

Selsdon Gazette

IT IS TIME, we feel, that readers of the Gazette should know of the difficulties that the magazine is currently facing—difficulties which have been discussed at meeting after meeting of the Residents' Association's executive committee and for which no ready solution can be found.

Indeed, we feel that members of the Residents' Association have the firm *right* to know what those problems are, for the Gazette is their journal.

THE HARSH FACTS

- The Gazette is losing money rapidly. We have been sorely hit by inflation. It is anticipated that by the end of the year our funds and our reserve investment may have been exhausted.
- Why? Because our printers' charges have been increased by 40% since the beginning of the year and may well be raised further. Our printers, Heath Press, retain a very cordial association with the magazine, but point out that they have been undercharging us for a very long time—simply because they have wanted to maintain that cordial association. But they have had to face massive increases in costs for labour and materials.

Because our revenue from advertisers (our sole income) has been dropping steadily. The gap between income and expenditure is widening relentlessly.

- Thus something positive must be done quickly to save the Gazette—or we shall have no alternative but to cease publication.

WHAT MIGHT BE DONE

- Increase our charges to advertisers by at least 40%? That is the superficial answer. But would our advertisers go along with us? We doubt it. Why not? Because inflation is hitting them too. And because many of them have little need to advertise. The ladies' hairdressers and the builders, for example, say that they are already overloaded with customers, so why advertise for more?

And we realise full well that many advertisers retain their connection with the Gazette, like Heath Press, for sentimental reasons in the sense that they want to be part of Selsdon's community spirit. It is they—and Heath Press—who have made the Gazette possible.

- Seek new advertisers from outside Selsdon? Suppliers of goods and services not at the moment available in our village? An excellent idea. But who would approach them? We badly need a new advertisement manager—someone who has the time and the enterprise to do the work. Mrs. June Carmichael, our present advertisement manager whose contribution to the Gazette has been invaluable over so many years, is more than anxious to hand over to a newcomer, as we have announced several times.

to be or not to be?

- Make a charge for the Gazette to our readers? Ask for annual subscriptions? Unhappy thought—and utterly impracticable. For who would have time to collect the money? Certainly not our gallant band of distributors to whom we are already deeply indebted.
- Print a less glossy magazine every month—on poorer quality paper? No. Paradoxically enough, poorer quality paper is in short supply nationally and may be just as expensive.
- Print fewer pages in each issue? Yes, that would help financially. But then the Gazette would be less readable and an inadequate mirror of the social life of our community—and therefore a less attractive proposition to advertisers.

TRADITION

The Gazette is a Selsdon tradition. It has helped to “unite the people and the organisations of Selsdon, so that they have a better understanding of each other and become a true social community” (we quote the words of Roy A. Savill, the editor in 1946). Is that tradition to die? Has the Gazette outlived its ideals and purpose? Has Selsdon become so closely linked with Croydon, Sanderstead and Addington that it has lost its character and no longer needs a magazine of its own?

We of this editorial do not think so, and we are emboldened in our belief because we know that the Gazette is the envy of other local residents' associations: they have told us so.

CONCLUSION

But the inescapable truth is that we *must* receive a higher regular income in order to survive. We *must* have a new advertisement manager—someone with the time and the enterprise to bring in the money.

It may well be that there is a solution somewhere. But where?

“It is unthinkable that the Gazette should cease publication,” so many readers have told us. We wonder whether the new residents are similarly minded—those in Selsdon Vale, for instance: those who would have no knowledge of the benefits engineered for all Selsdonians by the officers of the Residents' Association over the years; those perhaps who have yet to recognise that the Gazette is the journal and mouthpiece of the Association.

It grieves the new editor immeasurably to have to present the unpalatable facts (he has occupied the hot seat only since last March) and to announce that the Gazette is no longer commercially viable. He has been told repeatedly that the magazine is welcomed in readers' homes. But, rightly or wrongly, he believes that the nub of the situation is whether advertisers and potential advertisers welcome it sufficiently to reimburse the 40% (perhaps 50%) increase in printers' charges.

That is the real question. And so—to be or not to be?