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Business Is (Unfortunately) Business

"Irregular"

Dear reader: Can we have your 1969 subscription for postage to cover "Irregular" ? :-

\$ I please.

If you are feeling well-healed \$2 would be appreciated because our readers list is growing and you would help cover some extras for those who have not asked for "Irregular", but we think should get it.

(Cheques can be paid to : "Kevin Borland " and addressed to: "Mr Kevin Borland, Architect, 116 Hotham St, East Melbourne)

February Meeting

Subject for discussion:

Walter Gropius

(Remember: some material on Gropius appeared in the December issue of "Irregular")

To connect this subject with the stimulating December discussion on subdivisions we advance one sub-topic for suggested discussion:

Which Direction Should Be Encouraged ?

- (a) 70 ft. suburban frontages and 60 ft. roads to accomodate 3 cars, a boat, a caravan and a back-yard pool ?
OR
- (b) high-rise apartment blocks with centralised service installations and recreation facilities ? (See Gropius on this in December "Irregular" at p.5)
OR
- (c) both at once ?
OR
- (d) what else then ?

THIS ISSUE

- 1. Tourism
- 2. The Botanic Gardens.
- 3. Control of Flats
- 4. MMBW, Democracy & the ALP
(or "A bad principle is never a good tactic")
- 5. Challenge from Perth.
- 6. J. Bayly Speaks Again.

I. TOURISM

1/18/9

The Victorian Government's "Tourist Bill" has been debated during October, November and December 1968.

The Government wants to elevate the present Tourist Development Authority to a Ministry of Tourism, without the expense, though, of a separate department or a separate Minister, or promise of extra funds to help tourist accomodation. For this, it was criticised by the Labor Opposition and Country Party.

Mr Hanson, Minister for State Development sees tourism

from the point of view of its economic importance as an industry (he does not deal ~~at all~~ with its recreational, restorative, educational or cultural significance at all---nor do the debaters on either side of the House).

The economic benefits he sees as twofold:-

(1) Balancing international trade accounts:

On a world scale "---since the second world war the travel industry has become the largest single item in international trade accounts---" (Hansard p 661 : for Volume references to Hansard see at foot of article)

As far as Australia is concerned "---it is already eighth on th list of foreign exchange earnings industries ---" (p664) As far as Victoria goes, rough estimates are 1,000,000 visitors a year spending say \$10 a day, equals \$20,000,000 plus Victorians travelling within Victoria another \$10,000,000 say a total of \$30,000,000.

(The Minister did not mention, and it was left to a late stage of debate, and half by interjection, to complete the economic side of this rosy picture !! :-

Evans: "---internal tourism does not really produce any real wealth in the community but simply transfers it from one section to another. Whilst our balance of payments ~~system~~ position is assisted by having overseas tourists in Australia.

Floyd: "What they bring in has to be balanced against what is taken out by Australians who go abroad"

Evans: "That is so and I think we are a long way behind on balance---")

2/18/9

Manson however hopes for better things. He sees Tullamarine handling sub-sonic jets carrying 500 or more passengers. Already the British-French "Concorde" is to carry 130 passengers at 1400 mph reducing London-Sydney time from 37 to 17 hours. The U.S Boeing 2707 is later to take only 16 hours carrying 300 at 1800 mph. Forecasts are that the 250,000 overseas passengers for 1968 will have increased by more than 3 times to 850,000 by 1980. (P.661-662).

As Mr Mitchell put it, rather more bluntly than Manson "the time has now come to do something to cope with the vast flood of Americans who will be visiting this country" (p.1705)

3/18/9 (2) Decentralisation.

Secondly Manson sees these tourist opportunities as "one of the best forms of decentralisation---" "---the customer goes to the product---" (p.662)

But, as Swinburne pointed out "---most tourists spend only two or three days in each country---will benefit only a few hotels such as the Southern Cross and perhaps some of the bus lines--- However the majority of Victorians in tourist areas will not obtain any substantial benefit from international travellers (p.2693)

The debate which followed Manson's speech produced many interesting angles. For example:

4/18/9 (3) Accommodation

Large proportion of attention on both sides of the House to better accomodation in such a context that it could only mean expensive accomodation for wealthy travellers. A few stressed need for more cheap holiday facilities for ordinary Victorian tourists such as caravan parks.

5/18/9 (4) Advertising "gimmicks"

Plenty of advertising "gim icks" suggested e.g Ballarat Historical Park with reconstruction of mining village 1860 style; rationalisation of attractions such as Swan Hill "Folk Museum" on a regional basis, with different attractions for each region to avoid repetition; "boatels" on the Hume Weir ; development of

10, (23)

the happy case of Daylesford-Hepburn, our national parks like Wilson Promontory, the Grampians and Mallacoota to be "advertised" so people would come to see them as they do the Grand Canyon and other parks in America

6/18/9 But the extraordinary feature of the debate was that tourism and conservation ~~xxxxxx~~ were not seen as reverse sides of the same problem.

Manson in winding up the debate happened to mention the problem (not that his remarks rose from anything in the debate !). Quite a few wanted our national parks to be flooded with visitors without any idea as to how this flood was to be controlled.)

"We talk about national parks and tourism and the happy coincidence of having the same minister in charge of both", said Manson. "Sometimes it is a happy coincidence and at other times it is not. On most occasions there is a continuous clash of interests between conservationists who want nothing moved and the tourists who want everything moved to provide access to an area. Here again there has to be a fairly happy tolerance and a balance between the affected interests---"

It is disheartening to find that neither side of the House tackles this most difficult problem. It is not good enough to have a compromise "happy tolerance". With just such a pragmatic approach half Australia's best beaches are being ruined, and the choicest forest areas can easily follow.

It is all the more disheartening when it is recalled that the Town & Country ~~(Amendment) Planning (Amendment) Act~~ was carried with approval by all parties in April 1968, and this provided for a State Planning Council one of whose prime concerns (one would have thought) would be to evolve principles and practices aimed at designating and strengthening areas to be conserved and so controlling holiday resorts & tourism within such areas that the ecology of a region remained undisturbed. This involves a policy of concentrating (as distinct from permitting the scatteration) of tourist and holiday resorts, so that the features that attracted holiday makers to various areas could remain undisturbed "conserved" and therefore attractive. Subdivision along ocean roads are a typical example of despoliation.

It is the more amazing when it is known that the keynote of the Government's address-in-reply to the Governor's speech to the opening of this very session of Parliament was none other than--- (yes, you've guessed it !)--conservation !

Mr Suggatt pointed out that in Israel, where 4% of the national income is derived from tourism, any person to be in charge of a tourist bus "must undergo a twelve month's intensive course at the end of which he knows all about his country---" (p 1699).

In Australia, we suggest, we could well do with a twelve month's intensive course in principles of "total environment" to be compulsory for all politicians---unless of course we aim to have "dead hearts", dust bowls, dreary suburban type ocean ~~xxxx~~ suburbia, the Dandenongs without trees and other forms of desolation to attract the morbidly curious, as one might be attracted (once) to see the "grey pumice" of the lifeless moon !

(References throughout above: Hansard 1968 No 5 pp 659-664, No 9 pp. 1674-1706, No 12 pp. 2689-2699)

A footnote: We have some sympathy too for Paul Ritter's point of view expressed at the Urban Land Institutes Annual Convention in November (which we have never heard before) that we should make our cities so attractive that people don't feel compelled to rush away from them every chance !

2. The Botanic Gardens

7/18/9

It may never be told, we may never know, but is our guess that the Government's decision to build a licensed restaurant in our Royal Botanic Gardens was just such a tourist "gimmick" as is mentioned above. The idea of a licensed night-club in an internationally-famous gardens could easily have been a tourist-agent's dream backed by people angling for an easy way to get a knighthood or two.

It is a pity, in our opinion, that the Government's decision got a few people "in" who are normally progressive, just on the basis of the ~~freedom~~ principle of freedom to have civilised drinking in pleasant surroundings.

This, we submit, was not the issue at all. By all means have civilised drinking. Rebuild the present kiosk (in sympathy however with its surroundings) for this purpose if necessary (except for the night trade) and without destroying its "reasonable price" meal policy. (At the new kiosk in the Treasury Gardens you pay 50% to 100% more for the same meal)

But surely, just as it is necessary to conserve, say, Wilson's Promintory, the Grampians or Tara Valley, it is necessary to conserve this monument to the mammoth botany of Von Mueller and even more the brilliant landscape artistry of Guilfoyle.

The restaurant was to have obliterated that delightful little grassed knoll, opposite the present kiosk which was a lake-side focal-point of Guilfoyle's art. Just as soon stick some Courage brewery ads. over choice portions of "Chloe" in Young and Jacksons, or (as one of the scores of irate press letter-writers said) clear out a wing of the new Arts centre and install a Casino !

8/18/9

And what was Guilfoyle's "art" ? One aspect was that the winding paths and clumps of trees and vegetation were so designed that the leisurely stroller was continually confronted with different "vistas" from different angles; this incidentally, making the area of the Gardens seem very many times larger than they really are and apparently remote from buildings of the surrounding city which cannot be seen (except from the Temple of the Winds) and except for Government House occasionally)

We offer two proposals:-

(1) New "Botanics"

With ten times the resource of last century let us build some new botanic gardens. Say, another one in the inner areas and one in the suburbs, why not one "mixed" and one with Australian-only flora, and each with their licensed restaurants (with sections for cheap snacks and meals for ordinary citizens) and each with their pre-planned car-parks and car-access ?

(2) Prevent "Overlooking"

Prevent any further luxury high-rise flats in Anderson Street which "overlook" the gardens. This is of course wonderful for the overlookers, but unfortunately, they too are visible from the Gardens. This has begun to destroy the deliberate effect at which Guilfoyle aimed of "shutting out the world" and being able to wander with endless pastoral delight in a garden apparently without end or "edge" which always beckoned one onwards.

We have never seen this issue raised before. Why has there been silence from all the architects, landscapers, escapers, Garden-caperers, nymphs, fauns, artists, nature-lovers, and quite ordinary conscientious citizens on this issue ?

One thing: you can't trust Liberal Governments with such issues, Hamer or no Hamer. They withdrew the restaurant proposition not "in principle" but only because it was too cost too much.

9/18/9

3. Control of Flats

Minister for Local Government, Hamer, urged by the Preston Council and supported by the Blackburn "bell-bird belt" on November 29th announced that he was to give local Councils new powers to control flats.

A reader ("Anon" by name) has handed in a newsclipping of a letter-to-the-Editor on the subject which appeared in "The Age" 16/1/68; and has added some awkward questions. Here they are:-

Letter to Age

"Planning for High Density Living"

Sir---David.P.Gawler (9/1) has surely listed a sound minimum set of standards which should be fixed for flat development.

"Co-ordinated development of substantial areas for large-scale high-density, realistic provisions for open space other than car parks, prevention of "overshadowing" by appropriate set-back, more unconventional design and use provided amenity is retained, and developers of high-rise flats to be required to contribute to a "civic development" fund are points advocated by Mr Gawler.

"More even than this is required. The Government's announced intention last November, to give local Councils the power to set aside separate areas for high-rise flats, medium-size flats, villa units and areas where no flats can be built at all is certainly a step forward, but surely only a small step.

"Before, each builder was a law unto himself. It is an improvement, but not sufficient, if, instead, each Council is to become a law unto itself.

"One Council could prevent flats everywhere. An adjoining Council could permit high-rise flats everywhere. As the Toorak protester's report to the Board of Works says: 'a random proliferation of high-rise development is contrary to sound town-planning principles.'

"Indeed 'random proliferation' of any type of development is unsound.

"The Government, last April, set up a State Planning Council. Location of high-density is so important to the related planning problems of transport and growth patterns and to maximise and economise on amenities of a social character that the new State Planning Council should surely set a general framework that requires the Board of Works to give guide-lines for Metropolitan-wide principles for location of the various densities.

"Thus, high densities should be encouraged near the city and along rail spines, for the amenity of the city as a whole, in addition to Mr Gawler's suggested improved standards for parts of the city.

"Sufficient finance to enable humane methods of rehousing persons whose properties are purchased or acquired in the same area, and with no economic loss, could make such a policy publicly acceptable."

Yours etc.

"M.S.CROW (North Melbourne)"

10/18/9

ANON's Objections

"This seems one of those statements that "sound alright in general" and certainly it goes way beyond what the Government seems to be contemplating. I'm not complaining about that. But when it comes to "tin-tacks" this statement leaves many issues way "up in the air"

"What I want to know is:-

- (1) What does Mr Crow mean by "encouraging high density along rail spines" ?

Does he mean tram rails as well as train rails ? And

in any case, what does he mean by "along" rail spines ?
 "Does he mean 'all along', literally, or does he only mean near rail stations (and/or tram stops)? How wide on either side 'along' the rails does he mean ? Does he mean high density for the depth of several properties ? Or within walking distance to rail-heads ? Or further still ?

"Stretch Mr Crow's words to their limit in one direction, and there would be one solid mass of high-density nearly as far as the tram terminals in every direction ?"

" (ii) What is meant by "encouraging" high-density ? Whatever new capital redevelopment there is is going to be there a long time. Does he mean "compelled" by some regulation or other ? Or "impelled" by regulations so weighted to give economic advantage to high-density builders ? Or just each builder ~~is~~ "propelled" by his own innate townplanning sense and Mr Crow's occasional exhortations from the columns of the press ?"

" (iii) What does he mean by "high density" ? How many persons per acre: 50, 100, 150, 200, 300 or more ? "

III

Thank you Anon. Have any readers any views on Hamer, Gawler, Crow or Anon ? Please send them to "Irregular"

4. M.M.B.W. Democracy & the A.L.P
 or

A Bad Principle is Never a Good Tactic

11/18/9 Amazing ! Late last year the whole ALP Victorian Parliamentary Caucus leapt a somersault on principle for the sole purpose of "embarrassing" the Premier, Mr Bolte.

Bolte threatened an MMBW Commission of 3, unrepresentative of the municipal councils. He was defeated in his own Caucus on the issue.

What does the Labor Opposition do ? Applaud ? Not on your life !

They propose a Commission of 5, just to embarrass the Gov't. Such tactics not only do not embarrass the Government, they serve to present to the public a ridiculous image of the Labor Party.

After all the argument back-and-forth during 1967-68 about organisational principles of the MMBW and other regional planning councils, after the Labor Party itself supported the Country Party amendment (which was carried) to ensure that regional planning authorities should not only be representative of all local councils in the area, but that any other Government-nominated ~~members~~ experts on such Councils would become members and have a vote only after approval by the Council representatives, after all this successful struggle to retain this "second-tier" type democracy of the MMBW and other regional Councils, what does the Labor Party caucus do but calmly produce this ridiculous "echo-of-Bolte" proposition, as if there had been no argument, no victory and no labor party principles !

It is never good tactics to advance a bad principle, even to tactically embarrass the devil himself ! Even worse to be seen somersaulting to do it !

5. Challenge from Perth

12/18/9 Issue No 5 of "Prospect" organ of the Melbourne Division of the Australian Planning Institute carries a challenge by the newly-inducted Victorian President Mr Graham Shaw,

Mr Shaw, talking of the 1968 Convention of the Institute, and referring to Mr Leif Neilson (the acting townplanner of the City of Perth who inherited the team and policies of Mr Paul Ritter who was sacked, but who has now been elected as a

Councillor to Perth Council !) says:- "I was very impressed by Leif Neilson's address at Perth wherein he suggested that we must create, firstly an image, secondly a framework and thirdly achieve the implementation of the first two. Neilson further commented that the image and the framework must be obvious enough to be accepted by developers. He demonstrated with models the proposals for roofing the Perth railway yards and creating a pedestrian link from this new scheme southwards to the banks of the Swan---a distance of some $\frac{3}{4}$ mile---This seems to me to be the kind of planning device which we in Melbourne must explore much more fully"

(Perhaps we could add the full "model" was even more extensive? The roofing of the railway yards could involve a project to sink the railway underground with a new development on top, and beyond the rail lines the proposal for a future cultural centre)

Mr Shaw's challenge comes later in his speech when he says "---I would welcome suggestions from members on ways and means to achieve firstly an image and framework for any parts of the city---"

In the spirit of Ritter, Neilson, Shaw---how about it ?

6. J. Bayly Speaks Again

13/18/9

Mr J. Bayly, senior lecturer of the Town & Regional Planning Department, University of Melbourne, has spoken again !

It was Bayly who called urgently on the Government in "Prospect" (Issue No 3 April 1967) for a sub-regional plan for Mornington Peninsula. Later he advanced the concept that areas should be "conserved" (in the sense of being left forested, not just "open space") and speculated whether higher-density living in areas adjoining such rural parts might not be appropriate, enabling more people to enjoy at least a rural view if not a full rural environment.

In our experience, Mr Bayly never repeats the same speech twice unlike some Ministers we could name.

True to form, last year, at the Urban Land Institute Convention at Lorne, 17/11/68, Bayly has come up with something fruitful:-

"The Minister for Immigration recently suggested that his Department's programme for 1968-69 alone might be described as having an initial human capital inflow value of about \$500 million dollars with accretions for at least the next 25 years. Such a valuation surely implies that a few million dollars spent on improving the environment into which these valuable imports come would be a sound investment: no industrialist would think twice about such a level of investment in housing for imported machinery !"

"--Planning policy for the relationship between economic development and patterns of land use requires Commonwealth participation in urban development, as it has already attracted such participation in related matters of transport, water and power resources, and the support of new rural ventures."

"This is no more than the logical extension of the system now established in Victoria under which strategic policy decisions are to be handed down from State through regional to local authorities through the promising agency of the State Planning Council."

(A few more of Mr Bayly's bright ideas will be given in subsequent issues of "Irregular")

Dear reader: Do, you keep repeating stale ideas ? ~~xxxxx~~ Or do you, like Mr Bayly, keep producing fresh ones ? Either way, stale or fresh if your ideas have not appeared in "Irregular" then we want them. Don't forget: what is stale to you could well be fresh to another.