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DEPARTMENT OF UNIVERSITY EXTENSION

UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND
Armidale - 'phone 2911

re Coleambally

P R E S S S T A T E M E N T

TOWN AND SHIRE MANAGEMENT

Land, Area and Services

A fascinating "case study" in new urban development in the country area of New South Wales was presented by a team of people who have been closely associated with it. Mr. George Clarke (planner), Mr. ^{Bob} Ben Willing (civil engineer), Councillor Colin McInnes (Shire President) and Mr. Ian Crump (Shire Clerk) of the Murrumbidgee Shire Council between them described the way in which the rural service centre of Coleambally has begun to develop. It is to serve the Coleambally Irrigation Area below the Blowering Dam. Members of the Local Government Seminar on "Town and Shire Management - Land, Area and Services" obtained a first hand impression of the financial, political, social and physical problems, and the extent to which constant personal and local initiative and drive had found ways of overcoming them. Plans, slides and models helped to bring to life this extremely interesting "case study" which is judged to be, in many ways, very typical of "New Town" development anywhere.

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Dr. Woolmington of The University of New England chose "Urban Development in the Context of Decentralization" as the title for his report to the Local Government Seminar on some current research within the Geography Department. The "drift to the cities" from rural areas was general, but approximately a dozen towns in New South Wales, roughly 200-250 miles apart from each other, appear to be holding their populations. For this reason, if decentralization means anything, the key to it appears to be in further development of the "going" towns and not, as in the 19th century, in closer agricultural settlement. Is decentralization against "progress"? Dr. Woolmington suggested a number of reasons for thinking that it may not be, given certain important changes, such as the further evolution of national immigration policy, and greater understanding of locational, social and economic, and resource factors which might guide selective decentralization. He showed, in relation to studies of water availability, the way in which resource factors may determine, or be used to assist in, the selection of sites for urban development. Discussion turned on the criteria which should be used if such selection is attempted, and upon such regional organization as may be needed to effect new decentralization policies. The place of local government seemed to the Seminar to depend very much on its ability to change, in face of new activities and new thinking.

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In the context of the Local Government Seminar's interest in "Town and Shire Management - Land, Area and Services" at The University of New England, Mr. Whipple's address on "Private developers and Local Government" provided a useful insight into this relationship. He started by saying that there must inevitably be points of conflict between private developers and local councils, and then went on to describe in some detail how each approaches any new development project. Soundly based private developers use sophisticated techniques of capital budgeting and benefit-cost analysis which he described in some detail. Local government should act as the watchdog of long term community interests, within which private development operates; but these are too often not considered at all because local councils, as political bodies, are representative of competing local interests, and the long term is neglected for compromise in the short term conflicts. He suggested that local government would better its performance by improving the quality of the local political leadership and the training and status of its officers; also by adopting more modern management techniques, such as capital budgeting, so that it can meet private developers and work with them, and provide the guidelines to sound community development.

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At the final session of "Town and Shire Management - Land, Area and Services" at The University of New England Mr. Gordon Craig showed that local government can attack the problems of long term community development which has been one of the themes of this Local Government Seminar. Within an area sufficiently large, and where growth factors are already in evidence, the Shoalhaven Shire has adopted a vigorous approach to development. It seeks to be in advance of private enterprise, ready to put proposals to, and provide facilities for, individual developers. This requires a courageous Council and participation by local people; but also an effective management system which can control present performance and identify future opportunities. After describing management procedures in current use, Mr. Craig challenged members of the Seminar to use imagination as well as technique in the development of the urban environment.