

## Chapter 4:

### IMPERIALISM IN SUBURBIA

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p.37.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Davison, Graeme, 'Driving to Austerica' in Bolitho, Harold and Wallace-Crabbe, Chris (eds), Approaching Australia: papers from the Harvard Australian studies symposium, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Committee on Australian Studies, 1998, p.172.

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

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

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Sun, 28 March 1964, p.15.

<sup>7</sup> Feldmann, Jules and Holmesby, Russell, The point

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

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

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

<sup>8</sup> Sporting Globe, 1 April 1964, p.1.

<sup>9</sup> Sun, 25 March 1964, p.51 and Sporting Globe, 28 March 1964, p.1.

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

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

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<sup>10</sup> Sporting Globe, 17 March 1962, p.1.

<sup>11</sup> Sporting Globe, 3 March 1962, p.7.

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

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

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

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

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<sup>12</sup> Sporting Globe, 17 March 1962, p.1.

<sup>13</sup> Sporting Globe, 17 March 1962, p.1 (cont. p.7).

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

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

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

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p.7.

<sup>15</sup> Sun, 24 March 1964, p.52.

<sup>16</sup> Moorabbin News, 8 April 1964, p.20.



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

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

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<sup>17</sup> Sporting Globe, 11 September 1963, p.20.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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<sup>21</sup> Sun, 2 October 1963, p.54.

<sup>22</sup> Sporting Globe, 28 March 1964, p.1.

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

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<sup>23</sup> Neutze, Max, Urban development in Australia, 1981, cited in Dingle, 'People and places ...' in Davison et al, The cream brick frontier ..., pp.28-30.

<sup>24</sup> Dingle, 'People and places ...' in Davison et al, The cream brick frontier ..., p.34, p.31.

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

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

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

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

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<sup>25</sup> Sun, 25 March 1964, p.51.

<sup>26</sup> Moorabbin News, 1 April 1964, p.16.

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

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

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<sup>27</sup> Sporting Globe, 21 March 1964, p.15.

<sup>28</sup> Dingle, 'People and places ...' in Davison et al, The cream brick frontier..., p.31.

<sup>29</sup> Sporting Globe, 21 March 1964, p.15.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

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

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

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<sup>31</sup> Sun, 31 March 1964, p.5.

<sup>32</sup> Davison, 'Driving to Austerica' in Bolitho and Wallace-Crabbe (eds), op.cit., p.165.

<sup>33</sup> Feldmann and Holmesby, op.cit., p.173.

<sup>34</sup> Sun, 25 March 1964, p.27.

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

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

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



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

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

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<sup>35</sup> Sporting Globe, 28 March 1964, p.1.

<sup>36</sup> Sun, 24 March 1964, p.52.

<sup>37</sup> Moorabbin News, 26 March 1964, p.1.

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

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

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<sup>38</sup> Sun, 25 March 1964, p.27.

<sup>39</sup> Sporting Globe, 28 March 1964, p.13 with cricket club's rebuttal on 1 April 1964, p.1.

<sup>40</sup> Sun, 28 March 1964, p.15.

<sup>41</sup> Sporting Globe, 1 April 1964, p.1.

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

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

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<sup>42</sup> Sun, 28 March 1964, p.15.

<sup>43</sup> Sporting Globe, 8 April 1964, p.19.

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

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

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

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<sup>44</sup> Sporting Globe, 1 April 1964, p.1.

<sup>45</sup> Sporting Globe, 8 April 1964, p.1.

<sup>46</sup> Troy, Patrick N., 'Environmental quality in four Melbourne suburbs', Urban Research Unit, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University, 1972, p.49.

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

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

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

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p.54.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Dingle, 'People and places ...' in Davison *et al*, The cream brick frontier..., p.35.

<sup>50</sup> Sun 24 March 1964 p52.

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

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

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

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<sup>51</sup> Sun, 25 March 1964, p.52.

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

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

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

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<sup>52</sup> Sun, 26 March 1964, p.40.

<sup>53</sup> Sun, 28 March 1964, p.17.

<sup>54</sup> Sun, 28 March 1964, p.15.

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

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

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

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<sup>55</sup> Sporting Globe, 4 April 1964, p.10.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Inside Football, 3 May 1989, p.26.

<sup>58</sup> Sun, 28 March 1964, p.17.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Sporting Globe, 4 April 1964, p.1.



St.Kilda members were not happy to endure enlightened despotism until the next election.<sup>62</sup>

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

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

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

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

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Sun, 30 March 1964, p.32.

<sup>64</sup> Sporting Globe, 4 April 1964, p.1.

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

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

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

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

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Feldmann and Holmesby, op.cit., p.168.

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

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

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Inside Football, 3 May 1989, p.26.

<sup>70</sup> Feldmann and Holmesby, op.cit., p.169.

<sup>71</sup> Inside Football, 3 May 1989, p.26.

<sup>72</sup> Age, 26 September 1997, p.A1.

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

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

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<sup>73</sup> Sun, 28 March 1964, p.15.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p.17.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

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

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

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<sup>76</sup> Inside Football, 3 May 1989, p.26.

<sup>77</sup> Sun, 25 March 1964, p.52.

<sup>78</sup> Fiddian, Marc, The pioneers: 100 years of Association football Melbourne, Victorian Football Association, 1977, p.36.

<sup>79</sup> Fiddian, Marc, The roar of the crowd, Melbourne,

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

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

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

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Victorian Football Association, 1987, p.81.

<sup>80</sup> Sun, 25 March 1964, p.51.

<sup>81</sup> Moorabbin News, 8 April 1964, p.19.

imagination to determine which club it will be that will fade into extinction.<sup>82</sup>

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

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

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

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Moorabbin News, 8 April 1964, p.2.

proceed now, the parking facilities provided could also be used for the football ground.<sup>86</sup>

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

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

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

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<sup>85</sup> Moorabbin News, 1 April 1964, p.1.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., p.2.

<sup>87</sup> Moorabbin News, 8 April 1964, p.1.

<sup>88</sup> Cribbin, John, Moorabbin: a pictorial history, 1862-1994, Moorabbin, Vic., City of Kingston, 1995, p.178.



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

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

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

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<sup>89</sup> Moorabbin News, 8 April 1964, p.14.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., p.1.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., p.20.

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

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

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

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

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<sup>92</sup> Sporting Globe, 8 April 1964, p.1.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Sporting Globe, 4 April 1964, p.1.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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<sup>95</sup> Sporting Globe, 28 March 1964, p.15.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., p.1.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Gordon, op.cit., p.137.

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

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

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<sup>100</sup> Sporting Globe, 23 November 1963, p.13.

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

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

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

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Sporting Globe, 7 December 1963, p.7.

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

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

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



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

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