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Quo Vadis

Donald Gazzard resigned
as Vice President (Publications)
on 12th November, 1976.

This is the last issue of AA in this format that you will receive. The RAIA Federal Council has decided that AA be handed over to a commercial publisher in Melbourne. You will, of course, get the reduced standard of journal that is economically feasible under those circumstances while still making a profit for the publisher.

This will delight those carping critics who equate low cost with success. AA has no doubt stumbled in its search for the right sort of editorial mix for the mid-seventies. Our aim however has always been clear – to produce a critical, visually attractive journal that would appeal to the intelligent general public as well as architects (this is necessary for survival in more ways than income) and to canvass the issues and ideas that would enable the architectural profession to change with changing times – to assist the re-thinking necessary to respond to new circumstances.

Although the number of general subscriptions has risen over the last year, the economic circumstances of the country have naturally dampened the hoped for increases. As a result of decreased income from all sources AA lost money this year. (Our thanks to the one third of members who paid the voluntary levy and provided our *only* income this year from Institute sources.)

There is an unreasonable attitude that persists among the Councils of our Institute that AA should pay for itself from advertising alone (no other quality journal does) and that it is always being 'propped up' by financial assistance from the Institute. The records show that the average contribution per issue over the last seven years is 35 cents – hardly unreasonable!

Without any increases in advertising income or general subscriptions at all AA could make a profit next year if only 52% of members paid a proper economic subscription.

But there's the rub. Your Council was caught in a two-way bind. It didn't want to increase all annual subscriptions by an extra \$10 for AA because it feared that the increased subscription level would cause members to leave the Institute.

On the other hand it didn't want to make subscription to AA voluntary and separate from your RAIA subscription because it feared that members might subscribe to AA and not the Institute (this option is, of course, open to Members now!), and also they doubted that we would get the members (big offices would only take out one subscription, etc.).

Although we preferred the first alternative, we at AA were prepared to take our chances with the second alternative as we told you in a recent issue. If not enough people want AA and not enough people are prepared to pay for it then it deserves to go out of existence. But your Council wouldn't accept that hard economic argument either – quite plainly for the reason that the natives might get restless – what else tangible *DO* we get from our Institute?

However, the last year has demonstrated that it is possible to produce a journal that, given time, could hold its head up in any company.

We have also forced the Council to accept that an AA like that has to be paid for.

Although your Council wasn't prepared to go all the way, in 1977 more of your subscription will go for AA than ever before. What AA becomes is up to you. By its Federal nature your Council is a conservative institution. They will give you the lowest standard AA that you are prepared to put up with. Their only criterion is cost and there are many competing claims for a slice of the subscription cake.

Whether the Council's priorities are right is for you to say. We think AA rates more than 3 or 4% of your subscription – come to think of it where *DOES* the rest of it go?

Don Gazzard.