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## A vain attempt to exclude the exclusive

"Either none of mankind possesses genuine rights, or everyone shares them equally; whoever votes against another's rights, whatever his religion, colour or sex, forswears his own."

-Antoine-Nicolas de Condorcet

When I was a kid the dwelling opposite ours was a grand residence called Sway Place. It was largely hidden behind a substantial laurel hedge on the corner of Opaki Road and Oxford Street and housed an elderly widow named Mrs. Mawley. Whenever she ventured out I observed that she was exquisitely groomed, always dressed in Rose Kennedy style black and invariably wore a hat. Mrs. Mawley owned a covetous dark green Packard saloon car and employed a mild-mannered chauffeur named Mr. Gordon.

Mr. Gordon used to let us watch him lovingly groom the car every day on the verge outside the house fronting Oxford Street. We used to enjoy crawling under the vehicle to admire the chassis and particularly the coil springs that softened the front suspension as opposed to the leaf springs that adorned most cars we crawled under.

The Mawley's once owned the whole area from Oxford Street to the Waipoua river, but had generously gifted the land to the Borough Council to use as a camping ground. Hence the Mawley Park Motor Camp.

When Mrs. Mawley passed on, the property was purchased by Dr. Blair Harvey, a distinguished looking medical practitioner who had a bit of a Harley Street air about him and he utilised part of the front of the house as consulting rooms.

The next owner was Major Norman Noon who galloped into town following a distinguished army career to set up a motel and licensed restaurant on the property which he called The Golden Shears. My parents peace was shattered. Revellers would keep them awake until all hours, particularly on Friday and Saturday nights. Dance-bands played loudly, with windows wide open, and inebriated patrons would often use their front lawn as a urinal and drive off with tyres squealing at one or two in the morning. But this was pre-Resource Management Act times and they and the other residents in the neighbourhood who were losing sleep and patience had been given no opportunity to object to the establishment of the hostelry.

Later the complex was bought by the Licensing Trust and so now they could complain directly to me, but a licensed restaurant is designed as a place where people can legally imbibe, let their hair down a little and generally have fun. Hours are set by lawful negotiation so there was little I could do to ameliorate the situation.

The property has turned a complete circle. Still owned by Trust House, it now accommodates gentle elderly folk like Mrs. Mawley and my parents would have greatly welcomed the change in designation.

And so I found it somewhat surprising that the owners of a licensed restaurant in Solway Crescent complained at a District Council resource consent hearing about a church applying to come into their neighbourhood. Given a choice I reckon my parents and their neighbours would have opted for a church over a licensed restaurant any day. In fact the majority of the town's churches are in residential areas which seems logical and is attractively village-like.



I'm no apologist for the Exclusive Brethren denomination, but these people are likely to be well-behaved to a fault, won't drink or smoke and I gather if a goose needed re-directing, they wouldn't say boo to it.

Actually I used to know an Exclusive Brethren man quite well once; his name was George Davis and he owned one of New Zealand's smartest butcher's shops situated on Broadway in Palmerston North. I would try to make the pilgrimage at least annually to his shop to see what he was up to and endeavour to glean some ideas to improve my own business. George was older than me but he was always very generous with his time and was not averse to letting me in on his latest innovations.

He had a large shop which was divided into a delicatessen on one side and displayed fresh meat on the other. His staff were all members of the local Exclusive Brethren church and this was most evident, particularly with the female assistants. They uniformly wore ankle length frocks buttoned up to the neck, invariably had their hair tied severely back from their faces, had white bonnets atop and wore no make-up. Out the back was a large pastry kitchen and here the atmosphere was warm and friendly and the aroma from the ovens overwhelmingly inviting. It was as though you had walked back in time to Norman Rockwell's Quaker America.

You probably couldn't have got a better workforce if you tried. They would have been doctrinally honest, fiercely loyal and dedicated to producing a wholesome product. I suspect the profits all went to the church.

But how dare people of this ilk try to set up shop here. Angry Solway Crescent residents acted as though the Hell's Angels would have been more welcome. The likely outcomes are catastrophic. I'm sure there will be singing and there may even be some praying; and perhaps fellowshiping and sermons. Such treasonous activities should be discouraged wherever possible. Let's gather in the vineyards and plot their downfall.

I was pleased to see that the Council was a little more circumspect.

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