

Coventry Library Facing 20-Fold Hike in Rent

The Fairmount Center for Creative and Performing Arts, owner of the former Coventry Library building (1925 Coventry at Euclid Heights) and lessor of two rooms in that structure to the Coventry Village Branch Library, has placed a stiff fee on continuation of the Branch's occupancy beyond the three years originally contracted when the Center bought the building. In a letter read at the March 28th meeting of the Library Board of Trustees, the Center set a rental fee of \$10,000 per year for five years, plus a prompt shiftover to the new arrangement in lieu of continuation for the year remaining under the old agreement, as its price for extension of Branch presence in the Center site.

By contrast, the Library has paid mildly escalating rent at no time reaching \$500 per year under the old lease-back agreement. Considering the size of the rooms used by the Branch, the new per-square-foot charge would be higher than commercial space downtown, according to Library Trustee, Annette Butler, who read the Center's letter. The total five-year figure of \$50,000 is on the same order as the sum paid by the Center for the entire building originally, just under \$60,000.

The Library Board will continue consideration of its dialogue with the Center in closed executive session, which it may do for this type of deliberation under the Sunshine rules. It was clear, however, from comments of Trustees that the Board does not consider this proposal remotely acceptable. Mrs. Butler indicated that alternative sites have been looked into, and will be pursued even more intensively.

Individuals from the Coventry community have been urging the Library Board to give more serious consideration to such alternatives almost from the day Fairmount Center bought the old Library building. The Library Board has taken the consistent position that it is committed to continuation of branch service in Coventry and would meet this end by seeking renewal of its arrangement with the Center. This latest development severely reduces the likelihood of such a resolution.

Alternatives include locating the Branch in a house, either purchased or rented; or locating in commercial space in the Coventry shopping area. The last notion is probably ruled out by cost considerations. Another option, a joint facility with Coventry Elementary School, was in the air at the time the library building was sold, but has almost certainly been precluded by the completion of construction at the School.

At the same Library Board meeting, statements advising of the desirability of an alternative location and/or asserting the inadequacy of the present site were made by June Wortman, Co-President of the Coventry P.T.A.; Regina Sweeney, former Chair of the School Board; and David Burwasser, Trustee of Coventry Neighbors, Inc.

- David Burwasser

THE NEXT MEETING OF COVENTRY NEIGHBORS, INC. WILL TAKE PLACE ON TUESDAY, APRIL 12, 1977 at 8:00 p.m. AT THE HOME OF MRS. CHARLES BUCK, 1803 WILTON ROAD (371-2709). PLEASE FEEL FREE TO JOIN US.

THE END OF TOMMY'S

It is a little odd walking past the empty store front where Tommy's has been for so many years. Most of the movables have been relocated, and by the time you read this article, it may be difficult for the casual visitor to Coventry to tell that anything was ever there. But something most certainly was there, and the neighborhood noted its passing with deep regret.

A few friends gathered to say goodbye to the Fello family Friday night, March 25th, at a party held at the Heights Art Theatre. Actually, the crowd easily numbered 700--and another cople hundred people were turned away for lack of space in the theatre. While the mood was generally festive, each person there seemed aware of the not-so-happy reason for the drinking, eating, and hob-nobbing. Petitions supporting Tommy's were filled with signatures, but the more indicative sign of the attitude of the party organizers was a huge sign-in guest register more suitable as a memento than as anything else. The party was a gathering of Old Coventry, with most people there knowing dozens of others in attendance. And while no one would call it a last hurrah, there must have been several thoughts about the lack of a common rallying point in Coventry, now that Tommy's is gone.

There were no real wild incidents at this party. No plans to picket. No plans to organize. Still, it was just as well that Lewis Zipkin did not walk in. His name was on many lips that night, and I think it would be fair to say kind thoughts were not devoted to him.

The crowd moved about freely, with small groups getting together for light conversation. After a while, everyone sat and listened as a presentation of a belt buckle was made to Tommy Fello. The buckle had a picture of a walking onion on the front. Then, quite spontaneously, the crowd broke into a rendition of "For He's A Jolly Good Fello." Afterwards, people settled into their seats and watched a private screening of the movie "2001." The party broke up soon after the movie ended, but several groups adjourned to private parties which had been set up on short notice.

I passed by Tommy's the other day, and saw a poem attached to the window of the door. It read:

HERE'S TO TOMMY'S!
BYE BYE ... CIOU ... ALOHA ... ARRIVERDERCI ... ADIEU ...

SO LONG TO MORNINGS THAT BEGIN THERE
AND LINGER ON WITH ENDLESS CUPS OF COFFEE
EGGS JUST THE WAY YOU LIKE THEM AND ON AND ON ...

CONTINUED FAILURE TO ANYONE RESPONSIBLE FOR
THE DEATH OF THIS BELOVED PLACE ...

ONE DAY HUMANE PEOPLE WILL CONTROL CHANGE ...

KATE
1977

It seems to me that this poem says it all insofar as the neighbors are concerned. For some, Tommy's was not just part of Coventry--it was Coventry.

----- Alan Rapoport -----

Gay Community Services Center at Coventry & Euclid Heights

The latest "business" to open its doors in the Coventry commercial strip is not a business at all, but a counseling, educational and activity center: the Gay Community Services Center at 2795 Coventry (3rd floor). Housed in a large converted apartment overlooking the Coventry/Euclid Heights intersection, the Center is intended as a place for meetings, planning, coordination of activities with other groups and counseling.

Spokesperson Don Skaggs, interviewed at the Center's open house on March 27th, described the Center as "An alternative service organization that will operate with established community services." Reaching the isolated individual with a problem and resolving his/her sexual identity is a priority of the Center, but far from the only one. Counseling will be offered mostly on a group basis, with individual counseling available as needed. Staff of the Center is volunteer, backed up by skilled professionals available on an as-needed basis. One goal of the Center is to obtain eventual foundation funding and thus to upgrade to a full-time professional staff.

Other activities planned include ongoing rap groups; a print and film library; a speakers' bureau and lecture series; dances and sports. The latter two will not be held at the Center premises, as there is insufficient space. A Gay Hotline is now in operation (321-6632).

The Gay Community Services Center is an operation of the GEAR Foundation (Gay Educational and Awareness Resources), which also publishes HIGH GEAR, a gay-oriented monthly newsletter covering Northeast Ohio. The GEAR Foundation, headquartered in Cleveland, is committed to self-understanding, community understanding and positive support facilities for gay people.

There are two things that it should be understood that the Center is not: it is not a dating service, and it is not a recruitment center.

The Center occupies one of the Coventryard former residential spaces converted to commercial purposes, and represents one of landlord Lew Zipkins few successes in moving anything into such spaces above the courtyard and street levels. From the viewpoint of development in the Coventry Commercial zone, perhaps the most important thing about the Center is that it is an office--the first one to move into redeveloped space on Coventry, but maybe not the last. The area's potential for office spaces could prove extremely important if the facts bear out the sense of many street observers that Coventry is near or at its carrying capacity for shops.



PLASTIC BAGS AVAILABLE

After April 1, the City will pick up garbage only in plastic bags. You can get bags at Heights Hardware, 1792 Coventry, for \$7 per one hundred bags and ties. (Other bags are acceptable and you don't have to use these particular bags).

So far as we know, the bags will be collected even if they don't have the Cleveland Heights logo on them.



COMMERCIAL STRIP GOINGS-ONS

David Grumbach, a local resident, will be transforming Tony's Deli into an ambitiously designed submarine sandwich carry-out. He will need local patronage to survive, especially the patronage of those who can walk to his store. If his plans are any indication, the shop should be a real plus for Coventry.

We hear that Heights Hardware has a landlord-tenant problem. The problem is similar to that recently faced by Tommy's, i.e., new landlord, higher rent. The solution to the problem, regrettably, may end up being the same as Tommy's solution.

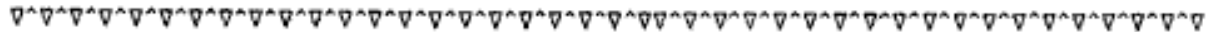
Other commercial enterprises on the street will be renegotiating their leases in the near future. Look for more old favorite stores threatening to leave Coventry.

The prospects for a Fourth Coventry Village Fair are pretty poor. If no application for a permit is made in the next two months, it will be too late to get permission for this summer.

With the coming of spring, local artists are in full bloom. The Art Gallery opens on Coventry around May 1. It will be run by Drusilla Smittle and Diane LoPresti.

Incidentally, artists with bad cases of "cabin fever" from operating out of their homes all winter might be interested in contacting Nira Esrati of the Heights Guild of Artists and Artisans (371-2757). The Guild sponsors workshop spaces at a building on the Severance properties where artists can work.

The Natural Earth Shoe store on Coventry went out of business. Guessing is that it couldn't compete with the other "natural" shoe store, Kalso's, a few store fronts away. That makes one more empty space.



COVENTRY SCHOOL PLANS PAPER DRIVE

Coventry Elementary School is holding a paper drive on three separate days to gather newspapers for recycling. Classes of students will be competing for prizes based on which class brings the most paper. Dates and classes are as follows:

- WEDNESDAY, APRIL 13 - Kdg., Grades 1 & 5
- WEDNESDAY, APRIL 27 - Grades 3, 4 & Ung.
- WEDNESDAY, MAY 4 - Grades 2 & 6

All newspapers should be bundled and tied with string or put in a paper bag. Times for the drive will be 7:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. and 12:00 noon to 12:30 p.m. Newspapers can be dropped off by car at the school parking lot (entrance off Washington Boulevard).



THE HEIGHTS HOME AND GARDEN SHOW is fast approaching. It will take place at the Recreation Pavilion between April 14 and 17. Admission and parking are free, so don't miss out!



COVENTRY NEIGHBORS, INC. WILL HAVE ITS NEXT REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING ON TUESDAY, MAY 10th AT THE UNITARIAN SOCIETY ON LANCASHIRE ROAD AT 8:00 PM.

TOPICS OF DISCUSSION WILL INCLUDE PLANS FOR A 1977 COVENTRY STREET FAIR, TRAFFIC PROBLEMS ON SIDE STREETS IN THE COVENTRY AREA AND THE POSSIBLE RETURN OF TOMMY'S TO COVENTRY.
