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An irregular publication for members of the Townplanning Research Group (not for general publication or republication).

This issue:

1. Tribute to Walter Gropius.
2. Unpolished gem from afar.
3. Odd notes on transport and redevelopment.

(Note to meeting attenders: Item 3 includes "Guide to topics on transport" in previous "Irregular"---to help August discussion)

1/24/9

I. Tribute to Walter Gropius.

Walter Gropius is dead ! Long live his revolutionary spirit in the minds of men ! "Irregular" adds its tribute to those of the daily press columnists. Yes: they called him a revolutionary and they were right.

"The Quiet Revolutionary" reported "The Age" (7/7/'69) from its Boston correspondent. Gropius "quietly led a revolution in design which profoundly influenced the world of the 20th. century man---anxious to bridge the gulf between art and industry he founded the Bauhaus in 1919---without its influence everyday items such as spoons, wallpaper, and furniture, not to mention buildings would be cluttered with what supporters of the Bauhaus movement would call 'stylistic irrelevance'---"

"Dr Gropius: a humble rebel", is the caption given by Ian Moffit in the "Australian" (8/7/'69) aptly entitled "The man who lives in every city". "Teamwork", Moffit points out "was paramount with Gropius--he humbly submerged his identity for the greater good while Wright and Corbusier stood more proudly in the spotlight-----he cleaved through the era of traditionalism with exciting new concepts for his students, including the psychological effects of design, color, texture, rhythm, light and shade----- The world has lost a great revolutionary."

"Gropius, says Graham Whitford, Director RAIH Housing Service (Age 21/7/'69) went further than Wright or Le Corbusier. "He saw that the key to reform lay in education"----"Gropius realised that designers would need to conquer these new" (mass production) techniques. The artist or architect should also be a craftsman with experience of working in various materials----architecture should result from a collective effort where each member of the design team contributed his specialised knowledge".

Yes, yes. All very true.

2/24/9

Correct as these obituaries are, so far as they go, do not they miss the revolutionary essence of Gropius ? Could Gropius have grappled so determinedly with the problem of combining the art and crafts of tradition with the new world of modern mass production using new materials, and could he have shown such insight into the compelling necessity of team-work from a superficial position, with so many pressures in the opposite direction ? Surely no !

He was a revolutionary in a much more thoroughgoing way. His democratic-radical spirit sprang from a real concern for the deep-going historic processes and the social changes to which they gave birth. His "sure-fire" feel for the modern needs of man, art, and modern industry all in one are demonstrated nowhere more clearly than in "Modern" buildings he was designing half a century ago. But his grip on the present was due to his ability to analyse the past in order to foreshadow the future. He understood the revolutionising role of changing modes of production and their impact on the institutions of men and their social consciousness.

In this sense he was a revolutionary: not just a radical. Proof of this by chapter and verse is not appropriate here, but



we invite you to re-read "Irregular" No 17 (the special issue last Xmas given over to Gropius), and judge for yourself whether Gropius was not a socialist without a political party.

Suffice here to let Gropius himself to voice a line or two---a few epitaphs maybe more profound than many a learned oration bespoke by his admirers.

3/24/9 The following three quotations are all from "Scope of Total Architecture" by Walter Gropius, Allen & Unwin 1956

"As the family transfers numerous domestic chores to the machinery of socialist production, woman's sphere of domestic activity shrinks and she looks beyond the family for an outlet for her natural need for occupation: she enters the world of business and industry. In turn, industry, rejuvenated on basically new foundations by the machine, shows woman the impractical nature of her domestic hard labor."

"Recognition of the shortcomings of the individual household awakens thoughts about new forms of centralised master households which partially relieve the individual woman of her domestic tasks by means of an improved centralised organisation which is capable of performing them better and more economically than she can perform them herself, even when she applies all her efforts" (p.109)

"The special character of metropolitan housing developments for settling large numbers of working people around a concentrated city core makes for short travelling distances. The single family house is contradictory to this basic trend of the city" (p.120)

The high-rise apartment is a "biologically motivated type of dwelling, a genuine by-product of our age." (p.123)

Conceding the popularity of a one-family house in a garden, Gropius explains it is a revolt against the early crowded tenements. "However, the cause for the misery of these undignified dwellings is not the dwelling form of the multi-storey apartment house as such but the short-sighted legislation which permitted the construction of this class of low-cost dwelling to fall into the hands of unscrupulous speculators without adequate social safeguards". (p.119)

"It is true that the creative spark originates always with the individual, but by working in close collaboration with others towards a common aim, he will attain greater heights of achievement through the stimulation and challenging critique of his team-mates, than by living in an ivory tower" (p.90)

The "creative spark" of Walter Gropius is not enshrined in any ivory tower! It will still challenge generations of "team-mates" who can only know him through his ideas.

## 2. Unpolished Gem from Afar

(by "Rover")

3/24/9.

"U.S.A. is a mess. Its political system is so confused that it cannot handle its urban crisis. The riots in poverty areas are partly related to the inability to implement policies--of which there have been countless high sounding specially named 'programs' "

4/24/9

"U.K. is significant in that in its NewTown Programs it has such a breadth of experience of a wide variety of housing types---which are being studied and examined and learnt from---it inspires me to forcefully advocate a definite percentage of our housing



Budget MUST be towards experiment: URGENT."

5/24/9

"I question at this stage "public housing" for Australia because it creates this low-income ghetto. We must examine subsidised rents--so that low-income families live alongside middle-income families in the same housing. This may mean that the Housing Commission should construct housing for middle income groups? Let to low incomes? I don't know. But we must overcome this low-income ghetto stuff."

6/24/9

"Social research, assessment, and study of overseas research is also an urgent task. Britain and U.S have gone away from building high-rise for families. Why do we persist?"

### 3. Odd Notes on Transport & Redevelopment

7/24/9

#### The Devil and the Deep Blue Sea

Those who back personalities or organisations instead of principles in relation to redevelopment are likely to find themselves in a few months between the devil and the sea.

There is strong and growing (even "fashionable") opposition to Minister of Housing Mr Meagher and his proposition that the Housing Commission should be the Redevelopment Authority (See "Irregular" No. 23, 2/23/9). But those who fall for backing Minister for Local Government, Mr Hamer and the MIBW rather than laying stress on the correct principles of redevelopment (See "Irregular" 4/23/9 - 7/23/9) may have second thoughts yet to think.

After the last "Irregular" went to press, Lionel Dunk in The Age (5/7/69) carried a special article on the alleged rivalry between Meagher and Hamer to step into the shoes either of Bolte or Rylah, both of whom are rumored to be near to retirement. Hence the special piquancy of "Carlton".

In the course of the article, Mr Dunk observes: "Mr Meagher and Mr Hamer have already locked horns over planning issues: as Minister for Transport Mr Meagher fought for priority over Mr Hamer's roads programme" (See "Irregular" No 21: 1/21/9 - 5/21/9 for this). "Mr Hamer won that round."

In other words, Hamer appears to be associated not only with a freeway system but a radial freeway system. It was he who recently and prematurely announced the Eastern (Doncaster) freeway, before publication (let alone public discussion) of the Metropolitan Transportation Committee's report.

When that report does come out, all the signs are that it will advocate a radial freeway system. It might call it a cartwheel system or some other euphemistic term to cover up the fact that it will also be radial. (Of necessity, there will have to be circumferential freeways connecting the outer centres of the various spinal urban corridors planned by the Government. But cartwheel or no, the radial spokes are already taking shape: Tullamarine, Doncaster, South-Eastern, Kinsway, Yarra-Crossing.

We have been warned that the planned reservations for these freeways and clearways will cut great "swathes" through the inner areas.

Hamer's reputed championship for roads rather than rail is likely to spell more destruction to the inner areas than the Housing Commission and Jennings combined.

We would like to be proved wrong, but today's battle against Housing Commission insensitivity, which has to be joined right now, could tomorrow be a battle against the ruthlessness and insatiability of freeways, cloverleaves, car-parks.

Preservationists, like the National Trust, which recently



progressed from the concept of preserving individual buildings to the concept of preserving environmental areas (See their imported U.S film "How Will We Know It Is Us ?") To achieve their aim they will next have to tackle transport.

Is this then what is needed? A cross between Heagher's (erstwhile) anti-radial-freeway pro-public-transport policy and Hamer's ~~anti~~ anti-bulldozing pro-preservation-in-parts policy? This cross-policy would then reject not only Housing Commission bulldozing-scatteration-of-community concepts, along with any MBW ruthless and self-defeating so-called Balanced-transport radial freeways, but also policies that happen to suit either Jennings or GMH-Ford. Cars are wonderful. Mass modern building projects are wonderful. That is: once they are confined to their correct role by plans that advance humans to the forefront.

(Anybody disagreeing? Please pen a line or two, then!)

#### 8/34/9 Yet Another "Plan" for Melbourne?

The Urban Research Unit of the A.N.U is to supply two senior research workers in a 3-year \$100,000 grant to analyse Melbourne's development.

"The unit's senior fellow (Dr. G.M. Neutze) said last night the findings might show how Government decisions affecting urban development could be redirected to give better service to the long-term interests of the community" (Age, 11/7/'69).

Is it too late to hope these "long-term interests" might change something really fundamental such as the direction of the Gorton-Bolte edicts that Victoria's ~~extra~~ extra road money is to be used for radial freeways? If the survey is going to confine itself too closely to "gauging environmental features, services and aspects of convenience householders consider to be most significant" it might not get much beyond "The Trend".

Incidentally, how about the Government spending a few \$100,000 also on some top-rate experimental housing? No householder can possibly "consider significant" something he can never have experienced! (Over to you, Rover!)

#### 9/24/9 "Cluster-City" Suggested for Future Melbourne

The Victorian ALP according to their publication "Fact" (18/4/'69) will make submissions to the special enquiry into local government set up by the Government examining advisability to amalgamate the MCC and other inner suburban Councils.

"More than a year ago", says "Fact", "The Victorian Executive of the ALP made clear its support of the concept of an enquiry into Local Government amalgamations. At the time it tended to favor a proposal that the City of Melbourne should be amalgamated with the cities of Fitzroy, Collingwood, Richmond, Port Melbourne, South Melbourne, Prahan and St. Kilda. Meanwhile, sentiment in favor of a more extensive amalgamation of this type appears to have become stronger. The basic reason for the Labor Party's view is the need for streamlining of Local Government procedures and redevelopment of the inner areas. ---"

"Fact" then goes on to quote (apparently favourably) a speech by Mr J.A. Hoadley of the RMIT addressing the 12th Congress of the Institution of Surveyors.

Mr Hoadley favors limiting the central business district by creating new "nodes" or "focal points" in the suburbs which would be "self-contained communities". "Such a polycentric city would require efficient transport links", but he proceeds to deal with freeways only, not rail.

According to Mr Hoadley, Perth by 2000 will ~~sh~~ have developed Fremantle into a centre only slightly smaller than Perth, and will have laid the basis for four more "nodes".



All of this is interesting and some certainly valid. But it does seem as though the "Fact" reporter could have two types of organisation of a different order mixed up in his mind, just as Mr Hoadley has postulated as mutually exclusive alternatives that are not necessarily so.

Mr Hoadley first: the deliberate creation of strong "district centres" or "nodes" on a "polycentred" city basis, does mean that the non-policy of scattering major facilities hap-hazardly throughout the suburbs (made possible by the car and truck) has to be avoided by grouping them into focal or nodal district centres. But this does not necessarily mean and should not mean any deliberate restriction on the growth of the C.B.D still less that the new centres have to be based on freeways, as distinct from railways.

Secondly, "Fact" reporter: Local Councils around each nodal, focal, district centre (irrespective of whether there was a policy of restriction of the C.B.D or not) do not necessarily have to be amalgamated to make such district centres function or function well. Melbourne's C.B.D is, of course, the prime example of this: it has existed for years as a centre with 40 odd Councils clustered around it: only a few of them have been amalgamated into what is now the M.C.C.

"Cluster-city" is the heading to the article. It is a term which the reporter may not have used, for he certainly does not mention it again, let alone define it in the article. It is impossible to guess whether it refers to Mr Hoadley's "polycentered city", or to Council mergers, or in a muddle-headed way to both.

Regarding mergers: efficiency is not everything even if it was guaranteed by size. Roads and rubbish as well as water and sewerage could well be on an all-Melbourne basis. But wholesale mergers on too wide a scale would, it seems to the writer, leave the local citizen relatively voiceless in relation to the intimate local needs where he most needs a democratic voice and a handy local representative. Abolish them, and the need would surely soon re-appear for some other alternative expression of localised social facilities and services which vary so much from place to place.

#### 10/24/9 Guide to "Irregular" Topics on Transport.

(For reference convenience for TRG discussion on transport)

#### "Irregular" No. 19 March 1969

##### Transport--A Partisan View Part II

1. Transport only one facet of Planning Purpose  
Metro. Transportation Cttee: hat principles?--high density, siting, corridors (1/9) Social effect of contrary policy (2/19) freeways or railways a social question (3/9)
2. A Summary of Consultant's Report  
Facts (4/19) Travel characteristics (5/19) Wilbur Smith's methods and conclusions (6/19-8/19)
3. Softening-Up for Freeways Commenced  
Wilcox's kiteflying (9/19) RACV Survey (10/19) Tram & train fare increases (11/19) Umpteen press articles on road needs (12/19) Loaded propaganda (13/19).
4. Critiques of Wilbur Smith  
Troy & Russell (14/19-16/19) History obtrudes (17/19-19/19) A few Comments (20/19-24/19)

#### "Irregular" No. 20 April 1969

1. Prof. Denis Winston on Freeways (1/20)
2. The Cheapest Transport--Legpower (2/20)  
Hidden pedestrians and "shut-in" people (3/20) Mini-market (4/20) The match-box and the motor car (5/20)

(cont. next page)



3. Transport--A Partisan View, Part (2)

3 experts write (6/20) Is it true: the more passengers, the bigger the loss (Wilson)? (7/20) Alpha's conclusions (8/20) public service (9/20) What the "cost" & "benefit" (Kolsen & Forsyth)? (10/20) Community-user-preference (11/20) Which trends win (Richards)? (12/20)

"Irregular" No. 21 May 1969

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1. A Brilliant Speech by a Minister of Transport (Meagher)  
Has Government somersaulted? (1/21) dilemma of immobility (2/21) hidden costs of freeways (3/21) fast comfortable cheap rail (4/21) motorists best interests (5/21)
2. Transport--A Partisan View (Part (3))  
Facts on railways (Richards) (6/21) promoting off-peak (7/21) feeder bus & taxi (8/21) major sporting events (9/22) high density near stations (10/21) factories connected to stations (11/21)
3. Gorton & Bolte Give Freeways a Walkover (12/21)  
N.F. Clark (13/21) Immediate policy (14/21).

"Irregular" No. 22 June 1969

2. Alternative Undergrounds--I.D. Richards Speaks  
Doncaster-Rly-Queens St Underground (4/22) Merits of 4 schemes (5/22) Advantages of Queens St underground (6/22) (Also map of Richards scheme on p.8)

"Irregular" No. 23 July 1969

Dispersal (5/23) Concentration (6/23) Hybrid & Synthesis (7/23) Computer-fed "facts" cannot produce criteria (8/23)

"Irregular" No. 24 August 1969 (This issue)

3. Odd Notes on Transport & Redevelopment  
The devil & the deep blue sea (7/24) Another "plan"? (8/24) "Cluster-City" (9/24)

Some scraps of Information to Fill in Space

I.D. Richards: Special Lecture in Transport "Desirable Public Transport Criteria: Planned System for Future Melbourne" (obtainable Transport Section, Dept of Civil Engineering, University of Melbourne) has plenty of important ideas other than the brilliant ideas in the underground and flexible re-routing scheme balancing east-west trains into Flinders ST ("Irregular" No 22). It has valuable comparative tables. A table of recommended off-peak maximum rail service headways. A table of practical lane capacities for transit vehicle types (e.g. one rapid transit train can shift in one hour 40,000 passengers which would require 32,000 cars in 21.3 one-way traffic lanes to equal). Radical ideas of single-vehicle "trains" that could be strung together at peak, automatic controls, ideas on trams buses, pricing policy etc--well worth obtaining to read.

Joint Select Committee on Drainage--Sixth Progress Report  
Vic Government Printer Ref. No 7--10917/68 price 35 cents. Don't be put off by the "dry" title--this report is actually wholly on water pollution. Seems to contain very powerful conclusions. Wants proper standards to measure pollution. Wants a Water Pollution Control Authority, deals with pesticides, trade wastes and a lot more. Only action needed.

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