - On the Ball, City.* Internet site. Updated 21 April 2000. Accessed 21 April 2000 at http://www.ecn.co.uk/canaries/club/Ontheball.htm

[17] Pearman, John 'The Mersey Sound: part 2', appearing on *Official Liverpool F.C. Website.* Internet site. Updated 7 April 2000. Accessed 18 April 2000 at http://www.liverpoolfc.net/features/sound/1999/feature 002.html

living rooms of England but it was not just their team and champion player, Pele, that fascinated the British. The chanting of their supporters, a distinctive 'BRA-ZIL' followed by staccato clapping to a 'cha-cha-cha' rhythm, would soon be adapted to the terraces of England and it was the Kop, the home supporters' 'end' at Liverpool's Anfield Stadium, that led the way.[18]

Buoyed by Beatlemania, Liverpool enjoyed a particularly vibrant youth culture in the winter of 1962-63. Songs from the hit parade were played over the public address system prior to matches at Anfield, prompting pre-match sing-a-longs on the Kop. Many of the hit songs of the time were given subtle changes of lyrics and adapted into Soccer chants and sung by the crowd during matches.[19] The most enduring of these Soccer anthems was a song originally written by Rogers and Hammerstein for the musical 'Carousel'. 'You'll Never Walk Alone' was a major hit for Gerry and the Pacemakers in 1963 and became the most popular song on the Kop. It survived into the twenty-first century as Liverpool's official club song and its title was incorporated as a motto in the club logo.

The Liverpudlian genre of football enthusiasm, with its synthesis of Mersey-beat and Brazilian influences, was copied by supporters of other English clubs and was heard in Australia as the background ambience to television replays of English Soccer matches on the A.B.C. Among V.F.L. fans in Melbourne,

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[18] Pearman, John 'The Mersey Sound: part 1', appearing on *Official Liverpool FC Website*. Internet site. Updated 1 April 2000. Accessed 18 April 2000 at http://www.liverpoolfc.net/features/sound/1999/feature_001.html

[19] Ibid.

the link to Beatlemania was most obvious at St.Kilda, where a long-haired young ruckman, Carl Ditterich, was idolised by fans. Later in the decade Collingwood's Peter McKenna, another player whose coiffure displayed a prominent British pop influence, would attract similar attention from supporters. The St.K.C.S. included a young pop music enthusiast, Ian 'Molly' Meldrum, who became one of Australia's most influential music industry media figures in the last three decades of the twentieth century.

Usually occupying the area behind the goal posts at one end of the ground, a V.F.L. cheersquads used streamers, torn-up paper, 'floggers' in club colours and large lettered flash cards spelling the club's name to provide a spectacular visual accompaniment to their repertoire of witty chants. The squads were also responsible for the provision of long banners made of canvas, draped around the fences of ovals, bearing messages of support for their respective teams. These banners were replaced by corporate signage during the 1970s, by which time the less permanent crepe paper run-through banner had become a major focus of cheersquad activity. Fence banners feature prominently in video footage of matches from the 1960s. Messages such as 'The Great High-Flying Magpies, the Mightiest Club Of Them All, Collingwood, Our Team of Black and White Champions' stretched half way around the perimeter of V.F.L. ovals, becoming unreadable in places where opposition supporters had dared to untie the cords securing the banner to the fence. Unlike English Soccer crowds, V.F.L. crowds were not segregated along club lines. As a result the close proximity of opposition supporters acted as a circuit-breaker on cheersquad chanting, inhibiting club

supporters other than squad members from joining in. The rich aural texture of the English terraces would not become a feature of V.F.L.

After beginning as informal and spontaneous expressions of support by groups of like-minded people, cheersquads became organisations with formal memberships in the early 1960s. The Footscray Cheer Squad was formed in 1963 by a group of 25 fanatical and mostly teenaged supporters of the club. The squad's secretary, Margaret Prowse, made fence banners at home with materials bought with money donated by supporters.[20] Most other clubs' cheersquads became formal entities at about the same time.

In his 1998 interview, David Norman claimed that the O.R.C.S. became an official part of the Richmond Football Club as early as 1961.[21] However, an article in Fighting Tiger, written by Norman himself in 1989, puts the date as 1966.[22] The later date would appear more likely. No references were made to the cheersquad in Richmond Football Club annual reports until 1968, when a small note of appreciation to 'Alice Wills and her Cheer Squad' appeared.[23] The squad's 'official' status came about as the result of discussions with the club secretary, Graeme Richmond, instigated by squad members who wanted to be formally recognised as part of the club. Rather than have his club's offices inundated with young enthusiasts, Graeme Richmond appointed Alice Wills to be both the club's representative to the cheersquad and the cheersquad's

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[20] Lack *et al*, op.cit., p.263.
[21] David Norman interview, p.8.
[22] Fighting Tiger, June 1989, back page. (pages not numbered).
[23] Richmond Football Club, Annual Report, Season 1968, p.22.

representative to the club. The squad drew up its own constitution, based on the constitution of the football club. While the football club's constitution later changed radically in response to the needs of liquor and gaming licensing, the cheersquad's constitution remained fundamentally unchanged.[24] In 1966 Hawthorn saw fit to acknowledge the loyalty of 'all the girls and boys of the Cheer-Banner Squad' in its Annual Report.[25] The Carlton Football Club's 1964 Annual Report recognised the efforts of the 'Carlton Football Supporters Club'.[26] This, however, was unlikely to have meant the cheersquad. Supporters' clubs generally comprised older people than cheersquads and did not provide the same visual focus that the cheersquads provided. Alice Wills formed a supporters' group, separate from the cheersquad, at Richmond in 1962. An initial membership of 15 had grown to 250 by 1974.[27] It was the forerunner of what would, in 1986, be known as 'Team '86', changing its name annually thereafter according to the year.[28]

In 1969, the year after Richmond's first mention of its cheersquad in an annual report, the note of appreciation in the report was directed to 'Miss Alice Wills and members of the Supporters' Group and Cheer

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[24] David Norman, 30 September 1998, p.8.
[25] Hawthorn Football Club, Annual Report, Season 1966, p.15.
[26] Carlton Football Club, Annual Report, Season 1964, p.7.
[27] Richmond Football Club, Annual Report, Season 1988, article in recognition of the conferral of Life Membership of the Richmond Football Club upon Alice Wills. (pages not numbered)
[28] Richmond Football Club, Annual Report, Season 1986, p.22. The group is regularly acknowledged in subsequent Annual Reports.

Squad.'[29] This became the standard, and possibly tokenistic, entry on the 'Appreciation' page of Richmond annual reports every year from then until 1976. The cover of the 1969 report gave implicit recognition of the cheersquad's efforts by showing the club captain, Roger Dean, running through the cheersquad's crepe banner prior to the Grand Final which Richmond subsequently won.[30] From 1977 onwards, the club's annual notes of appreciation to the supporters' group and cheersquad became more specific, giving actual reasons for the club's appreciation. The 1977 report expressed the club's appreciation to 'Miss Alice Wills and the members of the Supporters' Group and Cheer Squad who have done so much this year for the Club.'[31] The 1978 report acknowledged the 'colour' and the 'hundreds of man-hours support' that these groups provided and hailed them as 'an integral part of Richmond'.[32] In 1980 the cheersquad's 'magnificent run-through banners' were acknowledged.[33] The following year the cheersquad and the supporters' group were acknowledged separately for the first time.[34] In 1984, by which time the O.R.C.S. was entrenched as the largest of all the V.F.L. cheersquads, with a strong reputation for creativity based on its consistent production of stunning match-

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[29] Richmond Football Club, Annual Report, Season 1969, p.26.
[30] Richmond Football Club, 85th Annual Report, Season 1969, front cover.
[31] Richmond Football Club, Annual Report, Season 1977, p.18.
[32] Richmond Football Club, Annual Report, Season 1978, p.17.
[33] Richmond Football Club, Annual Report, Season 1980, p.20.
[34] Richmond Football Club, Annual Report, Season 1981. (pages not numbered)

day banners, David Norman attributed the squad's success to its long standing rapport with the club.[35]

Richmond's policy on finals ticket queues in the 1970s indicated that the club and the cheersquad enjoyed a close working relationship. Indeed, senior members of the O.R.C.S. regarded this relationship as a source of pride. Gerard Egan, another 1998 interviewee, claimed that his squad had enjoyed, and continued to enjoy, a cordiality with the Richmond Football Club that other cheersquads had not shared with their respective clubs.

> We can almost go to the club with anything and they'll come to us with stuff. It's a two-way street. They'll help us, we'll help them. If we have a problem they'll sort it out for us if we can't do anything about it.[36]

Egan's perception of a 'two-way street' between the squad and the club evinced a comfortable acceptance of a situation in which the squad was a small part of the much larger entity, the club, but could relate to the larger body without any sense of inferiority. Michael Halsted of the St.K.C.S. took a completely different view of the situation at Moorabbin. To him it seemed that the St.Kilda Football Club did not treat its cheersquad with the same respect that it accorded more moneyed supporter groups.

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[35] Fighting Tiger, May 1984, p.12.
[36] Research interview, Gerard Egan, 23 September 1998, p.4.

> I just feel nowadays that sport isn't sport. It's a business. And if you haven't got money to put in I don't think the club … really wants to know you. We've got so many coterie groups at the club. You've got your President's Club that's probably put in thousands and thousands a year. And other groups probably put in hundreds of dollars a year. We're the cheersquad. We've got little kids. We've got adults. But we're there for the colour. At the end of the year, sometimes, from what I've known in the past, we might have $5,000 left in the kitty. We might donate $3,000 back to the club. In terms of a $10 million football club, what's $3,000? … We're not putting in the money, so they just think, 'Oh, you're just little kids. Go and wave your flags.'[37]

Richmond's annual reports for the 1982 and 1983 seasons raised the issue of squad behaviour. After commending the squad for its efforts in producing run-throughs, the 1982 report noted that it was important that the exuberance of cheersquad members was tempered by 'decorum and discipline'. The report commended Alice Wills for her efforts in that regard.[38] Comments in the following season's report suggested that the behaviour of cheersquads generally was under public scrutiny. Richmond wanted it known that the behaviour of its cheersquad, at least, was not a problem.

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[37] Research interview, Michael Halsted, 20 August 1998, p.11.
[38] Richmond Football Club, Annual Report, Season 1982.

> Contrary to popular opinion, the Richmond cheer squad creates very little concern for the administration and this is largely due to the control exerted by Ms. Alice Wills.[39]

From the early 1980s the relationship between the O.R.C.S. and the Richmond Football Club became even closer, as the squad became more directly involved in the club and vice versa,[40] mirroring a trend apparent at all clubs. The demise of the fence banner brought about by the increased use of corporate signage at League football grounds had increased the importance of the run-through banner as a focus of cheersquad activity. In 1983 run-throughs prepared by the O.R.C.S. to mark Kevin Bartlett's 400th game, and later his 403rd and final game, received considerable media acclaim. The size and intricacy of these banners set a benchmark that would encourage cheersquad members at all clubs to become involved in many hours of preparation each week and huge expenses on crepe paper and sticky tape. For this reason the provision of finance from clubs and sponsors became crucial to the activities of the squads.[41]

The manner in which clubs provided assistance to cheersquads varied from club to club. Essendon Football Club in 1998 provided an annual budget of

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[39] Richmond Football Club, Annual Report, Season 1983. (pages not numbered)

[40] David Norman interview, p.7.

[41] Nowicki, Simon and Filliponi, Frank A run through the runthroughs: V.F.L. cheersquads and their

$14,000.[42] At St.Kilda there was no fixed amount allocated. The club paid accounts for crepe paper and other materials. In return it was able to use the space on the back of banners either to sell as advertising space or as a means of thanking its existing sponsors.[43] Collingwood's arrangement was similar to that at St.Kilda in that the club picked up the tab for basic banner-making materials. In 1998 the club paid out over $12,000 to cover large accounts for crepe paper and sticky tape. Despite this assistance, which was acknowledged in the squad's financial report but not included in the calculations of income or expenditure, other costs associated with the run-through alone still came to $3,517.50. This included an amount of $2,000 paid to a professional artist for reusable caricature drawings, $110 for photography and another $1,407.50 listed as 'General'. This was part of an overall expenditure of $26,714.13 covering phone bills, postage, membership medallions, stationery, donations to the club and to charitable organisations, hall hire, vehicle registration, insurance and maintenance, advertising, interstate accommodation, travel and seating at matches, bank fees and numerous items listed under either 'Miscellaneous' or 'Petty Cash'. Income for the year came to $23,780.76, made up of receipts from membership dues, sale to squad members of interstate trip packages and reserved seats for home matches, proceeds from chocolate drives, raffles and various squad functions, an amount of $1,730 from an insurance claim and some $200.76 in bank interest. Despite the operating loss of

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banners, Melbourne, Collins Dove, 1989, p.6.

[42] Shayne Honey interview, p.5.

[43] Pam Mawson interview, p.4.

$2,933.37, the squad remained solvent by virtue of an opening total bank balance of $12,197.67.[44] From these figures it was clear that the squad's budget would have been in tatters if it had been required to find another $12,000 or so to pay for crepe paper and sticky tape. On the other hand, the $2,000 donation that the cheersquad made to the football club's Nutrition Department[45] would have been insignificant in the budget of an organisation with an operating revenue of $13,862,197 which the Collingwood Football Club reported for the 1998 season.[46]

There were times when the role of sponsorship in the cheersquads caused conflict of interest between the cheersquads' sponsors and official club sponsors. However, direct subsidies from clubs later relieved cheersquads of the burden of having to find their own corporate backers. C.O.C.S. treasurer, Michael Garth, acknowledged that the $12,000 in assistance received from the club was much more than the squad could have hoped to have received had it sought out its own sponsors. It was also, clearly, a much simpler arrangement. Although negotiations had taken place in 1998 for the selling of space on the Collingwood run-through to the Channel 7 network, the squad was in the happy position of being able to opt for 'discretion and common sense rather than the dollars' when Channel 9's Eddie McGuire became the club's president later in the year.[47]

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[44] C.O.C.S., Treasurer's Report, 1 December 1997 to 30 November 1998.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Collingwood Football Club, Annual Report, 1998, p.10.
[47] C.O.C.S., Treasurer's Report, 1 December 1997 - 30 November 1998.

Given the relative insignificance of cheersquad finances in the overall budgets of football clubs, the relationship between a club and a cheersquad was comparable to that between a parent and an indulged but sometimes annoying child. The child wanted crepe paper and sticky tape to play with, so the parent gave it some small change to keep it happy. The small change was everything to the child and virtually nothing to the parent. In return the child made a banner as a present to the parent each week and managed to save a few shillings out of its allowance to buy the parent a small gift at Christmas. In order to appear to be a kind and interested parent, the club said, 'Very nice, dear. Now run along and play.' Or, as Michael Halsted would have put it, 'Go and wave your flags.'[48]

To continue the parent-child analogy, the provision of an allowance was not unconditional. The child had to behave if it wanted its pocket money. Cheersquads knew that funding from clubs could be stopped at any time and insisted that their members complied with an accepted code of behaviour. At the end of the twentieth century the accepted code varied from squad to squad. Before joining or renewing membership of the C.O.C.S., applicants were required to agree in writing to abide by a set of conditions. These conditions forbade the throwing of any article, the consumption of alcohol in the cheersquad area, the use of 'foul language' and unauthorised entry on to the playing arena.[49] Members of the squad committee were, metaphorically, the trusted older children

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[48] Michael Halsted interview, p.11.
[49] C.O.C.S., 1999 Membership Application Form.

charged with the supervision of their younger siblings.

While the provision of five-figure finance for a group of flag-wavers may have seemed ill-advised in a corporate environment in which every dollar had to be justified, it would have been difficult to argue that the cheersquads did not earn the assistance they received from their clubs. Gerard Egan recalled the involvement of the O.R.C.S. in the 'Save Our Skins' campaign in 1990, when Richmond was forced to embark on a frantic fund-raising exercise to remain solvent. He recalled squad members standing on street corners, 'shaking tins to save the club.' For three or four weeks, Egan himself would put in a solid eight hours of voluntary work for the club every day, on top of his normal employment. The work involved collecting money in tins, selling raffle tickets or badges as well and helping to mail out letters to targeted individuals to try to raise money. He would then 'go home and have three or four hours' sleep and start all over again.'[50] In less traumatic times cheersquad members were no less willing to give their time to help their favourite club. Andrew Luke and his fiancée, both members of the Hawthorn Forever Cheer Squad (H.F.C.S.), were happy to do voluntary work for Hawthorn whenever required. Their tasks involved helping to send out membership information or 'anything [they could] do'.[51] Squad members involved in this type of voluntary work did so either as individuals, as in the case of Andrew Luke and his fiancée, or collectively. Clubs sometimes approached

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[50] Gerard Egan interview, p.5.
[51] Research interview, Andrew Luke, 8 September 1998, p.3.

cheersquads for help in specific circumstances. Rhonda Davies of the St.K.C.S., who was also an employee of the football club, explained that the club recognised the cheersquad as a source of help when required and would approach it for help 'if anything [came] up'. The decorating of the rooms prior to matches was one regularly occurring example.[52] Squad president, Pam Mawson, felt that the club was inclined to under-utilise this resource. She saw the cheersquad as a 'sub-community group that works away in there somewhere, probably to the benefit of the club if they knew it.' She felt, however, that the club was only beginning to tap into the cheersquad's potential as a tangible club asset.[53]

Other clubs seemed to utilise that potential more than St.Kilda. During the Hawthorn Football Club's celebrations of its 125th Anniversary, the cheersquad was approached to provide 'pie boys' for the Captain's Pie Night at the Camberwell Civic Centre.[54] The Essendon Cheer Squad was also active at club functions. At the club's annual Family Day, the cheersquad, in addition to running its own stall, also provided personnel for other stalls run by the club itself.[55] At Richmond too, the cheersquad provided valuable unpaid help at club functions. As David Norman explained:

> Obviously it's quite a big band of willing arms and legs and if you can put a

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[52] Research interview, Rhonda Davies, 20 August 1998, p.1.
[53] Pam Mawson interview, p.12.
[54] Research interview, The President, H.F.C.S., 8 September 1998, p.10.
[55] Shayne Honey interview, p.5.

> cheersquad member behind a pie stall on Family Day and get them to sell pies it's certainly better than paying somebody to do it.[56]

Squad support for its club sometimes came in the form of the provision of tangible assets. The C.O.C.S., on occasions, provided furniture and fittings for the Social Club premises and heaters for the players' gym out of end-of-season surplus funds.[57]

At the time of the 1998 cheersquad interviews, the O.R.C.S. was responsible for the pre-match decoration of the Tigers' dressing rooms in consultation with the senior coach, Jeff Gieschen. The coach would advise David Norman of any theme or specific message that he wanted conveyed to the players before the match.[58] At Essendon the cheersquad was similarly entrusted with the task of ensuring that the Essendon rooms looked unmistakably like the Essendon rooms. This was especially important when the Bombers played as the 'visiting' club at the M.C.G. and were required to use the dressing rooms beneath the Olympic Stand, rather than their own. A group of cheersquad members would undertake the task of giving those rooms an overwhelmingly red and black décor.[59] However, it was not only the Essendon rooms that enjoyed the benefit of the Essendon Cheer Squad's creativity. In the days when the club played its home matches at Windy Hill, the squad made its banners in the Cookson Stand the night before the match.

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[56] David Norman interview, p.4.
[57] Research interview, Kath Johnstone, 7 August 1998, p.5.
[58] David Norman interview, p.11.
[59] Shayne Honey interview, p.2.

Sometimes cheersquad members would stay overnight, using the visitors' dressing rooms as accommodation. On vacating the premises the next morning they would usually leave an unfriendly message for the opposition on the walls of the visitors' rooms.[60]

League coaches sometimes made use of the cheersquad, as an organised body of support, to motivate their team at crucial moments. Jeff Gieschen and Collingwood's Tony Shaw were two coaches who occasionally adopted the ploy of moving the team's three-quarter time huddle from the usual position on the wing to the area in front of the goal at the end at which the cheersquad was located. Gieschen took things a step further prior to a match against Port Adelaide in 1997. While the coach was giving his players their final instructions in the players' meeting room, 300 O.R.C.S. members, by prior arrangement with Gieschen himself, silently filled the dressing room through which the team would have to pass to make their way to the race. David Norman described it thus:

> As soon as Knighter (Club Captain, Matthew Knights) appeared around the corner we started chanting. Of course, 300 people in a room that size, the players were saying later their adrenalin was just so pumped when they ran out that it made a big difference.[61]

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[60] Ibid., p.8.
[61] David Norman interview, p.11.

In its 1998 Annual Report, the Collingwood Football Club listed the cheersquad and the names of the four individual members of its executive on a page devoted to 'Coteries and Supporter Groups'. In terms of formal recognition, the squad's listing on this page placed it on a similar footing to the 'Dolly Greys', 'Club 42' and the Past Players Association, all of whom were listed, with their executive members individually identified. Admittedly, it did not enjoy quite the same status as the more moneyed coteries, the 'Woodsmen', the 'Pie Club' and the 'Magpie Club', all of whom had their full memberships named.[62] However, the cheersquad's formal standing as a supporter group, or even as a low-level coterie, was well entrenched at Collingwood. In 1990, when Collingwood won the Premiership, the club invited four members of the cheersquad to attend an after-match dinner with the players at the Southern Cross Hotel.[63]

The provision of fringe benefits that, by their nature, could only be enjoyed by a small number of squad members was not confined to Collingwood. After Shayne Honey became squad president at Essendon in the mid-1990s, the squad's standing in the eyes of the club improved to the point where the club provided the cheersquad committee with a membership ticket. An award for the player of the year as judged by the cheersquad was included at the club's best and fairest award night. Two free tickets were provided for the cheersquad so that this award could be presented and the squad president was also normally invited to the

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[62] Collingwood Football Club, Annual Report, Season 1998, p.17.
[63] Kath Johnstone interview, p.13.

Chairman's Dinner at the beginning of each season.[64] For Shayne Honey such gatherings were an opportunity to experience a small measure of celebrity status. He said that he 'enjoy[ed] the limelight and being able to speak to so many different people around the club'.[65]

Michael Halsted found that the granting of these kinds of privileges produced a public perception that cheersquad members were paid employees of the club. He said that he had often been asked how much he was paid to attend interstate St.Kilda fixtures. While admitting that some of this perception may have stemmed from the fact that the club did, in fact, provide a small subsidy to help the squad's regular interstate travellers, he claimed that the amount was negligible compared to the actual cost of such trips.[66] At Richmond, the situation regarding subsidisation of interstate trips for cheersquad members was made clear in an issue of Fighting Tiger in 1996. The article explained that money raised through raffles and chocolate drives organised by the cheersquad and proceeds from sponsorship of run-through banners had been used to send a group of approximately ten O.R.C.S. members to matches in Brisbane and Perth during the season. The squad members chosen for this subsidy were required to provide half the cost of the travel package out of their own pockets.[67]

A public perception that cheersquad members were paid employees of clubs was laughable in light of an anecdote from Michael Halsted concerning St.Kilda's disastrous trip to Brisbane in round two of the 1997

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[64] Shayne Honey interview, p.5.
[65] Ibid., p9.
[66] Michael Halsted interview, pp.2-3.

season when it suffered a 100 point humiliation in 35 degree heat.

> Before the game we were doing the banner. There were about five of us. And the sweat was pouring off us. And the players and officials just walked right past us. Just ignored us … And then we asked one of the officials, 'Any chance of five drinks of water?' And he turned around and said, 'No. You've got to pay for it.'[68]

Nevertheless, even the ill-treated St.K.C.S., like all other A.F.L. cheersquads, was a recognisable component of its club's corporate identity. The reliance of cheersquads on financial support for the continuation of their activities provided a potential threat to the autonomy of what were essentially communities with qualities characteristic of *gemeinschaft*. As organisations subsumed beneath the umbrella of football's complex organisational structure, they were subject, and therefore vulnerable, to the forces of commercialisation.

At Collingwood prior to the 1999 season, signs were afoot that Eddie McGuire's takeover of the club could threaten the autonomy of the cheersquad. In order to quell a destructive factionalism which he felt was holding the club back, Eddie McGuire was seeking to unite all of the club's coterie groups, including the cheersquad, by bringing them under tighter club control. In late February, the Age reported that the Collingwood Football Club had

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[67] Fighting Tiger, July 1996, p.19.
[68] Michael Halsted interview, p.10.

'taken over' the cheersquad. McGuire had announced that the club would be having a much greater say in the content of the weekly run-through and the way in which 'that core group of fans', meaning the cheersquad, 'present[ed] themselves and the club.'[69] The report revealed that McGuire, a life-long Collingwood supporter, had felt unwelcome in the cheersquad as a child. The new regime was determined to ensure that Collingwood's cheersquad would be a 'magic experience for young kids.' He promised to 'set up a situation where parents [could] go to the footy and know their kids [were] safe without having to sit with them in the cheersquad.'[70] Where the cheersquad had, in the past, been subsidised but essentially autonomous, it would now be directly administered by the club.[71] The impact of this policy on the day-to-day activities of the cheersquad was not spelt out in the article, but there seemed to be the hint of a move to exclude, or least discourage, older members. The O.R.C.S.'s practice of allowing only associate membership to persons over 25 joining the squad for the first time would provide some sort of precedent for age discrimination within cheersquads.[72] The Collingwood Football Club's financial clout, purchased by virtue of its generous subsidisation of banner-making materials, would give it the potential for considerable control over the policies and activities of the C.O.C.S. This potential had existed for as long as football clubs had been subsidising the activities of cheersquads or granting special privileges to them. McGuire's

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[69] Age, 27 February 1999, p.21.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid.

reported comments indicated a willingness to utilise that potential.

The Carlton Football Club, unhappy with the way its cheersquad was being run, had considered a similar takeover of the squad at the start of the 1998 season. Carlton's idea was to recruit separate cheersquads from local schools, rotating them on a week-to-week basis.[73] The plan did not come to fruition, hampered as it was by the club's ignorance of the need for a cheersquad to have an ongoing organisational structure to facilitate its week-to-week activities. In the same way, Eddie McGuire's comments suggested that the Collingwood president may well have failed to grasp the realities of a squad's organisational needs and the importance of the role that the older and more experienced squad members played in meeting those needs.

At Essendon the relationship between cheersquad and club became strained in the early 1990s. As Shayne Honey put it, the squad had 'gone off track … and got into a bit of trouble'.[74] At this time it lacked organisation. There was no elected committee and its leaders were largely self appointed. The presidency was handed on by a process of cronyism.

> The cheersquad came into a stage where one person would finish off his season and … turn around to his mate and say, 'I'm not doing it next year, you can do it.' And it carried on like that.[75]

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[72] David Norman interview, p.13.
[73] Ibid., p.9.
[74] Shayne Honey interview, p.1.

Shayne Honey assumed a joint presidency with two other members, Justin Fairservice and Robbie Ortisi, in 1993. Fairservice emerged as the dominant member of the trio, but left the squad midway through the 1995 season. The two surviving co-presidents decided to use this break in continuity of leadership as an opportunity to get the squad 'back on track' by establishing closer working links with the football club. Shayne Honey approached the club at the end of the 1995 season for assistance. The club appointed a cheersquad committee for the following season, with Honey as president. The new president instituted a system whereby the committee was elected at an annual general meeting. He was re-elected unopposed at the end of the 1996 and 1997 seasons.[76] While the Essendon Football Club obviously had a hand in setting up the cheersquad's organisational structure, it seemed to have acted largely on Shayne Honey's initiative.

In 1996 the Hawthorn Cheer Squad's loyalty to its club resulted in it being disbanded. Like many A.F.L. clubs, Hawthorn had an 'official' cheersquad, closely aligned to the club and a 'rebel' cheersquad. Rebel cheersquads were groups of enthusiastic club supporters who sat together at matches, chanting in unison and providing a visual focus in much the same way as official cheersquads. They had no official link to the club however. Because they received no funding they were not answerable to the club in any way. The *sobriquet*, 'rebel' was a reflection of their behaviour, which was free of any regulation beyond that of common law. Even this was sometimes flouted. Brian Stephensen, vice-president of the H.F.C.S. in

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[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid., pp.1-2.

1998, had been a member of the rebel cheersquad in 1996, when an attempt was made to merge the Hawthorn and Melbourne football clubs. A staunch opponent of the merger, he was actively involved with Don Scott's anti-merger group.[77] When Scott's group ultimately succeeded in ensuring that the Hawthorn Football Club survived as an entity in its own right, the official cheersquad, which had supported the merger, was discredited. It was banished along with the old merger-supporting Hawthorn Football Club board. Its role as the club's official cheersquad was handed over to the former rebel cheersquad.[78] The new official squad opted to call itself the 'Hawthorn Forever Cheer Squad', both to commemorate the anti-merger struggle and as an expression of a desire for a new beginning.[79] Members of the old official cheersquad were subsequently welcomed back into the newly constituted squad. Brian Stephensen, for one, did not hold their support for the merger against them.

> Because they were an official cheersquad they had to do what the club said. The club was pushing for a merger and they were caught between a rock and a hard place.[80]

Another fundamental difference between an official cheersquad and a rebel cheersquad was that the latter was not involved in the production of a run-through banner and therefore played no part in on-field activities prior to a match. By the end of the

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[77] Brian Stephensen interview, p.1.
[78] 'MARK WALTERS' interview, p.3.
[79] The President, H.F.C.S. interview, p.1.

twentieth century the practice of each team running through a crepe banner to the strains of the official club song played over the public address system had become a long-established pre-game ritual. Rebel cheersquads, however, provided a residual expression of a spontaneity characteristic of the earlier embryonic squads prior to their attainment of official status.

Cheersquad expenditure figures referred to earlier in this chapter and the preoccupation with matters related to banner production evident in most of the 1998 interviews suggested that the banner had almost become the *raison d'être* for cheersquads in the last two decades of the century. It would, at least, seem to have been the major factor in the special treatment granted by the League to official cheersquads. Cheersquads could even be said to have been filling a gap that increased corporatisation had left in the ambience of the modern Game. Murray Weideman's 1963 comments concerning the lack of a partisan atmosphere at Grand Finals were frequently echoed throughout the 1990s in comments on the A.F.L. scene generally, which was seen by many as having more in common with the theatre than League football as it had once been known. It could even possibly be said that the League's sanctioning of cheersquads' pre-match activities was *gesellschaft*'s attempt to recreate an ambience that *gemeinschaft* had once provided. Another attempt at the artificial creation of 'atmosphere' was the use of paid dancers, invariably female, performing choreographed routines prior to matches in much the same way as the professional cheerleading groups in America.

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[80] Brian Stephensen interview, p.2.

Such attempts by the League to generate excitement among crowds were prone to failure. The 'Coca-cola countdown', with which the A.F.L. attempted to launch the 1997 season ended in embarrassment when the crowd and the umpire failed to respond. The idea had been for the crowd to count down the last ten seconds before the start of the season opener between Melbourne and North Melbourne in time with a digital display on the scoreboard. Problems arose when the audio of the television commentator's introduction to the countdown failed. Crowd and umpire alike missed the call and the ball was still sitting in the centre as the opening siren sounded.[81]

The banner ritual, however, survived the turn of the century. Players entering the arena were greeted by the roar of the crowd, the club song and a visual message on a banner painstakingly prepared by the cheersquad. Although banners reflected corporatisation by becoming outlets for advertising and community information, their primary purpose was to give the players a tangible and visible reminder of the support and appreciation bestowed upon them by their fans. In addition to commemorating milestone matches for individual players, they provided one last message to the team as it took the field.

For the squads themselves the banners provided a manifestation of their creativity. It was usual for a member of the squad to take a photograph of the banner as it was being displayed to the crowd prior to the teams running on to the field.[82] Cheersquads were not

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[81] Herald Sun, 29 March 1997, p.78.
[82] Research interview, 'JULIETTE', 7 August 1998, p.1.

meticulous keepers of their own archives. Photographs of run-throughs, however, were one of the few ways by which they documented their history, lending support to the theory that banners had become the central focus of cheersquad culture. In particular, photographs of banners commemorating important milestones in the careers of individual players were framed, blown up and signed by the player involved and used as prizes in fund-raising raffles.[83] In some cases they were presented to the player himself.

An anecdote from Shayne Honey suggested that there were even talismanic qualities ascribed to the banner. He recalled a night when a woman he had seen at various club functions arrived with her children at Windy Hill to watch training, only to find that it had already finished. The cheersquad was finishing its banner for the forthcoming match and Honey was able to appease the disappointment of the children by cutting off a small portion of crepe paper from the part of the banner that was to be attached to the poles and giving it to them. To be given a piece of the banner before it had been displayed to the public was, apparently, compensation enough for the disappointment of missing training.[84]

In addition to providing an intrinsic satisfaction for the squad members involved, the quality of the banners produced by the various cheersquads provided demonstrable, albeit subjectively interpretable, evidence of the superior professionalism of one squad over another.[85] Shayne Honey, although not particularly conscious of any

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[83] The President, H.F.C.S. interview, p.7.
[84] Shayne Honey interview, p.9.
[85] The President, H.F.C.S. interview, p.5.

sense of competition between cheersquads, expressed the opinion that the O.R.C.S. made the best banners. He saw his own squad as coming a rapidly improving second.[86]

While the sheer professionalism of the A.F.L. limited the scope of well-meaning individuals lacking in specialised skills to feel that they were making an important contribution, involvement in banner-making gave a supporter like Essendon's Mark Eyries a chance to 'put [his] bit into the club'.[87] Banner-making was, in fact, a specialised skill in its own right, an *arcanum* passed from one generation of cheersquad members to another. It became a mini-industry, utilised by district and country football clubs, who approached A.F.L. cheersquads to have banners made for special occasions, such as grand finals. For the St.K.C.S., banner-making for outside organisations was the chief avenue for fund-raising. In addition to minor football clubs, St.K.C.S.'s clientele included corporations and other businesses requiring banners for special promotional activities.[88]

The banner clearly helped to legitimise the standing of cheersquads in modern football. In less regulated times, however, their use as an outlet for dissent made them a source of conflict between cheersquads and clubs. At Collingwood, in particular, the content of messages on run-through banners frequently incurred the wrath of the club. In some cases the offending content was merely tasteless. C.O.C.S. president, Kath Johnstone, recalled one particular banner that the squad made for a match

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[86] Shayne Honey interview, p.5.
[87] Research interview, Mark Eyries, 16 July 1998, p.3.
[88] Pam Mawson interview, p.3.

against Carlton. It referred to the Blues' colourful big man, Percy Jones, as a 'lunatic' in recognition of his brief sojourn at the mental institution, Larundel, as the result of a nervous breakdown.[89]

More frequently, however, it was the use of the banner as an outlet for populist protest that brought cheersquads into conflict with football authorities. During the itinerant Fitzroy Football Club's brief period of tenancy at Victoria Park in the mid-1980s a Collingwood banner described the Lions as 'co-tenants but unwanted guests'. This outburst saw the squad hauled before the club to explain.[90] Another controversial message on a Collingwood banner created havoc, both for the Collingwood Football Club and the League at a time when moves were afoot to relocate Collingwood from Victoria Park to Waverley. The cheersquad expressed its disapproval by producing an 80 foot by 30 foot banner for a match at Victoria Park, which included the League's phone number and a message inviting all people who wanted Collingwood to remain at Victoria Park to ring the League. On the following Monday phone lines at both the League and Collingwood were jammed as staff attempted to field a barrage of angry calls. Again the squad had to front the club to explain.[91]

Another object of derision from the C.O.C.S. was the particular style of club and sponsor generated enthusiasm embodied in the Carlton 'Bluebirds' of the late 1970s. The use of scantilly clad and heavily sponsored dancing girls performing a choreographed routine prior to a match inspired contempt among

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[89] Kath Johnstone interview, p.6.
[90] Ibid., p.12.
[91] Ibid., p.11.

cheersquad traditionalists like Kath Johnstone. C.O.C.S. members had been told, correctly or incorrectly, that the Bluebirds were each receiving generous payments to perform their routine. One controversial Collingwood run-through labelled them as 'Americana trash'.[92] The idea of paid entertainers posing as cheerleaders was anathema to the volunteer spirit of those who saw themselves as the true cheerleaders of the V.F.L. clubs.

Another common source of friction between clubs and cheersquads was the practice of 'snowing'. This involved the tearing up of newspapers or telephone books into small pieces to be used as a heavy-duty form of confetti to enhance the visual impact of the squads. The resulting litter often made it difficult for umpires and players to see boundary and goal-square markings during the match, and later presented ground staff with a difficult cleaning up operation. The transformation of the oval immediately in front of the cheersquad's area into something resembling a snowfield had a certain aesthetic appeal and was viewed with some pride by squad members.

Barry Ross, who was St.K.C.S. president in the early 1970s, recalled that there was very little formal contact between the cheersquad and the club in those days.

> The only time we really had any contact with the club was if anyone had done anything wrong in the cheersquad. Then we had to come here (Moorabbin) and answer for it.[93]

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[92] Ibid., pp.12-13.
[93] Barry Ross interview, p.8.

He recalled that one of the occasions on which the cheersquad was summoned to Moorabbin to face the anger of the club came as the result of a massive snowing operation the night before an away match. Squad members had scaled the fence and succeeded in completely obscuring the playing surface of the ground, much to the chagrin of officialdom the next morning.[94]

Even with the benefit of middle-aged hindsight, Barry Ross barely acknowledged that there was anything wrong with snowing. According to him, 'It wasn't vandalism or anything like that. It was just snowing.' In sharing this anecdote he used the expression, 'It snowed on the whole ground.'[95] The implication here was that snowing was something that just happened. No one actually did it. To cheersquad members from the era prior to the development of guidelines regulating their activities, 'snow' was as inevitable a feature of a Melbourne winter as rain. To Barry Ross the sight of paper and streamers going up into the air was 'a big part of football.'[96] The practice had been reluctantly tolerated by the League and the ground managers in the 1960s, but had become unacceptable to them by the time Ross became president. Even so, the penalty was scarcely daunting.

> Well we got summoned here a couple of times to answer for it. We got away with it. We got told, 'You won't do it again, will

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[94] Ibid., pp.9-10.
[95] Ibid., p.10.
[96] Ibid., p.8.

you?' So next week we go out and do the same thing again.[97]

After the formation of the Combined Cheersquads League in 1987 the activities of cheersquads became heavily regulated. From a 2000 perspective, the reluctance of the V.F.L. to take decisive action against the excesses of cheersquads in the 1960s and early 1970s was difficult to understand. By the end of the 1960s the squads had become something of a law unto themselves. They provided a safe haven in which littering and low-level assault on opposition players could be practiced with near impunity.

It would seem most probable that the use of the term 'flogger', meaning strips of crepe paper, or plastic, in club colours attached to a stick, arose because the thin early models vaguely resembled the 'cat o' nine tails' in appearance. The term took on a completely new meaning, however, when the stick itself, as distinct from the coloured strips attached to them, was used to do the 'flogging'. When North Melbourne full back, Peter Steward, complained to the press that two Geelong supporters had beaten him with the sticks of their floggers while he was about to take a free kick during a match in 1969 he made it clear that this was not an isolated incident. The prospect of being poked, prodded or struck by the handles of floggers was a hazard familiar to any player unfortunate enough to have to venture into the territory of the opposition cheersquad to retrieve a ball lying close to the fence. On the occasion in question, Steward reported that he had told the offenders to stop assaulting him and that

[97] Ibid.

a policeman nearby had told them to 'cut it out'.[98] It would have been difficult to imagine such a soft response from authorities at the turn of the century. Goal umpires, too, because of their close proximity to the cheersquads, were an easy target for assault. A complaint by two goal umpires after a match not long before Peter Steward's complaint had resulted in Police being asked to stop people from waving floggers over the fences at League matches.[99]

Another goal-mouth hazard directly attributable to the cheersquads was the accumulation of snow and streamers. At Princes Park on the same weekend as the Steward incident, Fitzroy's Peter Wood was unable to use the drop-kick, still popular at this time, when kicking in after a Collingwood behind because of a three to four inch thick carpet of litter in the goal square.[100]

A proliferation of these kinds of events concerned the League to the extent that, in August 1969, they asked ground managers to ensure that Police take action to protect players and umpires from being assaulted in the course of their duties and to clamp down on litterbugs. Although the League did not specify the cheersquads as the target of their proposed clampdown, the squads felt that their activities were under threat.[101] At Princes Park during the half-time break of the match that prompted Peter Wood's complaint, the C.O.C.S. staged a sit-down protest against what it feared was the League's intention to ban the use of floggers. As the players left the ground more than 100 squad members invaded the cricket pitch area. They were

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[98] Age, 18 August 1969, p.30.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Sporting Globe, 20 August 1969, p.5.

promptly dispersed by Police but made their exit from the arena slowly. The Sun reported that, during the exodus, a 'long-haired youth' was escorted from the ground by two policemen.[102]

The Sun's reference to the young cheersquad member's coiffure was significant in that it was using the same manner of reporting as was customary for the popular press of this era to use when reporting instances of youth dissent. In Australia in 1969, long hair, when worn by male youths, was associated with the counter-culture with its left-wing politics and illicit lifestyle choices which were seen as a threat to the comfortable conservatism left over from the Menzies era. Popular newspapers seeking to discredit a protest movement could easily do so, at least in conservative eyes, by associating it with the hirsute appearance popular in the radical student protest movement of the time.

The possibility of a connection between the cheersquads and the New Left was made apparent by the nature of the protest that the Collingwood squad attempted. The 'sit-in' style of protest, in which dissidents took over a strategic location until forcibly removed, was popular with the radical student protest movement at Monash University during its campaign against the Vietnam War. Only one month before the Princes Park sit-in, a group of about 80 students had tried to force their way into the monthly meeting of the Monash University Council to discuss changes to the university's discipline statutes.[103] The students were demanding the deletion of a statute barring people

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[101] Ibid.
[102] Sun, 18 August 1969, p.26.
[103] Herald, 14 July 1969, p.1.

with criminal records from enrolment at the University.[104] The court cases of students arrested in this protest were still being fought around the time of the Fitzroy-Collingwood match. A reporter for the Age suggested that the cheersquad's attempted sit-in had been influenced by the student protests at Monash.[105] This perception would have probably been given further impetus by rumours, reported in the Sporting Globe on the day of the sit-in, that the squad was planning a subsequent protest march through city streets.[106] Credible though it may have been that the C.O.C.S. was influenced in some way by the students at Monash, it would seem that they had much to learn about the art of dissent. It would seem inconceivable that a sit-in at Monash could have been dispersed as easily as the one at Princes Park.

The image of the 1960s cheersquad that survives in grainy black and white video footage, microfilmed newspaper records of occasional controversies and the memories of veteran squad members is one of fence banners, floggers, streamers, snow, youthful larrikinism and dissent. There was a relative spontaneity about cheersquad behaviour in this era compared to the heavily regulated activities of squads at the turn of the century. The more recent model bridged *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft* by becoming entrenched in the organisational structure of the A.F.L. cheersquads at the beginning of the new century were communities bound by love of club, recognised primarily for their part in a League-sanctioned

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[104] Herald, 15 July 1969, p.3.
[105] Age, 18 August 1969, p.28.
[106] Sporting Globe, 16 August 1969, p.9.

production of 'atmosphere'. Their efforts were rewarded in the formal recognition of a territorial claim formerly staked by vigil. Benefits for members included a degree of exemption from the effects of the League's usual indifference to the non-corporate supporter. Clubs that formerly gave only token recognition to their cheersquads were won over by impressive displays of creativity in banner-making, to the extent that they provided the bulk of the funds required for the continuation of this traditional and, to an extent, arcane activity. Funding and privileges, however, came largely at the cost of autonomy. Cheersquads were subject to the authority of the League and their respective clubs.

Meanwhile, in contrast, the rebel cheersquads served as a nostalgic throw-back to the days of larrikin dissent. While they were not as organised or as colourful as their snow-making predecessors, their behaviour was not bound by the constraints that kept the official squads in line. Only their often offensive chanting and propensity towards mischief set them apart from ordinary barrackers. Their relative visual anonymity was reminiscent of an era that the official cheersquads passed through during the 1970s. The following chapter examines the factors that gave rise to this 'dark age' in cheersquad history, the decade that split the halcyon 1960s from the era of cheersquad corporatisation.

Chapter 9:

THE TAMING OF THE CHEERSQUADS

Any public human activity produces artefacts. In time these become historical documents, primary sources for historians. Football's artefacts come in many forms, the style of which can often identify the period in question. Black and white video footage of V.F.L. matches played on ovals strewn with streamers and other debris are unmistakably artefacts from either the 1960s or the early 1970s, when cheersquads stamped their visual impact on the Game. Barely readable messages on sagging fence banners denote a different era to the one in which the same space was devoted to saturation corporate advertising. A photograph of a run-through banner featuring a sponsor's logo would suggest the 1980s or later, after cheersquads had become part of League football's corporate structure. A scholar examining colour footage from the mid-1970s for evidence of cheersquad activity could be excused for thinking that the squads had ceased to exist. If the O.R.C.S.'s intricacy in banner-making in the early 1980s could be regarded as a sign of a renaissance in cheersquad history, the period that preceded it could be called the dark age, or perhaps more aptly, the 'invisible age'.

While commercialisation of football goes back a long way, it was only in the 1970s that it encroached on to the field of play. Prior to this time advertisers had exploited the Game's popularity by

using media coverage of the Game as a promotional site. In the 1970s advertising literally jumped the pickets and became part of the spectacle itself. In 1976, while cheersquads' fence banners were being gradually replaced by advertising hoardings, sponsors' logos began to appear on team guernseys. Escalating player payments were forcing League clubs to look beyond the turnstiles to meet their commitments. Where television cameras in the previous decade had recorded an ambience dominated by images of floggers, snow and streamers, the prevailing backdrop in the 1970s was one of rampant commercial promotion.

Cheersquads that had previously synthesised American and British styles of supporter enthusiasm to produce a style of barracking culture unique to Australian Rules football began to look and behave like pale imitations of British football hooligans. Even the O.R.C.S., a squad acknowledged before and since for its exemplary behaviour, had a reputation for fighting, drinking and other excesses when Gerard Egan joined as an adolescent in the late 1970s. Although not actually involved himself, Egan was aware of rumours of unsavoury activities on the 'fringe' of the cheersquad.[1] Essendon's Ricky O'Meara also joined his respective cheersquad at about the same time and age. He spoke of a similar peripheral element loosely connected with the Bombers' cheersquad, referring to it as the 'grog squad'.

> It used to be behind the goals at Essendon. We'd have all these big guys. You wouldn't be scared of them because they were our own

> supporters. But if there was a close game, or a problem, there'd be a can being thrown over. Because they were behind us it was always the cheersquad that threw it. There was no way of checking who was doing what because we had a lot of aggression behind us.[2]

O'Meara's observations suggest that the residual 1960s image of larrikinism associated with cheersquads was still colouring the public's perception of squads in the late 1970s to the extent that any misbehaviour in their vicinity was attributed to them. His preoccupation with the way in which cheersquads were perceived by the general public has been expressed frequently by squad members whenever cheersquads have found themselves embroiled in controversy. In 1972, for example, when pre-match violence between cheersquads at a Collingwood-Essendon match resulted in a strong public backlash against cheersquads generally, an O.R.C.S. member told a reporter from the Age that he feared that parents would stop their children from joining because they would think that they were 'mob[s] of drunken louts'. He admitted that 'a few larrikins' were infiltrating their ranks, but assured the reporter that squad leaders were trying to have the disreputable elements removed.[3] As Shayne Honey put it, 26 years later, 'You don't want your cheersquad looking like rabble, starting trouble.

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[1] Gerard Egan interview, p.3.
[2] Ricky O'Meara interview, p.4.
[3] Age, 14 June 1972, p.22.

Because, as a cheersquad, you're representing your club.'[4]

While much of the League's efforts at countering the hooligan ambience of crowds in the 1970s was directed against cheersquads, some observers felt that authorities had not targeted the real source of trouble. In a letter to Inside Football, Stephen Rogers of Wodonga suggested that a ban on alcohol would be a more effective way of stopping unruly behaviour than a clampdown on cheersquads. He argued that a football match was 'not an hotel'. Spectators could surely go 100 minutes without a beer.[5] The editor agreed that alcohol at football was unnecessary.

> It seems that Australians think it essential to their way of life to swill grog while watching their favourite sport. Maybe that's why we are becoming a nation of spectators.[6]

Despite Ricky O'Meara's suggestion that the grog squads were separate entities from cheersquads there would seem to have been some overlap between the two. Most squads in the 1990s took a strong stand against alcohol abuse. The Essendon Cheer Squad, for example, did not allow the consumption of alcohol within its seating area at matches. Members were permitted to drink in moderation outside of the area but any member considered by the president to be adversely affected by drink was not permitted to return to the

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[4] Shayne Honey interview, p.6.
[5] Inside Football, 12 August 1972, p.13.
[6] Ibid.

area. At the time of his 1998 interview Shayne Honey was employed as a bar attendant at Crown Casino and considered himself a fair judge of whether or not a person was intoxicated.[7] Sobriety in the Essendon Cheer Squad was a virtue that had only been fairly recently acquired, however. Luisa Gaetano, who joined the cheersquad in the early 1990s as a chaperone for her then 11-year-old son, recalled less orderly times.

> I wasn't too happy because the people who were running it at the time were an absolute disgrace. The drunken behaviour, the swearing and everything else that was going on. That's why I stayed with my son because I was a bit worried about him … I went to make the run-through one time and they were all drunk.[8]

While alcohol restrictions discouraged unruly elements from joining official cheersquads in the 1990s, the loosely-knit squads of the 1970s had no self-regulatory framework. With corporate signage rapidly replacing the fence banner and floggers banned as the result of a League clampdown, cheersquads operated for most of that decade without a strong visual focus. As a result, the line between the cheersquad and its hooligan periphery became harder to define. Official membership numbers declined[9] as squad activities became more anarchic. Less inclined than Ricky O'Meara to distance the

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[7] Shayne Honey interview, p.7.
[8] Research interview, Luisa Gaetano, 16 July 1998, pp.4-5.
[9] Nowicki and Filliponi, op.cit., p.4.

official cheersquads from the feral elements at their margins, David Norman explained:

> When we had what we considered our privileges taken away from us we decided to play up a bit. And the alcohol trip crept in, and the odd fight here and there started up.[10]

Under the Kübler-Ross model this represented a shift from denial to anger.[11] Cheersquads of the 1960s had taken impunity from the consequences of their actions for granted. Loss of impunity provoked anger. Norman described the squads of the 1970s as 'a pretty wild mongrelly lot', infamous for their drinking and general misbehaviour.[12] The V.F.L.'s ban on floggers initially included run-through banners, but the League relented in regard to the latter as the result of a protest outside V.F.L. house in 1975.[13] While the return of run-through banners gave the squads a visual presence prior to the match, this was lost as soon as the players had entered the arena.

The ban on floggers and run-throughs was the League's reaction to events at a match between Collingwood and Essendon at Victoria Park on 12 June 1972. The 1989 publication, A run through the run-throughs: V.F.L. cheer squads and their banners, by Simon Nowicki and Frank Fillipone, a mostly illustrative book focused on the topic suggested by its title, devoted a section to a brief and sketchy

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[10] David Norman interview, p.2.
[11] Kübler-Ross, op.cit., p.44.
[12] David Norman interview, p.2.

history of cheersquads. The writers regarded this particular Collingwood-Essendon fixture as a significant turning point in the development of the cheersquad phenomenon. According to Nowicki and Filliponi, the action of an Essendon supporter in running through the Collingwood banner sparked an on-field brawl between rival supporters prior to the match. During the second quarter a fire broke out among the Collingwood streamers and floggers.[14] However, a report in the Age, supported by photographs, made it clear that the fire occurred at the Outer end, among the Essendon floggers and debris. The match was held up for five minutes as the crowd invaded the playing arena to escape the flames, which spread for 'at least 80 yards along the fence'. The report was consistent with Nowicki and Fillipone in that the pre-match fracas was started by an Essendon supporter running through the Collingwood banner. Collingwood supporters retaliated by destroying the Essendon banner.[15]

Once again the behaviour of cheersquads came under the scrutiny of officialdom. Collingwood Football Club's secretary-manager, Peter Lucas, was quoted as saying that something needed to be done about the cheersquads. His comments implied that the cheersquads were going to be made the scapegoat for what he regarded as the worst display of crowd behaviour he had ever witnessed at Victoria Park. The public holiday fixture had drawn a capacity crowd to the cramped Collingwood ground. An hour before the match the gates had been closed by order of the Health

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[13] Nowicki and Filliponi, op.cit., p.4.
[14] Ibid., p.4, p.40.
[15] Age, 13 June 1972, p.26.

Department with an officially estimated crowd of 42,200 in attendance. Hundreds of determined fans forced their way into the ground by ripping sheets of iron from the perimeter fence, tearing wire from gates or simply climbing through the barbed wire at the top of the fence. Some were reported to have climbed on to the roof of the Outer stand.[16]

Reports in other newspapers offered further details. Rival publications sought to outdo each other in the length of the delay caused by the fire. In the Sporting Globe it was five and a half minutes,[17] while the Sun insisted it was seven minutes.[18] The Sun also gave further details of the ingenuity with which locked-out patrons sought to gain admission. The report told of stones from under fences being removed, enabling people to scramble into the ground under the fence. The crowd on top of the Outer stand, 'with their feet dangling over the roof', was estimated at more than 200.[19]

Each of the two rival cheersquads sought to deflect blame from itself on to the other. A C.O.C.S. spokesman pointed out that the fire had occurred at the Essendon Cheer Squad's end of the ground. An Essendon Cheer Squad member claimed that it was actually a Collingwood flogger that had caught fire, initially from cigarette butts. He claimed that it had been dragged by a Collingwood supporter into the Essendon floggers which had then caught alight *en masse*.[20] If this claim was true, it is unlikely that the Collingwood flogger belonged to an official squad

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[16] Ibid.
[17] Sporting Globe, 14 June 1972, p.24.
[18] Sun, 13 June 1972, p.1.
[19] Ibid., p.2.
[20] Age, 14 June 1972, p.22.

member because the C.O.C.S. was at the opposite end of the ground. The Essendon spokesman also claimed that the Essendon supporter who destroyed the Collingwood run-through was not a member of the cheersquad, but that it had been Collingwood squad members who had taken the retaliatory action on the Essendon run-through at the Sherrin Stand players' race.[21]

Media coverage of the occasion, apart from the match itself, focussed basically on three dysfunctional and unrelated events, the lock out, the pre-match brawl and the fire during the second quarter. Admittedly the two latter events both involved the cheersquads to a greater or lesser degree, but there was no evidence that they were linked causally. Nevertheless the prevailing message was that Monday 12 June 1972 had been football's day of three-fold shame for which somebody had to pay. The simple fact was that the inadequacy of Collingwood's home ground to cater for a crowd at a major public holiday fixture involving two very popular clubs had provided the overriding extenuation for a day of general mayhem. The reported comments of Peter Lucas, however, suggested that the Collingwood Football Club intended to confine its soul searching to a heavy-handed clampdown on the enthusiasm of a youthful group of the club's most dedicated supporters.

Not everybody blamed the cheersquads. Brian Hansen, in the Truth, said that he knew that it was going to be a 'black day for football' 45 minutes before the game, when he was still half a mile from the ground and could see disappointed people who had been turned away. Hansen laid the blame firmly at the feet of V.F.L. administrators. For him, the whole

[21] Ibid.

debacle was ammunition for his crusade to have the match-of-the-day played at either the M.C.G. or Waverley, rather than at cramped grounds like Victoria Park, which could not hope to cater for all those who wished to attend. The brawl and the fire merely provided further sticks with which to beat the League. It was time, he argued, for the League not to curtail the activities of the squads, but to ensure that only official members of cheersquads be allowed to enter the arena with banners and floggers or hold up the banner for the team to run through.[22] His views predated the A.F.L. guidelines of more recent years, through which the League, in consultation with the Combined Cheersquads League, set strict limits on the number of squad members allowed on to the ground prior to a match to hold up the banner. Another journalist who took a similar view was Ron Carter of the Age, whose suggestion that the football clubs take their respective cheersquads 'under their wings' anticipated later developments.[23]

On 14 June representatives from the Chief Secretary's Department, the Police, the Fire Brigade, the V.F.L. and the ground managers met and resolved to increase the Police presence at League matches, with a clampdown on drunkenness, offensive behaviour, vandalism and the entry of unauthorised people on to the arena. They decided also to ban streamers, floggers, torn-up paper and flags on sticks from being brought into grounds. The ban did not apply to canvas banners hung from the fence. J.V.Dillon, under-secretary of the Chief Secretary's Department, told reporters that the meeting had expressed concern that

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[22] Truth, 17 June 1972, p.39.
[23] Age, 19 June 1972, p.22.

the excessive amount of waste paper and litter being brought into grounds was both a fire hazard and an inconvenience to umpires, players and officials. For the V.F.L. administrative director, Eric McCutchan, the meeting's decision was 'precisely what [the League had] been looking for'. The League had been trying to introduce these controls for some time. Since the debacle two days earlier, the Collingwood Football Club had taken steps to ban floggers and the throwing of paper and streamers, and North Melbourne, Carlton and Essendon were in full support of the tough measures.[24]

The ban was implemented immediately at the three matches played as part of a split round on the following Saturday. At North Melbourne, officials confiscated the floggers of cheersquad members entering the ground and held them in clubrooms until after the match. The squad's 16-year-old president, Peter Clarke, 'threatened strike action' according to the Sporting Globe. The use of the term, 'strike', should be viewed with some suspicion, given that the same article also claimed that the C.O.C.S. had gone 'on strike' that day at Victoria Park, where the Magpies played Richmond. The squad took up its usual position at the Sherrin Stand end without floggers, leaving Collingwood's home ground with a distinct lack of a black-and-white presence. The reporter suggested that the squad was trying to make the point that the game would lose something as a spectacle without its influence. However, the article later explained that no fans carrying floggers or paper had been allowed into the ground anyway.[25] A more appropriate expression

[24] Sun, 15 June 1972, p.56.
[25] Sporting Globe, 17 June 1972, p.1 (continued on

for the squad's action might have been 'protest'. Ron Carter, in the Age, noted that after each Collingwood goal, squad members went through the actions of waving non-existent floggers, 'keeping the motions of waving in practice for the day when they are allowed to have them once more.'[26] This hardly constituted 'strike' action. The C.O.C.S. had received shabby treatment from the club it loved and was hurting.

The Sporting Globe reported that the Melbourne and Hawthorn cheersquads were 'on their best behaviour' at the M.C.G. on the first day of the ban. There was a complete absence of floggers and cut-up paper.[27] Inside Football correspondent, P.White of Beaumaris, who attended the match, remarked that the desperate efforts of the two cheersquads to lift their teams without floggers was 'pitiful'. To P.White, floggers had become such an accepted part of the spectacle of football that the game seemed 'bare' without them. With no indication of ironic intent, the writer made the apparently unthinkable suggestion that it would now be 'up to the players to provide the interest'.[28]

The Melbourne Cheer Squad did, however, 'make an effort to decorate the race'.[29] As David Norman explained in his 1998 interview, 'decorating the race' was a term for the creation of the style of run-through in use in the 1950s and early 1960s. It was simply a tapestry of crepe streamers in club colours woven across the opening at the bottom of the players' race where the players made their entry on to the

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p24).

[26] Age, 19 June 1972, p.22.

[27] Sporting Globe, 17 June 1972, p.24.

[28] Inside Football, 1 July 1972, p.12.

[29] Sporting Globe, 17 June 1972, p.24.

ground. This style of run-through had to be hastily put together between the end of the Reserves match and the entry of the players on to the field for the senior match. This was the style used prior to the development of the modern version, attached to poles and held up by cheersquad members, which Norman claimed was pioneered by Richmond at the 1967 Grand Final.[30]

The Sporting Globe also reported moves to call a meeting of all cheersquads for the purpose of appointing delegates to discuss the ban with the V.F.L.[31] This meeting, if it actually took place, would have been an embryonic version of later organisations representing the combined League football cheersquads. Although the Essendon and Collingwood squads had gone to some lengths to blame each other for the trouble on 12 June, there was a sense in which the ban brought rival cheersquads closer together. The importance that the cheersquads placed on floggers, in particular, as a visual focus and a badge of identity, was reflected in publicly expressed fears that their banning could threaten the very existence of the cheersquads. Jim McGuane, 19-year-old acting president of the O.R.C.S. feared that some cheersquads would decide to disband as a result. He felt that the ban could even discourage many young football fans from going to matches at all. Putting aside club parochialism, McGuane leapt to the defence of his Essendon and Collingwood counterparts.

> These cheer squad kids are not responsible for the burning of streamers and floggers.

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[30] David Norman interview, p.3.
[31] Sporting Globe, 17 June 1972, p.24.

> They pay a lot of money for them and guard them with their lives … They are quite often set alight by beer-swilling louts who flick cigarettes, and deliberately try to start fires.[32]

McGuane, however, did not attempt to defend snowing or the throwing of streamers, claiming that the O.R.C.S. was a well-disciplined and well-organised squad, which did not indulge in these activities.[33] A letter to the magazine, Inside Football, from Kym Doherty of North Balwyn, explained that the squad itself had resolved to discontinue the practice of snowing at the end of the 1969 season. The decision was made because the presence of streamers and torn-up paper on the playing arena had caused problems for players of both sides during the Grand Final that year. Doherty reiterated McGuane's observations on the expense involved in the making of floggers, pointing out that an average Richmond flogger would require about 40 sheets of crepe paper, priced at 15 cents per sheet.[34] Cheersquad members in this era, many of whom were children, made their own floggers, individually, at their own expense. If Doherty's figures were correct a flogger would have cost its owner about $6 to make. In 1972 this amount was equal to the price of an adult season ticket and four times the price of a junior ticket.[35]

Newspaper correspondence on the subject expressed similar fears for the future of cheersquads as those expressed by Jim McGuane and, at the same time, a

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[32] Age, 17 June 1972, p.26.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Inside Football, 15 July 1972, p.12.

similar disdain for snowing while defending the use of floggers. A letter signed 'SEVEN FOOTBALL FANS FROM HAMPTON', possibly missing the very point of the ban, claimed that floggers were 'only a fire hazard when they are deliberately lit'. The writers claimed that cheersquads were being 'stamped out altogether' by the ban.[36] J.Kissick of Glen Iris claimed that cheersquad members were 'football's most enthusiastic supporters' and saw the ban as an expression of the 'generation gap'. Cheersquad members were 'not doing anyone any harm' provided they did not throw paper on to the oval.[37]

In his letter to the clubs announcing the ban, Eric McCutchan showed that the League made no distinction between snow and floggers. He instructed clubs to ensure that 'unnecessary waste paper or litter, including floggers' was not brought into football grounds. Cloth fence banners were acceptable but crepe run-throughs were not.[38] The Chief Secretary and acting Premier, Dick Hamer, who had instigated the extraordinary meeting on 14 June, emerged as an unexpected ally of the cheersquads. On 14 June he had been quoted in the Age as being opposed to the throwing of torn-up paper and streamers,[39] but a week later declared that the State Government had no objection to floggers as long as the sticks were not used against umpires or opposition players. At Collingwood, however, Peter Lucas insisted that floggers were in fact used for that very purpose.[40] Lucas's allegation was

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[35] V.F.L. Annual Report, Season 1972, p.12.
[36] Sun, 20 June 1972, p.25.
[37] Sun, 19 June 1972, p.25.
[38] Sun, 22 June 1972, p.63.
[39] Age, 14 June 1972, p.22.
[40] Age, 22 June 1972, p.30.

supported by Essendon captain-coach, Des Tuddenham, in an article in Inside Football which carried the provocative headline, 'Flog the Floggers'.[41]

In contrast to Collingwood's firm stand, the Hawthorn, Geelong and Fitzroy clubs stood by their cheersquads and argued in favour of the return of floggers.[42] Fitzroy Football Club secretary, Bruce Wilkinson, commended the behaviour of his own club's cheersquad, but explained that cheersquads had been banned from the stands at Junction Oval because of the behaviour of a visiting squad the previous year. The Fitzroy Cheer Squad, when asked to refrain from snowing during the 1971 season, had cooperated fully with the club's request. Wilkinson added, 'I can't really say so much for the visiting cheersquads.'[43] The correspondence column of Inside Football, however, provided evidence of a residue of resentment on the part of some Fitzroy Cheer Squad members at the banning of squads from the stands. Malcolm Edwards and Greg Murphy, both of North Fitzroy, regarded the club's treatment of its own cheersquad as unfair. As club members, they saw the ban as a denial of their membership entitlements.[44]

After the first day of the ban on floggers and run-throughs, Ron Carter reported that the consensus among football fans at matches on the Saturday had been that games had suffered as a spectacle because of the absence of floggers and run-throughs. At Victoria Park a serious brawl had erupted in the crowd at three-quarter time but Carter, in taking the cheersquads' point of view on the issue of floggers

[41] Inside Football, 17 June 1972, p.3.
[42] Age, 22 June 1972, p.30.
[43] Age, 17 June 1972, p.26.

and run-throughs, stressed to his readers that the Richmond and Collingwood cheersquads had not been involved in the disturbance. The wording of his plea, however, revealed a patronising, condescending attitude towards cheersquads. 'Give the kids back their floggers,' he urged.[45] It was comparable, if not quite as contemptuous, to the attitude that Michael Halsted talked about 26 years later: 'Oh, you're just little kids. Go and wave your flags.'[46]

The ban on floggers never seems to have been formally lifted. The squads were able to get around the ban with the use of the 'pattie', a pom-pom in club colours on the end of a stick. According to David Norman, the pattie was named after the American actress Pattie Duke who appeared in the introduction to her popular television show dressed as an American-style cheerleader. By gradually increasing the size of their patties and thereby testing and extending the boundaries of what was acceptable, the cheersquads were able to reintroduce the flogger by stealth. From 1972 until about 1979, however, the flogger all but disappeared.[47]

During roughly the same period the fence banner became a casualty of corporate signage. A letter to Inside Football, written in 1972 by Gwenda Lucas of Reservoir, a disgruntled South Melbourne Cheer Squad member complaining about the lack of fence space available at Junction Oval for the banners of visiting cheersquads, seems comical in its naivety if read from a 2000 perspective.

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[44] Inside Football, 17 June 1972, p.12.
[45] Age, 19 June 1972, p.22.
[46] Michael Halsted interview, p.11.

> At most any ground you will find some advertising signs along the fence such as 'Carlton Draught' or 'Winfield', etc. These are all right to a limit but the Fitzroy ground is plain ridiculous. On the grandstand side there is not an advertising sign to be seen and the Fitzroy cheer squad has plenty of room to put up their banners - they had at least three. Whereas the remaining part of the ground is completely covered in advertisements from one set of goals right the way around to the next set of goals … Unfortunately, banners are not permitted to cover these signs.[48]

To Gwenda Lucas, the corporate signage at Junction Oval was an aberration, an unfortunate oversight on the part of football authorities or ground managers, who had failed to take account of a cheersquad's presumably inalienable right to put up its banner. The writer went on to make what would now be considered the laughable suggestion that 'surely some of these signs could come down to give visiting cheersquads a chance to put up their banner.'[49]

It is reasonable to assume that Gwenda Lucas was not joking. Football in 1972 merely flirted with the advertising dollar. It had not yet sold out completely. Club guernseys were still sacrosanct and any attempt to commercialise the Game was still capable of raising eyebrows if it was allowed to

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[47] David Norman interview, p.2.
[48] Inside Football, 9 September 1972, p.13.
[49] Ibid.

affect the actual spectacle itself. Saturation signage on the Outer side of Junction Oval was an attempt to capitalise on the many hours of valuable television exposure that the Game received. The Grandstand side was spared the blight because it didn't come into the view of television cameras. While commerce was unmistakably taking over the Outer side, community, in the form of the Fitzroy Cheer Squad's self-funded fence banners, still held sway outside of camera range.

The trend apparent at Junction Oval would be universal within a couple of seasons, but in 1972 it was still essentially foreign to a game that still made most of its income at the turnstiles. Cheersquads contributed their share of that revenue and, at the same time, contributed to the spectacle unencumbered by corporate motives. To Gwenda Lucas it was unthinkable that the contribution of a brewery or a cigarette company could be valued more highly than that of the cheersquads. The attitudes of administrators like Peter Lucas and Eric McCutchan, however, reflected the standing that cheersquads had in the emerging football industry. From the early 1970s to the mid-1980s the fence banner made its gradual disappearance. At the M.C.G., where more fence space was available than at other grounds, it made its exit gradually, relegated to the fence in front of the upper section of the old Southern Stand and the two decks of the Ponsford Stand, before they too were taken over by advertising. David Norman recalled that Richmond's banner was still in use at the 1982 Grand Final. Stretching from the time clock on the Southern Stand wing to the beginning of the M.C.C. Members' section, it read, 'Ruthless Richmond - Our Powerful

Premiership Predators - Our Tenacious Team of Talented Tigers Tearing Towards Triumph'. By about 1985 the fence banners had completely disappeared.[50]

While they may have appeared to degenerate into disorganised rabble, the cheersquads retained formal membership, albeit in diminished numbers, during this 'invisible age'. The disorder associated with the cheersquads of this time would seem to have been the product of an anarchic element, both within and peripheral to the squads, that was small in number but large in impact. Among the true believers, however, a yearning for a return to the spectacular visual impact of the era prior to the 1972 Victoria Park fire was being felt. A strong and ultimately prevailing element within the squads wanted the cheersquad to be an organised and highly visible focus of concentrated club support. By the end of the decade floggers were making their surreptitious return and run-through banners were becoming more intricate. On-field participation of cheersquads in pre-game activities, originally a spontaneous expression of enthusiasm, had acquired ritual status through repetition and familiarity and now demanded formal recognition within the football industry. The excesses of the unruly element could only sabotage acceptance of the squads within that industry.

For cheersquads to function effectively in their role within the industry certain conditions needed to be met and formally enshrined. A large organised group of concentrated support needed to have its territory set aside. It need to be allowed entry to grounds before the gates were open to the general public in

[50] David Norman interview, pp.2-3.

order to get its various items of paraphernalia into position. It needed access to the playing arena prior to a match in order to hold up its run-through. Meeting these conditions involved the granting of privileges not available to the general public. The League had the power to grant these privileges but it also had the power to take them away. The experience of 1972 had shown that it was willing to restrict the activities of cheersquads if given reason to do so.

That the League continued to tolerate their existence at all was probably due partly to the squads' contribution to pre-game activities and partly because the sum total of the members of the cheersquads of all League clubs represented a significant portion of the football market. Another factor, one which squad members were particularly fond of stressing as a tangible benefit to the League, was the spectacle that the squads provided. As Ricky O'Meara asserted, 'Because it looks great, it sells.'[51]

Kath Johnstone recalled an occasion, in the early 1980s, when the C.O.C.S. was refused entry to Victoria Park on the morning of an away match to collect the banner for the afternoon's game. Collingwood ground staff locked them out because they had left some litter behind after banner-making. The squad arrived for the match at Moorabbin empty handed. In protest at their treatment by the club, squad members took off their black and white apparel and greeted all goals kicked by their team by turning their backs. The lack of banner, colours and acknowledgment of goals was noticed by radio commentator, Harry Beitzel, who sent a message to the cheersquad asking for an explanation. Kath Johnstone went to the commentary box and

explained to Beitzel and his listeners the reason for the protest and the lack of a banner. Once again the Collingwood Football Club was overwhelmed by irate telephone calls. Ross Dunne, the man responsible for the lockout, was reprimanded by the club. Enough people had noticed the absence of a Collingwood run-through to convince officialdom that cheersquads were important to the game as a spectacle.[52]

Although some of the excesses of cheersquads were cause for concern, authorities had no wish to provoke a popular backlash by destroying the phenomenon completely. However, a withdrawal of privileges by either the League or the clubs would clearly have had the power to weaken it significantly. Although squad culture contributed to the spectacle and to football's corporate profile, its impact was fundamentally cosmetic and peripheral to the main thrust of the business of football. The League did not need the cheersquads as much as the cheersquads needed the cooperation of the League. For this reason, any attempt by the cheersquads to negotiate with the League had to be done from a position of weakness.

In order to improve their chances of achieving a satisfactory working relationship with the League, the cheersquads of the various League clubs joined forces. A combined association representing cheersquads was formed during the 1970s in order to present a united front in negotiations with the League. It disbanded for reasons which interview respondents were unwilling to elaborate upon. Another similar organisation was formed in 1987 and was more enduring. David Norman likened it to a union. Estimating, somewhat generously

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[51] Ricky O'Meara interview, p.15.
[52] Kath Johnstone interview, pp.11-12.

perhaps, the combined number of all cheersquad members at about 10,000, Norman suggested, 'With a little bit of unity there is strength.'[53] However, just as the C.O.C.S.'s waving of non-existent floggers at a match against Richmond in 1972 did not constitute strike action, neither could a body representing cheersquads strictly be called a 'union'.

A labour union makes a collective decision to provide labour for an employer provided certain conditions are met. The union's insistence on these conditions being met implies that the act of providing labour is not intrinsically enjoyable. It is only worthwhile, to the labourer, if the pay, the working hours and other conditions are satisfactory. Unionism implies an ultimate willingness to withdraw labour if conditions are not met.

Cheersquad members were not paid employees of the League or the clubs. Their labour was a labour of love. Their pay was simply the satisfaction of performing their labour. An organisation representing cheersquads was fighting simply for the right to provide that labour. Improvements in conditions were sought, not for their value as such, but in order to make the provision of that labour more effective. It would have made no sense for the Combined Cheersquads League (C.C.L.) to threaten to withdraw its labour because such action would have hurt the cheersquads themselves more than it would have hurt the League or the clubs.

The C.C.L. should only be regarded as a union in the sense that it presented a united front representing all cheersquads in their dealings with the League. Rather than having each cheersquad go to

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[53] David Norman interview, p.5.

the League to discuss essentially the same problems, ask essentially the same questions and negotiate essentially the same solutions, the C.C.L. was one body authorised to negotiate with the League on behalf of all cheersquads.[54]

The C.C.L. recognised the limitations of its bargaining position. To 'walk in there with a big stick and start making demands' would not have been advisable.[55] Its demands were, in David Norman's opinion, quite reasonable. It wanted roped off, fenced off or reserved areas set aside for the squads behind the goals,[56] thereby giving official sanction to a long established custom which had hitherto been maintained by virtue of the squads' early arrival at matches. The squads believed that it was in the League's best interests, as well as their own, that areas of visible concentrated support for each competing club become institutionalised and protected by regulation rather than by a weekly overnight vigil practised by die-hards. The V.F.L. ultimately agreed, but demanded that the squads put their own house in order first. It wanted an end to snowing, which had reappeared surreptitiously, if sporadically, along with floggers. It was also concerned at what it perceived as the negativity of some of the messages appearing on run-throughs. David Norman recalled the early days of the reformed C.C.L.

> When we first went in there, I was at a meeting with the late Alan Schwab … He said he had some guidelines that he would like

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[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid., p.6.
[56] Ibid.

> the cheersquads to adhere to, and when we got that under control, to come back and talk to him about some of the things we wanted.[57]

The A.F.L. guidelines governing various aspects of cheersquad activity, evolved as a result of those and subsequent discussions. Included among the guidelines were rules about the size of banners and provision for cheersquads to be fined if the maximum dimensions were exceeded. The O.R.C.S.'s banner in honour of Kevin Bartlett's last game in 1983 measured 44 feet high by 140 feet wide. The size limit that applied at Victorian grounds in 1998 was 25 feet by 60 feet.[58] As Kath Johnstone recalled, a dispute between the League and cheersquads over the maximum size allowable was the issue which, more than anything else, brought the 1987 chapter of the C.C.L. into existence. In the mid-1980s the V.F.L. attempted to introduce a size limit of 15 feet by 30 feet[59] and called representatives from each cheersquad into V.F.L. House to announce the new regulation. The cheersquads argued that the new size limit would be physically hazardous to the players. They felt that a group of players crashing through a banner of that size would be in danger of being hit by the poles holding the banner up. The squads enlisted the support of the media. After a three-day stand-off, the League

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[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid., p.3.
[59] Kath Johnstone interview, p.6. (but see also 'TERESA' interview, p.10. 'TERESA' recalled the VFL's proposed size limit as having been 15ft X 40ft)

was shamed into negotiating a new size limit with the cheersquads.[60]

Very large banners could be difficult for squad members to control, particularly in high winds. High spirits, too, could impede banner control. The Hawthorn Cheer Squad of the mid-1980s had a reputation for 'getting too drunk ... and stuffing up' at Grand Finals when attempting to control extremely large run-throughs.[61] Kath Johnstone recollected that in the days prior to regulation, the usual size of banners had grown to 30 feet by 90 feet. She recalled, with some amusement, that the O.R.C.S. had, on one occasion, 'lost' a banner 100 feet wide.[62] The 'losing' of a banner was possibly the greatest fear that could plague the collective psyche of a cheersquad. To see the lovingly crafted product of hours of painstaking collective labour torn apart by a howling gale before the players had had a chance to run through it must have been a recurring nightmare.

The League's insistence on some sort of size limit was a way of restricting the number of cheersquad members allowable on the arena prior to a match. In order to restrict that number to 20 from each squad, banner size needed to be restricted to a dimension that would allow that number of people to control it.[63] It was also possible that the League felt that by imposing an arbitrary limit it was giving itself the upper hand in the power dynamics of the relationship between it and the C.C.L. Another possibility was that the League, knowing that banner expenses were being met largely by clubs and their

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[60] Kath Johnstone interview, p.6.
[61] David Norman interview, p.3.
[62] Kath Johnstone interview, p.6.

sponsors, wanted to protect its corporate sector from having to foot the bill for attempts by rival cheersquads to outdo each other.

Shayne Honey explained how the system of fines for breaches of the A.F.L.'s cheersquad guidelines operated in 1998. A fine of $500 applied to oversized banners. However, a second and subsequent offence by a particular cheersquad within the same season would result in a $1,000 fine. At the beginning of each season the fine reverted to $500 for all cheersquads regardless of the previous season's misdemeanours. Fines also applied to oversized handles on floggers,[64] an interesting anomaly given that the ban on floggers instituted in 1972 had never been formally lifted. While lawyers could no doubt have had the proverbial picnic arguing the validity of these guidelines and the penalties that applied to breaches of them, cheersquads accepted them with only minimal dissent. When Mark Thompson played his 200th League game, the Essendon Cheer Squad produced an oversized banner knowing and accepting that they would be fined for their transgression.[65] The H.F.C.S. was a little more fortunate when an oversized banner produced for Jason Dunstall's last match escaped the notice of officialdom.[66]

At the end of the century the C.C.L. continued to serve as a forum through which cheersquads could raise and discuss common problems in order to find common solutions. Where club parochialism had once produced hostility between rival squads, a recognition that the similarities between cheersquads were, in many ways,

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[63] Nowicki and Filliponi, op.cit., p.42.
[64] Shayne Honey interview, p.6.
[65] Ibid.

more significant than the differences gave impetus to the ongoing existence of the organisation. Negotiation between it and the A.F.L. provided a regulatory structure that helped to formalise the friendliness of inter-squad relations.

Prior to the A.F.L. guidelines there was no regulation to stop rival cheersquads from sitting next to each other at matches. Although relying on a distant memory of his days as 'only a young naive kid', the President of the H.F.C.S., who opted for anonymity for the purposes of this study, attributed much of the tension that had previously existed to this absence of clearly defined territorial regulation.[67]

However, a regulation based on the fear that rival cheersquads sitting next to each other would come to blows was made to look absurdly redundant when two 'friendly' cheersquads decided to make a mockery of it. St.K.C.S.'s 'TERESA' recalled an occasion at Waverley when her cheersquad sat near Hawthorn's with only one bay between them. Ground staff had tried to insist that there be three bays between them despite the League rule only stipulating two. The squads defied the directive using the mathematically contentious argument that there were, in fact, three bays between the two squads if the area 'between' them was inclusive of the bays in which the two squads were actually located. A contingent of eight police officers stood at the back of the neutral bay between the two squads waiting for the seemingly inevitable confrontation. The attitudes of the two squads during the first quarter suggested that the police were in

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[66] The President, H.F.C.S. interview, p.7.
[67] Ibid., p.5.

for a torrid afternoon, as mutual abuse was screamed continuously back and forth between the rival camps. Their fears were heightened at quarter time when members of each squad invaded the territory of the other. However, no blows were exchanged. The invaders on both sides merely sat down among their opponents and exchanged polite conversation until the end of the quarter time break, whereupon they returned to their respective home bays to continue the tirade of abuse throughout the second quarter.[68]

The close and cooperative nature of the relationship between rival cheersquads contradicted a popular perception that the squads were mortal enemies of each other. An attempt by Channel 7's football-oriented variety show, 'Live and Kicking', to bait the C.O.C.S. during the 1998 season was thwarted by a tip-off from the opposition. Channel 7 had planted a North Melbourne supporter, in full royal blue and white regalia next to the C.O.C.S. area in the Ponsford Stand during a match between the two clubs. For the benefit of the cameras, the North supporter poured forth an endless stream of invective, at stentorian volume, at the Collingwood team. The camera angle was manipulated to create the illusion that the highly volumed heckler was actually sitting in the middle of the cheersquad itself. 'HELEN', a member of the C.O.C.S., insisted that the Kangaroo fan was sitting two rows down from her but on the opposite side of the aisle that separated the cheersquad's roped-off area from the general public. The Channel 7 story claimed that Kath Johnstone had him removed from the cheersquad area but 'HELEN' insisted that he had not been in the area anyway. The whole story was put

[68] 'TERESA' interview, p.10.

together, she alleged, by manipulating camera images. The television crew had become frustrated by the cheersquad's lack of cooperation and had decided to create something out of nothing. By refusing to react to the heckling the squad had denied the television crew their required footage. Some members of the North Melbourne Cheer Squad had obtained prior knowledge of the stunt and had warned their Collingwood counterparts of what was going to happen.[69]

Cooperation between cheersquads could even extend to the practice of 'off-duty' squad members attending neutral matches and sitting with one of the competing cheersquads. In 1990, 'TERESA' and three of four of her St.Kilda squad-mates, along with members of the Carlton and North Melbourne squads, joined forces to help boost the numbers in the West Coast Cheer Squad at the Qualifying Final against Collingwood. 'TERESA' knew the West Coast Cheer Squad members through the C.C.L. and felt it necessary to 'educate' the small and relatively inexperienced interstate squad in some of the ancient (and illegal) cheersquad arts, particularly snowing. For supporters of a struggling club such as St.Kilda, it was one way to experience the atmosphere of finals football. Unused tickets out of the competing squads' allocation could be distributed to friends from non-competing cheersquads who would otherwise have had difficulty obtaining them.[70] Essendon Cheer Squad's Helen Heffernan sat with her youngest son, a Carlton supporter, in the Carlton Cheer Squad at a finals match against Adelaide at Waverley in 1993. She cited, as one of her funniest

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[69] Research interview, 'HELEN', 11 August 1998, pp.2-3.

[70] 'TERESA' interview, p.1.

memories, the looks on the faces of the Carlton faithful when she told them which team she really supported.[71] Ironically, two weeks later, the two clubs were opposed in the Grand Final.

Although the C.C.L. helped to bring rival cheersquads closer together, it would be an over-simplification to say that such closeness was an entirely modern phenomenon. Margret McKee, a 46-year-old member of the Essendon Cheer Squad, was a member of the squad in her teens. She recalled being on sociable terms with members of other cheersquads. In the 1960s seating arrangements at the finals were relatively flexible compared to more recent times. About ten Essendon Cheer Squad members were able to squeeze into the area occupied by the Collingwood squad to help the efforts of their black and white counterparts at the 1966 Grand Final against St.Kilda. Her recollection as to which cheersquads she was on friendly terms with and which ones she wasn't suggested the existence of an elitism within squad culture, based largely on the success of the particular club. Essendon was probably the most successful club of the 1960s, with two premierships from three Grand Final appearances and a consistent record of finals participation. The cheersquads with which Margret McKee felt the Essendon Cheer Squad had the closest relationships were Collingwood, St.Kilda, Melbourne and Carlton. Collingwood, though unable to win a premiership, was consistently near the top, while St.Kilda was enjoying its golden era. Melbourne, though in decline, had been the dominant club since the mid-1950s and Carlton, buoyed by the influence of

[71] Written response to interview questions, Helen Heffernan, 24 July 1998, p.3.

Barassi, was showing signs of great things to come. South Melbourne Cheer Squad, however, was not part of the elite as Margret McKee recalled it. The club itself was a consistent cellar-dweller. Hawthorn, despite sporadic displays of greatness under John Kennedy early in the decade, was still essentially a struggling club. Although Margret McKee regarded their cheersquad as 'OK', its standing in the eyes of the elite was not high. She explained that 'Hawthorn was so insignificant in those days that we didn't really bother about them.'[72]

The ecumenical spirit among cheersquads went even further than social interaction and occasional moonlighting. Margret McKee's group of friends at Essendon in the 1960s actually went so far as to become financial members of the Carlton Outer Cheer Squad, wearing the badges of that organisation on their Essendon duffle coats. McKee saw this as a 'show of support' for 'the rebels'. She also numbered members of the Collingwood Outer Cheer Squad among her friends.

> I think we must have liked the rebels … I think they were just a bit more friendly or something. There's something about rebels, isn't there?[73]

'Outer' or 'rebel' cheersquads were sometimes at odds with their 'official' counterparts at the same club. Kath Johnstone explained that the outer squads were run by people with their own interests at heart rather than those of the club. She alleged that the

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[72] Margret McKee interview, p.4.
[73] Ibid.

Collingwood Outer Cheer Squad in the 1960s was 'basically a fund-raiser for … the Outer Cheer Squad.'[74] Rebel cheersquads were traditionally regarded by official cheersquad members as troublemakers, forced out of the official squads by their own inability, or unwillingness, to adhere to the standards of behaviour demanded. Even in 2000 the long-standing antipathy between official and unofficial cheersquads continued to provide lively debate on the bulletin board of *Nick's Collingwood Page*. In one typical exchange, 'MAGPIE MICK' complained that the 'imposters behind one end of the goals', meaning Collingwood's unofficial cheersquad, were 'yelling obsene jestures' [*sic*] and giving Collingwood supporters generally a bad name. He was supported by 'MAGPIE GREG', who alleged that the unofficial squad embarrassed Collingwood supporters with their behaviour which was highlighted on television and served to perpetuate negative popular stereotypes about Collingwood supporters. 'SPIDERGIRL', a member of the unofficial cheersquad retorted by claiming that obscene gestures and swearing at the football were normal and a traditional component of Collingwood supporter culture. She had previously opened the thread on which this discussion was taking place by attacking the official cheersquad for failing to provide a run-through for an Ansett Cup match at Waverley. 'CHRISTIAN FROM BERWICK', another member of the unofficial squad, suggested that magpies Greg and Mick 'piss off back to the Dolly Greys and say hello to Wayne Jackson'. The 'Dolly Greys' were Collingwood's female coterie group. Christian's

[74] Kath Johnstone interview, p.5.

comment carried an implied slur on the official cheersquad's conformity to A.F.L. regulations and middle-aged notions of 'respectability'.[75]

The letter cited earlier, from J.Kissick of Glen Iris to the Sun in 1972, referred to the heavy-handedness of football officials towards cheersquads as evidence of a 'generation gap'.[76] Despite the official squads' perception of themselves as loyal servants of their respective clubs, there has already been ample evidence given to suggest that the clubs did not always see their activities in a favourable light. Cheersquads in the 1960s were essentially young people's organisation, run by teenagers predominantly for teenagers. The 'generation gap' theory is convincing in light of the fact that most football club officials were at least one generation older than most cheersquad members. Margret McKee's teenage friendship network transcended club parochialism in a similar way, but for different reasons, to the C.C.L. in a later era. United by a common primal need to rebel, the 1960s cheersquads staked their generational identity in defiance of the middle-aged establishment that ran football, dividing along club lines only to the extent that the cheersquads of successful clubs were placed to flaunt their youthfulness more arrogantly than those of unsuccessful clubs.

Squads at the turn of the century were run, generally speaking, by the teenagers of the 1960s.

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[75] 'Where was the Official Cheersquad last night huh?' on *Nick's Bulletin Board*. Internet site. Posted between 13 and 15 February 2000. Accessed 18 May 2000 at http://www.magpies.org.au/nick/ubb/Forum1/HTML/000270.html

They fought their battles with a football establishment drawn largely from this same generation. By this time any 'gap' that existed between cheersquads and officialdom was no longer about generation. The excesses of the late 1960s and early 1970s occurred when the cheersquad, as a phenomenon, was in the springtime of its youth. Its cheeky irreverence put it at odds the middle-aged, middle-class mainstream that controlled football. Only as it acquired the safe conformity of adulthood could it be accepted as a legitimate contributor to the modern football industry.

If the cheersquad phenomenon could be said to have undergone a metaphorical transition from adolescence to seniority between the late 1960s and the turn of the century, the passage of three decades could be said to have wrought a corresponding physical transition on the handful of individuals who remained members of cheersquads throughout that period. St.K.C.S., in particular, had a core of long-serving members whose reminiscences tended to highlight the more mischievous exploits of their youth. Bill Cobb, the treasurer in 1998, admitted to having 'been around so long that [he was] part of the furniture'.[77] He remembered a particular occasion, during his teenage years, when cheersquad members had spent the night camped outside South Melbourne's Lakeside Oval. In the morning a group of them, including one girl, hired a boat and rowed out to the island in the middle of the Albert Park lake. On arrival, the boys, 'being gentlemen, like [they] were in those days', allowed the girl to get off first, and promptly rowed away,

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[76] Sun, 19 June 1972, p.25.
[77] Research interview, Bill Cobb, 20 August 1998, p.6.

leaving her stranded on the island until her subsequent rescue by the boat owner.[78] Barry Ross, remembered rowdy Friday nights camped outside Moorabbin. On one occasion, as he recalled it, the noise only subsided when a local resident produced a shotgun through his bedroom window, threatening to shoot if the noise did not stop. The ultimatum provided an instant cure for the collective insomnia.[79]

As Bill Cobb explained it, the excesses of this era were 'all in fun'.[80]

> These days we still have our fun. Different sorts of fun. But we're probably more professional in what we do. So, the image has got to be right. We let our hair down a little bit, but there is a time and a place.[81]

Margret McKee's youthful involvement with the Essendon Cheer Squad ended in her late teens as a result of her interest in horses. The demands of horse ownership were not compatible with an ongoing involvement in the cheersquad. Her friendship network changed as she entered the workforce. Later, marriage and motherhood restricted her opportunities to attend football matches. She began to attend regularly again in 1992, when her then 10-year-old daughter, Lauren, began to take an interest. Margret McKee rejoined the cheersquad in 1994 when Lauren decided to join. Even though the demands of weekend casual employment later restricted Lauren's opportunities to go to the

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[78] Ibid., p.4.
[79] Barry Ross interview, p.5.
[80] Bill Cobb interview, p.5.

football, her mother continued to attend football regularly as a cheersquad member.[82]

Where it would have been unthinkable, in the 1960s, for a cheersquad member to be over 40, this demographic was strongly represented in all cheersquads at the end of the century. The majority of members of this group fell into one of two categories; those who became cheersquad members when they were children or teenagers and had remained members ever since, and those who had more recently became members as chaperones for their children. Many of the latter category, like Luisa Gaetano and Pam Mawson, went on to become actively involved at a high level in the organisation of their respective squads. Where parenthood would have once spelt the end of a cheersquad career, it was now often the beginning. The cheersquad provided a meeting point for parents who, having joined the squad initially for their children's sake, developed friendship networks with other parents in a similar position.[83]

Barry Ross attributed changes in the overall behaviour of cheersquads to this modern trend toward family involvement. The excesses of a by-gone era were the excesses of youth. The increased involvement of adults in cheersquads had moderated the collective behaviour of the squads.[84] Examination of cause and effect reveals a 'chicken-and-egg' scenario. Moderation of behaviour undoubtedly made participation in cheersquads more attractive as a family activity but it would seem, from Luisa Gaetano's testimony at least, that these changes in behaviour occurred

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[81] Ibid.
[82] Margret McKee interview, pp.6-7.
[83] Ibid., p.7.

largely as a result of adult intervention. As previously noted, Luisa Gaetano joined the cheersquad as a chaperone for her child, didn't like what she saw, became involved and helped to make changes.

While this would account, perhaps, for the dramatic changes in behaviour that occurred in the Essendon Cheer Squad in the 1990s, more general and gradual behavioural changes that occurred in cheersquads generally over a much longer period were more likely the result of aging. Senior squad members, like Barry Ross and Bill Cobb at St.Kilda, aged simultaneously with the cheersquad phenomenon itself. The youth of squad culture was their youth, just as the maturity of that culture became their maturity. Collectively, the senior members of cheersquads, who tended to hold most of the committee positions, kept an eye on the youngsters to make sure they didn't get up to the same mischief that they themselves got up to when they were young.

Although I chose not to interview any squad members under the age of 18, there was evidence to suggest some resentment, on the part of younger members, to the domination of cheersquads by older people. Scott Morgan, aged 19 when interviewed in 1998, was one of the youngest members of a predominantly middle-aged C.O.C.S. committee. When asked why the squad's chanting had become lacklustre, he felt that the long-serving chant leader, Jethro, needed to be replaced. He felt that Jethro had done a commendable job in that position, but that younger members of the cheersquad were not joining in on the chanting because they wanted to take their lead from

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[84] Barry Ross interview, p.2.

someone of their own generation.[85] A new, and much younger, chant leader was subsequently elected at the squad's annual general meeting in December 1998 but the change did nothing to improve the squad's diminishing reputation.

Michael Halsted felt that football clubs were more inclined to respect a cheersquad with an older committee than a younger one. St.K.C.S. he recalled, had once had a very young committee which he felt was not accorded the respect that it deserved from the club. He felt that the emergence of an older committee had improved communication with the club.[86]

At Richmond in 1998, a person joining the cheersquad for the first time, over the age of 25, was only permitted to become an associate member. As such, they had no voting rights, were ineligible to be on the committee and had no guaranteed access to a seat. In determining the distribution of the squad's allocation of seats for finals, it was the squad's policy to cater for full members first before accommodating any of the associates. In the early 1980s a group of parents had tried to take over the running of the cheersquad, but the club had intervened, insisting that the cheersquad be run, as David Norman put it, 'by the kids, for the kids, under the club's direction'. At 37 years of age, Norman explained his ongoing involvement by describing himself as a 'big kid' who 'just stuck around'.[87]

Bill Cobb gave his view, possibly an idealistic one, of how generational dynamics should work in the context of a cheersquad.

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[85] Scott Morgan interview, p.3.
[86] Michael Halsted interview, p.3.
[87] David Norman interview, p.13.

> I keep telling people that if a properly run cheersquad is around you can get families involved … You bring young kids in. They grow up. And they take over. And it's an ongoing thing.[88]

Part of that ongoing process was the passing on of information from generation to generation. The making of run-throughs, patties and floggers was a trade or an art passed from older squad members to the younger ones. This could not take place in a cheersquad consisting entirely of young people.

As well as specific skills, there was a less tangible legacy that young people could receive from those a few years their senior. Scott Morgan's experiences suggested that there was a sense of triumphant self-awareness that a young person could attain growing from a child, through adolescence, into adulthood in a cheersquad. Scott Morgan learned this through a changing perception of himself in relation to those a few years older than himself. It was a process that became particularly noticeable on interstate trips. He found himself bonding, as an equal, with people to whom he had looked with reverent awe as a child in his early days in the squad.[89]

In addition to the responsibility of passing on arcane skills, older members of cheersquads also felt an unofficial duty of care towards the younger ones. On banner-making nights at Essendon, Shayne Honey and his committee took it upon themselves to ensure that no members under 18 were left unsupervised at the end

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[88] Bill Cobb interview, p.1.
[89] Scott Morgan interview, p.7.

of the night waiting for lifts home.[90] Where squad culture had once been pivotal to the politics of ageism, it now provided a site on which a more positive generational dynamic could operate.

While the efforts of the C.C.L. in securing squad privileges made cheersquad life considerably less spartan, the expansion of the V.F.L. into a national competition provided die-hard cheersquad members with new avenues for proving their dedication. Modern football replaced the redundant practice of sleeping out with the need to travel interstate to attend some away matches. Although interstate trips created an enormous amount of work for Bill Cobb, who did much of the organisation of St.K.C.S's trips abroad, Cobb regarded the travelling as being an important part of the enjoyment that he derived from being in the cheersquad.[91] 'JULIETTE', who was in the habit of attending most of Collingwood's interstate games, regarded interstate travel as the most expensive aspect of being a cheersquad member.[92] In addition to the expense, time was also a deterrent, particularly where work commitments were involved. The scheduling of a Collingwood away match against Adelaide in 1997 for a Monday night reduced the C.O.C.S. contingent to a mere five.[93]

Cheersquads usually arranged package deals for their members which included travel, accommodation and match tickets. At one point during the 1998 season, Bill Cobb found himself in the position of having to

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[90] Shayne Honey interview, p.2.
[91] Bill Cobb interview, p.1.
[92] 'JULIETTE' interview, p.4.

organise trips to Sydney and Adelaide, as well as a weekend pokie trip to Corowa for the squad's State-of-Origin weekend 'off', all at the same time. As treasurer, he had to collect money from squad members and organise transport and accommodation for all three excursions.[94] Arrangements varied from squad to squad, but it was usual for the squad to hire its own bus. For the Monday night match in Adelaide in 1997, however, the five C.O.C.S. members travelled by train.[95] Air travel was less time consuming but was considered too expensive by most of the cheersquad members interviewed, all of whom were based in Melbourne. Many were unwilling to travel to Perth or Brisbane, either because of the time, if travelling overland, or the expense, if travelling by air, but were regular travellers to Sydney and Adelaide. Bill Cobb missed only one St.Kilda match during the 1998 season. The club was drawn to play two matches in Perth and one in Brisbane during the season. These were in addition to the more routine trips, 'minor details' as he called them, to Adelaide and Sydney. He attended one Perth match but missed the other due to work commitments. For the longer trips his preferred method of travel was by air, although at the time of the interview, he was planning to travel by road to an upcoming match in Brisbane.[96]

Ironically, much of the expense involved in an interstate trip was self-perpetuating. As Bill Cobb saw it:

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[93] Ibid., p.6.
[94] Bill Cobb interview, p.2.
[95] 'JULIETTE' interview, p.6.
[96] Bill Cobb interview, pp.3-4.

> Going to Perth and things like that. You don't go over there for one day and come back the next. If you're spending that sort of money you know you'll go over for a few days. And like, Brisbane. If you go up that far you might as well make a holiday of it.[97]

The interstate trip, with the organisation that it required, was a significantly more complex way for cheersquads to prove their commitment to their respective clubs than the older practice of sleeping outside grounds. The trend towards complexity reflected the transformation in the nature of the cheersquads from spontaneous expressions of community to formally structured organisations. Nevertheless, close relationships between members and family involvement preserved much of what could be considered *gemeinschaft* in the way cheersquads operated.

Inter-squad relations underwent a similar transformation but again the change was not absolute. Informal friendship networks of the kind described by Margret McKee continued to exist, but the C.C.L. gave friendship between rival cheersquads a formal face. Solidarity between cheersquads in the face of officialdom's condescending paternal philanthropy raised the notion that the cheersquad movement was, itself, a community that transcended club rivalry. As David Norman put it, 'We're all doing the same thing, just different colours.'[98]

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[97] Ibid., p.3.
[98] David Norman interview, p.14.

As the struggle with officialdom continued into the twenty-first century, a united cheersquad community continued to be empowered by the C.C.L. It experienced victories in small battles along the way to the seemingly inevitable defeat that awaited all non-corporate football barrackers in the greater war, fought on battle sites inhabited by richer and more powerful armies. Whether the enemy was an overbearing A.F.L. or just a lack of sticky tape, solidarity between cheersquads enhanced squad members' experience of life in the struggle.

It was common practice, when teams from different states were opposed, for the home cheersquad to lend run-through poles to the visitors. If the visiting squad didn't have enough members present to hold up its banner, members of the home squad would often help out.[99] The sight, common in the 1990s, of rival cheersquads approaching each other in the middle of the oval to shake hands prior to holding up their respective banners[100] was a far cry from events at Victoria Park on 12 June 1972. It was a far cry also from media rhetoric that used so-called 'traditional rivalry' as a promotional tool. Much was made of the mutual loathing between Collingwood and Carlton. Over the years, many a newspaper was sold on the strength of these two clubs' supposed hate for each other. There was no media hype, however, the day that the Carlton Cheer Squad discovered that it had run out of sticky tape prior to a match against the black and white foe, and successfully approached Kath Johnstone to borrow some.[101] The C.C.L. did not create the

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[99] Ibid., p.13.
[100] Kath Johnstone interview, p.13.
[101] Ibid., p.14.

goodwill that existed between cheersquads, as Margret McKee's testimony showed. Rather, it formalised a goodwill that already existed and fostered its development.

Although some squad officials still used the term 'union', the C.C.L. could have probably been more accurately labelled a 'cooperative'. The President of the H.F.C.S. explained that if a cheersquad had a problem or an idea that needed to be discussed either with other cheersquads or the A.F.L. the matter would be raised and discussed at C.C.L. meetings and, if necessary, taken to the A.F.L. by the cooperative's representatives. An individual cheersquad might still approach the A.F.L. directly on a matter requiring an urgent decision. An example of this occurred in round 22 of the 1998 season, when the H.F.C.S., faced with three milestones and two retirements on the one weekend, approached the A.F.L. operations manager for permission to produce two banners for the one match. Generally, however, it was preferable for correspondence between a particular cheersquad and the A.F.L. to be handled by the cooperative.[102]

In 1998 the cooperative's chairperson was Collingwood's Kath Johnstone and the secretary was Judy Wilson from North Melbourne.[103] Meetings, which were held once a month at the Collingwood Social Club, normally lasted about two or three hours. Topics discussed were likely to involve such matters as problems encountered by cheersquads with ground staff at particular grounds or difficulties involved getting equipment such as banners into grounds. Sometimes the problem could be resolved, sometimes not, but by

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[102] The President, H.F.C.S. interview, p.7.
[103] Shayne Honey interview, p.4.

raising the matter of problems encountered, a cheersquad could at least alert other cheersquads to a situation.[104]

The privileges that cheersquads enjoyed were highly valued by the squads themselves and were used by the League as an incentive to maintain the squads' conformity to the guidelines. They were enforced by feedback from the public and video surveillance. Kath Johnstone explained that it would take only two members of the public to complain about the content of a cheersquad's run-through for the squad to be called before the League and asked to explain. Fines would apply if the claims were found to be justified. Squad officials were required to liaise with security on match days. The squad's territory was defined and if any trouble occurred in that area the onus was on the cheersquad to prove that its members were not responsible. Security video footage could be used either to support or refute any allegations of squad misbehaviour.[105]

While the League clearly held the upper hand in its relationship with the cheersquads, its guidelines were really only a form of quantitative regulation, imposing size limits and on-field personnel restrictions. As at the end of 1998, the more qualitative aspects of squad behaviour were regulated by each cheersquad individually. Codes of behaviour, while essentially the same in spirit, differed slightly in detail. While most cheersquads banned alcohol consumption in their area during a match, Hawthorn's rules and conditions of membership merely

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[104] Ibid.
[105] Kath Johnstone interview, p.8.

forbade 'drunken behaviour'.[106] The O.R.C.S. was a 'dry' area, but as David Norman explained, 'It's a game of bluff, really.' The squad committee enforced total abstinence in the cheersquad area, but there was no actual A.F.L. or M.C.G. rule to give any legal sanction to that ban.[107] Cheersquads were essentially self-policing. Even fines levied for breaches of A.F.L. guidelines were imposed by the C.C.L.[108] It was not in the interests of cheersquads, either collectively or individually, to provoke a hostile reaction either from the League or the clubs. While the ultimate right to heavy handedness belonged to the League, the clubs too, by virtue of their financial support, had the power to make or break the budgets of most cheersquads. By paying the piper, the clubs had bought the right to call the tune.

The survival of the cheersquads into the 21st century seemed remarkable in the context of the corporate orientation of the modern A.F.L., especially as it involved a guarantee, albeit conditional, of an access not always available to other non-corporate supporters. Cheersquad history, like the history of barrackers generally, lends itself to a Kübler-Ross interpretation. In the 1960s the unsustainable was defended as a right. Cheersquads saw themselves as above the law, as if to deny that littering and assault were in any way unreasonable. When the League belatedly acted against them after the Victoria Park fire in 1972, squad anger was expressed through an anarchic hooliganism

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[106] Hawthorn Forever Cheer Squad, 1998 Membership Application Form, Rules and Conditions.
[107] David Norman interview, p.6.

that fragmented the squad communities almost beyond both recognition and reconciliation. The squads could never be the same again because the Game would never be the same again. Those who yearned for the communion that cheersquads had once provided became willing to bargain to keep their communal ideal alive. Ironically, the bargaining process required the cheersquads to embrace a more corporate style. From 1987 the C.C.L. would improve their bargaining position but as the A.F.L. continued to shed layer after layer of non-corporate support their position became increasingly precarious. By 1998 depression was apparent. Kath Johnstone felt that the cheersquads had less than five years left,[109] while Pam Mawson raised the possibility that virtual advertising technology would make banner-making and, by implication, the banner-makers redundant.[110] Bargaining could only work as long as a market existed for the bargain being offered.

In the 1960s and 1970s the cheersquads fostered a communal spirit among football supporters that the breakdown of the V.F.L. geographical boundaries had threatened to weaken. As the Game became corporatised the cheersquads followed suit, providing a corporate home for this communal spirit. While each cheersquad was bound together by a shared love of its respective club, the cheersquads as a whole also represented a community, bound together by the shared experience of a particular style of barracking and related activity. This community was embodied in the C.C.L. If Kath Johnstone's prediction proves correct and Pam

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[108] Kath Johnstone interview, p.8.
[109] Ibid., p.15.
[110] Pam Mawson interview, p.13.

Mawson's fears are shown to have been justified, another layer of barracker will be absent from matches. A residual anachronism will have been corrected.

Chapter 10:

CLUB IDENTITY

Of the four understandings of community identified by Ian Andrews the one most apparent during the expansion of the V.F.L. into a national competition in the 1980s and 1990s was the ideological. This interpretation saw community as being constantly threatened by the unstoppable advance of modernisation. Supporters of *gemeinschaft* engaged in a noble but ultimately futile battle to preserve the Game as they had once known it. While cheersquads provided a refuge for football's communal spirit their highly organised nature was in some ways a contradiction of that very spirit.

The modern Game's increasingly national and corporate focus prompted nostalgia for more localised understandings of community. These understandings arose among football supporters as a direct result of football's historical role in suburban community formation in Melbourne. Prior to St.Kilda opening the floodgates of ground rationalisation by moving to Moorabbin in 1965, League clubs were identified strongly with the localities after which they were named. After demographics, economics and technology had wrought significant changes to the way community manifested itself in football the old localism, where it still existed, was merely residual.

It was in this context of declining local patriotism that Melbourne-based League clubs battled to survive the mounting economic pressures of modern football. The surprising resilience of the corporately

unfashionable Footscray Football Club in the face of a V.F.L. proposed forced merger with Fitzroy in 1989, suggested that the mourners of *gemeinschaft* had donned the black armbands prematurely. Even after the subsequent takeover of the club's board by a corporate coterie in 1996, evidence existed that the club's culture had not yet made an unconditional surrender to *gesellschaft*.

In 1989 the board of the Footscray Football Club, faced with serious debts, authorised club president, Nick Columb, to examine possible merger options with other similarly placed League clubs. The club's financial woes were compounded by its inability to attract either corporate or non-corporate support. Poor on-field results in 1989 had resulted in a decline in attendances, with only 8,673 attending the last home match against Richmond. Lack of corporate facilities at Western Oval severely restricted the club's ability to attract sponsorship.[1] For Columb, a businessman and racehorse owner with Liberal Party connections, the preferred option was the club's survival in its own right, but support from the Labor-dominated Footscray Council was insufficient to convince the V.F.L. of Footscray's sustainability. On Sunday 1 October Columb met with representatives from Fitzroy and the V.F.L. Commission to discuss the foundation of a merged entity, the 'Fitzroy Bulldogs', to be based at Princes' Park. Footscray's club directors had been divided on the issue of a merger and one of them, outspoken left-wing lawyer, Dennis Galimberti,

[1] Lack *et al*, op.cit., pp.249-251.

resolved to actively oppose the idea.[2] After V.F.L. chief commissioner, Ross Oakley, officially announced the merger on Tuesday 3 October the Sun's headline proclaimed the 'death of the Bulldogs'. Prominent television identity, Ernie Sigley, angrily threatened to relinquish his life membership of the club and local youth worker, Les Twentyman, described the merger as 'social vandalism'.[3]

Although the problems that led to the 1989 crisis would cost the Footscray Football Club its identity seven years later, an injunction served on the V.F.L. on 5 October by lifelong rank-and-file Footscray supporter, Irene Chatfield, forced the League to give Footscray a stay of execution. The club was given 21 days to raise the $1.3 million needed to keep the club solvent. An informal 'board-in-exile' was appointed. It included Galimberti and another prominent left-wing lawyer, Peter Gordon.[4] In view of events in 1996, hindsight enabled the Chatfield injunction to be seen in terms of the Kübler-Ross bargaining phase, in which the soon-to-be-deceased entered into 'some sort of agreement which may postpone the inevitable happening'.[5]

Granted a new lease on life, the makeshift board immediately organised a fund-raising rally at the Whitten Oval for Sunday 8 October. The gathering attracted over 10,000 people, including supporters of other clubs, in a strong show of support for the ailing club that raised $450,000. The offices of Peter Gordon's law firm, Slater and Gordon, in

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[2] Ibid., pp.252-253.
[3] Ibid., pp.254-256.
[4] Ibid., pp.257-259.
[5] Kübler-Ross, op.cit., p.72.

Nicholson Street, Footscray, became the headquarters for what was dubbed the 'Fightback' campaign.

The Slater and Gordon firm had a proud history of using the legal system to champion the rights of the underprivileged since it was founded by the self-educated socialist barrister and solicitor, William Slater, shortly after World War 1. The firm's early work was mostly worker's compensation cases for the Australian Railways Union, but it later branched out into civil liberties cases. It handled the cases of conscientious objectors during the Korea and Vietnam wars and actively opposed the attempt by the Menzies Government in the early 1950s to outlaw the Communist Party. It was also involved in municipal law, tenancy cases, probate, conveyancing, family law and commercial law. From the late 1980s the firm entered the field of mass litigation, in which it displayed a penchant for representing the underprivileged against more moneyed interests. Its 'no win, no fee' policy provided people who could not normally afford to go to Court the opportunity to take legal action where they felt they had a valid case.[6] Peter Gordon, one of Australia's leading litigation lawyers with a reputation built largely on his pursuit of class actions on behalf of asbestos victims in particular, was the firm's leading light and its familiar public face.[7]

Local newspapers, the Western Times, the Mail and the Western Independent, offered their support to

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[6] 'A brief history of Slater & Gordon', *Slater & Gordon, Solicitors*. Internet site. Accessed 27 June 2000 at http://www.slatergordon.com.au

[7] 'Who's Who', *Slater & Gordon, Solicitors*. Internet site. Accessed 27 June 2000 at http://www.slatergordon.com.au

Fightback and an extensive doorknock campaign was begun on Saturday 14 October. A major coup for the club was the signing of the chemical company, I.C.I., as its major sponsor. The Fightback also received support from the union movement which threatened to black-ban all V.F.L.-related projects, including the building of the Great Southern Stand at the M.C.G., if the Footscray Football Club was disbanded.[8]

In the wake of the successful Fightback, Footscray experienced a period of limited success in the early 1990s. However, by the end of 1996 it was once again languishing near the bottom of the A.F.L. premiership table. It had been a turbulent season with the A.F.L. keen to reduce the number of Melbourne-based clubs. Fitzroy had fallen victim to an A.F.L.-brokered merger with Brisbane and the climate was such that no Melbourne-based club could feel safe from merger or extinction, let alone one with a small supporter base, crippling debts and a history of on-field failure.

As the 1996 A.F.L. finals series was being played out in Footscray's absence, a changing of the guard was taking place at Barkly Street. Peter Gordon, who had become president of the club after his role in Fightback, resigned from his post at the same time as general manager, Dennis Galimberti. Galimberti claimed that most Footscray supporters were working class A.L.P. voters. He regarded Gordon, himself and, by implication, most Footscray supporters as 'natural enemies' of the A.F.L., which he saw as a 'bastion of the Liberal Party'.[9] Gordon and Galimberti stepped aside to make way for a new administration led by a

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[8] Lack *et al*, op.cit., pp.259-264.
[9] Mail, (Footscray) 11 September 1996, p.1.

four-man task-force of former players and businessmen, Ray Baxter, Rick Kennedy, David Smorgon and Alan Johnston.[10]

Deborah Gough, a journalist writing for Footscray's local newspaper, the Mail, described the takeover as 'a bloodless coup done in stealth'. At half time of Footscray's home match against Fremantle on 12 July, Baxter, Smorgon, Kennedy and Johnston had met to discuss the formation of a coterie of sponsors to stave off rumoured A.F.L. plans to force clubs into mergers. The clandestine nature of the meeting suggested to Deborah Gough that the task-force, like the club's previous administration, regarded the A.F.L. as the enemy. She quoted an undisclosed source as saying:

> The last thing we wanted was to have a dogfight going on in the papers. That would have played right into the A.F.L.'s hands.[11]

The rhetoric associated with Fightback had promoted Footscray as a battling club with a local working class following. In the first half of the 1990s Footscray had seen itself as defying the trend that was making attendance at A.F.L. matches a pastime for an increasingly wealthy audience. Since her appointment in 1994, Maribyrnong Council's chief commissioner, Barbara Champion, had been impressed by the importance that the people of Footscray attached to the football club. 'It provides a talking point, a sense of place, the glue,' she told James Button of

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[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid., p.3.

the Age.[12] She claimed that because the Footscray Football Club lacked the corporate connections available to clubs such as Carlton, it was 'staking its survival on putting down roots in the community'.[13] The examples she gave suggested that her notion of community was in line with Ian Andrews's second understanding. She cited player involvement in the running of camps for young drug offenders and the employment of long-term unemployed people on the Ted Whitten project at the Whitten Oval as evidence of the Footscray Football Club's place in a social system based specifically in and around Footscray.[14]

In the context of declining turnstile sufficiency, however, corporate connections had become more crucial to a football club's survival than its role as a pillar of community. In early September, James Button commended Footscray's campaign to sign new members but correctly identified the chief problem facing the club in its attempt to remain part of the modern A.F.L.

> Sadly Footscray doesn't do much for the A.F.L.'s big ticket items: corporate boxes and the box; top rating T.V. drama and finger-food football.[15]

When the task-force took over the club, outgoing president, Gordon, gave the new regime his blessing, urging supporters to work toward the common goal of survival and commending the new bosses for their

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[12] Age, 7 September 1996, p.A1.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid.

'business acumen and [their] love of Footscray'.[16] By this time the coterie was well established with over 60 corporate backers. It seemed, even at this stage, that it was not intent on continuing Peter Gordon's stubborn rearguard action on behalf of *gemeinschaft*. Deborah Gough suggested that change was afoot. Without naming her source she cited one of the 60 coterie members as saying that references to Fightback should be dropped from the club song and that Footscray should no longer be seen as an underdog at war with the A.F.L. Interestingly, her source argued that the club should continue to play its home games at Whitten Oval.[17]

Deborah Gough's informant was clearly not David Smorgon. Nor was her source an accurate representation of the dominant school of thought within the coterie. A report in the Age cited Smorgon as saying that the task-force had an open mind on the matter of where the club should play its home matches. Whitten Oval, the M.C.G. and Optus Oval were all under consideration.[18] The full extent of the coterie's agenda became apparent in late October, with the announcement that the club would change its name to 'Western Bulldogs' and play its home matches at Carlton's Optus Oval, the former Princes' Park.

Hailed by Gordon as a 'fantastic breath of fresh air and opportunity',[19] the plan provoked a mixed reaction among supporters and caused a rift between the club and the Maribyrnong Council. The conflict illustrated the way proponents of differing notions of

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[15] Ibid.
[16] Age, 11 September 1996, p.C16.
[17] Mail, 11 September 1996, p.1.
[18] Age, 11 September 1996, p.C16.
[19] Herald Sun, 28 October 1996, p.77.

community, whether they be marked by Bender's 'mutuality and emotional bonds' or by a common locality, could become divided on an issue directly because of those understandings.

In October 1990 the (then) Footscray Football Club and the (then) Footscray Council embarked on a $4.6 million project to upgrade the (then) Western Oval. The first stage was the building of corporate boxes on a new third level of the John Gent Stand, for which the club had incurred a debt to the council of $1.97 million. At the time of the task-force's announcement of the impending move to Optus Oval there was still $1.8 million outstanding on the debt, but negotiations between the club and what was now the Maribyrnong Council over the writing off of a large portion of that debt had been taking place. The debt gave the council leverage in its bid to convince the League football club that it was not above community. Barbara Champion suggested that a move away from Whitten Oval could change the council's attitude towards the club's outstanding debt and put proposed future works at Whitten Oval in doubt.[20]

In Footscray Mall, Deborah Gough discovered a mixed reaction to the club's proposed changes. Christine Dalipis of North Sunshine and Arnold Garcia of Gladstone Park provided responses that were typical of the opposite ends of the polarity. Dalipis felt that Optus Oval was too far to travel and was opposed to the name change while Garcia supported any changes that ensured the club's survival.[21] The territorial preoccupation of the former and the survival concerns

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[20] Mail, 23 October 1996, p.1.
[21] Mail, 23 October 1996, p.9.

of the latter represented the two conflicting strands of opinion that emerged.

Examination of other opinions, however, suggests that it would have been an over-simplification to regard territorialism, tradition and *gemeinschaft,* on the one hand, as existing in a perfectly parallel dichotomy to survivalism, change and *gesellschaft* on the other. Supporters, as well as opponents, of the new regime were represented among the territorialists. The former were keen to develop a regional identity rather than a limited local one. It would also have been erroneous to suggest that those who opposed change were not concerned for the club's survival. Rather, the opposing sides held different views of what constituted survival. The new guard was focussed on the economic imperatives that it felt a rise in the club's corporate profile would address, while Footscray traditionalists took the view that a change in the club's identity would, of itself, preclude survival. Despite their differing views, possibly influenced by their differing addresses, Dalipis's deep in the Footscray heartland and Garcia's in an area closer to Essendon than Footscray, they shared membership of one of Ian Andrews's third type of communities. Communion, shared through a common emotional attachment to club, over-rode geographical differences.

Arnold Garcia's response would have pleased club vice-president, Mike Feehan, who announced a new membership drive with an attack upon those fans who were in the habit of phoning the club to complain about its decisions. Proving that football club democracy in the mid-1990s was in a parlous state, he justified his 'pay up and shut up' attitude by

highlighting the primacy of the need for survival over any rights that members felt they had to influence the running of the club.

> Members must take up the challenge now by renewing their membership now, not wait and see who we draft, who the captain is or even what name we play under. If we don't have the support from members we won't have to worry about any of those details.[22]

The outburst was, in effect, a use of emotional blackmail as a ploy for denying a consumer's fundamental right to know the product they were purchasing. It constituted a telling indictment of the gaping chasm that had opened between football administrators and barrackers as a direct result of the economic imperatives of the modern Game.

Another of Deborah Gough's respondents, Graeme Golding of Tottenham, not a Footscray supporter but a former employee of the club, stated that the club helped the 'self-esteem of the area' and yet thought the name change was a 'nice idea'.[23] His comments suggested that the area whose self-esteem should be nurtured was the wider western suburban region into which the bulk of the club's supporter base had spilled since World War 2, rather than the local suburb that had spawned the club and from which it had taken its identity for over a century.

Matters were brought to a head when David Smorgon sought to justify the club's change of name in what

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[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.

Deborah Gough interpreted as a 'tirade of insults aimed at the [Footscray] area and its community'.

> What do you think of when you think of Footscray? Underprivileged, third-rate, not good enough, lacking success ... That does not convey the spirit that's in the [wider] western region.[24]

The outburst was reminiscent of Ron Barassi's 1989 comments that Footscray was 'full of Vietnamese, and drug addicts'.[25] Scott Cullan of the Herald Sun described it as 'extraordinarily tactless' and noted that Smorgon was a Toorak resident.[26] Smorgon later claimed that the press had given a misleading impression of his views. He said that his comments were a reiteration of opinions that had been expressed in surveys conducted in Melton, Sunbury and Werribee, rather than his own views.[27] The areas mentioned had earlier been cited by Rick Kennedy as those from which the club should be seeking its supporters because Footscray was 'no longer the hub of the western region.'[28] As had been the case when St.Kilda embraced its recognised heartland in the mid-1960s, League football's iconography lagged well behind demographic reality.

Notwithstanding Peter Gordon's observations at the time of the takeover, it would appear that David

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[24] Mail, 30 October 1996, p.1.
[25] Comments made on 3AW Sports Show, cited in Lack *et al*, op.cit., p.249, with a reference to Sunday Press, 30 April 1989.
[26] Herald Sun, 26 October 1996, p.103.
[27] Mail, 20 November 1996, p.13.

Smorgon did not regard 'business acumen' and 'love of Footscray' as mutually compatible. Smorgon claimed that he was attempting to 'reverse the club's image' by promoting a winning mentality at all levels in the club from board members to bootstudders.[29] This new image was a clear shift from the 'people's club' promoted by Gordon and Galimberti. No longer was the club to be a representative of a working class community naturally opposed to an A.F.L. allegedly dominated by supporters of the Liberal Party.

Paul Adams of Yarraville, in a letter to the Mail, noted that Smorgon's attitude was a far cry from the philosophy that had characterised the Fightback era. He drew attention to Smorgon's position as a director of the Sydney Institute, 'one of Australia's premier New Right think tanks', whose economic rationalist philosophies had helped to influence government cuts and privatisations of services 'traditionally important for people in the west'.[30]

Another Fightback veteran who felt betrayed by the new regime was Denis Lupton, a Barkly Street service station proprietor.

> I put a bit of money in to save the club in 1989, a lot of ordinary supporters did, and they didn't do it to see them play at Carlton. There should have been more consultation.[31]

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[28] Mail, 30 October 1996, p.1.
[29] Mail, 20 November 1996, p.13.
[30] Mail, 27 November 1996, p.24.
[31] Herald Sun, 26 October 1996, p.10.

Smorgon's negative comments about Footscray's image infuriated Footscray resident and former mayor, Ron Jevic, who saw fit to raise the small matter of $1.8 million as a stick with which to beat the club.

> When I was a councillor in the City of Footscray, the footy club was always seeking financial assistance from the community it now wants to disown. How dare they accumulate a debt of $1.8 million ... to the community of 'third rate losers' and then say not only do we want to take your name out of the club and get the hell out of Footscray but we don't even want to pay back the debt.[32]

Despite strong words from past and present municipal officials, negotiations over the reduction of the club's debt to Council continued, with the council using the club's financial liability as a lever in negotiations to ensure its continued presence at the Whitten Oval, if only on a limited and temporary basis. The new task-force was forced to accept a compromise on the home ground issue by agreeing to allow two games to be played at Whitten Oval in 1997, with the possibility of two more in 1998. It was clear, however, that the club saw the proposed new Docklands stadium, later named Colonial Stadium, as its long-term home match venue.[33]

The eventual agreement between the football club and the council reduced the club's debt to $750,000.

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[32] Mail, 30 October 1996, p.7.
[33] Mail, 30 October 1996, p.3.

The club's administrative base was to remain at Whitten Oval to which the club was bound by a 25 year lease at an initial annual rental of $95,000, increasing to $115,000 after five years. The council was free to encourage other sporting clubs to use the oval. As the club's main creditor, the council would be free to inspect the club's financial records, play a role in any merger negotiations and call in the debt if it perceived that the club was no longer a true representative of the western suburbs. Council clearly held the whip hand in the deal and Smorgon made it clear that the willingness of the task-force to take positions on the club's board was entirely dependant on the willingness of council to waive a considerable portion of the $1.8 million debt. As board members were personally liable for the club's debt, he and his colleagues were unwilling to take on a $1.8 million debt that they had not created.[34]

Larry Noye of Altona felt that the 'likeable, most approachable and dedicated' Barbara Champion had been too soft in her dealings with the club. He felt that, as an unelected commissioner, she had erred in assuming Maribyrnong ratepayers were willing to waive the greater portion of the club's debt. He linked the new regime of the club with the 'domineering A.F.L.' as the collective enemy 'riding roughshod' over the local community.[35]

Deborah Gough described the club's rejection of Whitten Oval as a match venue and its adoption of a regional identity as the 'death knell for suburban football', a victory for 'glitz, gloss and pandering

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[34] Mail, 20 November 1996, p.5.
[35] Mail, 13 November 1996, p.16.

to daily journos and corporate dollars'. Her eulogy appeared in a Mail editorial.

> Footscray, you were all heart when all else failed. When North left Arden Street, you stood firm, when Essendon left Windy Hill, you were defiant. When it was Sydney's dancing girls, you still had a local band walking around the oval at half-time. You offered none of the gleam but all the endearing and gritty qualities of a club trying to keep the good things about football alive.[36]

She argued that when a football club was named after a suburb, the suburb enjoyed a national profile. If the club changed its name that profile was lost. The football club had made Footscray famous. 'What will Footscray be known for now?' she asked.[37] Perhaps Smorgon and Barassi had already given the answer.

Prior to St.Kilda's relocation in 1965, the thought of a 'Western' club playing its home matches in an inner suburb directly north of the city would not have made much sense. The convention whereby a football club represented a place included the accepted practice that a home ground within easy walking distance of the place being represented would also be the venue for half of that club's matches. The St.Kilda move and, to a lesser extent, North Melbourne's short-lived sojourn at Coburg in the same

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[36] Mail, 30 October 1996, p.5.
[37] Ibid.

year weakened that convention. At the same time, the arrangement whereby the Richmond and Melbourne clubs shared the M.C.G. became the first of a succession of ground-sharing deals that gradually reduced the number of League football venues in Melbourne. By 1996 Hawthorn and St.Kilda were sharing Waverley and Collingwood was playing the bulk of its home matches at the M.C.G. along with Melbourne, Richmond, Essendon and North Melbourne. Such arrangements would not have been possible in 1965, when all League matches were played simultaneously on Saturday afternoons. Since then, Carlton had welcomed Fitzroy and Hawthorn as co-tenants at Princes Park at various times. Fitzroy's resumé of tenancies included the club's traditional home in Brunswick Street, Fitzroy, the Princes' Park ground, later dubbed 'Optus Oval', in North Carlton, St.Kilda's Junction Oval, Collingwood's Victoria Park ground in Abbotsford and the Western Oval, later named 'Whitten Oval', in West Footscray.

As the more primitive of Melbourne's football grounds either fell into complete disuse or became simply training and administrative centres for League clubs, an expectation developed among football followers that League venues would be places that provided adequate seating and some measure of protection from the elements. Footscray's Whitten Oval, however, provided neither of these. The ground was famous for its howling gales and its large areas of terraced, but predominantly unsheltered, mound. On a wet day one simply got wet. In a capacity crowd spectators unable to find suitable vantage positions saw little or none of the action. Nevertheless, as poor as facilities undoubtedly were, the ground was

held in fond regard by more nostalgic barrackers as a throwback to an earlier less corporate era.

By 1996, however, nostalgia was not a commodity that could fill the coffers of a struggling football club. In corporate eyes, the Whitten Oval could no longer pass muster as a venue for elite Australian Football. For varied reasons many Footscray barrackers agreed. Gwen Connell, a supporter for 23 years, felt that facilities at Whitten Oval were a disincentive to opposition supporters to attend the ground.[38] Ralph Edwards, a former player and backer of the task-force was sympathetic to the plight of the corporate sponsor.

> We make them sit out in the rain to watch the game. Who's going to want to pay for that. At Optus they can sit in comfort.[39]

A.O'Halloran of West Footscray agreed that Optus Oval was a better venue for the 'influential sponsor'. However, she maintained that Whitten Oval was more suitable for the 'ordinary supporter'.[40]

While it would require further research to determine whether any particular class of football barracker actually enjoyed getting wet at the football, the comments of Edwards and O'Halloran indicated a perception that a gap existed between the needs of the 'influential' members of a football club and those of the 'ordinary'. Connell's primary concern, which seemed to be for the comfort of

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[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid., p.7.

visiting supporters, carried the amusing implication that Bulldog barrackers, unlike 'visitors', were a hardy lot who could endure anything. Taken collectively, the three comments merged into an altruistic concern for unfortunate members of the corporate sector and equally pathetic opposition supporters, corporate or otherwise, who needed special treatment because they lacked the battle-hardened toughness of the Bulldog rank-and-file.

Apart from the matter of spectator facilities, there was also considerable pressure on the club to move from Whitten Oval because of criticism of its playing surface. As part of its deal with the club, Maribyrnong Council undertook a project to re-grass the entire oval during the summer of 1996/97. Larry Noye, a regular correspondent to the Mail, emerged as a strong supporter of Whitten Oval, with the 'impregnable' home ground advantage that its idiosyncrasies allegedly gave the Bulldogs, during the home ground debate that continued to rage through the summer.[41]

Advocates of tradition over change were dealt a further blow when the A.F.L. ordered the transfer of the first of Whitten Oval's two games for the season. The opening round clash with Fremantle was moved to Optus Oval after a ground inspection in February revealed that the ground would not be in a satisfactory condition.[42] Larry Noye complained bitterly :

> Paying Footscray ratepayers must trudge for the opening match to the ground promoted by

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[41] Ibid.
[42] Mail, 12 March 1997, p.3.

> the entrepreneurial John Elliot. If any 'Son of the 'Scray' seeks to rest his weary stern on a seat, he must pay for it, as at 11 other 'home' games.[43]

John Elliot's ground, with its newly built Legends Stand dedicated unashamedly to the glory of the Navy Blues, would not immediately make a happy home for many 'Sons of the 'Scray'. Larry Noye had exaggerated the problem slightly, however. It was not just his minor error in the calculation of the number of matches scheduled for Optus Oval but also the fact that Western Bulldogs supporters would be provided with more than adequate free seating at Optus Oval provided they were members of the club.

The 'Stand Up and Be Counted' television advertising campaign had been produced at no cost by Chris Joiner of Corporate Images, an Essendon supporter who was persuaded by Bulldogs board member, Trevor Flett of F.H.A. Design, to offer his services. Air-time on Channels 7 and 9 was donated to the club by several sponsors who insisted on remaining anonymous.[44] The club was determined to increase its membership to the level needed to enable its survival. Membership would be encouraged not just by providing comfortable seating for those who joined, but by punishing those who didn't.

The club's public relations were dealt a savage blow in round one, when many outraged Bulldog supporters refused to pay the required price for a seat in John Elliot's monument to the Carlton Football

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[43] Mail, 26 March 1997, p.12.
[44] Mail, 19 February 1997, p.15.

Club. Non-members who did not arrive early enough to secure a place in the strictly limited general admission area were required to pay $12 for reserved seating in the Legends Stand, in addition to the general admission price of $12.50. Even members who wished to sit with non-member friends in the Legends Stand were required to pay the $12 fee.[45] The thrilling Western Bulldogs-Fremantle clash was played out in front of the ludicrous backdrop of an almost empty Legends Stand as hundreds of disgruntled fans walked away, refusing to pay for a reserved seat. The presence of a paltry 8,667 customers,[46] at a match from which patrons were being turned away for being unwilling to pay $24.50, was clear evidence of a marketing disaster.

Following adverse press criticism of opening round seating arrangements the club's president, David Smorgon, and chief executive officer, Mark Patterson, issued a public apology and announced details of a less prohibitive pricing structure for reserved seating at future Western Bulldogs home matches at Optus Oval. Entry to the Legends Stand would be free for members. Friends of members could purchase guest passes into the stand for $4 in addition to the general admission price. Other adults could pay $5 plus general admission for a seat. Concession rates would apply, where appropriate, on both the general admission fee and the cost of a seat.[47] While the new prices would have softened the blow, attending a home match at Optus Oval was clearly a more complicated, albeit a more comfortable, pastime than paying general

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[45] Mail, 2 April 1997, p.3.
[46] Herald Sun, 31 March 1997, p.42.
[47] Ibid.

admission to stand on a terraced mound in windswept West Footscray.

As has already been shown, acceptance of change at Footscray was far from unanimous. In November 1996, the Footscray Forever Committee was formed to oppose the change of name. Among its members was a former captain and club president, Jack Collins, who complained about the undemocratic manner by which the board was instituting the change.[48] By February, the pressure group was reported to be considering a Supreme Court challenge to the club. Committee spokesman, Randal Killip, claimed that he had received legal advice to the effect that the club could not change its name without the support of at least 75% of its members and signalled the committee's intention to field candidates at the club's annual general meeting.[49] It was the primacy of the need for survival that ultimately persuaded the committee to compromise its stand. The reasons for its partial back-down were indicative of the football barracker's powerlessness against the controlling bodies of the game. The A.F.L., whose long-term national agenda would have been helped by the demise of Footscray or, indeed, any of Melbourne's less fashionable clubs, was sufficiently impressed by the changes which the task-force was instituting to allow the club's continued existence for the time being. According to Wayne Jackson, the club had proceeded 'well beyond the point of no return'. On radio 3AW he expressed his hope that the 'small group of people' opposed to change would realise that the new board was giving the club a

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[48] Mail, 20 November 1996, p.5.
[49] Mail, 5 February 1997, p.1.

chance for survival that it would not otherwise have had. There was also the fact that $1 million worth of 'Western Bulldogs' merchandise was already in the market place.[50] This was the *coup-de-grace*. 'Footscray', as a commodity, was dead.

By using emotional blackmail in the extenuating circumstance of economic necessity, the task-force and the A.F.L. combined to crush opposition to the reinvention of what had once been the 'people's club'. Jackson informed the Footscray Forever Committee that the league would be forced to 'reconsider its options' if the club altered the new direction in which it was heading.[51] This thinly veiled threat to the club's ongoing existence was enough to force the Footscray Forever Committee into compromise. The committee withdrew its threat of legal action and urged its members to rejoin the club to ensure their right to take part in a vote on the name change at the annual general meeting in December.[52]

Although committed to playing as the Western Bulldogs for the 1997 season, the club agreed to the end of year referendum. Smorgon, however, was interpreting the committee's concern for the club's ongoing existence as a back-down and was claiming it as a 'major victory'. Either in arrogance or ignorance, he saw fit to boast:

> We have started to change the way the club is perceived and have brought all of the

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[50] Age, 13 February 1997, p.B6.
[51] Mail, 19 February 1997, p.3.
[52] Ibid.

> constituents within the club closer together.[53]

Dubious though his claim to have unified the club may have been, Smorgon was able to quote statistics which suggested that the policies of his task-force were working. He claimed that membership had increased by 127% and that the club had attracted fourteen new sponsors. Many of the new members had come from the specifically targeted outlying western region.[54]

As impressive as these claims may have sounded, however, they represented only the corporate view. In October, when the changes were first announced, Ross Brundrett, in the Herald Sun, had this to say about the corporate view:

> That's the view you get from looking at the game and its people from behind plate glass. It's a sanitised, simplistic view which fails to take into account the emotional attachment to a club which was kept alive by the ordinary supporters back in 1989.[55]

Again, there was the perception of a dichotomy between the corporate and the ordinary. Brundrett himself may well have been a shade simplistic in his implied assertion that plate glass could filter the emotional attachment out of the relationship between a football club and its corporate backers.

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[53] Ibid.
[54] Age, 13 February 1997, p.B6.
[55] Herald Sun, 28 October 1996, p.19.

Nevertheless a corporate entity's strength rested on the quantitative rather than the qualitative. As every corporate citizen knew, emotional bonds were of no value until converted into hard currency. The transformation of Footscray into the Western Bulldogs was the expression of an economic rationalism into which some of the more well-heeled members of the bulldog community were able to channel their 'irrational' attachment to the club. Beneath the demands of an age in which economics enjoyed ascendancy over community, *gemeinschaft* would need to don *gesellschaft*'s cloak if it were to survive.

Although the name change did not have the unanimous support that Smorgon claimed, a successful 1997 season, in which the Western Bulldogs only narrowly missed a Grand Final berth, did much to quell opposition to the changes that the task force had instituted. At the end of the season the club claimed to have made an agreement with the Footscray Forever Committee to put the initials 'F.F.C.' on the back of the Western Bulldogs guernsey in exchange for the withdrawal of opposition to the name change. As a result Mark Patterson announced that there would be no vote on the matter at the annual general meeting. Smorgon claimed that the deal had been struck with Footscray Forever Committee member, Gareth Stephenson. Committee secretary, Marie Thompson, claimed that Stephenson had approached the club with the plan without the backing of the rest of the committee. The club executive remained insistent that the deal would stand.[56] The barely visible initials, 'F.F.C', found their way on to the Bulldogs guernsey as agreed. Whether they stood for 'Footscray Football Club' or

'Footscray Forever Committee' may well provide amusing debate at trivia nights in the future, but the matter is scarcely important here. Suffice to say the initials on the Bulldogs guernsey survived into the twenty-first century as a monument to the death of democracy at the western club.

There was no contention regarding the 'Bulldogs' component of the club's new identity, however. As Samantha Stott put it, 'I could live with the name change because we always cheer for the Bulldogs anyway.'[57] The club had been known, either formally or informally, as the Bulldogs since at least the early 1920s.

Nicknames were used freely by early twentieth century football journalists as a colloquial way of identifying teams. When St.Kilda, along with seven other rebel clubs, left the V.F.A. to form the V.F.L. in 1896, leaving Footscray as the only club in the V.F.A. playing in a combination of three colours, the 'tricolours' nickname became a popular moniker for Footscray. North Melbourne was popularly known as the 'shinboners'. One theory for the origin of this nickname was that the club's Arden Street ground had once been used for hurling, an Irish sport known colloquially as 'shinbones' because of the ever-present danger of players being hit in the shins by the sticks used for playing the game.[58] Other theories attributed the name to a style of play traditionally associated with North Melbourne, a style necessitated by the tendency of the Arden Street ground to become a quagmire in wet weather, which produced similar danger

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[56] Herald Sun, 3 October 1997, p.10.
[57] Mail, 29 January 1997, p.26.
[58] Herald Sun, 1 April 1999, special supplement,

to the shins of opponents as the aforementioned Irish hurling sticks.[59] Still another explanation linked the club to the local meat industry that provided employment for many of the players.[60] It became a custom among butchers in North Melbourne to decorate their shops on match days with blue and white ribbons tied around the shinbones of cattle.[61]

Club nicknames, however, were completely informal and it was not uncommon for journalists to confuse the issue in match reports. In the 1920 V.F.A. Grand Final report in the Independent the 'magpies', Brunswick, were said to be 'fighting like demons' in the thrilling final quarter. The tricolours, Footscray, responded to the challenge by 'playing like tigers'.[62] The real 'tigers', Richmond, had defected to the V.F.L. in 1908.

In the patriotic atmosphere immediately after World War 1, it became a common practice to ascribe admirable qualities such as courage and tenacity to the bulldog. This particular canine breed was associated with Britain. A football team that displayed the courage and tenacity of a bulldog could be linked to all the finest British qualities. This golden era of imperial patriotism coincided with a period during which the Footscray Football Club dominated the V.F.A. competition. Although courage and tenacity were not the exclusive property of Footscray, these bulldog qualities were more frequently applied to it than to any other club at this particular time. At a smoke night which followed Footscray's 1920

Football's fabulous century, Part 6, p.6.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Sandercock and Turner, op.cit., p.51.

[62] Independent, (Footscray) 16 October 1920, p.1.

premiership, a red, white and blue flag embellished with a picture of a bulldog and the words 'bulldog tenacity' was presented to club president, Dave Mitchell. The following year's membership ticket featured a picture of a bulldog's head.[63] Although not formally adopted as the club's emblem until 1936, the bulldog gradually became synonymous with Footscray.

The club's era of dominance in the Association culminated in an end of season victory over the V.F.L. premier, Essendon, in 1924 and its entry into the V.F.L. the following year. After three years of predominantly lacklustre performances, the club's form in the early part of the 1928 season was sufficiently impressive for its home match against the reigning premier, Collingwood, in late June to be treated by the press as the match of the day. In Footscray's local paper, the Advertiser, the headlines boldly predicted that the 'bull-dogs' would not be scared by the reputation of the 'magpies'. Former Footscray captain, Con McCarthy, ventured the opinion, 'The "bull-dogs" are doing well ... and, with ordinary luck ... will be hard to beat.'[64] The nickname was being used in the local press with a familiarity that required no explanation. The Sporting Globe, however, still felt it necessary to explain the term to its readers.

> The game between the 'bulldogs', as the Footscray team is known locally, and

[63] Lack *et al*, op.cit., p.68.
[64] Advertiser, 23 June 1928, p.1.

> Collingwood, the League leaders, aroused tremendous interest.[65]

Prior to the match Footscray committeeman, Jack Nobbs, introduced a novelty which also aroused some interest. By using his own pet bulldog as a team mascot,[66] he gave the proverbial source of Footscray's renowned tenacity a physical presence. Thus, the abstract was given concrete reinforcement in the public consciousness. Thankfully, Richmond never attempted the same tactic.

The Argus remarked that it had become 'the fashion' for clubs to adopt a mascot and offered an ironic explanation for Footscray's defeat by Collingwood.

> The attribute of the bulldog, 'what he has he holds', was in some degree responsible for the defeat on Saturday. With a lead of 20 points at the opening of the final quarter, gained by speed and enterprise, the Footscray plan of campaign was to 'hold' its advantage rather than increase it, and in so doing it played into the hands of Collingwood, who, aided by the breeze, finished with rare determination.[67]

The alleged attribute was reflected in the motto, '*Cede Nullis*' (Yield To None), which the club adopted in 1937, the year prior to its official adoption of

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[65] Sporting Globe, 23 June 1928, p.2.
[66] Lack *et al*, op.cit., p.105.
[67] Argus, 25 June 1928, p.6.

the Bulldogs emblem.[68] This formalisation was the product of a gradual reinforcement of a public perception. The perception had been cultivated over two decades by media imagery and the isolated actions of individuals such as Jack Nobbs.

At Hawthorn, however, the adoption of the 'Hawks' emblem occurred much more suddenly. The hawthorn bush from which the suburb, and hence the football team, derived its name, was also known as the May bush because, as Harry Gordon explained in The hard way, it was at its most attractive in May 'when it was covered in the gold of yellowing fruit and the brown of a bronzed foliage'.[69] Its flowers were known as 'mayblooms' and were probably the inspiration behind the club's colours of brown and gold. In any case the maybloom became the club emblem and persisted for almost two decades after Hawthorn's entry to the V.F.L. in 1925.[70] An alternative nickname arose briefly in 1933, when the club changed its guernsey design to a brown V on a yellow background. The 'effect of the brown dripping into the yellow' gave rise to the moniker, 'mustard pots'. The changed guernsey, and the new nickname which went with it were abandoned after only one season.[71]

A more lasting change to the Hawthorn image occurred on 15 May 1943, when coach, Roy Cazaly, decreed that Hawthorn would henceforth be known as the 'hawks'. Cazaly had long been annoyed by what he considered the effeminate connotations of the mayblooms label. He hoped that the new name would

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[68] Lack *et al*, op.cit., p.124.
[69] Gordon, op.cit., p.46.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid., p.63.

inspire the players to 'fight hard and carry the ball away with pace and dash to the goal.'[72]

Cazaly's rejection of a floral emblem in favour of that of a bird of prey reflected the growth of an aggressive professionalism which was relatively new in football's middle class strongholds. In the period between the two world wars impoverished working class communities in suburbs like Collingwood and Richmond had found solace and strength in the exploits of football teams whose achievements were not hindered in any way by middle class baggage such as amateurism or notions of fair play. Tough economic conditions bred tough and ruthless footballers for whom football provided a possible escape route from grinding poverty. Their successes on the field gave their supporters a vicarious source of pride that the economic system denied them. Amateurism was the luxury of middle class clubs like Hawthorn and Melbourne. The price of this luxury, however, was on-field failure. In his association of the maybloom with effeminacy and his demand for a more aggressive image, Cazaly was declaring, in the gendered terminology typical of the time, his intention that Hawthorn would be seen as powerful. Melbourne had undergone a similar change of image when it rejected the fuschia for the demon in 1933. Coach 'Checker' Hughes was reported to have lambasted his players for 'playing like a lot of flowers', urging them instead to 'play like demons'.[73]

The Sporting Globe announced Hawthorn's Cazaly-imposed nickname change and, the following week, carried the three-quarter time headline, 'Hawks lead

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[72] Ibid., p.78.
[73] Herald Sun, 8 April 1999, special supplement, *Football's fabulous century, Part 8*, p.3.

Melbourne'.[74] The Hawthorn Standard, however, took two weeks to acknowledge the new name, and then only with the self-conscious protection of inverted commas. The headline on 2 June read:

> HAWTHORN IN THE FOUR
> 'Hawks' Hold Fitzroy at Critical Stage of Play.[75]

Two weeks later a new milestone was reached in the local paper's acceptance of the new nickname, when the editor allowed a passage of the text to tell readers that 'North was unable to counter the Hawks' fast and systematic play'. In the headline, however, Hawthorn was still the 'Hawks', i.e. with inverted commas.[76] Only on 30 June did the Hawthorn Standard allow itself to use the new nickname naked.

> TIGERS OVERWHELM HAWTHORN IN FIRST QUARTER
> Hawks Fight Back Strongly in Rugged Game.[77]

Post-war popular journalism, in its brazen informality, no longer felt the need to use inverted commas around football club nicknames as a way of apologising for the use of colloquialism. The names themselves, once very informal and loosely applied, were eventually incorporated into official club logos

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[74] Sporting Globe, 22 May 1943, p.3.
[75] Hawthorn Standard, 2 June 1943, p.3.
[76] Hawthorn Standard, 23 June 1943, p.3.
[77] Hawthorn Standard, 30 June 1943, p.3.

and used freely and shamelessly by all branches of the media.

While Footscray had long been the Bulldogs rather than the 'bull-dogs', David Smorgon and his task-force took matters a little further. By including the nickname as a formal part of the club's identity, the Western Bulldogs board was following the convention of American sporting franchises, for whom place and emblem shared equal billing. The Miami Dolphins or the Green Bay Packers were not usually called simply 'Miami' or 'Green Bay', except as an obvious abbreviation. The V.F.L. convention, until the 1980s, had been to refer to a team either by its formal or place name, e.g. Footscray, or its nickname, e.g. the Bulldogs, but rarely both. The expressions 'Footscray Bulldogs', 'Richmond Tigers' or 'Collingwood Magpies', although not completely unknown, did not conform to the usual syntax of Australian Rules nomenclature.

The first sign that the convention was changing occurred as a result of the South Melbourne Football Club's relocation to Sydney. Prior to the 1982 season, it was announced that all South Melbourne home games would be played in Sydney. The V.F.L. had been experimenting with the scheduling of matches in Sydney for premiership points and believed that the severe financial woes that the club was experiencing could be overcome by developing a new market in Australia's biggest city.

In late February, the Sporting Globe displayed the new club logo on its front page. It featured a swan against the backdrop of the Sydney Harbour Bridge with the words, 'Sydney Swans', which, the story explained, was the name by which the South Melbourne

Football Club would be known in Sydney.[78] The club's administrative and training base would remain at the Lakeside Oval, Albert Park.

During the first half of the 1982 season, Melbourne newspapers continued to refer to the club by its traditional name. The Sporting Globe's summary of results for round one showed that South Melbourne, with a score of 20 goals 17 behinds (137 points), had defeated Melbourne, 16 goals 12 behinds (108 points). The club was listed as 'South Melbourne' on the premiership table.[79] This convention was observed until early June, when the V.F.L. announced that the club would, in future, be known as 'The Swans'. The Sporting Globe dutifully reported that Richmond, 20 goals 14 behinds (134 points) had defeated The Swans, 18 goals 25 behinds (133 points). However the team which appeared in 8th position on the premiership table, with five wins and six losses, was simply called 'Swans', i.e. minus the definite article with its upper case letter, 'T'.[80] In his regular column in the Sporting Globe, Kevin Bartlett suggested that the letters, S.W.A.N., stood for 'Side Without A Name'.[81]

Jokes aside, there was a looseness about the club's identity which persisted for the first five years of its new era. Expressions such as 'South Melbourne', 'South', 'The Swans', 'the Swans', 'Swans' and 'Sydney Swans' were all used in Melbourne newspapers at various times in various contexts, although the first two terms disappeared from the vocabularies of even the most careless of commentators

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[78] Sporting Globe, 25 February 1982, p.1.
[79] Sporting Globe, 30 March 1982, p.6.
[80] Sporting Globe, 8 June 1982, p.27.
[81] Sporting Globe, 8 June 1982, p.2.

after the club abandoned its Lakeside headquarters at the end of the 1982 season.

The attraction of a new supporter base in Sydney, in addition to the existing Melbourne-based membership, created an interstate factionalism within the club, which the improved on-field performances of 1982 did little to quell. In August the Sporting Globe reported that the growing Sydney membership, which was by now bigger than that in Melbourne, and the club's influential Sydney-based financial backers were clamouring to usurp control of the club from the existing board, many of whom had been associated with the Keep South At South movement which had fought to keep the club at Lakeside.[82] By October the Sydney faction had taken control of the club and it was announced that the club would move permanently to Sydney.[83]

A thrilling one point win over Essendon in Sydney in the opening round of 1983 raised expectations of a successful season among the Swans' supporters on both sides of the Murray. On 5 April, the Sporting Globe remarked that it was amazing how a club's membership could be increased by success. The Melbourne-based membership, which had plummeted to 12 by the beginning of the season, increased to over 1,000 in the week following the win. The club's old supporters were 'coming out of the woodwork' and jumping on the 'Sydney Swans bandwagon'.[84] However, after the club's second home appearance for the season had yielded a 140-point drubbing at the hands of North Melbourne, the same publication was reporting that the wheels of

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[82] Sporting Globe, 3 August 1982, p.1.
[83] Sporting Globe, 12 October 1982, p.20.
[84] Sporting Globe, 5 April 1983, p.31.

the aforementioned bandwagon had fallen off. As if in complete denial of the problems that had forced the club to Sydney in the first instance, the Sporting Globe's front page headline read, 'Come home Swans! Sydney doesn't want you!' The report argued that the Sydney crowds, already below the average attendances at South Melbourne's 1981 home games at Lakeside and still falling, would fall even further as a result of the North debacle. Fickle Sydney crowds would not tolerate lack of success.[85]

A year earlier, editor, Greg Hobbs, had written :

> I sincerely hope South Melbourne make a better fist of things as the Sydney Swans in the Harbour City. Because there won't be much to come back to if the Sydney mission collapses.[86]

He claimed that 'many of the old diehards' already felt as if they had lost their club. For these supporters, he suggested, life would never be the same again.[87] Whether or not this was the case, the character of the club was changing beyond recognition. As the old diehards faded into anonymity, their lost club became a corporate plaything, teetering on the brink of extinction for the next decade, propped up at times by a V.F.L hell-bent on becoming an A.F.L. There could, and would, be no return to Lakeside. South Melbourne was gone.

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[85] Sporting Globe, 12 April 1983, p.1.
[86] Sporting Globe, 23 March 1982, p.45.
[87] Ibid.

Even so, it took the Melbourne media until 1987 to accept the newly defined club. The Sun, in its regular Monday summary of the previous weekend's matches, continued to list the club as 'Swans' until the end of the 1986 season.[88] Only in 1987 did the weekly summary pay the new entity the compliment of traditional nomenclature by referring to it simply as 'Sydney'.[89]

The use of American syntax became more blatant when the V.F.L. competition expanded to Queensland and Western Australia in 1987. Perth's composite team was not only a *parvenu* to the V.F.L., unlike Sydney, whose historical links with South Melbourne gave it a relative legitimacy in parochial Victorian eyes, but its name provided stark proof that an American consciousness was pervading Australian Football. The West Australian printed a letter from P.Murphy of Donnybrook complaining that 'West Coast Eagles' sounded like the name of a baseball team from Los Angeles. He suggested that the W.A.F.L., the body responsible for the formation of the club, could have come up with a more 'dinkum' name.[90]

The Western Australian league was limited in its options to an extent. It could not use the simple title, 'Perth', because a Perth Football Club already existed in its local competition. It would have also been inappropriate to name the club 'Western Australia' because that title rightfully belonged to the State-of-Origin side. Nevertheless, the combination of 'West Coast', a term applied to a peculiarly Californian style of radio-friendly

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[88] Sun, 25 August 1986, p.63.
[89] Sun, 6 April 1987, p.85.
[90] West Australian, 6 November 1986, p.8.

commercial rock music, and 'Eagles', not only a potent symbol of America but also the name of a band instantly recognisable as an exponent of the aforementioned musical style, would have been particularly abhorrent to those who lamented the Americanisation of Australian cultural institutions.

Surprisingly, P.Murphy's letter was the only sign of dissent in the correspondence pages of the West Australian, although the editor of that newspaper suggested, shortly after the launch of the new club, 'Traditionalists may be dubious of the new concept, with its emphasis on American-style hype'. These misgivings notwithstanding, the editor felt that the new name, despite the lack of a certain 'ring' to it, would be accepted by the public after the new team had been through its 'baptism of fire in the crucible of the V.F.L.'[91] He continued by noting that 'nothing stays the same forever'. Australian sport was changing in both style and substance. Even cricket, despite the considerable weight of its traditional values, had been transformed by media interests and marketeers in the late 1970s and early 1980s and it was inevitable that similar forces would influence football.[92]

When the West Coast Eagles and the Brisbane Bears joined the V.F.L. in 1987 there were suddenly 14 clubs instead of 12. Within the living memories of the vast majority of Victorian football followers there had always been 12 clubs which, until 1982, had all been based in Victoria. It mattered not that four of the 'traditional' twelve clubs, i.e. Richmond, Hawthorn, North Melbourne and Footscray, were not founding members of the League. Nor did it matter that one of

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[91] West Australian, 1 November 1986, p.8.
[92] Ibid.

the League's original clubs, Geelong, was not even based in the same city as the others. In the context of the transport technology of 1897, the 'pivotonians' would have been as foreign as the Sydney, Brisbane and West Coast clubs were in 1987. It mattered not, even, that the V.F.L. itself was a splinter group that had broken away from the V.F.A. in 1896 for primarily economic reasons.

It became customary in the 1980s and 1990s for any innovations undertaken by football clubs or the League to be decried as a breach of tradition. Changes of home grounds, guernsey designs or club names, suggestions for the merger or relocation of struggling clubs and the creation of new clubs from outside Victoria were presented almost as the coming of the apocalypse. To many, longevity was the ultimate virtue and the essential foundation of tradition. New interstate clubs tended to be known, initially, by a seemingly contemptuous combination of place name and nickname until the passage of a few seasons granted them a degree of acceptance from the Melbourne audience. Tradition, in this popular sense at least, was a product of familiarity.

The potential for the development of a new syntactic tradition in club nomenclature became apparent in Adelaide shortly after the formation of the Adelaide Crows and the announcement of the club's major sponsorship deal with Toyota. The adoption of sponsors' names as a component of club identity was already accepted practice in such high-profile sports as baseball and basketball. The Adelaide Football Club's original theme song, 'Here We Go', was an adaptation of a traditional English soccer chant which doubled as a Toyota Camry advertising jingle. The song

referred to the club as the 'Camry Crows', an expression which was used by the popular daily press in Adelaide for a short period after the Toyota deal had been made. Subsequently the Adelaide press learned to tell the difference between the club's official name and the sponsor's wishful thinking. By the time the Adelaide team ran its premiership lap of honour in 1997, 'The Pride of South Australia' had long replaced 'Here We Go' as the club song. Toyota advertisements on many of Adelaide's buses, however, still carried the words, 'Camry Crows'.

Sponsors' logos, which began to appear on club guernseys in 1977, became an integral part of each club's uniform. In the 1990s supporters who purchased and wore official A.F.L. merchandise paid, in effect, for the privilege of being unpaid walking advertisements for their clubs' sponsors. At the beginning of the twenty-first century the logical extension of advertising's invasion of the club guernsey into the club's formal identity had not yet been made. The bizarre scenario of a future Grand Final between, for example, the 'Hyundai Blues' and the 'Drink Drive Bloody Idiot Tigers' at, perhaps, the Microsoft Cricket Ground might have been considered possible, however.

In September 1996, while the Footscray Football Club's new task-force was preparing to redefine the western suburban club, the Sydney Football Club was in the process of reinventing itself as an A.F.L. power. Thrilling home final victories over Hawthorn and Essendon, following an enormously successful home-and-away series, landed the harbour city club in its first Grand Final. A peculiar phenomenon occurred as the

diehards of the early 1980s emerged from their anonymity. Suddenly, it was not uncommon in Melbourne to hear the club again referred to as 'South'. The club's historical roots became a popular topic in feature articles in Melbourne newspapers during the week preceding the big match.

Paul Croagh, the owner of the Cricket Club Hotel in Clarendon Street, South Melbourne, appeared on the pages of the Age, wearing a tightly fitting South Melbourne guernsey and proclaiming that his hotel was the 'unofficial headquarters of the South Melbourne Football Club'. His nostalgic reminiscences of a Lakeside childhood included a vivid memory of a face-to-face meeting with his hero, Bob Skilton. Despite the fact that the ceiling of the pub was painted green, where it had once been red and white, Croagh said that it was beginning to feel 'like the old days'. He said that many of his customers were Swans supporters and that it had been 'standing room only' at the pub during the Preliminary Final. Bernard Mandile, the owner of a continental delicatessen in South Melbourne, resplendent with red and white banners in the lead-up to the Grand Final, had provided 'passionate resistance' at the time of the relocation to Sydney. Like Paul Croagh, Mandile had been born into a family of South Melbourne supporters and believed that many of the club's barrackers had remained loyal because 'there is no choice when it's in your blood.'[93]

At the Grand Final parade in the streets of Melbourne on the Friday before the match, a large contingent of Swans supporters was present among the

[93] Age, 25 September 1996, pp.A1-A2.

estimated crowd of 50,000. The Age suggested that not all of these had crossed the border to get there.

> Former South Melbourne supporters who have kept following the Swans since their move to Sydney appeared to be out in force. And North Melbourne fans were surprisingly restrained in their abuse of the interstate team.[94]

South Melbourne's triple Brownlow Medal winner, and Paul Croagh's childhood hero, Bob Skilton, felt that a Sydney victory in the Grand Final would unite the Swans 'family' on both sides of the border for all time. He went on:

> Much of the bitterness about the relocation of South Melbourne in 1982 has already dissipated and the identity crisis that has troubled us all at times has largely been resolved. People accept now that Sydney's roots are in South Melbourne and that there is no shame in this.[95]

Skilton's words and the revival of interest in the Swans apparent in Melbourne in 1996 hinted at the last of Kübler-Ross's stages in the grieving process, acceptance. Age journalist, Jake Niall, in an article in July that year, suggested that South Melbourne supporters had 'long passed the emotional bereavement

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[94] Age, 28 September 1996, p.A1.
[95] Age, 28 September 1996, p.B23.

stage'. He suggested that old wounds had been healed by a combination of the club's new-found success, an increased willingness of the Sydney administration to embrace, rather than shun, the club's South Melbourne roots and the simple passage of time.[96]

The club's increased exposure on television from 1982 onwards, with matches in Sydney televised live into Melbourne every second week, had raised the Swans' profile. Old fans gradually accepted the idea of following their club on television and a new wave of supporters, raised on television football, were not averse to the idea of following an interstate club.[97] Ironically, supporters who attended the club's matches in Melbourne enjoyed a stronger sense of communion than supporters of more popular clubs because of the intimacy of being part of a smaller group. *Gemeinschaft*, far from being residual, had actually occurred as a by-product of the modernisation process.[98]

Jake Niall's article had been prompted by a week of turmoil that had culminated in the merger of the Brisbane and Fitzroy clubs. Fitzroy, like the South Melbourne club in 1982, had a poor on-field record, a diminishing supporter base and massive debts. Its chief creditor, the Nauru Insurance Corporation that had saved the club from extinction two years earlier, was demanding immediate settlement of a $1.25 million debt. The club's survival had become, literally, a week-to-week proposition. Only an A.F.L. decision to provide emergency funding had enabled the Lions to field a team for its round 13 engagement with

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[96] Age, 7 July 1996, SPORTSWEEK, p.17.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Ibid.

Geelong. The paltry 10,504 who attended the Whitten Oval debacle that resulted in a 127-point win to the Cats did so on the understanding that this might have been Fitzroy's last appearance.[99] The club had signed a heads of agreement on 11 May to merge with North Melbourne[100] and the A.F.L. Commission on 1 July threatened to remove all funding if the club could not finalise a merger and satisfy all creditors by 12 noon on Friday 5 July. The League agreed to underwrite expenses for just one more match, against Essendon on 6 July.[101]

Believing that a reduction in the number of Melbourne-based clubs was essential to the success of its expanding national competition, the League had offered a $6 million inducement to any clubs willing to join forces and the North Melbourne and Fitzroy clubs appeared set to take up the offer. The merger could, however, be vetoed by a two-thirds majority of club presidents and doubts had begun to emerge as to whether the clubs would agree to it. North Melbourne was insisting that the new club be allowed an expanded player list in its initial stages. Most clubs were arguing that this would give the merged entity an unfair advantage. In addition, Footscray was demanding compensation for a breach of Fitzroy's agreement to play at Whitten Oval.[102]

As the deadline drew closer it became apparent that North Melbourne was not going to be easily swayed from its insistence on an extended list. Meanwhile, Brisbane Bears chairman, Noel Gordon, who had met with Fitzroy president, Dyson Hore-Lacey, in

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[99] Age, 1 July 1996, SPORTSMONDAYFOOTBALL, p.5.
[100] Sunday Age, 12 May 1996, p.1.
[101] Age, 2 July 1996, p.1.

March to discuss merger possibilities, had prepared an alternative proposal to put to the League. It was Noel Gordon who emerged triumphant from the League meeting on 4 July that rejected the North-Fitzroy proposal in favour of a merger between Fitzroy and Brisbane.[103]

With the demise of the Fitzroy Football Club as an A.F.L. competitor in its own right, the imagery of death abounded in the Melbourne media. One of the more eloquent mourners was Ken Merrigan of the Sunday Age.

> Football, the hoary old witticism runs, isn't a matter of life and death. It's more important than that. Life and death. The newspaper posters spoke of an A.F.L. club being born. Strangely, some of us had a nagging suspicion that a club had just passed away, loved but under-nourished. R.I.P. It had been on artificial respiration for a decade.[104]

The Kübler-Ross analogy was apparent in much of the reporting of the reaction of Fitzroy supporters and officials to the club's downfall. The editorial in the same issue of the Sunday Age reminded readers that when it had been revealed, two months earlier, that the Fitzroy Football Club was close to merger, the response from officials had been denial.[105] After the previous week's match against Geelong, Martin Flanagan had described the anger of one particular

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[102] Age, 3 July 1996, p.B15-B16.
[103] Age, 5 July 1996, p.1.
[104] Sunday Age, 7 July 1996, p.18.

Fitzroy supporter to the possibility that he had just witnessed the club's last game. He was 'twisting like a creature impaled on a spike … screaming "I hate the A.F.L.! I hate the A.F.L.!"'[106] Dyson Hore-Lacy, Q.C., whose preferred option for Fitzroy had been the North Melbourne proposal, reacted to the ambush of that deal by Brisbane and the A.F.L. with this loaded observation.

> I've been appearing for crims for 25 years, but I never knew what a real crook was until I became involved in football administration.[107]

While Hore-Lacy's comment was vulnerable to charges of hyperbole, popular perceptions of football administrators took a battering in the latter half of the 1990s as financially-driven decisions by the A.F.L. continued to alienate a growing section of the football public. The decision in 1997 to sell the Waverley Park stadium in order to finance the League's investment in the Docklands project was perceived by many observers as a disenfranchisement of people living in Melbourne's demographic centre. This was the same area that the V.F.L. had vigorously targeted in the 1960s in its initial decision to build the stadium. The Sunday Herald Sun's Rod Nicholson saw the Waverley decision as the continuation of the same process embodied in the Brisbane-Fitzroy merger.

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[105] Ibid.
[106] Age, 1 July 1996, SPORTSMONDAYFOOTBALL, p.12.
[107] Sunday Age, 7 July 1996, p.1.

> The A.F.L. commissioners are again telling the Victorian football public to 'like it or lump it'. Unconcerned that 'a few' Fitzroy supporters may turn their collective backs on the code now the club has been shunted interstate after 113 years, the commissioners have decided what is best for the 1.2 million footy followers who live in Melbourne's south-east.[108]

In 1998 retired coach, Tom Hafey, and League chief, Wayne Jackson, presented the opposing sides in the Waverley-Docklands debate in an article in the Herald Sun. Hafey argued that the League already owned Waverley and that it was ideally located for attracting the many young families in Melbourne's southern and eastern suburbs. It was also a perfect catchment area for football fans from the Latrobe Valley and Gippsland. Another advantage was that the ground was large enough to ensure seating for all without the need for reservation. Hafey stressed, also, the popularity of the ground and expressed his hope that 'the quick buck [would not] take precedence over what the football public want[ed].'[109]

Wayne Jackson's argument focussed on the financial benefits of selling the old stadium to finance the new. The $80 million expected to be raised by the sale of Waverley would not only pay the League's $30 million commitment to Docklands but would also provide funding for a proposed new state-based Victorian football structure as well as

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[108] Sunday Herald Sun, 30 March 1997, SPORT, p.22.
[109] Herald Sun, 11 September 1998, p.19.

national development of football at the grassroots level. At no point did Jackson address the issue of the popularity or otherwise of the League's decision.[110] The League's attitude, as had been the case in the 1960s, was that what it regarded as being in the best interests of football was more important than the public's preferences. Football's best interests would be served by whatever course of action would generate the most revenue for the Game.

This same insatiable need, and perhaps greed, for money on the part of football administrators had been at the core of the Footscray name change. The attitude of the Western Bulldogs' Board to the Footscray Forever Committee was symptomatic of a worsening malaise affecting relations between football officialdom and fans. Mike Feehan's outburst against supporters who complained about the club's decisions illustrated the growing unwillingness of football clubs to sanction dissent. The same lack of tolerance by a club board to organised activity beyond its control was apparent in the attitude of the new board that seized power at Collingwood at the end of 1998. Eddie McGuire's moves to assume more direct control of an already heavily regulated cheersquad were an indication that the new Magpie administration wanted to disempower all possible avenues of dissent. The club's new attitude also affected its relationship with the unofficial internet fan site, *Nick's Collingwood Page*.

Initially set up as a simple gesture of homage to the club by Nick Wilson, a young technologically aware Tasmanian in 1996, Nick's site quickly surpassed the official club site, launched a year

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[110] Ibid.

earlier, in the services it provided for Collingwood fans. Among its innovations were Australia's first on-line 'live' scoreboard, featuring the first Collingwood chat room. It also provided the first bulletin board specifically for Collingwood supporters. In cooperation with the club, Nick set up a facility through which fans could send email messages to players. This involved liaison with Richard Stremski, the historian and former La Trobe University academic who was elected to the Collingwood board in 1997 and the club's then chief executive officer, John May.[111]

By 2000, however, relations between the club and *Nick's Collingwood Page* had broken down. Prior to the 2000 season Collingwood had developed a new web-site through the Sportsview company. Embracing the perceived commercial potential of an increasingly sophisticated internet, the Collingwood Football Club came to regard Nick's site as a competitor rather than an ally. Where Nick's site had previously been sent weekly official media releases from the club, it was now kept in the dark. Collingwood's media communications and public relations manager, Robert Pyman explained, in reply to inquiries from Nick's father, Mike Wilson, concerning the lack of information forthcoming:

> All that information is available on the [official] web-site. We only send out media

[111] 'The Collingwood Football Club and Nick's Collingwood Page', posted on *Nick's Collingwood Page*. Internet site. Updated 18 April 2000. Accessed 18 April 2000 at http://www.magpies.org.au/nick/ubb/Forum1/HTML/000341.html

> releases to the media through the A.F.L. We don't want just anyone turning up to our media events.[112]

When asked by Mike Wilson what was happening to the fan mail that was being sent to the club through Nick's site, Pyman's reply suggested that it was being ignored. As Wilson expressed it in a posting on *Nick's Bulletin Board*, 'I could tell that he thought I was just some crackpot with a web-site who was wasting his valuable time.'[113]

The end of turnstile sufficiency, simultaneously a cause and an effect of the commercialisation of football in the last two and a half decades of the twentieth century, paved the way for football's administrators to gain the upper hand in their on-going relationship with the barrackers. The A.F.L., in courting the corporate sector, displayed an increasing contempt towards the mass support upon which its predecessor, the V.F.L., had relied. Clubs, too, pursued their respective corporate agendas often in direct defiance of their supporters' wishes, relying on an assumed unconditional devotion on the part of their followers. The precarious financial knife-edge upon which clubs walked enabled emotional blackmail to quell most dissent.

The ongoing sustainability of this co-dependent relationship between club and fan, however, looked questionable by the end of the century. The price of bargaining was becoming too high for growing numbers of less affluent supporters, and national expansion

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[112] Ibid.
[113] Ibid.

of the competition was making live television coverage an increasingly important vehicle of community formation. Whether an increasingly passive television audience would be emotional enough to be as easily blackmailed as the crowds that had once thronged the terraces looked problematical. So too did the tractability of football's new on-line community, whose intelligence the administrators had insulted in their determination to reduce an essentially interactive technology into yet another passive consumerist avenue for League and club propaganda.

Chapter 11:

CONCLUSION

On Sunday, 28 May 2000 a crowd of 6,963 attended the round 12 A.F.L. match at the S.C.G. between the Kangaroos and Port Adelaide.[1] This was the fifth lowest crowd to attend an A.F.L. match in Sydney and the lowest at any A.F.L. match since the demise of the Fitzroy Football Club in 1996.[2] At the two clubs' previous home-and-away encounter at the M.C.G. in 1999 they drew 16,429.[3] Despite the abysmal turnout for the 2000 clash, the club formerly known as North Melbourne was reported to be determined to continue its push to establish itself in the Sydney market.[4] The club's on-field success in the 1990s failed to attract a large supporter base. In September 1998 the club reached an agreement with the A.F.L. to play four home matches, plus an away match against the Swans, in Sydney in 1999, with a similar arrangement to apply for the next four seasons after that. It was also reported that the club would be known simply as 'Kangaroos'.[5] Of the six Kangaroos home matches at the S.C.G. to that time, the match against Port Adelaide attracted the smallest crowd. The average attendance at the six matches was

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[1] Herald Sun, 29 May 2000, p.48.
[2] Ibid., p.47.
[3] *Official Australian Football League Website: the official A.F.L. stats*. Internet site. Accessed 3 June 2000 at http://www.afl.com.au/results/matchresults 10382.htm
[4] Herald Sun, 29 May 2000, p.47.
[5] Herald Sun, 9 September 1998, p.77.

15,378. Even the 'derby' against the Swans seven weeks earlier had pulled a paltry 19,729.[6]

A list, published mid-season by the Herald Sun, of 2000 club membership figures in comparison to those of 1999 showed that the Kangaroos had improved their numbers by 13.22%. Only Essendon and Brisbane had done better in terms of percentage improvement.[7] Hawthorn showed the sharpest decline in numbers, with figures down 16.33%, a result that the club attributed to the A.F.L.'s closure of Waverley. Chief executive, Michael Brown, said the move of home games to the M.C.G. had attracted 5,000 new members from the inner suburbs but had cost the club 9,000 of its old south-eastern suburban constituents. The Hawks' former co-tenant at Waverley, St.Kilda, had the smallest membership overall and the second largest percentage decrease from the previous season.[8] They were one of three clubs that had opted to make Colonial Stadium their main home match venue. Of these, only Essendon, still unbeaten at the half-way mark of the season after narrowly missing a Grand Final berth the previous year, had recorded an increase. The Western Bulldogs, also languishing near the bottom in actual numbers, were also in decline with a 12.64% decrease. Collingwood, a club scheduled to play four home matches at Colonial Stadium despite being an M.C.G. tenant, had also shed 13.47% of its members from the previous season despite winning its first five games.[9]

The combination of a serious decrease in membership for the former Waverley tenants and similar results for two of the three major Colonial tenants,

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[6] Herald Sun, 29 May 2000, p.47.
[7] Herald Sun, 2 June 2000, p.117.
[8] Ibid.

supported to a lesser extent by the declining figures for Collingwood, lent very strong support to the belief that the A.F.L.'s embrace of Colonial Stadium at the expense of Waverley had cost it patronage. In addition, the Kangaroos' push into the Sydney market was reducing that club's actual match attendances despite its improving membership base. Something was seriously amiss. The Collingwood membership decline may have had as much to do with the devaluing of Social Club membership, with the introduction of newer and more expensive priority membership packages, as it did with the number of matches scheduled at the new stadium. Whatever the reason, however, it was clear that the fans were not happy with the League, their clubs or both.

Melbourne president, Joe Gutnick, dubbed Colonial Stadium a 'house of horrors' after ticketing problems at the round seven match between Melbourne and West Coast caused many fans to walk away in disgust and delayed the entry of many others.[10] The Demons' chief executive, John Anderson, expressed the fear that thousands of Melbourne fans unable to get in would be lost to the Game forever. Melbourne, like St.Kilda, did not charge its members extra for seating at Colonial. Essendon and the Western Bulldogs, on the other hand, had membership packages that included the price of reserved seating for the full season. These packages enabled members to gain entry by just swiping their tickets at the turnstiles. It was not so simple, however, for members of the Demons and the Saints. They could not simply enter the ground and choose their seat. Instead they had to be issued with a

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[9] Ibid.
[10] Herald Sun, 24 April 2000, p.1.

ticket for a specific seat on the day, which required them to wait in a queue.[11] On this particular occasion nearly half the crowd of only 20,774 was still waiting in the queues when the match started. Queues were reported, at one point, to have stretched for almost a kilometre with some fans said to have been waiting two hours to gain admission. Many were still queuing well into the second quarter.[12] A public relations exercise providing free admission to the round nine match between the Western Bulldogs and St.Kilda again had embarrassing consequences for the League when only 35,505 spectators took up the offer.[13] This left the unedifying spectacle of about 17,000 unoccupied seats at a derby between two major tenant clubs, hardly a ringing endorsement for the boutique venue.

While public anger at the decision making of football administrators had become increasingly apparent in the last two or three decades of the twentieth century, falling attendance figures in 2000 and the tone of much of the dissatisfaction being publicly expressed by fans indicated that the public was losing interest in the idea of going to the football. The myth of the People's Game could no longer be reconciled with the reality of the League's indifference to a public disoriented by the accelerating rate of change being forced upon the Game by the same economic rationalism rampant in wider society.

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[11] Ibid., p.39.
[12] Ibid., p.1.
[13] *Official Australian Football League Website: the official A.F.L. stats.* Internet site. Updated and accessed 5 June 2000 at http://www.afl.com.au/results/matchresults 10536.htm

In her Hugo Wolfsohn Memorial Lecture, Judith Brett commented upon the impact of late twentieth century economic development on broader Australian society by noting that it was the speed of change, rather than change itself, that was undermining the attachments people felt for those familiar aspects of their lives under attack.

> We keep being told we must adapt, be flexible, change with the times, make way for progress - for two centuries the mantra of the liberal faith in progress. Hence the globalisation cheer squad tells us that there's nothing new in people being expected to live with change. Perhaps, but it seems to many that the *pace* of the change is new.[14]

Brett was articulating the same disorientation experienced by football fans at the start of the twenty-first century. The escalation of change needed to develop the national competition had accentuated a sense of loss, producing a need for mourning parallel to the one Brett felt necessary to help Australians generally to deal with sudden changes affecting their lives. Using the Elizabeth Kübler-Ross model of the five stages of grieving, it could be observed that few non-corporate football followers were in denial any more. Although the anger and bargaining stages were still apparent in the long queues outside Colonial Stadium, the preponderance of empty seating inside suggested that many had come to regard the bargain as a swindle.

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[14] Brett, op.cit., p.21.

It would be an over-statement to conclude, purely on the basis of falling attendances, that the public was losing interest in football altogether. Much can be said for the resilience and adaptability of football communities that had long been under attack from the forces of modernisation. The barracker of the 1950s and 1960s learned to value a communion based purely on love of club when the old localism crumbled beneath the weight of post-war demographic change. Embracing the motor car, the freeway and suburban affluence, the fan of the 1970s paid more and travelled further for the right to see League football. Faced with the national competition and the relocations of clubs, the fans of the 1980s and 1990s embraced live television coverage as a new way to experience football. Communion came to rely less on direct contact than a shared experience of cultural symbols circulated by mass media. The arrival of the internet provided avenues for a return to a more direct experience of community for those willing to make the effort to look beyond the standard consumerist fare offered by the League and the clubs. Football administrators, meanwhile, endeavoured to control and standardise the production and consumption of their product in order to milk every available cent from both the corporate and the non-corporate sectors of the football public.

From the moment that the Game's popularity began to demand commodification, conflict of interest between the barracker and the football administrator became the natural by-product of market forces. An industry grew, supported by the collective obsession of barrackers, whose respective club orientations were frequently at odds with the interests of the Game as a

whole, but whose patronage simultaneously enabled the Game to flourish, affording the barracker an illusory sense of ownership of the Game. As long as the Game was turnstile sufficient, the illusion would be enhanced by a pricing mechanism heavily in favour of the consumer. By the early 1960s an equilibrium in the power equation had produced an apparent *status quo* dignified by the epistemology of tradition. The legitimacy of this tradition rested upon the simple longevity of a localised twelve-team suburban competition. An uncritical ahistoricity pervaded the rhetoric that demonised any move to bring the iconography of the Game into line with new social conditions. An obsequious media, however, caught in the affluent optimism of the times, fawned over the Game and saw the actions of its more forward thinking administrators as an expression of progress. The notion that the Game belonged to the People was non-negotiable and not seen to be under threat.

Club allegiances in the very early years of the V.F.L. had been expressions of local patriotism arising naturally from Melbourne's pattern of suburban settlement. There was a sense, however, in which they could be seen as a forced response to a localism imposed from above. The electorate system of player recruitment, for example, was an administrative initiative providing artificial reinforcement and rigidity to whatever naturally occurring local loyalty might have already existed. If football clubs could be said to bind local communities together, the V.F.L.'s decision to impose localism on players in 1915, thereby setting the example that reinforced similar loyalties among the football-going public, must be seen as a form of

social engineering. The League's attitude that it was above the community that had made it a significant institution in Melbourne life was clearly illustrated in its annual reports as early as 1931. This attitude must then be seen to be traceable at least to World War 1 in this determination to actively shape its community rather than let it evolve naturally.

A system that effectively conscripted any footballer with aspirations of playing at the highest level to the service of his local V.F.L. club provided a situation where a football community could theoretically have been forged merely by a shared geographical locale. However, by the time the effects of the electorate system had trickled down to football spectators, community formation depended on more than mere place. Local social systems, transport networks in particular, had a significant bearing on people's ability to participate actively in football communities. Club allegiance also required a sense of belonging, which in turn hinged on a sense of connection with the club in question. To live in Richmond, for example, was not sufficient to be a Richmond supporter. One had firstly to be drawn to the Game itself, and then to a sense of communion shared with others drawn to the idea of a football club called 'Richmond'. While transport limitations might have limited choices to an extent, the League could not impose allegiances on spectators. It could merely play a role in helping to establish conditions that were conducive to the outcomes it desired.

Prior to the 1965 relocations, the twelve V.F.L. clubs were based at twelve different venues, each ground being local to its respective club's place of identity. The dispute with the ground managers

shattered this comfortable localism but the only victim apparent at the time was the V.F.A., whose dominion over the outer suburbs was significantly weakened. The League's conquest of the Association was completed 35 years later when the latter body, renamed the V.F.L. in 1997, was absorbed into a new hybrid league. This modified V.F.L. competition was comprised of a blend of amalgamated and stand-alone clubs, drawn from the old competition and what had formerly been the reserves teams of Melbourne-based A.F.L. clubs. Postings on the bulletin board at *Nick's Collingwood Page* suggested that some disaffected fans were coming to regard the V.F.L. as an alternative to the over-priced, corporatised elite competition. One correspondent, 'SPIDERGIRL', offered this colourful assessment.

> It'll be mad to get back to the good old days of sitting at a game with a VB in the hand and be able to run on the ground at the quarter and half-time breaks but best of all no stingy AFL! *[sic]*[15]

It was perhaps fitting that a competition evolving out of the old V.F.A., itself a victim of the League's imperialism in the 1960s, should attract fans from among the casualties of A.F.L. need and greed at the turn of the century.

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[15] 'V.F.L. draw?' on *Nick's Collingwood Bulletin Board*. Internet site. Posted 8 February 2000. Accessed 5 June 2000 at http://www.magpies.org.au/nick/ubb/Forum9/HTML/000026.html

The metamorphosis of Footscray into the Western Bulldogs in 1996, in the face of futile opposition from the Footscray Forever Committee, signalled the end of any consideration of the will of the People in the business of elite football. By this time the forces of commercialisation had gathered a momentum of their own, sweeping all before them. Princes' Park had been renamed Optus Oval in 1994. Cheersquad banners were as much advertisements for club sponsors as messages of support for teams. The dissenting spirit of the squads themselves had been steadily regulated out of existence in the modern Game. The ball, the goalposts, club guernseys and every available metre of fencing were daubed with the legalised graffiti of the corporate sector. An editorial in the Sunday Age, written shortly after the completion of the Brisbane-Fitzroy merger, reflected upon the state of the Game at that time.

> What began as an amateur game between rival localities has developed into a fully professional, highly commercialised nationwide sport, dominated not by rank-and-file supporters but by corporate sponsors, hierarchical officialdom and the demands of television … It is worth remembering that, in many other countries, football and other spectator sports have always been professional and proprietorial, played for the people but not belonging to the people. That is the way of the world of which we are all a part.[16]

At the beginning of the twenty-first century the community that supported the Game entrusted to the A.F.L. was no longer bound by the social geography that helped to shape it. Its sense of communion was fostered by cultural images disseminated through revolutionary communication technologies. Imagined communities, spanning continents and hemispheres, met in chat rooms and on bulletin boards to discuss football and their respective clubs' fortunes. Free-to-air and pay-T.V. audiences enjoyed a more detailed, albeit mediated, view of the action than the crowds that had once stood in the rain at suburban ovals like Western Oval or Victoria Park. Meanwhile, at the new boutique venues, an increasingly corporate crowd enjoyed lavish facilities unheard of at League football in an earlier, more spartan era. The last four decades of the twentieth century were characterised by a gradual exclusion of the non-corporate barracker from physical attendance at matches. The comfortably familiar environment of the old suburban V.F.L. gave way to the economically driven and expensive innovation that was the hallmark of the A.F.L. The right to attend matches, once so inexpensive as to be mistaken as a birthright for all Melburnians, became a commodity that progressively higher socio-economic groups came to regard as unaffordable.

Just as grainy, black and white video-tapes of 1960s V.F.L. matches are among the historical artefacts of their time, so too the slickly produced graphics-laden footage of Channel 7's coverage of the 2000 season will, in due course, be part of the

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[16] Sunday Age, 7 July 1996, p.18.

public record of this troubled era in football's history. Where the 1960s footage showed the Outer grounds of suburban venues like Windy Hill and Moorabbin packed to capacity with standing spectators, the visual public record of the 2000 season will, more typically, show a half-empty Colonial Stadium. At matches such as the round four clash between Richmond and Fremantle, viewers will notice that the bottom level of seating was generally crowded, more so than the upper level, while the middle tier was almost completely empty. Even the video record of 'sell-out' matches such as the round five Western Bulldogs-Collingwood match will show some 'bald spots', particularly in the middle level.

Much of the empty seating in the middle tier at these matches belonged to members of the Medallion Club. Their prime seating was not accessible to the general public and sometimes remained unoccupied even when other sections of the ground were filled to capacity. Empty seats were less common on the bottom level, home of the bargainers, hard-core club members with seats reserved for the season. The upper deck contained a mixture of reserved and walk-up seating predominantly for the casual fans. These could include the 'theatre-goers' having a one-off night out at the football or former die-hards who still loved the Game but no longer felt obliged by a quasi-religious sense of duty to attend every week.

Beyond match venues, beyond physical space, was a greater football public, an imagined community drawn together by a shared experience of cultural texts and images. It included those physically present at matches but went well beyond them. It included the thoroughly regulated consumers of the

thoroughly regulated football product but also embraced the rebels. It met on web-sites, both official and unofficial, and formed cheersquads with or without the industry's sanction. It divided itself into 16 tribes, each identified by its own particular iconography. Multiple citizenship was possible but rare. Each tribe had a corporate entity that it worshipped and brand loyalty in the purchase of merchandise was remarkably strong. One's choice of tribe might by dictated by a stubbornly residual territorialism or it might be a simple choice of one brand over the other 15.

Among the corporate entities there were winners and losers, and their 16 tribes suffered and rejoiced accordingly. More important than winning or losing, however, was survival. In the last two decades of the twentieth century South Melbourne and Fitzroy had been two famous casualties. Anticipating Fitzroy's demise, Martin Flanagan, in 1996, pondered the ailing club's plight from a broader social context, delivering a sobering message for those social observers who regarded the machinations of the football industry as trivial.

> The cultural elite of this country, or elements within it, are still sneering about sport and what it represents. They ought to think again. What happened to Fitzroy Football Club has been happening, with far less justification, to communities and working people all over this country for the past decade, possibly longer, as their livelihoods have been sacrificed on the altar of 'economic efficiency'. Sport is one

> of the few areas of public life where people have enough information to have some idea of what is actually going on.[17]

The breakdown of locality-based football communities went hand-in-hand with the emergence of a corporate culture that alienated the barracker. Fans reared on an experience of football far removed from the consumer product available at the turn of the century found the modern commodity over-priced, inaccessible and ultimately unsatisfying. Where they had sought communion they found consumerism. Recognition of loss, long obscured beneath a denial afforded by popular mythology, gave impetus to an anger alleviated only by an ultimately unsustainable process of bargaining. The depressing truth, however, was that what had died could not be 'bought' back to life. Only the light of acceptance would provide the People with vision to look elsewhere for what the Game had once given them.

[17] Age, 1 July 1996, SPORTSMODAYFOOTBALL, p.12.

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