

URBAN AFFAIRS

Australia's cities have been demonstrably deteriorating throughout the post-war period, and even as hundreds of millions of dollars have been poured into improving the standard of individual business accommodation and of private homes, the overall functioning of the cities has gone steadily downhill.

In the circumstances, it is surprising how long it has taken the professional town planners to win the popular acceptance which in the past couple of years has seen a number of architectural firms hauling down their shingles and adding the words "urban planners" or something similar before putting them up again.

Until recently, the Royal Australian Planning Institute, the collective mouthpiece of the town planning profession, received little in the way of popular recognition. The letters RAPI could just as well have stood for Rarefied Atmosphere of Planners' Infighting.

Some reasons for the lag can be deduced from a paper at the 12th RAPI Congress in Brisbane recently, in which George Clarke, managing director of a large planning group which nests in the MLC building in North Sydney, discussed planning as a community learning process.

Doing something about politics

"My object at this congress is to help make things so hot for planners that they will not dare to refrain from thinking about, talking about and effectively doing something about politics," he commented.

"It is an interesting fact that only a very small proportion of planners, anywhere, seem to understand how important a subject politics is for the modern planning profession.

"It seems to me that the normally automatic mental response to the word politics, of many sincere and serious professionals, is that it has to do with policies.

"However, the normally automatic response in the minds of most politicians is that politics is about power. Our attitude research and survey analysts tell us that the majority of the electorate is most likely to think of the word politics as being about personalities.

"This is one possible explanation of why the great majority of professional planners have so much difficulty in communicating with politicians. The planners usually insist on talking about seemingly non-political, technocratic policies while the politician is entirely preoccupied with thinking about power — either how to win it or how to maintain it, in the party room, in Parliament, in the council chamber or in the electorate.

"Worse still, the planner is usually talking about long-term policies while the politicians are preoccupied worrying about short-term projects."

Mr Clarke gave as an example a discussion of several hours he had had 12 years ago with a minister in one State Government, on metropolitan planning and public housing priorities.

Throughout the discussion, the politician had difficulty in establishing the location of any particular place or

Planners are prone to forget about people

By CHRISTOPHER JAY

project. His method of tagging it was to work out which of his fellow politicians' electorates it was in.

As if the politicians aren't bad enough, then come the resident action groups, whether it's Paddington preservationists in Sydney or anti-Victorian Housing Commission groups in Melbourne's inner suburbs.

"No professional planner can any longer afford to subscribe to the belief, once so common, particularly among traditional, physical and economic planners, that planning in a social context can be envisaged as a rational, scheduled progress towards a predetermined objective," said Mr Clarke.

"The planner is an active participant, or an actor, in the essentially social and political processes he is trying to guide and sometimes imagines he is directing."

What this boils down to is that men who have been trained in technical drawing and design, the properties of materials and methods of construction, with some courses on the aesthetics of buildings to broaden their studies, have to learn that planning is for people, not buildings.

A static, physical plan is all very well, and suitably modelled in polystyrene with a few plastic model trees around can make a satisfying display in a council chamber, but that's not what urban planning is really about.

What the planners should be asking is how does an urban area function, what are the goals of its population, how can these best be provided for, and how can changes be accommodated over time?

Planning is not a once-for-all business but a continuous process of learning and revising goals.

The goals of the population

It is not enough for a suburban council to call in some consultants to draw up zoning and site-ratio controls (usually aimed at discouraging home units and transient people, who don't stay long enough to vote for the local aldermen). It has to be continuously involved in urban planning, just as it has to be continuously involved in road repairs or rate collection.

"This community learning or educative process seems to proceed at about the same pace and may take the same 10 to 20 years process that the primary, secondary and tertiary education of young people takes," Mr Clarke noted.

"Thus a council or a Government which is in the fourth or fifth year of continuing community participative planning may be thought of as being in the fourth or fifth class of the primary school of community planning." (On that basis, a lot

of Government organisations haven't even made kindergarten yet.)

An example of using the community learning process to modify planning, quoted in the speech, was development of comprehensive residential development control codes in Western Australia.

Involvement of a miscellany of Government, professional and citizen organisations took a lot of time, but in the end the results were worth it.

"Our plans and recommendations evolved in this way have all been adopted and implemented far quicker and more effectively than have been the results of

backroom planning done by professional planners entirely unaided," was the comment.

In the small cocktail groups which form after plenary sessions at planning conferences are over, the concept of citizen participation is sometimes derided as being mere window dressing.

But even if it is hard to envisage any one private individual having a decisive role on a particular plan, the technique of consulting various interests can be defended even if only as a form of market research.

After all, planners are supposed to be planning for people — not planning now to control them.



Paddington preservationists... "Nothing rational about planning in a social context."

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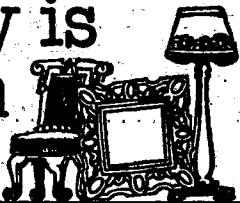


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Whitlam's advisers: 'more degrees than a hot day'

By FRED BRENCHLEY

If there is one thing the new Labor Government has plenty of, it is advice.

But they should stand by for more.

Australia's most famous women's libber Germaine Greer is due to fly in to Sydney this week.

She'll be spending Christmas with friends — and very likely she will be offering advice to the new Government.

She might start with the scarcity of women in the Government — and in the Government's think tank.

With the notable exception of Miss Megan Stoyles, who has been hired as the press secretary to Mr Bill Hayden, the prospective Minister for Health and Social Welfare, few women figure among the Government advisers.

But the advisers are certainly an educated lot.

"There are more degrees around here than on a thermometer on a hot day," cracked one of the old hands surveying the staff which the new Labor ministers are busily lining up.

Scientists on the payroll

Two PhDs are acting in an advisory capacity, while economists, lawyers, doctors and scientists have already joined the payroll.

Apart from the heavy loading of academic qualifications there are other shades to the new people behind the throne.

The new Prime Minister has the heaviest backing of academic qualifications. His new principal private secretary, Mr Peter Wilenski, 33, is a medical graduate from Sydney University, holds an arts degree with first class honours from Oxford, a Master of Public Administration from Harvard and an MA from Carleton University.

He has worked in Foreign Affairs and Treasury and before his appointment to Mr Whitlam's staff was on leave from the Treasury undertaking a Canadian scholarship on Chinese medical



Stephen Fitzgerald

practices. His wife is an activist in the Canberra branch of the women's electoral lobby.

Dr Wilenski was only introduced to Mr Whitlam four months ago and the two obviously struck it off.

Another senior adviser to Mr Whitlam is Mr Jim Spigelman, 26, a Sydney University graduate with double honours in government and economics.

He won the university medal for law and is perhaps better known publicly for his book "Secrecy — Political Censorship in Australia" and his attempts to mastermind a grassroots takeover of the NRMA.

Adviser on foreign affairs

Acting as a foreign affairs adviser to Mr Whitlam, before his appointment as Australia's first Ambassador to Peking is confirmed, is Dr Stephen Fitzgerald, 34, fellow in Far Eastern History at the Australian National University and acting head of the department.

Dr Fitzgerald holds a BA (Hons) from the University of Tasmania, a PhD from the ANU, and a variety of qualifications in Chinese stretching through Point Cook, Hong Kong University and the British Civil Service Commission.



Peter Ellyard

He accompanied Mr Whitlam on his visit to China last year and the new Prime Minister often calls on his advice on foreign policy. His name has been put to the Chinese as the first Australian Ambassador to the Peoples' Republic and, barring any unforeseen event, he is expected to take up his post about February.

The deputy Prime Minister, Mr Lance Barnard, is expected to build his new office around the nucleus of his present staff. Mr Brian Toohey, an economics graduate, is private secretary while Mr Clem Lloyd, who holds degrees in arts and economics and is currently working on a master's degree, is press secretary.

The Senate Leader and Attorney-General Lionel Murphy is planning a staff of nine, with Mr George Negus, formerly with "The Australian," as administrative secretary, personal secretary and research officer and Mr David Halpin as press secretary. Senator Murphy is considering the appointment of liaison officer to work between himself and the department.

Senator Don Willesee, the deputy Senate leader who has already been nominated as the minister to assist Mr Whitlam in his two portfolios of Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs, and who will prob-

ably have a department in his own right, has not yet moved to expand his staff situation.

His principal private secretary is Mr Geoff Briot, 29, who holds a BSc and a Dip Ed from the University of New England and a Master of Science degree from Macquarie.

At least three prospective ministers already nominated by Mr Whitlam to hold various portfolios have approached people to join their staffs.

Apart from the appointment of Miss Stoyles, 25, BA (Hons), and currently a reporter for the "Financial Review," Mr Hayden is likely to appoint Miss Gae Raby, 26, an economics graduate from the University of New England and currently in the parliamentary research service, as a research assistant.

A welfare economist

Mr R. Harvey, a welfare economist with a science degree as well, will be Mr Hayden's private secretary.

Mr Clyde Cameron, who will be the Minister for Labour and Immigration, has appointed Mr Bill Ford, head of the School of Industrial Relations at the University of NSW, as a special assistant, and Mr John Edwards, BA, currently with the "Financial Review," as press secretary.

Mr Tom Uren, Housing and Urban Affairs, who has drawn on the advice of several people, including Dr Peter Ellyard (with an honours degree in Agricultural Science from Sydney, a Master of Science and PhD from Cornell), has not yet finalised his staff arrangements but Dr Ellyard, who is currently in one of the departments which Mr Uren will administer — the Environment — will probably work with him.

Mr John Mant, a BA and LLB from Sydney University, former editor of "Australian Quarterly" and now in the National Capital Development Commission, may join Mr Uren as a special adviser.