

Food Security & Urban Sprawl in SA

"The issue of urban encroachment on prime agricultural land is a serious issue for SA and threatens the state's food security and export ability. It coincides with claims by University of Adelaide senior geographer Douglas Bardsley that urban expansion and climate change also threaten the sustainability of horticultural industries in the Hills. Growers fear horticultural land will be at a premium, an issue that could result in fewer growers, a cut in production, and possibly higher prices for consumers. ... Grow SA chief executive, Mike Redmond ... estimated the Virginia area grows about 90 per cent of the state's vegetables, saying the immediate urban encroachment problems included the development of the Northern Expressway which he estimated would cut close to 20 per cent from the region's farm land by 2014."

Ref: Nigel Austin, Adelaide Advertiser, 7/8/09

Rail Deconstruction in NSW

"Hundreds, and possibly thousands, of kilometres of NSW rail track, including lines through key growth areas, are at risk as the Rees Government prepares legislation that would end more than a century of protection for train lines. Labor backbenchers fear it will leave all rural and regional tracks - and, in theory, even urban lines - vulnerable, and open the door for developers, especially those wanting access to prime waterfront land in Newcastle's city centre, which is occupied by train track. Under current law, an act of parliament is required before the Government can rip up lines, but a spokesman for the Minister for Transport, David Campbell, has confirmed the proposed bill would override those protections."

Ref: Andrew West, SMH, 14/9/09

Road Building in New Zealand

"Few will have been surprised by the new [NZ] Government's increased emphasis on roads in the new 2009/12 National Land Transport Programme. With 'sustainability' now banned from the Government's vocabulary... it is hardly surprising that the new program with its emphasis on 'roads of national significance' (RONS) envisages and encourages a continuous increase in road use and fossil fuel consumption. With new rail funding now removed from the NZ Transport Agency's responsibilities (and likely to lead to semi-starvation, since this Government doesn't believe in a 'sustainability' justification for rail investment), the Agency has reverted to the road agency role of the old (and mis-named) Transit NZ."

Ref: Trans-Action (for Wellington) #80, 9/9/09

Backward Gains

"[A] report, by the Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics, has added weight to demands for tough new measures to encourage the production of smaller, more efficient vehicles, including mandatory emissions standards. It said new cars sold today are one-third more efficient than equivalent models sold three decades ago. But potential cuts in fuel consumption made possible by better technology 'have not been fully realised' because of steadily increasing consumer demand for more powerful vehicles. 'This is a worldwide trend in the automobile sector, and it cautions against undue reliance on technology alone to deliver reductions in fuel use and emissions'

"The Government has also ordered Treasury Secretary Ken Henry to examine as part of his tax review a range of financial carrots and sticks to encourage consumers to buy smaller, more efficient vehicles, including linking stamp duty and registration charges to vehicle emissions. The report, based on new data stretching back 30 years, found that a typical small car with a 55-litre tank such as a 2008 Toyota Corolla can be driven nearly 150 kilometres further than an equivalent model purchased in 1979. A larger Holden Commodore with a 73-litre tank can be stretched an extra 220 kilometres. In total, fuel efficiency has increased by 32%, with a new car averaging 7.1 litres per 100 kilometres in 2008 compared with 10.5 litres in 1979. The average efficiency for all light vehicles, including cars, vans and four-wheel-drives, is now about 8.1L/100km compared with well over 10 litres 30 years ago. The improvement means an average new car purchased today will travel 5.1 kilometres per kilogram of carbon dioxide, compared with just 3.5 30 years ago. But the gains have been offset by a proliferation of four-wheel drives and so-called sports utility vehicles."

Ref: Josh Gordon, The Age, 30/8/09

Transforming Public Transport (Part 1)

"Our approaches to resolving Australia's urban transport difficulties are piecemeal and what limited success we have - notably in Perth (Western Australia) - arose from the remarkable generalising influence of an outsider, environmental scientist, Prof. Peter Newman. So far however, the successes have not involved any large scale inroads into the use of the private urban commuter vehicle, or DODO, as Australia's primary means for urban commuting let alone into the use of trucks instead of trains for goods transport. The DODO (or Driver Only Driver Owned) commuter car exercises its seductive hold over urban commutation through its very

dedication to a single person. In the first instance it does it by privatising ownership to its (owner-) driver which secures and ensures his/her continuous access to it. The apparent freedoms provided by that dedication, by the widely accessible monetary resources to secure (owner-)dedication and by the equally widespread (if nowadays wilful) ignorance to the planetary consequences of DODOs, are among the many difficult binds we must unpick in the effort to wean ourselves off default use of DODOs for all transport duties.

“Currently the dedication to the DODO accounts for something like a third of all our energy use. In saying this I am including the energy costs of building, maintaining, monitoring and deconstructing the motor car and all its supporting infrastructures. These costs cover such diverse activities as a good proportion of hospital emergency activities, a significant proportion of government bureaucracies, one part of which will be the defence forces dedicated to maintaining oil supply lines and another being provision of foreign relations services to facilitate them. Were we to attempt to cover all the energy costs of the car and its supporting infrastructures, we would need to offset the energy demands of rectifying environment and human health damage inflicted by its many-faceted emissions - only one of which is CO₂! Other emissions from its operation are a variety of noxious gases, particulates, heat, vibration, noise, etc.

“Beyond its operational environmental costs are the pollution implications associated with driving its infrastructures, their construction and all their supporting infrastructures in turn. To make good these extensive and comprehensive environmental damages would likely take more energy than we currently use for everything. Taking implications such as these into consideration implies an operational efficiency in moving that Driver very close to zero. On top of this, governments desperate to reduce their fossil fuel dependency are now beginning to support fuelling this process from foodstuffs (corn, sugar, canola) forcing up the price of foodstuffs. The use of foodstuffs to drive DODOs moves us way beyond the inefficiencies in using grain for feed lot beef because a far smaller proportion of the fuel provided to a car (<1%) actually goes to move its driver, than goes to

‘fuel’ a grain fed steer’s production of meat! If grain-fed beef is a reprehensible use of grain, how much less acceptable are grain-fed DODOs?

“What then might we do to make its alternative, urban public transport and in particular the **bike-rail** combination of bicycles and public transport, more attractive to city dwellers?” {Cont. in #124}
Ref: Frank Fisher, Arena Magazine, 4/6/09

Transforming Trucks

“Australian Design Rule (ADR 84) requires Front Underrun Protection Systems (FUPS) to be fitted to the front of all new models of heavy vehicles (over 12 tonnes) from January 2011 and to all existing models from January 2012. FUPS



‘A new Personal Best. I scored five cars and a moped today.’

prevents the car from becoming trapped under the front of the truck in the unfortunate event of a collision between the two, thereby ensuring the car’s safety features such as seatbelts, airbags and crumple zones remain fully effective. [By catching or deflecting the light vehicle, its occupant protection systems are then able to work effectively, mitigating

injury to the occupants]. Each year in Australia around 30 people are killed in ‘underrun’ crashes, with most of these victims being the occupants of the cars involved.”

Ref: Federal Govt Media Statement, 14/9/09

Comment: The clear message here is: keep away from trucks until 2012. Don’t be one of the 60 to be killed in the next two years. My preferred weapon of defence is something hefty, like using a tram.

And Also ...

From Japan, ‘Deko-Tora’ (decorative trucks).



Picture: Funnvoycures.net.au

Iranian Oil and a Coup (Part 3)

“Annabelle Quince: In 1951 Mohammad Mossadeq was elected prime minister of Iran by the parliament, and the first thing he did was nationalise the oil industry.

“Mark Gasiorowski: Well the reaction from the British was just a certain amount of astonishment and certainly disdain towards this Iranian upstart who would do such a thing. And they very quickly came to the decision that they were going to take all sorts of means to try to stop Mossadeq and reverse the oil nationalisation. So very quickly within the following weeks, they began to gear up a full-scale embargo of Iranian oil exports, which was very successful. They slapped various kinds of economic sanctions on Iran, they began covert operations with their various intelligence assets inside Iran, to try to overturn Mossadeq, they even geared up an invasion plan; they were all set to invade Iran in September, 1951 and it was only intervention by President Truman that stopped the British from invading south-western Iran and seizing the oil areas.

“Steven Kinzer: Mossadeq was a huge figure because no-one from a poor country had ever challenged the rulers in the world the way that Mossadeq did. In the subsequent years you had Nasser and a whole series of other leaders who challenged the sort of ruling system in the world, but no-one had done it before Mossadeq. He stood up against all of the powers of the world on behalf of a cause that most people in most countries thought was very just, namely the Iranian control over Iranian oil. This conflict reached such a peak that Mossadeq actually came to the United Nations; the British were trying to pass a resolution there, demanding that he give back the oil company which he had seized, and the Security Council refused after Mossadeq spoke, to agree with that resolution. That was the first time ever that an important political resolution at the UN Security Council, presented by a big power, had ever failed to win approval. So it was really a titanic challenge to colonial power when Mossadeq became prime minister and immediately with the unanimous votes of both houses of the Iranian parliament, announced the nationalisation of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company.

“That led to a huge crisis, and the oil was shut down. The British withdrew all their technicians and blockaded Iranian ports so that no Iranian oil could be exported. The British tried to stop him at the United Nations, they tried to file a case against Iran at the World Court in The Hague where Mossadeq also turned up, and the World

Court ruled in favour of Iran. So nothing succeeded, and this is what led to the crisis when the British realised, 'If we don't do something radical, we are going to lose the most valuable foreign asset we possess in the whole world'. And that's what led to the coup of 1953.

“Annabelle Quince: When did the idea of actually trying to get rid of Mossadeq first appear?

“Steven Kinzer: By the beginning of 1953 it was becoming painfully obvious to the British that their many different efforts to head this thing off were not working. And as early as 1952 they had already thought about the possibility of arranging the coup. Now they actually made an effort to do this in the autumn of 1952, but Mossadeq got wind of it; he understood what was happening.

“Actually Tehran was a very small town politically speaking in those days, and once the British put the word out to their operators that they were thinking of trying to overthrow Mossadeq, it was only a short time before Mossadeq found out about this. He did the only thing he could have done to protect himself: he closed the British Embassy and he sent all the British diplomats home. Among these diplomats were all the secret agents who were going to play in the coup. So now the British found themselves in even bigger trouble because they had exhausted all means to try to pressure the Iranians. Essentially they had stopped all production of oil in Iran and essentially told the Iranians, 'If you don't let us help exploit the oil, it's not going to be exploited, it's just going sit in the ground and no-one's going to get anything.' And the answer of the Iranians and Mossadeq was, 'That's fine, we'll just leave it in the ground then, no problem.' The British of course couldn't abide that. So they found themselves after their Embassy in Tehran was closed, without even the means to overthrow Mossadeq. Then they really were in a kind of a panic. And they decided, this was when Winston Churchill was in his last hurrah as prime minister, the same Churchill who back in the 1920s as First Lord of the Admiralty had so urgently pressed for the takeover of Iranian oil, Churchill decided to ask the Americans to do this for him. 'Can you please overthrow Mossadeq for us?' this was the request that Churchill made to President Harry Truman in 1952. ...”

{To be continued in #124} **Ref: ABC Radio National: Background Briefing: Oil, Democracy and a CIA Coup, 30/9/07** See: www.abc.net.au/rn/rearvision/stories/2009/2605245.htm

And Also ...

“Iran, which sits on the world's second-largest oil and gas reserves, is an attractive prospect ...”

Ref: Arabian Business.com, 24/8/09

The Walkers of India (Part 4)

"It is a harrowing experience to walk in an Indian city. Road accidents in the country claim more than 80,000 lives every year, mostly pedestrians, cyclists or pavement dwellers. With the country's expanding middle class looking at motor vehicles as an indispensable extension of itself, the pedestrian's right to safe and free passage has become a casualty. The National Urban Transport Policy sums the situation aptly: 'The use of cheaper non-motorised modes like cycling and walking has become extremely risky, since these modes have to share the same right of way with motorized modes'. ...

"[The] pedestrian environment is continuously deteriorating in Indian cities. As awareness level regarding the pedestrian rights is very poor, people begin to accept the poor conditions of walking infrastructure as fait accompli. But slowly public angst is raising its head. There is simmering anger in Indian cities as the elevated roads, road widening, flyovers and clover leaves are disrupting the most direct route for walking, and pushing people to foot overbridge, skywalks or to underground passes. At the same time the choked pavements have become extremely unsafe for walking. Car infrastructure is severing links between adjacent urban locales, forcing people to make motorized trips even for small distances. ...

"To understand the contrast between poor neighbourhoods and the elite localities in Lutyen's Delhi, a trip was made to Aurangzeb Road. The irony hits hard. Govindpuri, where about 100 persons walk per five minutes during peak hour, has poorly built sidewalks. But in Aurangzeb Road, lined with ministerial bungalows, where only 3 persons were seen walking in ten minutes during the morning peak hour, has well designed and spacious footpaths. This shows complete policy disconnect between urban planning and reality of the city. Planning does not keep people in focus.

"The stark evidence of neglect of public space is poor engineering design. All city public works and municipal departments follow the guidelines of the Indian Road Congress (IRC) on regulations and control of mixed traffic in urban areas and geometric design standards for urban roads. But these guidelines are outdated and inadequate. ... People find at grade sidewalks and crossing most convenient. But increasingly authorities are promoting grade separated facilities — foot over bridges, sky walks and subways as roads are getting wider and wider. As vehicles begin to get priority through

seamless signal free roads pedestrians are pushed over and under the roads. People prefer to be at grade and cross with the help of pelican signals. But this is becoming increasingly difficult in main arterial roads where more lanes are being added for motorised traffic. Pedestrians have to cross more than two lanes of motorized vehicles in one direction. This creates extremely hostile and unsafe conditions. ... It is not often understood how car centric infrastructure — flyovers and clover-leaves completely severe neighbourhoods and increase distances. Clearly, cars are taking over the legitimate space of walkers. Parking of vehicles on footpaths has become chronic. Parked cars are taking away nearly the entire walk space and forcing people to walk on roads in sheer modal conflict. As there is no priority accorded to pedestrian, authorities do not care to enforce laws to prevent motorized traffic from filtering into the walkways.

"The pedestrian movement in other regions of the world has gone much beyond only footpath development for safe and comfortable passage. The movement is heralding in an entirely new ethos of urbanity to reduce automobile dependence. Global experience shows that initially the focus was to reduce traffic in busy city centres and shopping areas. Any policy focused on pedestrians has to take cognisance of the layers of issues that it needs to address. Globally, this is being done through a hierarchy of interventions.

"The UK has come up with one of the most comprehensive Road Users Act that lays down rules regarding Quiet lanes and Home zones and pedestrian zone. Such legislations deal with all road users - motorised and non-motorised traffic in an integrated manner. ... Even in the US some states have become more proactive about pedestrian environment. San Francisco for instance has created Better Street Policy. These focus on walking access to and from the site; assessment of land use to see walking is generated; capacity and quality of the local network, opportunities and requirements for improvement; inclusion of walking in the transport planning; Traffic Impact Assessment of the development; ... Procedures for funding, monitoring, and enforcement; Planning conditions relating to walking; Policy criteria for adoptable spaces and public rights of way; Mechanisms for ongoing maintenance of areas accessible to the public. New York City is also promoting pedestrian infrastructure." **Ref: Footfalls – Obstacle**

Course to Liveable Cities, Centre for Science and Environment, New Delhi, 2009

<http://www.gtkp.com/uploads/public/documents/Knowledge/Walkability.pdf> [Continued in #124]