

Jack the giant killer

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MR MUNDEY'S delusions of grandeur are amusingly exemplified in his letter published on this page today. There is something highly comical in the spectacle of builders' labourers, whose ideas on industrial relations do not rise above strikes, violence, intimidation and the destruction of property, setting themselves up as arbiters of taste and protectors of our national heritage. But its diverting side is swamped by the fact that it is also a costly demonstration of industrial anarchy in which a great city project is being endangered by a handful of unionists led by the nose by a member of a party dedicated to social disruption and the overthrow of democratic government.

It is time Mr Munday's bluff was called. Apparently the contractors who hire builders' labourers are afraid to challenge him because they fear that their other activities would effectively be declared black. If ever there was a case for the invocation of penal clauses and the application of the most stringent penalties to a union, this is it. Since the employers will not act, the Government should. It is by no means only the Rocks scheme with which our dainty builders'

labourers refuse to soil their hands; they are also, for instance, claiming the right to decide what work they will approve in connection with the Opera House. It is an absurd situation which the State Government can no longer afford to tolerate.

The mass of the unionists concerned are, of course, only the dupes of their leadership. There is nothing in it for them. All that their secretary's highfalutin' and tongue-in-cheek concern about "environmental issues" has brought his members is loss of work and loss of pay. What has Mr Munday gained? It is tempting to see him as basking happily in his notoriety and asking nothing more. But Mr Munday is too clever a man and too high in Communist Party councils for that simple human explanation to hold water. No, Mr Munday himself gives the clue in his letter when he refers to "our concept of democracy" — that is, the Communist concept of democracy, which involves the destruction of democracy as we know it by any and every means. The more men out of work, the more business losses, the more disruption of order and planning, the more "developers and foreign investors" discouraged, the better that "concept" is served.

ALL this year the Australian Builders Labourers' Federation, of which Mr Jack Munday is NSW secretary, has had a black ban on demolition and construction in the East Rocks area which Colonel Owen Magee's 18-months-old Sydney Cove Redevelopment Authority is supposed to be redeveloping and restoring.

This historic area of publicly owned property — the site of Sydney's first convict stockade, first jail and first gallows — extends from the western shore of Sydney Cove to the Harbour Bridge approaches, and south to Grosvenor Street.

Originally, says Mr Munday, the black ban was imposed to ensure that the 250 residents of The Rocks would be satis-

By GAVIN SOUTER

factorily rehoused. By the time this problem had almost been resolved, however, the ban had acquired a new rationale — an ecological one.

It found this rationale in June, when the NSW division of the Royal Australian Planning Institute issued a report on the East Rocks development scheme. The report was

severely critical of the scheme north of the Cahill Expressway, finding it too heavy on development and too light on open parkland.

"The institute," said the report, "believes that the State Government is side-stepping the moral issue involved here, that being in simple terms to use this land in such a way as

to bring the greatest benefit to the most people over time. This implies the same courage and foresight as must have been exercised by early decision-makers in this State, when areas such as Hyde Park, the Domain and Centennial Park were set aside for public use and enjoyment in perpetuity."

On the other hand, the institute's report conceded that the area south of the Cahill Expressway — a logical extension of the central business district — should be developed commercially along the lines proposed by the authority.

The authority replied formally to RAPI's criticism, "re-canting some of its over-development heresies," as one RAPI member has put it, and also defending itself. A meeting of RAPI's NSW division committee this evening will consider the authority's reply.

"My institute," says the NSW president, Mr George Clarke, "will either say, 'We're pleased the authority has seen the error of its ways', or it will say, 'This isn't enough.'"

"We've got a new committee, and I can't predict which way it's going to go."

Another meeting of importance to The Rocks scheme has been called for August 28 by the Builders Labourers' Federation. Mr Munday has invited town planners, architects, politicians and Colonel Magee. He says that the ban on demolition and construction will continue at least until this public meeting, which he hopes "will give the whole matter of urban renewal a public airing."

The federation this month lifted its ban on restoration work, a dispensation which affords Colonel Magee only slight relief. "They've hung the restoration work up for five months," he said yesterday, "and we've already lost \$60,000 in rent because of their ban. That would have been more than enough to restore Cadman's cottage."

"We can only do restoration with money, and the only way we can raise money is by development."

Most of the authority's income will be in the form of rent for sites which it has leased to developers. Its first deal of this kind will be site D3, on the southern side of the Cahill Expressway, bounded by George, Essex and Harrington Streets. It is just across George Street from Gold Fields House.

A 70-year lease is due to be signed by September 1 with a group of American investors. The Chicago-based hotel management concern, Hyatt International—or rather some of its shareholders acting privately in conjunction with an American bank—will erect a multi-mil-

lion dollar hotel and retail complex on D3. The annual site rental will be several hundred thousand dollars.

The Regency-Hyatt hotel will contain 700 rooms and a "junior department store" of 150,000 sq ft. Hyatt itself will not own the building, but will manage it for a fee, just as it already manages the Kingsgate Hotel at Kings Cross.

This complex is scheduled to start in about six weeks, provided the lease can be signed on time. RAPI has no quarrel with the authority's proposals south of the Cahill Expressway, but there are two other hitches. The authority cannot yet provide vacant possession, which the lessee requires, and the builders labourers' ban still applies as much to D3 as to any other site in The Rocks scheme.

The matter of vacant possession will be resolved one way or the other in eight cases now before the Supreme Court. But that still leaves Mr Munday's black ban.

Colonel Magee is understandably worried about its possible effect on the Hyatt investors. According to one of the Colonel's colleagues, "he's been through hell."

Prolonging the ban

Hyatt, on the other hand, does not admit to any qualms. One of its vice-presidents in Chicago, Mr Paul Novy, told the "Herald" that he knew nothing about a ban. "The only problem we know of," he said, "is that the owners of the site apparently have difficulty in delivering the land by September 1. Otherwise we are not aware of any obstacle. In any case, it is not our intention to pull out of the deal."

Despite the uncertainties that are plaguing the authority in this first redevelopment step, it seems unlikely that the builders' labourers will prolong their ban to the point where it would endanger the Regency deal.

The D3 complex will provide two and a half years' employment for about 1,000 men. Would any trade-union leader spurn that, considering, as he must do, that RAPI has no objection to the Regency project?

The impression one gets from Mr Munday is that the ban might be lifted from D3 in return for some sort of compromise north of the Cahill Expressway.

Is the federation in any position to demand such a compromise? A lot will hinge on today's meeting at the institute.

VICE-REGAL

His Excellency the Governor and Lady Cutler, accompanied by Mr Anthony Cutler, Mr Richard Cutler and Master Mark Cutler and attended by Lieutenant-Commander R. F. Tighe, honorary aide-de-camp, were present at a performance of "Der Rosenkavalier" by the Australian Opera at the Elizabethan Theatre, Newtown, yesterday evening.

18.8.72 SMH