

Chapter Four - Sydney or Bust: The South Melbourne Football Club's 1981 Relocation Saga³⁵⁰

South Melbourne Football Club: A Brief History

The South Melbourne Football Club occupied a prominent place in the Melbourne football landscape for more than one hundred years. Its origins coincided with the formation of the Victorian Football Association (VFA) in 1877. The Albert Park Football Club was a foundation member and three years later, on 22 January 1880, it amalgamated with the South Melbourne Football Club, formerly the Cecil Football Club, which had formed in 1874. The club retained the South Melbourne name and the red and white colours of the Albert Park club.³⁵¹ Large employment growth in the South Melbourne area during the 1880s led to a massive increase in crowds and the increase in paying spectators enabled the South Melbourne Football Club to buy players and to 'reward them handsomely'.³⁵² As a result the club enjoyed a period of dominance in the VFA, winning its first premiership in 1881, a second in 1885 and three in a row from 1888 to 1890.

In 1897 eight clubs broke away from the VFA to form the Victorian Football League (VFL), comprising Geelong, Carlton, St Kilda, Essendon, Fitzroy, Melbourne, Collingwood and South Melbourne.³⁵³ South Melbourne won their first premiership in the VFL in 1909, but had to wait until the 1930s to experience a 'golden age' similar to their domination of the VFA in the 1880s. As in the 1880s, their rise to

³⁵⁰ The phrase 'Sydney or Bust' was used as a headline by different newspapers during the South Melbourne relocation saga in 1981. See Peter Simunovich, 'Sydney or Bust!', *Sun*, 2 July, 1981, pp. 64-63; Mike Sheahan, 'Sydney or bust! – Says Stewart', *Herald*, 30 July, p. 38. [Note: page referencing for newspaper stories throughout this thesis will often appear backwards, because a story that began on the back page of the newspaper often continued on to one of the preceding pages]. The phrase was repeated in Taylor, *The Sydney Swans*, p. 75, in order to characterise the period of South Melbourne's history from 1969 to 1986, and in Hutchinson and Ross (eds), *The Clubs*, p. 357.

³⁵¹ Taylor, *The Sydney Swans*, pp. 9-10.

³⁵² Robin Grow, 'The Victorian Football Association in Control, 1877 – 1896', in Rob Hess and Bob Stewart (eds), *More Than A Game: An Unauthorised History of Australian Rules Football*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1998, p. 55

³⁵³ Grow, 'The Victorian Football Association in Control, 1877 – 1896', p. 85.

the top of the ladder in the early to mid 1930s was the result of an influx of money. Specifically, the club embarked on a fundraising effort that enabled it to recruit quality players, particularly from interstate. The proportion of players from outside Victoria led to the team, formerly known as the Bloods, being called the 'foreign legion'. The team subsequently became known as the Swans because of the high number of players that had been recruited from Western Australia.³⁵⁴

South Melbourne played in the infamous 'bloodbath' Grand Final in 1945, but their appearance in the finals was a rarity in the post-war period. From 1946 to 1981 the club made the finals only twice, both times during the 1970s.³⁵⁵ This record was the worst in the competition. The club did, however, have a number of individual champions throughout this period, including several Brownlow medallists, namely Ron Clegg (1949), Fred Goldsmith (1955), Bob Skilton (1959, 1963, 1968), Peter Bedford (1970), Graeme Teasdale (1977) and Barry Round (1981). In general, despite two periods of success in the 1880s and the 1930s, the South Melbourne Football Club's history was characterised by a lack of on-field success. At the end of the 1970s the club was facing a number of serious challenges, including how it might lift itself off the bottom of the ladder and how it might secure a viable financial future.

South Melbourne's Sydney Plan

On 2 July, 1981, two of the three major Melbourne daily newspapers broke the story of the South Melbourne Football Club's proposed move to Sydney. On the back page of the *Sun*, a huge headline read 'SYDNEY OR BUST!', followed by a smaller subheading – 'South tells VFL: club wants 1982 switch'.³⁵⁶

³⁵⁴ See Mark Branagan and Mike Lefebvre, *Bloodstained Angels: The Rise and Fall of the Foreign Legion, 1932 to 1938*, Melbourne, Branagan and Lefebvre, 1995; Taylor, *The Sydney Swans*, pp. 38-50; Freud and Cutler, *Flying North for the Winter*, p. 15. [Note: the Swan was the state emblem of Western Australia].

³⁵⁵ See Stewart, *The Australian Football Business*, p. 43; Freud and Cutler, *Flying North for the Winter*, p. 19; Taylor, *The Sydney Swans*, pp. 51-91.

³⁵⁶ Peter Simunovich, 'Sydney or bust!', *Sun*, 2 July, 1981, pp. 64-63.



The size of the headlines, the use of capital letters and an exclamation mark, as well as the formation of an oppositional pair, Sydney or bust, sensationalised the story.³⁵⁷ Similarly, the *Age* newspaper also ran the story of South's Sydney relocation proposal on the back page, with the headline 'South's survival kit'.³⁵⁸ The headline was not as large, or as sensational as the one in the *Sun*, yet the message was the same. That is, the Sydney proposal was South Melbourne's only option for survival.

Both newspapers reported that on 1 July South Melbourne asked the VFL to play all of its away games in Sydney and play all of its home games at VFL Park in Waverley, Melbourne, thereby leaving the Lakeside Oval in South Melbourne, the club's home ground since 1874. Under the proposal, all of the matches, whether in Melbourne or Sydney, would be played on Friday nights under lights. Neither Peter Simunovich, sports reporter for the *Sun*, nor Ron Carter and Trevor Grant, sports reporters for the *Age* identified South's proposal as an ambit claim, or an attempt to deflect

³⁵⁷ See Bruck, 'Crisis as Spectacle: Tabloid News and the Politics of Outrage', p. 114, where Bruck noted that the use of exclamation marks is a strategy used by the media to increase the degree of sensation or outrage.

³⁵⁸ Ron Carter and Trevor Grant, 'South's survival kit', *Age*, 2 July, 1981, p. 26.

potential criticism directed at the club for abandoning its Melbourne members. The proposal, had it been approved, would have effectively granted South Melbourne twenty-two home games, therefore depriving the other eleven League teams of one home game each. Simunovich, and Carter and Grant did, however, quote VFL president Allen Aylett as saying that South Melbourne's submission was 'feasible, reasonable and well researched', when in part it clearly was not.³⁵⁹ South Melbourne subsequently revised their plans a week later and submitted a proposal to the VFL directors that included eleven home games at the Sydney Cricket Ground, to be played on Sundays, yet Simunovich reported in the *Sun* that the 'hitch' the club had encountered was that 'most clubs did not want to play for premiership points at night'.³⁶⁰ That the other eleven clubs did not want to give up home games as well was presented as being of secondary importance. It is clear that sports journalists during the early stages of the South Melbourne relocation saga adopted what Henningham referred to as a 'neutral' approach, rather than a 'participant' approach.³⁶¹ In general, they reported the facts as they were told them, but did not seek to question the validity of what they were being told, or what was being proposed. In other words, the football print media reported within a promotional discourse.

Both articles, in the *Sun* and *Age*, indicated that South Melbourne's financial plight was dire. Carter and Grant wrote that South's financial advisors believed that the proposal to play games in Sydney would turn an operating loss of \$180,000 in 1980, into an operating profit of \$90,000 in 1982. Likewise, Simunovich quoted Jack Marks, chairman of South Melbourne Club Ltd., as saying that the club had been operating at a loss of \$150,000 per year for the last five years. Carter and Grant and Simunovich also noted that the VFL had frozen South Melbourne's share of the ground improvement fund, which stood at \$500,000 in 1981.³⁶² This meant that the

³⁵⁹ Ron Carter and Trevor Grant, 'South's survival kit', *Age*, 2 July, 1981, p. 26; Peter Simunovich, 'Sydney or bust!', *Sun*, 2 July, 1981, p. 64.

³⁶⁰ See Peter Simunovich, 'Swans in a rethink', 9 July, 1981, p. 68.

³⁶¹ Henningham, 'A Profile of Australian Sports Journalists', p. 17.

³⁶² See Stewart, *The Australian Football Business*, pp. 62-65, where Stewart explained the VFL distribution of gate receipts. For every ticket sold to a VFL game, \$0.40 was deducted and placed into the ground improvement fund, to be shared equally between the clubs. As part of the League's plan to rationalise the number of grounds, the VFL 'froze' South Melbourne's share of the ground improvement fund.

club was unable to improve the facilities at the Lakeside Oval, although the frozen ground improvement funds were only part of a broader financial problem. Carter and Grant noted that plans drawn in 1980 to build a three thousand seat grandstand were budgeted at \$3 million, which would have forced the club to borrow \$2.5 million, a loan which in turn would have cost the club \$500,000 a year to service.

The primary headline in the *Age* on 2 July was complemented by a smaller heading, 'Officials want to retain identity of club', and confirmed that the Sydney proposal represented the club's survival. Marks and South Melbourne's VFL Director Craig Kimberley, were quoted in both articles and acknowledged that the proposal before the VFL would ensure that the South Melbourne club would not lose its identity, either through an amalgamation with another team, or through a ground sharing arrangement with another team, which might lead to amalgamation.

Simunovich referred in his article to a letter that had been sent to South Melbourne members by the South Melbourne administration, outlining the plan to play in Sydney and signed by Marks and Graeme John, president of South Melbourne. In particular, Simunovich mentioned that the letter listed the advantages of a move to Sydney as an increased recruiting zone and richer sponsorship deals with companies that would want to associate themselves with a team that had all its games broadcast on television. In the scenario proposed by South Melbourne they would become the away team in Sydney and, as such, the eleven other VFL teams would be entitled to one eleventh of the increased recruiting zone, as the home team. Neither Simunovich, nor Carter and Grant, questioned how a team would increase its recruiting zone by playing away games. Simunovich also noted that the letter to club members advised that if the Sydney proposal was not supported there was a strong possibility that the club would go into voluntary liquidation.

Carter and Grant did not refer to the letter sent to South Melbourne members, but an anonymous article appeared next to their text on 2 July, titled 'Letter spells out reasons'.³⁶³ The article provided a summary of the reasons for the move to Sydney outlined in the letter sent by Marks and John. In particular, the article stated that the

³⁶³ Anonymous, 'Letter spells out reasons', *Age*, 2 July, 1981, p. 26.

increased recruiting zone and sponsorship deals would result in South Melbourne returning to the top of the ladder by 1984. Also, the article noted that the coach and the players had given South Melbourne's board of directors their unqualified support and that the South Melbourne colours would not be changed. The article also referred to the alternatives to the Sydney proposal, as detailed in the letter, which included continuing to operate at a loss and go out of existence, be driven off the Lakeside Oval because of the frozen ground improvement funds, or go into voluntary liquidation. Finally, the anonymous article cited the conclusion to the letter sent to members – 'The board of directors has taken into account all the advantages and alternatives and believe that the proposal to the VFL is South Melbourne's only chance of survival and revival as a force in the VFL'.³⁶⁴

In the articles written by Simunovich and Carter and Grant it was claimed that the South Melbourne members would be called to a special meeting to hear details of the proposed move to Sydney if the VFL directors approved the idea. Carter and Grant also noted that Marks, John and Kimberley gave the impression that the members would have little say if the move was approved, or be given the opportunity to endorse the VFL director's decision.

On 3 July, Mike Coward wrote a small article in the *Age* that claimed that Bob Skilton, South Melbourne's triple Brownlow medallist and 'greatest son', while not liking the thought of the Sydney relocation, could see no other alternative.³⁶⁵ In a slight exaggeration of the content and context of the article, the headline was 'Skilton backs South move'. On the same day, the *Sun* published an article by Simunovich titled '5 reasons for going'.³⁶⁶ The five reasons referred to in the title were the ways in which Jack Hamilton, general manager of the VFL, believed the South Melbourne proposal would benefit the League. Thus, on the day after the *Age* and the *Sun* broke the story of South Melbourne's Sydney proposal, both newspapers published articles that used prominent sources, one from within the club and one from within the VFL, to support or legitimise the proposed course of action.

³⁶⁴ Anonymous, 'Letter spells out reasons', *Age*, 2 July, 1981, p. 26.

³⁶⁵ Mike Coward, 'Skilton backs South move', *Age*, 3 July, 1981, p. 22.

³⁶⁶ Peter Simunovich, '5 reasons for going', *Sun*, 3 July, 1981, p. 68.

Two days after the *Age* and the *Sun*, Melbourne's other major daily newspaper at the time, the *Herald*, acknowledged South Melbourne's proposal to play in Sydney on 4 July. In an article titled 'Swans team backs move', Mike Sheahan noted that the Sydney proposal appeared to have the support of the players, as well as the sponsors, particularly the Bond Corporation, which sponsored South Melbourne for \$100,000 during 1981, as part of a three-year, \$300,000 deal.³⁶⁷ Furthermore, Sheahan quoted Marks as saying that from a business perspective, the club would be forced to amalgamate in the next ten years and that the Lakeside Oval was not a viable long-term option, because it would cost \$10 million to improve the facilities.

The only reporting that was critical of South Melbourne's relocation proposal was an 'Editorial Opinion' published in the sports section of the *Age* on 3 July, titled 'League in the dark'.³⁶⁸ Adopting the orthodox rhetoric mode, it did not argue that the fundamentals of the Sydney proposal were misconceived, but rather that playing twenty-two games under lights was a perversion of the game. It is likely that the anonymity of the article, created via the use of 'editorial opinion', was a way of protecting the reporter who wrote the opinion piece. This protection, as Lowes suggested, may have been necessary to avoid the reporter being cut-off or ostracised by his or her sources within the football industry.³⁶⁹

Sports journalists reported the initial impact of the South Melbourne relocation saga by reference to established news sources, such as the president and chairman of South Melbourne and the president of the VFL, or by material that they had written or circulated, such as the letter to South Melbourne members. Reference to these sources consequently established an economic rationalist framework that underpinned the way in which South Melbourne's proposal to play eleven games in Sydney was explained and understood. Furthermore, this economic rationalism, represented as South Melbourne's demise on one hand and its potential survival on

³⁶⁷ Mike Sheahan, 'Swans team "backs" move', *Herald*, 4 July, 1981, p. 28.

³⁶⁸ Editorial Opinion, 'League in the dark', *Age*, 3 July, 1981, p. 22.

³⁶⁹ Lowes, *Inside the Sports Pages*, pp. 83-4. See also Rowe and Stevenson, 'Negotiations and Mediations', p. 73 and Wenner, 'Drugs, sport and media influence', pp. 282-292.

the other, naturalised South Melbourne's plan, despite the fact that it was the first time a member club of the VFL had approached the central administration to play games outside Victoria on a regular basis. Both Simunovich and Carter and Grant quoted Aylett as saying that 'this sort of thing was inevitable and will help the game'.³⁷⁰ Reference to the inevitability and overwhelmingly positive nature of the proposal counteracted the potential sensationalism of the national expansion of the VFL. It also meant that apart from one anonymous article, the reporting of the announcement of South Melbourne's plans to play its away games in Sydney and its home games at VFL Park was devoid of criticism.

The Keep South at South Group

On 3 July, Simunovich reported in the *Sun* that South Melbourne supporters were going to hold a protest meeting at the Lakeside Oval on Sunday, 5 July.³⁷¹ The announcement of this meeting consisted of the last three sentences of an article dedicated to relating why Hamilton, the general manager of the VFL, believed the Sydney proposal was a good idea. On 7 July in the *Age*, Mike Coward reported in the last sentence of his article that one thousand supporters had staged a protest at the Lakeside Oval on Sunday, 5 July. Coward then blandly noted that a group was being formed to try and keep South Melbourne at the Lakeside Oval.³⁷² In total, the print media coverage of the protest rally consisted of four sentences in the *Age* and the *Sun*. The *Herald* provided no coverage of the event and none of the newspapers published photographs or the opinions of fans. This is surprising, since the SCEPMTFA predicts that opinions and photographs of fans are published during crisis events and that the victims of crisis events occupy a privileged position in the discourse. The lack of coverage may be explained in a number of ways. First, it may have been due to the protest rally not being considered newsworthy. Second, the 'beat' system of sports reporting may have meant that the event was too costly or

³⁷⁰ Peter Simunovich, 'Sydney or bust!', *Sun*, 2 July, 1981, p. 64; Ron Carter and Trevor Grant, 'South's survival kit', *Age*, 2 July, 1981, p. 26.

³⁷¹ Peter Simunovich, '5 reasons for going', *Sun*, 3 July, 1981, p. 68.

³⁷² Mike Coward, 'Action group bid to "save South"', 7 July, 1981, p. 36.

time consuming to cover. Finally, the protagonists were not considered to be routine sports news sources.

The *Age*, *Herald* and *Sun* reported that the Keep South at South (KSAS) committee had been formed, in opposition to the Sydney move. Furthermore, from the middle of July till an extraordinary meeting of South Melbourne members on 22 September, KSAS was at the centre of the South Melbourne relocation saga and the print media reporting of the administrative and legal machinations surrounding South Melbourne's Sydney proposal. Led by chairman John Keogh, KSAS campaigned in July 1981 for South Melbourne to give its members a fair hearing and for the VFL to reject the proposal to play eleven games in Sydney without such a hearing.

From 10 July until 30 July, when the *Age*, *Sun* and *Herald* reported that the VFL board of directors had approved South Melbourne's proposal to play its home games in Sydney, the reporting of the South Melbourne relocation saga stressed the division and conflict between South Melbourne's board of management and KSAS. The *Herald* published two major articles on 13 July, 'South rumpus hots up', and 23 July, 'Resign demand in Swans' "war"³⁷³. Both were large headlines and in capitals, in order to emphasise the sensational elements of the story. Furthermore, in the first sentence of the article on 23 July on the back page of the *Herald*, Bruce Matthews claimed that 'South Melbourne Football Club's warring factions erupted into battle again today'. Likewise, in the *Sun* on 14 July, Tim Habel wrote that 'war is about to be declared', and on 24 July, Greg Baum wrote that 'South Melbourne's simmering Sydney war is set to boil over'.³⁷⁴ The *Age* referred to the 'South dispute', but did not employ overtly sensationalistic headings or language.

During the latter part of July, KSAS demanded and then won talks with the South Melbourne board of management on several occasions. Furthermore, they asked federal Labour member of parliament and number one South Melbourne

³⁷³ Bill Cannon, 'South rumpus hots up', *Herald*, 13 July, 1981, p. 26; Bruce Matthews, 'Resign demand in Swans' "war", *Herald*, 23 July, 1981, p. 40.

³⁷⁴ Tim Habel, 'War looms at South', *Sun*, 14 July, 1981, p. 74; Greg Baum, 'South: the fight is on', *Sun*, 24 July, 1981, p. 70.

membership ticket holder Bob Hawke to intervene in the dispute³⁷⁵ (which he did, chairing several meetings), requested that the board resign³⁷⁶ (which they did not), petitioned the board to call an extraordinary meeting of members³⁷⁷ (which they did, but later than KSAS wanted) and threatened legal action if the VFL approved the Sydney plan³⁷⁸ (which they subsequently took).

On 29 July, the VFL board of directors approved South Melbourne's proposal to play eleven home games in Sydney in 1982. Ron Carter's article in the *Age* was titled 'South to play in Sydney', with the subheading 'Correct decision says Aylett'.³⁷⁹ Both Carter, and Simunovich in the *Sun* noted that Aylett believed that it was the right decision and that it would 'alter the course of football history'.³⁸⁰ In both articles a hierarchy of sources was evident. Aylett was quoted or referred to at, or near the beginning of the article, Hamilton in the first half of the article and KSAS at the end of the article, part of which was another page because it did not fit on the back page of either newspaper.

The *Herald* adopted the most sensationalist approach, by publishing the headline 'Sydney or bust! – Says Stewart' on the back page, duplicating the language used by the *Sun* newspaper earlier in the month to describe the announcement of South Melbourne's plan to play in Sydney.³⁸¹ In the article Mike Sheahan reported that VFL directors had voted to send South Melbourne to Sydney in 1982, but this fact was contained within the body of the report and was of secondary importance. More important and the focus of the article, was a pledge of support for the board of

³⁷⁵ See Mike Coward, 'Hawke to fight for members', *Age*, 16 July, 1981, p. 28; Corrie Perkin, 'South agrees to new talks', *Age*, 20 July, 1981, p. 23; Bruce Matthews, 'Hawke to chair South meeting', *Herald*, 17 July, 1981, p. 29; Peter Simunovich, 'South fans look to Hawke', *Sun*, 10 July, 1981, p. 60.

³⁷⁶ See Corrie Perkin, 'Sydney push for VFL club: Marks', *Age*, 24 July, 1981, p. 28; Bruce Matthews, 'Resign demand in Swans' "war"', *Herald*, 23 July, 1981, p. 40; Greg Baum, 'South: the fight is on', *Sun*, 24 July, 1981, p. 70.

³⁷⁷ See Mike Coward, 'Stay South men ready for spill bid', *Age*, 27 July, 1981, p. 29; Mike Coward, 'South group seeks delay', *Age*, 28 July, 1981, p. 36; Peter Simunovich, 'South group wins talks', *Sun*, 28 July, 1981, p. 64.

³⁷⁸ See Peter Simunovich, 'South group in VFL threat', *Sun*, 29 July, 1981, p. 67.

³⁷⁹ Ron Carter, 'South to play in Sydney', *Age*, 30 July, 1981, p. 28.

³⁸⁰ Ron Carter, 'South to play in Sydney', *Age*, 30 July, 1981, p. 28; Peter Simunovich, 'VFL "yes" to Swan move', *Sun*, 30 July, 1981, p. 68.

³⁸¹ Mike Sheahan, 'Sydney or bust! – Says Stewart', *Herald*, 30 July, 1981, p. 38. See also Peter Simunovich, 'Sydney or bust!', *Sun*, 2 July, 1981, pp. 64-63.

management by Ian Stewart, South Melbourne's coach, on behalf of the coaching panel and the club's administrative staff. Stewart was quoted in the article saying that the 'Sydney proposal is a professional business proposition' and that if the board is removed, it would take ten to twenty years to rebuild the club's administration. Sheahan's article was juxtaposed by 'Rebels step up "war"', written by Bruce Matthews and duplicated the language used by Matthews and the *Herald* a week earlier to describe the relocation saga.³⁸² In the article Matthews emphasised the conflict between KSAS and the board of management and quoted Keogh as saying that KSAS will take legal action and that they have the support of the members.

In general, the *Age*, *Herald* and *Sun* reported the VFL's vote that approved South Melbourne's Sydney plan by utilising a hierarchy of routine sources, including members of the VFL administration and South Melbourne's coach. By 30 July, Keogh had also established himself as a routine news source within the South Melbourne relocation saga. The KSAS perspective, however, was usually covered at the end of newspaper articles, thereby relegating it to a position of less importance, or was used to enhance the sensational elements of the story, such as the 'war' with the board of management.

Throughout August the relocation saga was dominated by legal action brought by KSAS against the South Melbourne board of management and the VFL. In particular, KSAS sought to have both South Melbourne and the VFL restrained from entering into contracts that would prejudice a vote on the Sydney proposal by the South Melbourne members. The *Age* provided the most extensive coverage of the three daily newspapers, while the *Sun* did not cover the legal proceedings at all. Sports journalists did not write any of the articles published in the *Age* or the *Herald*. In the *Herald*, three articles that covered the court proceedings were all anonymous, while in the *Age*, four of the seven articles that appeared were anonymous, while the other three were written by Prue Innes, the newspaper's court reporter.³⁸³ In each of the

³⁸² Bruce Matthews, 'Rebels step up "war"', *Herald*, 30 July, 1981, p. 38.

³⁸³ See Anonymous, 'South case adjourned', *Herald*, 4 August, 1981, p. 36; Anonymous, 'Swans – Injunction extended', *Herald*, 20 August, 1981, p. 42; Anonymous, 'South appeal starts', *Herald*, 24 August, 1981, p. 29; Prue Innes, 'South action group loses first round', *Age*, 1 August, 1981, p. 40; Anonymous, 'South case to go on today', *Age*, 4 August, 1981, p. 37; Innes, Prue, 'Court move "inhibits" Swans' Sydney talks', *Age*, 5 August, 1981, p. 26;

cases, whether in the *Age* or the *Herald*, the reporting adopted the hard news mode. In general, the articles were densely factual and used the court proceedings as the primary source material.

The absence of articles written by sports reporters on KSAS's legal campaign confirms Rowe, Stevenson and Wenner's argument that the news desk or non-sports reporters often cover controversial or 'real' sports news stories.³⁸⁴ An alternative and more likely explanation in the context in which sports reporters wrote the majority of articles throughout the relocation saga, is that none of the sports journalists' routine news sources were involved in the court case brought by KSAS against South Melbourne and the VFL and that journalists from other departments of the newspaper were deployed to cover the story because it was more convenient and cost efficient.

An Extraordinary Meeting of Members

The South Melbourne relocation saga reached a climax during September. Under South Melbourne's Articles of Association, a requisition with one hundred and twenty names was required to force the board to call an extraordinary meeting of members. KSAS presented the board with one hundred and eighty-three signatures in late July. The board eventually called the meeting for 22 September, at which the members voted on four resolutions – one, that the meeting has no confidence in the present board of management; two, that each and every officer of the of the board be removed from office immediately; three, that the board of management be reduced from ten members to six immediately; and four, that a KSAS board ticket be elected.

Anonymous, 'South lease "not tying"', *Age*, 12 August, 1981, p. 30; Innes, Prue, 'Judge refuses to stop South', *Age*, 13 August, 1981, p. 26; Anonymous, 'New hold on South', *Age*, 21 August, 1981, p. 26; Anonymous, 'Deadline for South', *Age*, 26 August, 1981, p. 31.

³⁸⁴ See Rowe and Stevenson, 'Negotiations and Mediations', p. 73; Wenner, 'Drugs, sport and media influence', pp. 284.

The lead up to the extraordinary meeting of members on 22 September began in earnest on 1 September, when the *Age* and the *Herald* reported that the South Melbourne players had sent a letter to all members requesting that they give their proxy votes to Ricky Quade, the newly appointed coach and former chairman of selectors.³⁸⁵ The letter, signed by club captain Barry Round, Graham Teasdale, Mark Browning and Francis Jackson, declared the player's support for the Sydney move. Both Neil Mitchell in the *Age* and Sheahan in the *Herald* noted that the letter stated that the players do not normally involve themselves in club politics, but that the meeting on 22 September would have far-reaching implications and as such, the players thought it was important to represent their views to the South Melbourne membership. Both articles used the letter as the primary source of information and quoted some passages verbatim, while neither engaged in commentary or criticism of the player's action. In this respect, both Mitchell and Sheahan were acting as a 'mirror', as predicted by Dagenais, whereby they conveyed the position of one of the groups who decided to avail themselves of speech during the crisis.³⁸⁶

The *Age*, *Herald* and *Sun* reported that several companies, based in Sydney and Melbourne, had purchased a significant number of South Melbourne memberships in the lead up to the extraordinary meeting on 22 September, in an attempt to influence the vote. On 2 September, the *Age* reported that four hundred Sydney people had paid approximately \$45,000 in an attempt to become members of the South Melbourne Football Club.³⁸⁷ At various points throughout the relocation saga, newspaper reports suggested that prior to the announcement of South Melbourne's proposal to play games in Sydney, the club's membership stood at approximately 1,200. In this context, four hundred additional members were both a substantial boost to the club's membership and a dent to KSAS's plan to take control of the club.

³⁸⁵ Neil Mitchell, 'Players join South battle', *Age*, 1 September, 1981, p. 36; Mike Sheahan, 'Players back Sydney switch', *Herald*, 1 September, 1981, p. 42.

³⁸⁶ See Dagenais, 'Media in Crises', p. 123.

³⁸⁷ David Wilson and Neil Mitchell, 'Sydney push to sway South', *Age*, 2 September, 1981, p. 30.

On 5 September, the *Sun* reported that six hundred people had nominated for South Melbourne membership, including several media executives.³⁸⁸ On the same day, the *Age* reported on the front page of the newspaper that there were approximately six hundred and forty-five new membership applicants, including 'senior executives of media magnate Mr Rupert Murdoch'.³⁸⁹ Furthermore, the article noted that Murdoch's TEN network (TV) was interested in securing the television rights to broadcast South Melbourne's Sydney games. The reporters referred to the application lists having been 'sighted by the *Age*' and that they had been 'checked either directly with the named person or with staff'. This article was one of the few instances in the print media reporting of the South Melbourne relocation saga in which the reporters and the newspaper were conscious of the part they were playing in the crisis, to the point that they articulated their role and the intricacies of the news gathering process, as part of the more general process of reporting the news. In this respect, the *Age* was acting as a 'witness', as predicted by Dagenais, whereby it demanded to be present, or informed, in order that the public's right to information was served.

The *Age* and the *Herald* reported on 10 September that seven hundred and forty people had applied for membership of South Melbourne.³⁹⁰ The *Age* published a report on the front page of the newspaper, with the headline 'Tea lady in the Swans rush', which enhanced both the comical and scandalous nature of the bid to stack the South Melbourne membership rolls.³⁹¹ The *Age* article claimed that a tea lady and a five-year-old boy had been signed up in a recruiting drive. The anonymous article also noted, as in the article published on 5 September in the *Age*, that the *Age* had 'obtained' the application lists. Among the companies involved in buying South Melbourne memberships were those associated with Murdoch, as well as Sydney based Tooth and Co. (brewery), Visy Board (cardboard packagers), O'Brien

³⁸⁸ Greg Baum, 'Battle for South builds up', *Sun*, 5 September, 1981, p. 60.

³⁸⁹ David Wilson and Lindsay Murdoch, 'Murdoch executives sign up with Swans', *Age*, 5 September, 1981, pp. 1, 3. See also Anonymous, '650 join South', *Herald*, 8 September, 1981, p. 38.

³⁹⁰ Anonymous, 'Tea lady in the Swans rush', *Age*, 10 September, 1981, p. 1; David Wilson and Damien Murphy, 'Stacking bid at South', *Age*, 10 September, 1981, p. 32; Ron Reed and Bruce Matthews, 'Tickets "promised" in row', *Herald*, 10 September, 1981, p. 40.

³⁹¹ See also Anonymous, 'Boy, 3, a "signed" Swan – court told', *Age*, 15 September, 1981, p. 40.

(caterers) and New System Fasteners (owned by Reg Myers, president of the committee for the advancement of Australian Rules football in Sydney). KSAS took the South Melbourne Football Club to court in an attempt to prevent the new applicants from being approved as members of the club. This action failed and the new members were able to vote on the future of the club on 22 September, either in person or by proxy.³⁹²

The following full-page advertisement appeared in the *Sun* on 22 September³⁹³:

KEEP SOUTH AT SOUTH. LAST CHANCE TONIGHT.

Tonight will decide whether South Melbourne stays at South Melbourne or goes to Sydney.

Tonight, the members of the South Melbourne Football Club have their last chance to act.

We call on all members of the South Melbourne Football Club to attend the

Extraordinary Meeting tonight and vote for your Club and your future.

This is the final round in the battle to keep South at South.

It is our last chance to act.

But with your support you have a great chance.

³⁹² See Prue Innes, 'South meeting goes ahead', *Age*, 22 September, 1981, p. 38; Bill Cannon, 'Guards at Swans meeting', *Herald*, 22 September, 1981, p. 44; Anonymous, 'South set for meeting', *Sun*, 22 September, 1981, p. 2. The number of members eligible to vote at the 22 September meeting is unclear from the newspaper reports. Cannon noted that almost 800 new members could vote, along with the original 1300, while Innes claimed the number of new members was 791. The anonymous article in the *Sun* noted that South had 1266 members prior to 1 June, 1981 and that 794 new members had been accepted.

³⁹³ Advertisement, 'Keep South at South. Last Chance Tonight', *Sun*, 22 September, 1981, p. 83.

This was the only paid advertisement to appear in any of the major daily newspapers throughout the entire South Melbourne relocation saga and although not a report by a newspaper journalist, it is indicative of the impact of the relocation campaign and the importance of the extraordinary meeting.³⁹⁴ The drama and sensation of the meeting was exacerbated by the use of a full-page advertisement, bold capital letters and the suggestion that it was South Melbourne's 'last chance'.

In the *Herald* on 22 September, Bill Cannon reported that the battle for control of the club would reach a climax at the meeting and that it was likely to be a cliffhanger.³⁹⁵ His article was further sensationalised by the heading 'Guards at Swans meeting', in reference to the security guards who were employed to check the membership credentials of people who attempted to gain entry to the Caulfield Town Hall on the night of 22 September.

The extraordinary meeting on 22 September received a substantial amount of print media coverage. The *Age* reported the meeting on the front page of the newspaper on 23 September, removing it from the segregated enclave of the sports pages.³⁹⁶ As Hall suggested, this indicates that a phenomenon of great public resonance was being encountered and that sport had 'gone political'.³⁹⁷ This was particularly true of the extraordinary meeting on 22 September, as South Melbourne members voted not only on the future of the South Melbourne football Club, but also on the expansion of the VFL. Furthermore, the story had been politicised by KSAS's demand that the South Melbourne members be given a democratic vote, the court case throughout August, and the intervention of Bob Hawke in the dispute in early July.

Articles in the *Age*, *Herald* and *Sun* reported that South Melbourne members had jammed into the Caulfield Town Hall and that due to strict security measures, many

³⁹⁴ It is likely that the KSAS group chose the *Sun* because it had the highest circulation of the three daily Melbourne newspapers at the time.

³⁹⁵ Bill Cannon, 'Guards at Swans meeting', *Herald*, 22 September, 1981, p. 44.

³⁹⁶ Michael Doyle and Mike Coward, 'Next stop Sydney? Swans cast their vote', *Age*, 23 September, 1981, p. 1.

³⁹⁷ Hall, 'The treatment of 'football hooliganism' in the press', p. 18.

had waited up to an hour to gain entry.³⁹⁸ The headlines in the *Sun*, 'SOUTH'S D-DAY!', and the *Herald*, 'SWANS CLIFF-HANGER', were sensationalised by the use of capital letters, large, bold typeface and their prominent position on the back page of the respective newspapers. Of the three major daily newspapers, however, the *Age* was the only one to describe the members as 'angry', or claim that officials of the club had been 'booed and shouted down'.³⁹⁹ The *Sun* described the meeting as 'emotional', but in general all three newspapers used a measured tone to report the proceedings. Each of the newspapers reported that approximately eighty percent of the people that attended the meeting voted in favour of the KSAS proposals, but that the result of the vote would not be known until the next day, as approximately one thousand proxy votes were yet to be counted. The *Age*, *Herald* and *Sun* also reported that KSAS were confident of victory.

All except one of the *Age*, *Herald* and *Sun* articles that referred to the extraordinary meeting adopted the hard news mode of sports writing. Ron Reed's 'Swan sparks but no flair' adopted the orthodox rhetoric mode and argued that although South Melbourne's extraordinary meeting was an emotional occasion, where 'much mention [was] made of things like loyalty and tradition', the argument 'boiled down, purely and simply, to the most necessary of all evils, money'.⁴⁰⁰ In this respect, Reed picked up on the theme that had been articulated throughout the relocation saga in the print media, that the South Melbourne options were 'Sydney or bust' and that South Melbourne could not survive financially without considering radical options, such as relocation or amalgamation. To what the 'no flair' in the headline of Reed's article referred was clearer towards the end of his analysis, where he noted that the outcome of the South Melbourne vote was of great significance to the future of football, 'yet it has somehow failed to really grab the attention of the bloke in the street'. Reed did not articulate, or perhaps realise, that he and other journalists at the *Age*, *Herald* and *Sun* played a part in that lack of attention. In part, this was due

³⁹⁸ Michael Doyle and Mike Coward, 'Next stop Sydney? Swans cast their vote', *Age*, 23 September, 1981, p. 1; Mike Coward and Andrew Rule, 'First vote says stay here', *Age*, 23 September, pp. 36, 34; Ron Reed and Bruce Matthews, 'Swans Cliff-hanger', *Herald*, 23 September, 1981, p. 42; Michael Davis, 'Swans vote, but still in the dark', *Sun*, 23 September, 1981, p. 3; Michael Davis and Peter Simunovich, 'South's D-Day', *Sun*, 23 September, 1981, p. 84.

³⁹⁹ Michael Doyle and Mike Coward, 'Next stop Sydney? Swans cast their vote', *Age*, 23 September, 1981, p. 1.

⁴⁰⁰ Ron Reed, 'Swan sparks but no flair', *Herald*, 23 September, 1981, p. 41.

to the overwhelming use of hard news reporting, the overt focus on the economic rationalism in South Melbourne's proposal to the VFL and that until reports of the extraordinary meeting were published on 23 September, South Melbourne's move to Sydney had been represented by the major daily newspapers primarily as a forgone conclusion. Finally, Reed advocated that 'a couple of blokes in red jumpers' selling raffle tickets wasn't enough to 'put goals on the scoreboard', a suggestion that the KSAS campaign was living in the past and that the club needed to 'think bigger than that'.

The front page *Age* report on the South Melbourne extraordinary meeting was neither the longest article, nor did it include the largest heading. However, the accompanying photograph, which covered approximately one-fifth of the front page meant that the story dominated the front page space. The photograph is reproduced below:⁴⁰¹

Next stop Sydney? Swans cast their vote



⁴⁰¹ Michael Doyle and Mike Coward, 'Next stop Sydney? Swans cast their vote', *Age*, 23 September, 1981, p.1.

This photograph is significant for two reasons. First, until this point in the relocation saga, the Age had published small photographs of Bob Hawke⁴⁰², Alan Bond⁴⁰³, Jack Marks⁴⁰⁴, Rupert Murdoch⁴⁰⁵ and a large photograph of the South Melbourne team at training.⁴⁰⁶ Second, it was the first Age photograph that featured South Melbourne supporters. The photograph that appeared on the back page of the Age, reproduced below, was the second and the last⁴⁰⁷:



Keep South at South: members at last night's meeting cheer and applaud a speaker against the move to Sydney.

Coverage of the extraordinary meeting took up the entire back page of the *Sun* on 23 September, with a prominent photograph of a large number of South Melbourne members seated in the Caulfield Town Hall and a smaller photograph of South Melbourne members casting their vote into a ballot box.⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰² Mike Coward, 'Hawke to fight for members', *Age*, 16 July, 1981, p. 28; Corrie Perkin, 'South agrees to new talks', *Age*, 20 July, 1981, p. 23 (in the photograph that accompanies this article Hawke is pictured talking to Jack Marks, and South Melbourne board member and former president George Camakaris).

⁴⁰³ Mike Coward, 'Hawke to fight for members', *Age*, 16 July, 1981, p. 28

⁴⁰⁴ Corrie Perkin, 'Sydney push for VFL club: Marks', *Age*, 24 July, 1981, p. 28.

⁴⁰⁵ David Wilson and Damien Murphy, 'Stacking bid at South', *Age*, 10 September, 1981, p. 32

⁴⁰⁶ Trevor Grant, 'TV to finance Sydney airlift', *Age*, 31 July, 1981, p. 28.

⁴⁰⁷ Mike Coward and Andrew Rule, 'First vote says stay here', *Age*, 23 September, 1981, p. 36.

⁴⁰⁸ Michael Davis and Peter Simunovich, 'South's D-Day!', *Sun*, 23 September, 1981, p. 84.

In summary, only four photographs (two in the *Sun* and two in the *Age*) focussed on South Melbourne supporters. All four photographs were candid and structured to reveal, as Becker suggested, how people react when the comfortable façade of daily life is torn away.⁴⁰⁹ The extraordinary meeting, by definition, was not an ordinary event. Moreover, members of a VFL club had never previously voted on whether their club should move to another State, or with the knowledge that the decision of the majority might be against the wishes of the board of management that they had elected and the VFL, the governing administrative body for football in Victoria. Hall argued that the news photograph is not the representation of objective truth, but rather a single moment that has been selected to represent a complex chain of events.⁴¹⁰ In the case of the South Melbourne relocation saga, both the *Sun* and the *Age* chose to represent the high point with two sets of almost identical photographs. One showed South Melbourne members casting their votes into a ballot box, and the other was a shot of the crowd. In each of the photographs of the assembled crowd of South Melbourne members, the people 'caught in the moment' were applauding. The photographs are so similar that the same group of supporters were photographed, but from different angles. Both the *Age* and the *Sun* chose to represent that a democratic vote was part of the meeting and that the meeting had been well attended by animated supporters.

On 24 September the *Sun* and *Age* reported that the KSAS group had won control of the South Melbourne Football Club by less than ten votes.⁴¹¹ Like the day before the news was not restricted to the segregated enclave of the sports pages. The *Sun* published the article 'SOUTH TO STAY, BUT SO CLOSE' on the front page. Capital letters and bold typeface were again used to emphasise that the story was important and sensational. Both the *Sun* and the *Age* reported that the KSAS group had taken control of the South Melbourne board and both published a large

⁴⁰⁹ Becker, 'Photojournalism and the Tabloid Press', p. 143.

⁴¹⁰ Hall, 'The determinations of news photographs', p. 241.

⁴¹¹ Peter Simunovich, 'South to stay, but so close', *Sun*, 24 September, 1981, p. 1; Peter Simunovich, 'South to stay, but so close', *Sun*, 24 September, 1981, p. 68; Anonymous, 'South stayput victory', *Age*, 24 September, 1981, p. 1; Mike Coward, 'South stayputs win', *Age*, 24 September, 1981, pp. 30, 29. See also David Wilson, 'One vote decided South faction row', *Age*, 25 September, 1981, p. 1, where Wilson noted that the vote in favour of the KSAS group replacing the existing administration was carried 961 to 960.

photograph of Keogh on the back page. The *Sun* chose a large close-up shot of a gleeful Keogh being interviewed by the media, while the *Age* photographed a pensive Keogh on the terraces of the Lakeside Oval.⁴¹² From 24 September Keogh became a primary news source and thereafter photographs of him were published regularly with reports on the South Melbourne relocation saga. The *Age*, *Herald* and *Sun* also reported that the new administration was bracing itself ahead of problems and unrest. In particular, Simunovich and Coward reported that the South Melbourne players were disappointed with the decision to unseat the board led by Marks, while Matthews, in keeping with the *Herald's* theme of war, reported that 'strife-torn South Melbourne is fighting a critical battle'.⁴¹³ Specifically, a substantial number of players wanted to play in Sydney and several had already indicated their desire to leave the club.

An anonymous 'editorial opinion' in the *Age* adopted the orthodox rhetoric mode in a blunt assessment of South Melbourne's administrative position on 24 September.⁴¹⁴ It argued that despite the 'rhetoric and intense activity of recent months, the problems are just beginning'. The article identified that there was a division between the players and new coach Quade on the one hand and the new administration on the other. This, coupled with a perilous financial situation argued the editorial, meant that the club required the VFL's help. Furthermore, the editorial advocated that the members' vote had decided the issue and as such, it was irrelevant whether the VFL thought the Sydney move was the right or wrong decision.

The predictions of division between the players and the new administration, as well as the club seeking help from the VFL were both realised, as South Melbourne plunged deeper into crisis.

⁴¹² Peter Simunovich, 'South to stay, but so close', *Sun*, 24 September, 1981, p. 68; Mike Coward, 'South stayputs win', *Age*, 24 September, 1981, p. 30.

⁴¹³ Bruce Matthews, 'Troubled Swans hit by new rebellion', *Herald*, 24 September, 1981, p. 36.

⁴¹⁴ Editorial Opinion, 'Problems just starting', *Age*, 24 September, 1981, p. 30.

Player Dissent

The division between South Melbourne players and the new KSAS board of management dominated the sports news from September to December of 1981. Furthermore, the demands of the players were at odds with the new board of management's purpose of playing in Melbourne, to the point that the KSAS administration was unable to act effectively. This was compounded by the fact that the players were routine news sources for the print media and were recognisable figures to the football public. As such, their opinions were reported consistently and their actions received extensive coverage in the South Melbourne relocation saga.

At 1pm on 28 September the new KSAS board called the players to a special 6pm meeting that evening, to discuss their policies. According to the *Age*, at 6.16pm the meeting started at the Lakeside Oval offices, at which point the players requested permission to hold a private twenty-minute meeting before hearing the policy address.⁴¹⁵ The request was denied. As a result, at 6.19pm all but five of the players then 'marched in Indian file through the front bar and into the car park where they convened a meeting'. At 6.23pm, the players decided not to return to the meeting with the new administration and 'headed for their cars'. The article 'South players snub new board', on the back page of the *Age* on 29 September, was accompanied by a large photograph of the players gathered in the car park and a smaller photograph of the players arriving for the meeting with the KSAS board. The specific details in the *Age* report, the photographs and a 'timetable of a split' feature on the timing of the meeting and walkout created a sense of immediacy, a sense of 'being there' for the reader.

On 29 September, the *Age*, *Herald* and *Sun* reported that the South Melbourne players walked out on a meeting with the new KSAS board of management the night before. In an article on the front page of the *Age* titled 'South players walk out on new regime', Coward noted that a 'fresh split has hit the South Melbourne Football Club'.⁴¹⁶ In the *Sun* a large headline on the back page announced 'Another Swan

⁴¹⁵ Mike Coward, 'South players snub new board', *Age*, 29 September, 1981, p. 38.

⁴¹⁶ Mike Coward, 'South players walk out on new regime', *Age*, 29 September, 1981, p. 1.

battle', while the *Herald* downplayed the importance of the walkout by including its details as a complement to the primary story about an attempt by Reg Myers, chairman of the Committee to Advance Australian Football in Sydney, to force another extraordinary meeting on the South Melbourne board.⁴¹⁷

The South Melbourne players met at one of the players' houses on 29 September to discuss the events of the night before and review their options. Spokesman, club captain and Brownlow medallist Barry Round was quoted in the *Age* and *Sun* as saying that the meeting was orderly, that the players had agreed not to discuss the proceedings publicly, that a list of questions for the new board of management was being developed and that the players had decided to meet with the new administration again.⁴¹⁸ A photograph of Round was published with both articles. In the *Sun*, Simunovich reported that the players were in an angry mood and that they were 'furious that they were not given an opportunity to meet among themselves before the hastily-arranged talk with the new administration'.⁴¹⁹

The first instance of player dissent followed a pattern that was repeated during the last three months of 1981. First, a meeting between the players and the South Melbourne administration was called. Second, the players were unhappy with the meeting, because of the way it was conducted, the attitude of the South Melbourne administration or what was said at the meeting. Third, the players met together to discuss the previous meeting and develop their strategy. Finally, another meeting was scheduled, at which the players presented their demands. Usually, the conduct or outcome of the last meeting in the cycle was sufficient to begin the process again, whereby the players, unhappy with the result, would meet again, to further discuss their options and formulate their demands.

⁴¹⁷ Peter Simunovich, 'Another Swan battle', *Sun*, 29 September, 1981, p. 76; Mike Sheahan and Bruce Matthews, 'Bid to oust South board', *Herald*, 29 September, 1981, p. 40.

⁴¹⁸ Mike Coward, 'Get-together at South', *Age*, 30 September, 1981, p. 36; Peter Simunovich, 'Swans agree to meeting', *Sun*, 30 September, 1981, pp. 76, 75.

⁴¹⁹ Peter Simunovich, 'Swans agree to meeting', *Sun*, 29 September, 1981, p. 76.

On 2 October, both the *Age* and *Sun* reported that the players and the new South Melbourne administration were engaged in talks.⁴²⁰ Coward and Simunovich reported that although the players and administration were talking, a settlement had not been reached. They both noted that Keogh was positive and confident of a peace deal being worked out, whereas Round was more guarded. There was, however, an important difference between the two. The *Sun* quoted Keogh as saying that South Melbourne was being run under 'management in crisis' and used the quote as the basis for the title of Simunovich's article – 'A crisis situation at South'. By contrast, the *Age* quoted Keogh as saying that 'it is management by crisis at the moment, but every day it gets a little bit easier'. It is unclear which quote is correct, yet it is likely, given that the *Age* quoted a whole sentence, as opposed to three words, that the *Sun* used what Keogh said to sensationalise the story and exaggerate the dispute between the players and Keogh's administration. On the surface, the difference between management *in* crisis and management *by* crisis was small, yet the change in emphasis was significant.

By 6 October, Michael Davis reported in the *Sun* that 'the rift between the new board of the South Melbourne Football Club and its players appears to be gradually healing', as the players started pre-season training, albeit without a coach.⁴²¹ The next day, however, it was clear that far from healing, the rift appeared to be widening. The players, reported the *Age*, had boycotted the second and further training sessions, in case it 'would be seen as supporting the new administration'.⁴²² In the *Herald*, Sheahan wrote, in the orthodox rhetoric mode, that Keogh and KSAS may have won the right to govern the club, but they 'do not have the equipment to do the job' and that the time had come for 'emotion to make way for commonsense'.⁴²³ Furthermore, Sheahan noted that the new administration and the bulk of the players remained wide apart and that 'a newspaper story yesterday suggesting "Patch up at South" prompted all but eight players to boycott training last night'. It is not clear from the newspaper reports why the players objected to Davis'

⁴²⁰ Mike Coward, 'Swans still undecided', *Age*, 2 October, 1981, p. 32; Peter Simunovich, 'A crisis situation at South', *Sun*, 2 October, 1981, p. 63.

⁴²¹ Michael Davis, 'Patch up at South', *Sun*, 6 October, 1981, p. 87.

⁴²² Geoff Slattery, 'Swans boycott second training', *Age*, 7 October, 1981, p. 30.

⁴²³ Mike Sheahan, 'South needs compromise', *Herald*, 7 October, 1981, p. 52.

article in the *Sun*, but it is likely, from the content of Sheahan and Geoff Slattery's articles, that the juxtaposition of the news of players training and the suggestion that the two factions were close to peace was cause for the players to act.⁴²⁴ In this respect it was one of the few occasions during the South Melbourne relocation saga, in which a section of the print media adopted the role of an 'involved actor', whereby the newspaper reporting of an event altered the development of the crisis.⁴²⁵ Dagenais suggested that in playing this role the media necessarily abandon the 'observer' role, yet it is unclear whether Davis or the *Sun* made a conscious decision to adopt a position, or whether they inadvertently prompted one of the crisis protagonists to take action, despite functioning primarily as an 'observer'.

From 7 October until 14 October, the dispute between the players and the new South Melbourne administration continued, although it was somewhat in limbo, as both sides waited for the result of the VFL directors vote on whether to rescind the motion to allow the club to play in Sydney in 1982. The original vote, on 29 July required a simple majority to carry the proposal, but under League regulations a three-quarters majority was required to rescind the decision. In the meantime, both the *Age* and *Sun* speculated that former South Melbourne player, John Rantall, was going to be named coach for the forthcoming season, replacing Ricky Quade, also a former player, who had been appointed by the previous administration.⁴²⁶ The *Age* noted that although Rantall was a popular figure at South Melbourne, most of the players would be shattered by the news that Quade had been discarded. Coward described the likely appointment of Rantall as 'another bizarre twist to the extraordinary South saga'.⁴²⁷

On 14 October, the VFL directors refused to rescind their earlier decision to approve South Melbourne's proposal to play eleven home games at the SCG in 1982 and in doing so exacerbated the dispute between the new South administration and

⁴²⁴ Michael Davis, 'Patch up at South', *Sun*, 6 October, 1981, p. 87; Mike Sheahan, 'South needs compromise', *Herald*, 7 October, 1981, p. 52; Geoff Slattery, 'Swans boycott second training', *Age*, 7 October, 1981, p. 30.

⁴²⁵ Dagenais, 'Media in Crises', p. 123.

⁴²⁶ See Mike Coward, 'South in bid for Rantall', *Age*, 9 October, 1981, p. 28; Peter Simunovich, 'Rantall is the man for South', *Sun*, 11 October, 1981, p.73; Andrew Rule, 'Rantall South coach', *Age*, 14 October, 1981, p. 34.

⁴²⁷ Mike Coward, 'South in bid for Rantall', *Age*, 9 October, 1981, p. 28.

the majority of the senior players. The *Herald* and *Sun* reported the decision on the back page, while the *Age* covered the story on the front and back pages.⁴²⁸ In the *Herald*, Sheahan's article was titled 'Crisis talks for Swans', in which he noted that the three groups involved in the dispute, the old administration and its supporters, the new administration and the players, would all be meeting separately to determine the future of the club.⁴²⁹ In the *Age*, Coward noted that the new KSAS administration was 'rocked by the judgement', while the 'angry South players were elated'.⁴³⁰

The South Melbourne players were reported to have 'reaffirmed their resolve to play in Sydney', in an article published in the *Sun* on 16 October.⁴³¹ The headline, 'Sydney or bust – players', repeated the phrase that the newspaper used to break the story of South Melbourne's Sydney proposal on 2 July and the *Herald* used as a headline to frame the views of coach Ian Stewart at the end of July.⁴³² The focus of this article, the players' views and demands, was indicative of the general theme of newspaper reporting until the resolution of the South Melbourne relocation saga. On 23 October the *Age* reported that a group of approximately twenty South Melbourne players, including most of the senior team, had retained the services of solicitor Issac Apel to 'put their case to the club's administration'.⁴³³ Apel quickly became a key figure in the dispute between the players and the South Melbourne administration. He also became a reliable and routine source of information for sports journalists in his role as spokesman for the players.

⁴²⁸ Anonymous, 'Swans lose VFL vote on Sydney', *Age*, 15 October, 1981, p. 1; Mike Coward, 'VFL "no" sends South to Sydney', *Age*, 15 October, 1981, pp. 32, 30; Mike Sheahan, 'Crisis talks for Swans', *Herald*, 15 October, 1981, p. 48; Jack Dunn, 'Swans still for Sydney', *Sun*, 15 October, 1981, p. 80.

⁴²⁹ Mike Sheahan, 'Crisis talks for Swans', *Herald*, 15 October, 1981, p. 48

⁴³⁰ Mike Coward, 'VFL "no" sends South to Sydney', *Age*, 15 October, 1981, pp. 32, 30.

⁴³¹ Greg Baum and Jack Dunn, 'Sydney or bust – players', *Sun*, 16 October, 1981, p. 71.

⁴³² Peter Simunovich, 'Sydney or bust!', *Sun*, 2 July, 1981, pp. 64-63; Mike Sheahan, 'Sydney or bust! – Says Stewart', *Herald*, 30 July, 1981, p. 38

⁴³³ Geoff Slattery, 'Senior Swans meet over fears', *Age*, 23 October, 1981, p. 26.

On 7 November the *Age*, *Herald* and *Sun* reported that eighteen South Melbourne players were officially on strike.⁴³⁴ Simunovich wrote in an article published on the front page of the *Sun* that the strike, 'believed to be unprecedented in modern football history, follows claims by players that their demands have not been met by the club'.⁴³⁵ The headline of the article was published in a bold typeface and used capital letters to emphasise its importance – 'WALKOUT – SWANS IN SHOCK'. Simunovich reported that summonses had been issued on South Melbourne by seventeen players, claiming that more than \$79,000 was owed to the players, as a result of not being paid since round ten of the season. Furthermore, Apel was quoted, in both the *Sun* and the *Age* as saying that at least eleven players had terminated their contracts with the club, as a result of the club's outstanding debt and the administration's failure to meet their demands, particularly the request that the administration guarantee that they were committed to the Sydney venture in the long-term. As a result, the players, according to Apel, were 'no longer obliged to carry out orders under the present administration and coach John Rantall'.⁴³⁶ In the *Herald*, Ron Reed took a different tack when he argued that the 'so-called strike' was not about the unpaid debts, but about the future of the football club, as indicated by the article's headline – 'Swans strike out for Sydney'.⁴³⁷ Specifically, Reed suggested the dispute was about whether the club had a long-term future in Sydney, as the players wanted, or whether it would just play out a one-year trial period, as the KSAS administration hoped.

In an attempt to alleviate its liquidity problems and return to a situation of relative financial stability, the South Melbourne administration appealed to the VFL on 18 November for a loan of \$400,000 from the ground improvement fund.⁴³⁸ On 25 November the VFL directors agreed to loan South Melbourne the money. Greg Baum reported in the *Sun* ('SOUTH GETS CASH') that South Melbourne 'became

⁴³⁴ Geoff Slattery, 'South players on strike', *Age*, 7 November, 1981, p. 40; Ron Reed, 'Swans strike out for Sydney', *Herald*, 7 November, 1981, p. 28; Peter Simunovich, 'Walkout – Swans in shock', *Sun*, 7 November, 1981, p.1.

⁴³⁵ Peter Simunovich, 'Walkout – Swans in shock', *Sun*, 7 November, 1981, p.1.

⁴³⁶ Peter Simunovich, 'Walkout – Swans in shock', *Sun*, 7 November, 1981, p.1.

⁴³⁷ Ron Reed, 'Swans strike out for Sydney', *Herald*, 7 November, 1981, p. 28

⁴³⁸ Geoff Slattery, 'Swans asks VFL for \$400,000 loan', *Age*, 19 November, 1981, p. 34; Anonymous, 'Swans' SOS to League', *Sun*, 19 November, 1981, p. 76.

the first VFL club to be bailed out of a financial crisis by the League' and quoted Aylett as saying that 'no money has ever been lent to a VFL club before'.⁴³⁹ The *Age*, *Herald* and *Sun* all noted that some of the conditions of the loan were that the administration committed the club to Sydney for at least two years, the money was not to be used to buy players and that the VFL would administer the loan.⁴⁴⁰

In the late edition of the *Herald* on 3 December, Sheahan announced that Round had quit South Melbourne that afternoon.⁴⁴¹ In the *Age* and *Sun* on 4 December, Apel was quoted as saying that the other striking players were expected to follow Round's lead and resign.⁴⁴² On the same day Sheahan wrote another article in the *Herald*, and acted in the role of 'transmitter', as predicted by Dagenais, whereby he made himself the spokesperson of the players.⁴⁴³ The article was titled 'Swans: Why we are out' and was published with a photograph of the players meeting with Apel at his legal offices.⁴⁴⁴ The byline of Sheahan's article read 'Mike Sheahan, Herald Chief Football Writer, gets the inside story on the South Melbourne row'. The inside story referred to was the players, their views and their actions in the relocation saga, while the tag 'Chief Football Writer' confirmed that the story was written by a credible, expert source. Sheahan claimed in the article that he spent '1 ½ hours with a group of players who literally have put their future on the line on a matter of principle', and that 'they came to bear their soul'. Sheahan also advocated that 'it's not a question of money or loyalty, more a question of trust and respect'. Throughout the article the players were represented as people worthy of the reader's sympathy, for they had been hard done by. 'There is not doubt in my mind', wrote Sheahan, 'that the striking players believe they have been continually and deliberately misled'. Sheahan complemented this assessment by describing Apel, the player's representative, at various times as 'confident, dapper, energetic and hard-

⁴³⁹ Greg Baum, 'South gets cash', *Sun*, 26 November, 1981, p. 84.

⁴⁴⁰ Ron Carter, '\$400,000 loan saves South', *Age*, 26 November, 1981, p. 38; Peter Stone, '2 years, South is told', *Herald*, 26 November, 1981, p. 52; Greg Baum, 'South gets cash', *Sun*, 26 November, 1981, p. 84; Geoff Slattery, 'Loan ties Swans to Sydney home', *Age*, 27 November, 1981, p. 36.

⁴⁴¹ Mike Sheahan, 'Round quits South', *Herald*, 3 December, 1981, p. 64.

⁴⁴² Geoff Slattery, 'South saga latest: Round resigns', *Age*, 4 December, 1981, p. 32; Peter Simunovich, 'Swan rebels set to resign', *Sun*, 4 December, 1981, p. 88.

⁴⁴³ Dagenais, 'Media in Crises', p. 123.

⁴⁴⁴ Mike Sheahan, 'Swans: Why we are out', *Herald*, 4 December, 1981, p. 30.

nosed'. Throughout the article, Sheahan mixed past and present tense, with a great number of the quotes written in the present tense, to create the sense of 'being there' for the reader. Reflecting on the resignation of Round, Sheahan wrote 'Round looks up at me, as if seeking reassurance, and says: "I just didn't run out on all these other blokes"'. Sheahan's article was extremely supportive of the players and was indicative of the concluding stages of the relocation saga. The players were clearly represented more sympathetically than the KSAS based administration.

On 9 December, Simunovich reported in the *Sun* that an 'eleventh hour' peace bid had failed to resolve the dispute at South Melbourne.⁴⁴⁵ The solution, he noted, revolved around the board of management making a long-term commitment to the Sydney solution and members of the old board being accepted back on to a composite board. Both the *Age* and *Sun* reported on 9 December that an informal meeting of the VFL presidents had taken place, at which it was believed the general consensus was that they wanted the VFL to 'take over South Melbourne and field its players as a Sydney-based team under the VFL banner'.⁴⁴⁶ On the same day, under the headline 'VFL MUST ACT ON SWANS', Sheahan adopted the orthodox rhetoric mode and claimed that the South Melbourne club was a shambles and that it was time for the VFL to make a meaningful decision at the director's meeting that night.⁴⁴⁷ On 10 December the *Age* and *Sun* reported that as a result of the VFL directors meeting, the VFL had decided to intervene in the dispute, in the form of Aylett and Hamilton being present at meeting between South Melbourne players and administration.⁴⁴⁸ The article in the *Sun* covered the entire back page, with a large headline and a photo of Hamilton announcing the VFL's decision.

The intervention by Aylett and Hamilton did little good, as the South Melbourne players walked out of a meeting with the KSAS administration on 10 December, after the board refused to resign. The *Sun* published a photograph of Round and

⁴⁴⁵ Peter Simunovich, 'No go' in South bid for peace', *Sun*, 9 December, 1981, p. 92.

⁴⁴⁶ Ron Carter, 'Annex South - club chiefs', *Age*, 9 December, 1981, p. 36; Peter Simunovich, 'No go' in South bid for peace', *Sun*, 9 December, 1981, p. 92.

⁴⁴⁷ Mike Sheahan, 'VFL must act on Swans', *Herald*, 9 December, 1981, p. 60.

⁴⁴⁸ Ron Carter, 'South row: VFL steps in', *Age*, 10 December, 1981, p. 36; Peter Simunovich, 'Swans: VFL steps in', *Sun*, 10 December, 1981, p. 92.

Max James walking out of VFL house that took up half of the front page on 11 December, under the headline 'WALKOUT!'.⁴⁴⁹ The *Age* reported that the rift at South had widened even further, while on the back page of the *Sun*, the headline for Simunovich's article was 'NEW VFL CRISIS: SOUTH IN WALKOUT'.⁴⁵⁰ Simunovich reported that the VFL appeared certain to take over the 'shattered' club, while Trevor Grant suggested that the South relocation saga had become an acute embarrassment to the League. The most pessimistic report appeared in the *Herald*. Under the headline 'Swansong for South near?', Peter Stone claimed that as a beleaguered club with virtually no members, South Melbourne was almost certain to be suspended from the VFL.

The players' strikes and their refusal to budge on any of their demands, particularly that the new board of management commit to a long-term future in Sydney, restricted the KSAS based administration's ability to run the club and eventually forced the VFL's hand. It appeared that the club was on the verge of extinction.

Collins Takes Control

On 12 December the *Age* and *Herald* reported that the South Melbourne board of management agreed to resign on 11 December and that Bill Collins, 'media personality and the country's top horse race caller', had been declared as the new president.⁴⁵¹ In the *Herald*, under the headline 'Swans' man of peace steps in', Reed suggested that bringing 'political peace to the disintegrating South Melbourne Football Club' would daunt Henry Kissinger, such was the enormity of the task that Collins was taking on.⁴⁵² Both the *Age* and *Herald* published large photographs of Collins and as the crisis proceeded towards a resolution, photographs of Collins became a common feature of the South Melbourne relocation saga reporting in Melbourne's three major daily newspapers. The ascendancy of Collins to the South

⁴⁴⁹ Anonymous, 'Walkout!', *Sun*, 11 December, 1981, p. 1.

⁴⁵⁰ Trevor Grant, 'South rift widens', *Age*, 11 December, 1981, p. 28; Peter Simunovich, 'New VFL crisis: South in walkout', *Sun*, 11 December, 1981, p. 88.

⁴⁵¹ Ron Carter, 'Collins gets the call at South', *Age*, 12 December, 1981, p. 40; Ron Reed, 'Swans' man of peace steps in', *Herald*, 12 December, 1981, p. 34.

⁴⁵² Ron Reed, 'Swans' man of peace steps in', *Herald*, 12 December, 1981, p. 34.

Melbourne presidency was generally regarded as a move towards peace, according to the newspaper reporting and marked the beginning of the resolution phase of the crisis. In the *Sun* on 14 December an article titled 'Bill sparks fresh hope at South' claimed that Collins had a 'peace plan', was confident of finding a solution to the dispute and had introduced a new urgency and some commonsense to the dispute.⁴⁵³

The *Age* and *Sun* published photographs of Collins and Apel on 17 December, as both newspapers reported that a peace deal had been struck and South Melbourne had been saved.⁴⁵⁴ In the *Sun* the story 'SOUTH: IT'S A DEAL' covered the entire back page. The large heading, bold typeface, capital letters and exclamation mark emphasised the significance of the article. Simunovich noted that a new composite board of management had been formed as part of a peace deal struck with the players. In the *Age*, Carter reported that a compromise had saved South Melbourne, but the article's headline 'Who will coach South?' indicated that John Rantall's appointment as coach was still a sticking point for the players in the new peace deal. Carter's article was complemented by a timeline of 'The South Melbourne Crisis'. The last entry, 16 December, noted that 'the dispute appears settled'.⁴⁵⁵

The peace at South Melbourne did not last. On 21 December, Sheahan reported in the *Herald* that South Melbourne confirmed the appointment of John Rantall as coach for the 1982 season, which 'immediately sparked a resumption of the internal war'.⁴⁵⁶ The composite board of management put in place on 16 December was split on the coaching decision and Collins used his casting vote in favour of Rantall, rather than Quade. As a result, four of the five board members who had voted for Quade resigned their positions. Sheahan reported that a significant number of players would resign if the decision stood.

⁴⁵³ Greg Baum, 'Bill sparks fresh hope at South', *Sun*, 14 December, 1981, p. 75.

⁴⁵⁴ Ron Carter, 'Who will coach South?', *Age*, 17 December, 1981, p. 32; Peter Simunovich, 'South: It's a deal', *Sun*, 17 December, 1981, p. 76.

⁴⁵⁵ Anonymous, 'The South Melbourne Crisis', *Age*, 17 December, 1981, p. 32.

⁴⁵⁶ Mike Sheahan, 'Swan coach: war again', *Herald*, 21 December, 1981, p. 52.

On 22 December the *Sun* devoted the entire back page to coverage of the Rantall appointment.⁴⁵⁷ Photographs of Rantall, Quade, Collins, Keogh and Steve Wright (see below) were published, juxtaposed with the large headline 'SOUTH: A NEW CRISIS'. In the article, Simunovich reported that South Melbourne faced the possibility of being disqualified or suspended from the VFL. Likewise, the headline of Peter Wilmoth's article in the *Age* was 'VFL ready to move in'.⁴⁵⁸ In the *Age* Aylett was quoted as saying that the situation was chaotic and that the VFL had no confidence in the board, while in the *Sun* he was quoted as saying that South Melbourne were 'fighting for survival' and that recent developments had turned the clock back five days. The *Age*, like the *Sun*, published a photograph of South Melbourne rover Steve Wright being comforted in the car park at South Melbourne by fellow 'rebel' team mates (see below).⁴⁵⁹ Both photographs conveyed the sense that the South Melbourne relocation saga was highly emotional, and that the players had reached a breaking point. In this respect, the confirmation of Rantall's appointment was the last straw for the striking players, and possibly the last straw for the club.



STEVE WRIGHT holds his head in his hand after yesterday's meeting.

⁴⁵⁷ Peter Simunovich, 'South: A new crisis', *Sun*, 22 December, 1981, p. 60.

⁴⁵⁸ Peter Wilmoth, 'VFL ready to move in', *Age*, 22 December, 1981, p. 22.

⁴⁵⁹ Peter Wilmoth, 'VFL ready to move in' *Age*, 22 December, 1981, p. 20; Peter Simunovich, 'South: A new crisis', *Sun*, 22 December, 1981, p. 60.



Rover Stephen Wright, one of the 18 "rebel" players is consoled by team mates last night after the club's fragile peace deal collapsed. Picture: ROBERT LEESON.

On 23 December Sheahan reported in the *Herald* that 'South Melbourne today appointed Ricky Quade coach for 1982 in what is seen as the final solution to the crisis which threatened the club's existence'.⁴⁶⁰ The headline, 'Rantall quits for Quade' succinctly tells the story of the final chapter in South Melbourne's relocation saga. In an article titled 'PEACE' Simunovich reported in the *Sun* on 24 December that Rantall had decided to put South Melbourne first and had tendered his

⁴⁶⁰ Mike Sheahan, 'Rantall quits for Quade', *Herald*, 23 December, 1981, p. 22.

resignation in order to let Quade coach for the 1982 season.⁴⁶¹ Had he not done so, Simunovich claimed that 'there is little doubt the VFL competition would have had 11 teams next year'. The Age reported that Quade had pledged that he would do all he could 'to heal the scars at South' and Aylett was quoted as saying that 'I'm certain wiser heads will prevail now and the club can look forward to a successful move to Sydney'.⁴⁶²

Ricky Quade's appointment as coach of South Melbourne resolved the crisis that engulfed the club in the last six months of 1981. In 1982 South Melbourne played its home games at the SCG and changed its name to 'The Swans'. In 1983 the club and its players relocated to Sydney on a permanent basis, and changed its name again. It has been known as the Sydney Swans ever since.

Analysis

Crisis Event Status

The South Melbourne relocation saga was a crisis event, for both the club and the League. South Melbourne had played at the Lakeside Oval since 1874 and was a foundation member of the VFL and until the start of the 1982 season the VFL had been an exclusively state based competition. The relocation of a foundation member club to a city that primarily supported rugby league and did not have a strong Australian Rules football infrastructure was clearly a turning point, as well as a moment of rupture and discontinuity. The VFL was an extremely stable competition up until the 1980s and 1990s. As previously mentioned, it began in 1897 with eight teams – Carlton, Collingwood, Essendon, Fitzroy, Geelong, Melbourne, St Kilda and South Melbourne. In 1908 it admitted Richmond and University to League ranks, and in 1925 added Footscray, Hawthorn and North Melbourne. Apart from University's demise in 1914, the competition grew during the first quarter of the twentieth century and then remained stable and constant for in excess of fifty years.

⁴⁶¹ Peter Simunovich, 'Peace', *Sun*, 24 December, 1981, p. 52.

⁴⁶² Peter Wilmoth and Geoff Slattery, 'Coach Quade pledges to "heal scars"', *Age*, 24 December, p. 20.

The relocation of South Melbourne was a break with tradition and the antithesis of the VFL status quo.

As has already been noted, the South Melbourne relocation saga was also the first time a VFL club had been saved by financial intervention from the VFL administration and the first time that players had declared a strike to force club administrators to meet their demands. Stewart argued that player dissent began to increase at the beginning of the 1970s after a long period in which the players were, in general, both subservient and loyal.⁴⁶³ Specifically, players from Essendon and Collingwood refused to play in 1970 unless match payments were improved. The actions of the South Melbourne players during the relocation saga extended beyond financially motivated personal gain, or the perceived fairness of their contractual relationship with the club. During October, November and December of 1981 a group of rebel senior players effectively held the South Melbourne Football Club to ransom. For the first time in VFL history the players determined the future of the football club, not the administrators or the members. The players wanted to go to Sydney, which they did. The players wanted a composite board to be put in place of the Keogh led KSAS board, which it was. The players wanted Quade to coach, instead of Rantall, which he did. Until the South Melbourne relocation saga it was inconceivable that players could have an input into decision making processes, let alone the determination of a League club's future.

Newsworthiness

As a point of rupture and discontinuity within the VFL, the South Melbourne relocation saga was undoubtedly a newsworthy event. The relocation met the news value criteria in the simplification and social significance categories, as identified in the SCEPMTFA. Although the relocation of South Melbourne was not personified initially, as the saga wore on the newspapers were able to use the technique of personification, particularly once the South Melbourne players became intimately involved.

⁴⁶³ Stewart, *The Australian Football Business*, pp. 116-119.

Despite the fact that trial games had been played in Sydney in the years leading up to and including 1981 and the VFL were planning expansion into Sydney, the relocation of South Melbourne was outside the bounds of what would have been normally expected, predicted or wanted from a football news story. In this respect, Galtung and Ruge's suggestion that an event may be distorted to meet the expectations of the public and the press, explains in part the attempt by journalists within the first week of the story breaking to naturalise South Melbourne's proposal. This naturalisation was enhanced by the sports journalist's reference to the economic imperatives in South Melbourne's proposal, as well as the use of routine news sources within the club and the VFL.

The South Melbourne relocation saga was also continuous, as its impact and importance did not experience a significant overall decrease throughout the last six months of 1981. During August, the *Age*, *Herald* and *Sun* did, however, publish significantly fewer reports on the relocation saga than in July, September, October, November or December. The emphasis shifted from football related news reporting to court reporting as the intensity of the campaign decreased briefly. As such, the articles published were neither written by sports reporters, nor were anonymous and were less prominent than when they were published in the sports sections.

The South Melbourne relocation saga was odd, unusual, sensational, conflictual, controversial and prominent. Shoemaker, Danielian and Brendlinger suggested that if an event exhibited these features it was more likely to be recorded as news. Finally, the relocation saga, as the antithesis of the status quo, was a deviant event and satisfied the sixth and final news value category identified in the SCEPMTFA in Figure 9.

Reporting Cycle⁴⁶⁴



The print media representation of the South Melbourne relocation saga was limited to one element of the cycle identified in the SCEPMTFA. While the *Age*, *Herald* and *Sun* circulated information during the period that spanned from the beginning of July to the end of December 1981, there was no evidence that the journalists within these newspapers, or the newspapers as a collective questioned their role. Furthermore, Sheahan's article in the *Herald* on 7 October, in which he acknowledged that the players had been unhappy with the inference in Davis' article in the *Sun* the previous day, was the only instance during the entire crisis where a journalist or newspaper recognised the impact of another journalist or newspaper.⁴⁶⁵ There was also no evidence in the print media reporting to suggest that the *Age*, *Herald* or *Sun* had their roles throughout the crisis judged externally. In summary, contrary to the predictions of the theoretical framework of analysis, the reporting cycle did not go beyond the circulation of information.

⁴⁶⁴ The following diagram is a segment of the process model of the print media reporting of context specific crisis events in sport. Refer to Figure 9 for a complete graphic representation of the model.

⁴⁶⁵ Mike Sheahan, 'South needs compromise', *Herald*, 7 October, 1981, p. 52.

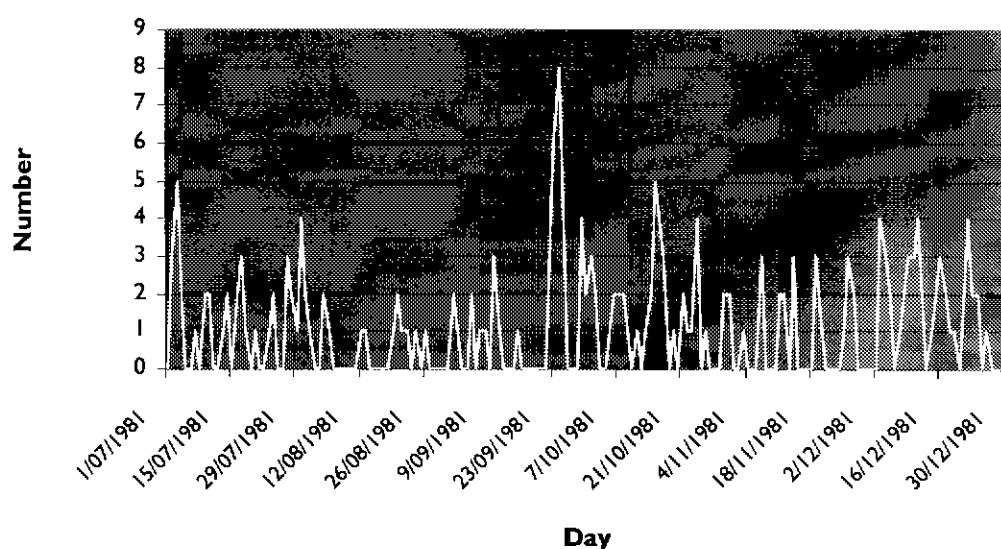
Reporting Phases⁴⁶⁶



The reporting period of the South Melbourne relocation saga began on 2 July, 1981 and concluded on 26 December, 1981. The following diagram represents the combined frequency and distribution of articles published in the *Age*, *Herald* and *Sun* throughout the crisis.

⁴⁶⁶ The following diagram is a segment of the process model of the print media reporting of context specific crisis events in sport. Refer to Figure 9 for a complete graphic representation of the model.

Figure 10: Frequency and Distribution of South Melbourne Relocation Saga Articles from July to December by Day - Combined



The diagram illustrates that the print media coverage of the South Melbourne relocation saga was relatively even from July until December. It demonstrates that there were several phases evident in the reporting. In particular, the most significant 'spike' in the reporting occurred between 22 and 25 September, at the time of the extraordinary meeting. Specifically, twenty-one articles were published during this period. The diagram also illustrates that a significant proportion of the South Melbourne relocation saga reporting occurred during the resolution phase of the crisis in December.

Print media reporting of the South Melbourne proposal to play its home games in Sydney began on 2 July in the *Age* and *Sun*. This was the first stage of the impact or manifestation phase. The second stage of the impact or manifestation phase began in mid-July as the newspapers began to report that the KSAS group had formed in opposition to the board of management's Sydney proposal.

The actions of the KSAS group dominated events during August and early September. As previously mentioned, the print media reporting of the South Melbourne relocation saga shifted its focus from football related news to court news

in August, as KSAS brought legal action against South Melbourne and the VFL. The reporting in the *Age*, *Herald* and *Sun* during August represented neither an impact, nor a high-point. Rather, it is more accurately seen as the low-point of the entire crisis, as newspapers used articles written anonymously or by non-sports reporters to relate dry, hard news facts about legal proceedings to their readers. Furthermore, in August the *Age*, *Herald* and *Sun* published the fewest articles about the relocation saga of any of the six months between July and December. The *Age* published eight articles during August, equivalent to nine per cent of its overall coverage, the *Herald* published four, equivalent to approximately eight percent and the *Sun* published one article, which represented less than two percent of its overall coverage.

Print media interest in the South Melbourne relocation saga was reignited in early September, in the lead up to the extraordinary meeting on 22 September, as several Sydney companies bought approximately nine hundred South Melbourne memberships in an attempt to stack the voting rolls and ensure that the club moved to Sydney. This phase of the crisis, from 1 September to 22 September, was a precursor to a high-point of the South Melbourne relocation saga. During this period, print media reporting intensified, particularly in the *Age*, but less so in the *Herald* and *Sun*. The *Age* claimed to have 'sighted' the membership lists that showed that the Sydney companies were trying to influence the vote, to the extent that small children had been signed up as members of South Melbourne. In doing so, the newspaper actively involved itself in the campaign and engaged in a form of investigative journalism that was not evident at all in the *Herald* or *Sun*, or in the *Age* during the rest of the relocation saga.

The first stage of the high-point or inventory phase of the South Melbourne relocation saga was the extraordinary meeting held at the Caulfield Town Hall on 22 September, at which the South Melbourne members present voted overwhelmingly in favour of the KSAS group. Each of the three newspapers covered the event and its impact extensively from 23 September onwards. In the case of the *Age* and *Sun*, the reporting of the extraordinary meeting contained photographs of the South Melbourne fans, the first and only time during the crisis that this occurred. Reports

of the extraordinary meeting and its impact also broke out of the segregated enclave of the sports pages and appeared on the front pages of the newspapers, which indicated that it was a moment of great importance and significance.

The second stage of the high-point or inventory phase of the South Melbourne relocation saga resulted from the events of 22 September and in particular, the election of the KSAS group to the board of management of the South Melbourne Football Club. As early as 24 September, an editorial in the *Age* suggested that the problems were just beginning for the club. Specifically, the division between the South Melbourne players and the new administration and the club's financial situation, were identified as central to the struggle over the club's future. By 29 September the *Age*, *Herald* and *Sun* reported that the players had walked out on the new South Melbourne administration. The print media reporting during October, November and December focussed on the relationship between the players and the KSAS based administration, as the players stuck to their demands, retained the services of solicitor Isaac Apel and invoked a strike, in order to get what they wanted. During this period, the VFL directors refused to rescind the decision that approved South Melbourne's Sydney proposal and then later approved a \$400,000 loan to keep the club solvent. Until late December, it was unclear from the print media reporting whether the South Melbourne Football Club would survive, as the division between the players and administration looked unlikely to be resolved.

The print media reporting of the South Melbourne relocation saga entered the final crisis phase of resolution and reaction when Bill Collins took over as president of the club. The *Age*, *Herald* and *Sun* represented Collins as a man of peace, who could unite the factions that were dividing South Melbourne. On 16 and 17 December, the three newspapers reported that a new composite board had been installed as part of a peace deal. The peace deal was short lived, as the players rejected the confirmation of Rantall's appointment as coach for the 1982 season. In turn, the new division was short lived, as Rantall resigned in favour of Quade and ensured that a resolution to the South Melbourne relocation saga was achieved.

As the above analysis shows, the print media representation of the South Melbourne relocation saga was divided into three phases, not four as predicted by the SCEPMTFA. Prior to 2 July, 1981 there was no evidence in the *Age*, *Herald* or *Sun* of the existence of an origin or warning phase. Moreover, two distinct stages were evident in both the manifestation/impact and high point/inventory phases, which was not predicted by the SCEPMTFA. The first stage of the manifestation or impact phase began on 2 July, when the *Age* and *Sun* reported South Melbourne's Sydney proposal. The second stage began with the reporting of the KSAS group. The first stage of the high point or inventory phase focussed on the extraordinary meeting on 22 September and its aftermath and the second on the player dissent from late September through to the end of December. In summary, the reporting phases during the South Melbourne relocation saga were more complicated than the SCEPMTFA predicted..

Reporting Modes⁴⁶⁷



The vast majority of newspaper reports throughout the South Melbourne relocation saga employed the hard news mode.

⁴⁶⁷ The following diagram is a segment of the process model of the print media reporting of context specific crisis events in sport. Refer to Figure 9 for a complete graphic representation of the model.

In the *Age*, ninety-four per cent of the articles published used the hard news mode.⁴⁶⁸ Five articles throughout the South Melbourne relocation saga were written in the orthodox rhetoric mode. Of these, three were editorial opinions and as such were anonymous.⁴⁶⁹ Of the remaining two, one was written by Garrie Hutchinson about the plight of clubs at the bottom of the ladder, such as South Melbourne and Footscray.⁴⁷⁰ David Wilson, who argued that the Swans were a bad credit risk, and that the VFL should consider not giving the club the \$400,000 it requested, wrote the other.⁴⁷¹ No articles were written in the *Age* throughout the South Melbourne relocation saga that adopted the soft news mode, or the reflexive analysis mode.

In the *Herald*, eighty-four per cent of the articles published used the hard news mode.⁴⁷² Two articles were written using the soft news mode and six were written using the orthodox rhetoric mode. No articles were published that adopted the reflexive analysis mode. The two soft news mode articles, written by Peter Stone, were published towards the end of the relocation saga. The first, on 21 December, acknowledged that the dispute between the players and the South Melbourne administration had taken its toll on Rantall, the focus of the article. In the second, on 26 December, Stone based the article on an interview with Steven Wright. Titled 'The footballer who cried', in reference to the photographs of Wright published in the *Age* and *Sun* on 22 December, the article was based on Wright's opinions of and emotions throughout the relocation saga.⁴⁷³ Of the six articles that adopted the orthodox rhetoric mode, four were written by Sheahan, one by Reed and one by Len Thompson, former VFL footballer and part-time *Herald* columnist at the time.⁴⁷⁴

⁴⁶⁸ A total of 83 out of 88 articles published used the hard news mode.

⁴⁶⁹ Editorial, 'League in the dark', *Age*, 3 July, 1981, p. 22; Editorial, 'Problems just starting', *Age*, 24 September, 1981, p. 30; Editorial, 'Football's season of discontents', *Age*, 25 September, 1981, p. 19.

⁴⁷⁰ Garrie Hutchinson, 'A black day for club loyalty', *Age*, 14 July, 1981, p. 36.

⁴⁷¹ David Wilson, 'Swans bad credit risk', *Age*, 3 December, 1981, p. 36.

⁴⁷² A total of 43 out of 51 articles published used the hard news mode.

⁴⁷³ Peter Wilmoth, 'VFL ready to move in', *Age*, 22 December, 1981, p. 22; Peter Simunovich, 'South: A new crisis', *Sun*, 22 December, 1981, p. 60.

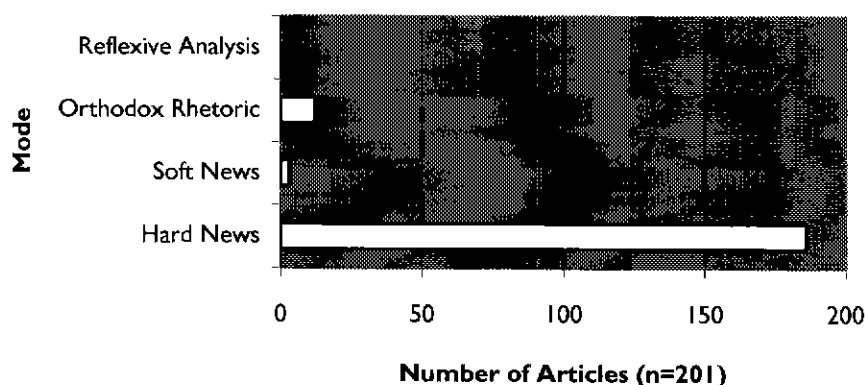
⁴⁷⁴ Len Thompson, 'Swans' big choice', *Herald*, 19 August, 1981, p. 42; Ron Reed, 'Swan sparks but no flair', *Herald*, 23 September, 1981, p. 41; Mike Sheahan, 'South needs compromise', *Herald*, 7 October, 1981, p. 52; Mike Sheahan, 'Keogh faces points KO', *Herald*, 15 October, 1981, p. 48; Mike Sheahan, 'Swans: Why we are out', *Herald*, 4 December, 1981, p. 30; Mike Sheahan, 'VFL must act on Swans', *Herald*, 9 December, 1981, p. 60.

In general, the articles by Sheahan and Reed were opinionated and advocated change at various times during the relocation saga. In this respect, they adopted the position of expert, in order to pass judgement on South Melbourne's plight. Sheahan's byline of 'chief football writer', and Reed's byline of 'sports editor' enhanced their credibility and authority. As a former South Melbourne player, Thompson primarily expressed the hope that the club would achieve success, wherever it was based.

In the *Sun*, ninety-seven per cent of the articles published used the hard news mode.⁴⁷⁵ One article, by former footballer and part-time *Sun* columnist Lou Richards, adopted the orthodox rhetoric mode, although the article was primarily a satirical examination of the new Sydney Swans.⁴⁷⁶ The only soft news article was written by Michael Wilkinson and was based on an interview with Allen Aylett.⁴⁷⁷ Like the Stone article in the *Herald*, Wilkinson primarily used the article to report Aylett's opinions on the South Melbourne relocation and to suggest that the president of the VFL had been 'doing it tough'. No articles in the *Sun* adopted the reflexive analysis mode.

The following diagram represents the overall distribution of the modes of sports writing through the South Melbourne relocation saga:

Figure 11: Modes of Sports Writing - South Melbourne relocation saga



⁴⁷⁵ A total of 60 out of 62 articles published used the hard news mode.

⁴⁷⁶ Lou Richards with Tom Prior, 'Sydney Sharks?', *Sun*, 3 July, 1981, p. 68.

⁴⁷⁷ Michael Wilkinson, 'Toughing it out', *Sun*, 17 October, 1981, p. 15.

Approximately ninety-three per cent of the major daily newspaper coverage of the South Melbourne relocation saga adopted the hard news mode. Only one per cent of articles adopted the soft news mode, while approximately six per cent used the orthodox rhetoric mode. Finally, the reflexive analysis mode was not used once during the coverage of the South Melbourne relocation saga in the *Age*, *Herald* or *Sun*. In summary, the SCEPMTFA provided more reporting modes than were actually used and failed to predict the dominance of the hard news mode.

Reporting Roles⁴⁷⁸



In the vast majority of the South Melbourne relocation saga reporting, the *Age* acted primarily as an 'observer' or a 'mirror', alternating between these roles from the impact of the crisis until its resolution. As mentioned above, the *Age*'s coverage of the extraordinary meeting on 22 September and the attempt to stack the South Melbourne membership rolls also partially fulfilled the 'witness' role criteria. Only three roles from Dagenais' model, 'observer', 'mirror' and 'witness', were identifiable in the coverage of the South Melbourne relocation saga by the *Age*.

⁴⁷⁸ The following diagram is a segment of the process model of the print media reporting of context specific crisis events in sport. Refer to Figure 9 for a complete graphic representation of the model.

There was no evidence to suggest that the *Age* or its journalists acted as 'transmitter', 'manipulated observer', 'neutral actor', 'involved actor' or 'censored'. There were also five articles in the *Age* that did not exhibit sufficient characteristics to be categorised into one of the eight roles predicted by Dagenais. These articles were published at various times throughout the South Melbourne relocation saga (3 July, 14 July, 24 September, 25 September, 3 December) and all adopted the orthodox rhetoric mode.⁴⁷⁹ Each advocated a position, yet it is unclear whether they altered the development of the crisis. As such, these articles cannot be considered to have established the *Age* in the role of 'involved actor'. Moreover, the articles did not appear at the end of the South Melbourne relocation saga. In the case of the 'editorial' published on 3 July, the 'observer' role was abandoned on the second day of coverage and a clear position on the proposal to play night games was articulated. Dagenais makes no provision in his model for this type of print media coverage.

The *Herald*, like the *Age*, also acted primarily as an 'observer' or 'mirror'. Unlike the *Age* or *Sun*, there was less evidence to suggest that the *Herald* adopted the role of 'witness'. The *Herald* reported on the same events, yet candid photographs were limited or non-existent. In particular, the newspaper published no photographs of the extraordinary meeting on 22 September and as such, the coverage lacked immediacy, or the sense of 'being there' for the reader. The *Herald* acted, unlike the *Age*, as a 'transmitter' in representing the views and motives of the striking players on several occasions throughout the crisis. There is no evidence to suggest that the *Herald* or its journalists acted as 'manipulated observer', 'neutral actor', 'involved actor' or 'censored'. As with the case of the *Age*, several articles were published in the *Herald* that used the orthodox rhetoric mode and advocated a position or opinion. As mentioned previously, articles by Sheahan, Reed and Thompson actively

⁴⁷⁹ Editorial, 'League in the dark', *Age*, 3 July, 1981, p. 22; Editorial, 'Problems just starting', *Age*, 24 September, 1981, p. 30; Editorial, 'Football's season of discontents', *Age*, 25 September, 1981, p. 19; Garrie Hutchinson, 'A black day for club loyalty', *Age*, 14 July, 1981, p. 36; David Wilson, 'Swans bad credit risk', *Age*, 3 December, 1981, p. 36.

intervened in the crisis discourse, yet there is no evidence of their impact and as such they do not fit any of the categories predicted by Dagenais.⁴⁸⁰

The *Sun* also acted primarily in the roles of 'observer' and 'mirror'. Like the *Age*, the *Sun* published photographs of the extraordinary meeting on 22 September, as well as the player walkout on 10 December and in doing so partially fulfilled the 'witness' criteria. There were also several articles in which the *Sun* acted as a 'transmitter'. There was no evidence to suggest, however, that the *Sun* had acted as a 'manipulated observer' or 'neutral actor'. Davis' report on 6 October was clear evidence that the *Sun* acted as an 'involved actor' during the South Melbourne relocation saga. Finally, there was no evidence that the *Sun* or its journalists had been 'censored'. Unlike the *Age* or *Herald*, there was only one instance in the *Sun* where the orthodox rhetoric mode was adopted. Richard's ghost written opinion piece is most accurately viewed as a humorous aside, rather than an active intervention in the crisis discourse. As such, it neither suggests that the *Sun* adopted the role of 'involved actor', nor fits Dagenais' model.

Overall, the print media adopted a number of roles, as predicted by Dagenais, but did not do so in sequence. The *Age*, *Herald* and *Sun* acted primarily as 'observers', whereby the facts of the South Melbourne relocation saga were faithfully reported, and as 'mirrors', whereby they 'conveyed the positions of all those who availed themselves of speech' during the saga. These two roles were interrelated because the newspaper journalists referred to a small number of routine sources in order to report the facts. These sources, such as South Melbourne's original board of management, the VFL, KSAS, the players and Bill Collins all sought to have their views reported, because of the nature of the dispute. For most of the South Melbourne relocation saga the roles of 'observer' and 'mirror' blurred. The sources that journalists used remained consistent, yet the emphasis shifted depending on the stage of the relocation saga. On 2 July, the primary sources for reporting South

⁴⁸⁰ Len Thompson, 'Swans' big choice', *Herald*, 19 August, 1981, p. 42; Ron Reed, 'Swan sparks but no flair', *Herald*, 23 September, 1981, p. 41; Mike Sheahan, 'South needs compromise', *Herald*, 7 October, 1981, p. 52; Mike Sheahan, 'Keogh faces points KO', *Herald*, 15 October, 1981, p. 48; Mike Sheahan, 'Swans: Why we are out', *Herald*, 4 December, 1981, p. 30; Mike Sheahan, 'VFL must act on Swans', *Herald*, 9 December, 1981, p. 60.

Melbourne's Sydney proposal were the board of management and the VFL, whereas on 23 September, the primary sources were KSAS and to a lesser extent the original board of management and the VFL. By the end of the South Melbourne relocation saga, the primary sources were the players, their representative Issac Apel, KSAS and the VFL.

The *Age*, *Herald* and *Sun* each acted as a 'witness' at various stages of the South Melbourne relocation saga. Specifically, the extraordinary meeting of 22 September and the player walkouts on 28 September and 10 December were reported with accompanying photographs in at least one of the three major newspapers. The photographs enhanced the sense of immediacy for the reader and made it clear that print media was present. It is unclear, however, whether the journalists demanded to be present in order that the public's right to information was served, or whether the report was a necessary component of the ongoing South Melbourne relocation saga narrative. On the other hand, the reports on the attempt to stack the South Melbourne membership roles by Sydney companies in the *Age* acknowledged the newspaper's role in 'sighting' or 'obtaining' the membership lists. In this instance, the newspaper acquired or demanded access to information, which it subsequently shared with the public. There were, however, no visual cues to suggest to the reader that this had occurred. In this respect, neither the reporting of dramatic moments, nor the overt intervention by the *Age* can be considered to completely satisfy the role of 'witness'.

On several occasions the *Herald* and *Sun* acted as 'transmitters', whereby the journalists made themselves the spokespeople of selected people or groups during the crisis. Neither of the newspapers acted as the spokesperson for all of the groups that expressed themselves during the South Melbourne relocation saga in the role of 'transmitter'. In their role as 'observer' or 'mirror', the newspapers represented all groups that expressed themselves during the crisis. In this respect, the print media, through an extensive use of quotes, let the people and groups involved in the crisis speak for themselves. As a consequence, the role of 'transmitter' was rarely adopted relative to the roles of 'observer' or 'mirror'.

The clearest example of the 'transmitter' role was Sheahan's article 'Swans: Why are we out', published on 4 December in the *Herald*, in which he not only reported the views of the striking players, but represented them as loyal, sad, misled, stunned and in search of a solution to the dispute with the administration.⁴⁸¹ By inference, the players were worthy of both respect and sympathy. Likewise, Wilkinson's profile of Aylett in the *Sun* suggested that 'the Doc, as VFL staff call him' had been under pressure over the South Melbourne relocation saga, but stressed that Aylett thought democratic process had been followed and the right decision had been made.⁴⁸² Unlike the striking players in Sheahan's article, Aylett was not represented as a man worthy of sympathy, but of understanding.

There was no evidence that the *Age*, *Herald* or *Sun* or their journalists acted as a 'manipulated observer'. There was, however, evidence that particular people during the crisis were able to gain better leverage out of the newspaper's role as a 'mirror' than others, but it was not sufficient to equate to the *Age* adopting the role of 'manipulated observer'. Apel, in particular was skilled in making the demands of South Melbourne's striking players seem synonymous with the interests of the club and its supporters, when it was clear that they centred on two primary demands and were motivated largely by self-interest.

There was only one instance during the entire South Melbourne relocation saga where the print media adopted the role of 'involved actor'. As previously mentioned, Sheahan's article on 7 October in the *Herald* noted that 'a newspaper story yesterday suggesting "Patch up at South" prompted all but eight players to boycott training last night'.⁴⁸³ The 'Patch up at South' that Sheahan referred to was an article of the same name by Davis, published in the *Sun* the previous day.⁴⁸⁴ Davis' article suggested that the rift between players and the board of management

⁴⁸¹ Mike Sheahan, 'Swans: Why we are out', *Herald*, 4 December, 1981, p. 30. See also Mike Sheahan, 'Clubs sweat on Swans', *Herald*, 10 December, 1981, p. 60; Peter Stone, 'Long wait for John', *Herald*, 21 December, 1981, p. 52; Peter Stone, 'The footballer who cried', *Herald*, 26 December, 1981, p. 14.

⁴⁸² Michael Wilkinson, 'Toughing it out', *Sun*, 17 October, 1981, p. 15. See also Greg Baum, 'Swans act on move', *Herald*, 24 October, 1981, p. 63; Anonymous, 'Money can't buy Quade', *Herald*, 22 December, 1981, p. 60.

⁴⁸³ Mike Sheahan, 'South needs compromise', *Herald*, 7 October, 1981, p. 52.

⁴⁸⁴ Michael Davis, 'Patch up at South', *Sun*, 6 October, 1981, p. 87.

appeared to be healing and that the players had started pre-season training. The juxtaposition of these two statements caused the players to boycott training, lest their resumption of training be construed as support for the KSAS based administration. There may have been further instances in which the print media acted as 'involved actors', although there is no evidence to support this claim.

There was also no evidence that the *Age*, *Herald* or *Sun* acted as a channel of communication between the crisis protagonists, or between the crisis protagonists and the public. As such, they did not adopt the role of 'neutral actor' throughout the South Melbourne relocation saga. Finally, there was no evidence in the *Age*, *Herald* or *Sun* that the print media's position throughout the crisis was questioned by state agencies, or by the media itself.

In summary, the SCEPMTFA provided more roles than were used during the reporting of the South Melbourne relocation saga. Furthermore, the theoretical framework of analysis failed to predict the preference for certain roles, the fact the some roles were not used at all, or that the print media would shift between roles throughout the crisis.

News Sources

The South Melbourne board of management, particularly Jack Marks and Graeme John and the VFL, particularly Allen Aylett and Jack Hamilton, were referred to and quoted in relation to the necessity and benefits of the Sydney proposal in the initial stages of the relocation saga. Aylett and Hamilton remained primary sources throughout the campaign, particularly when the VFL directors refused to rescind the decision to allow South Melbourne to play its home games in Sydney, when South Melbourne applied for and was subsequently granted a \$400,000 loan and when the VFL intervened in the dispute between players and the South Melbourne administration in December. Marks and John, however, were only primary sources for the print media until the KSAS group took control of the club in September. After they had been deposed, they were seldom featured or quoted in newspaper reports.

From the middle of July, by the time the KSAS group had been established, John Keogh became an intermittent source of information for journalists. He became a regular source once KSAS won control of the club at the extraordinary meeting on 22 September, until Bill Collins took over as president of the club in December. Keogh played a dual role during the South Melbourne relocation saga. At first he personified the KSAS campaign, as an opponent of the South Melbourne board of management and the VFL and then when the KSAS team was elected as the new board of management he personified the new South Melbourne administration. He remained an opponent of the VFL and soon after the 22 September meeting became an opponent of the players, until Bill Collins took over South Melbourne on 11 December. Throughout the South Melbourne relocation saga, Keogh was used in newspaper reporting to magnify division, either between KSAS and the club, KSAS and the VFL, the club and the VFL, or the club and the players. From 11 December onwards Collins personified the South Melbourne administration, but unlike Keogh, he was not represented in opposition to anyone or anything. Rather, Collins was an apolitical figure whom journalists represented as a peaceful alternative, as opposed to a mechanism for sustaining the perception of controversy and conflict. This was enhanced by Collins' role as one of Australia's best race callers. As such, he was both a familiar figure to sports journalists, as well as a part of their professional milieu as a colleague, rather than a subject.

Finally, the players and their legal representative, Issac Apel, were primary sources for print media journalists. The players were routine sources for sports journalists at the three newspapers prior to the relocation saga and as such, it was not surprising that they were used prominently in the coverage after they became involved in the politics of the proposed Sydney move. Apel was also a primary source throughout the relocation saga despite, like Keogh, not being a routine source for the print media prior to 2 July. Apel was a primary source because he was a conduit between the players and the KSAS based administration and a conduit between the players and the print media. In other words, Apel became a primary source because without him the sports journalists were unable to represent or report on the players' views and demands. Furthermore, without access to the

players, or their views, the sports journalists' ability to represent the South Melbourne relocation saga as a conflict, battle or 'war' would have been severely limited.

In summary, journalists reporting on the South Melbourne relocation saga in the *Age*, *Herald* and *Sun* used a small number of routine sources. These sources were limited to three main groups. First, people in senior administrative positions within the South Melbourne club or the VFL. Second, people representing the KSAS group. Finally, the South Melbourne players and their representative, Apel. Interestingly, South Melbourne fans were not used as sources throughout the relocation saga. It was as if their views were taken for granted or ignored by the print media, despite the fact they were important stakeholders in the club.

Sports Reporters or News Reporters?

In the *Age*, fourteen articles were written anonymously, and three were listed as editorials. Thus, approximately nineteen per cent of articles published in the *Age* did not have an attributable author, although it is likely that a significant number were either written by a sports reporter, or were edited from copy written by a sports reporter. Of the nineteen per cent, it is likely that at least a third, given the content, was either written by Prue Innes, the newspaper's court reporter, or by another court reporter. It is unlikely that any of the sports journalists wrote or contributed to articles that reported on legal proceedings, particularly during August. Innes wrote five further articles that were attributed to her, in which she reported on the legal action that KSAS took against South Melbourne and the VFL. Of the three editorials, two were published in the sports section, and one in the news section of the newspaper. Therefore, sports reporters were the primary authors of approximately eighty-six per cent of the total articles published in the *Age* during the South Melbourne relocation saga.

Of the seventy-six articles during the South Melbourne relocation campaign in the *Age* where a sports reporter was the primary author, Ron Carter, Mike Coward and Geoff Slattery contributed sixty-two per cent, or fifty-three per cent of the entire

coverage. Carter and Coward each wrote fifteen articles as the primary author, and Slattery seventeen. Eight other journalists contributed the remaining thirty-eight per cent, or twenty-two per cent of the entire coverage, with David Wilson writing five, Peter Wilmouth four and no other reporter writing more than two.

In the *Herald*, four articles were anonymous and three of those reported on the legal proceedings brought by KSAS against South Melbourne and the VFL. It is likely that the newspaper's court reporter, rather than a sports journalist wrote those three articles, like those in the *Age*. As such, sports journalists wrote approximately 94 per cent of the entire coverage of the South Melbourne relocation saga in the *Herald*. Furthermore, of that ninety-four per cent, Mike Sheahan wrote twenty-two articles, which was equivalent to approximately forty-six per cent, or forty-three per cent of the entire coverage. Ron Reed wrote eight articles, Bruce Matthews six, Peter Stone five and Bill Cannon four. Combined, they wrote twenty-three articles as the primary author and accounted for approximately forty-eight per cent of the articles written by sports journalists, or forty-five per cent of the entire coverage.

In the *Sun*, six articles were anonymous. Of those six, one reported on the KSAS legal proceedings. It is likely that a sports reporter did not write this article, based on the evidence from the *Age* and *Herald*. Of the other five, based on the content, it is likely that they were written by a sports reporter, or edited from copy written by a sports reporter. As such, it is clear that sports reporters wrote approximately ninety-eight per cent of the entire coverage of the South Melbourne relocation saga in the *Sun*. Furthermore, of that ninety-eight per cent, Peter Simunovich wrote thirty-three articles, equivalent to fifty-four per cent, or fifty-three per cent of the entire coverage. Greg Baum wrote eleven articles, equivalent to approximately eighteen per cent of the entire coverage. Combined, Simunovich and Baum accounted for almost three quarters of the entire *Sun* coverage of the South Melbourne relocation saga. No other sports journalists wrote more than four articles.

In summary, sports journalists covered almost the entire South Melbourne relocation saga, contrary to the prediction in the SCEPMTFA that news reporters

often cover controversy in sport, in order to protect the relationship that sports reporters have with their sources.

Interpretive Frames

The print media contextualised the South Melbourne relocation proposal by referring to its economic necessity. During the impact phase of the crisis, the *Age*, *Herald* and *Sun* reported that the options were effectively 'Sydney or bust'. In emphasising that the Sydney move was South Melbourne's 'survival kit', the print media made sense of an unusual and unexpected event and transformed a 'random' event into a 'meaningful' event.

The development of the relocation proposal, its details and its presentation to the VFL were all outside the direct experience of the majority of South Melbourne supporters, the general football public and the readership of the three major daily newspapers. As such, the *Age*, *Herald* and *Sun* were, along with radio and television, one of the few sources of information available to the public. Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke and Roberts suggested that a result of this type of situation is that the media engage in transforming a 'problematic reality' into a comprehensible text.⁴⁸⁵ As previously mentioned, the VFL had been an extremely stable competition for in excess of seventy years, in terms of its composition and the location of its member clubs. In this context, the relocation of one the VFL's foundation clubs to New South Wales was a problematic reality. In hindsight, it is clear that the South Melbourne relocation saga was a seminal moment in the transformation of the VFL into a national, fully professional League. The print media, however, downplayed the riskiness of the Sydney relocation and faithfully reported the board of management's argument that if the proposal was not accepted, the club would be likely to go into voluntary liquidation or have to amalgamate. The extensive use of the hard news mode and 'responsible' administrative figures as primary news sources ensured that the Sydney option was represented as a panacea to chronic financial problems.

⁴⁸⁵ Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke and Roberts, *Policing the Crisis*, pp. 55-57.

The use of the hard news mode and club and VFL administrators as primary news sources, as well as the emphasis on the economic necessity of the Sydney proposal also meant that the print media did not acknowledge the broader problems that were facing the League, of which the South Melbourne relocation saga was symptomatic. Thus, the print media reported a symptom, but did not address the cause. As Stewart and Andrews suggested, the late 1970s were a turbulent period for the VFL, as clubs attempted to professionalise in the wake of North Melbourne's success, became increasingly dependent on external revenue streams and were beset by dramatic inflation caused by rising player payments and transfer fees.⁴⁸⁶ Player payments rose by 1,826% between 1972 and 1980.⁴⁸⁷ Furthermore, in 1972 1,867 paying spectators were required in order to pay the average VFL player, whereas by 1980 the number had risen to a staggering 13,422.⁴⁸⁸ By 1981, the League's 'problematic reality' was endemic and threatened the viability of approximately half the clubs, based on the estimate that by 1983 half the League clubs were technically bankrupt. In general, however, the print media ignored the broader problems within the League that the South Melbourne relocation saga indicated. It is likely that as the personification of an individual is easier than the representation of an organisation or structure in news coverage, so too was the reporting of South Melbourne's 'survival kit' easier than the representation of the League's broader economic and structural malaise.

During the high-points and the resolution phase of the crisis, the print media focussed in general on the conflicts that arose between KSAS, South Melbourne, the VFL and the players in a variety of combinations. As a result, the newspaper coverage moved further towards micro analysis and further away from macro analysis. In other words, the reporting focussed on the club's internal politics, rather than the broader significance of the crisis event. The survival of the club was transformed from an issue that was reported via a detached representation of the economic realities of the Sydney proposal, to one where the reporting focussed on

⁴⁸⁶ Stewart, *The Australian Football Business*, pp. 119-126; Andrews, 'From a Club to a Corporate Game', pp. 234-240.

⁴⁸⁷ Linnell, *Football Ltd*, p. 27.

⁴⁸⁸ Linnell, *Football Ltd*, p. 27.

the infighting that threatened its existence. Had the dispute been confined to the various administrative figures, the event's sensation would have been markedly diminished. As it was, the involvement of the players in the dispute, as they themselves noted, was unusual. It ensured that substantial print media coverage continued for three months.

The SCEPMTFA predicted that interpretive communities, or fan groups, would be utilised by the print media to suit a specific context. In the case of the South Melbourne relocation saga, there was little evidence in the *Age*, *Herald* or *Sun* to suggest that the press actively created fan groups. All three newspapers referred to the fact that the club had a small membership base and in the impact phase of the crisis noted that the club would find it difficult to remain in Melbourne. In this respect, the print media created an interpretive community that represented the South Melbourne supporters as insignificant, or as an afterthought to a financial necessity.

The KSAS group was formed to represent the interests of the South Melbourne members, who had not been given a say on the issue. However, the KSAS group, rather than the rank and file members, were the focus of print media reporting. Initially, they were represented as the opposition to the South Melbourne board of management and the VFL. Soon after though, the print media personified Keogh as the leader of the KSAS group, for as Gitlin suggested, a person is easier to represent than an organisation or 'structure'.⁴⁸⁹ This was the first stage in the print media constructing the KSAS as distant from the South Melbourne members and fans and was enhanced by the reports of legal proceedings throughout August. These reports were depersonalised and focussed on hard news content. As such, the action by KSAS was not represented as an emotional or courageous fight to save the club on behalf of the members, but as an attempt to buy themselves some time in the lead up to the extraordinary meeting. The second stage of the process whereby the print media represented KSAS as distant from the South Melbourne members occurred at the time of KSAS's greatest triumph. When they took control of the club after the extraordinary meeting on 22 September, Keogh and the KSAS group shifted from

⁴⁸⁹ Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching*, pp. 146-149.

being in opposition, to being in power. The print media soon began to focus on the problems of the new administration, including the dispute with the South Melbourne players. From that point onwards, Keogh and the KSAS group were not represented as fighting for the rights of the members and supporters, but as a group embroiled in a conflict that seemingly had no solution.

The SCEPMTFA also predicted that disruption generates sensation during crisis events and that the press magnify subjective emotional experience. In the impact phase of the crisis, the disruption of South Melbourne's relocation was sensationalised, although it was moderated by reference to the financial reality of commercial sport. The coverage in the *Age* and *Sun* suggested that it was an important news story, but the reports focussed primarily on the financial necessity of the Sydney proposal, rather than the potentially greater sensation of the broader problems that faced the League.

The disruption of the extraordinary meeting and the dispute between the players and the KSAS based administration did generate sensationalism in the print media reporting, particularly in the *Herald* and *Sun*. Furthermore, the dispute between the players and the South Melbourne administration led the print media to magnify the subjective emotional experience of the players. Reports such as Sheahan's 'Swans: Why we are out' emphasised the player's confusion, their loyalty and the sense of betrayal they felt.⁴⁹⁰ This was further magnified by photographs in the *Age*, *Herald* and *Sun* of Steve Wright crying after peace deals between the players and the Collins' administration had broken down.⁴⁹¹

In summary, the print media contextualised the South Melbourne relocation saga in terms of economic necessity, sensationalised the conflictual elements of the crisis and personified the KSAS group as representative of the South Melbourne supporters. In reality, however, the group was not a representative cross section and was subsumed by the dominant interpretive frames utilised by the print media.

⁴⁹⁰ Mike Sheahan, 'Swans: Why we are out', *Herald*, 4 December, 1981, p. 30.

⁴⁹¹ Peter Wilmoth, 'VFL ready to move in' *Age*, 22 December, 1981, p. 20; Peter Stone, 'The footballer who cried', *Herald*, 26 December, 1981, p. 14; Peter Simunovich, 'South: A new crisis', *Sun*, 22 December, 1981, p. 60.

Narrative Framework

At each stage of the South Melbourne relocation saga the narrative was sustained by reference to conflict. Furthermore, the conflict was enhanced by repeated suggestions that the club might not survive. The *Herald* in particular used the theme of war and battle constantly during its coverage of the relocation saga. In essence, the print media reflected the evolution of the crisis. During the impact phase, the suggestion of conflict was minimal. Once the crisis entered the high-point(s), however, the dispute between the club and its players became the focus and as a consequence, sensationalised the crisis. The sensation was enhanced by the suggestion that club might not survive if the players quit the club, or the VFL did not grant it a loan from the ground improvement, or the VFL was forced to take over the club. In the resolution phase, the print media coverage fluctuated between reporting on the peace deals that had been struck and the peace deals that had been broken at the last minute. Finally, the print media's personification of Collins emphasised that he was the solution to the crisis. Furthermore, his role was enhanced by his connection to the sports industry as one of Australia's best race callers.

Personification

Reader Address

The three major daily newspapers that reported the South Melbourne relocation saga did not adopt the reader address approach, in which photographs of, and responses by, the public are published, the writing is directed at the reader's experience and their views are represented. As previously mentioned, only four photographs in the *Age* and *Sun* represented the South Melbourne supporters. Aside from these photographs, photos of, and responses by, the public were not published throughout the crisis. Furthermore, newspaper writing was not directed at the reader's experience, nor were their views represented.

The *Age*, *Herald* and *Sun* used the hard news mode most often, while in general they adopted the role of either 'observer' or 'mirror'. Use of the hard news mode limited the ability of the print media to represent the views of the public generally and football supporters specifically. The newspapers could have adopted the reader address approach in their role as a 'mirror', but this was negated by the emphasis on a small set of routine sources. As such, none of the newspapers claimed to be the voice of the reader and consequently, did not pursue causes in the name of the readers, or claim to represent them and their generalised interests. The emphasis on the economic necessity of the South Melbourne proposal limited the representation of South Melbourne supporters as a viable alternative to the change that was being proposed.

Once the KSAS group formed, they effectively represented the disenfranchised South Melbourne supporters and from the middle of July until the end of the relocation saga, Keogh personified KSAS. This meant on the one hand that the KSAS interests were high-profile, particularly after the extraordinary meeting. Keogh was a routine news source, and had his photograph published regularly. On the other hand, it also meant that it was easier for the newspapers to personify Keogh, rather than try to represent the broad collective of South Melbourne supporters. As such, the South Melbourne supporters and the general football public were absent from the crisis reporting.

Victims and Responsibles

Responsibles occupied both the privileged positions and reporting categories within the majority of the crisis discourse. In the impact phase of the crisis, the South Melbourne board of management and the VFL were the responsibles, or those in positions of power. Within the print media coverage of the high-points and the resolution phase of the crisis, the VFL and its representatives remained in a position of power, while the KSAS based administration and the players fought a battle that ebbed and flowed, during which one or both were represented as powerful or in control of the dispute at various stages.

The KSAS group led by Keogh was not represented as a victim at any stage during the South Melbourne relocation saga. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, the group was formed in opposition to a plan that had been represented by the print media as inherently reasonable and as a 'natural' solution. This negated the ability of the print media to use the group, or its personified form, to advocate a position or support particular measures, because there was limited opportunity within the coverage to represent the group, or Keogh, as aggrieved or victimised. Also, the construction of the club's plan as a 'survival kit' meant that the print media were unable to represent the club as the villain, to apportion blame, or to construct an oppositional pair in which the club's supporters or KSAS were perceived as victims. Secondly, KSAS instigated legal proceedings against the club and the VFL soon after their formation. Klapp argued that one of the qualities of a good victim is that they must not be in a position to help themselves, but be able to receive help. KSAS did not have this quality. The supporters may have had this quality, but they were largely absent from the print media coverage. Thirdly, once the KSAS group took control of the club in the wake of the extraordinary meeting in late September, it assumed a position of power. Clearly, it was able to help itself and was unable to be represented as a victim. Finally, in the dispute between the KSAS based administration and the senior players during the last three months of 1981, the players were represented at various times throughout the print media coverage as a group of people who were worthy of the readers' sympathy. In this respect, the KSAS based administration was closer to being constructed as a villain than as a victim.

The players did not satisfy Klapp's criteria for victim status either. Throughout the South Melbourne relocation saga the players put themselves in a position to help themselves. They retained legal representation, made demands of the KSAS based administration, ensured that the club played in Sydney in 1982 and forced the resignation of Rantall and the re-appointment of Quade. As such, they are more accurately viewed as responsables, on a par with the administration that they battled during October, November and December. At various times, however, the players were represented as a group of people who had not been paid by the club, had the

best interests of the club at heart and wanted a secure future. Rather than lead to the construction of victim status, this representation appeared to strengthen the players' bargaining position.

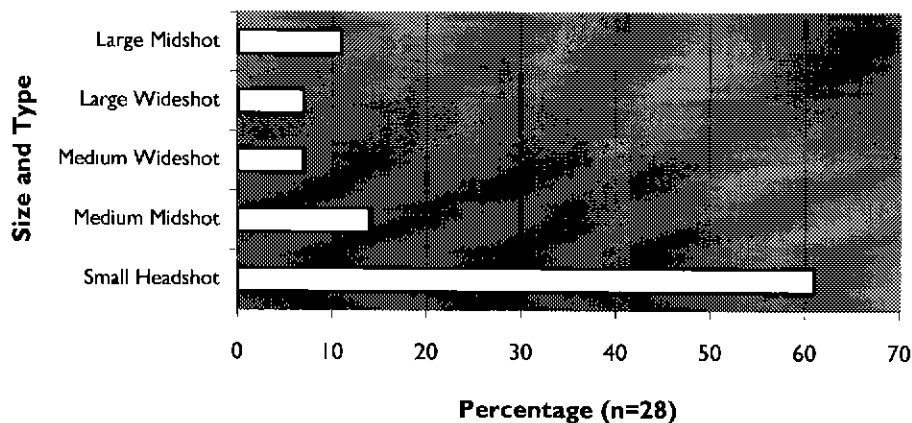
In summary, the representation of victims in the print media was almost non-existent, despite the prediction in the SCEPMTFA that victims would hold a privileged position and constitute a reporting category. On the other hand, the representation of responsables was far more pronounced.

Photographs

In general, recognisable news sources were the subject of the vast majority of photographs published throughout the South Melbourne relocation saga.

In the *Age* the majority of the photographs published were small headshots, as illustrated by the following diagram.⁴⁹²

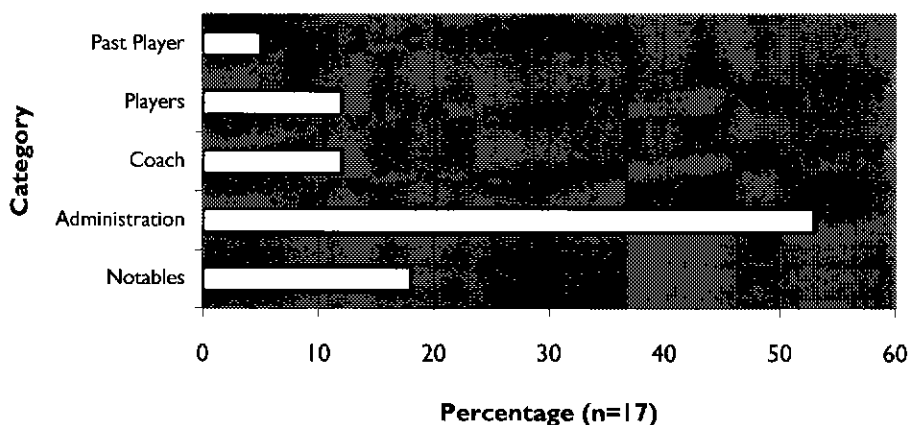
Figure 12: Photographs - Age



⁴⁹² The analysis is based on the following broad definitions: Small – one column width, with equivalent height; Medium – two or three columns in width, with equivalent height; Large – four or more columns in width with equivalent height; Headshot – only the head or face of the subject; Midshot – part, or all of the body of the subject, or subjects (usually a maximum of two to three people); Wideshot – all of the body of the subject, or subjects (unlimited), including the context or place where the photograph was taken.

Small headshots were primarily used to identify or reinforce the primary source or subject of the article. The following diagram illustrates that the majority of small headshots were used to identify a figure within the South Melbourne administration or the VFL, such as Keogh, Collins or Aylett. It also confirms that a small number of routine sources were used in the Age's reporting of the South Melbourne relocation saga.

Figure 13: Small Headshots by Subject - Age



Notables, such as Hawke, Bond and Murdoch, was the most featured category after the South Melbourne and VFL administration. These photographs were used to highlight the importance or significance of the news report. Small headshots of the South Melbourne coach, players or past players comprised approximately a quarter of the total.

Figure 14: Other by Subject - Age

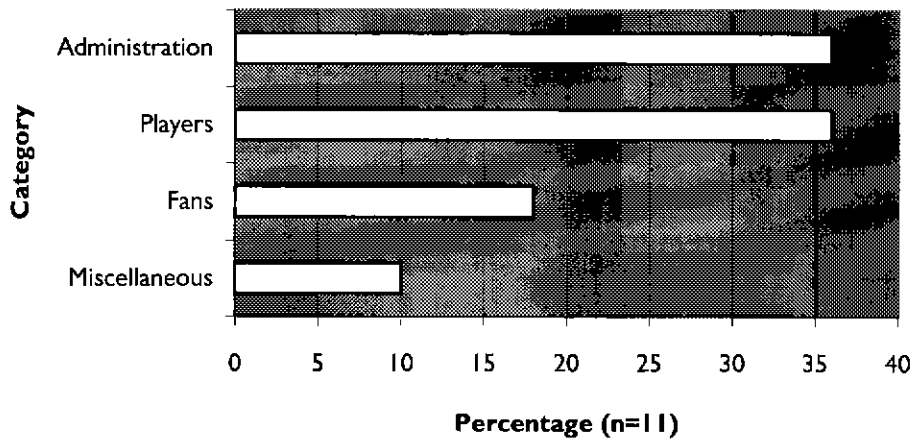
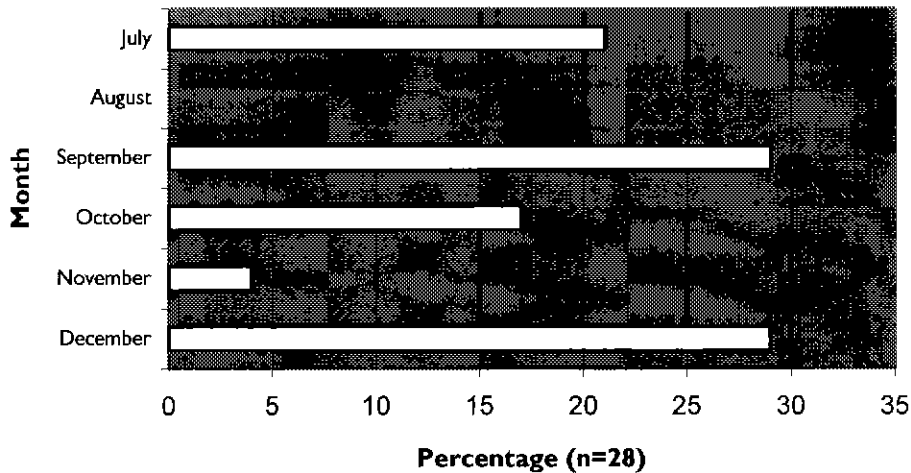


Figure 14 represents the subjects of photographs during the South Melbourne relocation saga, for photographs other than small headshots. Photographs of the South Melbourne administration were again the largest category, equal with the players. The types of photographs, however, were markedly different. Whereas the subjects of administration photographs were generally static, in which one of the officials, such as Keogh or Collins had posed for the camera, the photographs of the players were 'in the moment'. In three of the four photographs, the players were photographed after walking out on the South Melbourne administration (or walking in), or after the peace between the two factions had been broken. The players were photographed being active, similar to the way in which they would have been photographed during regular sports coverage. As previously mentioned, two large photographs of South Melbourne members appeared in the Age. A photograph of Collingwood's banner at the game played against South Melbourne in Sydney was also published during the relocation saga.

As illustrated by Figure 15, the distribution of photographs was uneven throughout the Age's coverage of the South Melbourne relocation saga.

Figure 15: Photograph Distribution by Month - Age



The months of September and December had the highest proportion of the total photographs published. This corresponded with the high-point of the extraordinary meeting on 22 September, the player walkout in late September and the resolution of the crisis after the appointment of Collins as president of the club. September also contained the greatest proportion of photographs that were not small headshots, indicating that the events the newspaper was reporting on were significant or of great public resonance. The impact of the South Melbourne relocation proposal was not represented visually, despite the fact that July was the third highest month of photographic coverage. All of the photographs published during July were on or after the 16th. As previously mentioned, reports on the court proceedings represented the majority of articles published in August. As such, it is not surprising that no photographs were published during this period. The *Age* published six photographs during October and November, of either Rantall or a figure from the South Melbourne administration, all of which were small headshots.

In contrast to the emphasis on war and conflict in the text and headlines of the *Herald* reports, the photographic representation was banal. As illustrated by the following diagrams, the photographs published in the *Herald* were typically small or medium head or midshots of administrators, such as Collins, or players such as Wright, or Rantall and Quade.

Figure 16: Photographs - Herald

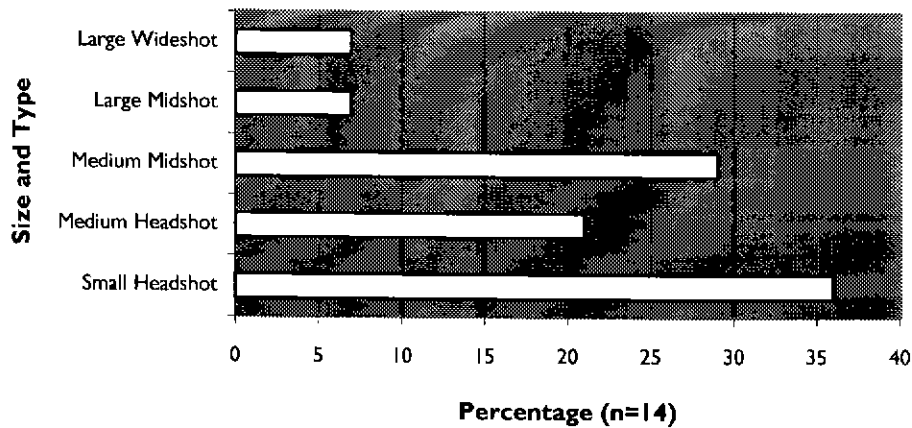
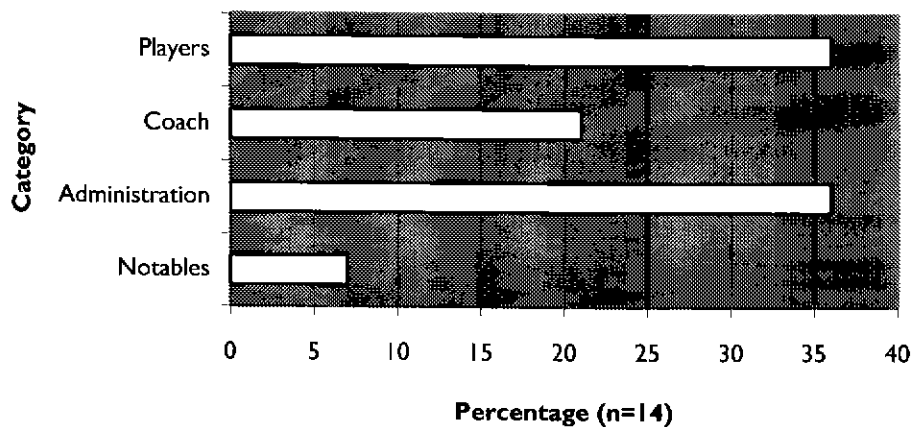


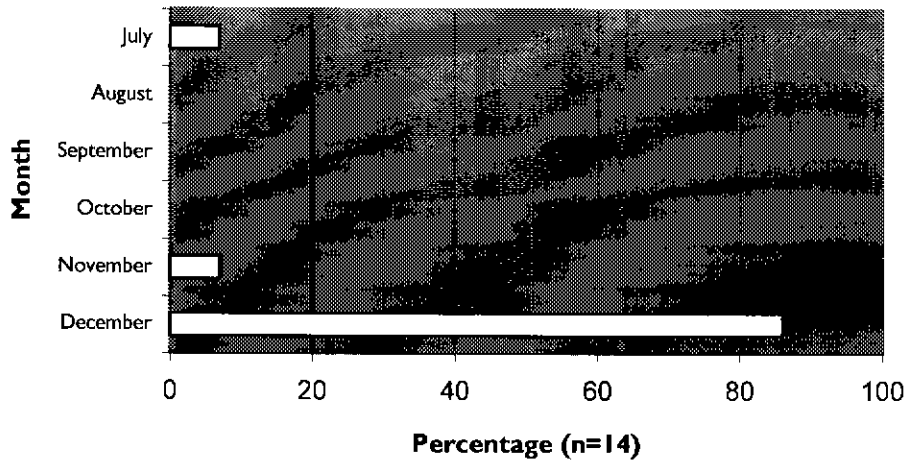
Figure 17: Photographs by Subject - Herald



The only photographs in which the subject or subjects were active were the two large photographs – one of Keogh on the steps of the South Melbourne Town Hall and one of the players in Apel's offices. The latter photo accompanied the orthodox rhetoric article by Sheahan that advocated that the players were worthy of sympathy and respect.

As illustrated in Figure 18, the distribution of photographs was also uneven throughout the *Herald's* coverage of the South Melbourne relocation saga.

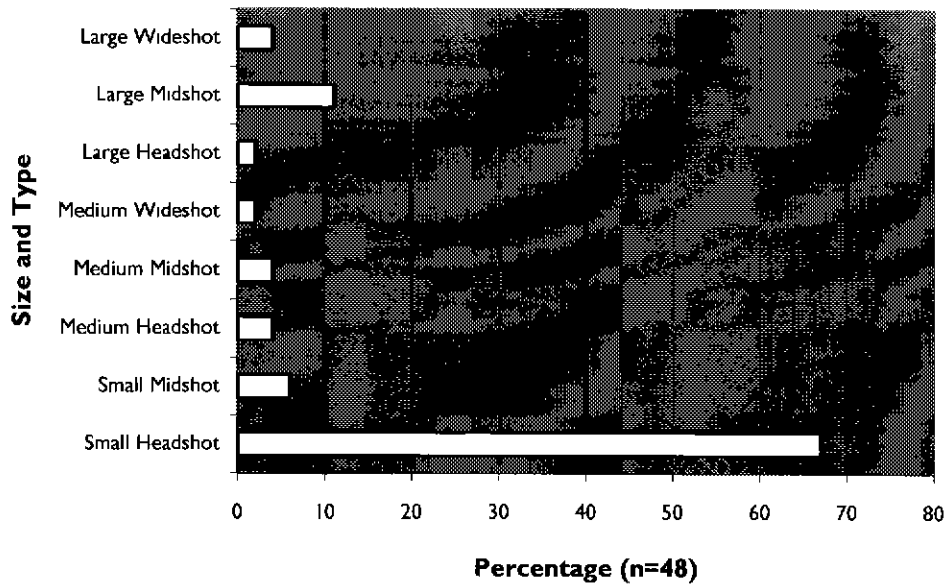
Figure 18: Photograph Distribution by Month - Herald



Unlike the *Age*, however, the photographs in the *Herald* were limited primarily to December. One photograph, of Keogh on the South Melbourne Town Hall steps, was published in July and one, of Steve Wright, was published in November. Neither of the photographs was remarkable. Surprisingly, the *Herald* published no photographs of the extraordinary meeting on 22 September. The vast majority of the *Herald's* photographs were published in December, including sixty-four percent during the resolution phase, after Collins took over as president. At least one photograph accompanied seven out of the last eight articles that reported on the relocation saga. The distribution of photographs throughout the *Herald's* coverage suggested that the resolution of the South Melbourne dispute, rather than the high-points of the crisis, was an event of great public resonance for its readers.

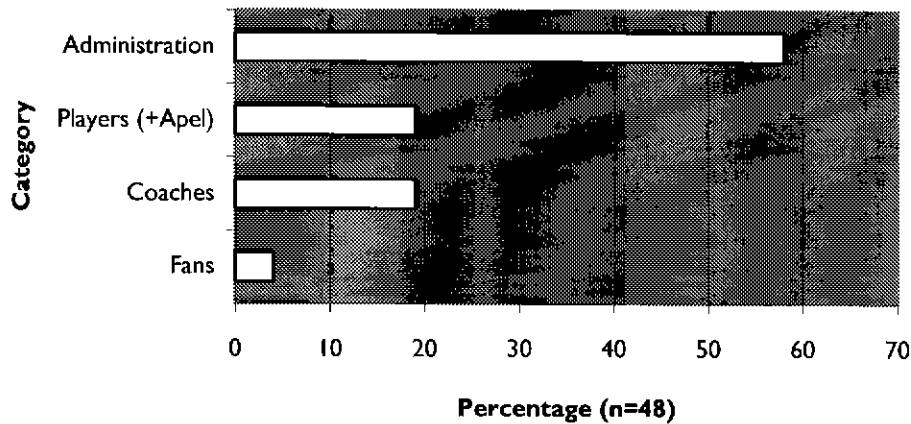
The *Sun* published the most photographs of any of the three newspapers during the South Melbourne relocation saga. Like the photographs published in the *Age* and *Herald*, the vast majority of those in the *Sun* were also small headshots, as illustrated by the following diagram.

Figure 19: Photographs - Sun



Representatives of the South Melbourne or VFL administration were the primary subjects of the majority of photographs published in the *Sun*. In particular, Keogh, Collins, Aylett and Hamilton featured prominently. Figure 20 illustrates that photographs of people in administrative roles comprised approximately fifty-eight percent of the entire photographic coverage. Photographs of players or their legal representative Apel and photographs of coaches (Rantall or Quade) were the next most published categories. Photographs of fans, of which there were only two, was the least represented category.

Figure 20: Photographs by Subject - Sun



The proportion of photographs of people in administrative positions during the relocation saga was greater if the category of small headshots is isolated, as illustrated in the following diagram.

Figure 21: Small Headshots by Subject - Sun

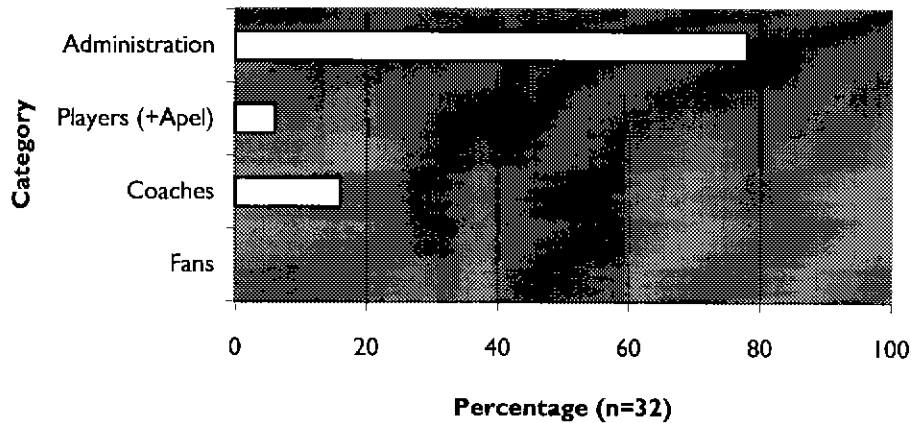
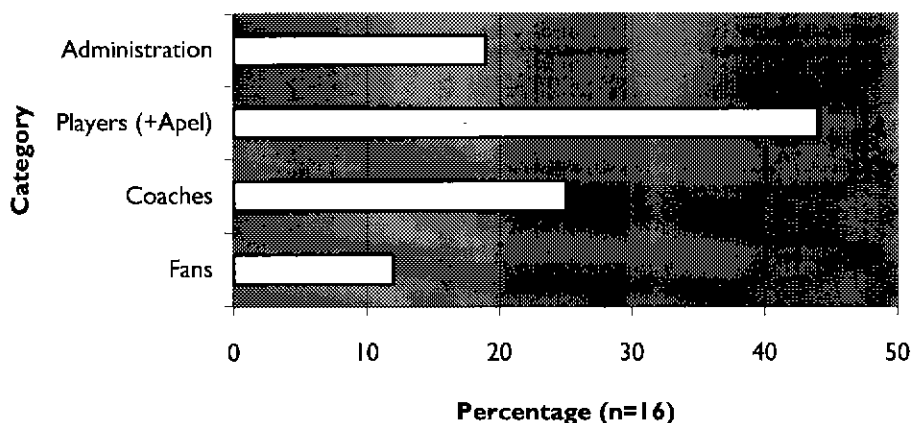


Figure 21 supports the conclusion that photographs of people in administrative positions were used to identify the primary subject or major source of a significant number of articles published in the *Sun*. These photographs were used in the first instance as a visual cue for the news report, but also represented administrators such as Keogh, Collins, Aylett and Hamilton as powerful and important. When the other photographic categories are isolated (non small headshots), as illustrated in

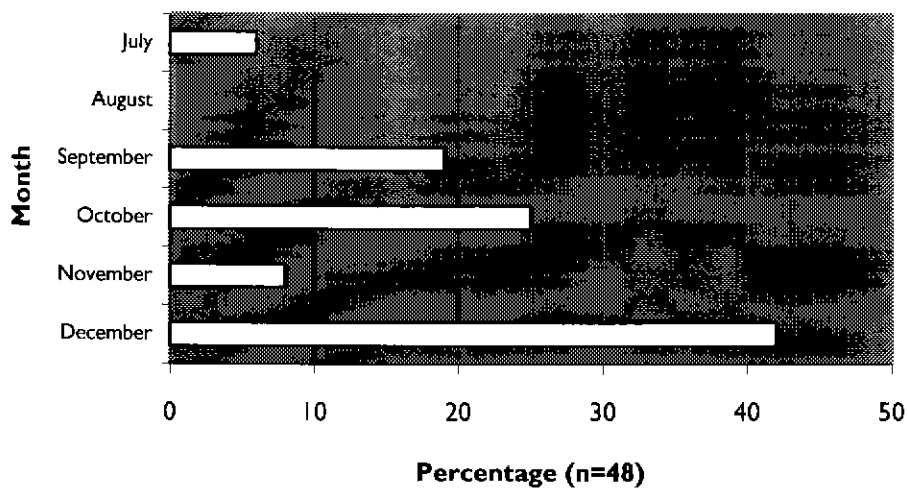
Figure 22, a person in an administrative position was only the third most frequent category. Photographs of players was the most frequent category, with photographs of coaches the next most published. Photographs of fans were again the least represented. It is clearly evident that the *Sun* chose photographs of players and coaches, rather than administrative personnel, to represent dynamic or dramatic moments during the South Melbourne relocation saga.

Figure 22: Other by Subject - Sun



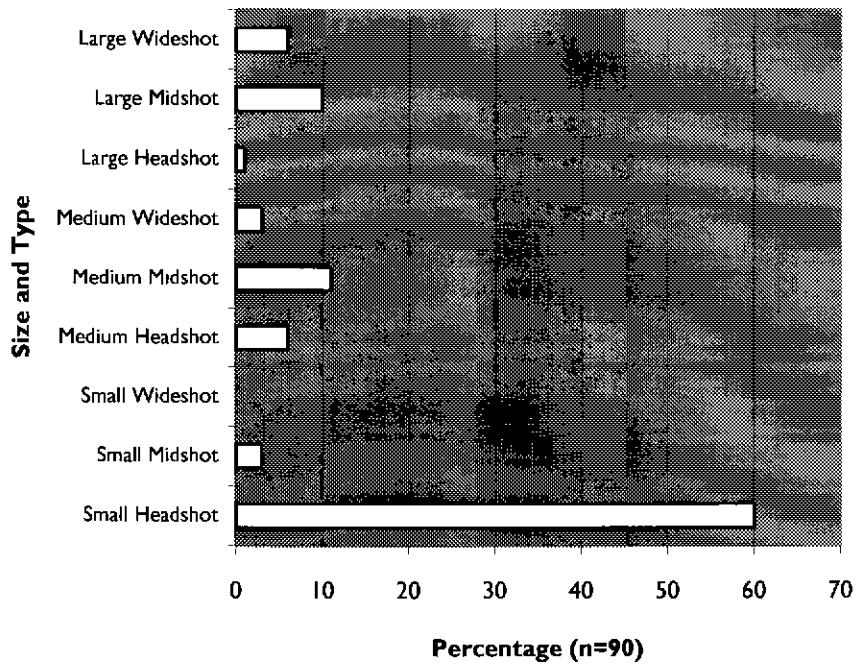
Finally, the *Sun* published, like the *Age* and *Herald*, the majority of photographs during the South Melbourne relocation saga in December, particularly during the resolution phase, as illustrated by Figure 23 below. Like the *Age* and *Herald*, the *Sun* also published no photographs during August. The high-points of the crisis, during September and October, received substantial photographic coverage.

Figure 23: Photograph Distribution by Month - Sun



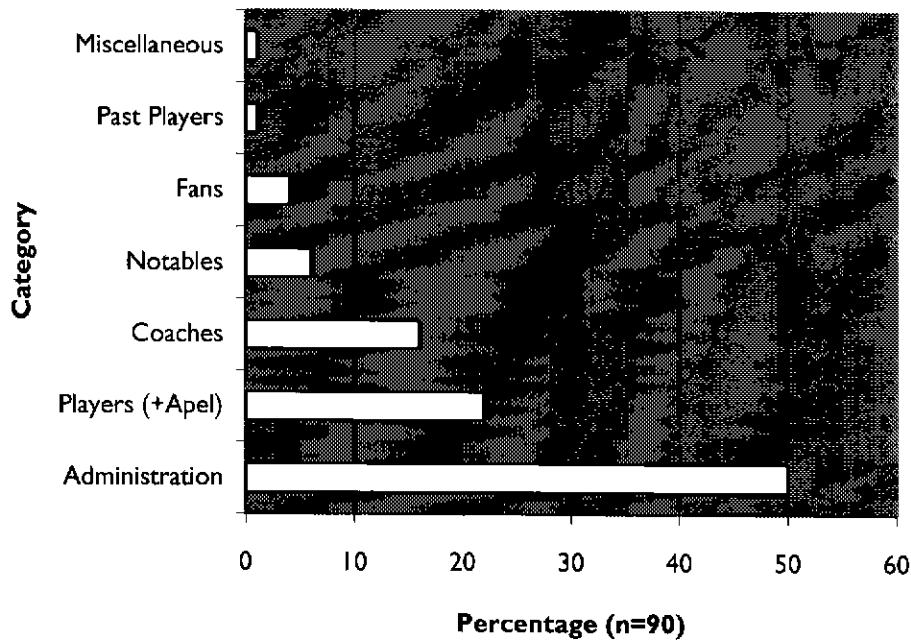
Overall, the photographic representation of the South Melbourne relocation saga in the *Age*, *Herald* and *Sun* was dominated by the use of small headshots, as illustrated by the following diagram. Small headshots accounted for sixty percent of all photographs. None of the other categories were significant by comparison. All other categories combined accounted for only forty percent. Large and medium midshots each accounted for approximately ten percent.

Figure 24: Photographs - All



Furthermore, two-thirds of the people featured in the small headshots were in senior administrative positions, such as Keogh, Collins, Aylett, Hamilton, Marks and John. The following diagram illustrates that photographs of these people accounted for exactly fifty percent of the entire photographic coverage. Photographs of players or coaches were the only other categories that accounted for in excess of ten percent.

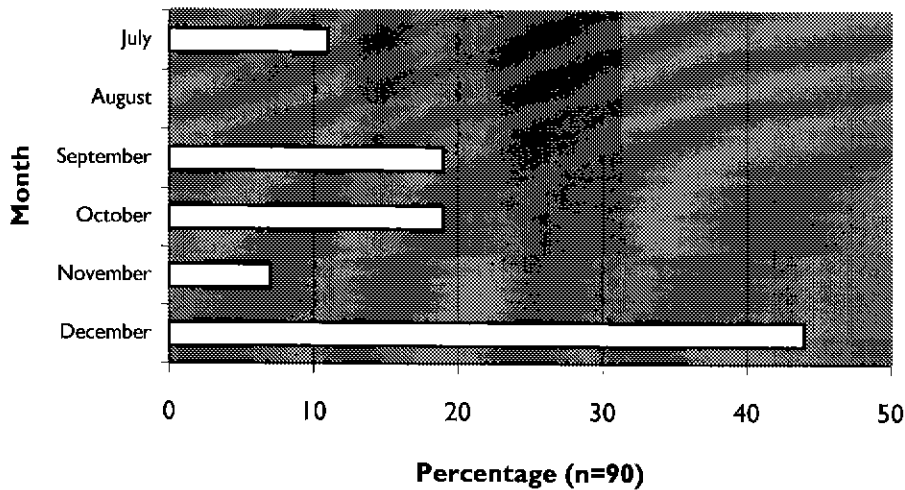
Figure 25: Photographs by Subject - All



Finally, the diagram below illustrates that approximately forty-four percent of the photographic representation of the South Melbourne relocation saga occurred in December. This indicates that the resolution phase of the crisis was either particularly important, or that it was better suited to photographic representation. The high-points during September and October, including the extraordinary meeting and player walkouts, appeared to be better suited to photographic coverage, but each only accounted for approximately nineteen percent of the entire coverage. The impact phase accounted for approximately eleven percent of the entire coverage.

In summary, the photographic coverage of the South Melbourne relocation saga in the print media was dominated by officials and players, and apart from the KSAS group, South Melbourne supporters were marginalised.

Figure 26: Photograph Distribution by Month - All



Letters to the Editor

The SCEPMTFA suggests that 'letters to the editor' are used to sustain the story and orchestrate public opinion. In the case of the South Melbourne relocation saga, only one 'letter to the editor' appeared in the *Age*. Published in the 'Access Age' section, Paul Kavanagh commented that the Victorian government had done nothing while the VFL engineered a move to Sydney, despite the claim by Aylett that Australian Rules football was one of the State's greatest assets.⁴⁹³ At no stage during the South Melbourne relocation saga did the *Age*, or its journalists comment on the role of the Victorian Government. In this respect, Kavanagh's 'letter' introduced a new perspective, but was unlikely to sustain the story or orchestrate public opinion. There were no 'letters to the editor' published in the *Herald* or *Sun* that referred to the South Melbourne relocation saga.

⁴⁹³ Paul Kavanagh, 'Moving asset', *Age*, 16 September, 1981, p. 12. Note: the 'Access Age' section published responses of readers who had telephoned the newspaper to express their views and opinions. As such, the contributions contained within this section are not technically 'letters to the editor'.