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MELBOURNE AUSTRALIA

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SPECIAL ISSUE ON REDEVELOPMENT

Hamer's statement on Government planning policy in connection with The Bill now before Parliament included some ideas on this subject. This issue will deal with three related topics:-

1. Should we demolish 240 acres a year ?
2. How dense should we be ?
3. An ~~essay~~ on the Housing Commission (in record form)

First, though, we cannot pass on without mention of The Bill and The Statement. (Note: the two points underlined below receive special treatment)

1/8/8

Well the Bill is before the House.  
The debate is not yet under way.  
From press reports it would seem:

We Can Applaud ———

- Corridors
- Metro-towns with centres of commerce industry & recreation
- Preservation of Yarra Valley
- Growth along main rail and road routes.
- The new co-ordinating State Planning Council
- Provision for regional planning throughout the State.
- 3-tier planning with local authorities given extended powers

We Can Argue ———

- Whether it is good to settle 500,000 extra in inner suburbs
- Whether west and north should be developed equal to south-east
- Whether it is sensible to have "satellites" at all at Melton, Sunbury or Whittlesea.

We Can Deplore ———

- There appears to be no formulation of housing-density policy
- There appears to be no indication of opting for public rapid transit rather than freeways for commuting.
- There is, so far, no talk that what is needed to complement the co-ordination at top-levels is equivalent co-ordinating machinery at local Council levels to ensure that all on-the-spot authorities concerned are properly involved in local planning and respond properly to local opinion on local matters.

Note:

Regions Although TCPB's 5 regions---Geelong, Melbourne, Westernport, X and Y have not been adopted, it cannot be said either that the principle behind them has been abandoned. Geelong, of course, is clearly qualified for a region. The MMBW area reaches only to the tip of Westernport and it would seem to be still possible to have a Mornington-Peninsula-Westernport region. X and Y were for the remote future anyway.

MMBW Democracy The 8 faceless men have not had to show which way they faced because the "buck" has been passed to yet another committee of enquiry. Is this all a face-saver for Bolte's petulance, or a prelude to an attack on democratic planning procedures ? Bolte should be careful ! There is even talk of running the MCC by a Commission. The idea needs to spread only a little further and Canberra could be running the MCC by a Commission ! Cabinet is so cumbersome !

Exercise No. I: Should we settle 500,000 in inner suburbs in 30 years ?

2/8/8 Hamer, in his policy statement, says we should. This will mean, of course, a much higher density, and it will mean an enormous area set aside for demolition and rebuilding.

The enormity of this proposal can be gathered by quoting the MMBW report from which, no doubt, Hamer's figured are taken.

"500,000 more people accomodated in 8,000 acres redeveloped at a net density of 130-160 persons per acre--"

--the density is about 3 times that at present existing in the Central Sector and very much higher than in the surrounding area--"

"If 8000 acres of high-density/development is to be obtained over the next three decades, it would necessitate clearing and rebuilding some 240 acres of land per year which can be compared with the total redevelopment of some 132 acres by the Housing Commission to date. It should also be pointed out that redevelopment on this scale although it will replace worn-out development and provide new housing with a modern environment will involve considerable disturbance to and relocation of the existing population"

--on present indication a target of even one-third of this figure seems optimistic. If the redevelopment target is not achieved, then greater outward growth must occur--" (MMBW "The Future Growth of Melb" pp 12-13)

3/8/8

Is Hamer's adoption of this stupendous goal of REDEVELOPING 240 acres per year (if it could be done) a bold progressive project designed to uplift the people in the inner areas and relieve the suburban isolation of younger couples in the outer areas ? Or, is it a heartless bid to obtain empty paddocks at cheap prices for big developers for luxury flats near the city's centre at the expense of misery of tens of thousands of displaced?

This is a complex question and before you answer quickly "yes" or "no", or even "yes-and no", please state what you think is a desirable density for inner Melbourne?

4/8/8

Some of our readers, we know, are convinced followers of Jane Jacobs and will therefor back her idea of high density for city vitality. These same readers however would probably also back Jacobs' for renovation of sound buildings as distinct from wholesale demolition and project-estate rebuilding. Both of these Jacobs' ideas, perfectly feasible for New York can not apply wholesale and simultaneously to inner Melbourne.

5/8/8

If we are going to have anywhere near Jacob-type density, we will have to have wholesale demolition and new construction. Conversely if we are to have gradual renovation and gradual reconstruction, we will never live to see the Jacob-type density on any scale and it is doubtful if our grandchildren could.

6/8/8

For the size of its population, Melbourne is about the broadest city in the world, but not the broadest-minded. The "broad mind" of the ordinary citizen derives from his opportunity for frequent, varied, high-class, rich social and cultural contact, and this is precisely the value of a great city. But Mumford with his concept of the need for "implosion" to draw together again the functions of the city's centre scattered into the lifeless suburbs by the urban-"explosion" equally with Jacobs demands a reversal of present trends.

Let us switch then, for a space, to ask the question What density do we have in Melbourne and what density should we have ?

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How Dense Are We ?  
How Dense Should We Be ?

7/8/8 Jane Jacobs ("Death and Life of Great American Cities" author) makes it clear in her book she is not dealing with the life of suburbs, nor with villages or towns, or moderate-size cities, but with "great-city" life.

Have we ever had quite such a thing in Melbourne?

In the 19th. century there were numerous double-storey terraces, row-houses etc in Fitzroy, Collingwood, Carlton, Richmond, East Melbourne, North Melbourne, West Melbourne, South Melbourne, and Port Melbourne. The 3-storey terrace was a rarity.

Since then, however, and leaving aside St. Kilda, could we not/Melbourne more as a complex of suburbs than a great city?

The older inner areas of comparable American cities, by contrast, seem to be 4 or 5-storey walk-up terraces, flats or apartment houses, and with many more higher elevator flats and much earlier than they appeared on the Melbourne scene.

8/8/8 Now Jacobs advances "exuberant diversity in the city's streets" as the goal to be struggled for. And of the four conditions she advances for this, density of housing is one.

"The district must have a sufficiently dense concentration of people, for whatever purpose they may be there. This includes people there because of residence" (p.213)

(Incidentally, remember her distinction between "over-crowding" equals too many people per room, and "density" equals the number of home-units per acre.)

Now differences between America and Australia on traditional densities in their old city or near-city areas do not necessarily nullify the Jacobin principles.

9/8/8 Query for Jacobites:-

1. Is the problem for Australian cities, not so much preserving high densities, as creating high densities that we have never had ?
2. Would this be acceptable to Australian "traditions" and conditions ?

The writer makes no bones about his opinion: high density is better because it provides the potential of a richer social sporting, cultural life... although it is vital to sound democratic planning principles to give individuals a choice of low or high.

10/8/8

Some figures (more are needed) to help you get the problem onto a scientific quantitative plane:-

1. New York's average dwelling density is 55 units per net residential acre (Jacobs p.217)

Greenwich Village (New York--where Jane Jacobs lives) manages to house people from densities ranging from 125 to above 200 dwellings units per acre (Jacobs p.227)

North End of Boston--averaging 275 dwellings per acre (p229)

2. "Very low densities, 6 dwellings or fewer to the net acre can make out well in suburbs---

"Between 10 and 20 dwellings to the acre yields a kind of semi-suburb---destined to become grey areas ---

"Above these semi-suburban densities, the reality of city life cannot be evaded, even for a short time---people who live near each other geographically are strangers to one another and always will be strangers---rather abruptly---an entirely different kind of city settlement exists---unfortunately--densities high enough to bring with them innate city problems are not by any means necessarily high enough to do their share in producing city liveliness, safety, convenience and interest. And so, between the point where semi-suburban character and function are lost, and the point at which lively

diversity and public life can hardly arise, lies a range of big city densities that I shall call "in-between" densities. They are fit neither for suburban life nor for city life. They are fit, generally for nothing but trouble. The 'in-between' densities extend upwards to the point, by definition, at which genuine city life can start flourishing---

"This point varies---I can find only one city district with vitality that has well under 100 dwellings per acre ---the escape from 'in-between' densities probably lies somewhere around the figure of 100 dwellings to an acre---" (Jacobs pp222-224)

3. Jacobs' criticism of Mumford:-

"Some planning theorists call for urban variety and liveliness, and simultaneously prescribe 'in-between' densities. For example---Lewis Mumford---'the great function of the city is---to permit, indeed to encourage and incite, the greatest potential number of meetings, encounters, challenges, between all persons, classes and groups---' In the next paragraph however, he castigates city areas occupied at densities of 200 to 500 persons per acre---and recommends---'densities not higher than 100 or at most, in quarters for childless people 125 persons per acre' Densities of 100 persons per acre mean dwelling-unit densities in the range of 25-50 per acre. Urbanity and 'in-between' densities like this can be combined only theoretically; they are incompatible because of the economics of generating city diversity" (Jacobs pp 223-224)

4. Summary of Jacobs' Definitions

(Note: from here on we give persons per acre as well as dwellings per acre, because some figures are expressed one way, some the other. Our reconstruction from one set of figures to the other---where necessary---is on the basis of 3 persons per dwelling.  $\phi$ .f Jacobs above "100 persons---means dwelling unit densities in range of 25-50 per acre")

	Dwellings per acre	Average Persons per acre
Suburb	1-10	3-30
Semi-suburb	10-20	30-60
'In-between' city	20-100	60-300
Vital city	100--	300---

5. Melbourne Comparisons

Caulfield	4.7	14.4
North Melb (before demolition)	17.6	48.7
North Melb (Housing Court Hotham Estate)	41.5	163.3

(Note: Hotham Estate includes one 20-storey high-rise and 4-storey walk-ups, but there is 80% open space)

(Figures from "High Living"--A study of Family Life in Flats"--Stevenson, Martin and O'Neill Melb Univ. Press \$2.75 at p.24)

(Note: these figures use 3.5 per dwelling, not 3)

Old inner suburbs	(10 - 20)	30-80
Northern & western suburbs	(7 - 8)	20-25
Eastern & southern suburbs	(5 - 7)	15-20

(Melb & Metro. Planning Scheme 1954 Surveys and Analysis pp 53-54)

MIBW's proposals for average density in 3000 acres "redevelopment area"

(43-52) 130-160

(The Future Growth of Melb p 12)

5. Melbourne Comparisons (cont.)

	Dwellings per acre	Average Persons per acre
<u>Typical Densities of Different-Type Buildings</u>		
<u>Low to Medium</u>		
Single or 2-storey houses (detached, pairs or attached)	-15	-50
<u>Medium</u>		
Three or four storey (houses, pairs or walk-up flat)	-30	-105
<u>Medium to High</u>		
(low elevator flats (three to seven flats)	-45	-150
<u>High</u>		
High elevator flats (sevent to thirty storey flats)	70--	245-

Trend towards Higher Density in Melbourne

Melbourne is in fact being re-built, some 30,000 to 40,000 walk-up flats on some 900 acres. But this is rebuilding wrongly.

(Gist of some remarks by Grahame Shaw, Seminar on Melbourne sprawl--see Irregular 38/3/7)

Figures of flats and houses 1966-67

Flats built	Houses built
10,138	22,126
(Irregular 12/7/8)	

6. Comments on Above Figures

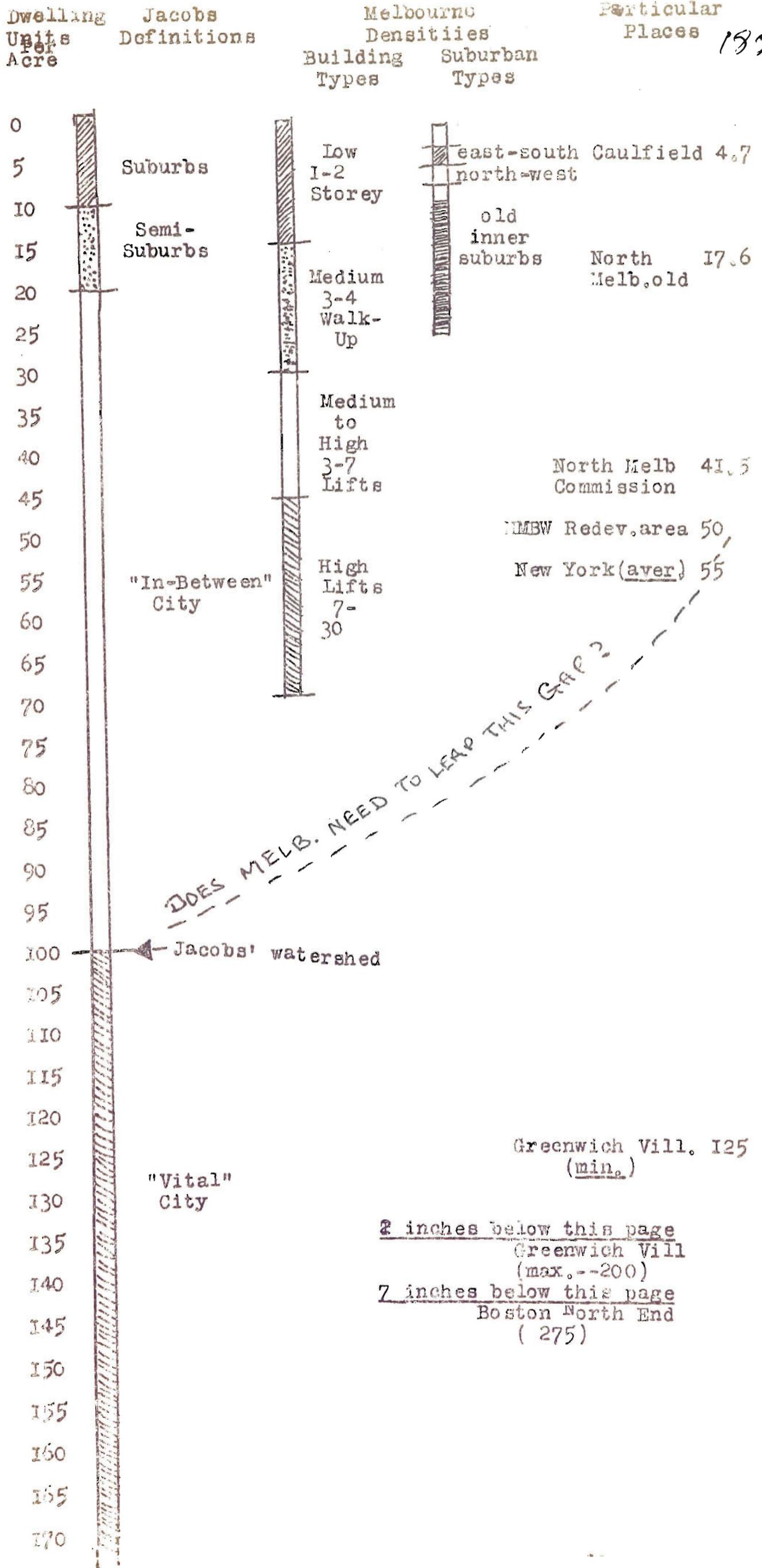
The highest traditional Melbourne inner-suburban densities were only 30-80 people per acre, roughly equivalent to Jacobs' "semi-suburbs". The highest type modern Melbourne densities e.g the North Melbourne Boundary Rd. "Hotham Estate" Housing Commission densities is 163.3 people per acre. This density, consisting of a 20-storey high-rise and numerous four-storey walk-ups is based on 30% open space, a degree of troublesome emptiness which would make Jane Jacobs throw up her hands in horror. The other type of Melbourne privately-built high-density high-income flats in Toorak and South Yarra are said to average about the same, namely 160 ~~persons~~ persons per acre, where nearly maximum advantage has been taken of the Uniform Building Regulations' site requirements.

This, you will note, is approximately the maximum density also which the MMBW advances for future redevelopment areas.

Thus, with all present, and contemplated future densities, the best Melbourne will be able to produce 160 persons per acre is quite low in the Jacobs' scale of sick 'in-between' city densities, of 60-200 persons per acre.

1128/8 Diagram on Relative Densities

Overleaf is an overlapping diagram to give you a better mind's-eye view. We have kept the densities figures throughout as housing units per acre



DOES MELB. NEED TO LEAP THIS GAP?

Jacobs' watershed

2 inches below this page  
Greenwich Vill  
(max. --200)  
7 inches below this page  
Boston North End  
(275)

12/8/8 If you have par-digested the above figures, return, please, once again to our first exercise:-

Exercise No I (Cont.) Should we settle 500,000 in inner suburbs in 30 years ?

The writer thinks (at the moment):

Yes. We should set out to do this.

But not by redeveloping 3000 acres at the rate of 240 acres a year at an average density of 150 persons (50 dwellings per acre)

13/8/8 Here are some tentative alternative suggestions:

- 1. Set out to rescue and renovate, say, 2000 of the 3000 acres at the rate of 160 acres a year.
- 2. On the remaining acres (1000) at the rate of 80 acres per year:-
  - (i) Experiment with one Jacob-style whopping-high density development in one area (say, 125 dwellings 375 people per acre) --six times the present density of the old inner areas.
  - (ii) The balance at a moderately high density (which would be really high for Melbourne) of say 80 dwellings, 240 people--four times the present inner area density

14/8/8 It should be appreciated that (except for point 2 (ii) these proposals and those of the MMBW and the current practise of the Housing Commission, all alike, continue to cast Melbourne into the category of Jacobs' sick "in-between" city category. Trouble is, Melbourne had a relatively high car-density before the modern trend towards higher density housing. So, (unless people will abandon their cars--hardly likely!) now the cars have to be housed too. Car-parking is therefor a limiting factor on the degree of high-density which Australians are likely to tolerate.

The writer however feels that a sick-city in-between density would at least provide a change of sickness from our wafer-thin suburban spread

Do you think that, in Australian conditions, densities of 20-100 dwellings per acre would be "trouble" areas? Or do we have, in Melbourne, different basic sociological features to America?

15/8/8 Whichever way you answer this question, and whatever the densities finally adopted, regard should be had anyway to permitting, even encouraging, high-density shops, offices, entertainment enterprises and unobnoxious factories in sufficiently close proximity to the high density housing to comply with a workable diversity of mixed "primary" uses as near as possible to Jacobs' principles.

16/8/8 To make up for the lack of older high-density low-rent buildings to fulfil the Jacobs' prescription for a mixture of rentals, there could be a subsidy for new but cheaper-type low-rent general-purpose buildings.

17/8/8 (To round the picture consideration will have to be given later to high-density policies for the proposed new "metro-town" centres, and the connection between these, and the inner areas and improved public transport).

18/8/8 But, wherever, the methods used to relocate people will need to be very different indeed to the present acquisition processes of the Housing Commission.

Here is the acid test: would a politician or union leader supporting residential densities 4 times greater than the present inner suburbs survive his next election? Is it too "foreign" compared to what the Australian worker has grown accustomed to? Or do today's youth want to live the same way as their grandfathers?

19/8/8 Unfortunately it is not the youth or even young families who have to be relocated. It is elderly people and migrants. Can this be done in a humane method? We come to the "essay" on the Housing Commission to pose some of the issues involved