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The "City Planner" was John Doran?

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

52 The Sydney City Council and the development of Woolloomooloo

SIR,—I have noted with great concern your editorial re the "\$400 million proposed redevelopment scheme at Woolloomooloo" ("Herald," May 11), and your comments in relation to that development.

Your editorial stated: "The plans came before the (Sydney City) Council without a recommendation from its expert officers or its works committee. The council had before it no evaluation of the scheme to show that it had been fully investigated."

The facts are that the City Planner made a report dated April 10, 1972, giving an incisive and factual review of the application for the development, stating maximum floor-space ratio, together with site area to be made available for public space. Additionally, the City Planner dealt with the matter of car parking within the area. This report first came before the works committee at its meeting held on April 17, 1972.

On April 24, the council resolved that the City Planner's report be received and that firm recommendations with regard to the development be submitted by the council's officers. A further report dated April 21, 1972, was then brought forward by the City Planner and this report having been circulated to all aldermen of the council was considered by the works committee at its meeting held on May 1, 1972.

It will be readily understood that in matters involving large scale business activities within the City of Sydney, aldermen may at times find that their private interests are involved, directly or indirectly with such business activities, and in this particular instance, I, as chairman of the works committee in terms of the Local Government Act, found it necessary to state publicly that I had an interest in this matter and that I was, therefore, forced to vacate the chair, which I did, and asked the Lord Mayor to take over as chairman while the matter was before committee. Alderman Leo Port then stated that he also had an interest, thus the Civic Reform Group found itself without the numbers necessary to carry a resolution within the committee.

The Lord Mayor suggested that in view of this unusual situation the matter might be allowed to go forward to a full meeting of the council without a recommendation from the committee. With this suggestion the Labor aldermen on the committee agreed.

These are the simple facts as to the reason for no recommendation being made by the works committee to the full council.

The next point is the statement that the council had before it no evaluation of the scheme to show that it had been fully investigated. This statement, of course, is absolutely without foundation, as will be seen from the indisputable facts set out above.

Your editorial goes on to say: "This is an odd dereliction of responsibility by a council which claims it should have greater powers to govern the planning of the city."

From the foregoing it must be patently obvious that there has been no dereliction of responsibility on the part of the council and that the aldermen have a very sincere feeling of their responsibilities within the Local Government Act, and I can assure you, to the citizens of the City of Sydney.

The very fact that there is this sense of civic responsibility on the part of aldermen is a salient reason why the claims of the council that it should have greater powers to govern the planning of the city must cause the State Government to see that civic powers shall be forthwith entrusted to the council.

Your article further states that the redevelopment plan "conflicts sharply with the council's own strategic planning scheme." This is clearly at variance with the facts, as the resolution adopted by the council accepts the recommendations of the City Planner dated April 21, 1972, wherein he recommended that:

(1) Approval be granted to the floor-space ratio not exceeding that specified in the State Planning Authority's Woolloomooloo study, i.e., a floor-space ratio of 10:1, provided that each separate stage of the development does not exceed, in its own right, the floor-space ratio which would be attributable to that stage as a separate development. Any further ratio in excess of 10:1 would be examined on the basis of the public benefit derived.

(2) Further conditions to the parking provisions complying with the parking code as adopted by the council.

(3) Open space and public pedestrian areas being not less than 50 per cent of the aggregated sites, the bonus floor space provision based on this factor being judged on the location, treatment and effectiveness of such space.

(4) Any reduction required in floor area being made to commercial office use.

(5) The road pattern being to the approval of the council and in accordance with the requirements of the City Engineer.

Your further statement that "the Woolloomooloo scheme will distract development from the depressed Haymarket end of the city" is completely irrelevant. There is no suggestion that the developer or the financiers of the Woolloomooloo scheme have the desire or intention to develop any section of the city other than Woolloomooloo.

In conclusion, may I express the opinion that the "huge office floor space provided is well above the market demand" does not appear to be shared by the leading developers in the City of Sydney, as there is a constant and steady stream of development applications from people who visualise Sydney in the years to come as one of the greatest cities of the world, and who are prepared not only to risk their financial future but to put their shoulders to the wheel to ensure that such a state of affairs does in fact eventuate.

JOHN HARRIS,
Chairman,
Works Committee,
Sydney City Council.
Sydney.

SIR,—Let's have no more honeyed words and wringing of hands by the Lord Mayor and

Correction

In a letter by Mr C. J. Danzey published on May 6, the sentence "It (the crisis facing the Water Board) cuts at the very heart of centralisation" should have read "the very heart of decentralisation."

his associates in the Sydney City Council about vanishing Sydney and what the poor old council is unable to do about developers, etc.

Last Monday night the council chose to dispense with expert advice, recommendations from the Royal Australian Institute of Architects and the National Trust, its own Strategic Plan and other authorities under which it might have sheltered, had it chosen so to do. Instead it passed in a mumbled embarrassment a monstrous plan that gives this city another huge chunk of concrete office blocks to digest. Perhaps it is significant that some of the aldermen withdrew from the debate because of admitted interests in the redevelopment.

Passed "in principle" indeed!

Not only in principle, but also in fact, some of the land and air space does not belong to the developer and is not likely to.

And for those of us who have husbands and sons called upon to shed their blood on the rice-fields of South Vietnam, ostensibly to stem the spread of communism, the Premier of this State rubs salt into our wounds by flirting with finance for this monstrosity from Russian capitalists!

Shame on them all!
(Mrs) H. WILKINSON.
Woolloomooloo.

The printers' dispute has made it somewhat difficult for us significantly to notify the people of Sydney of our important public meeting on Monday, May 15, in the Lower Town Hall, at 7.30 p.m. We look to the citizens for guidance. We feel we have a brief from them to fight for the preservation of the Theatre Royal and we hope for a truly representative capacity audience to tell us how we should continue their campaign. We were forced to turn people away from the small AMP Theatre when we held our first meeting on May 1. But the Lower Town Hall has a capacity five times greater.

J. TASKER,
Chairman,
Save Sydney's Theatre
Royal Committee.
Sydney.

It seems incredible to me that in the fortnight since the belligerent public meeting of the Save Sydney's Theatre Royal Committee not one plan appears to have been presented to the public with that end in view. I interpreted the mood of that meeting to be one "of saving the old theatre at all costs." True, we now have suggested modifications to the existing development plans which would replace the theatre with one of similar size. But can the history and atmosphere of the Royal be as easily retained? One feels, also, that this offer of a replacement may set a precedent for future developers who are confronted with what appears to be a mounting public hostility.

D. N. CREMER,
Rushcutters Bay.

In its present deliberations on the proposals for the virtual socialisation of the wool industry through the total acquisition of the clip, the Federal Cabinet should consider very carefully — particularly in an election year — whether a majority of woolgrowers, let alone the taxpayers who will be forced to stand behind the scheme, really support the proposals.

Indeed, there is grave doubt whether producers' organisations generally represent today a true consensus of rural opinion. Attendances at their branch meetings clearly do not indicate a local consensus and it is even being suggested that decisions made at conferences may be invalid because of alleged voting by



ussian embassy next!"