

## CENTENNIAL PARK'S SHAMEFUL LEGACY

Smelly, disgusting waste, which burns a track through the thick grass of Paritutu Centennial Park to the beach below, adds the crowning indignity to a playground which was proudly created to mark the centennial of Taranaki. No one visiting the park and seeking access to the beach can fail to be appalled by the general evidence of neglect in what could be one of New Plymouth's most attractive showplaces.

Starting close to the park's Paritutu Crescent boundary, where there is a large, smelly, unguarded pool of considerable danger to children playing in the park, the flow has destroyed the old pathway to the beach (which the public still are directed by sign to use). Such has been the force of the stream at times that it has caused quite extensive erosion, which should be quickly checked before it gets out of hand. And apart from the unsightliness of the drain and its objectionable smell, there is now no safe public track to the beach. The route through grass and sand slopes is far too steep for elderly people, arduous for adults and even hazardous for small children.

### DOES THE COMMITTEE KNOW?

To the credit of the firm from whose factory the waste is draining, it is intended to stop the effluent from running through the park. But the flow should never have been allowed to start. Did the Centennial Park Committee authorise the firm to discharge chemical waste into the park? Do its members ever visit the area? It is unbelievable that they would allow factory drainage into a public playground, let alone observe such damage without doing something to stop it.

Indeed, the public are entitled to ask if the committee ever meet at all. The city council's financial accounts suggest they do not. In the year ending March 31 last the committee received the usual £100 council subsidy, plus £40 in rent and interest, and spent precisely £17, comprising £8 for insurance and £9 for general upkeep!

Is it any wonder that the whole park has an air of general decrepitude? For elsewhere can be seen rusty and completely illegible signs, drooping fences, seats with only foundations remaining, potholed tracks and a mass of lupin and gorse.

### POPULAR

Yet why is such neglect tolerated in a community which prides itself on the attractiveness of its parks and even calls itself the "scenic city?" This is not an out-of-the-way spot visited by only occasional sight-seers, but one of the most popular vantage points in the city. Moreover Paritutu beach is serving a growing residential area, and will become increasingly popular if port expansion consumes part or whole of Ngamotu Beach.

The time is long past when responsibility for the upkeep and development of the park should be taken from the present committee and handed to someone with the interests of this area more at heart. With largescale housing development nearby, local residents might well be invited to supervise the development of the park.

For it would be impossible for them to do worse than past committees, whose somnolence has left New Plymouth with a shameful legacy of scenic inaction.