

9.45AM

Thurs 5 Oct

Level 5 Goodsell
8-12 Chifley Sq.

25th September, 1978.

Mr. Paul Ritter,
P.E.E.R. Institute Perth
76 Brookton Highway
Kelmscott, W.A. 6111

Dear Paul,

I am sitting on the 22nd floor of the Sydney City Council's Town Hall House where I have a temporary "grace and favour" office while I do part-time consulting work for the Council.

I brought in a pile of unanswered correspondence, including your kind letter to me dated 10th January, 1978; in that you told me about your visit to Teheran last December on your way to Isfahan. You met the same Oxford educated gentleman that I had met in '65 or '66 - the Minister for Art and Culture and the Shah's brother-in-Law (he may be brother to one of the earlier empresses; or is he the husband of the sister of the present empress?).

When so few people remember where ideas originate from, I was delighted that he remembered and mentioned to you what I had said twelve years ago. I believe that my words, praising traditional Persian planning, led several years later to my being invited back by the Iranian Minister for Housing and Development, to act as the government's representative in reviewing the French consultant's work on the Isfahan Regional Master Plan.

In the light of the religious riots and near revolution which we now read about in the newspapers, parts of my conversation with the Minister take on new significance. In 1966, he spoke to me with some anxiety about the difficulties of pursuing town planning and urban development policies in the face of land ownership and control by religious leaders. These Islamic religious leaders apparently control large areas of central Isfahan.

I had urged the Minister to proceed with my sketch plan for central Isfahan which was basically to preserve and restore the traditional central area as a pedestrian priority precinct, and establish a new late twentieth century city centre on a virgin land or other new site well away from the original core of the Shah Abbas City. Such a new centre would be designed

for access by automobiles and would be accessible from all of the new settlements springing up throughout the Isfahan region. The Minister indicated that such bold planning would be difficult because of conservative resistance from the religious leaders who controlled central city land. It may be that the Minister thought that the landowners would like to see continued centralisation within the old core and thus reap the benefits of higher land values as office buildings and shops replaced traditional religious centres and old housing. I was not able to pursue this subject and delve any deeper into it. The Minister suddenly changed the subject and earnestly asked my opinion of a proposal that was apparently close to his heart. I think he preferred it by saying that it was important to win the people's loyalty for the Shah and the "white revolution" away from their traditional religious obsessions.

The Minister for Art and Culture therefore asked me my opinion on a proposal to carve a likeness of the Shah's face into the rocky mountainous outcrops to the south of Isfahan, so that the Shah's head would be visible down the major north and south access of Isfahan across the river and the arched bridges.

This of course took me completely by surprise and I mumbled a few inconsequential remarks, hiding my disappointment that I could not concentrate the Minister's attention on what I felt to be the far more important questions of preserving and restoring historic Isfahan while planning the new industrialized regional city around it.

Over the past twelve months I have spent about half my time in Indonesia working for the World Bank on a series of "sites and services" and "Kampung Improved" projects in the Central Java Cities of Semarang, Surakarta (solo) and Yogyakarta. I organized a team of expatriates of Indonesia to carry out economic feasibility studies and social surveys (sites planning, town planning, detail engineering the design and preparation of contract documents, cost estimates etc.). In the process I have learnt to get along quite comfortably in Indonesian language and to get along very well with Indonesians. In particular I have spent a lot of time on my way to and fro, in Bali, and love to disappear for as long as I can up into the mountains there and to live in simple local houses with the local people.

I now am living a very quiet and simple life in Sydney trying to put myself together again physically, mentally and spiritually before I decide what to do over the next two or three decades that I hope remain to me.

Today is the ninth day since I stopped smoking; the first week brought strange sensations - rushes of blood to the head, throbbings, strange aches and pains, and a total inability to concentrate or to carry out any kind of serious thought process. I am on the mend this week. One test of this is my ability to dictate this letter to you to my very sympathetic and uncritical

secretary provided by courtesy of the Council.

I am earning a living by accepting consulting assignments offered to me without actively chasing any jobs. This means that for the first time in my life I am working without pressure and indeed only working about a third or half time. The most interesting recent assignment was from the Adelaide City Council. The Council invited me over to examine the 5,000 pages of expert reporting on the north-east Adelaide Public Transport Review. About a million dollars had been spent on every conceivable type of expert and the government had concluded that it wanted to build a fast tram or high speed Light Rail Transit line down the Torrens River Valley corridor, originally reserved for an expressway that was cancelled on social and environmental grounds.

The City Council was worried about the impact of the L.R.T. route within the City boundaries - through the northern parklands and down King William Street. When I first looked at the problem it seemed to me that a L.R.T. was probably a good idea, for all the obvious reasons, and that the environmental impact on the City would probably be small when compared to the overall benefits to the metropolitan area as a whole. However, I discovered that the Director-General of Transport and his Project Manager (John Hutchinson), had been guilty of suppression and distortion of facts - public but hidden in the 5,000 pages of expert, computer-assisted reports. With the help of Peter Casey who used to work in my office and who is now my Transport planning colleague, I produced a twenty-page report which showed up the dramatic inconsistencies of the government's proposals.

The L.R.T. of about a dozen alternative systems examined, had the highest capital cost, the highest operating cost and actually would generate less usage of public transport in the year 1986 than more flexible (all bus) systems.

We all know that L.R.T. are wonderful in higher density European cities - even in Sydney and Melbourne - and could be made to work anywhere if you build high density centres around and above each stop. However in low density existing suburbs in Adelaide - as low as Kelmscott I guess - hardly anyone lives within walking distance of the stations and people would have to be induced to use it by the use of feeder-buses. By the time people wait for a feeder-bus, get to the station, wait for the main L.R.T. vehicle, and then get shot into town along the high speed high capacity super-powered arrow train, they have taken more time than the ordinary bus would take.

The governments own experts' calculations showed that the volume of traffic on highways would not be significantly reduced by any such system and that there would be no impact on air pollution.

Unfortunately this was a trendy and dramatic idea strongly backed by Don Dunstan on very bad and incompetent advice by his anxious-to-please trendy public servants. They would have

served him better by telling him and publicizing the facts, that the L.R.T. was expensive but nevertheless they wanted to build it as a demonstration project. Alternatively they should have gone ahead and built something without publicizing any studies at all. But to conduct the studies, publicize them and then interpret them in such a way as to hide and distort facts is simply inviting the embarrassment that the S.S.A.A. government is now suffering as a result of the Clarke-Casey report.

The City Council took a copy to Dunstan when they realized the serious implications of my work. Among these implications, were that the professional careers of Derek Scafton and John Hutchinson (the two chief public servants involved) would be marred; and the other implication that if the Dunstan government were caught publicly with yet another pie-in-the-sky project failure Dunstan's electoral position would be dangerously weakened.

At one of the strangest little meetings of men that I have ever attended, Dunstan earnestly requested the Lord Mayor and senior Aldermen to withhold publicity of the Clarke-Casey report and to give his public servants and meetings a month to re-examine the matter. He promised not to publicize anything important without first consulting the City Council.

He has now invited us to a meeting and I am flying to Adelaide tomorrow to go with the Lord Mayor and the Town Clerk to see Dunstan at 4p.m. We have no idea what his reaction is going to be.

So, you see that in twenty pages I have been able to demolish 5,000, two years of effort and to put the City Council in the box seat vis-a-vis the State Government. Do bear this in mind if the Perth City Council ever needs anyone to do a similar job in Western Australia.

Dear Paul, thank you very much for the generous and kind things in your letter of last January. I did go through a period of enormous stress while I was dismantling the big firm, closing down offices, paying off staff and generally winding up the organisation. I have gone through a difficult period of adjustment over the last twelve months but am now very very pleased indeed to have dropped that monstrous monkey from my back. I do look forward to the benefits of the more leisured life style that I now enjoy. One of these benefits is simply having time to maintain contact with important personal friends such as yourself.

Do write and acknowledge receipt of this letter even if you have not time to say anything more than "hello, yes I am still here". Please send all correspondence to me at Box 423, G.P.O. Sydney, N.S.W. 2001.

Yours sincerely,

George Clarke