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Mud on His Boots: R. T. Kennedy and the Beginnings of Planning Education at the University of Auckland

Formal university training in town planning only commenced in New Zealand in the late 1950s during the town and country planning era. The University of Auckland's first professor of town planning was Robert Terence Kennedy (1903–1997), who was appointed in 1957 and retired in 1969. With no formal academic qualifications but an impressive background in design practice and administration in Britain, Kennedy found the going tough as a teacher and a professor and seemed relieved when it came time to step down.

This article offers a biographical account of Kennedy, known as Terry to friends. Biography provides insights into broader narratives in history. As a human-centred methodology for planning history, it places individual lives and careers within broader ideological and institutional currents to illuminate, in more nuanced fashion, agendas, achievements, and failings (Freestone 2018). Kennedy's timeline instructively intersects with several critical junctures in the history of modern architecture and design at both ends of the world: in Britain through participation in social housing projects pre-World War II, the mission of post-war reconstruction through the Ministry of Town and Country Planning, and the new towns programme, and in New Zealand through the promotion of town planning, urban renewal, and the institution of tertiary planning education. This article concentrates on the latter episode with Kennedy switching from his practitioner-bureaucratic roots into an academic role in which he made significant contributions in an antipodean setting. The article sketches Kennedy's early career as a prelude to his time in New Zealand, the background to the establishment of a planning programme at the University of Auckland, development of the early curriculum and staffing, and the legacy laid. It draws on two earlier conference presentations (Freestone 2014a, 2014b) and additional research utilising private papers subsequently lodged with the University of Auckland. It constructs an assessment of Kennedy as an archetypal British expatriate architect-planner, somewhat patrician but principled, steeped in old-world planning but not dogma, and striving to adapt best practice to the New Zealand environment. Despite self-doubts about his life achievements, within the educational sphere he is the key figure in establishing planning education on a firm footing in New Zealand.



Fig. 1 R. T. Kennedy, ca. 1944.
[Courtesy of Philip Kennedy]

Kennedy's Early Career

Kennedy (see Fig. 1) was a Mancunian destined to follow the career of his architect-father. He studied at the Manchester College of Technology and School of Arts but never completed a formal architectural qualification. From 1925 to 1939, he worked successively with three local governments: Manchester, Essex County, and Liverpool City, where he was involved with several central area redevelopment projects. From 1940 to 1943, he teamed up with Professor William Holford on wartime building contracts for factories and worker hostels on behalf of the Ministry of Supply. In 1943, he joined the new Ministry of Town and Country Planning which gathered together some formidable talent (Ward 2012). This was Kennedy's first entrée into town planning proper, working in the "Planning Technique" section alongside Holford, Gordon Stephenson, Colin Buchanan, and, briefly, Thomas Sharp, with the focus on new planning standards and techniques. After the war he was appointed Chief Planning Officer in the Directorate of Technical Services in the Ministry of Housing and Local Government. In this role he was involved in a more expansive range of town and country planning matters: the replanning of blitzed cities; the selection, designation, and planning of 12 new towns; designation of national parks; and examination of advisory city, regional, and county borough plans. In 1955, he entered private practice with Holford in London. The working relationship proved less satisfactory second time round (Cherry & Penny 1986). Despite taking a long time deliberating on leaving the Ministry, by 1956 he was looking for another opportunity when the Auckland position came up.

The New Zealand Planning Scene in the Early 1950s

The broader institutional and statutory backdrop to Kennedy's appointment is well covered in Miller's history of the New Zealand Planning Institute (NZPI) (Miller 2007). An active town planning movement dated from the 1910s and a major product of its efforts was the *Town-planning Act* of 1926, which enabled local authorities to prepare comprehensive town planning schemes overseen by the central government. Amendments in 1929 introduced regional planning provisions. By the early 1950s, only a handful of towns and boroughs had approved plans and larger New Zealand cities had little control over land development (Miller 2000). Metropolitan Auckland, with a population of nearly 400,000 by the mid-1950s, was said to be feeling the strain under the pressures of modernisation. The city was coming of age as a "national metropolis" but rapid growth and ad hoc development were bequeathing problems of residential blight, traffic congestion, and sewerage disposal, prompting thoughts toward limiting future expansion (Pownall 1950, 1951).

The early post-war years saw a renewed enthusiasm for planning, as they did globally, with energetic propaganda and lobbying campaigns including the first home-grown planning textbook in 1949 (Barry Martin 1949). Complementing the fledgling professional discourse was a growing community appreciation of the need for expert land use management and design control (Schrader 2010).

The passage of a new *Town and Country Planning Act* in 1953 provided a significant fillip to the planning cause. This required every city, borough, and town board to provide and maintain a district planning scheme. Regional planning

provisions were also retained. Regulations to the Act promulgated in 1954 provided more detailed guidelines to preparing planning schemes leading to “a rather standardised approach to plan writing” (Miller 2007: 23). The Ministry of Works provided oversight and a Town and Country Planning Appeal Board was empowered to deal with appeals resulting from council decisions. Qualified planners remained thin on the ground, assembled from the ranks of British immigrants, ex-servicemen, and dedicated individuals undertaking external study to meet the British Town Planning Institute’s (TPI) requirements. The Town Planning Institute of New Zealand, founded by John Mawson in 1930, had only 31 full members by 1954 (Aitken Rose 2017: 230). While the demand for planners from local authorities having to meet their obligations under the Act was set to grow, the institutional environment for professional education remained undeveloped. A notable non-government initiative from 1949 to the early 1950s was the town planning section of Wellington’s Architectural Centre, which formalised the historic practice of senior professionals mentoring students undertaking external study for TPI membership, with lectures by leading planning advocates such as John Cox, George Porter, Al Gabites, Maurice Patience, and Helmut Einhorn (Gatley & Walker 2014).

The Auckland Chair

The University of New Zealand was the only tertiary entity able to institutionalise this approach and Auckland University College was the obvious host as the only architecture school in the nation. As early as 1929, Cyril Knight, foundation Professor of Architecture, had developed a town planning diploma proposal involving papers in history, law, practice, engineering, and design (Miller 2000: 458–59). Depression, war, and the departure of Mawson cooled this early enthusiasm but from the late 1940s, Knight, who saw planning and architecture as “two phases of the same activity”, resumed his efforts. Various bodies took up the cudgels alongside him including the Town Planning Institute of New Zealand, the Town and Country Planning Association, and the Institute of Professional Town and Country Planners. Other professional bodies like the New Zealand Institute of Surveyors were also in the mix along with lobbying from the Chamber of Commerce and the City Council in Auckland.

The preferred model by 1948 was a professorial Chair in Planning as head of a separate school within the Faculty of Architecture. Various committees endorsed this approach including the University Council in April 1949. In mid-1952, the Academic Board “after an exhaustive investigation” also endorsed a new chair and following further examination the University Senate approved the proposal in August 1954. The latter decision was subject to available funding, which was the main sticking point throughout this protracted mini-saga. An approach to the Minister for Education was agreed (Principal[?] 1954). The key move at this time came from a member of University Council, Norman Spencer, who pledged an endowment of £7,200 to support the chair for the first four years. Spencer was a businessman, lawyer, and philanthropist involved in the transport industry, and chairman of the Auckland Transport Board from 1955 to 1964 (Glenie 1972; Sinclair 1983: 211).

Appointment of Kennedy

Applications for the chair were invited in early 1956 to reach the University by August 31. The number of applicants is unknown but two shortlisted candidates soon emerged. One was Neil Abercrombie, son of the legendary Sir Patrick. Apart from that credential, he had just taken up the position of Town and Country Planning Commissioner of Tasmania after five years as senior lecturer in Town and Regional Planning at the University of Melbourne (1951–55). Before that he had worked with the Department of Local Government in Sydney and the Illawarra Planning Authority in Wollongong, New South Wales. Neil was a gentleman architect-planner with interests in coastal planning and conservation; he was a competent administrator who would have brought a different sensibility to the role with a likely accent on regional planning.

Kennedy, then aged 53 years and coming off an unsuccessful application for Architect of the City of London, was arguably the lesser name. He was not a planner by training but his decade in the Ministry made him a key participant in a momentous period in British planning and in 1951 he had been awarded a CBE in recognition of his services to town and country planning. Kennedy enlisted influential support from Dame Evelyn Sharp, the secretary of the British Ministry of Housing and Local Government; Robert Matthew, Professor of Architecture at Edinburgh University; Gordon Stephenson, by then head of City and Regional Planning at the University of Toronto; and Holford, who was also a referee for Abercrombie. Applications were deliberated on by various University entities including the Professorial Board and there was a report of a special “London Committee”. Spencer was actively involved in this process, filing a report with his “impressions” of both candidates.

The post was offered to Kennedy in October 1956. He accepted and sailed with his family from Southampton on the *Southern Cross* and arrived in May 1957. The position of Professor and Chair of the Department of Town Planning carried an annual salary of £1,792.8.0 for an initial period of five years and compulsory retirement at 65. The “Conditions of Appointment” (dated May 1956) specified several responsibilities: fostering public interest and participation in town planning matters as well as directing and undertaking planning research; establishing and teaching into a new Diploma in Town Planning plus ancillary teaching into the architecture programme; and the right of private practice as a planning consultant.

Planning Philosophy

Kennedy was a self-confessed newcomer to planning having learnt on the job in the British civil service. His formative views were thus shaped largely by practice and through his working associations rather than a formal professional education. Intellectually, his influences were not Patrick Geddes or Raymond Unwin, both of whom he regarded as eccentric, but Lewis Mumford, whose *Culture of Cities* (1938) he found inspiring, Patrick Abercrombie, Clough Williams-Ellis, and, perhaps surprisingly, William Lethaby, whose essay “Towns Fit to Live In” (1918) had first stimulated his interest in planning (Kennedy 1959). “As soon as greater interest in town life can be aroused improvements must be undertaken in every direction”, wrote Lethaby (1922: 27).

Kennedy's inaugural professorial address delivered in University Hall in the Arts Building fronting Princes Street on March 27, 1958 establishes an ideological outlook to which he remained true. The occasion marked the transition of the Auckland University College of the University of New Zealand into a university in its own right (Kennedy 1958a, 1958b). The "purpose of planning", he explained, was "the control of land use for the creation of a physical environment conducive to better living". His elaboration reveals an incipient appreciation of the local scene and the challenges posed by increasing car ownership, tourism, and uncoordinated development. He had already perceived a divide between the clarity of the original town grids in New Zealand and the "mere agglomerations of buildings" growing up within them. There are other themes which would resurface in his endorsement of planning that was holistic, cooperative, based on common-sense, and not "compromised by legal complexities" (Kennedy 1958a: 59–68).

Kennedy was first and foremost a physical planner. Time and again he returned to three crucial yardsticks in making and evaluating plans: the economic, the social, and the aesthetic. He was a firm believer in the importance of what we would now term urban design—though rarely using that term—for its power in communicating the visions and elaborating the details that matter for successful planning on the ground. He was also an unapologetically pragmatic planner, which could be attributed partly to his years in Whitehall: "a theoretical future is so often at odds with immediate and practical solutions" (Kennedy 1969a: 14). Alongside that was the need for simpler, realistic planning schemes. He channelled many of his ideas into constant critiques of the *Town and Country Planning Act 1953*. He saw it as overly prescriptive and legalistic, particularly in its voluminous regulations, and offering few opportunities for positive planning or community involvement. He mounted an ultimately unsuccessful legal challenge to the unsympathetic erection of a residential apartment building immediately adjacent to his family home in the Auckland suburb of Remuera, a cause célèbre case which only confirmed his jaundiced view of the malleability of the Act's regulations and council administration of them (Northey 1966: 9–11). His criticisms of the complexity and the administrative demands of the legislation were not well received by the Town and Country Planning Directorate within the Ministry of Works. Nevertheless one of his most original ideas did call for greater centralisation, namely that planning survey research and data gathering be resourced at the national level (Kennedy 1968), an idea that would have come from his experience in central government in Britain (Kennedy 1969b).

In terms of the built environment, Kennedy was anti high-density, which he saw as compromising standards of living. He saw New Zealand's main urban problems stemming not from British-style "blitz and blight" but traffic (Kennedy 1960). While acknowledging the general quality of material life, he was also critical of the regimented and sprawling suburban landscape; "in physical terms, a mess" (Kennedy 1968). His middle way looked towards the better integration of land use and transport planning; encouraging mixed use through more flexible land use zoning rather than monolithic spatial segregation; combining public and private development; and enhancing urban design standards. His overriding yardstick was securing a common-sense balance of individualistic demands and collective welfare in the "public interest", a theme he returned to frequently in his writings (Kennedy 1965b). What was notably missing to latter-day eyes was a true appreciation of environmental management and virtually no mention of Māori or lifestyles beyond the stereotypical nuclear family.

Establishing a Department

Kennedy's brief from the University was for instruction to commence in the first session of 1958. He had first to build a department. The offices and lecture rooms were initially located at 28 Symonds Street (on the present-day site of the Faculty of Engineering) and then moved to 8 Symonds Street in 1964, expanding to 10 Symonds Street (shared with Political Studies) in 1968. Derek Hall recalls the scene at number 10 in the late 1960s:

This was a two-storey house with a basement which was the student common room. Out the back was a garden with fruit trees in it ... An annex at ground level had added a further three student rooms. Existing rooms provided offices and further student rooms, and one bigger room which was used for seminars and lectures. [They then started] using a proper lecture theatre across the road in Botany for lectures (D. Hall, personal communication, April 22, 2017).

Betty Cutter was appointed departmental secretary. Initially, there were no other staff except Gerhard Rosenberg, who had been appointed a senior lecturer in town and country planning in the School of Architecture by Cyril Knight in 1955. Rosenberg was a German Jew trained in architecture and town planning in the United Kingdom (MacKenzie-Hooson 2014). Elizabeth Aitken Rose notes that while Kennedy always retained "a certain technocratic British essence", Rosenberg was "quintessentially European" (2017: 233). Nonetheless, a strong working relationship would develop between the men and many years later Rosenberg wrote to Kennedy that he was "quite proud of having spent so many years as part of [his] team" (Rosenberg 1986).

Developing a Programme: The DipTP

Kennedy arrived to what Nancy Northcroft described as "a blank slate" with little information on important issues like student demand (Northcroft 1969: 10–11). Before coming to New Zealand, Kennedy had begun his research on planning programmes at various British universities. He was well aware of the deliberations of the Schuster Committee in the United Kingdom, which in 1950 endorsed an expansive social science-infused approach to planning education underpinned by inter-professional collaboration and ideally delivered as a two-year postgraduate programme (Ministry of Town and Country Planning 1950). After his arrival he spent nearly a year in consultation with architects, surveyors, engineers, and government officials to arrive at an educational programme acceptable to all.

The eventually agreed structure was a one-year full-time postgraduate diploma, a step down from a full master's degree but pragmatically defended as the best way of producing work-ready town planners at a time of urgent need. Kennedy did not see this as a narrowly-focused academic qualification but more a post-professional experience aimed at men [*sic*] with "mud on their boots", a phrase used in an address to the Institute of Surveyors in Gisborne. This hands-on approach was all about devising a "stimulating" and applied experience rather than just providing "men [*sic*] with an opportunity to add another qualification to their name" (Kennedy 1958b: 213).

Six subjects were devised: a foundational paper in Town Planning Theory and Techniques, complemented by instruction in Geography, Civil and Traffic Engineering, Surveying, Architecture, and Law, all as related to town planning. An additional thesis was “a test of how you apply what you know to a particular problem” and students were also exposed to “Drawing Office and Field Work” through various assignments. This curriculum evolved incrementally but was substantially intact a decade later. By then, Theory and Techniques had become two distinct courses, Surveying was dropped, Architecture included Landscape, Law became Statutory Planning and Administration, and a dissertation (a “written discourse” of up to 10,000 words) was added in a new Honours stream. At various times, Kennedy confessed that the programme had weaknesses, “particularly in relation to the examination prescriptions of the Town Planning Institute” (Kennedy 1965a). The absence of a dedicated economics, and particularly land economics, paper was acknowledged along with the need to cram so much into a one-year programme. Communication skills, positive rather than legalistic planning, and cross-professional learning were all valued highly. To keep things fresh and relevant, Kennedy displayed daily news cuttings and items of interest on the student noticeboard (Kennedy 1963: 4).

The Teaching Staff

Papers were taught by both core planning staff and part-time lecturers. By 1968, the core staff had grown to five members—Kennedy, Rosenberg, two former star students (Jim Dart commencing in 1962 when Rosenberg was on leave, and Mike Pritchard who started in 1965), and Harry Turbott, who taught landscape and urban design part-time from 1966. Kennedy was able to cultivate good relations with other people around and outside the University. The slowly increasing core staff was complemented by a changing cast of professors and practitioners. Early inputs came from Professors N. A. Mowbray (Engineering), F. J. Northey (Law), Cyril Knight (Architecture), and Kenneth Cumberland (Geography), although Kennedy was “always a bit wary of the Geography Department in Cumberland’s day, running courses to expand his territory” (Kennedy 1991b). Well-respected professionals were also conscripted such as J. W. Cox (Ministry of Works), F. W. O. Jones (Auckland Regional Planning Authority), and Nancy Northcroft (Christchurch Regional Planning Authority).

By all accounts, this was a strong, well-assembled, and harmonious team. Kennedy’s colleagues were united and loyal; they respected his directness, integrity, worldliness, experience, pragmatism, loyalty, and immersion in and knowledge of current events. He could be a harsh critic, but didn’t spare himself. Kennedy was a good manager bringing to bear his senior British experience from both private practice and the civil service. Mike Pritchard remembers his collegiality with informal examiners’ meetings over lunch at his house in Remuera (M. Pritchard, personal communication, August 8, 2012).

Students

Students generally had to have a first professional qualification in architecture, engineering, or surveying (University of Auckland 1960). Full-time candidature with a demanding workload was preferred. Kennedy warned the fresh intake of 1965 that their lectures, seminars, visits to various offices and sites, excursions,

and set exercises would be demanding; “full-time means full-time and overtime” (Kennedy 1965a).

The diploma struggled early in attracting students. Kennedy recalls the “birth pangs” as “agonising” (1984). In 1958, there were 14 students (only four full-time); by 1969 this had risen to 59 students (12 full-time) (Northcroft 1969). Most full-time students were sent and supported by the Ministry of Works and local councils. The part-timers were largely employees of government or planning practices around Auckland who were given time off to attend (D. Hall, personal communication, April 22, 2017; Aitken Rose 2017: 234–38). By 1968 bursary scholarships were offered by the surveying and architect institutes and the Auckland City Council.

Teaching Planning

Kennedy’s main teaching responsibilities were two co-taught papers. One was the foundational paper on Theory and Techniques, with contributions from Rosenberg. This provided an overview of planning history, governance, design, surveying, and methods. The primary topics when offered for the first time in 1958 were:

- The main contributors to town planning thought and the application of their theories and ideas, with historic examples;
- The objects of present-day planning;
- The inter-relation of social, economic, and physical planning;
- The role of the physical planner;
- The organisations and agencies for planning and development in New Zealand and abroad;
- Studies of regional and town planning schemes;
- The design of new towns and redevelopment areas;
- The design of industrial, commercial, residential, and recreational areas.

The 1966 syllabus for Town Planning Theory provides a more detailed breakdown of lectures (see Table 1). This was not a theory course as that term is presently understood, but rather an introduction to the profession, its history, and the major foci of spatial planning.

Fig. 2 The Town Planning Theory lecture programme included garden cities and suburbs, such as Hampstead Garden Suburb, designed by Parker & Unwin. [Photograph by Julia Gatley]



Table 1: Town Planning Theory lectures, 1966

| | | | |
|--|-----|---|-----|
| First Term (March 1 to May 3) | 1. | Objects of Present-Day Town Planning—R. T. Kennedy (RTK) | |
| | 2. | Historic Development Up to End of Nineteenth Century—Gerhard Rosenberg (GR) | |
| | 3. | Geddes | GR |
| | 4. | Howard, Unwin | GR |
| | 5. | Mumford | GR |
| | 6. | Garnier, Le Corbusier, CIAM | GR |
| | 7. | French Grand Ensembles, Reichow, Kahn | GR |
| | 8. | Buchanan | GR |
| | 9. | Regional Planning Theories | GR |
| Second Term (May 31 to August 9, with mid-term break) | 10. | Regional Planning Examples | GR |
| | 11. | Rural Areas, Agriculture and Forestry | GR |
| | 12. | Social Factors in TP | RTK |
| | 13. | Economic Factors in TP | RTK |
| | 14. | Aesthetic Factors in TP | RTK |
| | 15. | Role of Physical Planner (Schuster) | RTK |
| | 16. | Residential Areas | GR |
| | 17. | Industrial Areas | GR |
| | 18. | Recreational Areas | GR |
| | 19. | Town Planning Schemes I | RTK |
| Third Term (September 6 to October 4) | 20. | Town Planning Schemes II | RTK |
| | 21. | Central Areas | RTK |
| | 22. | Comprehensive Redevelopment Areas | RTK |
| | 23. | New Towns | RTK |
| | 24. | Planning Organisations | RTK |
| | 25. | Planning Organisations | RTK |

His second co-taught paper was architecture for planners. This offered an introduction to architectural composition and materials, site planning, and landscape and urban design. The 1958 synopsis was as follows:

- Architectural composition and the grouping of buildings;
- Urban street and open space patterns;
- Studies of historic and contemporary examples;
- Site planning in relation to topography and climate;
- Preservation of architectural and historic places;
- Use, colour, and texture of building materials;
- Street furniture;
- Landscape, natural, and man-made patterns;
- Planting for use and amenity;
- Park, garden, and recreation area design.

By the mid-1960s, Kennedy’s input had retracted as the landscape dimension was enhanced with the arrival of the Harvard-trained Turbott (see Table 2).

Table 2: Provisional programme for Architecture and Landscape lectures, March–October 1965

| | | | |
|---------------------------|-----|--|-----|
| March–October 1965 | 1. | Introduction—R. T. Kennedy (RTK) | |
| | 2. | Natural Man-Made Patterns of Landscape—Harry Turbott (HT) | |
| | 3. | Patterns of Landscape | HT |
| | 4. | Historic Examples: Hippodamus’ Roman Towns, Medieval Contribution—Gerhard Rosenberg (GR) | |
| | 5. | Renaissance, to Haussmann’s Paris | GR |
| | 6. | Rome—Imric Porsolt (IP) | |
| | 7. | Form and Function in Building | RTK |
| | 8. | Architectural Expression: Historical and Contemporary | RTK |
| | 9. | Scale and Proportion in Building | RTK |
| | 10. | Structure, Materials, Texture and Colour | RTK |
| | 11. | Architectural Criticism | RTK |
| | 12. | Townscape, Spaces Between Buildings | GR |
| | 13. | Cullen, Lynch—Visits to Sites | GR |
| | 14. | Preservation of Historic Places—Cyril Knight (CK) | |
| | 15. | Street Furniture and Lighting | GR |
| | 16. | Twentieth-Century Architect-Planners | GR |
| | 17. | Le Corbusier, Tony Garnier | GR |
| | 18. | Unwin | GR |
| | 19. | Niemeyer | GR |
| | 20. | Modern Landscape Architecture | HT |
| | 21. | Parks, Recreation Areas, Trees in Towns | HT |
| | 22. | Motorway Planting | HT |
| | 23. | Suburban Landscape | HT |
| | 24. | Effect of Buchanan, Retirees | GR |

Kennedy, who had departmental secretary Cutter type out all his lectures, was not, by his own estimation, a good lecturer. He later recalled:

Just think of the bloody awful lectures that I had to give. I had never before given a lecture—on anything. I was no scholar, had had an insufficient education, had no degree, had even failed matriculation ... When I saw what I thought I had said when typed out by Betty I was appalled and ashamed (Kennedy 1986).

The late Jim Dart, student and later colleague to whom this confession was addressed, remembered differently. He saw Kennedy as “a natural teacher ... not dogmatic in any way” and often reacting to current events (J. Dart, personal communication, August 7, 2012). Further, he was:

... always stimulating in his enthusiasms and his passions, always constructive in his criticisms of poor design and indignant at the crassness, lack of vision and ad hocery of so much civic decision-making. Like the Ancient Mariner, once within range of his voice, he would capture his audience with talk at great length on a wide range of topical issues and always with a total recall of past events (Dart 1998: 2).

Bill Robertson, a distinguished alumnus who became President of the NZPI, captures further the character of the classroom:

His courses were all about the process and the various options and not expecting right answers. He would stand there looking at you over his rimless glasses and always able to suggest another point of view when one thought one had finally settled on a “right” point of view. He was very good at providing wider references when various planning issues arose. He could always find alternative ideas or references to keep the planning possibilities open ... He used the diversity of student backgrounds to encourage us all to see the value of other skills, points of view and techniques (B. Robertson, personal communication, July 20, 2011).

Former students have mixed recollections. Michael Wearne remembers him in the late 1960s as still “somewhat schoolmasterish” and a practitioner rather than a theorist, “not surprisingly” (M. Wearne, personal communication, July 22, 2011). Henry van Roon and Richard Smyth both remember an intense and alert lecturer with a wide general knowledge who cared about his students (H. van Roon, personal communication, September 27, 2012; R. Smyth, personal communication, November 14, 2011).

Someone so steeped in British planning orthodoxy was not going to change radically overnight and the time he spent in government in London would remain the foundation of Kennedy’s planning ideas. To convey the realities of planning process, he would often tell stories about the politics of planning in Britain and how the Ministry had worked. Richard Smyth recalls that for his Architecture course the main textbook was *Town Design* (1953) by Frederick Gibberd, the designer of Harlow (R. Smyth, personal communication, November 14, 2011). In the 1960s, there were design exercises interpreting the parameters laid out by London County Council for its proposed new town of Hook (London County Council 1961). Other former students recall a similar Anglocentric treatment. Bill Robertson, who remembers Kennedy as “an approachable learned person with certain English reserve”, notes that, “He did convey a strong sense of the 1940s and 1950s planning approach. We were taught about the 1947 UK planning act, new towns and classic architecture in UK and Europe” (B. Robertson, personal communication, July 20, 2011). Robert Riddell remembers that over time Kennedy became “more of a Kiwi” and the quality and relevance of his lectures picked up enormously (R. Riddell, personal communication, June 27, 2011).

Kennedy tacitly acknowledged criticism that he was parlaying “just old-fashioned ideas from another country ... not really applicable to New Zealand” (M. Pritchard, personal communication, August 8, 2012). But as he gained a greater grasp of the New Zealand scene he began to more confidently distance himself from the solutions of his past. He criticised the 1953 Act as based too closely on the British experiences. The same extensive derelict industrial lands, scale of slum housing, and regional imbalance of economic opportunity were not replicated in New Zealand. Notes for a lecture in his Town Planning Theory course provide a concise statement of the position he had reached by 1965:

It is, I think, a mistake to look for exact parallels in other countries to justify our town planning approach, legislation and practice. The economic and social conditions that have created almost insuperable problems in the building and rebuilding of cities and the development of agricultural and mineral resources in older countries have not been paralleled in this country to anything like the same extent. We have our own social, economic and

aesthetic problems to solve and should find solutions to them in our own way, solutions that are politically acceptable and suited to the way of life we have decided to follow (Kennedy 1965c).

University Life

Mike Pritchard remembers Kennedy as an inspiring “battler” rather than an establishment figure; someone who was not afraid to critique orthodoxy and fight for what he felt was right in professional and personal terms—the fight to preserve the amenity of his own living space conflating both these ambitions (M. Pritchard, personal communication, August 8, 2012). Kennedy participated in broader aspects of University life but his firm views about issues and individuals placed him occasionally on the outer.

He had an inferiority complex about his lack of traditional academic qualifications and some of his professorial peers were apparently all too ready to remind him of it. His opposition to the proposed relocation of the University to a suburban greenfield site at either Tāmaki or Hobson Bay, a row that was in full cry when he arrived, put him offside with some senior University figures. At a hearing of the Town and Country Planning Appeal Board in July 1960, he spoke compellingly against any move and this resulted in his criticisms of moving away from the Princes/Symonds Street precinct being upheld. He had presented a range of criteria pointing to the superiority of the central city site (Planning the University 1957). Amid a general atmosphere of bitterness and resentment—which turned nasty for Kennedy when the Pro-Chancellor accused him of “not being a university man” (Kennedy 1987)—he resigned from the Professorial Board and associated committees (Sinclair 1983: 239).

While the affair did not damage his association with Vice Chancellor Kenneth Maidment, it further estranged him from the powerful Chancellor William Hollis Cocker. In a 1995 oral history tape, Kennedy tells of two extraordinary encounters with Cocker, who was blind. The first saw him as a newly arrived professor grilled inquisition-style in a darkened room by Cocker and members of the University Senate; the second alleges that Cocker attempted to sabotage his inaugural lecture in a stand-off with the Vice Chancellor through unflattering lighting and the absence of any of the usual protocols of such a significant event (Kennedy 1995).

Conclusion

Robert Kennedy was relieved to step away from University life, and while his retirement was long it was not particularly happy and was marked by harsh self-judgments about an “up and down” serendipitous career. His admissions to Gordon Stephenson seem far too bleak. In 1980, his summation was that “I am not—was not—much good as a Town Planner/academic and most of my efforts in practice fell on stony ground” (Kennedy 1980). A decade later came a similar sentiment:

Unlike you I was never a dedicated Town Planner and unlike you never academically trained for the job. My lectures were an agony to me, my talks and addresses very ordinary. I wrote no books. I relied almost entirely on experience of town planning in the Ministry but made no name for myself outside it ... I have no great thoughts on the subject. Unlike you I was never

dedicated. Often I was sceptical and inwardly critical of much town planning activity, so many plans, so many words, so much talk and so much paper (Kennedy 1990).

There is significant counter evidence to suggest this was a life worth living and a career that made a difference. The Auckland diploma remained the principal means of providing professional training for town planners in New Zealand until 1974. When Kennedy retired in 1969, there had been 66 graduates representing perhaps two-thirds of all professionally qualified planners in New Zealand (Kennedy 1969a), half of whom had been admitted as full members of the NZPI (Northcroft 1969). The *Town Planning Quarterly* stated that “there is barely a government department involved in aspects of land use planning or a territorial local authority of any consequence that does not have at least one ex-student on its staff” (Fact and Opinion 1969: 4). Many of the graduates from the first decade went on to have distinguished planning careers in New Zealand and Australia. One story might illustrate several. Richard Smyth recalled that only when he actually travelled to Europe did he fully appreciate the value of Kennedy’s enthusiasm for urban design which in turn influenced his decision to set up the first such unit in the Department of Environment and Planning in New South Wales in the 1980s (R. Smyth, personal communication, November 14, 2011). Jim Dart conveyed a pervasive influence on the Department’s first generation of graduates: “they gradually wove what they gained from Kennedy into their own thinking, their own work, whether it was harbour board work or ministry works, roading or first attempts at regional metropolitan planning ... He opened the eyes of many people” (J. Dart, personal communication, August 7, 2012).

According to Aitken Rose, Kennedy “epitomised the post-war reverence for rational comprehensive plans guided by a consensus ‘public interest’ and a progressive thrill of the modern” (Aitken Rose 2017: 240). He was certainly a product of his time, training as an architect-planner, with the early sensibility to urban design standing out. He was a classic “pracademic” of the old school. There were no refereed publications but plenty of public addresses. Research grants were conspicuously absent although there was some contract research. His primary interest was not traditional scholarship but practical interventions into real-world problems like the Auckland waterfront and the Wellington city centre. Derek Hall casts him as “more of an organiser and just what planning in New Zealand and the University needed at that time” and an individual who, “given all the surrounding circumstances”, delivered outcomes that might not have been bettered (D. Hall, personal communication, April 22, 2017). In his valedictory NZPI address, Kennedy saw his step from practice to academia as undoubtedly a good thing:

I first entered university life late in my own life ... I have not regretted it. It has done for me what it has I hope done for most university staff and students. It has enlarged my own understanding of the world around me and by the intellectual stimulus it has provided made me think more deeply than I otherwise would have done of many things (Kennedy 1969a: 16).

Kennedy later reflected that his life had “not been adventurous, daring, distinguished, not even notorious. I have just bobbed about on the life stream” (Kennedy 1991a). It was nonetheless purposeful enough for him to have been awarded in 1985 the NZPI Gold Medal for exceptional service to planning.

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