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THIS ISSUE :

Can The School Become THE Community Heart?

The "heart" or the "soul" or the "centre" of the local community, according to ^{the} ~~our~~ School of Town Planning thought has evaporated - scattered by the mobility of the modern citizen. Last meeting of the T.R.G., "Delta" advanced an interesting theory about the potential place of the school in modern society, which, in essence, ^{re-emphasises} ~~reflects~~ the importance of a local community "centre" where human beings can find their "soul" in contact with their neighbours.

This issue consists of articles by two contributors. "Gamma" having heard "Delta" writes on an interesting experiment contemplated for Collingwood, and "Delta" himself re-states his views.

1/10/8 A School Planned by the Community
(by "Gamma")

The formation of a committee to plan the proposed new High School for Collingwood may usher in a new era of school planning with community participation; this may well be the first step in Victoria for an Education Department School to be an educational, cultural and social centre, and for the school building and its environs to be a beautiful central feature of a re-developed area.

In September last year the Victorian Council of School Organisations held a seminar on Inner Melbourne Schools. As a result of this, Mr. Reed, Director of Secondary Education has initiated a Committee for this High School project. Already a teacher has been seconded for two days a week to act as Executive Officer of a Project Committee which has been formed to plan the school.

2/10/8

It is proposed that the school should be a centre for student parent and general community activity. The building may include meeting rooms and adult education facilities, a branch of the Municipal library, a coffee shop or cafeteria and sports facilities preferably under cover and with lighting.

The new project has not yet been fully approved by the Minister of Education; neither has the Housing Commission nor the Collingwood Municipal Council as yet been invited to join the Committee (although Cr. A. McCutcheon is on the committee as a representative of the Collingwood Girls School Advisory Committee)

It is hoped that the new High School will be in operation by the beginning of 1970.

3/10/8 What is Different at Collingwood?

For some years a number of Victorian schools have been used for educational purposes after school hours. Both private and state schools are used by the Council for Adult Education some primary schools are used for the teaching of English to New Australians and schools such as University High School and many technical schools are used for adults to study for school certificates such as matriculation and

leaving. In addition many technical schools in the city and suburbs have lessons which are more for learning a craft than a trade. Some school grounds are also used for sports teams in the week-end competitions.

However, the Collingwood proposals go further than the opening of the school for education in this formal way, or the casual use of the playground for sport.

4/10/8

For example it is suggested that the school should incorporate a branch of the Municipal Library, and that there should be first class covered sports facilities, and a coffee shop or cafeteria. This indicates that the plan is to have the school not only as an educational centre but as a social centre, so that adults, and youth can enjoy the facilities together, both formally and informally.

The Committee which was set up in February included members of School organisations, architects, members of teaching organisations, and teachers from both primary and secondary schools, as well as specialist teachers in visual education, psychology, curriculum and research.

5/10/8 Mr. Reed, Director of Secondary Education, has stated ..

"With the aid or leadership of the Victorian Council of School Organisations we shall make a thorough analysis of the area, its problem, its needs, its requirements as they can be expressed in educational terms. Such an analysis would involve social, economic, religious and racial as well as educational features. We shall use this analysis from the outset, to guide us in the design of a school planned to provide for the determined needs of the district and serving adults as well as children."

6/10/8 The Problem
(by "Delta")

World Health Organisation has stated, "The tremendous increase in urban population clearly justifies the warning that after the question of keeping world peace, metropolitan planning is probably the most serious single problem faced by man in the second half of the 20th Century.

Growth in terms of people is quite a staggering problem. In the world today we have 3,200,000,000 people and in 40 years time we will have 7,000,000,000. This gives us a current 20% annual increase in world population but during the same period we will have a 4% increase in the urban population.

7/10/8

Correspondingly we have a gradual deterioration of services to the community and the problem is that these services are wearing out much quicker than we can replace them.

We must also take into consideration coincidentally the possibility of automation which is embryonic at the moment but nevertheless a necessary factor to be considered in overall planning.

8/10/8

Living in a statistical world we must remember that trend is not destiny but that we must be in creative control. Trends can, like history, become an impediment for those who are seeking creative solutions and a sanctuary for those who are not. Ford Motor Car - computer designed.

9/10/8

We must distinguish between the inevitable and the alterable and controllable and bend trend to human and moral purpose.

Let us take one of Newtons Laws of Motion. "To every action there is an equal and opposite reaction". In Town Planning it is possible for us to answer a problem in one location e.g. traffic and you aggravate a problem some where else. I have it on good authority that the new V.F.L. stadium at Waverley will accommodate spectators magnificently when they get there as due to the absence of public transport the car will have to be used and assuming an average of 3 people per car for 120,000 seating capacity 40,000 cars will have to be accommodated within 2 hours on roads that are not capable of holding them! In fact the C.E. of Waverley imagines the last car will get away on the Wednesday following the match.

The creation of new perways have nearly always resulted in their obsolescence in about five years.

We blunder on from palliative to palliative no weight being given to the cumulative - the problem of increased congestion effects on traffic and transportation or the social effects of all these problems.

10/10/8

We must, just as we recognise a whole continent, a whole state, a whole region, a whole city, recognise a whole man - he is not a series of added up special compartments to be coped with by added up special departments, and that specialities are organic parts, fully effective only when they are parts of a joint and mingled program of education, housing, recreation, re-creation. This realisation of course must be not only an amiable intellectual recognition but an integral part of action.

This is not to assume that we will all be total men or generalists but the recognition that our speciality is directed to the creation of the whole. A concern of all men or no man are the only alternatives. You choose your field of special competency, interest, allegiance struggle with it and for it, more satisfyingly, more competently when you see it as part of an overall plan.

11/10/8

The Underlying Dynamics of Development are:

1. Population explosion and automobile ownership. It must be anticipated that we must in the future with the development of automation, consider a city within which our total committed work time will be four hours per day four days per week or 2 days a week 8 hours per day. The importance of planning for pleasure will undoubtedly assure greater importance and effect our concepts of any plan.
2. The private speculative developer operating on minimal or no investment, thriving on differential and accelerated obsolescence and quicker turnover. He moves on leaving behind a heritage of grey areas or areas soon to be grey.
3. The results of considering land merely as a private tradable highly speculative commodity. Can we afford to leave land resources entirely in the hands of private enterprise any more than we can afford to leave air in water resources in the hands of a private speculator.

12/10/8

The endemic qualities or constants in humanity: happiness, sadness, love, emotion, procreation, death and the extent to which man is thus preoccupied determines the spaces he creates. e.g. the Middle Ages with its emphasis on religion and faith, the 19th Century with its emphasis on political economy the preoccupation with possessions and today administration organisation monopoly capitalism, profit all leave their respective marks on our cities. The role of the Town Planner, the Architect has not changed. His is the interpreter, innovator, giving spatial expression to human conduct.

Lethaby states "Architecture properly understood is civilisation itself" and Mathew Arnold proposes "What is civilisation, it is the humanisation of man in Society."

13/10/8

The need for overall planning in both its social and physical aspects is of the utmost importance in order to create a life of expanded vision and understanding are reinforced by the interaction of community in both urban and rural areas which are easily interaccessible. Within the next forty years we will have to provide homes and all of the facilities needed for urban employment and enjoyment equal to all that has been built, to date in the entire history of our time.

Another reason that of efficiency put so cogently by London Wargo states

"The national interest arises from the productivity of urban land not the amount. Urban space represents substantially less than one percent of the nations area but it houses three out of every four people in this nation and produces well over 4% of the total economic output. This massive concentration suggests the critical importance of urban efficiency to the national product increasing inefficiency in the organisation and functioning of our major urban areas will in short order militate against the effectiveness of our national economic establishment simply because they will effect the bulk of our economic activities."

The statement of the problem the master factors involved or the reasons for planning must be considered in association with the way we go about it. Process is just as important as tangible result or physical product and is essential to them.

14/10/8

The architect traditional role in preceding centuries was largely a socially uncommitted one. In the special hierarchical system of values often applied to the creative man he has throughout the ages been regarded as godlike!

Times are now "a changing." I see him now becoming more and more democratic. He is now a participant not a benevolent dictator. He now sees that his predisposition to prepare some predetermined mould is allright for packages but has no application in the creation for an environment for people, cities which we can say, without exaggeration that they are places where it is good to live - for every citizen. We are the ally of every man or no man. So little attention is accorded to the creative potential of the countless millions and what they made for themselves through the ages in humble multiplicity what is called the vernacular of the heart.

15/10/8

Can we as architects meet society's plural demand? We unfortunately and the Housing Commission and numerous developers do not know how to humanise plurality.

Van Eyck Architect states in reference to City Planning:

"The task is still handed to us by the wrong client, reaching us hopelessly garbled, it is left to the muttering multitudes to make the least of the absurdities which are then, handed to them - to inhabit not as "people" but as population. It is time to stop freezing silly notions into a draughty solid, calling this a city and then whistling for population."

"Architecture is a constant rediscovery of constant human values translated into space."

16/10/8

A building, a city, a place, a house derives its raison d'être from people. Have you ever walked through the city of a Sunday morning? The city, the place, a building a house are nothing until there are people in and around, discovering its meaning potential and adding more to it. They, not the construction, form or materials, are the body of space.

It is in these realms of overall planning that we as architects need involvement rather than becoming preoccupied with technology. Too many people are interested in technology with too few interested in the changes it can bring to our way of life or shape of things. Thus for the architect the question of the industrialisation of buildings is still a question of what to fabricate not how to fabricate it. For me categorically architecture and technology are not homologous terms. Architecture is a discipline because it is a process involving a person and a technique. Technology is no more than a repository of knowledge which can be used negatively or positively upstairs or downstairs indoors or out by anyone.

Van Eyck states "The job of the planner is to provide built homecoming for all, to sustain a feeling of belonging."

I would go so far as to say that architecture is built homecoming.

17/10/8

Where does this get us in relation to overall planning except that we must understand that overall implies total planning. It involves people primarily. To give you an example:

In the urban Design Studio of the Long-Range Planning Office of the Puerto Rico Urban Renewal and Housing Administration they had a problem they had to provide 1,000 units of housing (500 low rise, 500 high rise,) a school, supermarket, chemist, offices and related communal facilities within an extremely low budget.

In approaching their design problem the architects had to keep in mind three basic considerations :

1. How people live in the slum and how many of the existing positive social and physical elements can be incorporated into the new housing.
2. How the old city of San Juan with its strong physical order has influenced the culture of Puerto Rico.
3. How new housing might be made to involve residents socially as well as physically with the neighborhood and with the whole city.

La Perla from which they will be moved is a hillside cluster of tar paper and wooden shacks on a slope lying between the ocean and the outer wall of the city. At least half the shacks consist of only one room which means that the one space must serve multiple household functions. In addition most of LaPerla is without electricity, water or sewerage. Even so the 3,000 residents are strongly attached to their little community.

They like the view, the nearness of the city, and the varied neighborhood environment created by the constant and imaginative use of open space. The Puntilla project was conceived by the architects as one of providing an improved physical environment without destroying established, often successful, social patterns.

The design itself calls for one large structure, patterned to pick up the grid of the streets and plazas of Old San Juan, from which it will be clearly visible. The structure will be divided to provide housing, commercial establishments, and community facilities such as schools, churches, and community halls. These community facilities will be located between two distinct housing sections - one for an extremely low income group, and one for a group with a slightly higher income level.

The ground-floor level of the housing will be almost entirely open, except for space taken up by shopping and community facilities. Spaces will occasionally open vertically through the structure to form plazas. In all, there will be eight large plazas; in addition, there will be 14 smaller ones, containing stair towers to the housing above and ringed with balconies, which will serve as entrance halls. Interior will consist only of floors, columns, ceilings, and basic utilities; the occupants will be expected to finish their accommodations themselves. Hopefully, they will endow their living arrangements with much of the same touches of individuality and taste that are now often found in La Perla. They may even bring tar paper and wood from the old dwellings to serve as the outer walls and interior partitions of the new. Cast-in-place concrete columns and beams. Two-way concrete floor slab system with native hollow clay tiles. Painted concrete block between apartments and for utility core walls; if not provided by the tenants, exterior walls will be plywood, as will interior partitions.