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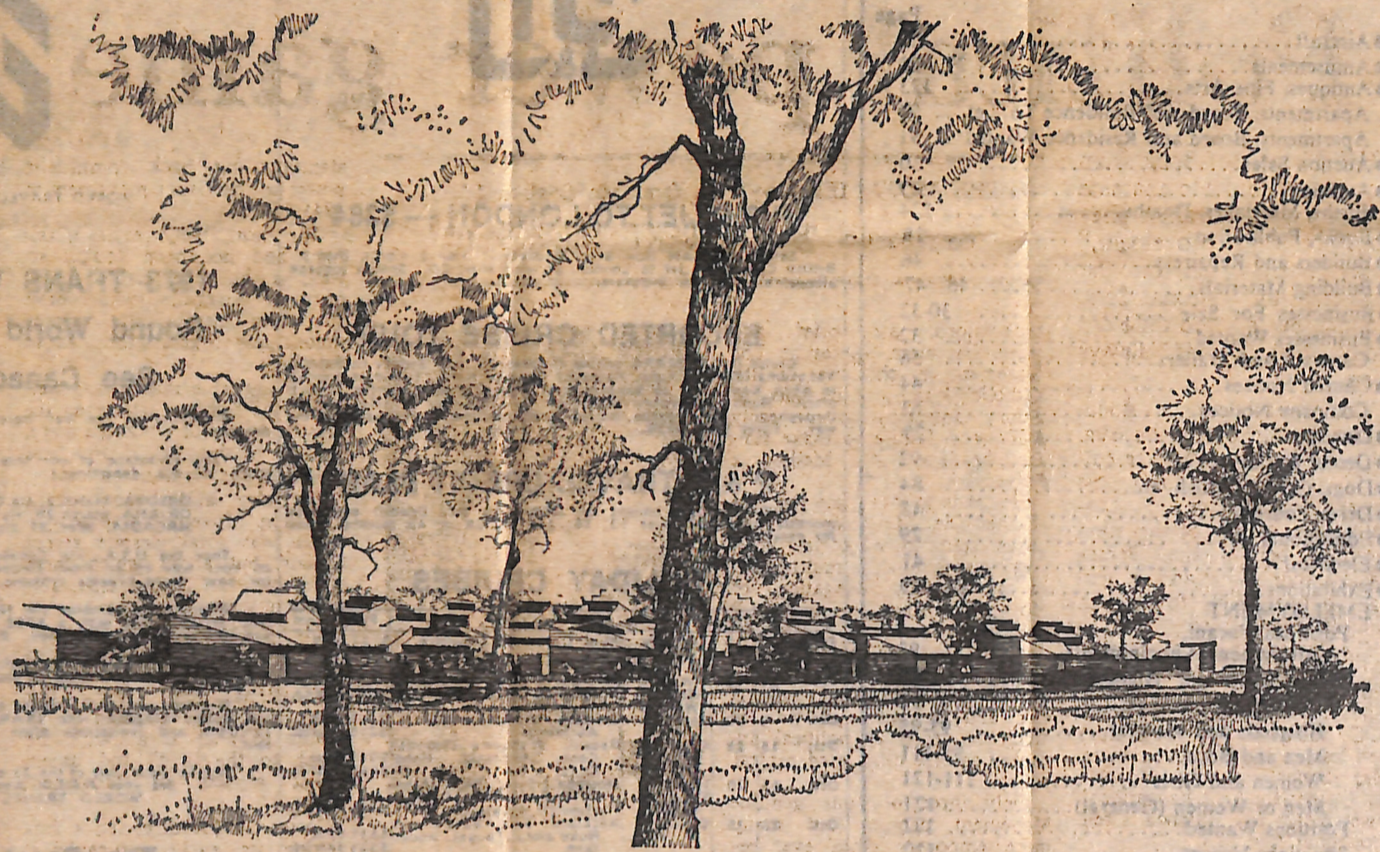
"MORNING HERALD"

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AND BOOK REVIEWS



Swinger Hill, Canberra — the first major housing development to directly challenge the Australian suburb. The final population will be about 2,400 people living in 700 dwellings of at least 15 different kinds — row houses, stepped houses, terraced houses, clustered, courtyard and atrium houses, and flats.

Outside the beautiful homes

A HASTY GLANCE at this book could leave the impression that it is a picture book of admirable houses and flats by Australian architects.

It is that, but something else besides. The buildings are certainly attractive. Most of them stand in generous nature settings. Informative plans and diagrams, and statements by the architects who designed them, are provided. Sixty-two projects are illustrated. The photography is usually splendid, the reproduction adequate.

That material fills 140 of the book's pages. It demonstrates that Australia has imaginative, enticing domestic architecture of the highest standard. It serves to bring up to date those already knowing that to be a fact.

The four very important essays which come with it invite us to step out from any one of those environmental havens in order to face the realities.

As you walk away from the superb private dwelling you are likely to pass its septic tank (and notice it because of its inadequacies), you will possibly depart by unmade roads, without constructed drainage.

You will almost certainly discover yourself miles from schools and shops, without public transport, and separated by inordinate distances from jobs and from entertainment.

Those experiences you have arise because of deliberate Government policy, and the situation is accepted by most Australians because they are only dimly aware of the alternative policies which are possible in this area of government.

Australia's choice is to regard a house as one of the consumer

LIVING AND PARTLY LIVING Housing in Australia by Ian McKay, Robin Boyd, Hugh Stretton, John Mant (Nelson \$10.95)

Reviewed by DAVID SAUNDERS

goods, even the largest and most expensive of them.

It is another appliance, along with cars, refrigerators and the rest. And some have good ones, some have none. The house is a privately owned commodity subject to all the market circumstances.

More than that, in all cities but Canberra, the public facilities are left to the same market processes.

They are to be paid for by those who buy houses. They are provided only when the pressure from householders accumulates enough force. Government, deliberately, is the follower in these matters.

The deliberate nature of that choice has not been especially the choice of one party. The decision to neglect the main proposals of their 1944 Commission on Housing was a decision of a Federal Labor Government.

As an alternative, in 1945, the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement was established, and it has provided the funds which at least do something for some of those who demonstrably cannot operate in the free market to provide themselves with basic accommodation.

The Commission had argued that it is at the national level that housing and planning policies must be operated. Housing, it said, is not just houses, but the whole environment — including jobs and leisure.

So, in the event, the contrast

stands, and increases, between these beautiful houses belonging to those who have, and the State Housing Commissions' provisions for those at the end of the scale of the have-nots.

That is the really drastic evidence of the extremes in our society. The rest of the painful evidence of our condition resides in the environment they all share.

This book is the most helpful statement to date on this vital matter. Its four authors have brought their varied experiences to bear in an effective way.

Ian McKay (he examines "The House") is an award-winning architect.

Robin Boyd's chapter ("The Neighbourhood") proves yet again how untimely his death was, making one wistful for his continuing presence in this field of argument where his was once a lonely voice.

Hugh Stretton ("The City"), Adelaide historian, is author of *Ideas for Australian Cities* (1970).

John Mant, solicitor, town planner and director of the Australian Institute of Political Science, typifies the grouping of skills required to promote discussion and action in this matter.

His is the opening chapter, a clear and objective statement of what the nation's policies are, the events which formed them, the unhappy implications of them, and the alternatives which political theory can offer.