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INVESTIGATIONS

\$400,000 TRAFFIC PLAN SCANDAL

By the Civic Roundsmen

A publication strongly criticising a \$400,000 report on Sydney's traffic needs was destroyed on orders from the former Labor Government of N.S.W.

Chairman of the State Planning Authority Mr. N. A. W. Ashton, "pulped" the publication as soon as he took office in 1964.

New South Wales last month lost one of Australia's foremost town planners, Mr. Rod Fraser, as a direct result of this action.

Mr. Fraser wrote the critical publication when he was chief planner of the Cumberland County Council.

The whole story, now re-

vealed for the first time, reeks of the political intrigue, inefficiency and "jobs for the boys" policy which ended in the defeat of the Labor Government at the last State elections.

It involves a report on Sydney's road needs from De Leuw Cather and Company, of San Francisco.

The then State Labor Government paid a fee of about \$400,000 for the report.

The Government sent

Key report destroyed

the report to the Cumberland County Council, then Sydney's town planning body, for analysis and comment.

Mr. Fraser, in a written report to the council, described the De Leuw Cather proposals as "unrealistic, misleading and bordering on salesmanship."

He said the proposals:

- Failed to consider special characteristics of Sydney's overall land-use pattern.

- Omitted to note that Sydney's transport system had changed from being predominantly radial to an intricate network of movement.

- Dealt only superficially with the movement of goods and people on Sydney's roads.

- Gave an unrealistic and misleading estimate of economic savings from the expressway system.

Increase

Mr. Fraser said proposals that recommended a three-fold increase in expressway mileage without relating it to land use could not stand up.

"The treatment of the movement of people and goods on our roads in the De Leuw Cather proposals is superficial," he said.

"An estimate that \$11-million a year could be saved through using proposed expressways is unrealistic and misleading."

"Indeed the whole tone of the proposals borders on salesmanship."

Mr. Fraser's report analysed the De Leuw Cather proposals in great detail and covered 23 foolscap pages.

He ended by urging the then Minister for Local Government, Mr. P. D. Hills, to "take no action" on the De Leuw Cather proposals.

Mr. Hills ignored the advice.

But Cumberland County Council was so impressed it ordered Mr. Fraser's report to be printed and distributed in thousands to local councils and other bodies throughout the metropolitan area.

Control

This happened while Mr. Hills was in the process of forming the State Planning Authority, one purpose of which was to absorb the CCC.

Mr. Fraser's report came off the presses.

But before it could be distributed, Mr. Hills announced the abolition of the CCC and the appointment of Mr. Nigel Ashton as chairman of the State Planning Authority.

This put Mr. Fraser directly under Mr. Ashton's control.

Mr. Ashton, reportedly acting on Mr. Hills's instructions, promptly ordered Mr. Fraser's report to be "pulped" describing it as "political dynamite" Senior officers of the

State Planning Authority believe this episode finished Mr. Fraser's chances of achieving top planning status with the SPA.

They say it explains why Mr. Fraser's application for the job of Chief Planner in the SPA failed, and a planner from the Local Government Department, Mr. C. E. Ferrier, got the job instead.

Mr. Fraser served 20 years with the Cumberland County Council, 12 of them as Chief County Planner.

He resigned from the SPA on February 18 when the Victorian Board of Town and Country Planning offered him the top post of chairman.

Mr. Fraser told me before he left Sydney he still hoped the new State Government would examine his analysis before implementing the De Leuw Cather recommendations.

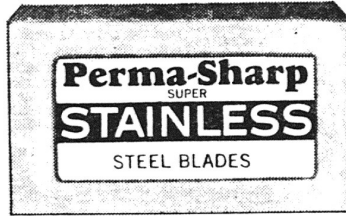
But he believed this might be difficult since his printed report had been destroyed "on political orders."

What he did not know was that I have one of the few, if not the only, copies of the printed report salvaged before destruction.

The State Government is welcome to it on request.

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