

August, 1971.

(An irregular publication for the Town Planning Research Group, not for publication or republication).

We've made it! For four years this publication has come out with monotonous regularity. At last we have qualified as truly "irregular" by celebrating with a 3 month gap in publication. We've come of age. One thing is regular: readers will get their \$2.00 worth of publication even if the period spans much more than a year.

This issue:-

1. A.C.T.U. Housing?
- 2(a) A tame transport reform. 2.(b) Transport Traffic Tragedy.
3. "Planning" by big corporations.

1/42/71 A.C.T.U. Housing.

Mr. R.J. Hawke returned to Australia on 29/7/71 and said that the A.C.T.U. would seriously consider entering the housing construction and finance fields. He had just returned from a visit to Israel, West Germany and the Soviet Union.

Well the A.C.T.U. couldn't do worse than the private sector with its standardised profit-motivated what-you-get and what-you-don't get rackets that masquerade as modern housing estates financed at rates of interest that are the highest in history.

But how much better could an A.C.T.U.-backed effort be? Could it control the price of land? Could it be mounted on such a scale as to include vital neighbourhood centres? Could it be orientated strongly at public transport and incorporate diversified industrial and commercial workplaces? Could it significantly narrow the deposit gap & rate of interest against all the trends? Can workers-controlled living-and-working community emerge in a capitalist-controlled economy? The Answer maybe "No" to all these questions. But such an A.C.T.U. effort could be worthwhile, for all that.

"Irregular" No.2. August, 1967 included supplementary roneoed material on Tapiola, Finland. It bears re-reading. According to the Christian Science booklet "Can we survive our cities" one of the "social organisations" that backed Tapiola was a union, the others a group of welfare agencies.

Now Tapiola was as unlike an Australian suburb as you are likely to find. With densities up to 26 people per acre, (about double that of our suburbs), nature prevails and architecture is secondary, yet it can sustain a "Town centre" which apart from the usual commercial and administrative centres and schools includes a theatre, concert hall, music conservatory, art gallery, library, church, public health centre, youth-centre, swimming pool, sports "establishments" and hotel with a conference and banquet hall,

To achieve this "the predominating type of building is that of the three to four storey walkup"..... and "some high tower houses if smaller flats"..... and "terrace houses".

The Theologians have a word "proleptic" meaning anticipative: a glimpse of the glory to come but not yet fully experienced.

If the A.C.T.U. offers us an Australian-type "Tapiola" as if it were the glory already arrived and in substitute for more radical and thoroughgoing social change, it will fail. Worse: if it pretends it is the glory to come, it will become an obstacle to the understanding of political reality. But if the A.C.T.U. regards the project proleptically, we are all for it.

Hotham Gardens North Melbourne were to have been the proleptic vision of the local establishment. Under Housing Commission and Jennings tutelage it has shown how little it can do. It can't even retain the range of existing shopping.

Good luck to the A.C.T.U. if its aim is to provide a proleptic example of what the working people (industrial, bright-cellar, and professional alike) can do!.

2/42/71

A Tame Transport Reform Appears:

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At last, at last there has appeared publicly a reasoned case backing a timid move to depart from the official;

Melbourne Transportation Plan, 18 months after its publication. The Town and Country Planning Association (T.C.P.A.) has distributed a document entitled "Melbourne Transportation" ("statement of Principles forming the Basis of the Associations Six Point Transport Policy"). The brief 6 point policy which appears as Appendix A and the Kernel of which was to reduce all-day commuters parking in the C.B.D. by upgrading public transport was presented to the Minister for Local Government and Minister of Transport in Sept. 1970 but the "statement of principles" published in May, 1971 gives the 6 points some weight.

The Transportation Plan described itself as a "demand" plan and the "demand" (which is carefully measured, analysed and extrapolated) is not, of course, the demand of that part of a motorists work or leisure when, having parked his car, he finds that all the other cars (and his) in their sum total are ruining his environment, disrupting many of his community activities not to mention the ecological damage. The Plan strictly confines itself to the "demand" of the "motorist-on-the-move". Its a transport plan whose object is transport.

What is different about the T.C.P.A. policy to give it its due is that it says that a transport plan should have the objective "to preserve and improve the physical character of the environment and the social well-being of the citizens" as well as improving all journeys.

It spells out the special important and character of the C.B.D. and the inner areas, and concludes that commuters to the C.B.D. or inner areas should either come by public transport or change their mode from car to tram or train well outside the inner areas.

Sensible enough, but not really very radical. One can't help but speculate that if the Metropolitan Transportation Committee had happened to employ English or European transport consultants rather than Wilbur-Smith and Associates (consultants for the U.S. Automobile Manufacturers Association and for whom the God-Almighty automobile is sacrosanct for all purposes.) they probably would have come up with something very like the T.C.P.A. propositions.

But the T.C.P.A. does not examine the validity of the freeway system as a whole. Nothing on the environmental rape of the Yarra Valley which "Plan News Review" wrote up several years ago as "Melbourne's Playground". Nothing on extension of rail lines or tram lines. Nothing imaginative on transport innovations like Dr. Breunig's report on the Adelaide M.A.T.S. plan "dial-a-bus" and other experiments. Nothing on rapid transit.

Maybe such exercises are a bit beyond a voluntary organisation like the T.C.P.A. What is the reason that Melbourne can't produce highly-placed planning experts with the understanding and courage to assail the official plan which can only result in hurrying Melbourne towards a freeway-type impasse?

The Melbourne Transportation Committee, combining as it does all public-authorities responsible for transport, effectively ties the tongue of all public servants who are transport experts and who cannot officially attack the Plan. Add to this that the academic circles, from which one would expect vigorous outcry (as with Proff. Winston in Sydney or Proff. Jensen in Adelaide) are in Melbourne dominated by the Nicholas Clark school which take as a truism that a person will only go where they can go by car.

At the public meeting called by the T.C.P.A. Loder (of Loder & Bayly) said that, faced with the impossibility of automobiles in dense areas, we should look forward to new automated transporter systems, instead of backwards to Victorian Railways carriages.

Tell us more about all this Mr. Loder! Does it mean you oppose the freeway extravaganzas as a whole? You don't say so. Does it mean that the rail reservations could be updated and adapted to your futuristic systems? If it is wrong to look backwards to the railway carriage is it not also "looking backward" to build freeways?

Seems to us: if we are "parking time" waiting for the "brave new world" of automated transporter systems we'd do better to call a halt to freeway acquisition immediately, pour half our money into more efficient public transport, and the other half into experimental

The T.C.P.A. ~~scheme~~, tame as it is, is a workable ~~stop~~-gap. To proceed with the freeway grids could be an extravagant disaster from the perspective of a few decades ahead.

A test of sincerity

Those who say "I support public transport (of course!) but we must realise that freeways are etc.

Which of them do you hear say:
"Give finance and works priority to public transport."

3/42/71 2.(b) Transport Traffic Tragedy.

Readers are adverted to the following:-

A brilliant document by a worker in the industry.

Transport Traffic. Tragedy
by Mr. John Arrowsmith
Price 50 cents.

As the summary says: "The road toll should be the subject of discussion in factories, offices wherever workers gather".

Packed full of facts, statistics, and attitudes it is a valuable reference document that should shock you.

Obtainable:

International Bookshop
17 Elizabeth Street, .
Melbourne. 3000.

Or
Mr. J. Arrowsmith,
Box 135, 141 Nicholson Street,
Carlton. 3051.

4/42/71 "Planning" by Big Corporations.

So primitive are the powers, resources and practices of our planning authorities, that they cannot hope to encompass, contain and control many of the new major developments on the horizon. Let us cite a few recent examples and ask:

1. Just how can planning authorities cope with them?
2. Beyond that, just how can the public participate in the decision-making?

Example No.1. Australian-Wide Sporting villages

A nationwide chain of high-class sporting holiday villages. Capital would come partly from purchasers of a "village unit", but a unit owner would have a right to facilities in all other villages. For example Fishing and game shooting at Lakes Entrance, golfing and bowling at Wellington (N.S.W.), or gliding at Tooraweenah, or big-game fishing at Bermagui. All centres to be linked by air and to be equipped with a complete catering service, shops, bank, swimming pool and recreational hall, videotape in each unit, and vehicles for day tours. Unit-owners have right to use for two months including peak holiday seasons; between times the villages would be open to "paying guests".

All this is being planned by Sydney-based "Mars Stone Village Olympics", who, naturally, also have their eyes on the international market as a source of investment and a provider for tourists. (Age 21/6/1971)

Probably a marvellous idea! But surely it should be multiplied by 10 or 100 and made available to everyone, not just selected wealthy ground - floor "unit holders" ? Certainly it would have to be checked-out ecology-wise. This idea with tight relatively high-density villages could be an important answer to combining recreation with conservation.

There is no indication of density suggested however. Direct air access could also obviate the conservation problems associated with "opening up" an area with roads. Government initiative led the way when the Railways built "the Chalet" at Mr. Buffalo at the beginning of the century. Is there no initiative left?

Example No. 2. \$370 million Airport Plan.

Sir Reginald Ansett employed Meldrum and Partners to produce a plan and exhibit (estimate at \$7,000) to convince the government to close Essendon airport and convert it to a \$370 million project including an industrial park, a residential estate, shops, schools, kindergarten, creches and health centres. ("Herald" 23/6/71).

Reg. reckons that he has done this so that "the community could look at it and start thinking about it". The 814 acres involved compares to say Fitzroy with 923 acres.

Here, of course, could be a brilliant experiment in bringing to bear all the best that planning has to offer, with a variety of different styles of housing at all densities, a variety of nearby employment opportunities, pre-planned relationship between the home, the shops, the schools and transport, with plenty left over for outdoor recreation.

This should not be an isolated accidental side-effect that suits Ansett's finances. If it is right that it should not continue as an airport (and we cannot judge), of course it should be design-planned like this, but so should every other suburban development on the outskirts of the city. The planned "growth corridor" land should be bought up and master-planned just so (and not merely by zoning planning techniques). This does not mean that big, medium-sized and small firms, or individual citizens would be denied initiative, only that their initiative and experimentations would be exercised within the overall design framework. Within the scheme incidentally, but indistinguishable from other homes, people eligible for Housing Commission assistance could be accommodated, which would make more sense than pulling down houses in the inner areas that people want to live in.

Example No. 3. Multi Million C.B.D. Schemes.

How many more mighty hotel-office-shopping-car parks complexes are to be projected for the C.B.D?

The biggest, just on their own, would make a sizable impact on the ultimate character of the C.B.D.

\$100 m. Flinders Street, Station plan. (Age 8/6/71)

\$50 m. 50 storey State Public Service Building (Her. 15/6/71)

\$87 m. Collins Place "twin tower" anti-Paris development (Age 11/6/71)

\$8½ m. Jollimont twin-tower motel (Her. 6/7/71)

\$x Victoria Market.

City Square.

\$z Lonsdale-Swanston Latrobe-Elizabeth block.

How can the M.C.C. have a (belated) "strategy plan" which really copes with such mammoth injections of capital? How can there be comprehensive planning when (as John Sorrell reported) the M.C.C. councillors see the issue as "Swanston Street versus Spring Street". i.e. The M.C.C. versus the State Government?

How, in such context, can the sensitive questions of retaining and advancing a human city that has attractions for all citizens be resolved?

Or is our C.B.D. to be adapted to a cosmopolitan-type night-stop for Jumbo-jet international tourists who "take in" Melbourne in a few hours, and who need a freeway from the airport right to their hotel door? The F19 freeway could connect direct to the 5,500 car-parking spaces of the projected Victoria Market complex, but should the freeway be tailored to such demands?

In a word, Can the big corporations really be entrusted with "planning" the sort of city you and I would want, the sort of recreation you and I should be able to enjoy and the high-quality human neighbourhood the 1970's should be capable of supplying? And how can public participation be combined with this sort of planning? Clearly the demands for public participation which may well have to start at the street and neighbourhood level, cannot finish there, but must traverse the metropolis, the State and the nation.