 MAV 01279

Many changes here are part of gradual processes, often hardly noticed, which have been going on for a long time, for example, changes in attitudes to the problem of vandalism, the need for provision of social life for young people, for a permanent city social worker, for family planning clinics, how to get rid of the city's worst eyesore, the gasometers at Highett and how carefully to watch the change from houses to flats and units. These questions involve changes which cannot come quickly because they have first to interest a majority of people, simmer there for a time, rise to the surface and begin to find expression in private conversation, in opinions expressed at regular meetings of organizations, at meetings held by candidates at municipal elections and in the "Moorabbin News". Here the local paper fulfils a valuable role. Thus opinion gradually builds up and becomes action, though when there is a sharp division in people's thinking it is a long time coming.

And we must keep an eye on the future as well as the present. This year the Council took a wise step in employing a firm of consultants, Loder and Bayley, to plan the future growth of the city. Through the local paper the firm invited citizens to submit opinions about the future of Moorabbin. Alas! in a city of more than 100,000 only six took the trouble to do so. Perhaps our greatest problem is apathy! The Council made the consultants report available to the public and the plans for future development were displayed in the libraries. Citizens with an inclination to grumble cannot say, "We didn't know anything about it".

Two events this year are of particular interest to those who care for the things that lift life above everyday work and play. One was the granting in July of $14,800 by the State Government for improvements in Cheltenham Park, a precious asset; the other was the purchase by the Council for cultural purposes of "Healey's House" on Nepean Highway. Here, when the building is available, the Society hopes to establish a museum which will be of permanent interest to the people.

And in suburban life what changes are going on? One is that we are writing less letters. The telephone is taking the place of the pen. Business letters may soon be the only ones written. This is a loss to history; the letters, diaries and journals in which people recorded the incidents of their lives and poured their thoughts and hopes and fears are vanishing. And when we do write something it is not with a fountain pen as of old but with a biro, that clever invention of two Hungarian brothers who gave their name to it. Overcoats have almost disappeared; look at a suburban crowd on a wet or cold day and you will see few of them. The same crowd makes you wonder whether skirts will soon follow them.

And just as skirts, except the minis, are becoming the sign of the older woman, so the dark suit and the shirt of plain light-coloured material are becoming the sign of the older man. The change to colour in men's clothing which began about ten years ago continues; sometimes it is more fanciful than attractive. So is the high neck; appropriate on a cool day, it looks uncomfortable and silly when the temperature is over 20 degrees. Beards and sideburns are still with us; so is male long hair, though perhaps both are less extreme than a few years ago. Older women still favour short hair, younger the long locks. The latter are attractive out of doors, perhaps less so in the office or the factory.

In transport we have the new silver trains, hopefully wooing the traveller off the roads. There is talk in public and private of the virtues of the bicycle and the new mini bikes are adding zest for living to youth and becoming a headache to municipal authorities. Seat belts, thank Heavens, are reducing the road toll - a triumph for common sense.