

CHAPTER 7

SENSE OF CONTROL

i. Analysis of Sense of Control:

a. Introduction:

Another fundamental component of sense of place is sense of control: that is, the feeling that one's relationship with the particular place contributes to one's sense of independence, competence and self-sufficiency. In this situation, people are engaged in an active, creative relationship with their environment, rather than a passive, dependent, or even negative relationship, which, far from contributing to their sense of control, may detract from it.¹

This definition is not meant to imply that life is necessarily easy in situations where people experience a sense of control. As Boyce Richardson makes clear throughout Strangers Devour the Land, the Cree hunter who survives in the bush does not lead an easy life; but his intimate knowledge of the environment, the development of the skills necessary for survival and his ability to overcome hardships

¹For example, in cases where people do not share in making decisions about how the environment is designed or used (e.g., rental housing) or where they are unable to do things that they would like to do (e.g., they would like to paint their apartment, but management prohibits it; they would like to make noise, but the walls between neighbours are too thin; they would like some privacy, but there is no place to find it). The extensive environment and behaviour literature is full of such examples.

and dangers, all contribute to his sense of self-esteem, competence, and freedom--feelings which are frequently absent when he is in the white man's world, where his bush skills are neither appropriate nor valued. Why do the trappers go out each winter to face the rigours of the wilderness? Richardson writes:

But there is more to it than just getting beaver fur. "They go trapping," said Speers [the manager of the Mistassini reserve's Hudson Bay store, who had spent 25 years in the James Bay area and knew virtually every trapper] in his clipped, understated way, "because they live better in the bush. They are free."¹

Overcoming difficulties, therefore, may be a major source of pride and satisfaction and may contribute, as it also does in the case of the Toronto Islanders, to a sense of control.

The definition of sense of control is also not meant to imply that

¹Boyce Richardson, Strangers Devour The Land: The Cree Hunters of the James Bay Area versus Premier Bourassa and the James Bay Development Corporation (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1975)p. 66. Richardson contrasts the trapping families in the bush, "commanding the wilderness and confident and proud in their skills" (p. 195) with the "somewhat harassed" Cree families who remain in the towns and are tied into the wage economy and the white man's way of doing things. He comments with evident admiration on the trappers' skills and competence in the bush and with irony on the fact that their accomplishments are not recognized by white society (pp. 216-127):

Though the autumn is a quiet and unspectacular time in a hunting camp, we had seen enough of the men to appreciate their supreme competence, the high intelligence of everything they did. Whether in setting and checking their nets, manipulating their canoes, using their axes, designing and building their lodge, whether in catching game for their families to eat or carefully preparing for the winter that lay ahead, these men were all masters of several crafts who had adapted their talents and needs to the environment they knew so well.

We understood that we would never be able to see the forest as they see it. We were blind, and would remain blind, to the many signs of life that lay around them as they walked among the trees. The irony and tragedy of their situation was that the outside world remained ignorant of their enormous capacities: however masterful the men might be in this environment, it was obvious to us that if they were to end up in a small Canadian town or village as government policy would have them do, they would be qualified for nothing except perhaps to collect garbage.

people who experience a sense of control have complete or even extensive freedom to act. Obviously, they do not. But it does mean that within limited areas of action (such as freedom from dependence on tradesmen or on cars or on municipal officials to provide recreation programmes and freedom to decorate a house or to make decisions about how certain facilities should be designed and used, and so on) people sense that they have a measure of control over their lives. One of the ironies of the Toronto Island situation, in fact, is that although Islanders place a high value on self-reliance and independence¹ and seem to have a strong sense of control, they actually have very little control over their ultimate fate. Because they live on publicly-owned land, they have less control over whether their houses and community will continue to exist than the average urban homeowner who owns both house and land.

Islanders talk less about sense of control than they do about sense of community or sense of environment. This may, of course, be because, like sense of identity, it is a more difficult concept to recognize and articulate. Several Islanders, in any event, did discuss aspects of sense of control.

In their responses to the 1973 City survey of Island residents, some Islanders touched on the idea of sense of control:

I like the absence of cars, oppressive buildings, the feeling that you are not hemmed in by houses, i.e., the space between the houses that you don't seem to get in the city. The total independence from tradesmen.

Best part: being cut-off from the city and having to arrange and do things yourself.

¹See for example, Sense of Community: "Some Community Values: Self-Reliance", p. 205.

Discussing where she would ideally like to move if she were forced to move from the Island, Mary Anderson chooses "the country" and describes very well the idea of a sense of control and how living on the Island contributes to that feeling:

[The attraction of living in the country would be] partially the same as living on the Island now. You take care of your own destiny. You work at survival and I think working at surviving gives people a purpose in life and you have to do that a little bit on the Island. You've got to keep things together. You've got to fix things, paint things. People are happier when they can see the fruits of their labours. That's why it's rough working in a factory when you only put on a little cog in a wheel and you don't ever see the product. And I think part of what the Island does is let people see the fruits of their labours - having your own house to work on and having to struggle to get your food - even over in the boat. There's a certain sense of satisfaction in that.¹

Other expressions of Islanders' sense of control are included in later sections of this chapter.

It is intriguing to speculate that one of the reasons why Toronto Islanders are particularly concerned about self-reliance and independence and why they perhaps feel a stronger sense of control than

¹Some Islanders characterize Island life as having a "pioneer" quality about it. Certainly, pioneers worked at survival - and gained a measure of satisfaction and self-esteem from surviving and from seeing, as Ms. Anderson puts it, the fruits of their labour. One old pioneer interviewed by Barry Broadfoot describes the back-breaking process of clearing the Alberta bush for a homestead. He concludes by saying:

You had to be a strong man to beat the bush. I think my father found out something and it was that he was a lot stronger and tougher and a better man than he ever thought he would be. At home he was always kind of a dreamer and not much at holding a job. In Canada he found he could clear the bush and when you stood in the doorway at evening and saw what you had done, the pasture and the cow and horses and the oats, then you saw that you had done something. You knew you had done something.

Barry Broadfoot, The Pioneer Years: 1896-1914 (Toronto: Doubleday Canada Limited, 1976), p. 46.

non-Islanders is because they live on an island. The type of person who is attracted to living on an island may be the type of person who places a high value on independence and self-reliance and who believes that she or he can give fuller expression to these qualities on an island than on the mainland. After all, among the main images of islands (found for example in fiction and utopian literature) are images of the island as a place beyond the law (of the mainland) and of the island as a place where new laws are created--of a new, self-contained society. In both cases, the focus of control is on the island, not in the outside world. Toronto Islanders' reactions may be influenced by these popular images. It is also intriguing—but equally difficult to prove--that Toronto Islanders resent the imposition of outside authority more than would non-Islanders in a similar political situation. It is certainly true that Toronto Islanders have for many years resented the control exercised by politicians over their fate. One Islander who was active in the political campaign of the 1950's remarks:

Unfortunately, we're in that ridiculous position between City and Metro, where the City wants to take us back and Metro doesn't want to. Though frankly what business of theirs it is, I don't know. We always have been approached by the City. And I resent very much the suburban politicians trying to dictate our future. A lot of them don't know what they're talking about.

In more recent years, Islanders have continued to resent the fact that they have so little control over their political future.¹

Sense of control is related to other components of sense of place. Being aware of a tradition (or history) of people's exercising control in a particular place may enhance sense of control. Having a sense of personal autonomy, of control over certain aspects of one's life, may

¹See also "Gaining Control: Successes and Failures", pp. 344-349 and "Paradox of Control", pp. 349-350.

contribute to a sense of identity. A community's exercising control over certain aspects of its environment (like design and use of community recreation facilities) can contribute to an over-all sense of community. Intimate knowledge of a particular environment (as in the case of the Cree hunter)--i.e., a sense of environment--may contribute to one's ability to operate effectively in that environment and, therefore, to one's sense of control. And, finally, a sense of forced change may erode, rather than enhance, a sense of control.

The following sections discuss various aspects of Islanders' sense of control.

b. Island Houses:

Island houses are flexible, owned (for the most part) by Island residents, and in need of constant repair and attention. Each of these aspects of Island houses contributes to Islanders' sense of control.

Island houses, which are small one-storey wooden structures, are very flexible and Islanders, as already indicated, can and do rearrange them to suit their needs and wishes.¹ In contrast to people who live in less flexible environments (because the physical nature of the dwelling unit is less easily changed or because the management of the environment is not under the residents' control or because changing the environment would be very difficult and therefore very costly or because the resident is afraid to do something unusual for fear of lowering the potential resale value), Islanders are able to change

¹See for example Sense of Identity: "Island Houses", pp. 171 ff. and Sense of Community: "Some Community Values: Scavenger Society", p. 207 for descriptions of house renovations.

their home environments relatively easily and cheaply. Elizabeth Amer discussed the flexibility and individuality of Island houses--which Islanders can "mould" to their individual needs and tastes¹--and goes on to describe the sense of personal "power" that is derived from this process:

You don't go into very many houses that don't tell you anything about the people....I think you go into an Island house and you can really get a feel for the person that's living there and I think that's really important and it gives people something which a lot of people are missing and they don't know they're missing and that's a sense of power. And I don't mean that in an aggressive sense. I just mean a sense of their own power as a being, you know, that who they are is important and that it needs to be expressed. That sort of thing seems to be happening here and I'm sure it's happening in other places. But I get a great sense of that here, where people do have a chance to express themselves through the way they can fix the house and the way they can live in it.

This ability to shape the immediate environment undoubtedly contributes to a sense of control, whereas inability to do so (as in the cases cited earlier), undoubtedly contributes to a sense of dependence, powerlessness, and even alienation, depending on how inflexible the

¹See Ms. Amer's comments in Sense of Identity: "Island Houses", p. 174-175.

environment is.¹

Most Island residents own their own houses and home ownership, which gives the owner certain rights to shape the building, also contributes to a sense of control. Freya Godard, musing about how her life would change if she were forced to move to the City, comments on this point:

¹Psychologist Robert Sommer discusses what he calls a "hardening of the landscape" in Tight Spaces: Hard Architecture and How to Humanize It (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1974), p. 2. He sees a trend toward "hard architecture"—i.e., architecture that is "designed to be strong and resistant to human imprint", which, he writes, "To the inhabitants it seems impervious, impersonal and inorganic". (p.2). The furniture cannot be moved or changed; the walls cannot be decorated; the windows (if there are any) cannot be opened; the temperature and lighting cannot be individually adjusted; the dwellings all look alike, and so on. The aim, he argues, is to create an easily maintained, economic, vandal-proof environment (but, as Sommer points out, no environment is vandal-proof if people wish to destroy it: "Challenge people to destroy something and they will find a way to do it". p. 10). Sommer advocates the replacement of "hard architecture" by "soft architecture": "If experience has shown that hard architecture is not working from the standpoint of economics, aesthetics or human dignity, what is the answer? The solution, I believe, is to reverse the course and make buildings more responsive rather than less responsive to their users."(p. 12); "Personalization, the ability to put one's imprint on one's surroundings is a prime ingredient of soft architecture"; and "Defensible space [as discussed by Oscar Newman in Defensible Space] is defined by real and symbolic barriers that combine to bring an environment under the control of its occupants. This is basically the goal of the soft architecture approach. Hard buildings, however, are designed by professionals at the behest of one group of people (clients) to provide shelter for another group of people (occupants). In the process of design as well as in form, hard architecture denies occupants control over their surroundings. The space is alien, bureaucratic and seemingly unowned by anyone except the custodians or some impersonal remote authority. It is devoid of personalization and responsiveness to human imprint." (p. 22) Sommer concludes the introductory chapter with the ringing statement: "If there is truth to Churchill's dictum that the buildings we shape will eventually shape us, then the inevitable result of hard architecture will be withdrawn, callous, and indifferent people. A security emphasis is being poured into concrete that will harden our children's children fifty years from now." (p. 26) Island houses, and the Island environment generally, are excellent examples of "soft architecture", which is flexible, personalized and, to a large extent, under the control of its users.

I wouldn't own the house, so I wouldn't be able to do things to the house and I wouldn't have control over my immediate environment to the extent that I have now.

And Jenny DeTolly, discussing her reactions to proposals for a housing cooperative on the Island, also discusses the importance to her of homeownership:

There's absolutely no way I want to cede ownership of my house [to a coop]. I've had a fundamental change of attitude ever since I've bought a house. Leasing a house and buying a house are two totally different experiences for me. Now that I own the house I do things to the house that I didn't do to the other place. It wasn't mine. This occurs in any rental and ownership situation...My reaction wasn't in terms of getting money back.¹ It's just that the house is mine. It's a very personal thing.

It is interesting to note in passing that Islanders' sense of homeownership and control over their immediate environment is apparently not negated by the fact that they do not own the land on which their houses sit. In fact, far from being bothered by living on public land, some Islanders prefer living on it. Terry Tyers comments on this:

I think that in many ways it's an avant-garde approach. There's no doubt it makes the accommodation much cheaper and therefore easier for lower income people to achieve.

Island houses, as Elizabeth Amer puts it, "take a lot of care". Most Islanders, of necessity, take home repairing and constant maintenance in their stride, developing a degree of skill and even pride in doing this:

[Did you see yourself as a handywoman before moving to the Island?] Certainly not. I don't think I ever owned a tool in my life. I may have had a screwdriver, and I possibly had a hammer. I don't think I had that much. I'd never sawed a piece of wood until I moved to the Island. Now, I've built a whole wall by myself. I had absolutely no desire to learn these things. It was the

¹Note also Mary Anderson's comments on homeownership below in "Reactions To A Housing Cooperative", p. 331.

furthest thing from my mind. And now I find it intensely interesting....It just began as necessities. I had to do this or that and one thing led to another.

(Freya Godard)

My father was a do-it-yourselfer, so I inherited that and I quite enjoy it. It tends to be never-ending. That's the problem.

(Ron Mazza)

That's one thing about being in this house, you know, taking care of this house, you don't call out for somebody, a professional, to come in and fix some part of your house. If the pipes burst, then you have to leave whatever you're doing; you have to change whatever plans you were making and go and do that.

(Michael Albrecht)

We put up walls and we painted the whole house front and back twice. With an Island house, things are constantly breaking and if you don't fix them constantly, you end up with one hell of a big job. If you fix them one thing now--one step--you don't have to replace the whole set of stairs in six months. We became handymen. Oh my God! In South Africa we never even painted our place. We had a contractor in to paint it. But when we came to Canada, we realized we couldn't afford this kind of thing. But it didn't strike us when we lived in the City [in an apartment]. There was really nothing to do. But when we came to the Island, there was not just the expense of the materials, but getting someone to come here to do it. It's amazing how much my husband has learned. When we work together, I'm his handmate. He's put new foundations on the house....Everybody knows a little and they pool information....No, I can honestly say we had no difficulties. We loved the idea that once you got on that ferry after a hard day's work, the City was behind you. All other problems could be solved....You learn all kinds of ways to solve the problem. And we actually enjoyed doing things like boardwalls and breaking down walls. It was a new thing to us.

(Memory Shearing)

For a number of Islanders, repairing the houses themselves and keeping them going are not simply inconveniences to be coped with because they enjoy other aspects of Island life, but are positive attractions: they contribute significantly to their sense of personal independence and competence and self-sufficiency--to their over-all sense of

control.¹ For those who have moved to the Island (as opposed to those who have grown up there and have known no other situation), it has perhaps been a particular joy to be weaned from dependence on repairmen, construction workers and other outside experts. (There may be frustrations involved with doing one's own repairs; but there are also frustrations and feelings of impotence associated with waiting for the plumber or electrician or TV repair person to come to fix something.) David Harris and Jenny DeTolly discuss this aspect of Island life:

I think it's really important for the male ego or whatever it is, to know all about your house. Like, I know where every wire in this house is and every bit of plumbing, every bit of gas plumbing. I understand how it all works. And I couldn't even drive a nail before I moved in here. And yet I put in the furnace myself. I put in the wiring myself. I've done all the carpentry work and the whole thing. And really, really enjoyed it. It's not that difficult, really, you know, if you have any aptitude at all. [I learned] just from watching and asking questions and [getting] help from friends from here on the Island, who know about it. A lot of people [have done their own renovations]. I think that one thing living on the Island teaches you is a degree of self-sufficiency. It just astounds me in Toronto, in the City, that many people have to call somebody to fix their front door buzzer or, you know, just the simplest of things.

(David Harris)

I had come from a situation where we had a house of our own and I had a maid who came in three mornings a week. Whenever she came, I would just get in the car and go off and I never ever felt trapped by kids. We had two cars and we had a garden boy who came in once a week. We could have been fifty, which was one of the reasons why we moved. That was all just too bloody secure. But [here] I've enjoyed the feeling that my future, in fact, my everyday life was entirely in my own hands. And I like the fact that I've had to learn to be utterly self-reliant, about physical things, anyway. I like the fact that I understand exactly how the plumbing in my house works, and exactly how the electricity works and exactly how to fix it....It's partly the fact that I have a terribly practical father who always used to have a tool carrier. So that I'd always had that background of helping him repair things. So

¹See also Elizabeth Amer's and Maureen Smith's comments in the next section, "Inconveniences", pp. 323 and 326.

that the bent was that way; though it wasn't a major effort for me. And I don't say that everyone that has moved onto the Island knows how their plumbing and electricity works. It's just that those were things that I learned to do and that I was pleased that I'd learned to do them, because in a similar situation in South Africa I would never have had to do them. In fact, even in a similar situation in Canada, I wouldn't have necessarily had to do that....You were just so reliant on other people carrying out your tasks there.

(Jenny DeTolly)

c. Inconveniences:

I found the idea of going into a modern house very boring. Modern houses are sterile. The caravan [I live in] needs ingenuity all the time. I can never understand people who pay all this money for convenience. Convenience has become a drug to them. Easy this, easy that. If I could afford it, I would buy a boat and live on that. It would need even more ingenuity to do than this.¹

Most Islanders would probably agree with these sentiments expressed by a young Suffolk school teacher in "Akenfield". There are undoubtedly many inconveniences associated with living on the Island: constantly repairing and working on the houses; lugging bags of groceries and other items home from the stores in the City; organizing life around a ferry schedule; walking relatively long distances not only in good weather, but also in the wind, the rain, and the cold; battling occasionally against high water and flooding; dealing with various sewage problems, and so on. But convenience per se does not have a very high priority for Islanders. Elizabeth Amer, for example, discussing the problems of running her house, says that convenience is simply not very important to her--other things are more important--and that coping with various problems adds to her life rather than detracts from it:

¹Robert Munro, quoted by Ronald Blythe, Akenfield: Portrait of an English Village (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books. Ltd., 1969) pp. 186-187.

The cottage has always appealed to me as being kind of romantic, I guess, and kind of connected with pleasure and holiday and that sort of thing and I think I hang onto that. I have very little desire to get ahead. In terms of houses there's nothing more that I want. I'm really more interested in the romantic aspect. I mean, many people would find it very unromantic to cope with an Island house, with all the drainage problems and one thing and another, but I really find that...right now, where I am, we're heating with coal and wood and it's kind of a constant struggle to keep that going. But I find that all that really adds to the enjoyment of everyday life, rather than taking away from it.¹ And maybe that's based on the fact that I'm not trying to get ahead at all. What I want to do is enjoy every day and it adds to the daily enjoyment. And I don't want everything to be... I'm not into convenience in a big way, you know. I'd rather get off on the idea of making my own bread and kind of doing things for myself and to eat plastic bread because it's faster than making your own has never struck me as a hell of a great idea, you know. And the same with the house, I think. I'm quite happy with the fact that you have to work a little bit at it and so on.

Doing things for herself has a higher priority than doing things conveniently.

Islanders acknowledge, sometimes scornfully, that anyone who valued convenience would not be happy living on the Island. For example:

Anyone who's not prepared to put up with the hassles of transportation and lack of it. Anyone who's lazy. I don't see how they could survive over there [on the Island]. [If convenience is your aim] you can just forget it.

(Nina Kilpatrick)

It's funny. I have people over for dinner and when they hear you have to carry your own groceries over and you have no car and you have to keep to a schedule and that kind of thing, they say, "oh, I wouldn't want to live here." And, funnily enough, the people who have said they don't want to live here have been the people I've felt glad don't live here!

(David Harris)

¹This sentiment is parallel to that expressed by Terry Tyers and Nina Kilpatrick, who liked "roughing it" on the Island, because that added to their enjoyment of life. See Sense of Environment: "Introduction", p. 255.

I had this reaction twenty times or more. Somebody would say, "Where do you live?" "On Toronto Islands." "Not in the winter! In the houses there?" And I'd say, "Why not? In winter, it's beautiful on the Island." "Oh, it must be so cold. How do you get across the ice? Oh, oh." Of course, you can't drive your own car from your back door to the front door of the office. But what's so hard about that? So many people are just spoiled in that respect.

(Al Schoenborn)

Generally speaking, Islanders take the inconveniences in stride. They feel that the benefits of Island life outweigh the bad things-- for example, that the benefits of having no cars (such as less noise, pollution and danger, more walking and closer contact with people and nature) outweigh the convenience of having cars. In most cases, the inconveniences are relegated to a relatively unimportant position in their view of things. Several Islanders comment on this:

They're hassles, but they're not terribly big ones. They're inconveniences. Again, it's something I've had to do for the last ten years, so it becomes a part of your life and just, you're constantly aware of it, but....It's something you can't really fight against, because there's not a solution. If you fight against it, you'd become very frustrated and I guess leave.

(Ron Mazza)

I think it's like anything, once you've made the mental adjustment to them, you just don't think about it again....There are always things you cater for. Once you've got used to the idea, you just shop in a different way....There's a lot of borrowing. There's much more borrowing than there ever would be in a situation where the store is around the corner. And also one tends to keep a much larger larder. I think quite a few people buy in bulk once a month.

(Jenny DeTolly)

I suppose if [the lack of stores] was amazingly important to me, I wouldn't have moved to the Island. It's funny. Where I lived in the City it was amazingly convenient. I was within walking distance of two subways and a number of theatres and around the corner from a good restaurant and close to Bloor Street also, and I enjoyed that very much. Strangely enough, I didn't find it very difficult to give that up. I feel it more now than I did. I suppose the constant aggravation of having to decide when to go to the City and if that's going to give me enough time to do what I want to do....On the other hand, almost anything you need suddenly on the Island, you can borrow from someone. Almost

anything you can borrow.

(Freya Godard)

The odd time it [shopping] is a problem, but not very often.

(Wendy Hanger)

Shopping is a little more of a hurdle now than it was [when we lived in the city], but I can't say that it was ever really a problem....I never liked carrying groceries back, so we developed an organizational pattern so that it is unnecessary to buy all our groceries on Saturday.

(Terry Tyers)

I find it remarkably convenient in some ways. How do you look at the half empty bowl, glass of water situation? I think it's quite convenient over here, considering where we live. It could be a hell of a lot more inconvenient before I wouldn't want to live here. So that's not a problem for us, but I know it's a problem for some people. My twin girls, for example, because they didn't grow up here and grew up in Don Mills, that would bother them, because they're used to being near Mac's Milk or whatever and they can get a package of cigarettes. Having done a lot of camping and liking that sort of thing, this is sort of like camping in style, if you will, so it's a hell of a lot more convenient than that. No, we don't find it inconvenient.

(Bill Metcalfe)

Well, there's other people that live in the City, people who you work with and they'll say, "I don't know how the hell you can stand living over there on that bloody Island." You know, having the hassles with the boats. But it's a way of life and a way that you're into. So everybody says, "Well, you live your life by a schedule." Well, you do. But you take it in stride.

(Jimmy Jones)

Some, like Maxine Wilson, even find Island life convenient:

Oh [shopping]'s really convenient for us, because we're so close to the [St.Lawrence] Market, so we go to the Market every Saturday and we're a lot closer than the people coming in from Scarborough.

And others find that coping with these various inconveniences (like coping with Island houses) contributes positively to Island life by contributing to Islanders' self-sufficiency and resourcefulness.

Maureen Smith, for example, positively welcomes inconveniences.¹ She even goes so far as to hope that the inconveniences are not lessened, for example, by improving the ferry service or providing shops. She comments:

No, no [the lack of stores doesn't bother me], not at all. When we first moved here [1958] there was a store, but we never used it that much. We've always been fairly well-organized....I'm the sort of person that doesn't run out of things too much and tend to be fairly self-sufficient. It's never bothered me. Actually, Michael puts that down as one of the things he really likes about the Island, that he's forced to be self-sufficient. He has to cope with things that are out of the ordinary. You have to be able to cope with plumbing that's broken. You have to do things for yourself. And he feels that's good for everybody. It's not for everybody to disintegrate into sitting around watching the idiot box. You know, you've got to do things and it makes you self-reliant so that you could cope in lots of different situations.

In short, according to this view, coping with inconveniences contributes to Islanders' resourcefulness and ability to cope generally-- i.e., to their sense of control.

d. Reactions to a Housing Cooperative:

Since about 1973, Islanders have been looking into the idea of forming a non-profit housing cooperative² as a way to prevent "windfall

¹See also Elizabeth Amer quoted on p. 323, Mary Anderson quoted on p. 314 and Freya Godard, p. 181.

²Under the usual non-profit housing coop scheme, the coop--not the individual residents--owns each dwelling unit. In addition, there are various income restrictions (at both ends of the scale) set by government regulation in order to qualify for government financial assistance. Islanders have developed various schemes for a non-profit housing association which would allow residents to own their own homes, but would require them to sell their house through the association at a price set by the association, and which would allow them to maintain the present socio-economic mix in the community.

profits"¹ and to maintain the present character of the community (e.g., its socio-economic mix and its year-round nature), if Islanders are granted either a long-term extension or permanent status. There has been pressure from both inside and outside the community. As some of the following comments indicate, many Islanders are genuinely concerned about maintaining the present nature of the community and are worried that if the ground leases are extended for a long period, the house prices will rise and the community will become a summer enclave for the rich.² From outside the community, some "reform" politicians at the City level have wanted to prevent windfall profits and to ensure that a significant number of the houses remained available to people with low incomes. The 1973 City report, Toronto's Island Park Neighbourhoods, listed the creation of a non-profit housing cooperative as one method of controlling windfall profits and attaining the objectives of the report. Undoubtedly (as some of the following comments indicate), without the outside political pressure, many Islanders who are willing to join a coop if it would save their homes and community, would not otherwise join a coop or non-profit housing association. Nevertheless, in April 1974 (as part of their political campaign to reopen and reverse the Metro decision to evict them), Islanders voted

¹Unless some form of control is devised, house prices would undoubtedly skyrocket if tenure were more secure and present owners, therefore, could make considerable profits if and when they sold their houses.

²Among the "Community Aims" developed at block meetings in early 1973 were: keeping the Island basically a year-round community (allowing present summer Islanders to remain, but encouraging any new Islanders to be year-round residents); providing low-cost housing; and preventing speculation in Island houses "which would tend to destroy the community". Reprinted in City of Toronto, Toronto's Island Park Neighbourhoods (September 1973), Appendix C.

overwhelmingly in favour of an Island position which would include creating an Island Non-Profit Housing Association (INPHA).¹ There was, however, a small, but vocal, minority who opposed any such arrangement. Since the Island leases have not been extended by Metro, this Island-wide housing association idea has lapsed, although a smaller group dedicated to the principles (not just the political pragmatism) of such a non-profit housing scheme, has laid the groundwork for a voluntary non-profit association.

Islanders' reactions to the idea of forming a non-profit housing coop (or a modified non-profit housing association) cast an interesting light on their sense of control--or their desire for a sense of control. In most cases, their objections seemed to be not to the idea that they would not be able to reap profits from the sale of their houses (although this was important to some people), but to the idea that they would (or might) lose control over various aspects of their housing situation: namely, homeownership, the right to choose to whom to sell and the day-to-day freedom of decision-making.

Some Islanders (apparently a minority) object to the idea of a housing coop (or non-profit housing association) on principle. Jack Bradley expresses this point of view:

I was deathly against it [INPHA]. Well, for one thing, I'm all

¹INPHA would have held a master lease from the City or Metro (whichever owned the land) and granted individual leases on the 250+ lots. Residents would have owned their houses, but would have had to sell them through INPHA at a price fixed by INPHA to a person meeting the qualifications set by INPHA. The INPHA board would have had representatives from the Island, from the City (or Metro) and perhaps outside interest groups (such as church or labour).

for free enterprise, having been in business myself a few times. I dislike anybody saying to me that I can only sell my house to a certain party and that they would put the appraisal price on it....I would never, ever vote for anything like that.

Others are equally strongly in favour of it. Ron Mazza expresses his support:

I think it's the only salvation for the Island. Not from a political point of view, but from a political-social point of view. Because I think if we do get an extension without some sort of [price] control on the Island, the Island will not stay as it is. You may argue that staying as it is is not the best thing. But what I don't want to see is the houses going on the general market and escalat[ing] tremendously in value and so it becomes a Michael Best type of situation where it is an elitist community. And the only way to stop that that I can see is some sort of coop, to keep the prices down, to keep [the houses] off the local market to the highest bidder.

And many are not especially keen, but are willing to join.

For example:

We could have gone along with it, you know....We'd have to have a reason, I think. I mean, if it's going to be good for us politically, then we'd consider it.

(Wendy Hanger)

I think it's probably necessary, but I don't like it, let's put it that way. I think it is necessary to control the profits here and the only way [to do that] is to separate the buyer and the seller by one method or another. And, if you do that, and if you start saying we're going to try to maintain a mix and choose people of certain incomes, then you destroy the spontaneity and I don't see how the scheme could avoid it. We have people here who are free spirits who probably wouldn't be here if they had to go through some sort of selection committee, not because they wouldn't be selected, just because they wouldn't want the hassle. People just don't like that regimented approach, but I don't know how it can be avoided.

(Freya Godard)

I didn't care one way or another so long as we got to stay. But I didn't want it to be a thing where you weeded out people, either. If part got to stay, I think we all should have got to stay.

(Maxine Wilson)

It was straw-grasping. That's all it was. If there had been a right-wing government in and they felt that if you put a fence around your house it would save you, suddenly you'd see all kinds of fences around here....I think it's got some points, ya. I don't think there should be windfall profits. That's as far as I go. I think the rest of it is all window-dressing to try to attract things [political support].

(David Harris)

How can one form a cooperative of non-cooperators?... Most of the Islanders would only have bought the, become part of the non-profit cooperative because that was the only route to survival. They would not have sought to have gone and formed a cooperative with their neighbours had there not been that motivation. I would say that still stands [in July 1975].

(Jenny DeTolly)

Some of the strongest opposition has been to the idea of having to give up ownership of the house, which, these people felt, would erode people's ability to be independent, to exercise personal initiative and to have a degree of control over their lives.¹ Mary Anderson,

¹It is important to bear in mind that although advocates of cooperative housing often argue that cooperative tenure would tend to increase (not decrease) occupants' control over their immediate living environment, they are usually comparing cooperative tenure to rental tenure, not homeownership. If a cooperative were formed on the Island, Toronto Islanders who own their own homes would change from individual ownership to cooperative tenure, which they would perceive as an (unwanted) reduction of control. Islanders are not alone in their preference for homeownership over cooperative tenure. Andrews' and Breslauer's case study of a housing cooperative revealed that although a large percentage of the coop residents interviewed preferred coop to rental accommodations (62%), only a relatively small percent preferred a coop to a single family home (23%). 44% indicated a preference for a single family home. Howard F. Andrews and Helen J. Breslauer, Cooperative Housing Project: An Overview of a Case Study, Methods and Findings (Toronto: Centre for Urban and Community Studies, University of Toronto, Research Paper #73, January 1976), pp. 45-46.

As indicated earlier, Islanders, in response to this view, have developed a structure which would allow members to continue owning their individual houses, but which would require them to sell them through the association at a price fixed by the association (which would cover any improvement made, but would not allow any large profits to be made).

who supports the non-profit housing association idea, comments on this:

I think those people should own their own houses. I don't think they should be able to sell for any sort of profit, but I think there's a great deal to be said for people taking care of themselves....I think it does something for people to have something of their own that they have to tackle with rather than saying you go to the coop and we'll decide what you need fixed and when and who's going to do it. I think that takes away a lot of the personal initiative that exists on the Island and I think when it comes down to deciding what kind of coop we're going to have with the City, I think we're going to have to scream for community control. I think it's our right, just as it's Trefann's right. We do have a unique situation where people are used to being independent and I don't think you should stamp upon that.

Related to this has been the opposition to the idea that the seller could not choose to whom he or she sold the house. The concern was not just (or even primarily) about losing the ability to set the selling price, but about losing the ability to choose a person who would care for the house, care for the Island, and enjoy the Island and, generally, about suffering an additional loss of freedom. Several Islanders comment on this objection:

And that became the major issue at all the block meetings, the not giving up [rights]. It wasn't totally the non-profit [aspect], it was the fact of giving up your rights, you know. There was concern that you couldn't decide who was going to buy your house from you. It had to go back through somebody. And that bothered people, you know. Why shouldn't they be able to choose who they wanted to live in their house? It wasn't totally the money, although that was a good deal of it. It was some sort of [loss of] free feeling.

(Sheila Du Toit)

My reaction wasn't in terms of getting money back. It's just the house is mine. It's a very personal thing. I feel very personal ...for instance, the cooperative housing would remove the right from you to sell to whomever you wanted. They would sell the house for you. I would like somebody that I like to have my house, if I'm going to sell it to anyone. And I won't necessarily sell it for any enormous amount, because I certainly was one of those people who believed it should be sold at a lesser price. I certainly believe in keeping control....Well, as I said before, this business of summer residences. I would hate to see this

community become summer residences for the RCYC [Royal Canadian Yacht Club], or such like. [It] would be a very attractive place for just that. I believe in those two controls [price and year-round residence], ya, but I don't believe in ceding ownership.

(Jenny DeTolly)

I think I can understand that view very well [of caring who you sell to]. I mean, people don't have that many areas nowadays where they do what they want to do. The options are pretty limited for people. If you have that option taken away from you, it's just one more whack at your autonomy. So I can understand it perfectly. The reason I found the attitude a little difficult to understand was: what were the options in the situation? The option was that you either adjusted to that whole coop future, or you had to get out. It was a question of either that or nothing. It seemed a necessary route to take to survival.

(Elizabeth Amer)

Finally, as several of the above comments indicate, there was a generalized fear that forming a coop or a non-profit housing association might erode Islanders' sense of independence and control by impinging on their freedom to make day-to-day decisions about their housing environment. Bill Metcalfe touches on this point:

I had real problems with it. I still have real problems with it. I subscribe to the business of there being some kind of control that had to do with windfall profits on the Island. The housing, therefore, has to be somehow controlled, because if it isn't then people will come over and buy the places like this and use them as summer residence and stow their sailing bags. So I believe that it should be a year-round community. But the idea of a coop is just so totally foreign to my experience that I have real concerns about it....I believe that most of the people who live here are people who are independent thinkers, even though we work together when it's appropriate to work together, and the idea of non-profit housing, I think, made sense to me, but the mechanisms which would pull it together, which were to become a coop-- which I perceive as being "My God damned roof is leaking, so come over and fix it." That's ultimately what would happen, I think in a coop situation. Now, you can plan a coop to get around that. But I felt that that sort of structure wasn't really necessary. I didn't strongly oppose it, if the majority of the community were in favour of it.

In short, much of the opposition to and reservations about forming some kind of non-profit housing association on the Island have

stemmed not from opposition to the control over profits, but from concern over a perceived loss of freedom of action and sense of control.¹

e. Community Control:

Individuals may increase their sense of control by working through and being part of groups which exercise some control over various aspects of their environment.² For example, sociologist Barry Wellman, in a discussion critical of the battle cry of the

¹The political aspects of the housing coop debate are discussed further below, pp. 337 ff.

²Robert Sommer advocates increased user-generated designs (of parks and other facilities) followed by community control over the use of the facilities. He writes the following rousing introduction to Design Awareness (San Francisco: Rinehart Press, 1972), p. vii:

People want a voice in the design and use of their buildings, streets, parks, and cities. They want to be more than spectators and consumers in a world designed and managed by remote professionals. They want to be more than passengers on a spaceship; they want to help design and personalize their cabins and passageways and to have a go at the controls.

As another example, advocates of cooperative housing argue that individuals may increase their control over their living environments by joining a housing cooperative and making decisions as a group, "cooperatively". These views are summarized by Howard F. Andrews and Helen J. Breslauer, Reflections on the Housing Process: Implications From a Case Study of Cooperative Housing (Toronto: Centre for Urban and Community Studies, University of Toronto, Research Paper #74, February 1976). They conclude (pp. 56-57):

And thus we are led to the conclusion that not only does coop housing (as shelter) provide choice, an alternative to other kinds of housing on the market, but in addition coop housing (as process) provides another kind of alternative - one in which people have the opportunity to participate in some of the decisions that most directly affect their day-to-day lives. The words of a coop member in his farewell speech provide an illustration:

...something that I hope will continue and continue and grow here, and that has been the development within [the coop] of an approach to solving problems...I guess what I'm saying is there's no 'them' in [the coop], you can't sit back and say 'when are they going to do it', there's only us.

Toronto citizen participation movement of the late 1960's and early 1970's, "save the neighbourhoods", nevertheless finds some definite value in neighbourhoods:

....the neighbourhood is a social unit with which its members can easily identify and over which they feel they can have some control. Such a unit, well organized, can do much to make government responsive to local needs as well as serve the important function of giving urbanites a sense of control over their own individual and group destinies.¹

The Toronto Island is an excellent example of just this. Islanders, as a group, have not only waged a long and effective political campaign to prolong the existence of their houses and their community (which is discussed below), but they have also exercised a fair degree of control over what happens on the Island. Over the years, Islanders have identified various needs in the community and organized to deal

¹Barry Wellman, "Who Needs Neighbourhoods?" revised version, mimeo dated March 1972, p. 7. (Originally published in Citizen Participation - A Book of Readings, ed. James A. Draper (Toronto: New Press, 1971), pp. 282-287.). The citizen movement of the last 15 years or so was generated in part by a feeling of powerlessness among urban residents in the face of decisions made by both government and the private sector--most notably, in Toronto, decisions about urban renewal (either government initiated or private developer initiated schemes to replace low-rise, often low-income housing with high-rise, often middle or upper income, apartments) and transportation planning (e.g., the Spadina Expressway debate)--and a growing ideal, as Wilson Head noted, "that the ordinary citizen possess the right to participate in decisions that affect his life". See Wilson Head, "The Ideology and Practice of Citizen Participation" in Draper, op. cit., pp. 14-29 for a general discussion of citizen participation in Canada; and Bureau of Municipal Research, Neighbourhood Participation in Local Government - A Study of Toronto (Toronto, January 1970), Bureau of Municipal Research, Citizen Participation In Metro Toronto: Climate For Cooperation? (Toronto, January 1975) and James T. Lemon, "The Urban Community Movement: Moving Toward Public Households," in Humanistic Geography, eds. David Ley and Marwyn Samuels (Chicago: Maaroufa Press, Inc., 1978), pp. 319-337, for discussions of citizen participation in Toronto.

with them. For example, they organized the WIA and AIA to provide a wide-range of social and recreational activities and to compensate for the relative inaccessibility of many City activities. They founded the Ward's Island Weekly, the Goose and Duck and other community newspapers to communicate with one another. They organized an active Home and School Association to finance and staff a wide variety of activities that would have been unavailable in a school as small as the Island Public School. They organized a Montessori nursery school to provide daycare and a stimulating environment for pre-school Islanders. They organized a building and a food coop to overcome some of the problems of Island living (like the lack of stores and the difficulty of transporting heavy goods). All of this may contribute to individuals' sense of control. Elizabeth Amer, one of the community leaders on the Island, comments on this aspect of Island life and how individuals, through their communities, can combat feelings of dependence or powerlessness, both in general community activities (like starting a community newspaper) and in political action (which is discussed below):

I don't really know what's stopping anybody else from doing the kinds of things that are being done here, except, you know, straight down the middle Canadian society encourages a kind of dependence which I don't think is necessary. In other words, any community that wanted to start a community newspaper can do it. On the Island the great advantage is that we all tend to know a lot of people. We know what they do. If you need something, you can put out a call for it....There's just in this community incredible resources which you can always tap if you just have the idea of doing it and any community, I think, would probably have this kind of resources if people could just be put in touch with each other...You've got to have the idea of taking action before these things can happen. You can't just throw up your hands and say, "Well, how the hell would you do that?" If we had been totally realistic about the Goose and Duck when we started it, we wouldn't have started it, because

it was just too expensive. There was no way you could raise the money. But we put out some 35 issues of the thing before we stopped doing it and by all logical, rational standards, this was impossible.¹

In conclusion, Islanders have adopted an active approach to community life, which, in turn, has undoubtedly contributed to their over-all sense of control.

Other links between Islanders' sense of control and their political experience are discussed in the final sections of this chapter.

ii. Sense of Control - Defense of Place:

This chapter has already discussed some aspects of Islanders' political history (notably their attitudes toward the formation of a housing association or coop). These and other links between Islanders' sense of control and defense of place are amplified here.

a. Impact of Islanders' Sense of Control On Their Defense of Place:

1. General Approach:

Study of the political history of the Island reveals, at the most general level, that Islanders have taken an active approach to defending their special place from outside threats. Since the mid-1930's (when the City decided to build the Island airport at the western end of the Island, thus necessitating the removal of over fifty houses along West Island Drive), Islanders, rather than quietly accepting the decisions of outside authorities, have actively and repeatedly sought to influence them. They have tried to exercise a measure of control over the future of the Island. Since that time, they have presented dozens of detailed briefs to City and Metro Committees (as

¹Some years after making this comment, Ms. Amer expanded on how communities could organize to take action. Elizabeth Amer, Yes We Can! How To Organize Citizen Action (Ottawa: Synergistics Consulting Limited, 1980).

well as other official groups); they have appeared en masse at numerous meetings (even in the mid 1930's, Island spokesmen were backed by audiences of over a hundred spectators); and they have lobbied politicians at all levels. They have been especially active, vocal and uncompromising in their goals since 1974, but, even in the earlier years, they sought to exercise a measure of control over their destiny.

2. Homeownership: INPHA and the Crombie Motion:

As this chapter has indicated, Islanders' sense of control is attained in part by the fact that most Islanders own their own homes. The desire to maintain homeownership has had a strong impact on Islanders' political behaviour since 1973 (when longer leases seemed possible and a number of "reform" aldermen were elected to City Council). For example, during the Spring Campaign in 1974 to reverse the December 11, 1973 decision of Metro Council, Islanders rejected the idea of forming a housing cooperative (which, among other things, would have removed homeownership from Islanders), but opted instead for the idea of forming a non-profit housing association which would have left homeownership with Islanders (but would have controlled the price of the houses). Islander Peter Atkinson, for example, commenting on housing cooperatives, wrote, "Islanders are such individuals and the feeling of ownership is so great, that I doubt that many would join" a housing cooperative voluntarily.¹ Beyond this, proposals for a non-profit housing association have tried to limit the functions of the association so that Islanders would retain maximum possible control over their homes. The Island Position Committee assured Islanders of this in its March 1974 report:

¹Peter Atkinson, Proposed Co-op, March 8, 1974, p. 3.

The essential purpose of the housing corporation would be to effect the non-profit sale and purchase of homes. However, a serious concern of many islanders is that this incorporated body not interfere with their individual control, enjoyment and maintenance of the properties they occupy. It is the intention that the corporation would not have the power to set standards, impose maintenance requirements, etc. Building and health standards would continue to be a responsibility of city administration, as is the practice now. Its charter would simply limit its function to that of buying and selling individual houses, or an actual "bill of rights" could be set into the charter prohibiting the corporation from interfering in the individual's enjoyment and maintenance of his home.¹

Islanders' refusal to willingly give up homeownership, however, led to strained relations with some "reform" City aldermen during that spring. For example, at a fiery meeting with City politicians on April 23, 1974, Alderman Dorothy Thomas indicated that, in her opinion, Islanders had not gone far enough in their proposal and that they should be willing to give up homeownership:

You want Metro to back down, lose face....But you're not prepared to give up anything in return. You want to retain ownership of the houses. You want to maintain essentially the status quo, only better. What are you prepared to give up?²

In the end, of course, Metro politicians were relatively uninterested in the housing association idea anyway and turned down Mayor Paul Cosgrove's May 31, 1974 bid to reopen the matter (which was based on granting a six year master lease to INPHA).

Islanders' desire to maintain homeownership also made Islanders less than enthusiastic about Mayor Crombie's June 18, 1974 motion to save Island houses by having them become part of a City non-profit

¹Island Position Committee Report, March 14, 1974, pp. 14-15. The most important step toward achieving this individual control, of course, was maintaining individual ownership of Island houses.

²Video tape of the April 23, 1974 meeting.

coop and be rented to Island residents after August 31, 1974. In fact, some Islanders wanted to reject the Crombie motion for this reason. One Islander delivered a letter to his neighbors, which said:

I wonder how much rent I'll have to pay for my house, what colour it will have to be painted, or what partition I can rip down... when the mood happens to strike me. These questions are a little more than academic. Damn it, I want to retain title to my own house; I want to raise the floor and repair the foundation. I'll repair the leaks in the roof and put in a new [toilet].

Islanders did not in fact reject the Crombie motion (but Metro Council did).

3. Spring Campaign Organization:

The 1974 Spring Campaign, which marked a new phase in Islanders' political history, appealed to and relied on Islanders' strong sense of control and high level of resentment--even outrage--when that control was threatened. Although in the political sphere Islanders had a history of relying on politicians (notably David Rotenberg from 1961-1972) to develop and implement political strategy (see below, pp. 344-349) on the Island itself, they were used to organizing activities for themselves. There was, therefore, already a relatively large group of seasoned community leaders who could be called upon in the course of the Campaign. In addition (as noted below), in the political context, there was a growing sense of frustration and dissatisfaction with relying so heavily on politicians.¹ A large group

¹For example, Islanders had a meeting with the City Executive Committee and several other City Hall insiders on January 7, 1974 to discuss strategy for the Spring Campaign. Islanders were disappointed, coming away with the "general impression...that this was the first time the city executive had thought about it [the Island and future strategy] since the Metro meeting [on December 11, 1973]". Bill Metcalfe, reflecting this frustration and dissatisfaction with the politicians, concluded, "We will have to be masters of our fate." TIRA Executive, Minutes, January 7, 1974, p. 1.

of Islanders, therefore, was ready, willing and able to organize and carry out a large political campaign.

b. Impact of Islanders' Defense of Place On Their Sense of Control:

Islanders' defense of place experiences have had a very marked impact on their sense of control. Sometimes the effects have been positive; sometimes the effects have been negative; and sometimes the effects apparently have been paradoxical.

1. Attitudes Toward Authority, Politics and Politicians:

Islanders' attitudes toward politics and politicians have evolved over the years from respectful deference to cynical distrust.

In the mid-1930's, when the airport was being discussed, Islanders did not try to overturn the basic decision. They accepted the decision to construct an airport as a fait accompli. They had more modest aims: to find a new site for their homes and to gain financial compensation and/or assistance for moving their homes. Because the political climate was different and accepted standards of political behaviour were different from more recent times, they did not consider "fighting City Hall", in the way that many present day Islanders do, but they certainly did try "influencing City Hall". They used many of the traditional means. They lobbied; they negotiated (with a fair degree of success, since they persuaded the City to open up Sunfish Island for cottage development and to give them three years' free rent as compensation); and they appeared in "large deputations" to state their case before City committees in as reasonable and respectful a manner as possible. Occasionally they became piqued, but

they did not "confront" or "demand".¹ Perhaps their acceptance of authority and generally (but not always) deferential attitude toward City officials is best summed up in the phrase "we waited upon" the Board of Control, or whatever committee--a phrase that is sprinkled throughout the West Island Drive Association minutes.

They also tried to present themselves in the most reasonable light possible--as citizens who were helpful and deferential toward those in authority. For example, on July 28, 1937, a deputation from the Hanlan's Point Association appeared before the Board of Control to ask that new sites for the affected houses be opened up on Hanlan's Point itself. In the course of their presentation, they said:

We as a community, especially for the last twelve years, have gone ahead improving and constructing and we do not think you will find that our requests of your body at any time have been unreasonable and at all times they have been presented with due respect to the members of council and with the spirit of friendship.²

They were, on occasion, even reluctant to appear before a City Committee, for fear of giving offense to City politicians or bureaucrats:

The general opinion of the [West Island Drive] Committee was that any such action [as appearing before the Board of Control to alter the City Parks Committee decision to open up Sunfish rather than Mugg's Island] might antagonize the Parks Committee in general and Mr. Chambers [the Parks Commissioner] in particular and thus jeopardize [sic] any chance we may have of a satisfactory settlement.³

¹The idea of appearing before the City Executive, as a group of Islanders did in April 1974 during the Spring Campaign, to ask its members what they had been doing to preserve the Island community and to rake its members over the coals for not having done enough, was unthinkable.

²Hanlan's Point Association, "Brief to the Mayor and Board of Control," Minutes - City Board of Control, 1937, vol. 2 (July 28, 1937), Item #321, p. 1.

³West Island Drive Association, Minutes, September 25, 1937.

In the late 1960's, after two-thirds of the houses on the Island had been demolished to make way for the developing Metro park (and only those residential areas which still remain on Ward's and Algonquin Islands were left), Islanders still accepted the basic decision to build a Metro park as a fait accompli. They only argued about the timing of the park development and only asked for temporary extensions until such time as the parkland was needed. In addition, many (though not all) Islanders still had a respectful, relatively positive, view of politics and clung to the view that if they presented their case in a reasonable, well-argued manner, they would succeed. For example, in their introductory letter announcing the formation of TIRA in July 1969, WIA President Peter Gzowski and AIA President Mark Harrison wrote:

Our opponents, if that's a fair word, are not unreasonable people. They're politicians and civil servants acting in the best of their faith with the public interest at heart. Well, we can operate in good faith too. And with the public interest at heart. We believe our case is a valid one, and we believe that if we begin now to talk and to act as a community, we can win our arguments.¹

By the mid-1970's, however, after several years of unsuccessful (frequently bitter)² political activity, which had actively involved most members of the Island community in one way or another, Islanders were no longer inclined to regard politicians or politics as "reasonable". They were no longer inclined to be overly deferential (usually

¹Peter Gzowski and Mark Harrison, "Open Letter To The Islanders," Ward's Island Weekly, July 11, 1969.

²There has been a great deal of bitterness on both sides-- among politicians and bureaucrats as well as Island residents.

polite,¹ but not differential). And they were no longer willing to accept the Metro decision to build the park as a fait accompli (since 1975 they have pressed the Province for a transfer of the land from Metro to the City in order to preserve a permanent community).

Islanders, for example, came away from their 1974 Spring Campaign with a deeply cynical and jaundiced view of politics and politicians.² They developed, as one Islander put it, "extreme bitterness that such twerps are making decisions that affect the lives of so many people, based on misinformation, based on political consideration and it's

¹They have not always been polite, either. For example, at a public forum during the 1974 Spring Campaign, several Islanders accused their ward alderman, William Archer (who had voted to terminate their leases) of having lied to them during the 1972 election campaign and afterward. On August 31, 1974, Islanders held a "New Year's Eve" celebration (on the day when their leases would have terminated if they had not initiated a court action) and, leading the parade were four Islanders dressed up with grotesque, over-sized heads of three politicians and the Metro Parks Commissioner, labeled: Paul Godless, Bull Archer, Snarl Mallette and Tummy Thompson. (See Illustration 28.) And at a July 1, 1980 rally to show public and political support, Islanders booted their M.P.P., Larry Grossman, when he stated that he (unlike Mayor Sewell, Aldermen Eggleton and Heap and others) was unwilling to "break the law" to help protect the houses--to stand up against the bulldozers. These, and other instances, are representative of a vastly different approach to politics and politicians.

²This evolution has been both a collective and an individual phenomenon. Bill Metcalfe, for example commented (in November 1975) on his initial reaction in the fall of 1973 to the City report which recommended that the community be preserved:

Well, elation. Somebody wants us and is willing to do something about it and I [didn't] know how in the face of this sort of document that anybody could be in a position to proceed against us.

He goes on to indicate that he became more cynical about politics as he followed the fortunes of this report (which, for example, was rejected virtually without discussion by the Metro Parks Committee that November):

I was at that stage of the game thinking politics was a logical process. It took me quite a long time to learn that that was a wrong perception.

really criminal." As a result, as David Amer said (in November 1975), they were even less likely to adopt a trusting view of politicians in the future:

Yes, [Islanders' general view of politicians has changed]. I think that nobody puts any stock in a politician's promises any more. I find the instant response these days [1975] is not, "Oh, wow. We've got somebody to support us", which is what would have happened three or four years ago. People say, "Come on. I've heard that a million times." They've really come to distrust politicians and want to know specifically what he has in mind and how he is going to do it. This is good, because it really cuts a lot of the crap out and the politicians are not going to get away with a public appearance.

There is no reason to believe that these views have changed in recent years. Part of this cynicism results from Islanders' sense of frustration over their lack of control in the political arena (see below).

2. Gaining Control: Successes and Failures:

The political history of the last decade or so has been characterized by Islanders' struggle to exercise more control over their political destiny.

During the 1960's, Alderman David Rotenberg emerged as the Islanders' major supporter and political strategist. He orchestrated the Lakeshore battles (which only ended in 1968 with the demolition of the last Lakeshore houses) and, in the course of this decade, Islanders generally came to rely heavily on his political advice and action. It was only in 1967, when the remaining 700+ residents on Ward's and Algonquin Islands (i.e., the 250+ holders of non-compensation leases) were faced with the termination of their leases in 1968,

that these residents became politically involved¹ and some began to question the wisdom of relying so heavily on David Rotenberg, or any politician. A split emerged over whether or not to hire N.D.P., M.P. and lawyer Andrew Brewin to present their case to the Metro Parks Committee. Some Islanders believed strongly that they should take Alderman Rotenberg's advice not to hire Mr. Brewin and that they should rely entirely on Alderman Rotenberg to manoeuvre something of his own devising through Metro Parks and Metro Council. Others, like Peter Cridland, were opposed to relying solely on Alderman Rotenberg. He explained (in November 1975) why he adopted this position on this and other occasions:

I'm prejudiced. There's no question about it. I'm not Conservative and he [Rotenberg] is. I had to face him virtually single-handed on occasions when I disagreed with his tactics on the Island cause and that was damned difficult to do, because a lot of people on the Island trusted him very thoroughly....They were typically occasions immediately before an important debate which he would suggest that basically that we either don't appear or certainly don't appear in any numbers, never raise a fuss or do anything untoward, possibly don't make an appearance or make a presentation [as in this case], but to leave it entirely to him to do quietly behind the scenes and for him to sort of stage manage exactly when a specific issue should be brought up and how it should be handled. And [my opposition wasn't] from any political differences. I, from observing countless debates at one level or another, I came to the conclusion that nobody at all, however strongly they supported us, could be trusted to do the homework thoroughly enough and shouldn't be left to make all the tactical decisions and decide just when the time was right, what we should be asking for and so on, that we had to come to those conclusions ourselves and win or lose, develop our own tactics. And I guess this was, too, at a time when ratepayers' groups as a whole were tending to become more vocal....I just felt that no matter what the risks and how strongly some members of the community felt, we simply had to do our own homework and make our own decisions. And we did, in fact, begin to take the initiative away from the politicians that supported us at the time.

¹This group of Islanders had not been active in the earlier political battles, partly because they were not immediately threatened; partly because many did not think they could successfully "fight City Hall"; and partly because many did not believe that the park plan would ever be completed. See also Sense of Change: "Coping With Stress: Attitudes", pp. 380 ff.

Islanders decided to hire Andrew Brewin. From this time forward, there was a growing desire among a growing number of Islanders to exercise more control over their political future.

During the early 1970's, when Islanders still relied heavily on Alderman Rotenberg, a good deal of tension arose between those who wished to rely on a chosen political champion (like Alderman Rotenberg) and those who wished to rely more on their own political judgement. In 1970, a debate almost identical to the 1967 debate arose within the newly-formed TIRA Executive. Again, Islanders decided to hire Andrew Brewin to present their Brief. In the fall of 1971,¹ the TIRA Executive was again split by a debate over how much to rely on Alderman Rotenberg, which indicates the extent--and the limitations--of their reliance. One Executive member proposed a motion that "it be TIRA policy to cooperate with Alderman Rotenberg, follow his advice and keep him informed of what we are doing on the political scene, etc."² After lengthy debate, the Executive passed the following, significantly revised, version of that motion:

that it be TIRA policy to co-operate with Alderman Rotenberg, consider his advice and where possible and feasible follow that advice and keep him informed of our plans and actions. It is also TIRA policy to seek out the advice of other interested politicians who might be favourably disposed toward our community, it being remembered that Alderman Rotenberg is given first consultation rights.³

¹In the spring, the TIRA Executive, as Maureen Smith put it succinctly, decided "to leave everything to Rotenberg", who successfully manoeuvred another lease extension (with an automatic renewal clause) through Metro Council. A new TIRA Executive was elected during the summer.

²Mary McLaughlin, (Statement On) Motions for TIRA Executive Committee Meeting October 12th, October 7, 1971.

³TIRA Executive, Minutes, October 12, 1971, p. 2.

Islanders, therefore, would continue to rely heavily, but not exclusively, on Alderman Rotenberg. They would "cooperate with", "consider" his advice, but not necessarily "follow" him.

In December 1972, David Crombie was elected mayor of Toronto (defeating Alderman David Rotenberg and Tony O'Donohue in the process). Elizabeth Amer (in November 1974) summarized Islanders' expectations of the new mayor and reflected the growing desire to exercise more control:

I don't think we wanted that [Crombie to take over Rotenberg's role]. I think we wanted to have more say about what went on. We didn't want anybody telling us to shut up and go home and not bother him. So I don't think we wanted—people who were on the Executive at that time really didn't want that kind of patronage. We wanted him to be as powerful and as manipulative of Council as Rotenberg had been, but we wanted him to implement what we wanted and that would be the difference. You see, Rotenberg would always implement what he could get through easily, whether we wanted it or not. What we wanted never had anything to do with it, other than the fact that we wanted a lease extension. But the conditions of it or the time period or when it was to happen and so on and so forth was always his decision. So our expectations of Crombie were, I think that he would find out what we wanted and then he would get it for us in any way he could.

Nevertheless, Islanders certainly did expect Mayor Crombie to be "kingpinning" the 1973 effort to obtain an extension,¹ as Ron Mazza phrased it, and did rely heavily on him and Alderman Karl Jaffary to organize the City and pro-Islander forces.

After these efforts failed at Metro Council on December 11, 1973, Islanders organized their major 1974 Spring Campaign to re-open and reverse the decision at Metro Council. In the course of this Campaign, Islanders took far greater responsibility for developing and executing a political strategy than they ever had before. They still

¹Or even permanent status, as the September 1973 City report recommended.

sought political advice from all quarters and, some would argue, were still looking for a white knight to champion their cause in the political arena at Metro Council. But a number of Islanders had been badly burnt by what they viewed as the City politicians' failure to win the day at Metro Council on December 11, 1973. From this time forward, Islanders have placed a high priority on exercising as much control as possible over their political future. To the extent that they have been successful in accomplishing this, their sense of control has been increased.¹

Nevertheless, the political history also shows how political events have frequently threatened Islanders' sense of control. Obviously, Metro Council's decision to evict Islanders and demolish the houses in order to extend the park is the prime example, but there are numerous other ones. Naturally, moves by their opponents have often changed the political context and forced Islanders to respond to outside forces, rather than allowing them to take the initiative. Beyond this, Islanders, over the years, have had to rely on friendly politicians to argue, negotiate and strategize on their behalf. Even in more recent years, since about 1973 (when David Rotenberg was no longer on Council), when Islanders have tried to overcome what organizer Dale Perkins has described as a "Saviour-King syndrome"² and "develop [in 1974] a strong

¹The fact that Islanders have discussed the matter of control so frequently and even passionately (in interviews, at public and Executive meetings, and so on) is another indication, in itself that a sense of control is especially important to them. Whether having a sense of control is more important to Islanders than to other people faced with similar political threats is impossible to determine from the data collected here. But, having a sense of control is undoubtedly important to Islanders.

²Mr. Perkins refers especially to Islanders' great reliance on David Rotenberg who, between 1962 and 1972 was, as Mr. Rotenberg put it, "running the Island issue".

campaign where [they] could assume a certain degree of control over their lives", Islanders have still encountered frequent instances of lack of control not only over their opponents (as expected), but also over their supporters. For example, Mayor Paul Cosgrove in May 1974 filed a motion to reopen the issue at Metro Council without even telling Islanders he had done so. They learned of his action on the radio only two days before the meeting and had to cram two weeks of lobbying into less than two days. More recently, Mayor John Sewell virtually single-handedly organized an unsuccessful attempt at Metro Council in February 1980--drafting the motion, lobbying politicians, and choosing the date to go before Metro Council--with only a minimum of discussion with Islanders.

Maureen Smith summed up Islanders' frustration over their ultimate lack of control in the political arena when she said in the summer of 1974:

What has happened with just about every TIRA Executive is that they have realized that you have reached a point beyond which we have absolutely no control over what's happening....Bill Ward, the night of the first defeat, the first reopening defeat [of Cosgrove's motion on May 31, 1974], he said to me, "My God, I don't think I've ever seen those City guys so mad," he said. "The top nearly blew off City Hall after that Metro debate, meeting." And they were so angry and they then decided they were going to try and do something. Find time to do something. But at that point it had gone beyond their control. There was nothing we could do about it [Crombie's motion]. And that's the hardest thing to tell the community, that we thereupon have no control and it was just back to the old days when Rotenberg used to carry the ball. Once it got into his court, there was nothing more we could do. We were just victims then of the deals and we were stuck with whatever came out.

Many Islanders share her sense of frustration.

3. Paradox of Control:

Islanders' defense of place, therefore, has both strengthened and weakened their sense of control. Paradoxically, however, even their

unsuccessful political experiences have perhaps strengthened their sense of control. They may have lost on various occasions, but they have not given up without a struggle (and they have sometimes come away from the defeat with a sense that they were making progress and becoming more skilled in the political arena). Elizabeth Amer's comments in November 1974 (after the failure of the Spring Campaign to win a victory at Metro Council) reflect this apparent paradox:

One thing I would like to communicate to other people in this kind of a [political] situation, and God knows there are people faced with these problems all across the country...the thing that I think is worth while learning is that they shouldn't be afraid to tackle it, however impossibly powerful the government is or the body that's trying to take it away from you, not to be afraid to tackle them, because there's a lot to be said for just simply sitting in your room and saying, "I would prefer not". Even that's a very radical thing to do, to simply sit in your house and say no. And if you don't do any more than that, you're doing something. From that point you can get everybody else to do the same thing and then you can get them to do something a little bit more aggressive about it and you can really get something going....So I think that although it's a pretty hard struggle, it's hard to live with yourself if you really believe that it's wrong and you don't do anything. I think people should really take a hold of these things and fight them wherever they can and find out how to organize themselves so that they can do it. I don't know how effective we were. I think we could have been more effective. But I think that that was a function of our lack of experience. And the next time we go through it, we'll be better at it.

She (like Maureen Smith earlier) may not have a great sense of control over political events; but she displays a great reluctance to accept an unpalatable decision or to be completely controlled by outside events and decisions. Just making the decision to fight something is an exercise of will and an expression of personal independence, which in turn may increase one's sense of control.¹

¹See also Amer, Yes We Can!, op. cit., as a reflection of this desire for control.