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THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

20.11.1972

IN REPLY PLEASE QUOTE:

THE RESEARCH SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

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Notice Board  
23.11.72

Urban Research Unit

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20 November 1972

Ans'd.....

Mr George Clarke,  
Urban Systems Corporation,  
Victoria Cross,  
M.L.C. Building,  
NORTH SYDNEY. N.S.W. 2060

Typical governmental  
statist, patriarchal,  
top-down,  
Australian public  
servant planner!

Dear George,

Glad to have a copy of your Congress paper but you shouldn't have asked for a criticism. The paper is elegantly expressed and was entirely appropriate to the occasion but I hope you don't really believe all that malarky about planning with people as you describe your Battery Point experience.

Planning by popular plebiscite to my mind amounts to a dereliction of professional responsibility. It is no more a professional activity than the practice of those consultants who make a business of preparing statutory plans for country towns, putting into statutory form whatever the council thinks it wants by way of development control.

And the 'learning process' bit sounds awfully patronising - 'Listen to us carefully and you too can be town planners'? But given that it is barely possible to make a community or its leaders more concerned about the future than they are about the immediate and selfish present, the Gold Coast exercise does seem to be worthwhile. Not exactly in the sense that you express it, but rather in the promotion of an evolutionary change in the norms of a community, even if the tangible evidence of physical improvement has to wait for a generation or two.

To the extent that this kind of brain-washing makes it easier for the professionals to achieve acceptance of positive proposals which will do something to improve the future, the exercise is worth the effort. But if it is no more than a profitable political cheer-chasing expedition under the guise of planning professionalism the world would be better off without it.

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Would you like to send me a copy of your Gold Coast booklet and whatever else you have which goes with it?

Your conduct of the Luker Memorial event was first-rate. A pity Hugh is not more of a performer on the rostrum but he certainly comes across well in discussion. The whole thing seemed to me to be a good show. I have been surprised at the number of people who have phoned or written to congratulate me on the award; you did a good job on the PR.

Would you convey my appreciation to the Division Committee and my regrets that Sheila and I won't be able to get to the Christmas function?

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'Peter Harrison', written in a cursive style.

Peter Harrison.