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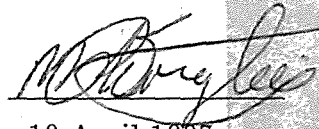
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THE EVOLUTION OF IDEAS  
AND PRACTICE CONCERNING  
THE PROVISION OF CHILDREN'S  
PLAYSPACE

(with a special reference to  
New Zealand and Palmerston North)

A Thesis Presented In Partial  
Fulfilment Of The Requirements  
For The Degree Of Master  
Of Philosophy In Social Science  
At Massey University.

Martin Paul Wrigley

March 1987

## ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks to explore the historical processes underlying the allocation and use of public space for children's play in nineteenth and twentieth century industrial society and examine how the processes have influenced the New Zealand situation.

The form of publicly provided playspace in New Zealand borrows extensively from overseas ideas and practices. The origins of playspace were a response to the conditions existing as a result of industrialisation in the late nineteenth century. The convergence of two streams of thought; the first the use of play as a tool for social integration of migrant children in the United States; and secondly the development of an urban parks system to alleviate the industrial blight of the cityscape in the United Kingdom; led to the establishment of recreation standards for the provision of children's playspace. The transportable nature of these ideas and practices resulted in children's playgrounds developing in New Zealand between 1920 and 1970 in a largely similar way. During this same period ideas concerning child constructed playgrounds and safety were evolving overseas. Such ideas when adopted in New Zealand have influenced the appearance and internal design of New Zealand playgrounds. However, in terms of function and form these changes have only been superficial.

Within New Zealand the social mechanisms for determining the allocation and design of playgrounds has constrained the use of playgrounds often to the disadvantage of different societal groups. The thesis concludes with a review of this issue.

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## CHAPTER 1

## PLAYGROUNDS - A SIGNIFICANT URBAN SPACE?

Playgrounds constitute a sizeable amount of urban space in New Zealand. From a recent series of studies by the Dunedin Parks and Gardens Department (1974), the South Auckland Regional Authority (1981a-e) and the Palmerston North City Council (1982) it is possible to gain an impression of the extent of this resource. Dunedin had 59 playgrounds for a population of 104,000; South Auckland 173 playgrounds for 207,000 people; and Palmerston North 33 playgrounds for 69,000 people. On a playground per head of population basis this represents one playground per 1,763; 1197 and 2,091 of population for each centre respectively. Based upon this information, using a conservative estimate of one playground per 2,000 people, and the urban population in 1981 of 2,650,954 (nearest census figure for two of the studies - New Zealand Census, 1981)) then some 1325 urban children's playgrounds nationally can be assumed as a minimum level of formed playgrounds in New Zealand. The area occupied by both playground equipment and associated open space would exceed 2000 hectares of largely prime residential and commercial land. In addition to the space utilised the provision of playgrounds is a large budget item. Based upon construction costs of the Palmerston North City Corporation, the cost in 1986 dollars of installing a playground ranges between \$30,000 (for small redevelopments at Farnham Park and Raleigh Street Reserve) and \$60,000 (for the larger redevelopments at Memorial Park and the Esplanade) depending upon the size of development and the extent of

compliance with safety standards operative since 1986. Given that many local authorities are developing playgrounds in new and recent subdivisions, or redeveloping playgrounds to meet with the new safety standards it is conceivable, based upon an estimate of \$40,000 per playground, that up to \$53 million (1986 dollars) could be spent on such facilities in the next ten to fifteen years, not including maintenance costs.

Despite the amount of space and finance devoted to playgrounds very little research has been undertaken to understand the character of such space and its function within present day New Zealand society.

### Thesis objectives

Given the limited literature on children's playgrounds this thesis attempts to outline a framework for comprehending the origins and changing character of this type of socially created space. Specifically, the thesis seeks to identify the historical processes underlying the allocation of public space for children's play in nineteenth and twentieth century industrial society and then outlines recent developments influencing the ideas about and the administration of playgrounds. To facilitate this the study first provides a contextual account of the allocation and use of children's playgrounds in New Zealand, particularly Palmerston North. The basic argument is that in New Zealand the social mechanisms determining playground location and design constrain the use of playgrounds in important ways, often to the disadvantage of different societal groups. As the above objectives suggest, the thesis is a preliminary project exploring one aspect of space allocation and use in an industrialised society.

Although informed by recent work in geography and planning suggesting a contextual approach to explanation, the bulk of the thesis is concerned with using the approach rather than discussing at length the case for or the main features of the approach adopted.

### Geography - space and society

The discipline of geography in the twentieth century has gone through three distinct phases, and has now entered a fourth. An early focus of human geography was regional geography,

"Each place was different, and the aim was to put together the elements in such a way that each configuration could be understood ... Too often it degenerated into an essentially descriptive and untheorised collection of facts" (Massey, 1984, 2).

The 1960's saw the onset of 'scientific geography', a phase distinguished by a search for generality, especially connected with spatial interaction (Taaffe, 1974). This strategy of knowledge building using quantitative data - privileging the measurable and biased towards description - ignored a whole body of thought in various social sciences dealing with qualitative as well as quantitative dimensions of explanation (Gray, 1975; Massey, 1984). Slater (1975) described this form of geography as abstracted empiricism, which relied on an accumulation of data which either outweighed or ignored theoretical considerations. Lewis and Melville (1979) saw this 'scientific geography' as emphasising empirical analysis and building simplified cause-effect or stimulus-response type models of empirical regularities. In doing so this form of geography tended to underplay the social role of theory, stressing instead the formal aspects of theory building. Lewis and Melville note the attitude towards theory building.

"Preference for one theory over another within a single subject area is due to a greater explanatory power, its simplicity, its elegance or the number of propositions generated by it rather than its use" (Lewis and Melville, 1979, 85).

The 1970's saw the scientism of the 1960's questioned. As Scott and Roweiss (1977) indicated, much of the existing literature adopted a theoretical position in which urban planning was seen as an 'abstract analytical concept' rather than a sociohistorical phenomenon. Roweiss (1981) continued this line of assessment stating that

"A plausible analysis of urban planning should start by rejecting even the possibility of carving out an area of activity and trying to analyse it in isolation from the overall social/historical context in which it occurs. Unless the analysis embraces the totality of society we are doomed to produce distortions and invalid views" (Roweiss, 1981, 160).

The new geography argued that spatial effects (geographical distribution of one thing) could not be explained by spatial causes (the distribution of phenomena) (Gore, 1984). Instead it was argued that it was necessary to understand the social conditions which determined both the allocation and use of space. This was extended a further step when the social and the spatial were seen as being interactive and intertwined, rather than the spatial being simply the effect of social processes (Thrift and Pred, 1981; Pred, 1982; Massey, 1984).

The main phases outlined above are broadly distinguishable in different lines of theoretic inquiry within geography. They are also generally indicative of wider changes in other fields of social science. Owens (1984) in an overview of recreation research in geography emphasised that there was in this field a preoccupation with empirical studies which were frequently site specific. These studies were

undertaken at the expense of conceptually oriented research. Instead they focused on the patterns which existed, rather than the processes which brought about such situations. Kirby (1985) in a major review of leisure research identifies what he considered a misdirection of attention in the leisure research field which placed much effort in the mould of the geography of the 1960's.

"What is required is not a continuation of the data collection that focuses upon particular respondents at particular sites enjoying particular activities. Instead the focus must be the building blocks of any sophisticated social science: the political and social structure, economic relations and the role of activities of the state" (Kirby, 1985, 80).

Using this as a basis, Kirby contended that progress could be made both in terms of understanding the processes involved and in terms of revealing similarities with otherwise artificially separated fields.

The idea that space is a social construction is perhaps more readily discussed with reference to spatial patterns (Claval, 1984) than to an activity such as recreation. Despite the conceptual void in the area of recreation some guidance can be gained from the recent work of urban geographers such as Buttimer (1980), Marchand (1982) and Ball (1984). Ball's (1984) discussion of housing, and its forms within the city is one such example. In examining new council developments in the United Kingdom it was observed that these tended to replace existing slums. Conversely up-market housing tended to gravitate towards established high income areas. The patterns of future development was in this way influenced by past development. In addition Ball indicated that external influences operated which affected spatial use. In the case of local authority housing he noted that (in Britain) such housing was undertaken to remedy a variety of problems, by local authorities

which were diverse in both politics and policy. However, the way in which the problem was ultimately dealt with was essentially uniform. This was largely attributable to actions of central government, rather than locally prevailing conditions. As Ball pointed out,

"it is impossible to separate out patterns of change in an urban area from the wider economic and social processes of which those changes are a part. Spatial factors are intertwined with general social and economic trends in a way in which it is impossible to separate one out from the other" (Ball, 1984, 81).

If playgrounds are considered a form of land use within urban areas, then it is probable that in their allocation and use of space that a variety of social and economic factors will influence the spatial patterning. In order to establish the nature of forces at work in the allocation and use of play space, however, there is a need to shift from the orthodox recreation research based upon concerns with location and participation to one which seeks to understand the processes involved in the establishment, maintenance and transformation of such space.

In terms of more recent approaches in geography, emphasising the links between the social and the spatial, three general questions are now asked to help conceptualise children's playspace:

1. In what ways are playgrounds in themselves a form of socially constructed space? Behind this question is the idea that both the organisation of urban areas and the internal organisation of such areas is important to social provision of children's playspace. In this context consideration must be given to the processes involved in industrialisation and urbanisation, and suburbanisation as it is possible that the ideas developed may be mainly a response to changing living and working conditions.



Care must be taken over the meaning of social provision, as it could be that only restricted groups may be in a position to formulate ideas and implement them. If an adequate answer can be given to the first question then a second may be introduced.

2. What are the implications of playgrounds as a form of socially constructed space within the urban environment? At the simplest level it may be viewed as an area set aside for the play of children, but on a deeper level it may have deliberate or unintended effects of social control. If so, in what ways does the provision of such areas satisfy the changing objectives of the governing groups? What constraints are placed on playground users by virtue of historical and contemporary influences? These points lead to a third question.
3. How do playgrounds, in the context of the first two questions, relate to the diversity that exists within communities? To what extent are communities assumed to be homogeneous, with those making the decisions relating to playspace not taking into account the viewpoints and needs of different groups?

It is through an examination of questions such as these that space usage can be more satisfactorily evaluated. If constraints do exist to the way in which space is provided and utilised, and if these are potentially incompatible with different interests either at an individual, family, community or societal level, then understanding the processes by which space has been produced is one starting point to initiate alternative and socially planned change.

In a New Zealand context, the recreation movement has never been particularly interested in children's public playspace. The major thrust of active recreation provision has been directed at team sports, predominantly for the New Zealand male (Simpson, 1984; Crawford and Cole, 1981). As a consequence the importance of developing play space specifically for children has been relegated to a relatively low position on the recreation agenda. More recently a new generation of landscape architects and designers have become responsible for developing such spaces within a park framework. Due to the initial weaknesses of approach followed by the few researchers in this area, and the newness of the profession of landscape architects, a cursory study of the available literature of both fails to reveal a great deal regarding the processes responsible for socially designated spaces as part of the urban landscape. To a large degree discussion is superficial, overlooking processes which determined land use in cities and which make up the context in which public playgrounds have been shaped.

It is necessary to delve further back into the historical, social and political circumstance which prevailed in the nineteenth century, and in some cases even before that, to identify the processes responsible for shaping children's recreation space in New Zealand. In positioning the research of this thesis in this deeply historical context it is helpful to draw on not just the work of geographers, but also radical planners and sociologists to understand the broad processes involved, and ultimately gain a reconception of children's play space of a kind which more closely aligns with the needs of different 'communities'.

Initially this study focuses upon the two precursors of children's playspace, the categories of **child** and **space**, and their social origins. Attitudes towards children have undergone a number of changes over time, and one important entry point into understanding the provision of space for children, is comprehending the promotion of ideas about children. The nineteenth century concept of childhood was an ambiguous one built up mainly from two positions: the philosophers who saw children as having rights; and a second faction, the industrialists, who saw them as resources of an industrial society. The social and political forces exerted predominantly by philanthropic groups drew a wider response in the form of a recreation movement which emerged from the convergence of these two areas.

Throughout the nineteenth century there was also a concern for the working person's environment. Reformists wished to see conditions improved, while industrialists wanted workers to benefit from improved conditions in order that they may make larger profits. One solution to improve the environment was the provision of open space, which it was felt would be a panacea to the blight of the industrial landscape.

It is against these background matters that the development of children's public playspace can be evaluated. In the unity of 'child' and 'space' an approach to the public provision of children's playgrounds originated, initially within the United States and then Britain. This study looks at the integration and legacy of these ideas in the provision of open space in the New Zealand environment, and with special reference to Palmerston North.

The thesis explores how historical processes - starting with the early ideas and practices connected with children's playspace - have influenced more recent overseas and New Zealand developments (true<sup>1</sup> adventure playgrounds, safety, public participation) and how these modern developments in turn have modified the character of the enduring historical processes. In studying the further elaboration of processes over long periods it is important not to ignore the changing context of the relevant society in which they are evolving, for this may have a bearing upon the nature of processes.

It is appropriate to mention some assumptions regarding the framework in which this examination takes place. Essentially New Zealand society is seen as capitalist in nature (Franklin, 1978), and this is the context in which statutory planning of various kinds is conducted. Wealth is concentrated in the hands of the few, and planning tends to reflect a status quo position, perpetuating what already exists, rather than serving the needs of the wider population (Johnston, 1975; 1984). It may be asked to what extent these characteristics are reflected in the planning of recreational resources for children. The argument developed is that the package of ideas and underlying social relationships must be made explicit and referenced to the historical context of origin and continuation. Although the connections to industrialisation and urbanisation under capitalism are not always immediately discernible careful conceptualisation makes apparent important links with enduring significance.

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<sup>1</sup>. The term true is used following Hanam and Lucking (1981) to distinguish the original concept of adventure playgrounds from the highly physically structured adventure playgrounds common in New Zealand.

To give a clear focus to the explanatory chapters of the thesis, the existing nature of Palmerston North's playgrounds is briefly summarised. Conceived solely in physical terms the provision of playspace appears, at first sight, to be both uncomplicated and uncontentious. When viewed through a social lense the allocation of space for such use, and the character of use, is nested within the politics of ideas about and administration of recreation, urban landscapes and children's development.

### Thesis Organisation

The chapter organisation reflects the idea that in order to comprehend the New Zealand expression of the provision of children's playspace and the peculiarities of the Palmerston North example it is necessary to articulate both the relevant historical processes impinging upon the New Zealand scene and distinctive processes of New Zealand origin.

Chapter 2 documents both public open space and children's playspace Palmerston North. The positioning of this chapter, although perhaps unusual, at the beginning of the thesis rather than the end, provides an opportunity to introduce a specific contextual focus. Subsequent discussion is directed towards providing an understanding of the development of playspace in Palmerston North, and in New Zealand and overseas, the contexts in which the Palmerston North example can usefully be interpreted.

Chapters 3 and 4 introduce a historical framework upon which the major concepts connected with playspace for children are based. Chapter 3 focuses primarily on the child, the changing perceptions towards children and the evolution of childhood. Particular attention is given to developments spawned during nineteenth century industrialisation under British and United States capitalism, for it is the resolution of conflict between the needs of children expressed by philosophers, and the views of industrialists, who saw children as a resource, that a recreation movement evolves. At the same time as the conflict over the role of children in an industrial society was being debated, the public parks, as they are known today, were beginning to be established. Chapter 4 briefly examines the development of parks, and the conflict between designers and physical recreationalists towards the end of the nineteenth century. The effects of this conflict were to have long standing repercussions. It is argued that in order to explain the inclusion of children's playspace in contemporary parks it is essential to ascertain the social, educational, and political influences which facilitated and constrained the integration of the recreation and parks movements. The question of how this was achieved is dealt with in Chapter 5. It is accompanied by a discussion of the extent to which integration of philosophies regarding both the development of children's play and of parks has been resolved.

Against this background the forms of children's playspace in New Zealand are analysed. Chapter 6 follows through the development of parks, predominantly influenced by British connections, the acknowledgement of recreation standards, their adoption and consolidation within the park system. The argument of the chapter

establishes what could be considered a position of traditional development, in terms of which post World War II influences on children's playspace can be evaluated.

Chapters 7 to 9 look at three recent developments in the arena of children's playspace: the true adventure playground; the role of safety and the playground; and public participation in playground development. A brief review of past positions is undertaken for each area, and an assessment of the interaction between historical processes and the more recent developments evaluated, with special emphasis given to the New Zealand situation and the Palmerston North experience.

Chapter 10, the final chapter, reviews the position of children's playspace, drawing upon the Palmerston example and New Zealand situation, but more importantly interpreting the development of such space in terms which are applicable nationally. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the social definition of such space and space use in a diverse and constantly changing society.

## CHAPTER 2

PALMERSTON NORTH - AN EXAMPLE OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF  
CHILDREN'S PUBLIC PLAYSPACE

The first park in Palmerston North was provided by an Act of New Zealand parliament. The Establishment of Parks Act was an act aimed at providing for reserves within the province of Wellington (2/11/1876, New Zealand Statutes). It was under the provisions of this Act that the area, later to be referred to as The Esplanade, was granted by Central government to the then borough in 1877. The original purpose of the park was to create a passive area for the enjoyment of the public, a recreation ground and a botanical garden. Between 1888 and 1903 a racecourse was developed on this particular reserve. This area was to serve as a focus of recreation for the expanding township. In conjunction with the passive recreation area two sports grounds were developed (1890-94, Park Road Recreation Ground; 1894, Fitzherbert Avenue Sportsground). Both of these areas were to serve as sites for team sports such as rugby and cricket.

The development of parks between 1900 and 1920 continued to concentrate upon either passive areas such as Anzac Park in 1916 (for the purpose of park and public garden under the Reserves Act of 1916) or places for sporting activities, (1902, Hokowhitu Domain; 1917, North Street Park; 1918, Manawatu Bowling, Croquet and Tennis Club; and 1920, Papaeoia and Takaro Parks). Until 1920 the only specific provision of recreational areas for children was the construction of a sand pit at the Esplanade.



At the instigation of the Borough Curator, Peter Black, the first playspaces specifically set aside for children were built. After assessing playgrounds provided by local authorities in New Plymouth and Auckland, Black (1922) recommended that playgrounds be built at The Esplanade, North Street and Papaeoia Parks (Figure 2-1). The form of equipment provided at each park was consistent with those considered appropriate overseas, and at the other two cities mentioned; a rock-a-bye swing, a large swing set, a big chute, a small swing set at all three parks, and in addition a Merry-go-round at the Esplanade. Based upon maps from the Palmerston North City Council Archives (filed 23/6/1965) these three parks provided open space within 2.2 kilometres of the majority of homes within Palmerston North, the central business area being within the service radii of all three parks. Although there is no record accompanying the archived maps, the service radii concept is heavily implied.

Between the 1920's and 1967 provision of playgrounds was relatively slow. In 1967 John Bolton reported that there were nine playgrounds in Palmerston North: two in the Esplanade, one in each of Highbury Shopping area, Hokowhitu, Memorial, Papaeois, Savage, Crewe and Takaro Parks (Bolton, 1967). These parks, with the exception of Savage Crescent Park, were all at the main residential periphery of the city (Figure 2-2). Based upon this spread of areas John Bolton stated,





Fig. 2-2 Playground and Park Locations - 1960, Palmerston North



Fig. 2-3 Playground, Park and Primary School Locations - 1982, Palmerston North

"the majority of the city is well catered for ... therefore one can gain that there is little doubt that the amount of play equipment is more than adequate for the needs of the children" (Bolton, 1967, 1).

Also between 1920 and 1967 the city acquired land for the purpose of providing active (sporting) recreation areas. The majority of this acquisition occurred in the 1950's and early 1960's. During this latter period there were also several parks established as a result of reserve contributions. Some of these were eventually to become playground locations.

The last major extension of the Palmerston North city boundaries in 1967 was followed by a large number of subdivisions. In accordance with the provisions of the Municipal Corporations Amendment Act, 1964, s.351c, reserve contributions were to increase significantly between 1967 and 1977 providing potential sites for children's playgrounds. The large number of subdivisions undertaken by both private developers and the state in Milson, Awapuni, Mangone, Highbury and Cloverlea all resulted in further playground construction being undertaken by the local authority (Figure 2-3). The location of these playgrounds within the suburban developments of the period reflected more closely the 400 metre standard. In general the size of playgrounds within these new areas were either relatively small, less than 0.4 hectares, or constructed in conjunction with sportsfields which provided a large area of open space. While extremely difficult to calculate, due to the varying size of the open spaces involved, it can be estimated that there is approximately one playground per 2000 residents in Palmerston.

The available playground resource base was further extended in 1976, when the Wanganui Education Board issued a policy statement regarding the use of school facilities by the community outside of school hours. Due to uncertainty in interpretation of the Control of Schools Act 1949, the Board sought legal opinion as to the extent of control they or their representatives had over Education Board property. In a policy statement (Wanganui Education Board, 1976) to all school committees and principals the Board indicated that in accordance with Government policy the committees were to encourage community use of school facilities (Figure 2-3).

Without exception until the 1970's local authority playgrounds contained early twentieth century traditional styled equipment. This fact is supported by Bolton (1967) when discussing the nature of children's playgrounds within Palmerston North. The employment of landscape architects, after the playground seminar held at Lincoln College in 1971, saw cosmetic changes to the playground environment. Nicholas Morgan (one of the first landscape architects employed by the City Council) was responsible for designing fort and platform type structures with slides and swings incorporated into the design. These reflected the structured adventure playgrounds advocated by the predominant school of thought on design of such areas at that time. Subsequent landscape architects have continued to blend traditional equipment into fort/platform structures, and in addition included such features as scramble nets constructed of connected tyres, rotating drums, and long slides which follow ground contours. There has been only one significant departure from such construction, that being a fitness course/playground adjoining Andrew Avenue.

School playgrounds developed during the late 1970's and 1980's have also been designed along the lines of structured adventure playgrounds.

The District Scheme of 1978 signified a desire to establish true adventure playgrounds within the city. To this date no such developments have been undertaken. The establishment of such areas has been opposed by the Director of Parks and Recreation, who is responsible for administering local authority playgrounds.

More recently both safety and public participation have become more significant issues in the planning of Palmerston North playgrounds. Concern with safety has a long history in Palmerston North. In 1962 an accident on an aeroplane swing in Wellington resulted in similar equipment at Papaeoia Park being dismantled. As early as 1965 soft surfaces, currently a very topical area in playground design, were recommended by council under play equipment. In 1976 a child fell to his death from a slide, once again raising the issue of soft surfaces. Nothing, however, of this nature was done until 1984, and then only on an experimental basis. Playgrounds developed since the end of 1985 in Palmerston North have been constructed over soft surfaces, predominantly bark. This complies with the 1986 safety standards for playground construction (NZS 5828, 1986). According to Councillor Vern Chettleburgh the compliance with safety standards has almost doubled installation costs (Evening Standard 19/12/1986). However, this is disputed by local representatives of the Accident Compensation Commission (pers. com.).

Safety, like the influence of true adventure playgrounds, has lead only to superficial changes to the appearance and use of the existing land resource in Palmerston North.

Public participation in playground planning was first undertaken in Palmerston North in 1977. School children from the Roslyn area were asked to design their public playground, ideas from these were to be incorporated into the eventual design. McLeod and Wrigley (1983), Wrigley (1984, 1986) also undertook survey research to ascertain preferred types of development for neighbourhood playgrounds. Designs which were formulated and implemented from all of these pieces of research reflected prevailing concepts in playground design.

Palmerston North's provision of public recreation areas specifically designed for children are in many ways reflecting the standards which were evolved some one hundred years ago with respect to size and location. Minor changes in internal design have occurred as a result of the influence of adventure playgrounds, but even these have not been significant. The desire to maintain ordered development (by the parks department), and the provision of playgrounds for children, rather than being created by them, has resulted in a perpetuation of uniform structures. In addition participative planning which has been undertaken has only served to reinforce the existing and longstanding playground forms which are present in the city.

There is, however, in Palmerston North scope to examine alternative ideas. Some councillors realise that what exists may not be the most appropriate form for recreation.



"... Crs Aline Pengally and Jill White were concerned about providing money for what they saw as an expensive playground, when they were unable to compare it with other priority recreation areas' needs. Cr Pengally, in particular thought the definition of recreation ... was too narrow to the exclusion of some areas of recreation" (Evening Standard, 19/12/1986, p 3).

By understanding the processes which have shaped playspace both in Palmerston North, and in other areas of New Zealand it may be possible to assist the development of alternative potentially workable options which meet the specific needs of communities.

As the processes which formed children's playspace, and the categories which contributed to the emergence of this aspect of urban life, (a recognition of childhood, play, and the development of parks as they exist today), predate developments in New Zealand, we look now beyond the New Zealand position in order to gain an understanding of what exists today. The following chapter examines the changing position of the child within western history, leading to the development of a philosophy regarding childhood, and the subsequent social and institutional influences which gave rise to the general provision of children's playspace.

### CHAPTER 3

#### CHILDHOOD - PERCEPTIONS IN THE PASSAGE OF TIME

Today childhood is recognised as an important phase in an individual's growth and development (Tuan, 1979). The way in which that individual is cared for is a response to many external influences. It is also evident that these influences are subjected to change as society evolves. The way in which the environment and changing social practices have influenced adult attitudes towards children and childhood, particularly in western culture, provides means for understanding the dynamic nature of society and an appreciation of the child's position in history.

#### Children without childhood

In general early literature pays very little attention to the predicament of the child, and what records are available of earlier periods often portray a very bleak outlook for them. It appears in ancient civilisations such as Carthage, Phoenicia and Ammon that the sacrificing of children to the gods was a widespread practice (Day, 1983). Later civilisations such as the Roman Empire and the Greeks at the time of Christ had what could be termed as only a cursory interest in child welfare. This to a certain extent may have been modified by social position. It appears that male children, in particular of the ruling class, were privileged to the extent that they were treated as

'minature adults', being involved, depending upon their background, in either scholarly pursuits or being trained for combat. For the majority of children the prospects of a bright future were not so assured. The practice of infanticide was not uncommon. First born males had the best prospects for survival, frequently subsequent male offspring and females were subject to infanticide or abandonment by parents. Abandoned children were either left to die or raised by others to be servants, prostitutes or maimed and became beggars. Sommerville (1982) writes,

"Up to this point in history even the few authors who reflected on the child's needs had considered children to be only potentially human. This attitude may have helped when it came to disposing of unwanted infants" (Sommerville, 1982, 47).

By 300AD Christainity was becoming more widespread and in some areas the Church's influence was beginning to have an impact on child welfare, with regard at least to their chances of survival. The first Christian Emperor, Constantine, made infanticide illegal in 318AD, and by 374AD it was considered a crime punishable by death. Other than this change the lot of children was not substantially improved.

The decline of Rome saw the onset of the Dark Ages, and until the year 1000 this would appear to be the most obscure period in Western history. Literacy was at its lowest ebb, trade was in a primitive state and feudalism prevalent.

"With no assured future, it would be perfectly understandable if society had given little thought to its children. The Church appears to have recognised their importance to the extension of its influence. But we can hardly expect children to benefit greatly from their place in such a long-range strategy. Very likely there was no one who could the luxury of enjoying or encouraging children simply for their own sake" (Sommerville, 1982, 63).

Although information available on children in the Middle Ages is not extensive, Sommerville believes some indication on attitudes towards children can be gauged from the contemporary manuscripts of medieval stories. In these stories children are shown primarily as the victims of adult misconduct, adultery, incest and abandonment.

Perhaps of more use are the observations of Braudel (1979) on the state of population growth and decline from this period to the Renaissance and beyond. In examining Western Europe population rises were recorded in the periods 1100 to 1350, 1450 and 1650, and from 1750 onwards. In a predominantly simple agrarian world there were changing relationships between the space occupied and the disposable wealth. Growth often outstripped the capacity to feed the population, and coupled with epidemics may have hardened the attitude of adults towards their offspring. Aries (1962), drawing from the writings of earlier authors such as Montaigne (late sixteenth century), concluded that attitudes regarding children, through the Middle Ages to the seventeenth century, were shaped largely by the high infant mortality rate,

" the general feeling was ... that one had several children to keep just a few." (Aries, 1962, 158).

Montaigne, recognised as an advocate of gentle child rearing , had six children, of which only two survived more than six months.

The Renaissance was a period of great creativity where the child appeared to assume an identity through the form of art. Italian artists portrayed mother and child scenes in the traditional sense of the Holy Family; Shakespeare used children within his plays to evoke pity and arouse sympathy against villains. Yet in reality the position afforded both women and children did not extend much in the way of individual rights. Children of the wealthy were to akin to property, often being raised by persons other than their natural parents. Practices of wet nursing were not uncommon, and swaddling of young children a reality (Tuan, 1979).

Thoughts on the raising of children were part of the social change brought about by religious groups. In England the Puritans recognised that children were little individuals, and in an attempt to tell people how to raise children published much material on child-rearing.

John Locke, a physician, also took exception to child rearing practices of the Renaissance with many of his arguments being directed against wet nursing and swaddling. Two major works were written by Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* and *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* in 1693. The second work became the most popular child rearing book in its day, being translated into French, Italian, Dutch, German, Swedish and Spanish. While Locke thought children could be moulded to one's desires, he, unlike the Puritans, advised parents that they should encourage their child's curiosity and play (Sommerville, 1982). Locke's concern for children was paralleled by that of the French aristocracy who increasingly in the seventeenth

century were said to have found enjoyment in their children. Children were played with, made to laugh, and laughed at for their childish antics and generally enjoyed in ways not common in earlier times (Day, 1983).

#### The dawn of childhood

Rousseau (1712-1778) was ideally situated to be a champion of children's rights. The foundations had been laid by Montaigne and Locke, and the French aristocracy were sympathetic towards their children. A climate in which childhood could be seen as important in itself had arrived. In *Emile*, Rousseau laid enduring foundations on the philosophy of childhood,

"... he argued for child rearing and educational practices in which play and direct experience were to be exploited to the fullest extent possible. He asserted that play was the means by which children developed both understanding and character and that adults could best promote development by assisting the child's investigation of all things in his/her life experience" (Day 1983, 9).

According to Sommerville

"Rousseau was the first author to accept and affirm the child fully. His was not the idle nostalgia of a poet for his own childhood, but a genuine effort to get inside the child and learn his needs and limits" (Somerville, 1982, 131).

The impetus begun by Rousseau on the importance of childhood was continued by Pestalozzi (1746-1827) and Herbart (1776 - 1841). Pestalozzi attempted to use the insights of Rousseau when he established schools in Switzerland. It was not he, however, who had a major impact upon education in the western world, but one of his assistants Fredrick

Froebel. Froebel was later employed by the Prussian government. At the same time the German, Herbart was formalising education, giving shape to teaching programmes and professionalisation of the educators calling. In this climate, encouraged by the Prussian authorities, Froebel established his first Kindergarten (child's garden) in 1837. The curriculum included elements of both Rousseau's philosophy and Pestalozzi's schools by continuing the assertion that a child's play was a natural and necessary developmental activity. Froebel did, however, vary from Rousseau's philosophy of natural undirected play in that he considered creative play could and perhaps should be channelled.

"He made much of children's apparent need to play but did so in prescriptive ways. The activities for children were selected in advance, organised in a precise sequence, and introduced to the children according to Froebel's intuitively derived developmental schedule" (Day, 1983, 22).

Unfortunately for the majority of children of this period, Rousseau's philosophy and the education system that Froebel was developing did not touch their lives. Instead of finding new liberation they became the victims of industrialisation, spending most of their early lives working in the mills.

The impact of urbanisation and industrialisation upon the young

"Towns, cities, are turning-points, watersheds of human history. ... All major bursts of growth are expressed by an urban explosion." (Braudel, 1979, 479).

From literature available it is very difficult to ascertain the sizes of towns prior to 1700, particularly small towns. However, Braudel considers that the typical urban population at the beginning of the eighteenth century was lower than 2000. If 5000 residents was to be defined as the minimum figure for classification of town status then in 1700 only thirteen percent of Britain's population could be considered urban. By 1801 this had risen to twenty five percent. (Deane and Cole, 1964).

While capital cities in the late eighteenth century had large populations, (London 860,000, Amsterdam 200,000) it was not these areas where the industrial revolution had the greatest impact on the location of the population. In Britain it was Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds, Glasglow and many small mill towns; in France the areas surrounding the coal mines of the north, the water power area of Alsace and the iron rich Lorraine, which launched into the new age. (Braudel, 1979).

The young were the fuel of the industrial age as much as water power or coal. As the major 'crafts' declined, children were looked upon as providing a cheap source of labour in industrial production.

"In urban society ... the young were losing their status in the world of work. Apprenticeships and training programs were done away with as the old crafts declined. After 1800 England and France repealed laws requiring apprenticeships, thereby allowing employers to hire children without teaching them a marketable skill" (Sommerville, 1982, 182).

Once trapped within the factory there was little hope of improvement for a young child. The attitude of most mill owners was unsympathetic towards the needs of the growing child. In 1835 Andrew Ure wrote,



"the work of these lively little elves seemed to resemble a sport, in which habit gave them a pleasing dexterity ... As to exhaustion by the days work [up to 12 hours], they evidenced no trace of it on emerging from the mill in the evening; for they immediately began to skip about the neighbouring playground and to commence their little amusements with the same alacrity as boys issuing from a school" (Pike, 1966, 214).

In contrast to Ure, John Fieldon, a Member of Parliament and a child labourer in his father's mill when young, took a much different view,

" ... because the children who work in the factories are seen to play like other children when they have time to do so, the labour is, therefore, light, and does not fatigue them. The reverse of this conclusion I know to be true" (Pike, 1966, 215).

Ure and Fieldon both discussed the labour of children in terms of their ability or willingness to play. Neither, however, indicated the needs of children as perceived by Rousseau. The industrial revolution was not without a champion for children amidst the industrialists. In the midst of child labour another regime arose. Robert Owen's New Lanark aimed to provide a good working environment for all of his factory workers. The aim consisted of improving working conditions within the mill, wages higher and more appropriate for the work done, better housing for mill workers and the best education available for children. Owen in his third essay (*New View of Society*, 1814) considered playgrounds an integral part of his development. The playground was not however envisaged to provide for free play and exploration but at the formation of character under supervision for children of pre-school age, and for those between the ages of five and ten to serve as a drill ground (Owen, 1963).

G. D. H. Cole in an introduction to *A New View of Society and Other Writings* said of Owen,

"Surely no man ever founded so many movements, and yet had so simple and unvarying a body of ideas. Surely no man was ever at once so practical and so visionary, so loveable and so impossible to work with, so laughed at and yet so influential" (Owen, 1963, vii).

Owen, as manager of the New Lanark reduced working hours for children from 13 hours to 10.5 hours, initially giving one and one half hours schooling after work. Later children under twelve did not work at all. As Galbraith said of New Lanark,

"It is an indication of how things were elsewhere that this was considered lenient. Because of his compassion Owen was always in trouble with his partners. They would have much preferred a tough, down-to-earth manager who would get a days work out of the little bastards" (Galbraith, 1977, 30).

While Owen was perhaps unsuccessful in spreading his New Lanark utopia throughout Britain, he did lay seeds for reform which would later be adopted even if in a somewhat modified form by later legislators.

Industrialisation was not confined to Britain. Europe and the United States were undergoing similar changes. Just as many poor of the rural areas left to work in the towns of Britain, the same happened in Europe. For the United States, however, it was mostly immigrants, possibly trying to escape the poverty of Europe's industrialised towns, that filled the mills of the New World.

### Childhood and citizenship

Over the nineteenth century two divergent schools of thought on children had arisen. The first school followed Rousseau's philosophy of the child as having certain needs; the second, the industrialists saw children as labour, part of the means of production.

"If the nineteenth century had a lofty view of childhood, it was also a rather narrow one. It soon appeared, however, that many children did not fit the stereotype, especially the numerous children of the poor. So determined efforts were made to provide such a childhood for everyone, even if it meant squeezing them into a mould" (Sommerville, 1982, 189).

The method of gaining conformity amongst children was to be enabled by education. The motives behind educating children varied according to social conditions. Irrespective of the origins of the pressure which were to bring about change, the changes were to influence the provision in future years.

In Britain change was politically motivated. Although the vote was extended to the working class in 1867, the problem was that many of the working people were barely literate. Realising a need to 'educate' their masters, politicians passed the Education Act in 1878, and by 1880 all children up to the age of thirteen were supposed to attend school. School grounds provided the first major public open space for children, although it appears that it was mainly open space with little in the way of equipment. If equipment was present it was more appropriate to physical drill than play. Attitudes were similar to those which Robert Owen had expounded some forty years earlier.

More significant for children's public recreation was the education movement in the United States. Industrialisation was accompanied by a flood of immigration to the north-eastern United States. The area drew people from diverse cultural backgrounds; and education was seen as one method of 'Americanising' immigrant children to fit into society (Lazerson, 1972).

An immigrant from Germany, Mrs Carl Schurz, was responsible for bringing with her Froebel's kindergarten concept, (after having attended a lecture of his in her homeland). Mrs Schurz started her kindergarten in Watertown, Wisconsin. The kindergarten concept was to spread fairly rapidly. Elizabeth Peabody, a prominent Bostonian, after seeing Mrs Schurz's kindergarten, started one in Boston in 1860. It was this and subsequent kindergartens which drew the attention of the females who constituted the Massachusetts Emergency and Hygiene Association (MEHA). This philanthropic group saw kindergartens as a means of social change.

The members of MEHA were to exert a major influence on recreation in general, by what at first seems only a minor action. In 1885 sand piles were placed in a kindergarten to foster play. The origin of this is subject to conjecture. According to Dickason (1983) and Olivia (1985) this was done at the suggestion of Dr Zakrzewska's model on the 'Berlin Plan'. However, Marsden (1961) considered that the idea came from a friend writing to the chairman of MEHA. Irrespective of the source the effect was to be profound. Eighteen eighty six saw the formation within MEHA of a "Committee On Sand Gardens". Such was the influence of the members of MEHA, that this was to be instrumental in the development of the recreation movement and indeed also to have wider political ramifications.

Historically the ideas that are behind the provision of play for children are inextricably connected to the more general philosophy of childhood. Tuan (1979) in summarising the origins of childhood stated,

"Concern with childhood as a unique and uniquely important stage of growth is a characteristic preoccupation of Western culture, with roots not much older than the seventeenth century" (Tuan, 1979, 11).

Prior to the seventeenth century the prevailing social and environmental conditions determined the attitudes towards children. The emergence of a philosophy on childhood provided a basis upon which these attitudes could be reassessed in the light of further change. From the philosophical position adopted by Rousseau evolved both formal structures, predominantly educational in nature, and with increasing industrialisation less formal philanthropic groups which sought to translate the ideals into specific actions. In doing so these agencies aimed not only at catering for what they perceived as the needs of the child but also, and perhaps more importantly, the social development of the child into an established society. Play was seen by both the formal and informal agencies as a means for childhood expression, while at the same time providing an opportunity for social induction.

Just as the social environment was changing in the onslaught of industrialisation, the physical urban environment was also being transformed. The deteriorating urban physical conditions, and the way in which these were responded to are the basis of the following chapter.

## CHAPTER 4

## THE SOCIAL PROVISION OF CHILDREN'S PUBLIC PLAYSPACE

Open areas for public use is not a new concept. The ancient Romans had gardens, large tracts of land were set aside by the Assyrians for hunting, and many early western towns had commons. But it is not until the nineteenth century that the public park as known today, as an area of land primarily for public use amidst essentially urban surroundings, had its foundations.

## The public parks movement of the nineteenth century

"The creation of useful landscapes within the town for the use and enjoyment of the public at large is essentially a Victorian idea, due in the first place to the phenomenal growth of the insensate industrial town, which created the basic need for such areas, and in the second place, perhaps, to the Victorian zeal for reform" (Chadwick, 1966, 19).

These landscapes had their origins already firmly established.

Many parks took the ideas of landscapers such as Brown, Jones and Repton who designed the gardens of many of the great British estates. Whether the 'English solution' to create recreation space alleviated the problems posed by the industrial town is questioned by Chadwick:

"... the Victorian aptitude for passionate reform was brought into play to attempt to improve at once both physical conditions and souls; not to remove the root cause of the disease itself but merely to alleviate its symptoms by the insertion of limited green ... areas within the framework of by-law, street, mill and factory" (Chadwick, 1966, 19).

At the same time that parks were being developed in Britain, the United States was beginning its journey towards a public parks philosophy. Frederick Law Olmstead was at the forefront of American urban park development. He was aware of what the British were doing, and was equally concerned with the problems of the common person in the industrialised city. Olmstead reasoned that the entire population could not go to the countryside to escape the cityscape, so he proposed the rural landscape should be brought to the heart of the city.

The nineteenth century development of urban park space could be viewed as an extension of landscape form from one social class to another (Cosgrove, 1983). Given the nature of existing 'great estate' landscapes, the reproduction of parks within the urban environment took on a predominantly passive appearance where the activity of walking for pleasure was seen as being of paramount importance. This use of urban space tended to reflect narrowly defined attitudes of an upper social class with respect to what constituted a park environment. This concept which can be termed the 'aesthetics' of the park environment has remained as a dominant feature of park design.

In these early parks it appeared that no recognition of children's public play space was allowed for. This, however, is misleading. According to Chadwick (1966), Olmstead in his plan for Central Park included within the design a playground for children, but this was to receive little attention from later controllers of the park or subsequent landscape architects. In the United States it appears that Olmstead was perceived by landscape architects as a champion for rural retreats in the city. Physical educationalists on the other hand wanted

to see recreation space devoted towards active pursuits. Rather than merge the ideas, the two groups became increasingly polarised (Rutledge, 1971).

Supporters of the perceived Olmstead philosophy saw parks as naturalised passive retreats.

"Parks departments became solely concerned with parks as defined above [naturalised passive retreats]. Landscape architects (schooled in the Olmstead tradition) turned their energies to park development and, in their enthusiasm for the topic, included options in park management in their university programs. Such background led landscape architects not only to the design of park areas in the early part of this century, but to roles as park administrators and policy makers" (Rutledge, 1971, 5).

Meanwhile recreation, and along with it children's playgrounds were relegated to a position of relative obscurity; parks received much design attention, while recreation suffered. This was clearly a result of professional elitism, and something that was to have an impact until after 1945 (Rutledge, 1971).

The evolution of public park space continued in Britain. But unlike the United States, both national and local politics, rather than the managerial politics of 'professionalism', was to determine the way in which urban park space was to develop. Robert Owen (Chapter 3) influenced politicians on what should be done to combat the industrial blight enveloping urban Britain. Industrialists, those who wielded power, saw some good in Owen's ideas for their own gain.



"... the towns were filthy: cleanse them and they would provide for more contented and better workers, thus more goods and profits. And so, influenced by the work of the indefatigable Sir Edwin Chadwick, a spate of voluminous reports appeared. ... Amongst these, in 1833, was the Report of the Select Committee on Public Walks ... " (Chadwick, 1966, 49-50).

The emphasis, however, was not on improving conditions for the purpose of individual well-being but more for the increased productivity and profits which it meant for the industrialists.

The 1840's saw Acts of Parliament in Britain passed with the powers to provide public parks. Despite enabling powers the general provision of parks was slow to materialise. So slow, in fact, that the Manchester City Council decided in 1845 to provide parks by direct purchase. Backed by Manchester manufacturers and 'enlightened' people, sites were secured and a competition to design the parks initiated. The Manchester Committee required competitors to provide playgrounds and spaces for as many games as possible. The winner of the competition Joshua Major incorporated within his design such features as climbing poles, gymnasium and see saws. This was considered a revolutionary idea for the time (Chadwick, 1966).

It was not until 1859 that the Recreation Grounds Act attempted to consolidate the position of recreation in the legislation, and gave first reference to children and play.

"Whereas the want of open public Grounds for the Resort and Recreation of Adults, and of Playgrounds for Children and Youth is much felt in the Metropolis and other popular Places within this Realm, and by reason of the great and continuous Increase of Population and Extension of Towns such Evil is seriously increasing, and it is desirable to provide a Remedy for the same" (Statutes: Recreation Grounds Act, 1859).

Whether the Manchester experience was responsible for the particular framing of the legislation is unclear, however, Manchester's contribution should be considered a major breakthrough in the public provision of public and children's recreation space.

Other than the Manchester example, recorded history in Britain shows little evidence of children's playgrounds. Holme and Massie (1970) indicate that Birmingham had a playground in 1877 located at Burbury Street but there was no mention of equipment.

Legislation regarding the provision of parks continued to be written. The Public Health Act 1875 devoted a short section to recreation. It was, however, a philanthropic group, the Metropolitan Public Garden Association, under the leadership of the Earl of Meath which had the next major impact. In 1883, the Earl proposed that,

" ... a public space for recreation should be within a quarter of a mile of everyone's door" (Holmes, 1911, 484).

This statement was to have an impact extending to the present day distribution of parks within neighbourhoods. The Association continued pressuring Parliament and promoted the Open Spaces Acts of 1887, 1890 and 1906. Little of this however raised the profile of public children's playspace.

Education - the means to public provision of children's  
recreation space

The provision of children's recreation space appears to have faltered in both Britain and the United States during the 1860's. The year 1870 saw a revival of children's issues through the introduction of the Education Act, a response to educate the recently enfranchised working class of Britain. The focus of the child began to shift. Where the factory once dictated the daytime activity of the child the emphasis had now moved to the school. Dimensions for play were expanded. Holme and Massie (1970) suggest that the major playgrounds were the 'streets', close familiar areas to home which provided meeting places for children and their friends. Educational institutions also had an influence upon children's playspace. School grounds contained areas set aside primarily for drill, and in some cases, a range of gymnastic equipment aimed at physical fitness. Until the 1900's no significant gains were made from this position in Britain in achieving public playspace for children.

The greatest impacts of education on the recreation movement came in the United States. The kindergarten was used to focus attention on the recreation needs of children. Here the importance of philanthropy was to be significant. While the Earl of Meath proposed legislation in Britain, it was the members of the Massachusetts Emergency and Hygeine Association (MEHA) which was leading reform in the United States, particularly in Boston. (Refer Chapter 3).

The membership of MEHA (primarily female) was drawn from Boston's leading families, thus giving the organisation a platform of strength from which to launch issues. Through the members' connections the MEHA was able to obtain not only moral support but also strong political support. This was fundamental in gaining recognition within the framework of the emerging recreation movement. Although as the title suggest, MEHA was involved in more than just the playground movement, it was this area which took precedence. The 1886 Committee on Sand Gardens had by 1888 a name had change to the Committee on Playgrounds (Marsden, 1961). The playground issue continued to dominate MEHA activities into the 1890's.

#### The politics of children's recreation - the Boston experience

Children's recreation became a general political issue in the 1890's, support came from a variety of areas, but most can be linked closely with the activities of MEHA.

Gaining acceptance by education authorities of the importance of establishing playgrounds particularly for summer use when school was not in, proved an arduous process. The major breakthrough was to occur in 1887-1888 when Kate Garnett Wells became a governor of the Massachusetts Board of Education. She had been instrumental in founding MEHA in 1884 (Dickason, 1983) and in her new position pursued the right to have MEHA granted permission to open playgrounds on school sites. Expansion of playgrounds continued and in 1889, for the first time municipal financial support for a playground in Boston was obtained.

"Mayor Joshua Quincy persuaded the Boston School Committee to appropriate \$3000 for the maintenance of schoolyard playgrounds" (Marsden, 1961, 51),

and,

"MEHA convinced the city government to set aside a lot of land ... as a playground and appropriate \$1000 to grade and grass it" (Dickason, 1983, 93).

Playgrounds were seen as a positive accomplishment in the industrial city, an issue local politicians were prepared to capitalise on. While political capital was one thing, solid progress was another. Fragmentation of Boston into wards saw councillors and aldermen pursuing improvements in their area at the detriment of establishing a city wide playground system.

Throughout this period a new champion for children's recreation needs was emerging. In 1887, Joseph Lee organised the Massachusetts Civic League which was aimed at providing social legislation. Given his family's prominent position in society Lee was to be an excellent advocate. (Marsden, 1961; Olivia, 1985).

"It was the philanthropist, Lee believed, who was best qualified to express the public interest in matters of social need" (Marsden, 1961, 54).

It is of interest to note at this stage, that Lee shared office in organisations on which Miss Ellen M. Tower, the chairperson of the MEHA Committee on Sand Gardens, was also a member.

Lee became increasingly involved in the playground movement and in the early 1890's assisted in conducting a survey of play spaces in badly congested neighbourhoods. It was from this work that Lee developed standards for the operation of playgrounds. His subsequent efforts were to gain him a national reputation as a leader in recreation.

The years 1897 to 1907 were to see the maximum gains made for children's recreation. Mayor Quincy, in his inaugural address (1897), made the need for playgrounds a prominent part of his speech. Over the following 2 years \$US500,000 was used by the Parks Commission to develop 20 new playgrounds in addition to those already operated by MEHA. That same year (1897) saw a change in direction of MEHA; that was for wanting the city to take over their existing role in children's recreation.

There was, however, a fundamental difference between city and MEHA playgrounds according to Lee. The key to MEHA playground success was supervision, however, the city playgrounds lacked supervision. Backed by the Civic League, Lee set about showing that the MEHA philosophy of training for citizenship in a supervised recreational setting was the correct approach. The essence of this was the adoption of what could also be called a 'Froebelian perspective'

The attitudes of the School Board towards play had also slowly softened over the 1890's. This was due in part to the integration of kindergartens into the school system and the adoption of Froebel's philosophy. For Boston at least, education and recreation were being interwoven. The final acts occurred in 1907 when the Civic League introduced a bill to the state legislature requiring schools to provide

play equipment for children over the summer months, or otherwise by parks departments. The passing of this legislation saw the wealthy Bostonians, who were the major political force, finally obtain their objectives. MEHA, its objectives being met, disbanded.

The actions of philanthropists, those with wealth and power in the society, can not be understated in achieving within Boston the public provision of resources for children's play.

#### Children's recreation beyond Boston

Other cities in the United States followed Boston's lead. Philanthropic groups provided playgrounds in cities such as New York and Chicago. By 1900 there were 14 cities sponsoring playgrounds (Dickason, 1985). Among the more important developments were the playground at the Hull House, Chicago (1892) and Seeward Park, New York (1899). Both of these playgrounds were considered models and included, along with sand, a range of apparatus. The success of the New York model saw similar equipment installed in other city parks (Butler, 1967).

"Swings, seesaws and other equipment had been used by children for centuries, of course, but their appearance in the municipal playground coincides with the construction of the first commercial amusement parks ... [they were] a cheap substitute" (Mergen, 1982, 91).

These original 'model' playgrounds appear to have provided a basis from which equipment standards were later derived.

The recreation movement had several other early advocates; G. Stanley Hall, who delivered speeches to the members of MEHA (Dickason, 1983) and was a prominent advocate of children's recreation; Dr. L. H. Gulick, secretary of the YMCA of North America and Dr. H. S. Curtis, a student of Hall and considered an expert on children's play. The last two men mentioned, along with Joseph Lee, were to be instrumental in professionalising the recreation movement.

Dr. Gulick in 1899 approached the New York City's Outdoor Recreation League promising to get it members, and suggested that there should be a national organisation for the discussion of play and playgrounds. The League promised its support for establishing a national profession and for the publishing of articles.

By 1906 41 cities had playground programmes and there was an increase in communication between people participating in the provision of children's recreation. Gulick recognised that a wide range of organisations were involved in providing these recreational opportunities, but as yet no central body had been established for the movement (Dickason, 1985).

Gulick discussed this problem with Curtis, who in February had been appointed to the position of supervisor of the Public Playground Committee of the Associated Charities for the District of Columbia. The Association was moving to gain funding for additional play facilities and Curtis seized this opportunity to promote the formation of a national organisation. Curtis quoted Mr Lee as being very interested in the formation of a national organisation to C. R. Woodruff (Vice



President of the American Civic Association). Woodruff suggested that the idea be channelled through Joseph Lee. Curtis disregarded this advice, and pushed for a national organisation to be instituted separate from the Civic Association.

Woodruff meanwhile saw the District of Columbia Commissioner, H. B. F. MacFarland, to gain support for national playgrounds to come under the auspices of the Civic Association. Initially MacFarland agreed, but on April 12, 1906 MacFarland gave support to Curtis' idea of an independent body and was involved in a meeting which saw the establishment of the Playground Association of America.

"No single event has had a greater significance for the recreation movement than this Washington meeting. Previously the drive for playgrounds had received no concerted guidance or support; formation of the Playground Association of America, ... gave it new impetus and competent national leadership" (Butler, 1967, 86)

Despite Curtis avoiding involving the Civic Association of which Lee was prominent, Lee's name appeared as third president of the new association (Dickason, 1985). The association sent a deputation to meet with President Theodore Roosevelt who endorsed the action of forming a national playground association. With this endorsement a nationwide urban recreation movement in the United States was truly established.

In the United States the battle for provision of public recreation space for children's play had been largely carried out by interested individuals. By contrast Britain continued in its quest for provision of public space via legislation.

"In 1904 the Interdepartmental Committee on physical Deterioration recommended that local authorities should be obliged to provide open space in proportion to the population of the area. The Open Spaces Act of 1906 and the Public Health Amendment Act 1907 did not contain any such standard" (Veal, 1975, 4).

The Public Health Amendment Act did contain references to recreation, these were aimed at enabling local authorities to undertake planning for recreation purposes, but imposed no specific requirement for them to do so.

The late nineteenth and early twentieth century was a period in which both the education authorities and the largely philanthropic recreation movement articulated what they perceived as the needs of children and constructed children's playgrounds consistent with these views. Within the United States, the emergence of political support at both local and national levels aided the development of an administrative structure to further advocate the ideas of these interested groups. The resulting impact was the institutionalisation of certain practices regarding both the establishment and maintenance of children's playspace.

## CHAPTER 5

## THE STANDARDS OF CHILDREN'S RECREATION PLANNING

## A standard approach to children's recreation

The inception of the Playground Association of America was to see the introduction of a new professionalism to children's recreation. The association has undergone several name changes: 1911 - Playground and Recreation Association of America; 1930 - National Recreation Association; and finally in 1965 the National Recreation and Park Association (Hartsoe, 1985) but until recently the approach to children's recreation has remained relatively static. The changes in name have reflected a perceived mismatch with a changed society. The final change, attempting to unify the divergent recreation and parks sectors, was precipitated by the landscape architects' adopting a passive recreation approach to the design of open space.

When focusing on the role of children's recreation specifically within the Recreation Movement of the United States most progress was made in the formative years of the movement. Then, the aim of providing recreational opportunities for children within the urban environment was of paramount importance. To enable the initiators of the Playground Association of America's ideas to be communicated there was a need to package the concepts they wanted expressed. This was to result in the formulation of standards for children's recreation.

For a movement which exhibited a strongly independent nature it is interesting to note that the basis for the recreation space standards had foundations in Britain. Henry Curtis, who conducted some of the earliest recreation research in the United States (Dickason, 1965) said in 1910,

"... we don't know very well what adequate facilities for play are, but we know that they must be within walking distance of the children if they are to be attended" (Wilkinson, 1985, 191).

In adopting this view Curtis was applying the Earl of Meath's 1883 proposal, that public recreation space should be within a quarter of a mile of everyone's door (Chapter 4) to the child's situation.

In addition to the idea of spatial proximity the question of size of space was also first mooted in Britain. Although there appears to be no reason for the particular space allocation, the Playground Association of America in 1906 adopted the following resolution:

"That while there is no inherent relationship between space and children, and the exact amount of space required cannot be determined, it is our belief that the present London requirement of 30 square feet of playground for each child of the school is a minimum with which the proper amount of light, air and space for play and gymnastics can be secured: (Wilkinson, 1985, 191).

There already did appear to be some acceptance of this standard in Washington, District of Columbia, at the time. Although Washington was considered to contain many parks, their small size meant that utilisation of the sites for recreational purposes was low. The Playground Committee of Washington wished to see land acquired for the purpose of playgrounds, with the area to be allocated being 2 acres per 4000 children or approximately 28 square feet per child (Mergen, 1982).

As this was the region from which Henry Curtis initiated the Playground Association of America it is distinctly possible that this would have further influenced the American decision to accept this standard.

With the acceptance of these two concepts (distance and space) by 1910 both service radii and approximate sizes of neighbourhood facilities required as a minimum were determined. A survey by Hubbard in 1914

" ... showed that concepts of adequacy were considered, and that bases of contemporary standards were already in existence" (Gold, 1973, 144).

It would appear that surveys such as this served to 'legitimise' standards, giving them the air of respectability required for acceptance.

As the recreation movement grew in the United States there was an attempt to set some lower limits on other recreational space requirements. From Gold (1973) it is evident that the Recreation Movement adopted a space requirement of 10 acres of recreation space per thousand of population based upon expert opinion of the time. The allocation for children's playspace was to come within this new standard.

The base amount allocated to children's playspace was to be subject to further debate; the area according to Butler in 1928 was 200 square feet per child; Hamner in 1929 suggested 100 square feet per child; and in 1934 the National Recreation Association issued a new set of

standards, which when translated gave 1 acre of neighbourhood playground per 1000 persons. Cosmetic changes were suggested at other times, however, the standard of 1 acre per a 1000 people is still generally maintained as the accepted standard for playground space today (Gold, 1973).

Standards did not cease at specifying the size and location of children's recreation areas. While not being definitely documented until 1947 equipment was also subjected to a standards approach. The contents of the playground were not to alter significantly between the model playgrounds (Hull House 1892 and Seeward Park) and those still being built at the end of World War II. Butler (1947) in *Recreation Areas* set out what he considered minimum standards of an average playground; for those under 6 years of age - 6 chair swings, 1 sand box, 1 small slide, and 1 simple climbing device; for those 6 to 12 years - 6 frame swings, 1 slide, 1 horizontal ladder, 1 giant stride, 1 balance beam and 1 horizontal bar; and if funds and attendance justified - 1 travelling ring, 4 seesaws and 1 low climbing device. While these were seen as minimum standards they were seldom ever achieved.

The recreation movement in Britain was slower to establish, the National Playing Fields Association being formed in 1925, but it readily adopted the idea of open space standards. The British standard allocated 6 acres of permanently preserved playing space per 1000 people, the emphasis being placed upon playing (hence being lower than the 10 acres per 1000 people advocated in the United States). The allocation of playspace for children's playgrounds was set lower than in

the United States at one half acre per 1000 people. However, the same locational distances, that is serving persons within a quarter mile radius, was maintained (Gooch, 1964). These were also meant to serve as minimum standards.

In 1948 Butler was to say of all standards,

"Standards, it should be kept in mind, can never be applied completely or without modification, because an atypical or ideal situation is never found in a city. They need to be adjusted in the light of the conditions, needs and resources of each locality. Standards are designed to indicate a norm or a point of departure; as such they afford a basis for the intelligent development of local plans" (Butler, 1948, 161).

The problem was that standards were seen as guidelines, and as such frequently applied without adjustment to the conditions which prevailed in individual situations.

#### Planning and standards - guides, rules or goals?

The relationships between planning and the use of a standards approach needs to be couched in a time specific perspective. While more recent planning attitudes have centred upon the close relationships between planning practice and societal change this has not always been the situation. As recently as 1977 Gordon Cushman, a senior lecturer in the School of Architecture and Building (Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology) defined urban planning in the following context.

"Planning is the programming for mobilisation of all resources available to carry out a task so that it may be carried out in the most efficient manner and to maximum effect with economy of means" (Rushman, 1977, 2).

It is in this latter context that the standards approach may be seen as a framework for making sound public planning decisions. Unfortunately in an attempt to simplify the decision making process the words rules or goals surplant the word guideline. Rather than being tools used in obtaining the goal, they become the goal. Recreation standards have tended to be treated in this way by many planners, and are evidenced in many city landscapes. The question of why standards achieve the status of goals can best be understood by evaluating the process under which decisions are made. Gold (1973) recognised four factors which saw recreation standards translated in to goals.

1. They are usually clear and simple.
2. They are usually legitimised by 'experts'.
3. They represent an 'ideal'.
4. They act as bargaining points.

In any given planning situation there are likely to be a range of variables. Whether the planner has the time to assess all of these variables and make an optimum decision is open to debate. Often time is a limiting factor in decision making. Given such simplistic recreation guidelines as 10 acres per 1000 people, one tenth of which is to be devoted to children's playspace, and that children's playspace is to be located within 400 metres of all urban residences, the guidelines then become an expedient way of dealing with both the problems of allocation of space and location within the townscape. The simplicity of the standards precludes any real need for research, and as they are used more frequently they tend to become self-reinforcing.



Where standards are established by an organisation which is socially recognised as an authoritative body they also become legitimised. Experts in the field tend to relate research to the standards, giving them even more credence. Should the standards be challenged, it is not the planner that is in question, for he or she can point to the authoritativeness of the standards as their own defence. Because the standards originate from outside the planner's direct domain they can also act as neutralisers of political partisans or civic groups, trying to promote change in directions which the planner prefers not to proceed.

Standards also can act as a focus of community pride. In a competitive capitalist society where many things are invariably quantified, recreation standards are no exception. Many civic leaders see attaining national standards as a community accomplishment from which political gain can be derived. In much the same way rapid progress towards such standards can also engender a certain sense of satisfaction and pride.

Finally standards can be used as bargaining points. They are what the 'ideal' community should achieve (as a minimum according to experts). As such they can be held up for comparison with other activities when it comes to the allocation of resources. If there is a noticeable shortfall in resources when compared to the standard it then becomes easier to persuade people that additional resources should be moved in a particular direction.

Within a general planning context it is very easy to understand why Gold states that standards can take on a role well beyond the minimum guidelines for which they were initially established. What Gold fails to stress is the importance of replication of the standards approach, in that repetition over an extended period tends to act as a reinforcing influence of the standard. From a historical perspective it is possible that both a lack of knowledge about children's recreational requirements and prejudice on behalf of parks designers influenced a staid approach to the provision of children's playspace. The need for expediency, and the legitimisation of the standards by national organisations may have been secondary factors in the implementation of the standards.

The early development of parks in the United States and Britain (Chapter 4) which resulted during the industrial revolution were primarily aesthetic in nature. The Olmstead inspired landscape architecture school of thought which dominated parks design and management in the United States developed separately from the recreational movement. The professional sector of landscape architects perpetuated itself for 40 years (1860 to 1900), with the assistance of the universities, without having any measurable external pressure placed upon it for inclusion of recreational areas. The success of the recreation lobby at the turn of the twentieth century may have proved to be more of an irritation to the parks establishment than anything else. Given the landscape architects' major thrust of aesthetics, a concern for the beauty of the passive recreation environment, the quickest method of dealing with the requirement to provide for children's recreation may have been to adopt a standards approach.

It would appear from articles such as Gilbert Clegg's *Playground Planning and Layout* that landscape designers in 1936 did not pay a great deal of attention to play space quality once land had been allocated.

The plans were generally based upon principles such as:

"(1) to get maximum use from the land available, (2) to produce an attractive playground viewed from within and without, (3) to simplify the problems of supervision and leadership, (4) to prevent accidents by careful segregation of activities, (5) to keep operation costs low and (6) to keep original construction costs low" (Gold, 1973, 187).

To this list in 1947, Butler (1947) added convenience of people using the area. Rutledge (1971), an Associate Professor in Landscape Architecture, when discussing the anatomy of parks emphasised these same points. This indicated that the advancement of accepting broader issues from the recreationalist's school of thought still had a considerable distance to go in 1971 before gaining acceptance.

A further perspective on the importance of recreation within parks can be gauged from the formation of professional public open space organisations.

"It was being realised that parks management was a specialised profession and required a man fully trained and capable. The British Association of Superintendents of Parks and Reserves was formed in 1920. This was followed by a similar body in the United States of America in 1921." (Goodwin and Jellyman, 1984, 11).

The emphasis, intentional or unintentional, remained firmly focused upon the aesthetic and horticultural requirements of park space, with the area of recreation not being mentioned within the new associations' names.

Thus, the formal definition of standards on play areas by key organisations and the institutionalisation of standards as a component of urban planning extended further the social application of ideas about children's playspace. While the origins of the particular categories, child and play, may have been fading, the ideas still retained potency and attracted a moderate degree of support from the landscape design school. The ideas and practices, were moreover, eminently transportable. In the next five chapters, the application and modification of the 'principles and practice' pertaining to children's play are explored with reference to the New Zealand experience.

## CHAPTER 6

INHERITANCE WITHOUT INNOVATION - EARLY YEARS IN  
THE NEW ZEALAND CHILDREN'S RECREATION EXPERIENCE

## A British heritage

The land settlement procedures and practices which saw the establishment of towns in New Zealand were largely of British origin. Given the newness of the environmental setting the central and local politicians were able to incorporate within their visions of the landscape the parks and recreation concepts which had emerged from the period of early industrialisation. David Tannock in presenting the 1941 Banks Lecture (at the Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture Conference) placed this planning phase into a recreation context:

"Most cities and towns in New Zealand were planned in Britain before any settlement took place, and the town planners of those days showed great judgement, enlightenment and foresight in reserving areas for various purposes. These were the church, education, municipal endowments, parks, gardens and recreation grounds" (Goodwin and Jellyman, 1984, 8).

These developments were varied; Auckland had a domain and park, Christchurch a park, gardens and squares and Wellington had a town belt. Even smaller settlements included park space; New Plymouth had what was to become Pukekura Park, and in 1876, 340 acres was designated as public park, recreation ground and botanical gardens in Palmerston North, later to become the Esplanade.

The last mentioned of these parks, the Esplanade, was not originally contained within the town plan, but provided by an Act of Parliament, the 'Establishment of Parks', which sought to continue the provision of open space. While these parks provided the foundations from which public children's recreation would emerge, their creation was not immediate. The role of children and play was destined to evolve on similar patterns to those established in Britain; play was first in the street, later in the school yard, and eventually in publicly provided recreation areas.

Early settlers in New Zealand were faced with a variety of hardships and children had to adapt to a new environment along with their elders. The provision for childrens' recreation was not of high priority.

"Firstly in a pioneering settlement children were an economic asset. They were often left with little spare time to play. Secondly, when they did have spare time, they tended to use it (especially the boys) in exploring and experimenting with the wildlife and adventures offered by the natural environment ... Thirdly, as there was no tradition of play, no established hamlet 'greens', nor regular village sports, children had to learn their play habits as best they could" (Sutton-Smith, 1953, 412).

As settlements became established there was an increased provision of schools. These schools usually had land associated with them on which games could be played.

"Most teachers looked at the playground negatively or indifferently, but the arrival of gymnastic apparatus, cadet drill, physical training and playground supervision gradually forced teachers to take a more positive approach" (Sutton-Smith, 1981, 176).

Education was to foster children's play in New Zealand throughout the late nineteenth century. What was found in the school yard as equipment, was later to find its way into public open space as more emphasis was to be placed upon park development. This was not, however, to take place until the 1920's.

Whereas provision of public play space was noticeably a national political issue in the industrial settings of both the United States and Britain, the same could not be said for New Zealand. The early twentieth century settlers in New Zealand faced less urban population pressures than Britain; vacant lots still existed within boroughs, and traffic levels were not as high. Given these factors politicians focused their attentions on other concerns. Politically New Zealand was also young. Much of the legislation at the turn of the century reflected what was occurring in Britain with politicians following Britain's legislative examples. Although Britain was making legislative motions regarding the provision of open space the direction was somewhat indecisive. This was reflected in the New Zealand legislation. While some cities were providing recreation space and opportunities for children, legislation such as the 1920 Municipal Corporations Act failed to recognise the area at all. The major legislative breakthrough came in 1926 with the introduction of the Town Planning Act. Contained in an appended schedule was the first documented legislative provision for children's playgrounds in New Zealand. Like the British legislation of 1904 to 1910 it reflected an enabling stance rather than a directive to provide for children's recreation.

### Local authorities - the forefront of children's recreation

Local authorities did not wait to be motivated by central government legislators when it came to the public provision of children's play space. Rather, children's playgrounds were a response to a changing professional and urban environment. Parks had, prior to the 1900's been largely under the supervision of caretakers, but the employment of superintendents (or curators) in the early twentieth century saw a higher degree of professionalism enter this area of local authority management. These individuals tended to be more aware of the international advances in parks administration and in children's recreation. They, in particular, were prepared to follow overseas leads and in doing so effectively pre-empted the need for legislation to promote development of children's playspace within parks. Along with this 'professional' change, the townscape was also altering. The streets which had once been the haven of play were seeing an increase in automobile traffic, and the once vacant lots were being occupied. Economic progress was seen, in particular by parks superintendents, to be closing in on the traditional play environments of the young. Tannock summarised the feelings of both Mackenzie (1936) and Anderson (1940) in saying

"In the early days, there were numbers of empty sections in the towns; the streets were comparatively safe and, with the imaginative and inventiveness genius of youth, children could find lots of opportunities for play. Now these sections are built on and, with the advent of motor cars and trucks, the streets are no longer safe, therefore other provisions have had to be made. It is natural for a child to play, and a safe convenient playground is its right" (Goodwin and Jellyman, 1984, 9).



Anderson was particularly strong in his opinion, perceiving that the provision of children's recreation had been accepted by local authorities in response to increasing pressures of a capitalist society,

"a responsibility imposed upon it chiefly by those who use the streets for fast traffic and private gain, as well as by those who profit from crowding buildings too closely on the land (Anderson, 1940, 2).

Other reasons for supporting the construction of playgrounds were also offered. Mackenzie cited that in areas where playgrounds had been built a 50 percent drop in the numbers of children appearing before juvenile courts was recorded (Mackenzie, 1936). While this is unsubstantiated by any other reports of the time, such a statement made to a meeting of parks superintendents may have influenced decisions to speed up construction of children's playgrounds.

These writings of the 1930's and 1940's frequently concentrating on roads and safety, underplay the earlier strong individual contributions made by some superintendents in furthering the development of children's play space. Initial developments such as the construction of a sandpit in the Esplanade, Palmerston North appears to have heralded the beginnings of public children's playgrounds. Black, the curator for parks in the borough of Palmerston North reported to the Council on July 31, 1922 that in assessing modern playing areas for children he had visited both Auckland and New Plymouth. Auckland possessed at this time three playgrounds, and New Plymouth one. Based upon his observations he suggested that three playgrounds be established in Palmerston North. As for contents, he said,

"The most popular parts: swings (large and small), Rock-a- bye, Large Chute, Merry-go-round, and Seesaws in the order named. The Merry-go-round, small swings and seesaws are patronised chiefly by the smaller children, while the others are popular with the larger ones" (Black, 1922, 1).

The three playgrounds were subsequently established by the end of 1923. In addition to the somewhat standard equipment approved, Black also suggested that the area be asphalted in line with the hard surfacing used at both Auckland and New Plymouth's playgrounds, this being

"rendered necessary by reason of the number of children participating in the amusements" (Black, 1922, 2).

By the time the New Zealand Association of Gardens, Parks and Reserves Superintendents was formed in 1926 (following British and United States leads) the provision of recreational opportunities for children in many large towns and cities was already a reality. Their conference held in 1928 marked a major point in children's recreation. D. N. Harper of Timaru presented the first paper on children's playgrounds in New Zealand.

"Mr Harper introduced the discussion on children's playgrounds and their management. He was most emphatic about the importance of the various play devices being built of strong lasting materials and as near foolproof as possible. He also drew attention to the need for space around each of the devices, also the desirability of having a properly equipped playground within a quarter of a mile of every home and if possible away from the main thoroughfares. The need for expert supervision was mentioned by some of the delegates but it was considered better to put all available funds into acquiring suitable areas which need not be large" ( Harper, 1928, no pagination).

It is evident then that the parks superintendents had a reasonable understanding of what was being undertaken in recreation for children abroad. Concepts of equipment standards, location and supervision were all important components of the approach being adopted both in Britain and the United States. The acceptance of these ideas may also have been reinforced by the fact that the National Playing Fields Association had formulated standards only three years prior to the speech of Mr Harper, and that New Zealand parks at the time were closely aligned to developments in Britain. While there was recognition of space requirements, this was not specified, a preference at the time being given to actually acquiring spaces throughout the urban environment. J. G. Mackenzie, when addressing the Superintendents conference of 1936, did, however, allude more specifically to space requirements,

"while some grounds are only half an acre or less in extent, the ideal ground is two acres" (Mackenzie, 1936, no pagination).

Without reference to population it is difficult to establish if the area specified was a recognition of existing standards. However, it is interesting to note that 2 acres per 4000 children was the size recognised as being suitable for children's playspace by the Playground Committee of Washington in 1906 (Mergen, 1982), and subsequently related to the London standard of 30 square feet per child. Mackenzie's paper of 1936 was followed in 1940 by Anderson's, who actually specified the British and United States standards (Anderson, 1940). Anderson continued to say,

"I believe that our system of many small areas with easy accessibility is much more satisfactory" (Anderson, 1940, 2),

than the recommendation of the United States where 1 acre per 1000 people is the standard for children's playgrounds, and that no area should be under three and a half acres.

The reasons for not adhering to overseas standards was further explained by Henderson in *Children's Playgrounds and Playground Equipment*,

"Writers have gone to the extent of giving details of the amount of play space required by each individual in their various age groups. This information is useful as a basis for argument in favour of open spaces in built up areas where little attention has been given to the planning of recreation facilities ... However, we in New Zealand are faced with a different set of circumstances in that there are few children today who do not have at least some space surrounding their home where some form of passive recreation can be enjoyed" (Henderson, 1955, 10).

This recognition of guidelines implied by standards, modified by the situations which prevailed at different locations indicated some maturity on the part of the early superintendents. From Henderson's perspective standards were there to be used, perhaps as a form of political leverage to gain increased recreational areas where and when they were required.

As urbanisation increased in New Zealand, there was a rapid expansion in the numbers of suburban parks. The 1950's and early 1960's saw larger suburban parks. After this period neighbourhood parks, as part of the reserves contribution, became noticeably more prevalent.

### Elements making up the early New Zealand playground

Supervision had always been seen as a key ingredient in the success of early overseas playgrounds. This stemmed largely from the educational practices introduced by Froebel, and incorporated into the early playgrounds founded during the rise of the recreation movement. Supervision in the playgrounds of early New Zealand schools was, however, not taken on with the same enthusiasm.

"It would seem that playgrounds supervision arrived initially to protect the school property and to protect the children. But the former was probably reckoned the more important at the time" (Sutton-Smith, 1981, 187).

Despite the initial lack of enthusiasm exhibited on behalf of schools, early parks superintendents were supportive of providing supervision. Black saw supervision as necessary where equipment was in high use (Black, 1922). The 1928 conference delegates raised the issue of supervision also, but due to financial constraints considered it best to use available funds to construct play areas. New Zealand did not have the philanthropic groups which were present in the United States and Britain to assist in funding such supervisory positions. Fillmore indicated that

"... prior to the depression years of the 1930's many local authorities appointed sports officers to organise children's games as a part of the playground facilities" (Fillmore, 1965, 3).

However, given the comments previously mentioned by delegates at the 1928 conference, and those of Mackenzie (1936) the use of supervisors does not appear to have been widespread. This conclusion is reinforced by Anderson, who stated

"the broad principle that children's play in our town playgrounds requires guiding and directing, together with the provision of special equipment, is now fully recognised and the stumbling block to its universal application is the matter of expense ... so far as I know this phase of municipal activity has not been developed in New Zealand" (Anderson, 1940, 6).

It would appear that while the principle was accepted, supervision of playgrounds has never been a substantial part of playground development in New Zealand either prior to 1940 or since.

While supervision may not have had the same impact upon New Zealand playgrounds as overseas, the same cannot be said for either the style of equipment or the surfaces upon which they stood. The style of equipment and surfacings have endured largely unchanged from the inception of public playgrounds in New Zealand to almost the present day.

Black in forwarding his proposal for the development of playgrounds in Palmerston North referred to the equipment as 'amusements'. This paralleled the attitude of his British counterparts who saw the development of equipment as cheap public substitutes for the commercial amusement parks of the period (Mergen, 1982). The initial acceptance of that style of equipment, its perpetuation in early playgrounds, and the reporting of it in conference proceedings of New Zealand parks superintendents by Mackenzie (1936), Anderson (1940), Henderson (1955), Fillmore (1965) served to consolidate the range of equipment accepted as the norm for playgrounds. While Anderson provided some of the most enlightened discussion of playground development by a park's superintendent, his paper, *Children's Playgrounds* confirmed attitudes on what constituted 'proper' playground equipment,

"The following are recommended as giving the greatest efficiency for the least expenditure.

#### ITEMS

1. Swings. These may be erected in sets of 2 or 4 according to size of playground
2. Horizontal bars
3. See-saw
4. Slide
5. Sand pit
6. Mound (for King of Castle games)
7. Seats for parents or guardians
8. Drinking fountain; jet type if possible
9. Shade tree or trees; this is apart from landscape planting
10. Shelter shed" (Anderson, 1940, 3)

In defense of Anderson it must be indicated that he did also provide information of kindergarten type apparatus for playgrounds and an extensive list of alternative equipment (refer Appendix A), similar to those of Butler (in Gold, 1973). However, despite what one should assume to be his best intentions, the recommendation of 'giving the greatest efficiency for the least expenditure' appears to have been a major determinant of subsequent playground development, particularly in those areas which could be described as neighbourhood parks.

"... playgrounds were constructed ... following what we term today conventional lines, that is to say swings, slides, see-saws, etc. These were constructed as part of the main parks system, as an adjunct to major sports or pleasure facilities. Very little change has taken place since those days excepting the extension of the children's playground to neighbourhood parks" (Fillmore, 1965, 3).

New Zealand playgrounds also developed in line with Clegg's, Butler's and Rutledge's (Chapter 5) other comments regarding aesthetics, keeping operational costs low as well as minimizing initial construction costs. One of the major operational costs was that of maintaining turf

around equipment. From the earliest playgrounds in New Zealand either concrete (New Plymouth) or asphalt (Auckland) had been utilised to minimise wear. Superintendents advocated the use of

"a very fine beach gravel with a carpet of bitumen around each apparatus" (Mackenzie, 1936, 2),

as a means of reducing maintenance costs. The use of such hard surfaces was also justified as

"constant scraping of feet often gouges out small depressions which after rain become mudholes, and consequently children do not use the equipment or get severely reprimanded for the shocking state of their clothes on arrival home" (Henderson, 1955, 11).

The rise of aesthetics as a code in playground design can largely be traced to the fact that playground development into a park environment was controlled by horticulturists. Anderson considered that the physical needs of the child were not the only needs to be met. He considered that the presence of trees and shrubs would give children an appreciation of natural beauty and influence the development of character (Anderson, 1940). These thoughts were reiterated by Henderson,

"there should be sufficient space available to permit the planting of specimen trees. An endeavour should also be made to incorporate features of horticultural beauty in the form of shrubberies and perhaps a flower bed" (Henderson, 1955, 10).

As landscape architecture gained a more secure foothold in parks design and management through the 1950's and 1960's landscaping became a major facet of parks design. Fillmore in *Children's Playgrounds* showed considerably greater preoccupation with the aesthetics of neighbourhood



and formal park playgrounds than the function of such areas.

" ... the usual range of equipment should be provided ... the playground must not be allowed to detract from the amenities already provided" (Fillmore, 1965, 8).

Throughout the early development of New Zealand public playgrounds there have been close links with patterns established both in Britain and the United States. Earlier superintendents exhibited initiative in establishing playgrounds free of directive legislation. Developments since the initial spate of playground construction appears to have been less than innovative in terms of elaboration of the concept of children's playspace. Moreover the momentum of playground development was increasingly constrained by aesthetic sensitivities, debated and regularised by horticulturists charged with playground management. The environment was thus one in which any recall of the basic ideas about playgrounds for children would probably prompt a reaction towards more innovative design. Indeed, in New Zealand, an alternative to the longstanding playground form, the adventure playgrounds idea, gained currency as already discussed. The success of this development was not, however, assured, as the next chapter shows.

## CHAPTER 7

## AN ATTEMPTED ADVENTURE IN DESIGN

"So the children were given planks of wood and bricks and cement and all the tools they needed to build a new playground, and the architects sat down and watched and waited. After twenty five years the playground has still not been finished by the children, but the architects are still waiting in case one day it will be finished, and at last they will know what children really want" (Lambert, 1974, 9).

#### Adventure playgrounds - a recent innovation?

Adventure playgrounds are viewed as being a relatively new concept in the provision of public recreation for children. Professor Sorenson of Denmark is credited with conceiving the idea of junk playgrounds (subsequently referred to as adventure playgrounds) in 1931. The realisation of such a playground did, however, take a further twelve years, with the first being established in 1943 at Endrup, Denmark (Holme and Massie, 1970; Westland, 1985).

Sorenson argued that providing fixed equipment in an available space was not necessarily the best method of providing children with recreational opportunities. Rather than being a new concept, Sorenson was expanding upon a perspective on children's play springing from Rousseau,

"that play was the means by which children developed both understanding and character and that adults could best promote development by assisting the child's investigation of all things in his/her life experience" (Day, 1983, 9).

Gone were the restrictions of Froebel in directing play. Children were to be encouraged to explore their own environment in their own way.

There were several twentieth century forerunners to Sorenson including John Dewey, a leading American philosopher of the time, considered influential in the development of modern educational practices. Kraus (1971) notes

"Dewey felt that the most important kind of learning activity was that which involved freedom of choice, deliberate and self-planned involvement, and activity which involved mental initiative and intellectual self-reliance. He saw physical activities as not solely physical activities but also intellectual in quality, both in the learning and doing (Kraus, 1971, 250).

Another influential thinker was Jean Piaget whose research of the 1920's showed

"that the structure as well as the content of our minds must be developed by time and experience" (Sommerville, 1982, 212).

What Sorenson did achieve was placing these concepts into a playground situation where existing physical infrastructure was not acting as a constraint to activities undertaken by children using the playground.

It is of interest that twelve years elapsed between the original concept and the first adventure playground being constructed. It is unclear from literature if this delay was due to resistance of individuals or officials to the non-aesthetic appearance of such a

playground, or to Sorenson not formulating more specific plans beyond the concept. However, the circumstances surrounding the lack of availability of materials and the damages of war to property (Fillmore, 1965) would have meant the utilisation of available resources would have provided for a playground which did not conform to accepted aesthetic standards, and also allowed an excellent opportunity to test Sorenson's concept. The war extending two years beyond the original development of the playground, would also have permitted observations to be made as to whether the new form of playground met the user's requirements. A certain degree of success can be gauged by the idea subsequently spreading to Great Britain and other parts of Europe.

#### The direction of adventure playgrounds

The development of adventure playgrounds in Britain shares certain parallels with the evolution of playgrounds in the United States of the 1880's and 1890's. Like the American recreation movement which relied on such groups as the Massachusetts Emergency Hygiene Association and the Civic League, the British development of adventure playgrounds also relied upon well meaning individuals. But those involved in early British efforts were without the social standing of their earlier American counterparts.

"Nearly all the adventure playgrounds in this country were started and are run by autonomous groups of parents and others drawn mostly from the immediate neighbourhood" (Lady Allen, 1964, 9).

It was largely the influence of Lady Allen of Hurtwood that finally gave respectability and acceptance to the adventure playground movement. Her publication of **Design for Play and New Playgrounds** gained extensive recognition of the need for creative playgrounds, both at local and central government levels. The foreword of **New Playgrounds** was written by Eirene White, a member of the House of Commons, who attempted to justify the public provision of children's recreation.

"Our national failing is a lack of imagination. We all want to do our best for young people. But we need to think far harder than we do now to make up for the loss of the natural education available to a child ... his chances of constructive use is not good unless he is very persistent or has really resourceful parents or devoted school teachers prepared to give up much of their own free time. The child with none of these is the one most in need" (Lady Allen, 1964, 3).

Although there was an increasing degree of support, particularly in the 1960's, for adventure playgrounds very little headway was made against the more traditional playground. Joe Benjamin, a contemporary of Lady Allen and an advocate of adventure playgrounds, had become somewhat sceptical in assessing the general attitude towards such areas. He considered the situation as becoming one where the swings and slides of the engineers had been replaced by those of the scrap metal merchant (Ward, 1977).

In traditional playgrounds there has been a move towards incorporating physical structures of adventure playgrounds into the design of equipment. Larkin indicated that although there were many ways to swing on playgrounds only one method tended to be employed. He considered it necessary to investigate alternative ways of

providing this basic experience on the playground (Larkin, 1972). The emphasis was placed upon provision, not on supplying the materials for children to construct their own diversions, as originally envisaged in true adventure playgrounds.

A distinction must be drawn between the original concept of adventure playgrounds, and what many local authorities and educational institutions currently term adventure playgrounds. Many adventure playgrounds provided for children gained the title because they are constructed from more natural appearing materials (posts, wooden rails) and embody the physical structures built on the original adventure playgrounds, but without incorporating the opportunity for children to use their imagination to construct their own environment. Usually the designed playground features the traditional equipment, but as it is incorporated into an overall design, perhaps in conjunction with a physical structure such as a fort, the playground is perceived by advocates as providing a more stimulating environment (Hanan and Lucking, 1981).

Beverly Morris illustrates this approach succinctly in **Planning an Adventure Playground,**

"In choosing what equipment will be available in the playground, the planner must bear certain things in mind ... Water, sand, climbing frames, house like structures, places to hide and crawl through, swings slides ... should be included when selecting equipment" (Morris, 1972, 62).

### A New Zealand perspective on adventure playgrounds

New Zealand has not been completely devoid of true adventure playgrounds. Both the Wellington and Christchurch City Councils have provided such areas for children. The Newtown (Wellington) playground, being New Zealand's first fully supervised area has been the most frequently cited example. The initial playground was established in the early 1970's on land which was later to be developed for city housing. In 1976 the area was reduced to approximately one fifth of its original size, but it still provided room and facilities for children to create their own environment (Anon., 1976).

Despite the somewhat limited start for true adventure playgrounds, the Newtown example did prompt some local authorities to investigate incorporating such playgrounds within their cities. The District Scheme of Palmerston North, 1978, made, for example, specific reference to the Newtown adventure playground,

"Council accepts the desirability of establishing true adventure playgrounds based on the Newtown example in Wellington" (District Scheme of Palmerston North, 1978, 284).

No such development however has been undertaken. Further support for children to have opportunities to create their own environment have been given by the Play Unit of the New Zealand Council for Recreation and Sport (Densem, 1979).

The question arises, why, against the apparently successful background of an adventure playground (Newtown) and local and central government support, have adventure playgrounds not expanded into more communities? Bengtsson (1970), in evaluating the non-acceptance of adventure playgrounds in Europe, gives an insight which may also be helpful in understanding the New Zealand position. Adventure playgrounds overseas were considered a 'doctrine of salvation', but one requiring a radical conversion of conventional playgrounds, and a major departure from the orthodox philosophy surrounding children's playgrounds. Scepticism on the part of those responsible for the public provision of the playgrounds, and an unwillingness to implement such plans was seen as a major reason for the lack of success (Bengtsson, 1970). If this is compared with statements of Fillmore to the Superintendents of New Zealand parks in 1965, then certain similarities can be seen between the overseas and New Zealand situations.

"It was noted that children tended to play with odd pieces of junk on bombed out lots and it was from this observation that the adventure type of playground arose.

What was not realised of course was ... the child was making do with the only materials and areas available ... even when playing with junk, the child ... tries to achieve to the best of his ability, order out of chaos. The adventure type of playground soon loses its appeal when something of a higher standard is offered, and in the end it becomes a veritable rubbish dump and a blot on the landscape" (Fillmore, 1965, 2).

This is not an isolated opinion, and is continued to the present day,



"In New Zealand we are interested in aesthetics. We feel it is not pleasant to have what some would call a junk yard located next to residential areas. Health hazards and vandalism can be a problem. Maintenance needs are greater and in many cases adult supervision would be required. This rules adventure playgrounds out as far as John Bolton [Director of Palmerston North Parks and Recreation Department] is concerned. They are a better activity for backyards" (Saunders, 1986).

Given that parks directors are ultimately responsible for what is included within parks it is not surprising that if these attitudes dominate their thinking then the opportunity for creative play is not incorporated into public playgrounds.

Fillmore, rather than allowing for children to use their own imagination gave a range of equipment alternatives for those contemplating planning a playground. From Rhodesian examples he suggested concrete trains and submarines, from Los Angeles octopus and sea monsters sculptured in cement along with conventional equipment. The emphasis appears to have been placed on low maintenance costs rather than creativity, and of maintaining the aesthetic environment (Fillmore, 1965). It would, however, be possible to question the aesthetic qualities of some of the suggested concrete structures. The 1960's and 1970's did see several developments along the lines suggested by Fillmore at Kowhai Park, Wanganui; Fantasyland, Hastings; and Kawaroa Park, New Plymouth; however, the development of these theme parks did not supplant traditional parks or the New Zealand style adventure playgrounds. An attempt to include fantasy and futuristic equipment in the Esplanade, Palmerston North was rejected by the Park's Director, who stated that

"from an aesthetic point of view it is most undesirable" (Bolton, 1979, 1).

### New Zealand's adventure playground debate

The seminar *Playgrounds in the Community* in 1971 held at Lincoln College provided a forum at which the subject of adventure playgrounds was discussed. The seminar sought to draw together those actively concerned with playgrounds including providers from local authorities, designers, and other organisational groups from education and health. From the papers, views on adventure playgrounds could be roughly divided into two groupings. The first group consisted of those who could exercise the greatest degree of control over the nature of playgrounds, the parks administrators, and to a certain extent by those involved in training for parks administrators. Their major concerns lay with the consideration of aesthetics, maintenance and costs,

"quality is important when it comes to public money being spent ... a quality article, a stainless steel slide against one that will wear out" (Taylor, 1972, 89),

and

"Many of our playgrounds are sited on valuable land in residential areas ... why should a childrens playground not be pleasant to look upon, easy to maintain and become more lovely as the years go by?" (Henderson, 1972, 70).

The above quotes are typical of this groups concerns. These attitudes appear to be firmly associated with the horticultural perspective from which these people viewed children's playgrounds.

In contrast, the second group, consisting of those concerned with the development of children from an educational or health perspective tended to emphasise the need for latitude in the choice of activity for children. Smithells from the Department of Physical Education, Otago University, encapsulated this notion in his paper when criticising the high degree of rigid physical form in children's playgrounds,

"we have got to leave the imagining to the child ... we are doing the imagining for the child instead of letting the child imagine ... your imagination projects on to them what you want them to be. If you fix them by making them Goofy [the Disney character] ... then you do not imagine them as anything else because it has all been fixed" (Smithells, 1972, 22).

Although many connected with children's playground design today would state that their structured adventure playgrounds do provide scope for imagination on the part of the child, it would be wise to look at overseas opinions before committing any firm judgement. Wuellner (1979) in discussing more traditional children's playground design observed that the intended purpose of equipment was not always correlated to its actual use.

"Walking up and down slides, climbing onto any aspect of playground apparatus that allowed a grip or foothold and rough housing were evident on the indepth investigation" (Wuellner, 1979, 5).

This leads to a view that perhaps there is scope for imagination in this form of playground, or that the equipment, although not fulfilling its designed use does still possess some function.

Bengtsson supports the idea that many playgrounds once constructed fail to adequately entice children to play.

"Many playgrounds are most popular when they are under construction, when there are still bits of wood and mounds of earth all over the place. When it is finally finished the children's interest often wanes. The play equipment is soon explored, and planned play activities are a diminishing enticement if the possibility of variations are limited" (Bengtsson, 1970, 156).

Irrespective of whether or not true adventure playgrounds are further established in New Zealand, it is clear that they have made some impact on physical form taken within the playground. An important question remains to be answered. Are there aspects inherent within the extant ideas and practices of playground design that may constrain in other ways the scope for children's play in public space?

## CHAPTER 8

### A SAFE NEW ZEALAND?

#### The two faces of playground safety

Might safety determine the development of a playground? Broadly speaking local authorities examine this question from one of two perspectives. The first perspective emphasises one of concern for the child, an attempt to minimise the risk to which the child is at when playing; the second perspective is one of also minimises risk, but in this case it is risk to the supplier of the recreational opportunity - the risk of liability.

#### Safety in the traditional playground

Within all playground design, from those conceived in Boston to the playgrounds being built today there has always been concern over safety. Joseph Lee identified problems such as bullying on the Boston local authority playgrounds, compared with those run by the Massachusetts Emergency Hygiene Association which were supervised, and concluded that for the children's safety supervision of playgrounds was necessary (Dickason, 1983). In addition the supervisors provided recreation programmes and ensured the safe use of the equipment.

The early playgrounds of New Zealand schools were also supervised, although Sutton-Smith considered the supervision for safety only secondary to those of safeguarding the school's property (Sutton-Smith, 1981). Subsequently to this the parks administrators who controlled playgrounds also considered it desirable to have supervisors, but given the restricted finance available this never eventuated. This restriction in money available to develop playgrounds and maintain them may have attributed to many of the problems that are perceived as safety hazards today.

As previously mentioned the design of equipment of the early New Zealand playgrounds was based upon overseas practices. These were frequently adaptations of commercial equipment which may have been inappropriate in playgrounds without adequate supervision. A common practice in the construction of these playgrounds was to cover the surface in a paving of either asphalt or concrete to reduce maintenance.

Given the type of equipment, generally robust in nature, and the surface upon which the equipment was placed, there was always the possibility of injury from falls or by being struck by equipment. Early attitudes focused attention on the liability perspective. Mackenzie was concerned with accidents which arose from faulty equipment, and he advised that a comprehensive accident policy covering playgrounds and recreation areas should be taken out by all local authorities (Mackenzie, 1936).

The first major public attack on playground safety in New Zealand occurred in 1962. The debate on playground safety was fuelled by the death of a child struck by an aeroplane swing which hit him in a manner akin to a battering ram (Evening Post 14/12/1962). The first modification of playgrounds came in the form of removing equipment likely to inflict accidents of this nature. Action in some cases was swift, with for instance the Palmerston North City Council passing a resolution the same month to dismantle the lullaby swing in Papaeoia Park.

The major controversy of the 1960's regarding safety did not, however, originate from publicly provided playgrounds, but from school playgrounds in the Christchurch area. Under a heading *Injuries from playground Equipment too Numerous* (The Times 27/2/1963) it was noted that in one afternoon six children had been admitted to Christchurch hospital after sustaining injuries from playing on monkey bars and jungle gyms. Dr Roysmith, representing the hospital, indicated concern that the apparatus were positioned over hard surfaces (i.e. concrete or asphalt) and this contributed to the severity of the accidents. The Times a week later ran an editorial *The Trial of the Jungle Gym*.

"It seems to us, however, that children have a real need for such devices as the modern playground affords to help them develop confidence, physical adroitness and sense of balance. If they are shielded from all risk in childhood play, they will be less equipped to meet the situations of adult life when bones are more brittle and consequences of mishap more serious. The jungle gym is on trial. Let's hope its judges bear in mind that, to a very great extent, the risk of the playground are an investment" (Editorial, The Times, 6/3/1963).

Unlike the lullaby and areoplane swings, the jungle gyms remained in the playgrounds. What did occur, however, was an increased awareness of the dangers present within the playground environment.

#### Early safety standards - a safeguard against liability

At the same time as New Zealand was experiencing an upsurge in the interest of playground safety, the first safety standards for playground equipment were being developed in Britain. The British Standard 3178: Playground Equipment for Parks aimed

"first to specify certain features which are necessary if outdoor equipment is to stand up to exposure for a reasonable period of time, and to recommend the adoption of a controlled maintenance routine: secondly to set a general standard of construction to secure reasonable strength and thirdly to specify the details necessary if the apparatus is to be pleasant to use" (Calvert, 1972, 65).

These standards appear to have been designed specifically to reduce situations in which those providing public playgrounds for children would be liable for negligence.

The standards, whether they were intended or not, reinforced the idea that standardised traditional equipment was best suited to children's playgrounds. Children attempting to build their own playgrounds would not meet the standards required, largely due to the materials and construction methods. But who was to say the physical structures were unsafe? The standards were able to engender, along with other preconceived prejudices, a phobia regarding the safety of true adventure playgrounds. Lady Allen countered this by stating



"Fear of accidents is another argument used against them ... In all the ten years' experiment in this country there has been nothing more serious than cuts and bruises and no parent has ever made a claim. Children will get damaged whatever they are doing ... and many serious accidents happen when, because of boredom they play monkey tricks on the fixed equipment of orthodox playgrounds. (Lady Allen, 1964, 23).

Lady Allen's views were supported by Bengtsson, who believed that children took care so long as they could survey the situation and estimate the consequences of their action. He considered that it was also the simple well known activities, when the tempo was high and caution became minimal that produced conditions in which accidents were likely to occur (Bengtsson, 1970).

Despite these counter arguments of Lady Allen and Bengtsson, the fear of liability through the erection of non-standard structures has probably contributed to the limitations of development of true adventure playgrounds, but perhaps not as greatly as their perceived unaesthetic appearance. Instead of the true adventure playground, the highly physically structured, pre-built adventure playground has dominated recent playground developments. Designers of these playgrounds can exercise control over position, method of construction and materials in such a way as to conform with structural safety requirements, which can be defended in a court of law.

Geoffrey Powell, a British architect summarised this position,

"The architect finds himself having to plan a playground with the intention of controlling the children rather than widening and extending the possibilities of play ... The architect is forced to include those elements whose appearance can be controlled - nothing moveable is allowed - everything is static. There is a contrast between playgrounds invented by adults for children and those invented by children (Lady Allen, 1964, 7).

There is however one element that may be left to the architect to manipulate, that is the element of risk involved. The role of risk is closely linked with the liability. Bengtsson agrees with the editorial of The Times (6/3/1963) that risk was a necessary element to reduce the chances of future liability.

"Risk is a stimulus, and should be present in some form even in the playground; otherwise the child chooses somewhere else for its play and for taking risks - places which are perhaps truly risky" (Bengtsson, 1970, 192).

This view was apparently shared by the members of the Taranaki Education Board who for the afore mentioned reason encouraged the incorporation of risk into the five structured adventure playgrounds (Figure 8-1) that Brian Chong, a New Plymouth architect, designed. These were subsequently built at the five primary schools (Brian Chong, pers. comm.).

By comparison a recent visit to California public playgrounds (August 1986) revealed the removal of most elements which could be considered remotely dangerous and make the local authority liable for damages.

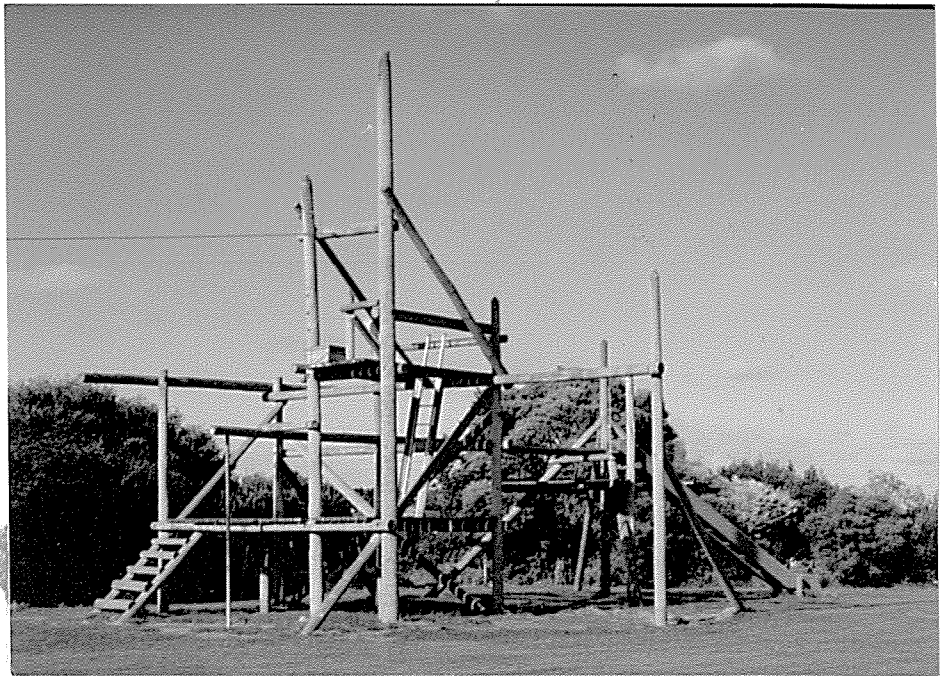


Fig. 8-1 Structured Adventure Playground,  
Westtown School, New Plymouth

This view is supported by van der Smissen (1985) who in a recent paper on trends in personal injury suits stated,

"Personal injury suits against recreation enterprises and parks increasingly focus on the professional who is responsible for preventing situations or conditions that give rise to injury or for managing the corporate risk that injuries would occur" (van der Smissen, 1985, 57).

The American situation of personal suit is not new,

"Lady Margorie Allen complained that American playgrounds were built for insurance companies" (Ward, 1977, 86).

Seymour Gold, Professor of Environmental Planning, Davis, California, an eminent spokesperson on playground was even more direct,

"We consider the costs instead of the benefits, liability instead of safe design, and structural instead of performance standards for equipment" (Gold, 1986, 10).

These attitudes are understandable given the societal context in which they were made. Risk as an element will be determined ultimately by the extent of liability which the provider of the playground faces. The question of liability and its influence on park users was addressed in 1982 by the Honourable Justice Kennedy, Judge of the Supreme Court of Western Australia,

"... It is essential to strike a balance, more and more frequently, authorities are being encouraged to extend recreational facilities and amenities and in the interest of the public they have done so. But, frequently, ... with some degree of risk. Action can be readily inhibited, notwithstanding insurance, if the slightest chance of mishap suffice to attract liability. The magnitude of risk must be weighed against the cost and inconvenience of the precautions or measures necessary to eliminate or minimise risk.

Too great a solicitude for the user of the parks may, in the long term, be to the prejudice of the public. On the one hand it may lead to a reluctance to provide facilities and amenities of a particular type. On the other hand, it may lead to attempts by authorities to exclude by express contract with the user, any liability for injuries sustained in the use of the park" (Kennedy, 1982, 20).

If in New Zealand the liability of the provider is increased, then there will be an inverse response in the amount of risk incorporated, as is the case in the United States.

#### Recent trends in safety

Given that the majority of local authorities making available children's play equipment in public parks construct them to a standard where faulty equipment should not occur, emphasis in safety has shifted towards the surface upon which the equipment stands. The reason for this shift is logical upon analysing available injury figures. Findings of the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission (Gold, 1986) indicated that only approximately five percent of playground accidents treated in United States emergency rooms were as a result of equipment failure. By comparison falls to paved or hard surface constituted 58 percent of all injuries treated, and a disproportionately high number of these were severe. While the use of protective surfaces (sand, wood chips or gravel) may have had little effect on the number of injuries, it was considered that they may have reduced their severity (Beckwith, 1982; Gold, 1986).

New Zealand playground accidents statistics are incomplete. Accident Compensation Corporation figures for 1980/81 indicated that 6 percent of all children's accidents (0.5 percent of all accidents) reported were as a result of playground mishaps. These figures fail to

reveal the true position. Understatement of accidents is due to two factors. Firstly, as they occur to children, who are not wage earners, many are not reported as there is no loss of income. Secondly, the bulk billing practices of general practitioners fails to detail minor accidents which do not require hospitalisation (Benis, 1983). Other statistics available for playground accidents are either restricted to particular geographic regions or types of playground. A survey of accident and emergency patients at Waikato Hospital in 1979 revealed 264 accidents could be attributed to playground falls (McRae and Topping, 1982). A subsequent study in March 1982, at the same hospital, indicated that there were 21 fall injuries, eleven of which caused fractures (Benis, 1983). Langley et. al. (1981), and Langley and Crosando (1982) in examining school accidents found that falls amounted for a significant portion of total accidents, and that approximately half of the cases resulted in fractures. The number of fracture cases appears largely responsible for the direction that framing of standards has taken, with respect to installing safety surface beneath play equipment in New Zealand playgrounds.

The idea of using protective surfaces is not new to New Zealand. Henderson reported the experimental use of synthetics on British playgrounds as early as 1955 (Henderson, 1955). However, extensive use of such surfaces was slow to be accepted. The comments of Dr Roysmith, and controversy regarding jungle gyms did foreshadow some interest shown by local groups in New Zealand. In 1965, for instance, the Palmerston City Council Reserves Committee recommended that softer surfaces be placed under play equipment, and asked the Director of parks at the time to investigate the matter (Minutes to the P.N.C.C. Reserves Committee, 11/11/1965). No further action was taken at this time.

Calvert in 1971 presented a paper entitled **Problems of Equipment Design** to the playground seminar held at Lincoln. His comments, some five years prior to the American studies reached similar conclusion regarding falls on to hard surfaces,

"... doctors agree that the important factor when falling ... is not so much the surface as how a child falls. Obviously the hardness of the surface will play a part in the severity of the injury" (Calvert, 1972, 67).

Calvert continued to discuss alternative options for surfaces: tan bark was difficult to obtain, sand was unhygienic and may conceal broken glass, and synthetic surfaces were six times the price of concrete, and also subject to vandalism. Against this background he concluded that asphalt and concrete were likely to remain as the commonly used surface under play equipment.

In Palmerston North it was not until 1976 that the safety of concrete under play equipment was questioned again. However, this does not appear untypical of New Zealand as a whole. The question was raised in Palmerston North as a result of a fatality; a child fell from a slide and died of head injuries. Following the death the local paper reported the Director of Parks as saying that alternative bases were being considered (Evening Standard, 10/2/1976). The immediate remedy was the addition of a safety rail. The concrete on to which the boy fell remained in place until the slide was removed in December 1986.

The Director re-iterated Calvert's views at the May meeting of the Recreation and Reserves Committee (4/5/1976) but suggested that synthetic surfaces would give the best long term solution. He proposed

an experiment be conducted comparing sawdust and a synthetic surface. The Committee, however, later in the month passed a resolution that sawdust not be used due to the health hazard associated with it (17/5/1976).

In line with slow progress made thus far, it was not until October 1982 that the Palmerston North City Council approved the idea of using the Australian safety standards for the construction and siting of childrens play equipment, and a further two years before an artificial surface was laid under swings in the Esplanade (Evening Standard, 26/9/1984). Finally on 20 October 1985 the Director of Parks and Recreation presented a report to council stating that the use of concrete and bitumen as a surfacing material under play equipment should be discouraged.

The rate of progress achieved by the Palmerston North City Council should not be taken as an indictment of their slowness to react to safety issues, but rather as an indication of deep seated attitudes in New Zealand society as a whole. Progress was not achieved elsewhere at a much faster rate, although there were prior uses of synthetic materials in both Christchurch and Wellington (Morgan ,1985) in the early 1980's.

The culmination of this attitude towards surfacing in particular is documented in the New Zealand Standard 5828: Part 1 1986, Specifications for Playgrounds and Playground Equipment. Parts 2 and 3 are



"Declarations of Australian Standards dealing respectively with materials for playground equipment and safe design of playground equipment" (NZS 5828, 1986, p 4).

Whether the standards would have eventuated at this stage , or would have been still developing is an interesting question. Like most decisions on safety, they tend to eventuate from catastrophe. The influence of David Lange (then Deputy Leader of the Opposition) writing to the Accident Compensation Commission after a constituent fell in a playground fracturing his skull (Saunders, 1986) in all probability hastened the process.

#### Possible implications of the application of standards to New Zealand playgrounds

Most proponents of safety in children's playgrounds would consider that the standards lead to modifications in playgrounds which reduce the possibility of severe injury. It is very difficult to deny that if applied the standards should succeed in achieving this objective. But with what implications?

Close examination of the standards reveals only one reference to child created play free from adult imposed physical structures. Part 1, Section 105.5 (n) states,

"In supervised playgrounds where activities such as crafts or play requiring portable equipment are possible, a suitable lockup storage area should be provided" (NZS 5828, 1986, 10),

and this in itself cannot be seen to allow a great deal of scope for children to construct their own environment. The remainder of the section on design of the playground focuses attention on adult provided

features. In this sense the standards do not modify, but reinforce the established position of an adult provided playground for children.

The standards also remove the inclusion of risk as a design element to extend children in their play. This is an area where Education Boards have been particularly active with regard to the construction of adventure playgrounds. One Board review discusses the issues

"Most of the Wanganui Education Board's 154 primary schools have adventure playground-type apparatus. Many seem unlikely to comply with new safety guidelines laid down by the Standards Association. ... He [Wayne Costello, the Board's General Manager] said schools would not be asked to stop using playground equipment ... By and large we are aware of what apparatus is being used by schools ... we feel comfortable that there's no danger" (Gardiner, 1986, 1).

Given that many of these playgrounds do not meet the standards, it is possible to question whether the standards are required, or if any notice will be paid to them - at least currently by some governing bodies.

Some local authorities, however, have responded to the call for safer playgrounds. Palmerston North, for example, have incorporated soft surfaces in all four of their most recent playgrounds in an attempt to meet the standards objectives.

Will playground safety standards continue to have a major effect upon playground design? The answer to this is most probably yes. But these same standards will have a range of effects. Modifications of surfacing materials will be the first obvious effect, hopefully reducing the severity of accidents. Secondly the equipment erected will be safer in terms of construction. These are both positive effects of safety standards. It is possible nevertheless that there will also be negative

effects. Safety standards are likely to restrict the range of developments that administering bodies will entertain. It will be easier to conform to the safety standards by designing essentially traditional equipment, for that is what the current standards are based upon. The problem associated with this scenario is that playgrounds will remain relatively uniform in nature, possibly excluding other playground forms which may be better suited to particular community situations.

## CHAPTER 9

## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN PLAYGROUND PLANNING

The 1960's overseas, and the 1970's in New Zealand saw attempts to extend public participation in the planning process. Herbert Gans commented that the effectiveness of city planning in the 1960's was reduced because it was based upon outmoded nineteenth century ideals of efficiency, order and beauty couched within a small town framework of white middle-class values (Gans, 1968). He considered that planning should be user orientated and that planners should find out and take account of people's wants and needs rather than following their own preferences.

The planning of parks, and children's recreation within those areas in particular were subject to the same types of forces Gans saw as shaping planning in general. The shape and form playgrounds took was autocratically decided upon by park administrators. The over-riding criteria were largely horticultural and aesthetic in nature. Equality in spatial distribution and uniformity in playground content served to overcome community dissention in the allocation of resources, for these areas then related to accepted standards. The end result was a high degree of conformity in what was presented to the child in the form of a public playground.

The dissatisfaction felt by Gans, and other authors such as Harvey (1973) and Pahl (1975) slowly filtered through into the area of recreation planning to a stage now where public participation in

planning decisions is becoming both more common and accepted. Two aspects are pertinent. What form does the participation take? And how do planners react to public participation?

### Public participation - a theoretical perspective

Public participation can be defined in several ways depending upon who's perspective one is describing it from, and the extent to which the public voice is heard and acted upon. Kirk (1980) in *Urban Planning in a Capitalist Society* considered six accepted definitions of participation which ranged from tokenism to radical power sharing:

1. participation as receiving benefits - the local authority informs citizens of an intended course of action;
2. participation as carrying out tasks - paid or voluntary work is undertaken under the control and guidance of a voluntary agency;
3. participation as the dissolution of organised opposition - by co-opting central figures of the opposition the situation becomes defused;
4. participation as attention to consumer demands - the participant is part of a market research approach, they give information but do not make decisions;
5. participation in the decision making process - the citizen becomes a policy maker or voter on the decision being made, frequently as a result of local group pressure;
6. participation as grassroots radicalism - organisations try to force the decision makers to accept their ideas and put them in place as policy (Kirk, 1980).

Within this broad conception of public participation there are several inherent problems. The first of these concerns planners. Are planners threatened by public participation? The more threatened then the less likely that the public will be provided with meaningful opportunities to participate. How do planners perceive public opinion? Is public participation to serve as only a resource information base with limited feedback or discussion with the public? If planners are not prepared to enter into meaningfully dialogue then the idea of public participation could be considered one of public relations.

"Whilst the word community has acquired a new elasticity the meaning of the word participation has been shrunk, so that it implies no more than publicity and public relations, with occasional forays into consultation (Hague, 1982, 230).

Philosophically three groups emerge with varying views on public participation in planning; pluralists, reformists, and marxists. The pluralists see public participation as the essence of democracy and a responsiveness to local interest. There is, however, a tendency to overlook the importance of economically strong groups and how they influence political decisions when dealing with this perspective. Reformists view public participation in terms of accountability and in controlling local officials. Kirk (1980) said of reformists, that they recognise inequalities and attempt to ameliorate them rather than address the problem. Finally Marxists consider public participation as tokenistic. They see a clear integration of politics and economics, and are more interested in the seizing of power than participating in what could be considered as meaningless dialogue. Dependent upon the perspective of the planner, the form which public participation takes will obviously vary.

The second issue deals with the resolution of conflict. If surveys or discussion are to serve as a means of gathering information how does one weight different interest group opinions, particular when their objectives may be very dissimilar? A planner's preconception of the problem may lead to a particular bias in interpretation, utililising one point of view to support his or her argument.

At the opposite end of the spectrum are the public. How knowledgeable are the participants? Does the means by which they are invited to paticipate constrain their input? This may be a reflection of how the local authority presents the problem. What do the public think they should or can contribute? How does the knowledge of existing alternatives constrain the expression of options they consider available? All or any of these questions raised can influence the quality of public participation.

Ryan (1979) and Schrijver (1980) expressed the same concerns when discussing the attempts by the Auckland Regional Authority to involve the public in the 'Current Issues - Proposed Policies' exercise. Public participation in this situation was seen as having involved only those skilled in reading planning documents, and in the main the public at large staying away (Schrijver, 1980).

This general lack of knowledge in one form or other has lead to the use of advocacy planning (Davidhoff, 1965; Peattie, 1968),

"... the ostensible goal of the advocate planner is through the use advocacy, ... to provide social change which will benefit those who are through a lack of education and technical sophistication particularly ill prepared to deal with the presentation of issues in a technical framework" (Mazziotti, 1982, 221).

This technique according to Schrijver (1980) has, however, been successfully used in other situations such as the involvement of the Maori community in drafting a regional scheme for Auckland, and, in his opinion, enabled planners to find useful models for participation within easy reach (Schrijver, 1980).

While advocacy planning is seen as desirable by Gold (1973), he considers that the recreation area will have difficulty in accepting such an approach due to strongly traditional attitudes (that focus upon activity analysis) which are present in the recreation movement at all levels.

Whether advocacy planning will provide the solutions required is also questionable according to Mazziotti,

"The bulk of planning literature concerned with advocacy fails to suggest new strategies to confront persistent social problems, continues to assume the necessity for gradualist or reform orientated solutions, and implies that the prime criteria for effectiveness must be the existing institutional setting" (Mazziotti, 1982, 223).

Against such a diverse background public participation in planning and decision making can not be seen as a simple situation. If any thread of commonality does exist, it is that planning decisions in general will be made against a background of what already exists, and in the majority of cases it will be the planners, not the users, who will define the limits to which public participation will occur.



### Public participation position in recreation planning

Stimulus for outdoor recreation research was largely provided by the United States Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission (ORRRC) in 1958. The Commission was responsible for the surveying of the recreation needs of the American nation and recommending policies which would ensure that these needs were met. While the Commission was directed to exclude the urban recreation resources from the scope of its study, the methods employed in data collection, mainly historical participation information, was to be utilised extensively in later urban research (Gold, 1973). At the same time that the ORRRC reports were being developed Butler (1967), indicated that local authorities were making plans of recreation areas available for the public to view prior to implementation. These initial steps in public participation could be considered largely tokenistic, due to the public having very little impact in the actual decision making process.

The 1970's saw public participation in recreation planning begin to adopt an increased role in the decision making process. Kraus, when discussing guidelines for park and recreation planning did not devote much space to the concept of participation, merely summarising the emerging attitude,

"Planning should reflect the needs and wishes of all citizens and should include them in data gathering and decision making processes" (Kraus, 1971, 439).

There was no mention of what type of data should be gathered, or at what level the public were to be involved in the making of decisions.

Peggy Miller, however in her book **Creative Outdoor Play Areas** gave a greater degree of direction,

"Planning should involve all those, at least on a representative basis, who will eventually be participants in, or affected by, the creative outdoor play area. This means youngsters as well as adults representing various interests should take part in planning and development; they should be meaningfully involved" (Miller, 1972, 100).

Miller envisaged a committee planning approach, the committee to consist of those who could open doors, those with a vision of what could be planned, and people to actually implement the plans. The committee was required to identify the needs and interests of the users. Much of this was to be undertaken by observing existing areas to establish a baseline from which to operate. Once the strengths and weaknesses had been established, then modifications could be implemented. Miller also saw a need to involve power people, leaders in the community, who could lend their weight to supporting proposals, and in doing so give a form of legitimisation to the process of public participation. The use of power people early in the process was as a hedge against projects foundering at a later stage due to a lack of support.

At one end of the public participation spectrum a situation was developing where the public was asked their views regarding activity participation, in accordance with the philosophy emanating from ORRRC type approaches; and at the other end, a form of advocacy planning involving people in making decisions as envisaged by Miller. From an administrative standpoint it was more expedient to follow a participation rate philosophy than a forum-debate philosophy, and as such the majority of early research into recreation has centred upon existing participation rates in activities.

### Recreation research in New Zealand

Among the earliest researchers in New Zealand was Peter Crawford, a research planner associated with the Palmerston North City Council. In 1970 he produced a report *The Family and Recreation* which was to be the fore-runner of similar reports produced by larger regional authorities in New Zealand. The report was developed from a survey which asked participants to list their recreational activities and membership of recreation organisations in Palmerston North (which were outside of the home environment). The survey was analysed by examining the number of activities engaged in by a range of age groups by sex. In his summary of individuals' participation in recreation Crawford stated,

"the ebb and flow of demand for and participation in recreation activities is illustrated ... " (Crawford, 1970, 22).

This statement illustrated the key dilemma of this type of research the confusion of demand with that of participation.

Crawford was far from being alone in the position he adopted of associating demand and participation. Reports of the Auckland Regional Authority (1971), Henderson and Stagpole (1974), Auckland Regional Authority (1973), Cardine and Field (1977), Pannett (1977), Robertson, Tubb, Edmonds and Hardy (1977), The South Auckland Recreational Planning Council (1981a, 1981b, 1981c, 1981d, 1981e), and Tait (1984) are all examples of where participation in activities was in some way construed to imply a demand for the activity.

The Auckland Regional Authority, which under its auspices has had the highest volume of recreational surveys undertaken by a local body group, is probably the most consistent at inferring demand from participation rates. In the major study Outdoor Recreation Chapter 2 began,

"This recreation demand survey was instigated because ... "  
(Auckland Regional Authority, 1973, 10),

and then implemented a participation based survey. A comparison was made with an identical survey carried out in Christchurch. The survey was designed among other things to gauge current demand, relative popularity, and evaluate major participation characteristics so that resource management policies might be designed for optimum allocation and development of facilities (Auckland Regional Authority, 1973).

Knetsch, a prominent American recreationalist, has an extremely negative view towards this planning based upon participation rates.

"The myth persists that somehow we are able to multiply population figures by recreation activity participation rates of some form and call it demand" (Knetsch, 1970, 131).

Demand in this case is not demand but consumption, which is related to the availability of opportunities. Knetsch uses an interesting example,

"It should not surprise us, for example that people in Colorado or Montreal ski in far greater numbers than people in Washington D.C. This difference does not by itself indicate differences in demand for skiing. The figures are the result of interaction between demand and supply factors" (Knetsch, 1970, 131).

What can be contended is that from participation surveys people will only demand what is currently available, and this will only serve to perpetuate any imbalance which may already exist.

Resource allocation using participation rates as guidelines, Knetsch contends, are popular as they appear right (support the status quo), are straight forward to collect and analyse, and give large numbers which appear as a democratic justification of what is supplied. His opinion is that they are wrong, provide poor planning guides and often pre-empt attempts to do something which would be of more use (Knetsch, 1970). Has research into children's playgrounds followed the same participation rate approach? If so, then what conclusions can be drawn?

One of the first major research works undertaken on New Zealand children's playgrounds involved a study of children's play activities in the Christchurch Botanic Gardens (Perry, 1972). The study was undertaken by psychology students from the University of Canterbury, and focused upon the use of standard types of play equipment and the degree of social interaction between children using the equipment. In the introduction to this study a modern playground was defined as a theme based playground which presented play opportunities in a different structured form, but did not change the function of the equipment. Statistical results from the Christchurch Botanic Garden Study were expressed in terms of the percentage of children who used the individual pieces of equipment and for various durations. In the results the following conclusion was drawn.

"The swings, roundabout and horse were preferred by the children and used for a longer time ... neither the child's age or sex made any difference on his preference for a particular piece of equipment ... also, boys and girls seemed to enjoy and use the equipment for the same length of time ... Why do young and old children play on the same equipment? Is it because of the natural exploratory instinct of children, or is it because the equipment is relatively safe for all age groups of children ... (Perry, 1972, 40-1).

In the light of Knetsch's comments it is possible to examine the results from another perspective. Given the limited range of activities available (swings, roundabout, horse, seesaw, slide and rails) it is distinctly possible that in a ten minute observation period that an active child will play on a number of these items. The fact that the child plays on them does not indicate that these are the items demanded in the playground, but the ones that can be used because the opportunity for consumption exists.

The Christchurch study, along with the comments of Larkin,

"How often have new brooms suggested that slides, swings and seesaws have no appeal ... The popularity of swings and slides was verified by recent surveys of playgrounds carried out by the New Zealand Institute of Parks and Recreation members (Larkin, 1972, 25)

do little other than reinforce what already exists. From a pluralist perspective such participation rate surveys provide an opportunity to gather statistical information that serves to maintain the status quo while appearing to be democratically arrived at.

Piesse (1972) was not satisfied with just observing children and noting participation rates. She considered that children should be asked their opinions regarding play equipment. This was a progressive step as earlier research had relied on adult views, and these it was thought might differ from a child's opinion.

"We cannot afford to make definitive statements based on little more than conjecture or our own vaguely remembered childhood. We need to know conclusively and we need to know now, before our playgrounds undergo drastic and perhaps senseless alterations in the name of modernisation and even in the name of the child" (Piesse, 1972, 3).

Piesse continued,

"our aim has been to go to the playgrounds, to study the children, ask them their opinion and in these ways form a basic framework from which we can design the best possible play equipment in the best possible environment, from the child's point of view" (Piesse, 1972, 3).

The problem with this and subsequent research is that a child's opinion, like an adults, is shaped by experience. Piesse conducted her research at a time period and in an environmental setting which saw a large degree of uniformity in playground provision, predominated by traditional playgrounds, with few theme or structured adventure playgrounds. Given the range of experiences available to the child, and a preconception that a public playground was a place which contained fixed play equipment the response of children would probably have been constrained by what already existed. By popular demand future playgrounds would then represent the features of existing playgrounds.

Public participation in playground development in  
Palmerston North

The first recorded public participation of children in the development of playgrounds in Palmerston North was in 1977. Children of the Ross Intermediate and Terrace End Schools were asked to establish what they would like in a play area in their district (Bolton, 1977). Over 400 ideas and/or plans were submitted, and these were referred to the departments landscape architect for consideration in designing the park.

The employment of a community recreation officer prompted further surveys of residents for their opinions regarding the development of neighbourhood parks: McLeod and Wrigley (1983), Wrigley (1984), and Wrigley (1986). A series of slightly different approaches were used in order to ascertain the best method for both involving the local community and obtaining information from them.

Anne McLeod initiated the first of these surveys in 1982 when it was proposed to redevelop Farnham Park. Due to a child falling through a fort floor and requiring hospitalisation as a result, there was opposition to play equipment, particularly the construction of another fort on the same site. Initially the recreation officer (McLeod) took parents from the community to other Palmerston North parks, and later a group of children from the community to the same parks, then asked them for their opinions on what the redeveloped playground should contain. The recreation officer then discussed the findings with the city landscape architect who prepared a plan. The plan did not conform with



the wishes expressed by the residents, the proposal contained two forts, whereas the initial discussions with the community had indicated that none be incorporated in the redevelopment.

The landscape architect's proposal as it stood carried more weight than the recreation officer's earlier suggestions. To counteract the proposal of the landscape architect (which reflected the current design pattern in other parks in the city) a survey of all residents was initiated with the assistance of a horticultural management class from Massey University. The survey consisted of three parts: the first part ascertained current usage or non usage of the park along with reasons; the second related to whether or not the plan proposal was acceptable and if items should be added or deleted; and finally whether there were any other comments the residents would like to make known to the Council.

The Farnham Park redevelopment met with general approval except for the fort concept, which as a result of the survey, was omitted. Equipment included on the park reflected other park equipment in Palmerston North.

The second survey undertaken concerned the redevelopment of Raleigh Street Reserve. The survey format was altered slightly to give current use of the playground by age group, reasons why different age groups within households did not use the reserve, gain indications of what would increase participation, data on reason and use of other parks in Palmerston North, and information on equipment children preferred playing on. As the respondents were mainly adult a visit for children

to parks was arranged to give them an opportunity to express their views on the equipment available at the other parks (Wrigley, 1984). The Savage Crescent Survey followed a similar pattern (Wrigley, 1986), though no visit for children was arranged because of a general lack of interest.

All surveys followed a similar approach, attempting to be democratic in the allocation of resources, and all, despite their objectives, suffered from the same problems. The three surveys were all conducted in state housing areas, and as such the participants were in the lower socio-economic group. There is strong possibility that education levels were not high, many residents had severe limitations on mobility (especially solo parents with young children and no vehicle), and there appeared to be a general preparedness to accept without question the resources which they thought could be allocated to them.

Opinions under these conditions were generally restricted to what they had seen within their particular locality. For example people in Raleigh Street considered a rotating drum an appropriate piece of equipment; Savage Crescent children favoured the idea of a fort structure and flying fox. Both of these examples are representative of residents selecting equipment from their nearest alternative playground.

The scope of the surveys had a definite bias towards equipment, yet many of the interesting ideas could be inferred from responses to other questions. The fact that responses to the question of non-use of the parks related to bullying by older children (a parallel with earlier playground problems of local authority parks in Boston) and the presence of stray dogs, may indicate that supervision might affect park use. In

some respects this view was substantiated by comments regarding rastafarians being present at Farnham Avenue. Far from being a disruptive element the group organised play activities for children, and many residents were sad to see authorities move them away from the area as they were seen as servicing the community. Despite these occurrences residents did not indicate that supervision or programmes were desired in their neighbourhood park. Was this a reflection that residents did not think such a service was a function of the local authority (particularly as it was not done elsewhere)? Possibly, supervision may not have been considered by residents as an alternative because the survey questionnaire did not specifically mention supervision of the playground as an option.

The tours of the parks, although they visited playgrounds of different styles, that is traditional, structured adventure and a physical fitness training course, only presented currently available options. By only exposing the children to existing ideas the response to questions such as what they would prefer in their playground was automatically directed towards maintaining the status quo.

Parents also reflected a status quo position with regard to equipment. The majority of adults favoured the incorporation of traditional items such as swings, slides, and seesaws. They frequently related their choice to the types of equipment their children currently played on while at parks, or what they themselves played on as children. Given that this was generally the only type of equipment available at the majority of parks, this too was a directed and somewhat predictable result.

These views are supported by Johnson (1984), who in investigating the relationships of children's idealised play environments and the design of play structures stated.

"First children tended to identify traditional play environments as forming part of their ideal.....the results suggest that interviewees may have been giving a conditioned or expected response. If this is the case, the use of children as experts in playground design may have some serious limitations" (Johnson, 1984, 27).

Democratically arrived at solutions via public participation in these situations can best be seen as a reflection of the existing environment.

Democratic opinion, will not necessarily be represented in the development of final plans. Attack on consensus positions can take two forms. One is where a conflict of interest occurs, and the other is the degree of the planner's acceptance of ideas forwarded in the public participation process.

An example of conflict and power associated with high socio-economic groups is illustrated in a report of McDiarmid and Thompson (1979). A Christchurch skating rink, which had been established several years, wished to open for longer hours, and gained high user support for this. However, the city had expanded, and the neighbourhood now consisted primarily of upper class housing. Residents of this area opposed extending the hours on the grounds that a bad element would be attracted to their neighbourhood. Although this contention was disputed by police the local authority bowed to the wishes of local residents. (McDiarmid and Thompson, 1979).

The Raleigh Street Reserve redevelopment survey (Wrigley, 1986) arrived at consensus opinions which for one reason or the other appear to have been overlooked in the implementation of the design. When the park had only three pieces of traditional equipment upon it a break dancing area was established. This, according to the survey, provided the main focus of interest on the park. One person, who objected to the platform, encouraged the council to have it removed. Several residents objected to its removal during the survey, as they considered that the platform performed an important social function in keeping local children closer to their homes at night. This point was cited in the report but not such development was introduced into the area.

In the same survey, very strong support was also made for the maintenance of a large open area for active sports (i.e. rugby, cricket, rugby league and soccer). The final design placed the playground at one third of the way along the reserve restricting the amount of open space more than necessary. This problem was further compounded by the planting of elm trees in such a way as to restrict play of a team nature.

The practice of involving the public in the planning phase is becoming a popular way of developing open space, but before it is seen as a panacea, the form that it takes, and where it is done should be considered before conclusions are leapt to. It seems too often that people promote the idea,

"That the process of planning, design and management of the environment should be one of participation by the total community including its children" (Densem, 1981, 97),

without full consideration of how it is to be done.

Where planning has been undertaken involving children, for example at Farnham Avenue (McLeod and Wrigley, 1983) and Raleigh Street (Wrigley, 1984) one feature was especially noticeable. Children's ideas of what was considered most suitable for inclusion in their neighbourhood park varied very little from parental concepts. The major difference in opinion regarded the safety of equipment, with parents exhibiting a higher degree of concern in this area. While not advocating that children should not be asked their opinion it is possible that no major difference in parental and child attitudes will surface in surveys as decisions are made based upon the same experiences.

If public participation in recreation planning is to be successful then an approach which critically situates the practice is required. Without such a perspective recreation planning by recreationalists and horticulturists will probably remain in a cul de sac. To be more socially relevant the broader issues impinging upon the social definition of space use must be examined and public participation operationalised within such a broader framework. The alternative appears to be a perpetuation of what already exists, with the only possibility of change being cosmetic.

## CHAPTER 10

## PLAYGROUNDS AS DYNAMIC SPACE?

Francis Pound in his book *Frames on the Landscape - Early Landscape Painting in New Zealand* stated

"that the very idea of landscape is a European import to New Zealand" (Pound, 1983, 11).

In the same way that Pound perceived landscape art as reflecting a European position, the manner in which many aspects of New Zealand have developed can be related to foreign influences. Rather than being a reflection of a lack of innovation within New Zealand, the direction of development can be seen more as a response to the relative youth of the country and the extremely transportable nature of ideas of the time. Both within the United States and Britain attitudes towards children, childhood, play, and parks within the urban environment had become firmly established by the early twentieth century.

The formation of playground standards for children's recreation by the Playground Association of America can be viewed as a synthesis of ideas from diverse origins. Instrumental among these were the actions of the philanthropic MEHA, who established the sand gardens of Boston, and through this influence promoted the idea of children's recreation. This initial action was a response to social conditions - the need to 'Americanise' the children of immigrant industrial workers. The result

was to provide a foundation for the United States recreation movement. The actions of MEHA were taken up by recreationalists such as Joseph Lee and Henry Curtis and eventually found expression in the form of the Playground Association of America. Drawing upon the experiences of the original American playgrounds, and ideas from Britain regarding spatial location and spatial size requirements for the play of children, space standards were evolved.

Basically the standards aimed at providing a playground within 400 metres of every child's home, and that 0.4 hectares (1 acre) per 1000 people should be set aside for children's recreation. The standards were therefore established within the context of neighbourhoods or suburbs and might be seen as an extension of these concepts. To these standards could be added the equipment standard - a list of items considered to provide a child with the necessary recreational experiences based upon earlier model playgrounds.

Also during the nineteenth century the Victorian reformists of Britain saw the development of public parks along the lines of the great estates as a means of overcoming the 'industrial blight' within the country. Industrialists supported the concept of publicly provided parks, as they considered anything which promoted a healthy, more mentally alert workforce, at little or no expense to themselves, would in turn increase profits. In the United States similar efforts were being made to provide open space for industrial workers. Olmstead's attempt to bring the rural environment to the city were viewed by landscape designers of the period as support of passive ornamental



environments. Despite attempts by recreationalists to provide for a greater degree of active recreation, the landscape designers institutionalised the concept of passive parks areas via implementation of such landscapes. The split between the landscape designers and recreationalists was most pronounced between 1860 and 1900, with landscape designers dominating the direction open space planning was to take.

The development of standards by the recreation movement was a method of both establishing concepts on children's recreation and communicating these concepts. Presidential support of the standards gave the recreation movement the required impetus to have their ideas incorporated into the parkscape. It is however, possible to question the degree of this acceptance by landscape designers as aesthetics still dominated the planning process. The acceptance of standards and the use of them as goals rather than guidelines may indicate that landscape designers found it more convenient to implement the standards without question or modification, and concentrate on their main interest, the ornamental quality of the park environment.

It was largely these ideas which influenced the development of both open space and children's playground development in New Zealand. Until the 1920's the emphasis was upon the provision of passive recreation space with additional land allocated for team sports. The growing awareness of children's recreation in the 1920's followed a British lead, which in turn was following the standards, although somewhat modified, established by the American recreation movement. The

integration of these standards into a strongly horticulturally managed system has meant that a high emphasis has always been placed upon aesthetics. The combination of standards and aesthetics has continued to be perpetuated by successive park superintendents and directors.

Increased suburban development in New Zealand has been paralleled by the development of neighbourhood parks. Location and size concepts for playgrounds appear to be integrated into this form of development.

At the same time that children's playgrounds were being developed within New Zealand, in accordance with nineteenth century concepts, new ideas were evolving overseas. These developments included the construction of adventure playgrounds, where children were given greater freedom to create their own environment, modifications of playgrounds to make them safer, and the involvement of the public in deciding what form playgrounds should take. These have resulted in the only modifications to patterns of development concerning children's playgrounds being in the internal appearance of such areas.

The acceptance of true adventure playgrounds in New Zealand has failed for two reasons. The first reason is that such playgrounds depart from the orthodox concepts of publicly provided playgrounds. This has resulted in scepticism by those who normally provide such space. Secondly, and more importantly true adventure playgrounds radically diverge from accepted aesthetic standards. Although true adventure playgrounds are not accepted in total, certain concessions in playground design have been made. The visual appearance of current

playgrounds frequently incorporates structures which resemble those constructed upon true adventure playgrounds by children, (e.g. forts and platforms), but the basic range of experiences remain unaltered. The arrangement and use of space is dictated by the erection of physical structures rather than allowing the child to explore and develop his/her own environment. In this manner children's space within the allocated area continues relatively unchanged.

The perceived need for safer playgrounds has resulted in a new set of standards: those of safety. Originally these standards were aimed at ensuring the structural safety of equipment. In framing the British standards for equipment the points of reference used were common existing structures (slides, swings, see-saws). Given the materials and equipment available to children in a true adventure playground situation it is unlikely that they could meet the standards. In basing the safety standards upon traditional equipment the continuation of existing playground forms was inevitable. The cosmetic changes of the structured adventure playground, incorporating fort-like structures, could be accommodated within the standards as they are both designed and constructed by adults with access to greater resources.

More recently the safety issues have focused upon the playground surface material. The concept of minimising the risk of injury from falls by providing a 'soft' surface has delineated the children's playspace. In addition it has reinforced the ideas of providing non-mobile and adult constructed play equipment as this can be located over the surface provided. The provision of the safety surface not only

serves to restrict the range over which a child is permitted to play on certain equipment, it also determines the type of equipment incorporated.

While public participation has been viewed as a means of gaining greater utilisation of resources, its contribution to the change in form of children's playspace is questionable. The majority of research has centred on participation rate surveys or surveys seeking preferences about recreational resources. Both forms of research have been undertaken against a background of set locational, size and equipment standards, and in general a limited range of recreational experiences of participants. Rather than measure demand, surveys have measured available consumption. The lack of scope of individuals to go beyond current experiences acts as a further constraint. These surveys have served more to perpetuate what already exists rather than add any new dimensions to what should be provided and where this should occur.

The strongly historical nature of parks and preoccupation with standards has lead to two things. The first is an allocation of space within the urban setting closely linked with suburbanisation, and secondly the creation of relative stable forms of use allocation within that space for children. The structuring of space for children's recreation can, therefore, be seen as occurring at two levels, firstly within the urban setting and secondly within the actual space provided.

### Gender geography, social change and playspace

Contained within the growing recognition that space is socially constructed, and that spatial patterns reflect and reinforce certain social relationships is an acknowledgement of gender roles in the evolution of urban space. The importance of gender in this structuration has been reinforced by the raised profile of both feminism and feminist geographers over the past ten years. When discussing the city, feminist geographers in particular have gone to reasonable length to identify the separation of work and residence (Women and Geography Study Group of IBG, 1984; Kelly, 1986). They have described the city centre as being developed as a man's domain, and the suburbs as spaces designed by men for women, with the emphasis being placed upon the neighbourhood and household level. If this interpretation of the social creation of space is accepted, and also, that it has been the role of women to shoulder the major responsibility of raising the young, then at a suburbanisation level certain commonalities in the provision of space for women, and space for children to play can be assumed.

The example of suburban development of Palmerston North (Figures 2-1, 2-2, and 2-3) in Chapter 2, would tend to give some credence to these assumptions. If Palmerston North is viewed as a reflection of a gender-biased geography and there is an association between this and the allocation of space for children's play then some interesting issues can be raised. Firstly, are the gender roles in today's society any different from those which existed when the foundations of provision for children's play were laid down? And secondly, if gender roles have

changed then has this an influence upon the manner in which children's playspace should be provided? These two questions can be further extended to examine other changes which have occurred in society in the period between the inception of provision for children's playspace and the current day.

### A changing industrial society

Society as a whole can be viewed as existing in a constant state of flux. Significant amongst contemporary changes are the role of women in society, the state of the nuclear family, and the position of children. Ideas from a century ago, such as those held by the MEHA, and of Olmstead, were established in a climate which was markedly different from that existing today.

As women have tended to shoulder the responsibility of rearing the young (Werkele, 1981; Women and Geography Study Group of the IBG, 1984), the changes in their lifestyle can be expected to have an impact on the lives of their offspring, and consequently upon the recreation of the young. Between 1900 and 1984 the lifestyle of women has changed dramatically. Women today tend to marry six years younger than their 1900 counterparts, and have their last child beginning school when the mother is entering her thirties. By contrast, women in 1900 continued to have children until into their forties (Ministry of Women's Affairs, 1986). This difference has allowed the present day mother to enter back into the workforce in many cases, rather than remain at home raising children over an extended period.

British statistics show that throughout the twentieth century the proportion of all wives (British) in paid employment has increased,

"in Britain the proportion of all wives in paid work went from 10% in 1911 ... to 26% in 1952 and 42% in 1972 (Young and Willmott, 1975, 101).

By 1984 in New Zealand nearly 50 percent of married women were in paid employment (Ministry of Women's Affairs, 1986).

Many of the existing structures within society tend to reflect historical positions. For instance schools tend to operate from approximately nine until three, kindergartens may operate mornings only. They do so on the understanding that a parent (usually the mother) or someone else is available to look after the child for the remainder of the day. These historically based assumptions hold less and less true given the changes in society. Instead these assumptions tend to reflect only a certain sector of society, which appears to be decreasing, while failing to accomodate others.

Ethnic groups also exhibit different work patterns,

"Maori mothers, for example, are far less likely than other women to take on paid employment. But when they do work, they are more likely to work full time. pakeha mothers are more likely to work but their jobs are likely to be only part-time" (Anon., 9/12/1986, 11).

If ethnic groups exist in different communities then needs are likely to be different between these communities with respect to the children of working mothers. The homogeneous response of MEHA in attempting to

Americanise children of diverse backgrounds has far less appeal in a modern New Zealand society, and accordingly it is appropriate to accomodate these differences.

It is not only women in society who are undergoing a transformation in roles, the family unit is also changing. Worsley in *Introducing Sociology* considered that,

"... we are presented with a rather bland, urban, suburban, middleclass model of the family living as if this were a model of or for society as a whole" (Worsley, 1977, 183),

and that much planning was carried out on this basis. Worsley contended that many different patterns exist and that these come about as a result of,

"linguistic, ethnic, or cultural identity, discrimination on the part of the host community, mobility or lack of mobility and economic differentiation" (Worsley, 1977, 184).

Van der Eyken (1982) estimated that the classic concept of the two parent family has changed, stating that in Europe only one quarter of the households formed this type of unit.

"One parent families, or families composed of stepmothers and stepfathers or of parents who are not legally married, or of children who have been fostered or adopted, now comprise sizeable proportions of child rearing households" (Van der Eyken, 1982, 87-88).

Van der Eyken contends that in modern society, while women have been provided with greater opportunities to enter the work force, and that there are a widening variety of families, there is a fundamental problem



of providing the necessary resources to assist parents with the responsibility of child raising.

Deviations from the accepted norms of the middle class family are not difficult to find within local communities. An example of one such deviation is the Highbury community of Palmerston North. Children within this community were the focus of national media attention regarding reported antisocial activities such as glue sniffing, thuggery and vandalism, the majority of which were unfounded (Campbell, 1985). However, an indepth report by the Department of Social Welfare indicated that the problems did lie in an inappropriately catered for lower socio-economic community (Craig, et. al., 1985).

Family structures in Highbury did not conform to the nuclear family concept, there being a high percentage of families with pre-school children and many one parent families. In addition where parents or parent were employed it became the responsibility of the older children in the family to look after the younger children (Craig, et. al., 1985).

Van der Eyken's contention that resources to assist the widening variety of families with parenting responsibilities were not made available was echoed in the Social Welfare report.

"Many parents talked at length about the effect of poverty. After the media/Police accusations of poor parenting standards, one parent noted 'it cost money to be a good parent'. Most of the day to day energies of the parents go into merely surviving ... there is little time or energy left for dealing with the children" (Craig, et.al., 1985, 39).

The question of expense in this particular case has a bearing upon the adequacy of locally provided recreation resources. The Highbury area does contain several traditional and structured adventure playgrounds. Despite this, the report focused on the observation that children could not afford public transport costs to desired forms of recreational areas, and privatisation of activities placed the cost of recreational opportunities outside of the reach of children from Highbury. Both of these factors contributed to the young congregating within their urban environment, but they did not use the existing parks which could be considered space allocated for their use for this purpose.

Highbury can not be considered a typical community, but it does serve to illustrate that both the existing structuring of space in terms of allocation and internal design may be increasingly problematised.

#### Where to from here?

Whereas women have an increasing capability (in part due to feminism) to articulate their views on society (Crawford and Cole, 1981; Werkele, 1984; Women and Geography Study Group of the IBG, 1984), children have very little in the way in which they can express dissatisfaction with their environment. They are subject to the external social influences which determine their allocation of any space (and the form it takes) within society, with little recourse to change, a view shared with McDiarmid and Thompson (1979). Expressions of

dissatisfaction are seen either as ungratefulness or antisocial behaviour, rather than an inappropriate allocation of resources.

The most common form of expression is probably the non-use of the resources provided. Before assuming that non-use is solely attributable to dissatisfaction it should be noted that there could be other contributing factors:

1. There may be no target population for which the resource has been developed;
2. Better alternatives may be readily available;
3. Dangers such as molestation potential, difficulties with access, dogs, unsafe terrain or equipment may deter use;
4. What is provided may not be what is required.

If the target population is not present or alternatives are available then this provides opportunities to reallocate mobile resources. Dangers may be rectified by appropriately addressing the situation. It is in the last area where the greatest scope for change exists. In order to find a more appropriate method of structuring space, so as to increase the utility to individuals in the community, a more innovative approach to research is required.

The first problem associated with a more innovative approach is, what agency is to have jurisdiction over the research conducted? Given that parks departments in the short term will continue to administer children's publicly provided space, it is appropriate to consider ways in which they might contribute to the provision of such space. Based upon the resources available to the parks departments, forms of

participatory research appear most applicable. Two such concepts which might be used are the introduction of mobile equipment and/or supervisors to designated children's playspace. The Western Region Commission of Melbourne has used mobile equipment as a means of evaluating alternative ideas which they are considering investing in (Thompson, 1979), and further work could be undertaken in this direction. Another idea worth consideration is the transportation of residents to other sites, examining their behaviour on the initial visit, and then to have subsequent visits and evaluation of changes in behavioural patterns.

The problem associated with these ideas is that they, like much previous research, are unlikely to provide experiences that differ much from what already exists.

The allocation of space and the ways in which it is utilised, therefore, requires a greater depth of questioning. How can the needs be identified? Is there a role for children's recreation in satisfying identified needs? What form should this assistance take? These are all appropriate questions and they cannot be answered properly without understanding the community involved. A very important question is: Can those whose traditional responsibility it has been to provide recreational opportunities understand the potentially multiple and perhaps even contradictory needs of people in a community in broad terms. In short the answer has to be an emphatic, no. The preoccupation with standards and aesthetics has determined for such a length of time the direction of provision of public playspace for

children, that 'objectivity' in such an exercise would be impossible. In conjunction with this, those currently in such positions of responsibility lack the range of skills required to undertake evaluations in both a scientific and a humanistic manner. If needs are to be accurately determined then a greater diversity of knowledge is required - the community and other professionals such as anthropologists, geographers, psychologists, sociologists and planners need to be involved in order to achieve a more appropriate form of development for the specific community.

Three strategies or more might evolve under such conditions; a top-down approach, a bottom-up approach, and a co-operative approach. A top-down approach would involve an analysis by the 'experts' of the community situation either by survey, interview or interpolation from like situations, and then a plan devised for discussion by the community. A bottom-up approach would consist of resources being made available to the community to initiate their own ideas, for example by use of the *Guidelines For Groups Planning Community Facilities Preparing A Feasibility Study* (John Daish et. al., 1981). A plan would be formulated and subsequently discussions with the 'experts' would be conducted prior to implementation. Rather than the three distinct strategies existing, the third co-operative approach could be seen as any point along a continuum between the top-down and bottom-up approaches. This approach would involve a greater degree of dialogue between people in the community and the 'experts'.

Each of the strategies might be employed depending upon the circumstances, but it is more likely that the co-operative strategy would have the most merit. The reason for this is that the majority of innovative planning required is likely to be in low socio-economic areas. Under such conditions there is greater probability of either polarised views existing or a general apathy, which in turn may require either an external balancing force or an external stimulation to be exerted (Hutcheson, 1984). The view that it is the lower socio-economic group that will need such assistance is supported by McDiarmid and Thompson (1979). In discussing conflicts of interest, they indicate that it is generally the lower socio-economic group and youth who will miss out on the allocation of resources to higher socio-economic groups.

Such an approach as suggested could be considered group advocacy planning. But it must be remembered that any new meaning which is given to space is brought about within an existing societal context.

This is illustrated in the Highbury situation,

"Although there are a number of halls and parks in the area, most are not considered suitable, or are not made available ... they [the community] recognise the need for improved suburban recreational resources ... The working party has held a number of discussions with the young people about their recreational needs and the type of facilities they would like to have made available to them. Initially they were sceptical in discussing this with us as they believe their views have generally been ignored" (Craig et. al., 1985, 40).

Community generated ideas in Highbury have included the establishment of a 'place of their own' in which to hold discos, free recreational activities and a works scheme. The basic problem is

articulating such ideas in a material form within a structured administrative environment.

Craig et. al., in discussing the Highbury situation, considered that,

"there has been no sustained effort at engaging the young people in regular organised activities and in this way working with them as a group rather than as individuals. Indeed, the working party itself is just one more example of the piecemeal and inadequate attempts to solve the problems of young people" (Craig et. al., 1985, 43).

In order to effect change, efforts involving the community, whether it be a top-down, bottom-up or cooperative approach, requires a sustained effort in order to achieve a successful understanding of community needs. It is from these foundations that the appropriate provision of recreation space may be undertaken. The forms of action may be quite diverse. For instance, the spaces provided may have different service radii, or size requirements; playgrounds of traditional or adventure nature may be incorporated; supervisors may be present; and/or children's playspace may be constructed in conjunction with other facilities such as recreation halls, creches or urban maraes. The important facet is that the space requirements and arrangements would link more closely to articulated needs of the community, rather than some predetermined concept of what should constitute the urban environment.

The allocation of children's space within the urban environment, and the internal arrangement of that space should reflect current social needs. To ascertain these needs further research is required, and there

will be an associated monetary cost. However, it does appear to be necessary to invest in today's society rather than yesterday's ideas. Practical steps may vindicate the historical processes of land use planning, or they may provide a new direction in the allocation of resources for children's space. Irrespective of the outcome, there should be an honest attempt to formulate appropriate questions and find a basis for cooperative action.

Certain parallels appear to exist in the wider sphere of land use planning and that of the specific allocation and use of publicly provided children's playspace. The concept of children's playspace has been developed by individuals, operating within well defined contextual parameters. Such parameters are often so integrated into the society, that they are accepted without question, and in doing so act as a constraint to alternative or more diverse uses of space. This would appear to be the case with the public provision of children's playspace.

Given that these parameters have served also as a basis for empirical research, there is a resultant entrenchment within the parameters. The choice then becomes one of two options: the first is to continue within the existing constraints; and the second is to examine the foundations of the parameters and ask if current needs are met.

As a social use of urban land, children's playspace has remained relatively static, bound by almost century old concepts. It is hoped that by understanding the basis of such concepts, that a platform has been established from which the constraints to this particular form of



institutionalised land use can be pushed back. Ultimately the aim would be to achieve uses of space which reflect the needs of people today and not those of a selection of people ten, twenty or one hundred years ago.



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# APPENDIX A

Type of apparatus	Dimensions	Approximate space requirements
Giant Stride	12 ft. high	36 ft. in diameter
" "	17 ft. high	48 ft. " "
Joy Wheel	9 ft. diameter	21 ft. " "
" "	12 ft. 6 ins. diameter	24 ft. " "
Jungle gym	Various sizes	14 ft. X 12 ft. to 29 ft. X 21 ft.
Horizontal Bar	4 ft., 5 ft. & 6 ft. high	-
" Ladder	6 ft. 6 ins. high X 16 ft long	18 ft. X 4 ft. 6 ins
Merry-go-round	8 ft. or 10 ft. diameter	20 ft. or 22 ft. diameter
Outdoor Gymnastic Set	10 ft. or 12 ft. high	36 ft. X 21 ft.
Ocean Wave	-	24 ft. diameter
Parallel Bars	4 ft. high X 8 ft. long	-
Plank Swings	7 ft. 6 ins. high 9 ft. high	30 ft. X 18 ft. 42 ft. X 18 ft.
Rocking Horse (5 Seater)	-	18 ft. X 9 ft.
" Boat (6 Seater)	-	21 ft. X 9 ft.
Sand Boxes	Size & shape varies from 6 ft. X 10 ft. to 10 ft. X 20 ft.	12 ft. X 16 ft. to 16 ft. X 30 ft.
See-Saw	-	18 ft. X 4 ft.
" " Ladders (set of 2)	-	15 ft. X 6 ft.
" " " (set of 3 )	-	15 ft. X 9 ft.
Slide	18 ft. 6 ins. long	30 ft. X 8 ft.
"	30 ft. long	46 ft. X 8 ft.
"	40 ft. long	56 ft. X 8 ft.
Swings (set of 6)	10 ft. high	33 ft. X 30 ft.
Swings (set of 6)	12 ft. high	36 ft. X 36 ft.

Swings (set of 6)	15 ft. high	48 ft. X 48 ft.
Two-seater Plane Swings - (set of 2)	-	21 ft. X 30 ft.
(set of 4)	-	33 ft. X 30 ft.
(set of 6)	-	42 ft. X 30 ft.
Trapeze Rings	20 ft. high	81 ft. X 15 ft.
Whirling Platform	10 ft. diameter	22 ft. diameter

(SOURCE: Anderson, A. W., 1940)