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Ref. 4.11.19.

PRESERVATION OF PARK LANDS.

Keen public interest is being manifested in the poll to be taken in Adelaide on Friday, to determine whether a lease shall be granted to the Tennis Association for six acres of land near the Adelaide Oval, which will be fenced in, and whether the University shall be allowed an additional two acres, also to be fenced in. The Adelaide Park Lands Preservation League is working enthusiastically in opposition to the proposals, on the ground that the time has arrived to stop any further alienation of the park lands. It has been pointed out that Adelaide residents are slow to anger, but when once roused are not easily pacified. The league urges them to "wake up" now. Originally the park lands comprised 2,300 acres, but, through "Government grabbing" and other alienations nearly one-third of the total has gone. Officers of the league say "Adelaide is known to be the most beautiful city naturally in the Commonwealth, and the only city in the world with such park lands and open places girted all round. Surely with their eyes open, ratepayers will not allow themselves and their city to be denuded of more of the park lands. The present occasion is not one for half-hearted expostulation, but the protest should be made so strongly and so resolute as to demonstrate for all time that there must be no further alienations."

Ad. 6.11.19

THE PARK LANDS.

To the Editor.

Sir—With reference to the application of the University and the Tennis Association for leases of portion of the park lands, I most earnestly call on all ratepayers of the city of Adelaide, who oppose further alienation of the park lands, not to fail to vote against the present proposals at the poll of the citizens, to be held on Friday next, at the Town Hall, Adelaide. I ask them to bear in mind that our park lands, which originally comprised 2,300 acres, have been appropriated absolutely to the extent of some 500 acres for Government and educational or other similar purposes, and that probably the area set aside for the racecourse, the Zoological and Botanic Gardens, the oval, and the numerous bowling greens, tramway tracks, roads, and other enclosures will exceed another 100 acres. Thus probably one-fourth of the total area of the Adelaide park lands may be said to have been deflected from general use by the public, for which purpose these park lands were set aside. The settlement of this State occurred only a little over 80 years ago, and the population of Adelaide and its suburbs is comparatively small at the present time, but the centuries roll on, and 100 years is a short period in the life of a nation. In a century or two the population of this fair city and its suburbs may well approach, if not exceed, a million souls, and as no great recreation areas have been set apart anywhere near the city, other than the park lands, future generations of both city and suburbs will practically be dependent on the park lands for means of recreation. It is these generations we must consider, with a special regard to the poorest classes, and resist the appropriation of the share of the latter in the common heritage by the better-off citizens. It would be an act of grace if the University and Tennis Association, seeing that the public is generally against the proposals, would resolve to abandon their efforts to secure from the park lands the areas in question, and thus relieve those institutions from any charge of selfishness, which even a victory on the day of polling will not absolve them from. In the meantime it behoves every ratepayer who is against further alienation of the park lands to resolve to vote without fail on Friday next against the proposals.—I am, &c.,

C. T. HARGRAVE.

King William-street, November 5, 1919.

Sir—I am quite sure that the members of the Park Lands Preservation League are working sincerely in what they believe to be the interests of the general public. We think we are working in the interests of the public, too. The difference between us is one of method, not of aim. I should be grateful if you would allow me to state the reasons why I think the additional two acres ought to be granted for the use of the students of the University:—1. The University is not a sectional institution; it represents the whole community. There are about 1,000 young men and women in attendance who need a little more space for the enjoyment of health-giving exercise. 2. There is no question of alienation at all. The land we have is leased from the City Council, and the general public are freely admitted. There is a hedge round it to keep cattle and horses off our oval and tennis courts, but there are five gateways through it, and they have never been closed. 3. The park lands were intended for the recreation of the citizens, and they must be preserved for the people.

Quite right. Can you think of any better way in which these purposes can be fulfilled than the way in which the University has used the grounds leased to it by the council? 4. In the past seven years the University has spent £5,000 on the grounds. The site is more beautiful than it was before we took the land over, and at least 100 of the general public use the ground now for every one that used it before. 5. In yesterday morning's "Advertiser" I see that the Lord Mayor has given £500 to set apart another portion of the park lands for the children. This is, I believe, politic as well as generous. But what is the difference in principle between leasing the park lands for children and using them for University students? 6. Much has been made of the contention that if we want more land we should buy it. Even if the students of the University or the council had the money where could they get land within any reasonable distance of the University? There is none. 7. The difference between our policy and that of the Park Lands Preservation League may, I think, be expressed in this way. (We have a practical constructive policy, which aims at keeping hundreds of men and women in health. Their policy ends in little more than the grazing of a few cattle and horses on the land that was set apart for the recreation of the citizens of Adelaide.—I am, &c.,

GEO. C. HENDERSON.

The University, November 5, 1919.

Sir—As you have given publicity to those who are opposed to the granting of a lease to the Lawn Tennis Association, I ask that in fairness equal publicity be given to state our case. 1. The association is desirous of surrendering six acres on the west park lands for 3 roads 11 perches adjoining the Adelaide Oval. It is not, therefore, applying for more park lands, as stated by the Park Lands League. 2. At the end of the lease the City Council have full power to take over the ground and all the improvements, if it so desires, without paying anything for the improvements. 3. The principal reason for the transfer is that on the six acres the land has a distinct fall to the west, thereby making it too costly an undertaking to level and plant the whole of that area with the money we have in hand. Therefore, we thought it wiser to more profitably employ our funds on the 3½ acres of level land situated on the south-western corner of the oval. 4. Twenty courts will be laid down, and I ask you, sir, is it not better to use this land for the health of the citizens than for the grazing of a few cattle? 5. These grounds will be put to their fullest use, and will be free of access to the general public on all days except 14 during the year. 6. There are now 17 clubs in the association, with a membership of over 400. This number will be largely increased when we have the twenty courts, membership being open to all clean "sports." 7. The standard of lawn tennis will be greatly improved, and thereby an incentive will be given to the thousands of players throughout the metropolitan and country districts to participate in the contests for supremacy, which will take place on these specially-prepared courts. The citizens of Adelaide may yet witness a Davis Cup contest by the world's champions on these courts?—I am, &c.,

A. J. ROBERTS.

Vice-President South Australian Lawn Tennis Association.
November 5, 1919.

Ad. 6.11.19.

THE PEOPLE'S PARKS.

Citizens of Adelaide who are called upon to vote to-morrow on the question of preventing further encroachments on the park lands should carefully and seriously ponder the account we published yesterday of the long series of attacks, some successful, some defeated, on the people's heritage. The original area devoted for the foresight of Colonel Light to the recreation and health of the citizens was 2,300 acres. Over 600 acres have been diverted to other purposes, and much more would have gone but for the patriotic opposition organised in many cases by the public spirit of the Park Lands Preservation League. The process of alienation has been gradual and insidious, depending on the apathy of the public, who have been slow to realise that unless they are vigilant in defending their rights they may ultimately find that their precious inheritance has wholly passed away from them. It has always been

possible to make out some sort of a plausible case for the mutilation of the squares and parks on grounds of public necessity or convenience, or the possibility of getting a revenue from the land taken from the citizens; but if such arguments are not resisted as being irrelevant to the crucial issue the time will surely come when all that is left of the parks will have been alienated or enclosed. In future the citizens ought to take their stand on the broad principle that the parks were intended and must be preserved for the common benefit, and they should steadfastly refuse to permit of diversions either for utilitarian purposes or for sports restricted to sections of the people. Not otherwise can safety be ensured. In the case of the applications for leases which are now to be voted upon we have the customary representation that the proposed enclosures will conduce to "the recreation and health of the inhabitants," and that they will lead to the improvement of ground at present vacant except for a few grazing cows. The reply is that the dedication of the parks to the health and enjoyment of the public did not mean that they might be gradually mopped up by groups of the citizens for their exclusive pleasure. They were to be free and open for the use and recreation of all classes. Nor can it be admitted that the park lands are improved in appearance by the multiplication of fenced-in enclosures. As Adelaide grows wealthier more funds will become available for the ornamental treatment of the park lands, on lines somewhat similar to those which have already been successfully pursued in the creation of charming gardens on the banks of the Torrens Lake and elsewhere in the city. Some such design as that which was elaborated by a former Conservator of Forests, Mr. Ednie Brown, may be carried out with good effect. But it will be impossible to do this, or to secure the broad landscape views that are so desirable, if in all directions the park lands are parcelled out among lawn tennis, bowling, and other clubs, and surrounded by the fences which are the sign of an exclusive occupation. The citizens have had their lessons in the past, and should take them to heart in looking to the future. Their park lands are a valuable inheritance, not to be carelessly guarded or wastefully squandered. The poll to-morrow will, we trust, show that the citizens are now thoroughly awake to their interests, and determined to protect the parks against further desecration.

Ref. 7.11.19.

THE PARK LANDS.

TO-DAY'S POLL.

To the Editor.

Sir—Writing as one who has all his life taken an interest in everything that touches the welfare of Adelaide and its citizens, I heartily approve of the granting to the Tennis Association a lease of 3½ acres on the north park lands, in lieu of the 6 acres previously granted to them on the west park lands. Converting a dusty bare piece of ground into a level sward of couch grass, enabling 100 men to engage in healthy sport with enjoyment, seems to me to meet the end Col. Light had in view when he planned the city. I was prominent in obtaining the lease of the Adelaide Oval, and have had a hand in spending many thousands of pounds on it, with the result of beautifying the people's heritage. I do not think the most earnest opponent of the present proposals would like to see the Oval out of existence, and the ground in its previous bare state. Similarly with the University Oval and the various bowling lawns. Thus I am in hearty sympathy with both proposals to be voted upon on Friday.—E. T. SMITH.

Sir—If the Park Lands Preservation League seeks to justify its existence, why in the name of common sense does it so strenuously oppose a proposition which, in so far as the Lawn Tennis Association is concerned, will result in two and a quarter acres reverting to the citizens?—A. L. LANGSFORD.

Sir—One point seems to be overlooked by both sides in the discussion whether leases of portions of the park lands should be granted to tennis associations, and that is, that when Col. Light made provision of land that were not to be built upon, he meant them more for the people's eyes and lungs than merely for the people's feet. Any association that will spend money on laying down grass, watering it, and keeping it green is a benefactor to all people; for it prevents dust, the cause of all dry places, and so helps to guard the nation's health far more than any uncarpeted arid spot, such as the park lands near the Bowden Station.—ELLA M. FISHER.

Sir—Surely the time has arrived when this continued witting away of the park lands should cease! Personally, I am of opinion that it should not be in the power of any corporate body or section of the community, for a longer or shorter time, to alienate any portion of the park lands. Nothing less than an Act of Parliament should be necessary to do that. As I understand it, they were set aside in perpetuity for the whole people, generation after generation. To submit a matter in which the whole of the people are interested to the fiat of a few is treating it as of far too little importance, and even wrong.—S. NEWLAND.

Sir—Mr. A. J. Roberts says that what the Tennis Association are asking is for an exchange of land only. Surely the original grant has been forfeited by non-fulfilment of conditions? In any case the Association are asking for a much better proposition than that originally granted. Everyone knows that there is an implied understanding that the leases will be renewed. Let Mr. Roberts state one that has not? Is the Crickiting Association in fear of a refusal to renew its lease? I think not. As to use by public, I have still to see anybody sporting on enclosed greens. The very fences around them spell "private," and I am sure any caretaker would have a fit to find a family picnic on his bowling-green. As to the grazing of cattle argument, the Park Lands League are looking forward; and perhaps in less than 100 years—what is left may be lovely gardens. Should the poll be successful (and no doubt there will be a big rally of "sports"), I hope a repetition against same will be presented to Parliament, as I think it is a national question, and should be decided by the whole of South Australia; for what interest has the average individual living in North Adelaide got in the park at South Terrace? Perhaps not as much as one "up North"—certainly not as much as one living in Unley.—Yours, &c., "FAIR-MINDED."

Sir—Professor Henderson has set out very clearly the attitude of the University with regard to its request for a lease of a portion of the park lands; but I would like to put the case from the point of view of one actively interested and engaged in sport at the "Varsity." The University Oval is not large enough to provide a sports ground for 1,000 odd students who attend the University. There is no other land anywhere near the "Varsity" available or suitable for sport, even if the council and the students could afford it; so the University has been forced to ask of the public the right to use a little more of the park lands for its sport. That the "Varsity Oval is not large enough is apparent. The oval is used as a practice ground for football, lacrosse, hockey, tennis, cricket, and running. To ask the students to practice under these conditions, and to enjoy the practice, is ridiculous. Take a winter's evening as an example. On one corner of the ground, 8 the weather is fairly dry, are perhaps 40 or 12 men playing tennis on the grass courts. On one side near the pavilion are about 20 fellows practising lacrosse—all of them playing towards the one net. (There is not room for two.) Nearer the centre of the oval, slightly to the south, there are a score or so of girls practising hockey, with overcoats or scarfs to represent goal posts; while running in a circle around these are 30 or 40 other fellows trying to practise football, and to look as though they are enjoying it. This state of things is "over the fence," to use the colloquialism employed by Mr. Stephens; and, even in these circumstances, not a tenth of the students are finding recreation. The others do not come because they are not so keen, and like to have a decent game or none at all. Again, it is impossible for more than one of the football, lacrosse, or tennis teams to be playing on their home ground each Saturday; and, as there are seven teams involved, it means that six teams every Saturday are trespassing on the hospitality of their opponents, besides being at a disadvantage in having to play on foreign soil. This state of things has a dampening effect on the ardour of the junior players, as often they cannot get a ground to play on. It is not uncommon for the B football team to go down to the "Varsity Oval to play 4 match, and to find a couple of teams of Amazonian females with vicious-looking sticks already in possession. To say that the granting of the land to the "Varsity is an alienation is absurd. There is a difference between an alienation and a use. The park lands were set apart for the recreation of the public; the University is the public; and its sport is its recreation. There is no more democratic institution in the State than the University. Every loyal subject of the King can demand admission. No one is excluded. The fees are reasonable, and there are scholarships for those who cannot afford even the reasonable fees charged. We submit, in making our own