



VICTORIA UNIVERSITY
MELBOURNE AUSTRALIA

Irregular no. 35; Aug. 1970

This is the Unpublished version of the following publication

UNSPECIFIED (1970) Irregular no. 35; Aug. 1970. Irregular (35). pp. 1-7.
(Unpublished)

The publisher's official version can be found at

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

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1. Two Unique Efforts

(Note: "Irregular" is not becoming a vehicle for innersuburban Planning news only: its just that there is plenty of action from these areas. Next issue will carry an item by a contributor "The Clayton Example: A seemingly simple scheme for co-ordination of community activities". We have had to hold it over for space reasons. Anyway in this issue "Tewksbury" and "McAlpines Underground" are not inner suburban only.)

1/35/0 (1) Fitzroy Begins to Advertise a "People's Plan"

Recall "irregular" No. 33 item "Fitzroy Feels Its Way Forward" was subtitled "Can a Local Plan for the People by the People Emerge?"

The Answer is "yes". The experiment of the Fitzroy Residents Association has now reached a stage of pioneering something quite unique for Victoria.

Whether the "Brookes Cres. Reclamation Area" citizens win or lose against the Housing Commission now, they will already have created an example of the kind of popular participation in planning in Victoria for which there is mounting support and which is bound to win in the long run.

On Friday 3rd July at Rae Street, North Fitzroy a crowded hall-full of 200 or so residents had placed before them by the locally-based professionals committee (see "Irregular" 33) an alternate plan to the Hosuing Commission. The Commission wants to bulldoze the whole block.

By slides and a wall-board architects drawing a scheme was presented for (i) rebuilding certain individual houses or "in filling" on certain bacant blocks (ii) the creation of a small park and play area by closing a street and (iii) a row of new style terrace houses, with private gardens for families on the lower floors and fronting the new park.

Defensively, to give time for this schene to be adopted, the residents unanimously agreed to "object" to the Housing Commission schene and support their own local plan. The small local factory owners (also threatened) which employ 800 (many of them women and many living locally) will fight the Commission in the Courts if the Commissions ignores the objections. The 26 unions, in the meantime, have so far retained their "demolition ban" on the area.

2/35/0 (1) Cont. Richmond Reacts to Housing Commission Bluff

In the meantime the unions have lifted their domolition ban from the Richmond Highett St. Reclamation area, for which the Richmond Association had hoped to bring to fruition alternative plans similar to Fitzroy.

On July 14th an unusually-assorted gathering was called by the Housing Sub-Committee of the ALP in the Fitzroy Town Hall consisting of representatives of the 26 unions, the Fitzroy, Richmond and Collingwood Councils and various inner suburban residents associations for a frank interchange of views on the problems of inner suburban "renewal".

The Richmond Association produced a statement for this meeting which carried (amongst already familiar ideas) some quite new ideas.

For example:-

"Production of precast concrete panels at Holmsglen Housing Commission factory to be diversified and increased for building houses, schools, community centres, temporary classrooms, pedestrian footbridges, etc." -- (Richmond backed this up with slides and a wall-board showing example)

"Use of suitable non-residential land for residential and community purposes (at least 400 acres of land in the inner area is at present wastefully used for non-residential purposes)".

These two points and other Richmond ideas were circulated by the ALP, in a list of 19 policy points which emerged as the "findings" of this Fitzroy Town Hall meeting.

The above two points (which we have selected) were the reaction of the Richmond Association to the Housing Commission bluff that it will close down Holmsglen unless demolition and high-rise can proceed, thus throwing^{out} of work over 200 workers who are in the same union as the workers who demolish houses.

Anyway, we reckon it is bluff. The Commission have already announced plans and have a scale model of a new type of long 5-storey row houses (something like a high-rise on its side!). If the Commission are not bluffing they are exhibiting a degree of economic and social irresponsibility unpardonable in any public body.

2. "Tewksbury" Symposium on Urban Development
.... An Overture by Colin Clark with Missing
Notes.

3/35/0

Mr. Nicholas Clark, Director of the Tewksbury Symposium held at the University of Melbourne July 14th to July 16th on the subject "an analysis of Urban Development" explains in a preface to the papers presented to the Symposium!

"To those familiar with urban research in the United States, it will be no surprise that the suggestion for and the organisation of the symposium came from the Transport Section of the Department of Civil Engineering. In a number of important respects the inspiration for the symposium came from the 1967 Dartmouth Conference on Urban Development convened by the U.S. Highway Research Board and reported in its Special Report 97 Urban Development Models (ed. George C. Hemmens)"

One must not judge a symposium by its origins, but allow every argument to speak for itself. There cannot fail to be stacks of gold amongst the 525 pages of the papers, by interstate and overseas urban authorities. The symposium was co-sponsored by the Institute of Urban Studies, the Committee for Economic Development and the Victoria Divisions of the Institute of Engineers, the Australian Planning Institute and Institute of Architects.

The following comment is restricted to the keynote address by Dr. Colin Clark, Institute of Economic Progress, Monash College, Monash University. It is not called anywhere a "keynote" address but by its very character and a study of the arrangement of the order of the subject matter of the following papers, it is clearly hoped that it would provide an overture to the Symposium. In analysing the location of population and industries, Clark says that as between cities there is too great a concentration, and within cities too great a dispersal (pl.3)

Stated thus simply and with such generality there is hardly any school of thought which would disagree.

Surprisingly, Clark gives what he says are his conclusions at the beginning, In the fourth paragraph we read that this proposition sums up in one sentence the whole content of the paper. Having got a good mental clap from his audience or reader (for who these days oppose decentralisation or support sprawl?) Clark proceeds with an analysis which, if accepted, would compel a very rigid and in our opinion reactionary solution to both problems.

Individual Market Demand Dictates "Welfare"

4/35/0

His method starts with the proposition that "the public welfare is best served by the free bargaining between individuals in the market....." "If A and B freely make a contract to exchange some commodity or labour or land or capital for a specified sum of money, then the economist generally regards the result of such free bargaining as socially beneficial...." (page 1.3.)

If this were to be taken literally and universally the whole role of planning and town planning would disappear entirely.

But Clark himself wants to see certain changes, so we learn there are three exceptions to the principle of allowing individuals to bargain freely to maximise the public welfare.

In matters of location and land use, first, there is an exceptional slowness of adjustment, sometimes several centuries, before the consequence of a decision are apparent, secondly there are "externalities" when the deal between A and B have a series of indirect consequences which affect C, and D, and E. e.g. if A buys a car from B, thus causing congestion which affects everyone or a major supermarket location affects hundreds of small shops for years ahead. Thirdly, many locations and land uses arise not by economic laws but by chance.

Now, although Clark does not say this, the planners are apparently permitted to interfere to "correct" these deficiencies of the "free market" to overcome slowness, externalities" or "indeterminacy" but not otherwise.

The "free market" conceived as between individuals is paramount and any interference is for Clark not so much to upset the principle as to sustain it.

From this it would seem that "the thing" in urban development is not for a planner to come onto the scene with concepts of more rational ways of living or working, nor the sociologist to examine the relationship between people that are not expressed as a market demand.

There follows an examination of the statistics of cities in many western-world countries ranging back 100 years or so, seeking algebraic formulae to express the relationship between residential densities and distance from the C.B.D which showed that the further a person lived from the C.B.D. the lower the residential density.

But this he shows is changed or changing. Applying what Clark finds to be present day trends he arrives at the conclusion that there seems to be a tendency for "almost uniform densities over large areas of the city". This process he says is going on in Australian cities as well as others and one symptom is that the inner .. higher-density suburbs are losing their erstwhile population. Thus, he says, there is "a pivotal line" of density beyond which a population decrease appears. Thus in suburbs with densities of more than 13,000 persons per square mile for Sydney, 10,000 for Melbourne and 7,000 for Brisbane, densities are declining, the residential density planned for Canberra is 6,500 per square mile . (1.7 ... 1.10.)

5/35/0

We Follow Clark in Diversion

The above figure are "gross" residential densities apparently including roads, industrial land and parks etc.

Clark (switching from square miles to square metres) says "the normal" density of 10,000 per square mile equals 259 square metres per person. Brisbane and Canberra would be about 400 square metres per person.

Then his politics emerge abruptly. "Some reference to Russian and Chinese technicals journals gives us communist ideas of how much people should be allowed to live in. The results are unbelievable. The amount of ground planned for dwellings per head of population is only 12 square meters in Russia and 10 in China "(i.e. from 1/20 to 1/25 of what Clark says is the norm or e.g. China is 1/40th of Canberra). There are no references given to the "technical journals" where this could be checked though all his other figures are carefully referenced. All his other evidence appears as dry economic facts, but there are no economics in socialist countries, apparently, only what "people should be allowed" (our emphasis p. 1.11) We comment... See Peter Hall "The World Cities" at p 160 for a table of Moscow's population and area. Whatever figure you take from that table it is nowhere near so different from western densities. For example the "old" Moscow area gives a gross residential density, according to our calculations of 37,000 per square mile (Compare New York City which is 32,000 according to Clark) the "New City" area of Moscow of 1960 is 18,000 and if the outer suburbs and "green belt" are added this becomes 16,000. So Moscow is no more than twice Mr. Clark's "Norm", not twenty times!!

6/35/0

"Norms" should be trends

Why 10,000 persons per square mile is a "norm" is nowhere explained, unless we are to take Pittsburg and Chicago, quite arbitrarily as "normal" whether this figure should be deemed as a "norm" is nowhere argued. Clark then states, without figures, that "in nearly all large cities employment in the central business zone has been stationary or declining in recent decades... though many planners seem to unaware of this fact" Why this has happened and whether should happen we are left to guess. On land values we learn that "more rapidly in America than in Europe, cities are tending to become sharply demarcated into a small very highly-valued central zone, outside which land values drop almost immediately to a uniform level..." But he gives no clue as to why this is so, or whether it should be.

Then we find that the highest rate of growth is for cities of about 1 million, whilst for cities over two millions the growth declines, (e.g. the population of Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth have recently grown faster than Sydney or Melbourne). No reasons given, however either "why" or "should" from all this half-analysed, unreasoned material with value judgments excluded, Clark then settles for "the best pattern of settlement for a modern society within a comparatively small agricultural population with good transport and communications, is a number of industrial cities of 1/2 to 1 million population, an array of rural service centres of much smaller population, and comparatively few towns in between" (p. 1. 21)

He says "we need a situation in which manufacturing labour has a considerable range of choice of employers as well as employers having a wide field of labour from which to select. These conditions appear to be satisfied when the town is somewhere in the 1/2 to 1 million population range," (p. 1. 20). But why this range of population satisfies these conditions and just what is meant by a "range of choice" of employment is not mentioned.

7/35/70

What Clark Strangely Misses

The strangest thing about Clark's method is that he is concerned with densities within a city and their relationship to the C.B.D. he is concerned with showing the levelling process whereby densities (except for the C.B.D.) are tending to equalise, he records "norms" of density, he postulates growth rate of cities of different size, and the optimum size of a city, but he nowhere examines the economic effect of the car and truck upon the whole process!!

He finds it necessary to mention that in an earlier period the "very large modern cities with good electric traction system" had "sprawl" and a lower density the further from the C.B.D. (p. 1. 6), but nowhere is the effect of the automobile mentioned, on the density-levelling process he has discovered nor on the faster growth of 1 million size cities!!.

The most quaint and "uneconomic" reasons are given for the numerous exceptions and differences between cities that Clark finds. Thus "the desire of the majority of men in many European Countries to go home for their midday meal makes them reluctant to live too far from work" (p. 1. 6) but we are not presented with any comparative statistics showing lower car ownership in European cities than American or Australian cities.

Why are cities that grew beyond a million or so before the advent of the car as a mass commuter more dense than the cities that grew up in the mass car-commuting era? Why is London, New York, more dense than Sydney or Melbourne? Why is Sydney or Melbourne more dense than Perth or Brisbane? Why (to give a comparison Clark gives on p. 1.6) is "old established" Baltimore more dense than Dallas "a comparatively new city"

8/35/70

Our Guess is that the Answer is: The Car!

The level of car and truck ownership at the time a city grew, we suggest couldn't fail to throw a flood of real relationships which would demonstrate the impact of the car as an economic factor, surely this would be a major factor in exploring changes in the character of the C.B.D. and the inner area densities and values, the variation in density between inner and outer areas, the spread of housing and levelling or densities between the railway lines (if its an older city), the random distribution of factories all around the perimeter, the dispersal of potentially-strong district centres, and many other interesting economic facts about cities, rather more compelling than whether dad feels like going home to lunch?!!

But from Clark: not one statistic, not one graph, not one formula (yet just as "electric traction" changed the shape and size and densities in cities, so just as fundamentally has the car, and these hard transport facts lie at the very heart of the very subject Clark is examining) He didn't even mention the car. He only made one slip; that the traditional model of a city with all work work places at the centre could not exist "because the traffic congestion would become inconceivable" and he throws this in only to tell the assembled planners they were many of them, fools because they didn't know that C.B.D. employment was declining! Ptherwise Clark is completely car-shy! He is like a physician dealing with cancer of the throat without mentioning cigarettes!

9/35/0

Why does Clark Miss the Vital Note?

In our opinion the reason that Clark omits the vital note or rather "motto" of the Jewksbury overture is that he wants to establish as "norm" the maximum untrammelled use of the car. More: he wants to do this without saying so, because, if he said so, there would be plenty of people to say: why can't we control the car instead of letting the car control our city? There would be plenty of people to challenge Clark's concept that "the public welfare is best served by the free bargaining between individuals in the market", if by this principle car commuters are to be encouraged to ruin the tremendous social value of the C.B.D. and inner areas as well as their local suburban communities and their holiday resorts!

So Clark comes out with "iron laws" of economics (those foolish planners!) which he pretends can be assiduously uncovered by treating in isolation the facts of densities, distance and size only, but the factors he "discovers" are (naturally) those characteristics of an uncontrolled car-dominated city (in the sense of a city with a high incidence of C.B.D. car commuting.

If ever the automobile and oil industries are looking for a theoretician to justify their self-interest, Clark, whether he realises it or not, is their man! The back-room tacticians of these giant corporations must by now be alarmed by the mounting opposition in the U.S.A to the insoluble, extravagant, city-ruining freeway "solutions" for a city of more than a few millions. Rather than control the car for city commuting and supply modern public transport for this problem of mass conveyance, therefore, it would suit these interests to limit all future urban growth to cities of 500,000 to 1,000,000 which could be entirely car-based with no railed transport whatsoever.

In cities which are already too big for this it would suit them to have uniformly low evenly-distributed densities with a small CBD so that the flow of traffic on the freeway networks is not disrupted by unpredictable higher-density build-ups likely in time to cause either congestion or intolerably extravagant super freeways so as to generate demands for better public transport.

Clark's own description of Dallas, Texas, for example, fits his model of the "norm" at which urban densities are going to "settle down" (p 1.22). He says: "A comparatively newly-built city, very wealthy in an oil-producing area, Dallas has a small central zone of very highly-priced land, with high commercial buildings built upon it, but as soon as we proceed a little distance from the centre we find both the height of the buildings and the land prices falling precipitately and almost immediately we find ourselves in a residential suburb" (p.1.6). In our judgment this unavoidably produces a typical car-based barre type of city: a centre of pretigious head offices with little attraction to the ordinary citizen, and the rest formless uniform low density that the citizen feels he has to "get away from" every weekend.

The Melbourne Transportation Plan with freeways orientated on the CBD will impel Melbourne towards this type of city. Clark's theories have the effect of disarming any counter-measures.

10/35/0

The Real Conclusions !

Now to re-state Clark's real conclusions (not his own version of harmless-seeming applause-producing 4th paragraph platitudes !) :-

1. Within cities the free market demand of the individual should be respected (and not interfered with either by resisting CBD all-day carparkers' demands or by improving public transport), and it will dictate an evenly-spread 10,000 persons per square mile density (to ensure maximum utilisation of cars for all purposes good or bad), and
2. As between cities the free market, which is distating the increasing size of the biggest of them should be ignored and new cities should be compulsorily held to a population of 1/2 to 1 million at which size they should show maximum growth rates and would stabilise if it were not for the "slowness", the "externalities" and the "indeterminancy" which hinder market forces in location decisions (and which would require no rail public transport whatever so that here the monopoly utilisation of cars would be ensured).

(Note: the phrases above which are in brackets are our own deductions and, in effect, represent the "awkward" and hence silent portion of the missing motif from the overture).

But these conclusions which Clark uses so much ability to "prove" are not inevitable.

We are not in the grip of economic laws which we can't control. If Clark were to bring the car back into his economic equation unashamedly, and helped with his economic expertise to devise an alternate system for city workers, he could not only explain much better some of the disparities he uncovers, but he could help save Melbourne becoming Dallas.

11/35/0

3. The McAlpine Underground

"Try and try again" is his motto

A plan for an underground loop which would give Melbourne a new-look has recently been prepared by Mr Robert McAlpine. This is the second plan he has prepared for the Melbourne underground. Mr McAlpine places it now under the southern side of Latrobe St. and not under the roadway as proposed by the Railways Dept. He claims his alternative would eventually provide a saving of \$91 million.

The underground on the south side of Latrobe St. would mean the demolition of all but two buildings on this frontage between Spencer St and Spring St. Those to be saved would be the Royal Mint and the Latrobe Library.

Mr McAlpine is the only qualified land valuer-town planner in Victoria, and he estimates that the cost of acquiring the necessary properties would be \$21,828,000 (this includes an extra 10% to land owners for their trouble)

If the underground was to go along the south side of Latrobe St. it would cost \$102 million. But, according to Mr McAlpine, to offset this total cost would be savings on construction and design, saving in the ease of working, and lack of disruption of traffic, and the Government would have an invaluable supply of land. Mr McAlpine has been reported as saying :- "On present city values this land would be worth \$38 million. Later on, big developers would, on evidence, pay more to get bigger chunks in one title. And, once the underground goes in, they could go up to anything".

Mr McAlpine therefore estimates that in the lone run the savings would amount to \$31 million over the present estimates for the underground along the Latrobe St. roadway.

In "Irregular" No. 25 (Sept. 1969) there is an article entitled "McAlpine's cut and cover Proposals" This was an earlier scheme that Mr. McAlpine put before transport authorities for the underground to go along the north side of Latrobe St. In this scheme he estimated a saving of \$20 million.

He investigated the alternative of going along the south side after a discussion with Melbourne City Councillor I. Stewart who pointed out to him that the M.C.C has frozen the block bounded by Latrobe, Elizabeth, Swanston and Lonsdale Sts for future big development. Mr McAlpine's south side scheme envisages total redevelopment along the entire length of the southern side of Latrobe St. to match the Council's ambitious scheme for this block

Reader: Have you read thus far ?

Have you no thoughts about the various matters ?

Have you a pen ?

Can you oblige the other readers with your thoughts
(however short) by sending something to the editor ?