

CENTRAL SQUARE BUSINESS ASSOCIATION

Carl F. Barron, *President*
Putnam Furniture Leasing Co., Inc.
617-354-3358 Fax 617-547-6636

February 1, 2001

Honorable Members of the
Cambridge City Council
Cambridge City Council
City Hall
795 Mass. Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139

RE: PIGEONS IN TRAFALGAR SQUARE/"RATS WITH WINGS"

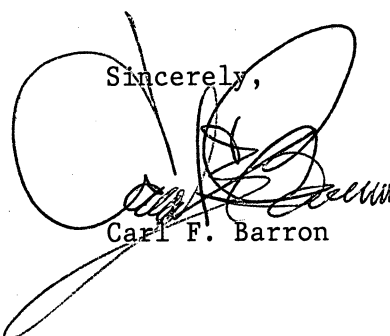
Dear Councillors:

I thought you would like to know that we are not alone.

However, all joking aside, I draw your attention to the comments of the Mayor of London, who recognizes the seriousness of the problem, and of the American surgical technician from Quincy, Mass., who said it would never happen here.

Tourists do not come to Central Square to feed the pigeons, but we have many kind hearted people in the neighborhood who support the pigeon population on a daily basis. Can anything be done to discourage or prevent this before the pigeons take over Central Square?

Sincerely,


Carl F. Barron

CFB01/CityCouncil

Enc.

cc: Commissioner Ronnie Watson
CSBA Board of Directors

2001 FEB -5 A 11: 15
OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

The Boston Globe

SATURDAY, JANUARY 27, 2001

Ruffling a Trafalgar tradition

Bird-feeding custom battles cosmopolitan vision for London square

By Kevin Cullen

GLOBE STAFF

LONDON — Central Park has carriages. The Public Garden has its Swan Boats. And Trafalgar Square has pigeons — thousands and thousands of pigeons. A carpet of pigeons. An ocean of the plump little birds.

And that makes Bernard Rayner smile. It also puts food on his table.

But then, a couple of weeks ago, some faceless bureaucrat appeared at Rayner's pigeon food stall in Trafalgar Square and handed Rayner a piece of paper that said he was out of business. Instead of getting mad, Rayner got a lawyer. Last Monday, the High Court gave Rayner permission to keep selling pigeon food until Feb. 7, when the court will hold a full hearing on the dispute.

London's mayor, Ken Living-

stone, has big plans for the city's most famous square and wants to transform it into a center for cultural and artistic events. But to do so, the mayor says, the pigeons have to go, and along with them the man whose business the mayor says is most responsible for making Trafalgar Square a cafeteria for thousands of what he calls "rats with wings."

With the pigeons gone, or at least greatly reduced, Livingstone envisions Trafalgar Square as a hip, cosmopolitan piazza, where the tourists and the trendies can sip cappuccino and listen to jazz or watch street performers.

Not so fast, says Rayner, 44, an affable Cockney who considers himself as much an ambassador of good will as a peddler of pigeon grub. This is more than about business. This is about tradition. His family has been selling pigeon

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AFP PHOTO

The pigeons in Trafalgar Square are one of London's enduring traditions, but their detractors say the birds are a disease-carrying nuisance.

Cockney custom fights for place in Trafalgar Square

► PIGEON
Continued from A1

food to tourists and locals alike for more than 50 years, and he says they'll have to drag him out of the square.

"You may not be able to beat City Hall, but I'm sure as hell going to fight them," Rayner said, leaning on the counter of the small trailer from which he sells dried corn in small plastic containers for 30 pence, or about 45 cents, apiece. "This is a family-oriented family business. Where else can you bring your kids and have a laugh for 30 p in London? And tell me where in London you see more different colors and creeds of people? They're here for the pigeons, not some expensive cup of coffee you can get everywhere else."

This is a classic battle between the forces of tradition and modernization. The modernizers at City Hall acknowledge that the pigeons of Trafalgar Square are one of the more enduring, quaint traditions in London. Tourists from all over the world come to Trafalgar Square to feed the pigeons.

But those pigeons are also a nuisance that can carry disease, monopolize the square, and coat it with unseemly droppings. It costs \$150,000 a year just to clean the square's centerpiece, the 165-foot column honoring Admiral Horatio Nelson, who died in the 1805 battle for which the square is named.

Helen Hall-Wright, a spokeswoman for Livingstone's office, said that about 3,000 pigeons fill the square each day, and that the city wants to reduce the number so more people will use the square. The city plans to begin offering concerts and performances in the square in March.

The city, which refused to renew Rayner's license to sell pigeon food last October, wants instead to license merchants to sell food that people will eat.



AFF PHOTO

A pigeon descending on Parliament member Tony Banks in Trafalgar Square in London last week.

Animal rights activists claim there are about 10,000 pigeons whose main food supply is Trafalgar Square and maintain that most of them will starve if Rayner's business is closed up.

It was Rayner's great-uncle, Ted, who opened a modest stand in Trafalgar Square after the end of World War II.

"They called him Buttonhole Ted because he always wore a carnation," Rayner said. "My father, Bert, took it over in 1956. They called him Bert on the Square. My old man was part of the square. My dad ran it until 1995, when I took it over."

Rayner's 16-year-old son, James, works at the trailer on weekends and was being groomed to become the fourth-generation Rayner to run the business.

Bert Rayner died last September. Three weeks later, without an explanation, the mayor's office informed Bernard Rayner that his license would not be renewed.

"I'm glad my dad wasn't here to see it," he said.

Rayner, a bearish man who is rarely without a lit Benson & Hedges, scoffs at claims that the

pigeons are a health hazard.

"My family's been here with the pigeons for more than 50 years, and not one of us ever got sick from them," he said.

Rayner says he is as upset about the way City Hall handled the dispute as with the substance of the complaints.

"No one from the mayor's office has had the decency to talk to me about all this," he said. "They just hand you pieces of paper and run away. They just expect you to follow their edict, no questions asked."

Rayner says he believes the effort to drive him out is a side effect

of Britain's identity crisis. He bemoans Britain's membership in the European Union.

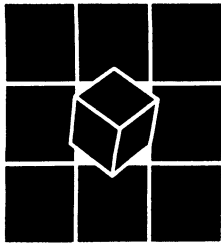
"The country's lost at the moment," he said. "Our heritage is being wiped out. We're told that we're Europeans, not English or British anymore. Well, the English would say keep the pigeons."

Anne Montegani, 31, a surgical technician from Quincy, Mass., was ambivalent after her 10-year-old niece, Sarah, photographed her with a dozen pigeons draped all over her.

"It's a great tradition, but now I'm wondering whether that was a smart thing to do," she said. "You could never do this in America. The health department would get rid of them."

Rayner says that however the High Court rules in two weeks, either side is likely to appeal. If it becomes a marathon court battle, he says he'll set up a defense fund and ask the public to support him.

"Deep in my heart, I figure I can't beat City Hall, but I'll have a bloody good go," he said. "The birds have been good to my family, and this is payback. Pigeon payback."



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Carl F. Barron, *President*
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February 1, 2001

Miss D. Margaret Drury, City Clerk
Office of the City Clerk
Cambridge City Hall
795 Mass. Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139

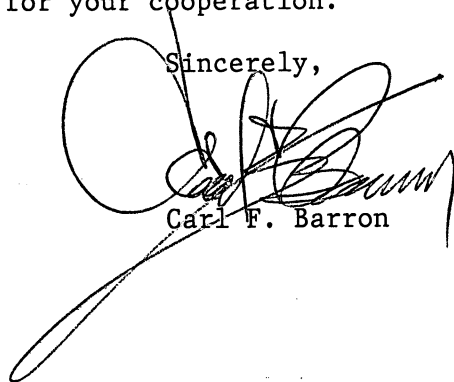
RE: PIGEON CONTROL

Dear Miss Drury:

Would you please forward a copy of the enclosed letter concerning
the above to each member of the Cambridge City Council.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Sincerely,


Carl F. Barron

CFB00/Drury

2001 FEB -5 A 11: 15
OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

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Consent Communication #1

A communication was received
from Carl F. Barron, President,
Central Square Business
Association, transmitting concern
of the pigeon population in Central
Square.

In City Council February 12, 2001

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