



60 Minutes forum was 'trial by media'

CONFLICTING views over Cabramatta's Asian community, gangs, drugs and crime were aired last Friday night, during a Channel Nine 60 Minutes forum held at the Cabravale Ex-servicemen's Club.

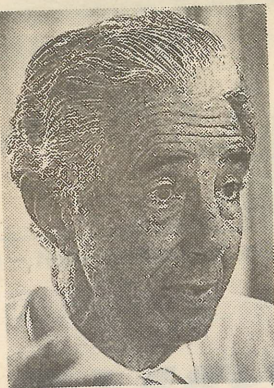
The event, which drew more than 300 participants was described as a 60 Minutes tribute to John Newman by reporter, Richard Carlton, and he threw open an informal debate on possible explanations for his death.

He suggested three reasons - the "explosion of Asian and Vietnamese gangs", fractional Labor Party warfare, and an affair of the heart.

Mr Carlton first invited response to the suggestion that the most popular explanation for Mr Newman's death was "gang warfare and that the Vietnamese were responsible".

But Cabramatta Patrol Commander, Chief Inspector Alan Leek, who sat on a panel next to Mr Cuong Vo, President of the Vietnamese Association (NSW branch) said the murder investigation did not concentrate on the Asian community.

"We have the expertise and the ability to get somewhere (with this investigation) ... but it's



FRANK Calabro

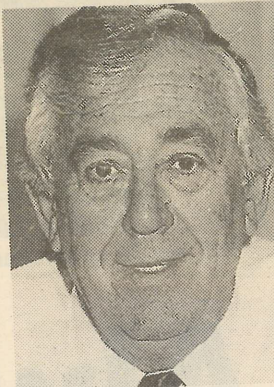
very early days and we need to accept that it will take a long time."

Mr Carlton then diverted the focus of the debate from Mr Newman's death to whether or not non-Vietnamese people felt excluded in Cabramatta.

The first person to speak from the audience complained that many non-Vietnamese people didn't even try to work or open a business or restaurant in Cabramatta because they had no chance to succeed.

The speaker said that non-Vietnamese were intimidated and made to feel excluded.

He said if they didn't pay for protection, their shops were burnt down or their windows broken. It had to be the Vietnamese or nothing.



TED Grace



JANICE Crosio



KEN Chapman



ROCKY Gattellari

By AMBER DE NARDI and THANG LUONG

From this point, the forum became a slanging match with audience members shouting out statements like "You're a racist"; "I'm against people who clam up when trouble happens"; "Vietnamese people don't try to force others out of Cabramatta"; "New Vietnamese migrants find it hard to settle so they naturally group together"; "Vietnamese are a scapegoat"; "Australians are racists and they don't accept the Vietnamese community"; "The police have to try harder"; "It's time the Vietnamese told the police who is behind extortion rackets".

President of the Cabramatta Electoral Council for the Labor Party, Ken

Chapman, accused the 60 Minutes forum of "turning the event into an anti-Vietnamese hate campaign".

"Cabramatta is a melting pot where East meets West and John Newman probably paid with his life to make sure everyone could blend together," Councillor Chapman said.

"What we've got to do is not vilify everything but build on what he (John Newman) put forward".

After the program, members of the public voiced their condemnation for Richard Carlton and the way he manipulated the forum.

Edna McGill of the Ethnic Communities Council Anti-Racism

Committee described the event as "a trial of Cabramatta by the media".

"This was not a tribute to John Newman at all. The message should have been for everyone in the community to get together and help the police solve the crime. But all Mr Carlton wanted to achieve was to divide the community," Mrs McGill said.

Another local resident, Glen Watson, said the segment was all about inciting racist remarks, and was not a tribute to John Newman as was advertised.

"And nothing was said about who will take over Mr Newman's place - who will be strong enough to

carry on the work where he left off."

Towards the end of the forum, a number of people suggested that only politicians can "fix the problems, because they make the laws".

And what did the politicians have to say? Ken Chapman, Councillor at Fairfield Council.

"Give police more power. Some Civil Libertarians have become too strong of late. There are some policies about law and order which must be changed". Janice Crosio, Federal Member for Prospect.

"Cabramatta has grown because people have contributed through the sweat of their brow. I don't care which race - people should not be chastised for working hard."

Ted Grace, Federal Member for Fowler.

"This forum is simply an Asian bashing exercise. There is a certain amount of racism in every community. But Mr Carlton is not helping this situation at all. John Newman would not have wanted this".

Among the audience there were also a number of well known community figures. This is what they had to say.

Frank Calabro, former Mayor of Fairfield and business man.

"Australia has an international society. Why all this venom against immigrants. There will always be some problems with new migrants at the beginning".

Rocky Gattellari, endorsed Liberal Candidate for Cabramatta, financier and former boxing champion.

"Every country in the world is racist. It's up to the individual to survive the early onslaught of discrimination. When migrants who came to this country 30 years ago and Aussies wanted to settle their differences, they just beat the s...t out of each other and then became best friends."