

PUBLIC MEETING

Multifunction Polis

A JAPANESE HI-TECH CITY FOR MELBOURNE?



7.30pm, Wednesday 14 March
South Melbourne Town Hall

Sponsored by the Rainbow Alliance in association with concerned groups.
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FROM: CLEM DOHERTY

DATE: MARCH 17, 1989

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MESSAGE

PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL

Attached is a draft copy of MFP Australia Research's proposed second paper. The paper is provided as a discussion for the board meeting scheduled for Monday, March 20, 1989.

We apologize for the late release, but are sure you will understand the dynamic approach involved.

PAGES TO FOLLOW

South Australia
(Mr Neave)

Well that in itself has got to be carefully handled. We don't want to invite something and then find that we can't deliver. So I think we have to talk about that later, Mr Chairman.

Chairman

Righto, now, does that deal adequately with the matters you've raised?

NSW (Mr Roche)

That covers the matters, yes, thank you.

AGENDA ITEM 3 30th January JSC Meeting

(a) Public Awareness Strategy

Queensland
(Mr Andrew)

I wanted to raise as mentioned in the Record of Discussion, that there was going to be a meeting of the Australian members of the Joint Steering Committee on the 30th and there was likely to be some further discussions on the public awareness strategy, and on the status of the Japanese contribution to funding the feasibility study. You've done a fair bit of talking, Mr Wrigley, but I wondered if you might be aware what came out of that.

Commonwealth
(Mr Wrigley)

Yes. Sorry if I'm boring people but I'll do my best to make this one short.

The public awareness strategy was dealt with in a fairly brief fashion. Really just enough I think to try to highlight the different interests involved in public awareness processes in MFP to reach a common level of understanding of what we were dealing with. To summarise those briefly, I think that the issues we tended to focus on was that there were different roles and spans of interest.

The three areas that were being talked about at the time were the Joint Secretariat in which the main point of debate I suppose was the significance of the fact that the Joint Secretariat was not an Australia Secretariat. It is a Joint Secretariat which owes its responsibility to both the Japanese and Australian side. And so, while it clearly had the basis for a role in the promotion and explanation of the MFP concept, we would need to take considerable care about having the Joint Secretariat seen as the driver, the area responsible, or whatever for primarily Australian domestic matters in particular social impact sort of issues and things of that nature where the Japanese have on more than one occasion made it clear that they don't really think that that is any of their business either to become involved with, have their people involved with, or to pay for. So the question I think really came there as to how that side of things is to be handled and as I say we didn't come to any decisions on any of these

Big risks for the public in the big projects

FOR some people, including worried senior government advisers, the MFP is not the only large project which should cause Australians concern.

The Very Fast Train, the space port and the MFP all bring to a national level the problems of public accountability — financially, socially and environmentally — such as arose in NSW with the construction of Darling Harbour and the Harbour Tunnel.

These projects are characterised not only by their huge scale. The local companies promoting them invariably depend on international partners — most notably Japanese — to improve the chances of their meeting governments' primary requirements of technical capacity and financial backing.

In the case of the space port, the Japanese conglomerate EIE now holds about a 30 per cent interest in the project.

The multi-function polis feasibility study will make it clear that the project can only go ahead with international investor support in the form of equity and not debt, especially from Japan.

The VFT has Kumagai-Gumi as one of its major partners. Most of the technology for the train will need to be imported.

With all these projects Australia faces a difficult task assessing their merits and overall impact. Can Australia, as host to much larger and more powerful partners, and with pressing balance of payments problems, be sure of deciding on each project so that the balance of benefits really goes its way?

Many senior government advisers, both Federal and State, say the question is not simply whether Australia should go ahead with any of these projects. It is whether, if it decides to go ahead, it can

meet the challenge of dealing with partners adept at controlling negotiations and extracting very favourable terms for themselves.

In the case of each project, governments have said they will stand or fall on commercial grounds.

But, for example, handing over a corridor of public land for a train and giving a monopoly to one consortium to use that space would represent a huge government subsidy. The same applies to any project which depends on government assistance to acquire land.

These projects, whatever their benefits, also come with heavy costs to the community. Yet the community has been locked out of the planning processes, at least partly because of government reluctance to acknowledge these costs.

Other questions arise from broad community perspectives, so far little debated, about the appropriateness of these developments.

Will there still be a commercial future for space ports when the present congestion in the market eases? What will happen if fibre optics becomes the predominant international communications link? If the space port fails, will its promoters hand back the piece of prize coastal real estate, including the bit on which they intend to develop a tourist resort?

Do we need a superfast passenger train when Australia's road freight industry is running amok, turning the highways into killing fields, and while the freight rail system and coastal shipping industry remain terribly neglected?

Do we really need the Japanese to tell us how to experiment in creative new ways to live and organise our cities? Will they truly share the secrets of their industrial success with us in return for some of our precious living space?

Multifunction Polis

To explore the issues & discuss future action

SPEAKERS

Yoshio Sugimoto

Professor of Sociology, La Trobe University, an expert on Japan who has written extensively on the MFP

Carol Crowe

Environmentalist and community activist resident in Gippsland and closely involved with Very Fast Train Awareness Groups

Paul James

Editor of 'Arena' who has made a detailed study of the MFP

Pat McPhie

Dairy farmer concerned with the local environment

Patricia Caswell

Industrial Officer, Victorian Trades Hall

The meeting will be chaired by **Dr Joe Camilleri**, political scientist, social commentator, peace activist and Rainbow Alliance spokesperson

Organised by the Rainbow Alliance

with the support of Aborigines Advancement League, Action for World Development, Amalgamated Metal Workers Union, Arena, Australian Railways Union, Australian Theatrical & Amusement Employees Association, CERES, Coalition Against Poverty and Unemployment, East Gippsland Coalition, Fast Train-Polis Action Group, Food Preservers Union, Friends of the Earth, Gardiners Valley Creek Association, Glass Workers Union, Hospital Employees Federation (No. 1), International Womens Development Agency, Mordialloc-Beaumaris Conservation League, Movement Against Uranium Mining, Self-Sufficiency Society, Union of Australian Women, Womens International League for Peace & Freedom.

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