

ii. Sense of Environment - Defense of Place:

The political history of the Island has been punctuated by numerous clashes of environmental values and images, several of which are discussed here.¹

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

It is already clear from this chapter that Islanders have a strong sense of environment. This, in turn, has had a marked impact

¹In the last fifteen to twenty years, sparked mainly by such seminal works as Kenneth Boulding's The Image, Anselm Strauss's Images of the American City and, perhaps most influential of all, Kevin Lynch's The Image of the City, geographers, psychologists, sociologists and others have done a great deal of research on environmental images (as well as other related topics that fall under the various rubrics of environmental perception, environmental psychology, environmental cognition, cognitive maps, mental maps and so on). Environmental images may be defined, very generally, as the mental pictures, or conceptions, that people hold about physical environments. The extremely diverse research into this subject (most of which has centred on urban imagery) ranges from analysis of the physical and geometric aspects of images to analysis of the meaning and symbolic content of images. The images of the Toronto Island discussed in this study fall more toward the symbolic than the physical end of the spectrum. Research into environmental images has been based on two fundamental ideas. First, that different people (and different groups of people) hold different images or conceptions of their environments. And second that these various environmental images influence behaviour. It is evident from this study that, over the years, different groups of people (e.g., Island residents and businessmen; political supporters and opponents; journalistic supporters and opponents, and so on) have held different, and in some cases conflicting, images of the Island (e.g., the Island as summer resort versus the Island as permanent home; the Island as place of business versus the Island as place of residence; the Island as a well-established community versus the Island as parkland manqué, and so on) and that these clashes have had a marked impact on the behaviour of these groups and individuals.

Kenneth Boulding, The Image: Knowledge in Life and Society (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1958); Anselm Strauss, Images of the American City (New York: Free Press, 1961); and Kevin Lynch, The Image of the City (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The M.I.T. Press, 1960).

on their political behaviour. At the most fundamental level, as was the case with sense of identity and sense of community, when the Island environment (as they know it) has been threatened, Islanders have been strongly motivated to try to defend it. This was evident, for example, in the later 1940's and early 1950's when Islanders strongly opposed a series of plans which would have radically altered the Island's physical environment (by building tunnels or bridges and roads, straightening and filling in lagoons, building highrise apartments and hotels, demolishing existing housing, creating major amusement parks, and even additional warehousing and dockyards).¹

1. "Protectors" Of the Island Environment:

Not only were Islanders defenders of their own interests (of saving their Island houses and Island environment), but they also saw themselves as being protectors and defenders of the virtues of the Island as it was. They therefore made direct appeals to politicians and others which were based on the need for and desirability of protecting an existing environment. For example, in 1948, a hundred Islanders trooped down to City Hall to successfully protest against the City Planning Board's Official Plan recommendations for the Island (i.e., that the land level be raised; that existing residential leases be eliminated and a new residential district composed principally of apartments and hotels be created; and that a motor highway and parking lots be constructed):

¹Such as the 1947 City Planning Board Proposal (Map 21), 1949 City Planning Board Official Plan recommendations, 1951 Joint City Planning Board-Toronto Harbour Commission Plan (Map 23) and 1953 Lamport Plan (Map 24). At each stage, through the IIC, Islanders made counter-proposals which would have maintained essentially the status quo by improving existing park and residential areas and not allowing motor vehicles. (Map 22).

They came as a delegation to tell the city parks Committee they did not like the changes the Planning Board proposed to make on the Island - now "a little gem set in downtown Toronto". To effect these changes, they said, would be "the biggest mistake Toronto could make".¹

The City Planning proposal was temporarily withdrawn.

Similarly, on May 12, 1953, Alan Howard of the IIC presented Islanders' own plan,² which advocated keeping and improving existing residential areas and improving park areas (including the picturesque, winding lagoon system), and opposed providing automobile access (discussed below, pp. 287 ff.).

[Mr. Howard] said there was no condition which could not be rectified without changing the face and function of the Islands. "Our plan is based on the policy adopted by the Inter-Island Council [in 1948]: 'To make major improvements on its existing state, at comparatively moderate cost, using the present assets'."

The result is that the Islanders' plan doesn't call for motor vehicle access, either by tunnel or bridge; it does not envision apartments, motels, docks, or stadia; it does not demand immediate raising of the level of the Islands - all items incorporated in other plans.

It does retain the present residential community. It does recommend the gradual improvement of the existing 220 acres of parkland and of the 152 acres of undeveloped land. It does make suggestions for the improvement of beaches.

"Above all," added Mr. Howard, "we do not propose the destruction of that which gives the Islands their enchantment - the lagoons".³

In more recent defenses of the Island, Islanders have continued to make direct appeals to save the existing physical environment, with

¹"Islanders Win Fight To Save 'Little Gem'," Telegram, October 12, 1949.

²This was similar to their 1948 and 1949 proposals (Map 22). It was issued again in 1953 largely as a response to Mayor Lampert's April 1953 industrial scheme (Map 24), but also to the 1951 Joint Plan (Map 23).

³"Plans For The Island," Globe and Mail, May 13, 1953.

its "car-free" streets¹ and "small village" atmosphere.² For example, the Save Island Homes pamphlet produced during the 1974 Spring Campaign argued that the existing residential community contributed to the quality of the park and generally reflected Islanders' own environmental (and social) values:

[M]any park visitors go to Ward's and Algonquin Islands precisely because there are People living there. They enjoy strolling through the narrow car-less streets and watching the residents working in their gardens or playing with their children. For the majority of park users who find their way to that part of the Island, the community, with its atmosphere of an old-fashioned country village, is just as much one of the attractions of the Island as the amusement park and formal gardens of Centre Island.³

Islanders, like their political supporters, have promoted a mixed-use approach to park planning: i.e., the idea that the existence of the residential area, for a variety of social and physical reasons, is a positive feature of the Island park. (See below pp. 296 ff.)

2. The Car Controversy:

Ever since 1912, tunnels, bridges and roads have been proposed for the Island (Map 14) and in 1935, the Dominion government even began constructing a tunnel under the Western Gap, which was abruptly halted, apparently for "political reasons".⁴ In any event, from the late 1940's (with the issuance of the City of Toronto Planning Board proposal to build a tunnel and an Island Boulevard) through the mid-1960's,

¹For example, the 1971 TIRA Brief, quoted on p. 228.

²For example, Maureen Smith's comments, November 1973, quoted on p. 226.

³Toronto Island Residents Association, Save Island Homes (Toronto Coach House Press, 1974), p. 16.

⁴See for example, Stanley Westall, "He Wouldn't Wait For \$100,000," Globe and Mail, January 15, 1960.

debate periodically raged over whether or not (and how) to provide motor vehicle access to the Island. This long debate represented a fundamental conflict of environmental values between the pro and anti-car forces.

Advocates of providing automobile access argued that it was necessary in order "to serve 'the many', not 'the few'", as the 1951 Joint Plan of the City Planning Board and the Toronto Harbour Commission stated.¹ Not providing a tunnel, Metro Parks Commissioner Tommy Thompson argued in his 1956 Island plan, would be "to purposely restrict the use of any park area",² Park users expected to be able to drive up and park near the picnic areas or beaches. The need for an Island tunnel (or bridge) was a refrain taken up by the major political figures of the day (notably Mayor Allan Lamport and Metro Chairmen Fred Gardiner and William Allen) and was abandoned (by politically pragmatic Gardiner and Allen) only when the Federal government failed to provide funds for the project.

¹This slogan was used during the 1950's and 1960's to promote automobile access. Then, after the tunnel idea was put to rest, it was taken up by pro-park forces to mean simply that all Island residents should be removed.

²"Park, Family Resort To Cost \$14,500,000 Toronto Island Plan," Star, February 10, 1956.

Opponents of automobile access, notably the Island residents,¹ argued that automobiles and other motor vehicles would ruin the natural character of the Island. Repeatedly, Islanders rejected such plans and reinforced the long-standing image of the Island as a place of retreat from and contrast to the City.² In October 1949, for example, Islanders argued that the City Planning Official Plan proposal for a tunnel and roadway would "spoil the charm of the Island as a quiet retreat from the noise, smoke and traffic of the City".³ Shortly thereafter, in the IIC plan of November 1949, the tunnel project was fiercely opposed by "island enthusiasts who regard the tunnel planners as despoilers of their little paradise".⁴ In 1951, IIC spokesman Alan Howard rejected the Joint Proposal of the Toronto City Planning Board and the Toronto Harbour Commission to build a 4-lane tunnel, an Island Boulevard, and parking areas for 1,100 cars. Rather than making the Island

¹The tunnel controversy provides an example of a case where different social groups within the Island community adopted different political positions. While Island residents represented by the IIC were busy opposing the 1951 tunnel proposal, Island businessmen, like Manitou Hotel proprietor (and Island resident), Bill Sutherland favoured the idea as being good for business. The tunnel controversy also made manifest differences between Island "users" generally (as represented by the Association of Women Electors, labour groups, and other City groups) and City business groups. The "users" opposed the tunnel and cars; whereas the "business" groups tended to favour it (and increased commercial development). Minutes City Parks and Exhibitions Committee, May 14, 1953 provides examples.

²See, for example, Sense of History, p. 124 and Sense of Environment, pp. 276 ff.

³Minutes City Parks and Exhibitions Committee, 1949, October 11, 1949, Item #458A.

⁴L.M. McKechnie, "Claim Tunnel Plan To Destroy Island/Residents Open Fight," Telegram, November 15, 1949.

"part of the city"¹ (by a tunnel link), he declared, planners should enhance its present assets. The "charm of Toronto Islands is that for the price of a street car ticket people can get away from the traffic and tension of the city to completely different surroundings".² And in 1953, when introducing another IIC plan, Mr. Howard reiterated these sentiments, "We see no reasons why this small oasis in the desert of smog and traffic congestion should not be retained."³

The long-standing fascination with building a bridge or tunnel to the Island stemmed perhaps from more than an assessment of the facts about getting more people to and from the Island.⁴ It is curious, for example, that some politicians (like Allan Lamport) were willing to spend hundreds of thousands (and probably millions) of dollars to provide vehicular access, but were reluctant in the extreme to spend money on improving the park itself. The debate, in part, came down to a conflict in values and images of just what sort of place the Island should be, what sort of symbol it was. Proponents of bridges and tunnels saw automobile access as a symbol of progress and modernization. It would take the Island out of the "horse and buggy era" and into the "motor age"--both positive advances according to proponents. For example, supporting the TCPB/THC Joint Plan of 1951, Toronto Harbour

¹Quoted in "Women Electors Study Varied Civic Questions," Globe and Mail, November 15, 1951.

²Ibid.

³Quoted in "Plans For The Island," Globe and Mail, May 13, 1953.

⁴Islanders repeatedly argued that, in fact, the ferry service was a more efficient method of transporting large numbers of Island visitors than either cars or buses would be. See for example, Letter from Inter-Island Council to Mayor, Board of Control and Members of City Council, November 11, 1949.

Commission Chairman Bosley declared grandly, "Broadly, the island is now a century behind. It's in the Victorian stage. We want to bring it up to 1952."¹ And a disappointed Alderman William Dennison lamented in 1956 when the Federal government refused to subsidize a tunnel, "This means the Island will remain in the horse and buggy stage of development forever."² Islanders, however, seeing themselves as the protectors and defenders of the Island, had no desire to bring it into the Automobile Age. In fact, their feelings were quite the reverse. For example, in 1953, Mr. Howard rejected the tunnel in the IIC plan:

There is nothing selfish about our plan....We are speaking for the thousands of people, families with children and without motor cars, who find relaxation and rest away from the vicissitudes of the motor age, at the Island.³

Opponents of the bridges and tunnels saw the Island as a place of retreat, a pastoral contrast to the noise and fumes of the City. Bringing cars to the Island, in their view, would be the worst fate that could befall it. To them, cars symbolized all the negative, rather than the positive, aspects of modern society as mechanized, motorized, and dehumanized. Such conflicting notions of progress have coloured the debate to the present. (See, for example, the section on "Island Tours", below, pp. 300 - 305.)

3. "Islandness":

Islanders are aware that there is something special about living

¹Quoted in "Island For All, Not Few/1,001-Acre Playground/10 mile Beach Is Plan," Star, September 12, 1951, p.1.

²Quoted in "Claim Government Welshing Hits Island," Telegram, March 29, 1956.

³Quoted in "Spokesman For Island Group Raps Ivory Tower Plans For Harbour Development," Globe and Mail, May 15, 1953.

on an island.¹ They have, therefore, been motivated to preserve this special characteristic when it has been threatened (notably, by the building of a bridge or tunnel link to the City). In 1949, the IIC wrote:

It is said that a tunnel is imperative to make the Island accessible to all - but a tunnel completely eradicates the Island! It then becomes a peninsula - a spur of the mainland, everything that made it attractively beautiful as an Island is cancelled. Its complete character is changed. Toronto's unique and priceless heritage is sacrificed. You haven't an Island left to be accessible to a single person.²

And, reacting against the Joint TCPB/THC Plan of 1951, IIC spokesman Alf Whiskin commented, "They call the island one of the finest assets nature has given the city....But if they built a road to it, it won't be an island any more. They'll be killing the best feature of it."³

4. Insularity: Physical and Political:

Not only have Islanders been physically removed from the mainland, but they have also, according to some observers, been politically removed. One criticism that some "reform" aldermen and their supporters expressed during the mid-1970's about Islanders was that they had been too "insular" or too isolated from other City causes. For example, Alderman Michael Goldrick commented on this (in March 1975), "That is another impression of mine, that they are quite removed and that they rose up when they were in danger, but you didn't hear about them being a strong lobby any other times." Alderman John Sewell (also in March 1975) commented somewhat scornfully on their insular frame of mind and its pragmatic political consequences:

¹ See for example Peter Cridland's comments on p.259.

² Letter from Inter-Island Council, November 11, 1949, op. cit.

³ Quoted in Marilyn Bell, "Fear No Place For Tots On 'Incubator Island' In Transformation Plan," Telegram, September 13, 1951.

Well, they're the ones who decided that they were going to go out live on a farm or something. And that's part of that whole mentality that causes trouble. I mean, one of the staggering things one person told me, "We don't understand anything about politics", this fellow said. "We live on an island." I mean, that describes it very well.

Alderman Karl Jaffary agreed (in June 1975) that Islanders as a group (as opposed to as individuals) had been somewhat insular politically, but qualified it by saying:

Maybe it was a problem. Certainly, Islanders tended to be involved in City and Metro political issues that touched the Island and not a great number of them were involved in very many other issues. Now, that may be unfair in view of the numbers. How many staunch community activists do you want out of that number of people?... But you didn't really find anybody on the Island who was a real City Hall wheeler-dealer who just understood how it all worked very well.

A number of Islanders themselves agreed that they probably had been too uninvolved in wider City issues and politics generally. Some pleaded political expediency (which Alderman Goldrick rejected as "sophistry): "Well, certainly before December 11th [1973] we never did [join in other City fights], because we couldn't afford to offend anyone....[It was] probably [a wise policy]. But I didn't like it." And some pleaded lack of numbers and insufficient energy, given the dire nature of their own cause:

Ya, I think it's fair enough [to criticize us for being politically insular]. There's certainly other causes that are going on in the City that are worth fighting for, but it's a fair enough argument, sure. But, you know, hell we've got a fairly basic cause here to fight ourselves. And you only have so much energy....It just happens that we are totally absorbed by our own survival.

As noted later (in Sense of Change, pp. 388 ff.) of necessity, this political insularity, especially since 1974, has been greatly reduced and Islanders have become heavily involved in Mainland politics and political issues.

b. Politicians' Responses:

Islanders' political supporters and opponents have held conflicting environmental values and images of the Island which have, over the years, informed their political behaviour.

1. Conflicting Images: Parkland Manqué vs. Well-Established Community:

Study of the Island's political history reveals that Islanders' opponents and supporters have tended to have fundamentally different and conflicting images of the remaining Island residential areas.

Islanders' opponents have tended to regard the residential areas as parkland manqué (because it was designated as Metro parkland in 1956) and the houses (and their occupants) as merely an obstacle in the way of achieving that desirable end result. For example, during the May 1973 Metro Council debate, Controller John Williams of North York gave a succinct pro-park statement, which reflected his image of the Island as "pure park" (see below) and of Ward's and Algonquin Islands as parkland manqué.

The lands in question are Metropolitan Toronto parklands. The Metropolitan Toronto parks are for the enjoyment and use of all the people of Metropolitan Toronto. They are not to be lived in.

On December 11, 1973, Etobicoke Controller Bill Stockwell, for pragmatic financial reasons, favoured granting Islanders a temporary extension. He rejected the notion of a permanent community, however, because, he concluded, "I see the Island as a Metro park." And, more recently, Metro Chairman Paul Godfrey, in June 1980, reflected a similar parkland manqué vision when he said, "The Island is a park and it should become a park."¹

¹Quoted in "Ontario Proposes Temporary Reprieve In Island Evictions," Globe and Mail, June 20, 1980.

Islanders' supporters, however, have regarded the existing residential areas as a remnant of a well-established, historic community, which predates the park (and is located adjacent to, rather than in the park).¹ For example, at City Council on November 21, 1973, Alderman Ann Johnston commented, "I wish people would stop talking about houses in a park. Why don't we talk about houses adjacent to a park?" At Metro Council on December 11, 1973, City Alderman Art Eggleton responded to the old argument that letting residents live on Ward's and Algonquin would be comparable to building houses in High Park:

There has been a lot of comment about the "privileged few" who are allowed to live on parkland. Mayor White [and Alderman Beavis] suggested, "Well, you wouldn't want people to live in High Park. Why are you allowing them to live down there?" Well, I think that's a silly comparison. Of course we are not going to allow houses in High Park. But I think that the main difference that we have to bear in mind here is that the houses were there long before the land was actually declared to be parkland. The houses had been there for a great many years.

¹ Islanders themselves certainly hold this image and have promoted this view during the political battles. For example, at the November 20, 1973 public meeting organized by the City (prior to the December 11, 1973 Metro Council decision), TIRA spokesperson Tony Gooch said:

It's not a question of putting houses in a park; they are there and have been longer than the park has been.

It's not in any way similar to putting houses in High Park - the similarity, if there is one - would be to demolish houses on the edge of High Park to make it bigger.

Tony Gooch, (Speech, November 20, 1973), p. 2.

And the Save Island Homes pamphlet, in answer to the question, "Is it right for people to be living in a park?", suggested:

The land on which the Island residents live has never been parkland.

It would be more to the point to ask: Is it right for a government to destroy a happy well-established community in order to create a park?

Save Island Homes, op. cit., p. 5.

And on March 20, 1974, at a public forum at the St. Lawrence Centre, Islanders' long-time supporter, David Rotenberg dismissed the park-land manqué view by emphasizing, "This is not part of a park and never has been. This has been a residential area. Always has beenThis is not parkland."

It is not surprising that the two sides have clashed frequently, especially since 1973 when the community and historic preservation arguments came to the fore.

2. Conflicting Park Philosophies: "Pure Park" vs. Mixed Use:

Not only have the two groups held conflicting images of the remaining residential areas, but they have also tended to hold conflicting park philosophies. This split was evident as early as November 1955, when the Metro Planning Board met to discuss the future of the Island. At that time planner Hans Blumenfeld recommended that "the island should contain both park and residential uses", because the existing residential areas enhanced the rest of the park:

There is no need to enlarge the park area at the expense of the existing housing. Far from being incompatible residential use enhances the attractiveness of the island for recreation. The houses, generally pleasant but architecturally undistinguished, and the gardens form an agreeable varied backdrop to the beaches, playgrounds and parks. The life of the residents, people puttering in their gardens, children playing, etc., add a human touch. Without the residences, the island would be a less interesting place.¹

But Metro Parks Commissioner Tommy Thompson argued against this approach:

¹Hans Blumenfeld, "The Role of Toronto Island in the Metropolitan Toronto Recreation System," November 1951, p. 4, which was before the Metro Planning Board on November 3, 1955.

- 251 -

Mr. T.W. Thompson, Metropolitan Commissioner of Parks, felt that Toronto Island should be developed as a park and if facilities were improved its use would increase. He was of the opinion that existing housing on the Island is of little value and should be removed. The Island should be developed simply, with plenty of open space.¹

Mr Thompson's "pure park" philosophy, of course, triumphed at this time and Metro proceeded to develop the Island in this manner.

The conflict, once again, erupted in the late 1960's and early 1970's, after much of the Island had been redeveloped as Metro parkland. While to some, like Scarborough Controller (later Mayor) Gus Harris, the Island Park, as developed by Metro, represents the "jewel of the whole system of parklands in Metro Toronto", to others, like Alderman William Kilbourn (who spent happy summers on Centre Island as a child), it is sterile, "inauthentic" and, as he put it, simply "prophylactic greensward", which attracts fewer people now than it did in its healthier, more colourful past.²

Beyond this, for opponents of the Islanders, like Mayor Willis Blair, who remarked, "I don't think you can have both [residences and parkland]. It's either going to be a Metro park or it isn't" and Metro Chairman Paul Godfrey, who commented, "I'm in favour of making the whole thing a park and you can't have a residential community being in there", parks and residents do not mix. Park means

¹Minutes of Special Meeting of the Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board, November 3, 1955.

²Many Islanders share this view of the park (e.g., of the formal flower beds set along a concrete promenade which replaced the rag tag, jumbled, crowded Manitou Road, or, as it was known, "the Main Drag"). A number of political supporters, like Barbara Greene, however, do praise the Metro park, but feel, as indicated below, that the whole Island need not - indeed should not - be the same.

"pure park"¹ and the whole Island should be "pure park".²

For Islanders' supporters, however, parks and residents (at least in this case) do mix and are mutually beneficial--the residents add to the charm, diversity, and safety of the park. For example,

¹Alderman Karl Jaffary comments (in 1975), "Yes [to most suburban politicians] I think that a park is an empty space with grass and trees in it. I think that's the general view of most people, because that's what parks tend to be around Metro Toronto and if you want to get any other view of a park, it requires some exposure to other kinds of parks." As for himself, he noted, "The fact that my house [in the City] is built on [the edge of a park with no street between my house and the park] may perhaps influence my views on the Island a little bit as well....I've been able to observe [how people who live on a park relate to that park] a bit myself, as well as read about it."

²There is an air of Gestalt simplicity about the idea of making the whole Island a park. Because it is a small island, there seems to be an inherent compulsion to make it all the same. There seems to be something about islands that leads people to believe that they should be all one thing, that they should be a single unit. (A similar principle seems to be operating, at a more tragic level, in such places as Ireland and Cyprus.)

Controller Barbara Greene of North York, a renegade from the Metro suburban majority,¹ comments on the value of residents to the park:

The community is an asset to the Island. I think that if people go for a walk around the Islands, it's nice to have a variety of things for them to see. And I think that the houses and the atmosphere, the trees and the houses and so on, are interesting. There is also aspects of it that have a certain "older" kind of flavour - the old tennis courts and volley ball and that kind of thing that make it a very interesting place just to see. You have one sort of experience at the other end of the Island, which is fine. A lot of people who walk. It's a promenade kind of thing. And they walk down there and they walk through those streets and on back to Centre Island. Or bicycle around. I personally find it an enjoyable experience and I think a lot of other people do. I don't see any harm in maintaining a small community. I wouldn't like to see it expanded....It's never been a park, eh. It's park in name only. But the community has been there longer. And I think that in the central waterfront area there is an awful lot of parkland etc.. That is really good. And I think that the recreational experiences of having the homes, as far as promenading and that sort of thing, is an asset

¹City representatives, of course, have been adamant on the value of Islanders to the park. For example, Mayor Crombie commented on their contribution to safety, saying, "The existence of the Islanders in the park means that after 10 o'clock the park isn't left to the muggers and the cops." Alderman Colin Vaughan commented on the need for diversity on the Island:

[I have supported Islanders] because I feel that the Island community adds to the life of the park. Without the Island community, the park, the Island park, would be a dead place, from all points of view. I basically support not only the community, but the fact that there are yacht clubs or marinas on the Island as well, that there's a mix of use, rather than a single, bland use across the whole Island. I think it would be a really bad decision to have just a park on the Islands, because I think it would become a sterile sort of place. But I think the fact that there's a living community there, which adds a certain dimension of mixture of uses of the space, plus the fact that there are yacht clubs and other things, enliven the place....The other thing is that the community makes it a year-round place, which I think is important.

And Alderman Michael Goldrick, at the March 1974 public forum took Scarborough Controller Karl Mallette to task for having "a limited conception of parks", as simply "grass and trees" and concluded that "the life that is given to parks is given to it by the users and the people who are living around about it and using it every day."

that far outweighs having a few more acres of green space....I think you get down to a fundamental difference about - which is a straight matter of opinion on the matter - as to what kinds of parks does one want. And Tommy Thompson's parks are very nice for the large part, but they need a little diversity. If you happen to have something unique that is doing well, that people seem to enjoy, I think it's an asset.

3. Island Tours:

Throughout the more recent political history (particularly since the late 1960's), Islanders' supporters and opponents have been engaged in a war of environmental images, which also reflect the above discussed conflicting environmental values (as well as political tactics).¹ As journalist Alexander Ross wrote in 1973, Island "houses ...are either charming or squalid depending on your value-system".² Metro Parks Commissioner Thompson's periodic tours of the Island prior to major debates and decisions, for example, were certainly designed to present the Island houses in the worst possible light, to reinforce negative images of Islanders and to support the idea that the houses simply were not worth preserving. David Rotenberg commented on this ploy (in June 1975):

Well, yes, in a way he did [lobby people]. We used to have a lot of fun. We used to go on a tour of the Island. The Parks Committee, with the Women Electors trailing along and the press and so on, to visit the houses to see how viable it all was. And Tommy always used to lead us down one street where the houses were all bad and I used to try to lead them down another where the houses were good. "Well, you've got to see this one" type of thing. And there were always people who wanted to serve us coffee, to the Committee and so on. And I used to try to get them over to Algonquin. It was a lot of fun. But that way Tommy did try and sell his case by showing the bad houses they had.

¹Journalists and editorial writers (like Alexander Ross, Michael Best and John Downing) have been eager combatants in this war of images.

²Alexander Ross, "Mud Not Flowers Shown On Tour of the Islands," Star, April 23, 1973.

And Alexander Ross described the April 1973 high water tour, which immediately preceded the May 1973 Metro Council decision, as a "pud-
dle jumping tour"¹, designed to present the Island "in as unfavour-
able a light as possible"² in order to finally "rid the Toronto
Islands of its houses and their inhabitants."³ "With unerring
instinct," Mr. Ross wrote, "Thompson led the committee straight to
the worst-hit house on the island....But he steered them briskly past
other well-kept homes and declined one woman's invitation to step
inside for a visit."⁴

The tours certainly made an impression on the politicians,
especially on Islanders' opponents, who eagerly and repeatedly referred
to the poor housing conditions. At the Metro Council debate in May
1973, for example, City Alderman Fred Beavis indicated that he had
been deeply impressed by this tour. He simply could not understand how
people could live in these conditions and the thought that people might
actually prefer to live in such "primitive conditions" (as Islander
Freya Godard phrased it) or in an area of tightly-packed, little
houses set along narrow, ill-kept, carless streets, etc., simply did
not occur to him. He had, in short, a totally negative image of the
Island and displayed a paternalistic attitude toward Islanders (i.e.,

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid. In Mr. Ross's view, "The place fairly sparkled." But
journalistic opponents, like Michael Best and John Downing supported
the Commissioner's view that Island houses were little more than
"squatters' shacks".

that Metro should, in effect, save Islanders from themselves). During the debate he said:

[We] made a tour of the Island and what we saw, Ward's Island certainly was a disgrace that people have to live in those kind of conditions. It looked like you'd turned the clock back forty years....The idea of what's going on at Ward's Island - I think it's disgraceful the way people have to live over there and the septic tanks and the conditions of the living.

Alderman William Kilbourn, who was sympathetic to the Islanders' sense of environment (and had in fact spent summers on the Island when he was a boy), responded sarcastically to this sort of argument:

I don't go on tours to view disgraceful living conditions, watching people live like "pigs" or with a view to getting some ammunition in order to destroy a community. But I do visit the Island regularly. I suppose I'm in some sense a product of it.

In his view, many Metro politicians are threatened by a community which is so different from the environments they know and live in. He expanded on this idea in an interview:

Basically, I think the reason it threatens Metro Council so much is that it's a community without shopping plazas and liquor stores, without crime [and cars] and traffic problems. And, you know, that sort of community is very different and it is not supposed to survive so easily and well.

Islanders, for their part, have been indignant about the tours and depressed by the apparent effect they have had on the politicians. For example, Maureen Smith spoke at some length about the 1970 tour. She charged the Parks Commissioner with deliberately trying to create a bad image of the Island in the politicians' minds and expanded on the idea that the Island community was so foreign to the politicians' image of a proper and decent place to live that they were at best puzzled (like North York Controller Paul Hunt) and at worst appalled and determined to eradicate the incomprehensible eye-sore (like Mayor William Dennison). She said:

They [the Parks Committee] came over, of course, on a tour, which was an absolutely disgusting thing. We knew they were coming.... They did a tour around Algonquin that was done at rapid fire pace. ...They arrived here [on Ward's] and Mr. Thompson - they came by bus - they got off at the foot of Channel. Mr. Thompson walked down Channel, up Third Street and across the Lakeshore, across the field and in behind the houses on the other side of the parkland [along Willow] in between rows, so that they were literally walking through people's backyards....

The only time they met anybody was when they got on the boat. And they were just astounded. I mean, these were "old guard" politicians. People from North York. I remember Paul Hunt was there and he was just astounded. He said, "How could they live there like that?" I mean, they were just astounded at the type of houses. They didn't go in any of them, of course. They said the houses are dreadful. You see, that was a very paternalistic attitude that those guys had: "We should try and save these people from this mess they're living in. People don't have to live like this in a city like Toronto." Dennison was the Mayor. It was the "We're going to beat Montreal" syndrome that was going the rounds. "This place is a disgrace to Toronto. That we expect our people to live in these kinds of conditions." And we kept saying, "Go in the houses. Go in the houses and you'll find out." But they wouldn't go in. Mr. Thompson never gave them any time....You know, the whole smear thing was going on in the background, that they were "shacks"....

But that was the extent of their tour and I know Paul Hunt met up with _____ and _____ who've both got really nice houses and he says, "I really can't understand it." He looks at these people and they were very well-dressed women from middle class families... very intelligent. Why are they living in these crazy little houses? He couldn't understand. And this whole thing of community and it being strange....Like, it being a place where people wanted to live because it was different never entered into it. They just saw it as bad housing stock and why should people be forced to live in it.

4. The Subsidy Argument:

That Islanders' supporters and opponents have tended to have different environmental values--very different views of what constitutes a "proper" place to live--is well illustrated by another argument that has been made repeatedly by Islanders' opponents: that it would simply cost too much to provide adequate municipal services (like street lighting, sidewalks, street signs, sewers, and so on), and that

doing so would be too great a burden to impose on the Metro taxpayer. For example, at a public forum on the Island issue in March 1974, Scarborough Controller Karl Mallette made this financial arguemnt. City Alderman Michael Goldrick replied that Controller Mallette betrayed a fundamental lack of understanding of the Island community and how it differed from suburban communities:

When Mr. Mallette speaks about...[the large investment that would be required for] sidewalks and lights and curbs and roads [if the community were to be preserved], it's beyond my comprehension how he can sort of count that in....Doesn't he understand ...that that's not what this community is about? ...We're not trying to replicate a suburban community on the Island. We're not about that. We want to preserve something that's there.

Alderman Goldrick's statement reflects Islanders' own feeling (which was discussed earlier) that one of their major problems was the fact that they were up against suburban politicians, like Controller Mallette, whose environmental values and sense of environment were fundamentally different from their own. In early May 1974, Bill Metcalfe replied to a similar argument that Metro taxpayers were unfairly subsidizing Island residents and revealed his own environmental values:

Metcalfe doesn't think the \$260 in taxes he pays is too low considering that his father, who has a home in North York, pays only \$300.

"And he has paved streets and bright lights. I don't even want paved streets and bright lights. That's why I'm living on the Island."¹

And six years later, the same argument was being made and the same response inspired. At Metro Council on February 26, 1980, Alderman Fred Beavis listed all the expenses that would be involved in turning the

¹Daniel Stoffman, "Islanders, Critics Can't Agree On Cost of 'Paradise'," Star, May 3, 1974.

Island into a proper "subdivision". Maureen Smith, who was listening to the debate, muttered, "Fancy being a subdivision. I don't want to be a subdivision."

5. Separateness:

Over the years, several politicians have made the provocative point that Islanders have been treated differently from other City (or Metro) residents by politicians because they were Islanders and were physically separated from the rest of the City. For example, in 1952 in the midst of a hot debate over whether or not to improve the seawall on the Island, Islanders' staunch supporter and ward alderman, Allan Grossman, forcefully put their case and noted, in passing, "The people of the Island...would probably have received quicker action if they weren't separated from the rest of the city by a stretch of water."¹

More recently, Alderman John Sewell opened the City Council debate on November 21, 1973 by unrolling a large map of Toronto, pointing to the Island and observing that politicians (as well as other people) have tended to have an image of the Island as "separate" and "different" from the City and have therefore tended to treat it differently from other parts of the City:

People have somehow perceived of the [the Islands] as somehow totally different from the City. When they look at a map of Toronto, they somehow never seem to include anything that's jutting out into the water and the result has been that people have been looking at the Island as something that's totally "other" than the City. And that's not the case. It's different [from] other parts of the City, just as Trefann Court is different [from] Lawrence Park, or Swansea is different [from] Ward 5. They're different parts. But the result of treating the Island

¹Quoted in "Tax Strike Is Islanders' Threat Unless City Builds Up Seawall," Globe and Mail, February 21, 1952.

as something totally "other" has meant that people have [tended] to understand it in purist terms. They've looked at it particularly in terms of being a "park"...That has meant that...this is probably the only place in the City where [when]...some government is threatening to tear down 250 houses, they say, "Well, that's not important, because it's really a park."

Similarly, at Metro Council on December 11, 1973, Alderman Karl Jaffary began his defense of the Island community by echoing his Ward 7 colleague's sentiment--i.e., that politicians have treated the Island differently from other parts of Metro simply because it is an island:

I also suggest that if this were not a unique situation, we would be able to deal with it far more easily. If we had 700 people living on land owned by Metropolitan Toronto that adjoined a large park owned by Metro Toronto and that was off some place in Metro Toronto that was not out on the water the way the Islands are and somebody said at this point in time, "Let's tear down the houses and make the park bigger", you would not get two votes on this Council for that proposition....If we are talking about the present need for parks, or the present need for housing, if these houses were not on an island, no one on this Council would support tearing them down right now....But the problem is that this is land that is off on the other side of the water somewhere.

From a political perspective, therefore, the traditional image of the Island as separate from and different from the Mainland seems to have worked to the disadvantage of Islanders.

In contrast, Aldermen Sewell and Jaffary--like other Island supporters--have had an image of Ward's and Algonquin as a worthy, established residential community, which is a "very important part of downtown Toronto" (as Alderman Ying Hope said at Metro Council on December 11, 1973) and is one, of many, distinctive communities which ought to be preserved.

c. Impact of Islanders' Defense of Place on Their Sense of Environment:

Islanders' defense of place, in turn, has had a distinct impact on their sense of environment.

1. Deliberately Reinforcing A Sense of Environment:

Deliberate attempts have been made in the course of the political defense of the Island to sensitize Islanders to different, special aspects of Island life (including the Island environment). David Amer, one of the founders of the now defunct Goose and Duck newspaper, said that one of the reasons the Goose and Duck was started in 1971 (before the 1971 lease extension was obtained) was to make people aware of their environment (as well as their neighbours, their history and so on) so that they would be more strongly motivated to defend the Island as they knew it when it was threatened. (See Illustration 32.)

He elaborates on this theme:

That's one of the things we tried to do with the Goose and Duck - make people more aware of their environment. If you're aware of your environment and can cope with it, you're more comfortable in it and have a feeling of security and when the thing is threatened, you're going to fight for it....That Bill George photograph that I told you about [of trees reflected in a puddle on the boardwalk] - that's home. That's warmth. That's all the things that home can be. That's private, personal pleasure that grabs everybody. If you can remind people of those things, then you've got their hearts and then if you've got their minds, then, tomorrow the world!...

Particularly for new people on the Island, for young people on the Island, we tried to supply those little things so that while they were in the City talking to non-Islanders they could say, "look at us, aren't we quaint?" - make them feel somehow a little bit special and give them a little ammunition and make them feel they're somebody and want to defend the place. A lot of this is theory. In practice we didn't do it as often as we liked, but given those ideals to work from, I think it was a pretty good thread to keep running through. Good propaganda is cardboard and blatant and that's what we were trying to do....We identified things that were there, but at the same time we exaggerated them, given the opportunity.

2. Suburban Contrast:

During their 1974 Spring Campaign, Islanders made over two hundred trips to suburban parts of Metro to meet suburban politicians,



SCAVS AND CANVASBACKS

Chasing them the high part from their nests, the birds are usually seen singly and have...
They are usually seen singly and have...
They are usually seen singly and have...

John Chappin

John Chappin

John Chappin

John Chappin

John Chappin

MANCH GARDENING NOTES

APRIL LAWNFOOD:
There is a lot of grass in the Manch garden and it is not yet cut...
There is a lot of grass in the Manch garden and it is not yet cut...

by Howard S. Adams

FINNOIS RECOGNIZES

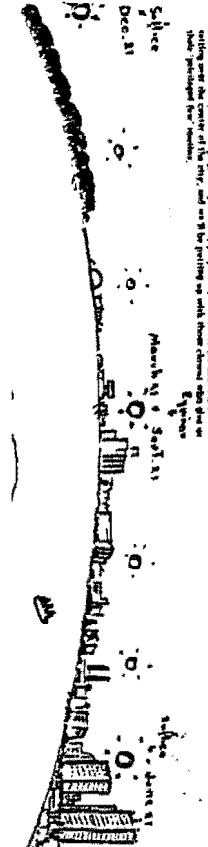
There is a lot of grass in the Manch garden and it is not yet cut...
There is a lot of grass in the Manch garden and it is not yet cut...

CONGERS GETS

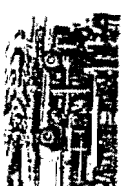
There is a lot of grass in the Manch garden and it is not yet cut...
There is a lot of grass in the Manch garden and it is not yet cut...

ROBBER

There is a lot of grass in the Manch garden and it is not yet cut...
There is a lot of grass in the Manch garden and it is not yet cut...

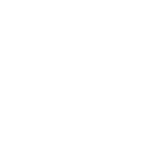


THE GOOSE AND DUCK: CREATING ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS



WINTER ENDS

It's if we had to have winter, that's the way...
It's if we had to have winter, that's the way...



The Goose and Duck

TORONTO ISLAND COMMUNITY NEWS MARCH 1972

CONVERSATIONS OVERHEARD

Advocate was Island's first...
Advocate was Island's first...

PATH PROMISED THROUGH MUD TO FERRY DOCK

When Park Commissioner T. M. ...
When Park Commissioner T. M. ...

When Park Commissioner T. M. ...
When Park Commissioner T. M. ...



TINY ISLAND COMMUNITY ROCKED BY SCANDAL

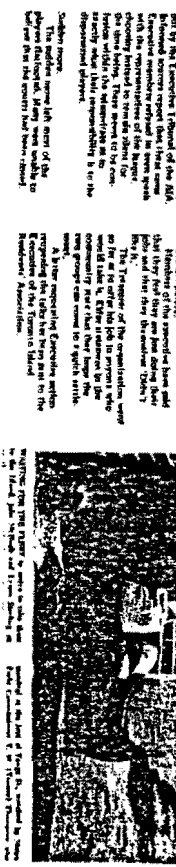
They actually happened! ...
They actually happened! ...

They actually happened! ...
They actually happened! ...

ISLAND ARTISTS' BASKETBALL LEAGUE LOCKED OUT

They actually happened! ...
They actually happened! ...

They actually happened! ...
They actually happened! ...



residents' groups and individuals. By exposing Islanders to environments and environmental lifestyles that contrasted so markedly with their own, these experiences reinforced both their negative images of suburbia and their positive images of the Island. For example, one politically active Islander (whose other comments showed him to be committed to the Island environment and lifestyle), commented on one borough:

People in _____ to me were so dull and dulled by their environmentIt seems to me from the few streets that I went up - three or four different routes - that it's all factories and housing from the forties. What I saw of it was detached and semi-detached or small housing. It's really very unattractive....It's a very depressing kind of place. And it seems to me that the whole thing looks like there's a lot of industrial pollution of all kinds around....The people have made that choice of living there....I think a lot of them like it. It's close to shopping. You can get in your car and go wherever you want and they like getting in their car and going wherever they want.

Although they were generally well received by suburban groups, Islanders, nevertheless, sometimes had the feeling that they were entering foreign territory when they ventured out into the boroughs. They also came away with the deep-seated feeling that people who lived in environments like these, that were so different from their own (with its narrow carless streets, archaic but picturesque street lights, sometimes "primitive" living conditions, occasionally wildly individualistic little houses, lack of stores and other conveniences, and so on) simply could not understand what it was like to be an Islander and could not be expected to give support to the Island cause. For example, Freya Godard discussed why most suburban politicians on Metro Council in 1973-1974 opposed retaining the Island community.

And I think our way of life is a threat to them....Well, I think it must somehow disturb them that people choose to be so unlike themselves, choose to be living in what they consider

very "primitive" circumstances. And simply they can't understand.

Mary Anderson, observing that "where you live very often expresses how you think the world ought to be", recalled her reactions when she went with a group of Island women (in May 1974) to a North York politician's house in affluent suburban Don Mills:

Some people just think the way _____ does. He has a sort of suburban mind set, for one thing....I remember when we went out to his house and I thought, "Well, of course. How can anybody who lives here understand what it's like to live on the Island? He would never say it. [Former Mayor William] Dennison would be the one to say, "Those elite people living in that dump". A real contradiction. But I'm sure that is the way _____ feels: how can people live out there?...Some people just can't conceive of that sort of existence. I think of it as a "neatness mentality". You see, [the Metro plan] is a 1950 plan and this was a decision that was made a long time back to make all this park and I do think a lot of these people are stuck in the 1950's. They're not imaginative or forward looking. In fact, I think the reverse is often very true. They are the most conservative types and this idea of clearing an area and making it this "wonderful" park is much easier to do than to conceive of it as being all sorts of things at once.¹ I think you have to have a slightly artistic mind to handle that sort of concept....Development looks good to them. I am sure a shopping plaza looks nice to them and new buildings look nice and that's what they live with. Certainly that's where they live, and where you live very often expresses how you think the world ought to be.

Bill Metcalfe recalled a similar reaction when he was driving through the borough of York on his way to lobby Mayor Phil White, who was one of the politicians Islanders had hoped to convert in the spring of 1974:

I can recall going to visit Phil White and driving out through his area and all I knew about Philip White was...that he was a bit "soft" about the Island issue, that he believed eventually it should be done away with, but that he wasn't really rigid about it as to timing. And as I'm driving out there, through his area, I said, "This meeting isn't going to work. Anybody who works in an...environment where he works, in no way could comprehend what this place is"; so that it will always be as abstract for him as where he lives is for me. We live in a totally different worldThe guy lives in a place that's as strange to the Island

¹See above (pp. 296 - 300) for a more extended discussion of a mixed use approach to park planning and development.

and downtown Toronto as if he lived in Regina. It's really remote... in psychological terms.

In conclusion, over the years, Islanders' defense of place has clarified and reinforced their sense of environment.