



VICTORIA UNIVERSITY
MELBOURNE AUSTRALIA

Irregular no. 47; June 1972

This is the Unpublished version of the following publication

UNSPECIFIED (1972) Irregular no. 47; June 1972. Irregular (47). pp. 1-9.
(Unpublished)

The publisher's official version can be found at

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(An irregular publication for the Town Planning Research Group, not for publication or republication.)

Notice of an urgently needed public effort;
Seminar on Public Transport.
 organised by "Campaign for Public Transport"
 Sec. Mrs S. Rutherford.
 Sunday, June 25, 2 p.m. to 9 p.m. At Younger-Ross
 Hall, Cnr Keppel and Swanston Streets, near
 Melbourne University.

Our Special Autumn Issue :

A Season of Seminars.

1. "Who Runs This Town ?" Lecture Series.
2. M.M.B.W. Seminars.
3. The R.A.I.A. Sunbury Convention.
4. The "Deprived West" Seminar.

I. WHO RUNS THIS TOWN ?

The Fitzroy Ecumenical Centre ran six lectures from April to May hearing Dr. Myer, A. Hill, K. Hardiman, J. Paterson, C. Benjamin and M. Bowman on one aspect or another of this useful theme. Involved was not examination of any future plan (as were the M.M.B.W. and Sunbury events) or a political demand for a better deal (the "deprived west" seminar), but rather to examine the machinery and procedures by which citizens exercise (or fail to exercise) the present ramshackle, competitive, decision-making machinery within which the pull of the powerful outweighs the popular interests.

There was too much meat here to review it adequately in "Irregular"

We welcome the establishment of the services provided by a "centre for urban research training and action" as the Fitzroy Ecumenical Centre describes itself, and the publication of "Ekstasis" (available 124 Napier Street, Fitzroy, 3065, of P.O. box 94 Fitzroy. 'phone 41.2050) It is worthwhile keeping in touch with this centre.

Editors Explanation. ; to strike a similar trendy note and to show the writer has not been uninfluenced by the Ecumenical vexed question of "who runs what and how?" the examination of the next three seminars will each deal first with the participatory arrangements.

2, The M.M.B.W. Seminars.

Explanation and "Questionation", not Participation.

One all-Melbourne seminar and five sub-regional ones at Dandenong, Ringwood, Broadmeadows, Sunshine and Dallas Brooks Hall....

According to Chairman Croxford's "introduction" to the M.M.B.W. "Planning Policies for Melbourne Metropolitan Region" Report "it is intended to stimulate public dialogue with interested organisations and individuals by inviting their participation in seminars."....."Any plan reflects the interests and inputs of people and will only be as good as the number of people who take an active part by contributing to the ultimate decision."

Now this is a first-time experiment and perhaps it must be excused weaknesses arising from inexperience on this account. But equally, it is important to assess what degree of success attended this experiment.

M.M.B.W. Seminar contd.

Basically the seminars were explanatory and explanatory only. Certainly at the all-Melbourne seminar at Monash and the C.B.D. ..inner.. middle suburbs seminar at Dallas Brooks Hall there were selected platform speakers, some of them critical.

In this respect, we urge readers to obtain and the study "Report on Proceedings of the Seminar held at Monash University, 26th Feb. 1972 on the Board of Works Report." ... read Ledger, Clark, Lobley, Christensen, Woodlock and Gardner. We also suggest that the reader ask the Board to make available the addresses of Grouse, aHowe, Loder and Jackson given at the Dallas Brooks meeting.

John Citizen, however, had to content himself with questions. Numbers of questioners at all seminars, obviously had points of view and were trying to put them, but could do so only by the twisted, frustrating manoeuvre of casting their ideas in the form of a question to which the speaker, who was asked, had another "Go" without a further "Go" for the hapless questioner.

The Dallas Brooks meeting looked more hopeful. It advertised on the program "general discussion" from 6.30 p.m. to 7 p.m. but, when the great moment for such severely limited "participation" arrived, it turned out to be only the familiar question and answer session with a panel of all speakers at once.

There was no evidence of shorthand writers or tape-recorders to record for the Board's experts such opinions as were expressed (couched awkwardly in a question) that might have been worth considering. There was no invitation to the audience to submit their ideas in writing, nor provision of forms on which to submit them.

Whilst admirably, calm, polite and diplomatic, Chief Planner Hepburn and other Board officers gave only explanatory-type reactions to questions. One never detected even the outward show of reflection, let alone sensed any genuine humility of attitude that would give confidence that the Board's officers felt that opinions they heard expressed anything worthwhile considering. True the Board's proposals in some instances may in many instances have been more community orientated than those of the questioner, The Plan worth defending, Certainly the Board has a right to its own position.

But, let's face it. The concept of "public ~~participation~~ dialogue" was not implemented. "Participation" by John Citizen or Germaine Citizen except as question (a distorted and helpless form) was not possible.

Maybe it is impractical at such functions to provide for this, maybe there were too many platform speakers to make it possible to find time.

Whatever the reason, let us not pretend that "questions" and "dialogue" or "participation" in Croxford's phraseology.

The M.M.B.W. Newsletter of 5th May '72 is honest "As a result of a series of seminars" it reports... "... more than 4000 people have a better understanding of what the plan seeks to achieve... the seminars were held to outline the planning proposals," (sic!)

Fair enough. But let us remind any reader interested that Croxford in the same introduction said "... the Board proposes to receive and consider all suggestions for alterations or improvements to the proposals not only during the objection period but during the course of examining the proposals as well."

In a "special edition" Newsletter of 11th May it is reported that the M.M.B.W. is to ask the Minister to extend the time of objections from 2.6.'72 to 2.7.'72.

To Plan or Not to Plan or the "Nitty-Gritty-Bitty".

Judging by the Board's Newsletter on its own seminars (5.5.'72, II .5. '72) the important thing to gauge is the property owners opposition.

"Questions asked at the Seminars indicated that the most controversial aspect was the Board's proposals for non-urban areas as opposed to urban areas."

... "The problems of people who owned property in non urban areas and wished to build a house on it."

... "major reserves especially in the Yarra Valley, Dandenong Creek and Maribyrong River were criticised by some and applauded by other. Property owners within these areas wanted to know how their interest were affected."

.... "future quarrying and mining activities, this brought understandable opposition from people living close to an area" (5.5. 72)

It would be fair to say from outward appearances, that what most preoccupies the Board's planning officers is what they call "nitty-gritty" aspects of their plan. Can I sell my farm for housing? Can I build in non urban wedge? How is my land zoned?

So, the requested extension of time for lodging objections is for "nitty gritty" purposes.

"The Board believes that the six public meetings already held have adequately presented proposals to the public" (Just so! What did we say?) no "dialogue" or "participation" pretended here)... "but there is need for many individual members of the public to obtain more information on their own problems and to decide their own course of action (it is the individual whom is the "nitty-gritty" ... not the community)

"It is believed this could best be done by arranging an evening exhibition of the planning scheme at each of the Council offices in the Extension Area and to make Board Officers available at the same time to answer individual questions." (This to apply to "Berwick, Bulla; Healesville, Melton, Sherbrooke, Werribee and Whittlesea.")

M.M.B.W. Seminar contd.

The Board, in other words, seems to be overwhelmed by the most primitive problem of all; whether their plans can "stick" or whether the pressures of the most self-centred and speculative elements in the community, considered as individuals, are to force them to abandon their green wedges and conservation areas. This issue is at such an elementary "nitty-gritty" level, that, if the Board and Government concentrates on these issues and fights them on the level of property-owner "ethics" (if there is such a thing), it will tend to lose the battle of planning altogether.

Always the backward, speculative element which is inescapably embedded in all property-owners, good, bad and indifferent, can be defeated only by appealing to the community-spirited side of the same people.

To do something for the benefit of the community means "to plan" i. e. to restrict individuals from doing what they want., where this runs counter to the common interests.

The issue "to plan or not to plan" therefore is best tackled positively by encouraging community spirited people to support what is good and appeal to the community spirited side of everyone else.

The Board seems to have "lost course". The "dialogue" and "participation" envisaged by the Chairman seems to be petering out into "nitty gritty" property "rights".

3. The Sunbury Convention

A Model of Study and Participation

At the other extreme was the 21st Australian Architectural Convention held over three days at Sunbury. An architectural students convention of some 500 (encamped along a creek in living units variously constructed of cardboard, mud bricks, sundry plastic materials, sheepskins and some even conventional canvas) ran for one week and concurrently in the weekend there was a Fair, a grand parade (a sort of mini Moomba) a pop concert and an exhibition.

All delegates were issued with a report entitled "A Study for an Australian New Town". Quite unlike the M.M.B.W. style, there was no long explanatory addresses. Instead the whole convention, including the students, were split into six work-groups the object being to stimulate the maximum participation by all present.

Each work group tackled four main topics. (1) social issues, (2) conservation and ecological issues, (3) economic and physical issues and (4) political issues. Each group was serviced by an inter-disciplinary assortment of 6 to 8 experts and attended by a member of the design team who had contributed to the Sunbury Study Project.

The discussion was guided by questions. It was made clear in the study report and by the nature of the questions themselves, that the whole exercise was not to be taken as a recommendation for the actual development of a "satellite city" of 100,000 to 200,00 at Sunbury, but rather as an illustration (using Sunbury to make it realistic) of the better sort of integrated planned development which could be feasible for Melbourne's outward growth. "It is not suggested that Sunbury should necessarily be developed. It is not suggested that the Sunbury area is necessarily the best area or the only area to be singled out for any type of development.... the Design Team hoped to demonstrate a planning process" (p II)

The President in opening proceedings on the first day cracked that it had been dubbed "~~the unconventional Convention~~" "the unconventional Convention". What could be said after three days of participatory discussions and under the impact of two types of mixtures at once.... mixed disciplines and mixed age groups.... that anyone who came with a conventional attitude and managed to depart with it was already too old to learn, because there was plenty of learning for everyone.

Some "Firsts"

The Architects Institute deserves considerable recognition for what appear to be a number of "firsts" for a professional organisation at least for Australia.

The Sunbury Convention contd.

It was an event which incorporated.....

- 1) Students playing an integrated role with graduates.
- 2) Thrown open to the public at large (anyone at all could enroll, although \$5.00 for non-students for each session was pitched too high to attract a really wide cross section)
- 3) Preceded by a serious nine months study made by an inter-disciplinary design team whose findings and data were available before the convention.
- 4) Selected professionals from other disciplines sought out and invited to assist with work group discussions.
- 5) An exhibition for popular presentation to the public and enlisting the co-operation of the local shire and community to stage a Fair, Gymkana and procession to attract the attention of the public generally.
- 6) Election of a ~~national~~ wide committee of action, to pursue the better type "planning process" through to practical conclusion.

And although not at Sunbury ~~one can add~~.....

7) Staging of a public platform (at Dallas Brooks Hall) of leading politicians (two Liberal... Hamer and Hunt, and two Labour... Whitlam and Dunstan) all vying with each other to agree on decentralisation, Federal moneys for urban planning purposes and public participation in planning.

Indeed an exercise that warrants commendation as an earnest effort to arise above the stultification imposed by private enterprise and public bureaucracy on urban "development". A credit to those with imagination to conceive the project and to carry it through. A credit to the hard organising it entailed.

It is disgraceful that the money for this project had to be found from James Hardie and Co, Pty, Ltd and not from the Government.

Right and Wrong Arguments

The Steering Committee of the Convention must have been quite puzzled as to how to bridge the gap (that often seems unbridgeable, in some of the discussion groups) between the survival-conscious, anti-consumerism, anti-waste, simple-life-style fundamentalism of the students, and the more conventional next-practical-step, albeit more sensitive approach of the older generation.

An attempt was made to wrap up all issues and attitudes in an omnibus resolution placed before the full assembly of the convention in the final session. John Bayly, whose job was supposed to be to "summarise" the convention (some job!) said there were issues at two levels both of which demanded immediate attention but the first of which had to do with short term problems (such as Sunbury) and the second with longer-term problems such as the ecological crisis.

He illustrated the scale of issue in a very clever way. His argument ran something like this: That if one took the population of Sunbury now, you would have to multiply it by a factor of 25 or so to arrive at the future population of Sunbury planned by the Study. This planned population would need then to be multiplied by a factor of 25 to equal the then population of Melbourne. Melbourne's population would need to be multiplied by another 25 to equal the population of the Great Boswash conurbation (i.e. Boston, New York, Washington urban belt) where said Bayly, signs of crisis ~~indeed~~ were indeed beginning to show.

Let's ~~get~~ our perspectives right, he argued. Anything we do at Sunbury, important as it is, could have no impact for years and years which could remotely compare with the crisis of Boswash. So the students, right as they are to be deeply concerned about world ecological crisis needn't worry that Sunbury is going to be a serious contributing factor,

What is Right? What is Wrong?

Fair enough to prove that for every soul at Sunbury now there will be 16,000 souls in Boswash (or whatever) or better, because Sunbury would always be inescapably part of Melbourne, that there are 600 times the number of souls in Boswash as compared to Melbourne. So, O.K. there is 600 times more technology, 600 times more pollution 600 times the size of damage.

The Sunbury Convention cont.

What is wrong about this idea is that Bayley apparently identifies the crisis to the biosphere with the sheer size of cities, with "conurbanisation" (to give him his due, no doubt, so do many of the students). But this is not the case. The ecological crisis is a world crisis, not a city crisis per se. It is technology not population-distribution that determines the issue. With a given level of uncontrolled modern technology, whether it is concentrated in a few conurbanations or scattered over thousands of smaller cities, there will still be the same degree of pollution of the air, pollution of the ocean, the same damage from heat levels on a world scale.

Western urban man therefore whether he lives in present Sunbury or Boswash has an equal responsibility to cut down on energy, and (amongst other things) to plan his cities so that they assist this process.

Bayley read the omnibus resolution which included the proposal that the Institute request the Bulla Shire Council, the M.M.B.W. and the T.C.P.B. to support the scheme and press the Government for finance. The Shire President said the Council had 20 applications for permits next Monday, and he wanted guidance. Bayley called for anyone who opposed in principle.

Maurie Crow moved an amendment deleting all reference to development at Sunbury. He argues that although the resolution spoke of "optimisation of energy", expansion of Sunbury, according to the design study would have the opposite effect, because it was an integral part of a radial corridor pattern proposed by the M.M.B.W. If planners were to set out to produce a pattern of city growth designed to maximise the use of cars between the even, elongated radial spokes, this was it. A long linear southeasterly corridor wouldn't have the same effect. He said he also opposed it on sociological grounds saying that it would not help the "deprived" north west, but gave no reasons.

The resolution was then watered down somewhat by inclusion of the idea that the support should be for "examining" the scheme

The fact is that the Bernard Evans plan for "balanced" development was adapted by Hamer in 1968 and it was Hamer who, when approached by the Institute in 1971 and told it proposed to do a study of Berwick, asked the Institute to do Sunbury instead.

Neither the Study Report, nor the questions for the Conventions Work Groups discussion were framed to permit discussion of the advisability of Sunbury in relation to Melbourne as a regional problem! Discussion was either on general lines, or about Sunbury in particular,

If the Institute, without discussion by its own Convention, presses for a city the size of Geelong at Sunbury, it will do irreparable harm to the very causes it is trying to champion, if Crow is right.

No-one minds if the Shire of Bulla is permitted to "round-off" Sunbury's imbalance with more employment opportunities and social facilities, better public transport and better design concepts borrowed from the Study to take in "natural growth". But, to use Bayley's argument in reverse and apply them to planning as he did to ecology, there is as big a disproportion between today's Sunbury and tomorrow's Geelong-sized Sunbury as there is between Melbourne and Boswash.

The Shire could adopt a mini-plan for Sunbury - as is without trying to have the Government adopt a Sunbury for 200,000.

People rushing in to obtain permits in an area designed as urban in the (as yet unapproved) M.M.B.W. Regional Plan, which looks ~~xxxxx~~ a most likely starter by the very publicity generated by the Institute do not prove that there is "natural" local pressure. They only prove, if anything, that speculators rush in where planners should fear to tread.

To use this "pressure" to argue that a Geelong-sized Sunbury is justified is to argue in a circle. The Institute's splendid efforts deserve a better fate.

Readers are urged to obtain a copy of "A Study for an Australian New Town", study it reflect on the many fine and improved ideas for Australian suburban-style life and methods of tackling obstacles..

4. THE DEPRIVED WEST SEMINAR.Action Participation.

A one day seminar with a political objective of action for the immediate improvement to the western suburbs, plus a subsidised registration fee of \$1.00 (including a meal) attracted a cross section of local people containing a far higher percentage of industrial workers and white collar workers than seemed evident either at the M.M.B.W or the Sunbury seminars. It was held on 7/5/ '72 at the Highway Motel, Deer Park and sponsored by Sunshine Lions Clubs, Sunshine Advocate and backed by various citizens groups throughout the western suburbs.

The program provided for questions of the speakers to the morning session but in practice there was no time for this. The afternoon session, however, broke up into discussion groups based on locality (e.g. Melton St. Albans, Williamstown, 2 for Sunshine Altona, Footscray etc) and the groups reported back to a plenary session. Delegates then left names for further participation in "Action Groups" depending on their interests (e.g. employment and transport, education, health and welfare, environment, sewerage, water and so on.)

Almost Unanimous

Really excellent papers were given which left the listener (or reader... copies were immediately available to delegates at the seminar) in no doubt that the western and northern suburbs are seriously deprived, whether it is a hospital bed, a kindergarten place, a job for a housewife, a scholarship for a student or even an average amount paid in interest charges for consumer goods. Moreover, what services there were tended to be supported less by Government subsidy and more by local impost (i.e. the more affluent workers of east and south can raise more \$1 for \$1 funds, whereas in the west the lower voluntary impost has to be supplemented by a higher involuntary impost e.g. in the form of rates or charges to make up for the proportionate lack of Government subsidy)

Readers are urged to get hold of this set of papers (if still available) from Mr W.H. Williams, Seminar Sec. 23 C Northumberland Rd. North Sunshine 3020. Read for yourself the research of Coulson, Roberson, Jenkins, Bottomley, Roper, Benjamin and Burgess.

The unanimity on deprivation seemed to be proved except on sewerage and water supply where M.M.B.W. Chief Engineer Robertson challenged Cr Ted Coulson's statistics. Robertson did not contest Coulson's conclusion of "appalling deficiencies in the Western suburbs in relation to water, sewerage and drainage" what he said was that such a state was typical of outer areas anywhere in Melbourne and, in fact the West slightly better off per head in such areas than the east... it was a question of the "deprived metropolis".

writer

The writer will not enter the gladiatorial field of rival statistical methodologies, save to comment (quite a few of the above speakers on alternative subjects) that statistics were simply unavailable to make accurate research possible.

This same statistical difficulty no doubt beset Colin Benjamin and Bob Burgell, social workers, in presentation of a "research summary" when they gave aggregate figures from 737 square miles of "West" (Altona, Footscray, Melton Sunshine, Werribee, Bulla, Williamstown, Keilor, Coburg, Broadmeadows, Brunswick and Essendon) to compare to aggregate figures for the 739 square miles of East.. (Camberwell, Hawthorn, Kew, Box Hill, Doncaster Templestowe, Nunawading, Ringwood, Croydon, Lilydale, Caulfield, Malvern, Prahran, St. Kilda, Brighton, Oakleigh, Sandringham, Moorabin, Mordialloc, Waverly, Springvale and Chelsea.)

It would be comparing like with like to compare urban built up areas, west versus east, but would not Melton, Werribee, Bulla, Keilor, contain much less urban development than are to be found in Lilydale, Croydon, Doncaster Templestowe, ? The writer does not know, but only suspects it. but Burgell and Benjamin do not deal with this difficulty. Have they therefore somewhat over-proved a good case.?

Confusion of Thought

The residents of the western suburbs are mainly industrial workers and the west has as a consequence been a relative stronghold of Labour, naturally with its complement of left-wing labour.

The Deprived West Seminar cont.

It is surprising therefore to detect a confusion of thought when thinking about the "deprivation" subject which seemed equally to permeate labour left, right and whatever.

The confusion between 1) The Standard of services for the present residents and 2) Plans for future urban development.

These are completely different issues, and to confuse service standards with development of undeveloped areas will only land the laborites in an anti-labour position and enmesh the left wing in an unforgivable opportunitis tangle of good - and-bad elements so they will find themselves backing the bad along with the good.

One suspects for example that the Burgell Benjamin exercise referred to above comparing 737 sq. miles of east with 739 sq miles of west is more than somewhat influenced by a concern for equal "development".

We use the words of Cr. Coulson, however, to illustrate our point in a sharper way. In doing so we are not more critical of Coulson than anybody else (indeed we admire his honesty and preparedness " to take the Government on")

Coulson showed the 1967 ~~T.C.P.B.~~ T.C.P.B.s elongated south eastern corridor design with no further growth to north and west. He said (which is untrue...) That this influences the Government (See Hamers' Ministerial statement, Hansard 24.2. '68 p.3244 and M.M.B.W. 1971 Planning Policies for Region p.13. Govt. policy was to encourage renewed growth in northern and western suburbs to restore balance)

He attacked the Government for the T.C.P.B future growth pattern and mixed up standard of sewerage and water in the west , compared to the east (good enough) with issues such as the "West's " claim to water and sewerage development.

The question has to be asked: if there were an extra 300,000 souls in a great Melton corridor stretching out beyond the present 300,000 souls already residing there, would this improve the standard of services for the present population ?

Did the Richmond workers have improved conditions because Melbourne grew to Frankston and Dandenong ? Are Collingwood workers better off because Melbourne stretches to Ringwood and Eltham.

Of course the land speculators, building firms and some of the larger manufacturing and commercial interests, whose size or land ownership would give them monopoly and dominating positions to reap a bonanza from rapid western growth, would benefit. But laborites who cannot distinguish enough to realise that they are talking so generally that they include in "us"... "our speculators", "our big capitalists", "our big monopolists" are beginning to forfeit their right to call themselves labour.

Indeed the essence of the "deprived west" is really "deprived working class" sub suburbs and is an all-Melbourne problem and a worker's policy must clearly be and all-Melbourne one, and not one of the eastern workers versus the western workers, or even white-collar workers versus blue collar workers.

Coulson's complaint "the west is producing wealth for the community, but as a community is not developing as it deserves to develop" (p 4) should be changed to " the west is producing wealth for the community, but not a high enough proportion of this wealth is ploughed back to the west to raise the standard of services for the people who have produced this wealth "!!

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Old Spot. Did You Miss our Front Page Story? May 20. '72

In case you did, here is as much as we can quote to fill up to the end of this page.

Whitlam: Protect Nature

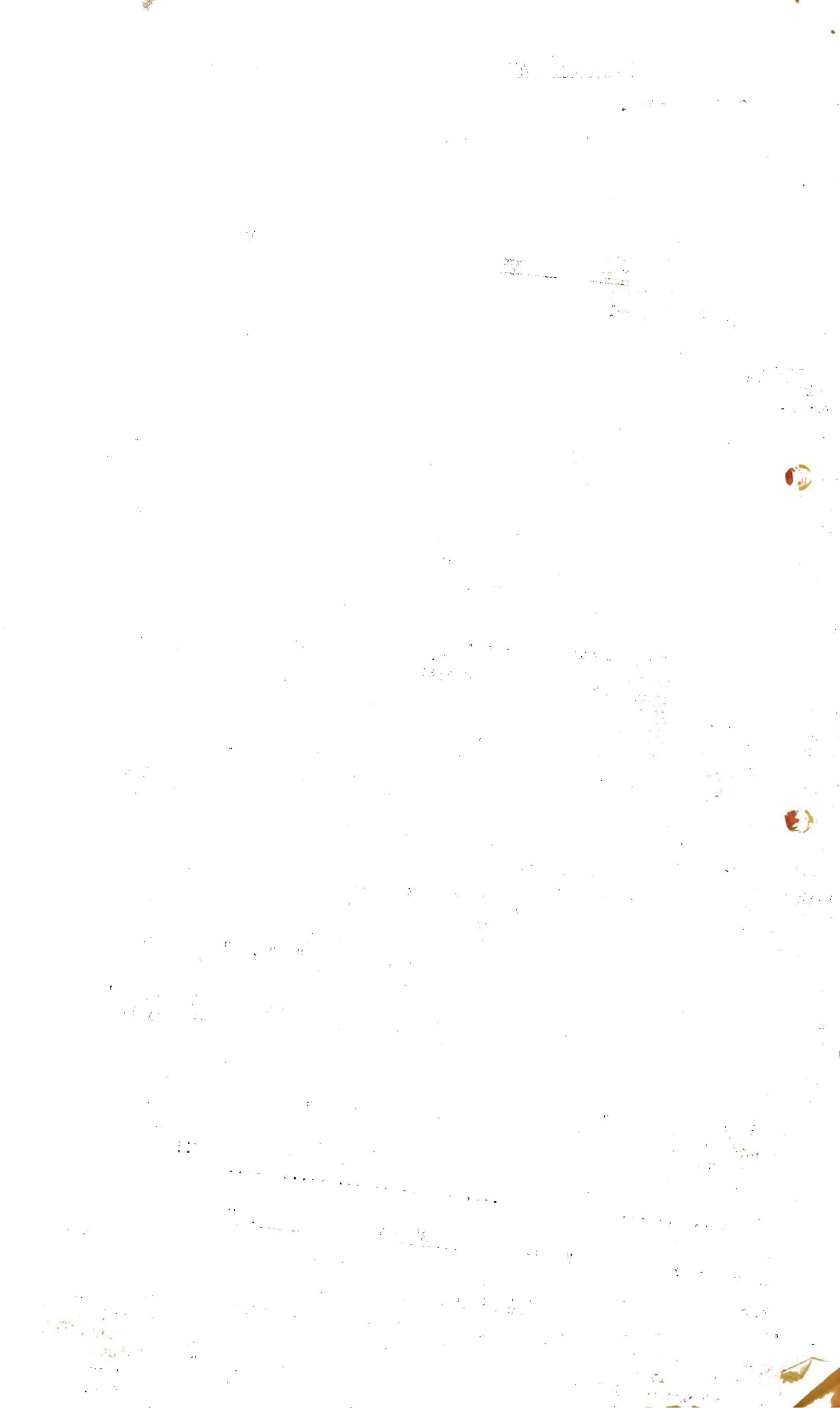
Each level of Government should accept specific responsibilities, Mr Whitlam told a dinner at Montsalvat, artists colony, Eltham... He said that the basis of environmental development under a Labor Government would be an optimum environment statement. This would be similar to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. "The statement will be a summary of agreed environmental goals expressed in terms of access to resources such as natural assets, open space, variety of education, employment and recreation and freedom from pollution," Mr Whitlam said.

"It will make explicit the fact that our resources can be overstrained by indiscriminate development in much the same way that pastures can be denuded if farmers indiscriminately enlarge their herds.

"We can make our optimum environment statement most effective by seeing that people feel involved in it and not merely obliged to adhere to it.

"Our chances of preserving the quality of our environment depends very largely upon willing observance of standards and not enforced obedience.

"We should see therefore, that the public voice is heard in the preparation of the statement from its earliest stages. "



The Deprived West Seminar cont.

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