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SPECIAL TRANSPORT ISSUE (Part III)

This issue:-

1. A Brilliant Speech by a Minister for Transport.
2. Transport - A Partisan View (Cont.)

1. A BRILLIANT SPEECH BY A MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT

The Hon. E.R. Meagher (the Minister for Transport in the Bolte Government before Wilcox) delivered himself of a "prepared paper" entitled "Comprehensive Metropolitan Transportation Planning" in February 1964 to a Traffic Symposium organised by the R.A.C.V. (published in book "Living with the Motor Car" by R.A.C.V. 1964.)

Permit us to put the sting at the outset! Does Wilcox agree with views there expressed? Does Bolte, or the majority of his Cabinet agree with these views? If the Government has somersaulted on these views, what pressures have forced it to do so? If the Government has not somersaulted will it act on these views?

We leave you, dear reader, to unravel for yourself this mystery. Like all good mysteries there are some missing links. The belated Transportation Committee's report, when it comes, should supply some of these. In the meantime you can have the excitement of trying your hand at inspired guesswork. Here follows some extensive quotations from Mr. Meagher's paper:-

"The modern metropolis is, despite the enormous technical progress of the twentieth century, today facing the dilemma of the great lizards of the past -- that of adapting itself to changing conditions or dying of sheer immobility. The mobility of the motor vehicle, which has made rapid movement possible has, paradoxically, by its profification in an affluent society, brought about a form of traffic thrombosis which has made it increasingly difficult to move and even more difficult to stop.

Concurrently, with this great increase in motor traffic there has been a steady decline in patronage of mass public transportation." (pp 93-94)

"The costs of a freeway system cannot be measured only in terms of its construction. Modern freeways are heavy consumers of land which, in metropolitan areas, is costly. Land resumptions are assessable in terms of money, as are land tax revenues derived therefrom.

Resumptions add to the cost of the freeway, and the loss of rates and land taxes reduces our capacity to meet these costs.

There is also the heavy social price to be paid in the loss of homes, shops, factories, and parklands. The family displaced by resumption can be compensated by cash, but who can measure the effect on it of removal from its chosen environment, established associations, and possibly increased travelling time to work?

Extensive road systems could, if constructed with regard only to vehicular traffic, blight a neighborhood. By destruction of parks and open spaces, and the rearing of unsightly concrete structures, they may depreciate surrounding land values and the revenues contributed, thus further reducing our capacity to pay. If these freeways are radial they have

a further effect on increasing demands on inner city areas for parking space, a demand which, if met, as it must be if the freeway is to serve its purpose, tends to convert the city into a place for the stabling of cars rather than for the use of people, and so by limiting the space available for the true purposes of the city, make the freeway system itself redundant.

On the other hand, a fixed rail service, undergrounded where appropriate, is economical in spatial requirements, can minimise the alienation of open spaces, has a tendency to enhance land values, earns revenues, and makes no demand on central city space for parking. If fast, comfortable and cheap it should attract increased patronage, thus reducing congestion on the roads and conserving both road funds and the motorist's nerves. Grade separation of road and rail traffic eliminates level crossings, thus facilitating the flow of both, and reducing the number of accidents.

This question of the best use of available space is one of the most important aspects of the problem of metropolitan planning. The answers provided will largely determine whether the metropolis is to be geared to the needs of the human beings for whose purposes it exists or is to become a giant monument to the abdication of man's spirit to the requirements of the machine age." (pp 95-96)

21/9

"A basic question for the transport planner therefore concerns the relative emphasis to be placed on our planning of free-ways and parking facilities, as compared with the modernisation of public transportation facilities, aimed at restoring lost patronage and thereby reducing the number of road vehicles entering the city, thus helping to conserve valuable road and parking space for those who, for various reasons, must rely on the motor vehicle for transport.

The planner will be aware of the necessity for more roads, and the consequent need for additional parking areas for stationary vehicles. These must be adequate to meet the needs of the motor vehicle. On the other hand, as I have previously shown, cities exist only for the needs of the people, and in Melbourne 75% of the people who commute to and from the city still use public transport.

If, by the provision of fast, comfortable and cheap services this percentage can be appreciably increased, the demand on city land and on revenues for roadways and parking areas can be, at least to some extent, contained.

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The planner must therefor approach his task with an understanding of the nature of the problem, which is that of achieving a metropolis in which is made easier for the individual traveller as well as carefully preserving the right of of the traveller to choose, within reasonable limits, his mode of transport. He must ask himself whether it is necessary for the community to set limits on total population, what density of population can be sustained and what areas should be devoted to residential, industrial, commercial and recreational use.

He must take account of the effect of housing development, slum abolition and changes in travel patterns consequent thereon.

He cannot divide the problem into the separate compartments of road, rail, tram, bus and parking, and expect to get whole answers.

There must be a definite concept of the relative roles of all forms of transportation which must be complementary to each other.

He must consider the question as to whether public transport must be self-supporting or whether in the long run it may better serve the needs of the community to subsidise such a system as an offset to the enormous cost of building essential freeways." (pp 96-97)

5/21/9 "The motorist who is asked, in the public interest, to leave his car at home and to use public transport, or to accept further restrictions on the use of street space for parking, must be satisfied that he is receiving in return an adequate service at a cost that he is willing and able to pay. (01

As a taxpayer he must be convinced that his money is being used for the good of the community. If he can be so satisfied, he will, I believe, agree that all available funds be pooled in the interests of transport efficiency. He will not insist that expenditures should continue to be arbitrarily related to taxable sources.

His reward for his attitude will surely be greater freedom to use the roads and gain maximum benefit from the flexible mode of transport which is his as a car owner." (pp 97-98)

## 2. Transport - A PARTISAN VIEW (Cont:) (by "Alpha")

### A. Facts on Melbourne's Railways - Richards

6/21/9 In "Irregular No:20 the treatment of Mr. Richards may have appeared somewhat unjust because much of the critical sections of our comments on this writer appeared first, and the important positive material presented by Mr. Richards did not appear. Here, in brief is his argument:-

(i) Less passengers but they have to be carried further Melbourne.....from 1951 to 1966.....passenger trips have fallen from 157 to 144 million trips while passenger train mileage has risen from 7.3 million to 8.5 million trains per annum. Passenger mileage has remained practically constant at 1273 million miles annually. This indicates the average length of passenger journey has changed from 7.93 miles in 1951 to 8.83 miles in 1966. Thus operations necessarily have been increased by 16.5% to provide 8.3% less patrons with the same overall service measured in passenger miles." P.111.

(ii) Highly "peaked" characteristics plus greater distances demands express running.

Every five (5) minutes in the morning and evening peak hour up to 6000 passengers flood through Flinders Street - Princes Bridge Station, but in off-peak hours it hardly ever exceeds 500 passengers per 5 minutes according to a diagram.

"The peak demand is the controlling factors in the design of facilities such as signalling, tracks, coaching stock etc....."

"Trains coming from outer suburbs are full, leaving no room for passengers to board at the inner stations, and having few or no passengers wishing to alight until they reach the centre city. Obviously such trains are best operated as express trains." (p. 113)

Thus there are "losses of patronage in the inner areas and gains in outer areas....at stations less than 12 miles from the city patronage has fallen. This is markedly so for stations between 6 and 9 miles from the city." (p.113)

(iii) Express outer-suburban running demands more signalling more trains and more car-parks.

..."Generally higher operating speeds require control system of quicker response..."

cost of "...Shorter headways require closer signalling spacing. The adequate signalling for high capacity lines is a major portion of the cost of new facilities." (p116.)

Thus in a table of new works, signalling on the triplification of track from Melbourne to East Camberwell cost \$1,046,000 and electrical \$224,000 as against \$3,256,000 for "ways and means" i.e. about one-quarter of the total cost.

In addition 18 extra trains at \$500,000 each have been needed because of longer distances.

"During the 1950's in Melbourne the use of a private car to travel to the railway station increased greatly and the provision of parking areas for these vehicles became highly desirable....at 98 suburban railway stations 6467 off-street parking spaces had been parked at those stations by rail patrons, and a further 2831 rail passengers parked in their cars "(in the street?)" at other rail stations in the suburban area, giving a total of 12,779 cars parked daily by rail passengers .... more numerous in the outer suburbs, but the train frequently also bears on a particular stations viz Caulfield only 6½ miles from the city but having 23 peak-hour trains to the city in 1964 and 348 cars parked daily." (p 117)

had been provided, an estimated 9948 cars ....

7/21/9 Some comment on Richard's facts.

The above-mentioned factual and statistical material is quite important for understanding the current position and the trends to be combatted.

We ask, however, a few questions which we feel to be pertinent:-

(a) Why cannot there be a deliberate policy to promote off-peak rail travel?

Mr. Richards has assumed that the off-peak house-wife-shopper housewife-sportswoman and house-wife-socialite will increasingly elect to go by car. Indeed increasingly such a pattern is forced on her---it is not a question of election.

In our view the planner can, and should, set out to reverse this trend. If there is a cheap frequent off-peak bus to a rail-based shopping-sports-social complex the housewife could

use it. If she can take her children in the bus and if there is a kindergarten/nursery/play-centre/playground for them at such a complex, if the shops, tennis courts, basket-ball courts and ~~sports~~ courts, hairdressers, library, gymnasium classes club activities are at such a complex, and if such a complex is ~~is limited~~ by rail with other district complexes and the central city area itself what is the advantage of a car?

So, this raises three more questions:-

8/21/9 Should there not be publicly-owned, subsidised, cheap feeder bus or feeder mini-bus or feeder taxi services to every rail-head?

Typically Mr. Richards sees the car, rather than a rail-way controlled bus, as the inevitable complement to the railway service. He sees the problem as spending money on bigger and bigger car-parks, rather than more and faster buses (or taxis) to the station. What is the point of 12,779 cars engines lying idle all day at stations all around Melbourne after only a short run to a Station when the job could be done, and done throughout the day by a fraction of that number of buses?

Incidentally, it should be noted that really <sup>big</sup> car-parks at district or local railway station centres can have, there, the same deadening effect as they can have in the central business district. If the car park immediately surrounds the station scattering the shops and social facilities to a thin straggle around its fringes, or to one side it creates an uninviting walk across the car-farm from the station to the facility or from one facility to another. Alternatively if the facilities are clustered around the stations in handy proximity to each other, the car parks have the inconvenience that they must be some distance from the stations.

9/21/9 (c) Would it not be possible to have all major sporting facilities served by rail?

The Waverley football ground is not so served. Could not this have been a potential off-peak revenue-earner for the railways? The Royal Agricultural Showgrounds and Flemington Racecourses for example, have a station connected right to the showgrounds with direct-running into the city. Spur-lines could be used where necessary.

The women's athletic facilities at Royal Park, for example are just too far away from either tram or train to be really convenient. With careful planning possibly a tramspur-line could have brought frequent trams to a more central part of the athletic grounds at least at typical starting and finishing-times.---Connecting with Royal Park stations as well.

10/21/9 (d) Would not high-density residential development around rail heads encourage off-peak, as well as peak, rail travel?

Mr Richards observes:- "The loads of provisions taken by one lady from the supermarket to her home by car would be an impossibility for her in a train." (p 116)

Under current conditions, quite correct! But need this be so for all time/for all women?

We leave aside examination of the long-term possibilities of more efficient distribution to all households, the great bulk of household products by delivery van (instead of each housewife turning her car into a delivery-van and herself into a delivery-man).

Some firms, for a small charge, will deliver now. Some firms already have sprung up to keep a constant larder of frozen foods supplied to domestic deep-freeze refrigerators. If some of these pioneer services are gimmicky and extortionate, they may nevertheless point the way to a more efficient automation-age way of doing things.

But leaving aside these more problematic developments, Mr. Richards does not deal at all, let alone imaginatively, with the more immediate possibilities of high-density residentials around rail-heads.

The Minister for Local Government Mr. Hamer, in his letter to local councils earlier this year states: "It is envisaged that control of flat development under the Town and Country Planning Act will be achieved primarily through a range of residential zones in which maximum density limits will be fixed from zones where flats would be entirely prohibited at one extreme, to high density zones at the other. The latter would generally be located in areas close to rail-way stations or other transport, or adjacent to shopping areas....."

Now since there are shopping areas at most rail stations, the problem of car-carried loads of shopping tends to disappear with handy high-density building. And since such a housewife does not really need to get out a car to do the shopping, could she not be more easily enticed onto rail travel for her other activities provided of course, that the off-peak rail service is reasonably frequent?

11/21/9 (e) If factories and offices on the fringes were located near rail-heads, and served with buses for railheads could not this commuting-in-reverse be encouraged?

This is not exactly a problem of increasing off-peak traffic. But it is part of the more general problem of greater utilisation, within the 24 hour per day of the same rolling stock, and rail staff.

This would require no doubt special subsidised "factory feeder-buses". Without these, the location of many factories make the use of the car virtually mandatory.

When it is considered that reverse-trends to the present trends are, in fact, the only alternative to freeway system, it is most disappointing to find that the Railways special research man on the Metropolitan Transportation Study does not raise some such issues.

B. Gorton & Bolte Give Freeways a Walkover

or

The Transport Dye

12/21/9

Is Cast Awry

"Irregular" No:19 for March at p. 4 (12/19/9, 13/19/9) and at p. 6 (43/19/9) raised the questions of whether the transport dye was already cast in favour of roads; whether Bolte was using the demand for Federal finance for the <sup>underground</sup> for example merely as a smokescreen to cover his basic interest in getting more Federal money for roads.

Since this issue of "Irregular" went to the press, the dye has been cast.

The Federal Government has made major transport financial decisions which will shape the main pattern of road transport for the next five (5) years.

Under the new Commonwealth Aid Roads Agreement announced at the Premier's Conference on 13/3/1969, Victoria will get an increase of \$107.5 million on the old five-year figure of \$146.9 million (increase of \$107.5 million or 73% as against the all-Australian 5-year average increase of 67%), 32.88% of the first years allocation must be spent on country roads (as against 40% previously) the percentage on country declining to 28% at the end of the five-year period. 7.07% is to be spent as trunk-roads.

Additionally Victoria is bound by the Agreement to increase its own spending on roads to a rate that is no less than the rate of increase in motor vehicle registration.

For the next five years the amount of Federal money for roads for Victoria has been predetermined. Moreover, the amount of money for city roads as against country roads has been predetermined. More, even, than that, the amount of money for freeways and expressway has been predetermined.

All this happened without any apparent consideration/needs for other modes of transport. It has happened without a decision made on Melbourne's underground. It has happened before the release of the Melbourne Transportation Committee's report.

Such a lop-sided approach must mean that if the dye is not cast awry it will be a sheer accident.

We fear that it will mean that for the next five years it has already been predetermined not so much that there will be too much spent roads (it is not much after all compared to F111 costs or Vietnam), or that the new emphasis on urban as distinct from country roads is wrong, but there will be too great a subsidy for roads compared to subsidies for train tram feeder-buses or taxis.

In particular, we accuse the Gorton and Bolte Government of forcing freeway systems on Melbourne by their control of finance.

Let them condemn themselves in their own words, as reported by the press:-

"Increased road grant allocations to Victoria and the other States are to be used mainly for urban express ways and freeways, the Prime Minister (Mr. Gorton) said yesterday" (Age 14/3/1969)

"In another 10 years we will be so far ahead of anybody else that it will be a pleasure to drive on Victorian roads. Sir Henry said the extra money would be spent on roads around Melbourne particularly freeways in and out of the city. He would not specify what roads, would be developed but said that roads leading in and out of Melbourne were more important than Melbourne's ring road" (Australian 14/3/69)

To "rub-it in" to the train and tram and bus travellers who have just had crippling fare increase Bolte adds. "I can guarantee for five years at least there will be no increase in taxes on Victorian motorist (Age 14/3/1969) According to the Age comment eight major road projects to take a large share of the new road funds are:-

"The South-Eastern Freeway Extension, Tullamarine Freeway, Lower Yarra Crossing, St.Kilda Road Underpass, the eastern and western sections of the city ring road, Eastern Freeway and Sydney Road Freeway."

The social consequences of that freeway decisions will be far-reaching.

13/2/69

In his five-part series "Keeping Up With The Traffic" columnist Anthony Hill (Herald 3/3/1969) quotes Mr. N.E. Clark (Head of Transport Section of Civil Engineering Department Melbourne University) as explaining "there are forces in the city that are pulling the metropolis apart, and the congestion on our roadways is simply a manifestation of these forces. They are pulling the city into a new structure.....three or four regional centres will become very strong."

Of course, three or four or even more regional centres will become very strong; we should consciously plan the type of "metro-town" or strong regional centres envisaged by Mr. Fraser, Chairman of the Town & Country Planning Board.

But Mr. Clark surely knows what these forces are: they are the ever-multiplying number of cars on the roads especially for commuter purposes and any pressures and policies aimed at multiplying the number quicker. Mr. Clark is content to see the central city area lose most of its functions except "executive." Mr. Clark goes further. He does not so much rely on "trend planning" (which is "non-planning"); he goes out of his way to hasten the trends which bring the trouble. According to Anthony Hill "Herald" 4/3/1969 "Mr. Clark's section is making a questionnaire survey in Melbourne, Sydney & Adelaide. The preliminary results of this show that about two-thirds of the central city workers would travel by car if the congestion and parking problems were solved". A more useful and less tendentious survey would be to find out how many would switch to bus and train if road congestion and parking grew worse and bus and train travel grew cheaper and more comfortable!

"These are forces....." says Mr. Clark....."pulling the city into a new structure, and we do not know yet what that is."

No? Well, Mr. Clark, you have supplied no answer as to what the new structure should be. But the "forces" you mention turn out to be those backed by "the Establishment" and they have determined what the structure will be. The radial freeway systems so favoured by the car-number-oil steel industry are to be forced on us by the Gorton-Bolte combination, and will certainly push the city into a new structure, that is, is the inevitable quite rapid decay of the central city areas, except for "head offices" and the inevitable pressure to spread the suburbs even further making even the new regional centres hard to establish on a really virile basis and condemning the public transport system to further deterioration.

The partisan radial freeway policies predetermined for Melbourne by the Gorton Government, must be reversed.  
A partisan policy for subsidies for public transport must be advanced.

The "road lobby" put forward concrete demands. Until some experts come forward and make some concrete demands for the "rail lobby" and the "save-Melbourne-as-a civilised-city" lobby can we suggest:-

14/2/9

- (1) A "matching grant" for public transport (\$254.4 million for Victoria in the next five years.)
  - (2) Spend the "freeways" grant on cross-suburban roads not radial freeways.
  - (3) One transport authority for Melbourne to own and run both train, tram and buses.
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Editors Note: A paragraph for further reflection on Gamma's article on "Legpower" (see "Irregular" 2/20/9)

Latest Commonwealth statistics "show that the day of the pram is just about finished. Output dropped from 19,423 to 8,573 between 1965-66 and 1967-68 and to 3,479 in the first seven months of the current year.