NOT FOR PUBLICATION

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

ERL - 23
Fun and Games

1828 Delaware Street
Berkeley, California
27 February 1970

Mr. R. H. Nolte
Institute of Current World Affairs
535 Fifth Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10017

Dear Mr. Nolte,

In the fall of 1968 a friend who teaches in the City Planning department at Yale asked if I would like to give a class session on new towns. I accepted with unseemly alacrity and one qualifying condition--that we bypass the obvious new town topic, the Garden City-satellite city-suburb-by-a-better-name. At the time I had begun reading about isolated new towns and the problems of transposing modern industrial life to the physical frontier. I thought it might be interesting and also useful for students whose introductory course in city planning used New York City for its nitty gritty example to think about the special, nearly utopian potential of a really new town. I fancied that focusing on such an extreme possibility might indirectly point up some of the fallacies of both the creeping "new towns are nirvahana" and the "new towns are nemisis" schools of thought.

Rather than deliver a lecture about exotica I was advised that in "now academe" the play's the thing. We designed a plausible scenario for the class. One division of a conglomerate has found an enormous strike of a rare, new, but soon to be essential mineral. The board of directors of the company is faced with the problem of getting and doing preliminary refining of the mineral in the wilderness. The game consists of the board meeting to consider the problems of building a permanent camp or town. The cast includes witnesses for special interests and government agencies as well as board members with causes. I arbitrarily set the game in Alaska mostly because most of my reading had been about northern towns. Between the time the students were given their role assignments and the class session, news of the oil strike on the North Slope hit the papers. Its implications did not register.

To my surprise, the students took the problem literally. They researched the geography of the vague site mentioned, and vigorously dismissed the possibility of intelligent life in that climate. They got so hung up on "northness" they nearly missed

what I thought was the point of the game entirely. The "personnel director" of the company earnestly told the rest of the "board" he couldn't possibly recruit workers and the "board" solemnly agreed. They were stunned when I interrupted the game to point out that a large percentage of the work force in Kitimat, the Alean town in British Columbia, are Portugese immigrants. By the time we established high salaries will bring workers and technology can keep them warm and went at the problems of town development, the time was up.

Perhaps because I learned more than the class did, both about a particular kind of new town and about teaching (which I had never done), I was invited to come back again this year for three game classes.

Game classes are a pedagogical risk. If they work, that is if the students not only prepare but relax and play the game, then it's an extremely effective way of illustrating the complexities of a policy problem. Almost by definition a good game precludes the student leaving the room with a tidy notebook outline of points with a fixed conclusion that can be coughed back in an examination. Of course, none of the games we played had conclusions so that was no worry; the question was whether or not the students would pick out many of the component issues.

It's commonly said that today's undergraduates are the brightest ever. It's also commonly moaned that they are either lazy, disinterested, sullen or inarticulate, and relentless in their search for "relevance." Momentarily city planning must be relevant. The students in the three games I chaired were not only delightfully bright, they were almost uniformly well prepared. Most importantly they were willing to play--to figure out the probable position of an assigned character and argue it tenaciously. Indeed, one class got so steamed up suddenly it seemed everyone was trying to talk at once. I finally pounded a book on the table in hopes of restoring order if not silence. In the sudden stillness a voice called out"...hey, Judge Hoffman...", which broke everyone up. It also reminded us that a game only works by consent.

One indication of the speed with which the ecology movement has swept onto the college campus was the approach the students took to the rewritten game now known as <u>The Call of the Wild</u>.

THE CALL OF THE WILD

> Not all new towns are garden or satellite cities, pretty ornaments set gracefully in the branches of a regional plan. Some new towns are outposts of

civilization set precariously against inimical forces of nature, kept alive in the empty wilderness because they produce one thing the industrial world will pay a high price to obtain.

Developmental new towns exist outside almost all normal considerations of scale. This game views the acute dis-economies of building an isolated new town as a unique opportunity for experimentation in community development. The game takes the form of a board meeting of the Ye-Grow-Co., a conglomorate whose International Ickindyl Division has just made a major basic resource discovery in Alaska. (see memo attached) In fact, the recent oil discoveries are in the vicinity of the Ickindyl find. Sometime before the Ice Highway, which the Nixon Administration has approved, is finished, the oil companies will play this game for real. Participants are encouraged to assume that anything is technologically possible. The game is about goals, priorities, power...not engineering. In other words, don't worry about the construction problems of northness, but concentrate on the conditions and components of the good life. Then consider some of the questions of corporate policy those ideas raise:

(1) Should Ye-Grow-Co develop a town?
(2) Should the company buy land for town development, if so how much?
(3) If Ye-Grow-Co does not control development of the town, who will? Does it matter? To whom?
(4) What relationship should the company seek with federal and state government?
(5) What priority should be given to non-essential facilities?
(6) Is Ye-Grow-Co responsible for attracting other industries to the area?
(7) Can a modern conglomorate, like Ye-Grow-Co. be Landlord, School Authority, Cruise Director, Store Keeper.....?

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

REPRESENTING YE-GROW-CO.

1. Chairman of the Board, Ye-Grow-Co.
2. Chairman of the Board Emeritus, Ye-Grow-Co.
   (A retired US Army General who was raised in rural Montana and spent 5 years as a lumber jack before entering the Army)

3. President, International Ickydil
   (A vigorous young executive interested in building an empire and insuring that the international image of his company will allow him immortality)
4. VP for Production, International Ickydil
5. VP for Personnel, International Ickydil
6. VP for Corporate Diversification, International Ickydil
7. Controller, Ye-Grow-Co.

INTERESTED PARTIES

1. Representative, U.S. Dept. Interior
2. Special Assistant, Gov. of Alaska
3. Director, State of Alaska Univ. Extension Program
4. VP Mine & Smelters Union
5. Chairman, Alaska Ecumenical Church Board
6. Regional Sales Director, Hudson's Bay Co.

CONSULTANTS

1. Architect
2. City Planner (disciple of Howard, Stien, & Garvin)

The students were constantly tempted to assume that ickidyl was really oil, and they were ready to jump beyond the game, which, in its establishment way, assumes that the price being high enough the metal will be brought out, and wanted to discuss the ecological merits of allowing the oil strike to be developed at all. In the after game rehash it became clear they were sensitized to the disaster potential of an oil spill in the tundra (the game was played a week before the tanker spewed oil off Newfoundland). However, in their discovery of ecology they seem to have forgotten about economics. I tried to turn questions around and ask what would be the implications of not having the extra oil, or nickel or ickidyl and it appeared to be a new idea, despite President Nixon's State of the Union speech which, however glibly, at least raised the question of the everlasting benefit of growth. If the game is played next year, it will be interesting to see where the students interest in ecology has carried them.

The other two games were set in New York. Both dealt with the potential for new towns in town. Both were Planning Commission hearings, one set in the present, the other a few years in the

past. One class was asked to consider plans for a new town on Staten Island. Again, almost unintentionally, the game skirts very close to the reality. Study reports on a new town for Staten Island will be released later this spring. Two of the plans were from private industry, the Rouse and Levitt Companies, and one was from a public advisory agency. The other game, cheerfully called "A Co-Op City Happening," was a "You are There" reinactment of the original Planning Commission hearings on Co-op City in April of 1965. The difference was that in the game the Commission was given broad powers to DO something about the proposal and witnesses were allowed to make reference to 20-20 hindsight in their recommendations.

The questions of density and urbanity seemed less controversial and interesting to the students than the overt political problems of developing open land either on Staten Island or in the Bronx. Two of the three Staten Island proposals accepted toy town definitions of new towns--small low density communities in the green belts. They were very orthodox old style new towns, which I thought bizarre for New York in 1970, but understandable given the literature. The third called for an undefined "high density modular development." None were challenged for their population and density assumptions. The density of Co-op City--55,000 people on such a small site--was accepted almost without question. The class grappled instead with transportation, discrimination, and, in passing, with aesthetics.

All three games involved spokesmen for the federal and state governments as well as private industry. Inevitably the students seemed to grasp more of the subtleties and potential of public policy than private initiative, and in after class discussions were suitably cynical about both. They all had good ears for catch phrases and jargon, so no one representing a federal department in the Nixon Administration, for example, failed "to make this perfectly clear." One student, however, transcended simply phrase snatching. Although not a native New Yorker, he gave a virtuoso performance in the Co-op City game as the Mayor's representative. He read off a prepared statement in a perfect parody of (then) Mayor Robert Wagner's style complete with strained references to the clammering at his heels of the reform Democrats. (His peers, come of age in the first term of Mayor Lindsay, were mildly amused. I was convulsed.)

I don't know if, in the context of a semester's work, the sessions on new towns will be remembered only as a curiosity or if they cast light on other problems. All three classes got beyond the standard readings and trivial assumptions about new towns. On that basis alone I thought they were successful.

Sincerely,

Eden Ross Lipson

Received in New York on March 2, 1970.