

Views the changing perspectives

Fighting Back shows Toronto's perspectives

By DAVID PHILLIPS

It is difficult to imagine the extent to which our view of the city has changed over the past seven years.

In 1966 most Torontonians thought in terms of majestic highrise apartment building and urban renewal. June Marks was the darling of all metropolitan liberals for her continued exposes of the ghastly standard of living suffered by Toronto's poor. But now in 1973 a mini-revolution has taken place. Highrise apartments are a thing of the past; we speak of urban rehabilitation rather than urban renewal; and June Marks has been defeated at the polls as just another member of the old guard who couldn't keep in touch with the Toronto electorate.

Fighting Back studies this change with a perspective which is at once narrow and broad in scope. Narrow in the sense that Fighting Back is the story of the struggles within one

small five-block section of downtown Toronto in the face of an urban renewal plan handed down from a government department which threatened to uproot the people living in the area and destroy their homes. Broad in the sense that this struggle has probably had more to do with changing the attitudes of citizens and bureaucracies towards urban affairs than any other public issue in urban Canada in the past few years.

The author, Graham Fraser, has adopted an approach which reflects

his experience as both a journalist and historian. His interest in the subject arises from the months he spent reporting on developments in Trefann Court for the Toronto Star between 1968 and 1970.

Fraser has discretely laid open the conflicts which existed throughout the struggle to have the urban renewal scheme defeated and a new plan negotiated and developed by the members of the Trefann community itself. The basic conflict developed right in Trefann between the homeowners and the tenants of the community. The homeowners

were concerned with preserving their homes while the tenants desired better living conditions which they felt would inevitably come with any urban renewal scheme. The two groups formed themselves into rival organizations and this subsequently led to splits and disputes among community workers and municipal departments which were forced to take sides.

Fraser explores the process of reconciliation among these competing interests — most notably the establishment and operation of the Trefann Court Working Committee.

This Committee (the urban equivalent of a Geneva peace conference) was composed of city aldermen, local homeowners and tenants with the task of drawing up their own plan for urban renewal in the area. The meetings were long and often tempestuous but Fraser tells how this plan was eventually achieved and passed by City Council Jan. 6, 1972.

Fraser's purpose throughout is to consider developments in Trefann Court against the background of the issue of citizen participation. The Trefann Court Working Committee seems to be a step towards the decentralization of decision-making but its power is very limited since all its activities must be approved by City Council. Nevertheless, he concludes that even more important than the plan itself is the process which the residents went through to achieve it. And it is the struggle to enter into this process which is the essence of citizen politics today.

Quite simply, this is an excellent book well worth the attention of anyone concerned with social reform in Canada's cities.

Fighting Back Urban Renewal in Trefann Court by Graham Fraser, Hakkert. \$3.95

At Global Village

The Big Apple is a bummer

By LYNN SLOTKIN

Poor productions like the musical play The Big Apple can do the Global Village no good.

The allegorical title is symbolic of all temptation to compromise ones beliefs. Monta Suma's whole life is dedicated to 'the dance' as she refers to it. She, with the help of two friends, Zona (Pam MacDonald) and Mialba (Patsy Rahn) plan on dedicating themselves to 'the dance'. But temptation creeps in to the two friends' lives. They are offered better paying jobs. Should they compromise their beliefs and leave Monta? What to do? First they could look for a decent script.

Elizabeth Swerdlow conceived the idea but Craig Jerris' book went nowhere with it. There is an abundance of confusion with some characters screaming in and out of scenes;

babbling lines that are vague in meaning; repetition of such informative dialogue as 'baby, baby, baby', or 'I'm good' (one is so tempted to say, 'no you're not') or 'let's get it on'. There are 400,000 words in the English language and Jerris chose the most mundane, the most colourless and threw them together to 'create' an hour and a half opus dedicated more to obscurity than to making a coherent statement about compromise. His lyrics and music aren't much better, except for a number called The Big Apple, which has a catchy chorus.

The acting by the cast of seven is uniformly non-existent. Pam MacDonald has the best voice. The others tend to lapse into rasping or yelling renditions of whatever song the group is doing. Elizabeth Swerdlow's choreography

has a repetitiveness about it with a kick here, a jerk there and little flow everywhere. Patsy Rahn moves better than her two women cohorts; there is a smoothness and natural quality lacking in the other two.



One must give into temptation and say The Big Apple is rotten to the core.

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