

Sydney — a 'sick' city with a 'pauper' council

Sydney was a sick city — "in a mess"
— Alderman Andrew Briger (Civic Reform)
told top town planners yesterday.

"Our theatres are dying out, our residents are leaving and our retail stores are closing down," he said.

"We of the City Council are absolute paupers.

"We have no money to spend — it all goes on wages.

"So, like any sick patient, we've sent for the doctor."

Alderman Briger, Vice-Chairman of Sydney City Council's Development Committee, issued these outspoken views at a seminar organised by the Urban Systems Corporation in Parramatta.

The seminar, attended by the Chairman of the State Planning Authority (Mr. Nigel Ashton) and other top planning officials, discussed "Effective Strategy and Action in Urban Planning."

Alderman Briger said the Urban Systems Corporation was the "doctor" for the City Council.

"First thing the doctor does it find the symptoms.

"Then he diagnoses the trouble, and prescribes a cure.

"That is what the strategic city plan will be — a diagnosis and, we hope, a cure for Sydney's sickness."

Alderman Briger said he had used these simple illustrative terms to explain to his city council what the strategic plan would be.

Mr. George Clarke, Director of Planning for the Urban Systems Corporation, said population and all aspects of urban growth had changed more in the last 10 years than in the previous 100 years.

But the rate of change in official and public thinking had not kept pace.

"We must change the Australian philosophy which says: 'If it moves, shoot it; if it goes, chop it down.'"

Mr. Clarke claimed a lot of success had been achieved for a better life through improved wages and working conditions.

But now the way to fight for a better life was through better urban environment.

Mr. Clarke also emphasised these points:

- Local council aldermen were not exactly bursting with abstract intellectual thought.

- Local Government elections more and more would be fought in future on planning issues at least one council had been ousted at the last election on such issues.

SPA Chairman, Mr. Ashton, urged all authorities to study changing values and be guided by them.

He said Glebe, Paddington and other areas of inner city had once considered poor living sites but were not highly sought after.

"Mangrove swamps, once considered undesirable, are now sacred," he said.

"We have a very great heritage — and that is our real wealth."

"Trees are the greatest asset pool planners can use — remember that.

"And also remember — we can have instant coffee and instant tea but not an instant community.

"And resources — people as well as money — must be organised.

"We must be firm and consistent if we are to lick the problem of urban society."

The planners at the seminar emphasised the need to inform people and invite their participation in plans.

In this regard, the Press played a vital role.

The Press, television and radio could greatly help good planning and would do so "if we get the news to them quickly and crisply."