



VICTORIA UNIVERSITY
MELBOURNE AUSTRALIA

Irregular no. 7; Feb. 1968

This is the Unpublished version of the following publication

UNSPECIFIED (1968) Irregular no. 7; Feb. 1968. Irregular (7). pp. 1-5.
(Unpublished)

The publisher's official version can be found at

Note that access to this version may require subscription.

Downloaded from VU Research Repository <https://vuir.vu.edu.au/16325/>

an irregular publication for members of the Townplanning Research Group (Not for general publication or re-publication)

1967 was a busy year. You are a busy person. You could not go to all of the seminars, conventions and meetings, or read all the reports books and journals relating to matters significant for a modern Melbourne's growth.

This issue (apart from the first two items) we fall back on our original intention to provide thumb-nail bits and pieces to "fill you in" not on the main seminars and reports but on the less well-known.

1/7/8

An Off-the-Cuff Huff ?

OR

A Premeditated Bolt from the Blue ?

Late last year saw an unprincipled power-motivated attack by elements in the MMBW on the concept of a Council for the Co-ordination of Regional Planning proposed by the TCPB. But there is room for both bodies, and the "second-tier" democracy of the MMBW should be retained to carry out the detailed planning (as it does now), but within the framework of a general strategic plan (which it can't now).

Early this year sees an equally unprincipled power-motivated attack in reverse. Premier Bolte threatens not to abolish the MMBW but to strip it of all semblance of representation from local government.

Pique at the Board's difference with himself over the use of Big River water (made a political football by Bolte in the 1964 elections to catch country votes in the Bendigo Province), or annoyance over Labor Commissioner's opposition to yearly increases in rates, are poor substitutes for statesmanship.

All democracy has blemishes. That is its nature. But if the local government democracy of the Board of Works is to be abolished, from that point onwards the State Government will bear direct responsibility for all but the most localised of planning decisions.

God help the Minister for Local Government when his Premier without consulting any of his Ministers threatens such far-reaching decisions in an off-the-cuff huff. Or was this bolt from the blue long pre-meditated ?

2/7/8

A Challenge to the Whole Race of Planners

Underlying assumptions and current practices of modern planning are witheringly assailed by Jane Jacobs, associate editor of Architectural Forum (U.S.). She tackles not only the conformers and the conservatives, but "the greats"--- those she calls the "decentrists", for example (Ebenezer Howard or Lewis Mumford), as well as Le Corbusier, whom she dubs a "utopian" for his "vertical garden city" concept which has had such a major impact on modern trends.

Her book "The Death and Life of Great American Cities"--- the Failure of Townplanning" (Pelican \$ 1.40), first published in 1961, cannot be ignored.

A "Must"

If you have not read this book it is a "must" because of the sharpness and earthiness with which it isolates

202

two opposite viewpoints on what modern man really requires to live in a civilised way in a great modern city. (Incidentally, this book should be just "the cup of tea" for those in the TRG who have been arguing, quite rightly, for more debate on fundamental purposes of planning, and have been highly critical for lack of fundamental perspectives in the MMBW and TCPS reports. They are likely to re-act strongly to this book---for or against !)

If you have read the book and disagree in general, then what are the flaws in her arguments ?

If you have read the book and agree in general, then the exercise of a critical faculty is called for:- To what extent is her analysis universal to "great city" life (and therefor her solutions applicable to Australian conditions) and to what extent is it peculiar to American traditions and conditions (and to that extent inapplicable to Australian conditions except with considerable modification) ?

Next issue of "Irregular" may pose some Melbourne trends for argument against the background of the issues raised in this book.

3/7/8

Finance for Public Purposes

Mr Bruce McFarlane, lecturer at Australian National University gave a paper to the Living Standards (follow-up) Symposium organised by ACSPA (Australian Council of Salaried and Professional Organisations) on 29/11/67.

On the necessity of new institutions including new fiscal institutions to organise our resources more effectively he advocates a Public Finance Corporation "Such an ~~institution~~ investment bank or corporation was advocated by Prof. H.W. Arndt in 1960, the capital funds to come from the annual proceeds of a development tax on company profits. Alternatively an excess profits tax could be levied on companies who would be given the option of paying the tax or granting shares in their company to the P F C to the value of their tax liability ---the role of the Public Finance Corporation would be to supply capital to those fields of investment and economic sectors 'which cannot obtain in the capital market a share of funds commensurate to their social priority': electrical commissions, town planning authorities, government oil and mineral exploration---"

(Comment: See also item 18/7/8 below)

4/7/8

Architects call for Co-ordination

The Victorian Chapter of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects wants the Government to accept direction of Melbourne's planning as a major responsibility. "It is only by this means that the present policy of isolationist planning of major projects by various Government departments will be co-ordinated---"

(Mr Lloyd Orton, President of the Chapter Herald 10/11/67)

(Comment : See also item 18/7/8 below)

A Cross-Section of "Cross-Section"

Department of Architecture, University of Melbourne, produce a monthly journal for the profession called "Cross-Section". Of course the emphasis is strongly

on architecture, problems of design, aesthetics and construction of individual buildings etc. but these problems spill over into problems of townplanning and visa versa.

Here are some thumb-nail excerpts of a few of the cross-problems:-

- 5/7/8 Housing "The Housing Industry Development Assoc. has become established as a registered national economy company---to carry out studies in structure, capacity, and market needs of future Housing Industry Assoc. homes---in all States and will work with Gov't Depts, university research and townplanning authorities " (C/S Jan 67 p.2)
- 6/7/8 Pubs "The Australian Pub" by J.M. Freeland (Prof of Architecture Univ. of N.S.W) Melb Uni. Press \$7.00 is as much a social as an architectural history (C/S Jan 67, p 3)
- 7/7/8 Flats---Bachelors above Families "As an alternative to high-rise flat re-development, architects David Saunders in association with Gerd and Renate Block have designed flat development which has the terrace house form on the ground and first floor, topped by a floor of bachelor flats, which make the terrace houses more economically viable. The \$170,000 project is sponsored by the Combined Parish of Collingwood and North Richmond---on Church land, Page Street, Clifton Hill---(C/S Jan 67 p.3)
- 8/7/8 ANZAAS Congresses 67 & 68 "The ANZAAS 39th Congress ended in Melb with sub-section H.A. --Architects and Townplanning resolving that 'Reappraisal of the Architecture and Town Planning professions' be the topic for next years symposium in Christchurch. This years symposium had a variety of papers on the theme 'Suburbia' for the first three days, and on environmental design for the fourth day (C/S Feb 67 p2)
- 9/7/8 Offices Mixed With Flats
Undergrounding Cars
Pedestrian Access
"Paul Ritter's proposed regulations for building in West Perth create an important precedent for the manipulation of by-laws to achieve results for which it would be undemocratic to legislate directly. The regulations require that 50% of the site is landscaped and that the existing system of service lanes will be retained and extended to provide separate pedestrian circulation throughout the area. The allowable plot ratio of 1:33 will give a fairly low density. Rather than legislate directly against overlooking, the by-laws require either a set-back of 20 ft., or building right up to the side boundary. To force parking out of sight the regulations require a minimum landscaped area of 50% and a maximum site cover of 50%, so that cars are either under the garden or under the building in a fully developed site. The cost of doing this makes the provision of car-parking a critical economic factor, and this is used to make mixed development the only economic way of developing any site. Parking spaces are required at the rate of ~~1:33~~ 1.33 per flat or 1 per 500 square ft of office space, whichever is the greater, so that the parking requirements for schemes containing equal amounts of flats and offices are half those for schemes containing solely the one or the other. It is interesting to ~~examine~~ consider whether this type of oblique legislation could be used to achieve other desirable objectives; for instance, if legislation on the width of access ways could be manipulated to favour pedestrian street access to flats. (C/S Feb 67 p.3)
- 10/7/8 "The Enemy Within the Gates" "A booklet 'The Enemy Within Our Gates' has been prepared to support the campaign of the Victorian Minister of Housing Mr Lindsay Thompson, and the

Housing Commission Chairman Mr J.P. Gaskin, for a doubling of the Federal Government's slum reclamation subsidy. Each year 20 acres of housing decays to the quality of a slum, but the money available from State and Federal sources combined (\$ 2,400,000) barely allows for the re-development of 14 to 15 acres. One of the most significant costs ~~of the~~ in reclamation of the inner suburban areas is the cost of acquisition and clearing of land at \$ 100,000 to \$ 160,000 an acre. More than social and architectural factors, it is this cost which has virtually required the Vic H.C to build multi-storey flats of ponderous girth and bulk and doubtful social progress, in order to appear to achieve maximum accommodation for least investment. Possibly this high acquisition and clearance cost per acre has been the inhibiting factor in deterring private developers, who although encouraged by the Housing Commission, have largely refrained so far from taking part in slum clearance. In fact the H.C is prepared to ~~xx~~ sell acquired land at a loss in order to promote private development. A recent change in H.C policy would release 30-acre lots as a better inducement to builders than the previous 10-acre sections. Although in this much vaunted affluent society we ought to expect the existence of sufficient available public finance to cure the housing problem it is evident that private investment is essential, and if private investors lack the courage or are unaware of the practicality of profit from high density housing, perhaps an architectural competition for a specific site--an 'ideas' competition backed with a financial assessment--would help to focus their attention. The Vic Housing Commission itself could sponsor such a competition, or even the RVIA Small Homes Service within 'The Age', for after all, these would be small homes, and the single house design competitions have become a trifle wearisome" (C/S March 67 p.3)

(Comment: See items 13/7/8 and 14/7/8 below)

11/7/8 Adventure Park "A scheme to landscape 100 acres beside the Yarra has been undertaken by the Heidelberg Council" (Grahame Shaw the townplanner) "---model boat pond, caravan park, picnic areas, canoe creek, oval and swimming holes. Children in an 'adventure playground' will be given free reign---" C/S April '67 p.2)

12/7/8 Popularity Poll for Flats 1966 Census--"Ten years ago ~~x~~ 5% of new dwellings were flats; now about 25-30% and probably 40% in Melb and Syd.-- (C/S April '67 p.2)

(Comment: Compare Ray Davie in "The Age" Real Estate 3/2/68: A recent study by the Housing Industry Association showed that during the 1966-67 financial year 10,138 flats were built in Victoria---more than seven times as many as in 1958-59. In contrast the number of new houses built has been fairly steady--21,195 in 1950-51 compared with 22,126 in 1966-67)

(Further Comment: See item 16/7/8. Are these figures right?)

13/7/8 Have the Master Builders Failed? June 1967 issue of Cross-Section criticises the decline in standards of the third (central) section of the Hotham Gardens (North Melb.) flat-building project which started out as a unique co-operative venture of the Royal Vic. Instit. of Architects, The Master Builders (Associated) Re-development Ltd (since taken over by Jennings) and the Housing Commission.

In the August 1967 issue of Cross-Section, the editors state: "An apology---complaints have been made by---A.V. Jennings---that---the " (June) "issue is untrue, defamatory and actionable", and proceeded to publish Jennings' article rebutting Cross-Section's article.

September Cross-Section has a ~~rebuttal~~ rejoinder to Jennings' rebuttal.

Those interested enough to estimate whether private

industry should be subsidised for re-development projects should read these three mini-articles, go and inspect the three stages of development, and decide for themselves. Especially as Jennings has now acquired from the Commission land for very similar buildings in Carlton and Winsor--and especially as 30-acre paddocks have become policy for the Commission (See 10/7/8 above)
(See also Irregular 8/2/7)

- 14/7/8 New Housing Minister "---Meagher declared himself unsympathetic to high rise dwellings for families, in favour of discussion with Melbourne architects to find better alternatives; sympathetic to the complaints of residents at Hotham Gardens estate--" (C/S July p.3)
- 15/7/8 Jenning's Award "The Australian Institute of Building-- has set up a \$2000 award for an original building research contribution into the economies of building--- award comes from A.V. Jennings' \$40,000 grant to building research " (C/S July p.3)
- 16/7/8 Flats Equal Houses ? "The number of flats now equalled the number of houses being built in Melbourne" is a statistic given by Mr G.N. Crowley, director of the Housing Industry Association's economic research department." (C/S Aug. '67 p.2) (Comment: inconsistent with 12/7/8 above?)
- 17/7/8 Major Parks 1 1/2 million People Apart "Victorian State Cabinet plans to set aside 250 acres for parkland opposite Latrobe university. This will be the first major park for Melbourne since 1933, 1 1/2 million people later" (C/S Aug p.2) (Comment: exercise for Jane Jacob fans: Will this sow the seeds of splendor or disaster ?)
- 18/7/8 The Urban Cinderella "A Sydney study group chaired by Mr George Clarke, town planner, has produced a review of the Sydney Metropolitan area, one of 40 studies of metropolitan areas in 40 countries, which were presented at Expo 67 in August. The review makes four main points 1. Sydney and Melb with 49% of Australia's population, are at a disadvantage in Federal and State allocations of resources. 2. There is a widening between Australian Federal power for raising public revenue and finance and the detailed responsibilities of the State for investment. 3. State powers need to be focused on metropolitan problems. 4. Sydney needs a metropolitan identity and voice in State and Federal decisions. The group says it sensed a dominance of rural slanting----" (C/S Sept. '67 p/2)
(Comment: Compare the substance of Victorian TCPB's report Items 19/6/7; 20/6/7 and 21/6/7 and see items 3/7/8 & 4/7/8 & 19/7/8)
- 19/7/8 Ritter Court Action "A supreme Court writ claiming damages £ for alleged wrongful dismissal was issued in October on behalf of Paul Ritter against the Perth C.C.--" (C/S Nov 67 p1)
- 20/7/8 No More Co-Ordination for N.S.W. ? The NSW Gov't has rejected a suggestion in Parliament for a Sydney Metropolitan Planning and Development Commission. The Premier, in a deferred reply said the functions proposed for the commission were already the responsibility of various Government agencies, and no necessity was seen for appointment of such a body. The diversity of authority surely makes a commission necessary ?" (C/S Nov '67 p.3) (Comment: what's this all about ? Isn't the N.S.W. State Planning Authority already integrated with essential service departments ?)
- 21/7/8 An Economist Opposes Corridors Mr Colin Clark, formerly economic advisor to the Queensland Gov't and now director of the agricultural research institute of Oxford Univ., speaking at a Univ. of Melb. seminar, advocated 10 new industrial cities each with at least 250,000 people. ---one new city every 2 years with complementary industries in these cities serving both national and export markets. He strongly criticised the Vic. T & C proposal for corridor development for Melb, saying this would create a deplorable drift in the current urban sprawl" (C/S Dec. '67 p.3)
(Comment: What industries, where ?)