

4.9.1973

28 Olphert Avenue
VAUCLUSE NSW 2030

September 4, 1973

49

Mr Hugh Stretton
C/- Centre for Environment Studies
5 Cambridge Terrace
Regents Park
LONDON NW1
England.

Congratulations on your Cities Commission appointment! I trust all goes well at the Centre and that I'll hear in due course about the work you're doing there and the new ideas you'll be bringing back.

The City of Adelaide Study will be at the mid-point by the end of this month. I was told that the Council were sending you copies of our progress reports but I'll check tomorrow when I return to Adelaide and see that you are kept up to date.

Like any other similarly ambitious effort, the Study has had its teething troubles with flak from Hugh Bubb, John Chappel and Councillor Harvey (representing the industrial ratepayers of the S.W. quadrant), and a difficult time for a few months when Bill Hayes was under great personal strain. But the team has settled down well and has now completed the first arduous phases of data collection, collation and analysis, the gaining of interest and participation by the general public, Commonwealth and State authorities by the score, and a number of what the Americans call "publics" - the conflicting special interest groups - from the residents societies to anti-residents business groups in the S.W. quadrant of South Adelaide. The Fourth Draft of Objectives and Policies for the City has been blessed by the Council's Select Committee and the CADC. We are busy exploring a whole range of alternative transport options and residential repopulation targets, and this month preparing a number of concept plans and ideas for submission to Council. I will then want to publish and exhibit these, to provoke and stimulate reaction and comment from as many participants as possible.

Council unfortunately has dilly dallied for six months in finding and launching our proposal for an "open shop" city planning workshop and exhibition centre, but we hope to get it going soon. John Chappel delayed a simple but practical proposal for putting it in a disused shop near the Town Hall, while he made us all chase after the chimera of an impressive, high quality, exhibition building in Victoria Square,

supposedly to be paid for by the Timber Development Association. It took months for Council to decide that this was impractical, and after looking at umpteen alternatives, they've finally settled for the old shop.

The CADC is working pretty well, but I regret your absence. It's now a bit overloaded with architects and tends to spend too much of its time on the minutest details of aesthetics, to the detriment of larger concerns, including those of equity and economics. The Council is still backing the CADC strongly, but there's a lot of inter-personal dissension among individual Councillors, little effective leadership and almost no coordination among a heap of competitive projects backed by individual enthusiasts - which gives us a few problems, but none which we can't eventually overcome.

Now that we are beginning the creative phase of the job, we're brining in more creative people, and a series of visiting critics.

I'll check tomorrow and see what I can send you in addition to anything sent so far by the Council or others. You'll presumably be back for the vital last three months of the job next year, and I would prefer your criticisms and contributions this year, rather than next, when we'll be well into the production of the final documents.

I now want to raise the question of what I would like very much to do after the City of Adelaide task is completed.

Last February, Denis Winston took me to dinner and urged me to apply for his Sydney Chair of Town and Country Planning. He leaves on December 31st next. The closing date for applications was April 30th last, but I wanted time to consult my own mind and didn't apply at that time.

I've been mulling over it for six months now. Since the 1971 City of Sydney Plan was published, I've been chafing at the routine of consultant practice. I find management and administration of the firm, together with the repetitive nature of most of the jobs, increasingly boring. I've finally decided (Eva has helped me to this decision), that after 13 years of consultancy, I'm now ready and really keen to take on something entirely new. I feel like a battle scarred old veteran of the early guerilla phase of what has now developed into full scale war, and would enjoy teaching the massive numbers of young people who must now carry on the war. It's become obvious recently that, since the December 2nd revolution, the demand for competent urban and regional "planners" of all shapes and sizes far exceeds any conceivable supply in the near future. The critical weakness in the system is now no longer on the demand side, but on supply - not only of cannon fodder for the bureaucratic trenches, but also of ideas, theory and methodology.

Page 3
Mr Hugh Stretton
September 4, 1973

Back in 1960, I promised myself I'd spend up to 15 years finding out what self-conscious urban "planning" was really about out there in the great unwashed metropolises, and then go academic and teach. It has taken me six months to realise that it's now or never - I don't really want to go to Canberra or overseas, and I don't want to uproot Eva and the kids.

At first, I kidded myself I was indispensable to the firm - but I've deliberately taken days and weeks off duty over recent months, and left the others to cope entirely alone - and somehow they have! I will have to spend some of my time up until May and June next year in Adelaide and polishing off some of the City of Sydney Action Plans, but after that, I could escape altogether. I'd still like to act in the outside world occasionally - but more as a critic and advisor to consultants rather than as a managing consultant myself.

I've discussed it with Don Gazzard, and we're both thinking of particular people to take over from me - Ian Arnold already is acting as the de facto Managing Director of USC - know anyone who would be interested in becoming Director of Planning?

During the great days of public debate this past year, I've often found myself constrained from speaking my mind because of USC's position as consultant to some authority - and imagine that I could speak and write more critically from an academic position.

Just as I had convinced myself that I ought to apply for the Chair, Denis Winston and Henry (Jack) Cowan, (who holds the Sydney Chair of Architectural Science) rang privately to say the list of applications was pretty weak, and wouldn't I like to apply?

So I've just spent three days compiling the enclosed, and late last night decided that you might like to act as one of my referees. How would you feel about this? Please let me know - by telegram preferably to "URBSEARCH" Sydney, and I'll advise the University accordingly.

Regards,

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "George", followed by a long horizontal flourish.