SAM STEPHENSON —
THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF ARCHITECTURE

BY FIONA MURPHY

DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRIAL DESIGN

GRADUATE 1990

COUNTRY LIFE—JANUARY 17, 1974

A PLANNING CRISIS IN DUBLIN

By K... NOWLAN and EDWARD McPARLAND

BUSINESS

FACT --NOT FICT...

RIAI Gold Medal

15-year saga of Dublin to...vn hall

Inescapable Architecture

Skyline Sam

...ble to massive office
... the heart of Georgian
... so fear that the
... create a precedent for
... in Merrion Square.

OF

How will Dublin's new bank be brought down to size?

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

Fate of Dublin bank still not decided

Split difference in height plea by Centr... Bank

THE LIFFEY QUAYS

...e of the design it is
... there will be an outcry
... is reminiscent of that

Bord na Mon...

Taisce

DESIGN

...ECTING CITY LIFE

The architect

...Bank's 30 feet

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

Dublin bank building must lose 30 feet

CONTENTS:

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the following individuals and institutions for their help in the research and preparation of this thesis.

Mr Paul Caffery, tutor, art historian, National College of Art and Design.

Mr Auther Gibney, Architect.

Mr Sam Stephenson, Architect.

The Architectural Archives, Dublin.

The Architectural Library, U.C.D.

Mr Joe Scully, librarian, R.T.E; Dublin

The security staff of the Central Bank.

The administration staff of Dublin Corporation.

The security staff of the Educational Building Society.

The security staff of the Bord Na Mona offices.

SYNOPSIS

> "Architecture is at once a structural, practical, and visual art. Without solidity it is dangerous; without usefulness, it is merely large scale sculpture; and without beauty, it is no more than utilitarian construction."
> (Trachtenberg and Hyman, 1986, page 41)

There are many decisions an architect must make when designing a building. If he makes the right decision he should be acclaimed, if he makes the wrong one he should be held responsible.

So too must the planning authorities make decisions, for they must co-ordinate the work of all architects and maintain standards so that the environment is functional, pleasant and acceptable to all.

This thesis will examine four buildings designed by Sam Stephenson, the circumstances under which they were built, and some decisions made by both the architect and the planning authorities.

To conclude we shall present when the architect and planning authorities fell short of their responsibilities in relation to these four buildings,

and some possible solutions to avoid such irresponsible actions in the future.

INTRODUCTION

> "Architecture and design for the masses must be functional in the sense that they must be acceptable to all and that their well-functioning is the primary necessity."
> Pevsner, 1968, page 9

When the eye scans the central Dublin city skyline it is subjected to a variety of architectural idioms from a multitude of epochs. The contribution which Sam Stephenson made to the skyline and street-scapes has been considerable and subject to endless controversy. What was originally a medieval city became dominated by 18th Century architecture which recently had to accommodate the revolutionary whims of the 20th Century. Social conditioning has a great influence on the public's initial rejection of modern architecture. The reaction of "old is good - new is bad" is due to fear of the unknown and preference to remain static in a secure situation.

But to remain static, innovation would be quenched and mere replicas of previous styles would be constructed. This would result in an era without architectural identity or progress.

Because of the permanent and dominant nature of architecture on the environment, the architect is obliged to undertake many responsibilities. He must maintain respect for regional heritage, the environment, the publics acceptance of the buildings functional and aesthetic principles, and the cost of the development. Architecture should never be abused by the architect for monumental self-glorification or commercial gain.

The planning office must also assume these responsibilities, yet co-ordinate the proposals of all architects to conform to an overall scheme. This is not to say they should oppress the creativity of the architect but merely set guidelines for him. The planners must be representative of general opinion allowing for public participation or intervention.

Taking four buildings designed by Sam Stephenson, within this thesis, I hope to illustrate some irresponsible actions taken by both the architect and the Dublin planning authorities. Some of these actions have resulted in the rape of Dublins' character and creation of buildings that are considered a public affront. Yet judgement cannot be cast on either the planning authorities or Sam Stephenson without fully analysing

the circumstances and intentions of both parties. The four buildings under consideration are; The Central Bank on Dame Street, (Chapter 3), the Dublin Civic offices on Wood Quay, (Chapter 4), the Educational Building Society on Westmoreland Street and the Bord Na Mona offices on Baggot Street. The latter two also examine the somewhat dubious architectural device of reflective glass curtain-walling and therefore have been categorized together in a single chapter. (Chapter 5).

The development and ideals of some modern architectural movements will be discussed briefly, along with some early and notable examples of "modern" architecture in Dublin, although not thoroughly due to the limitations of this paper (Chapter 1). Also a brief profile of Stephenson will be presented outlining his background, early career and influences (Chapter 2).

CHAPTER ONE

"THE MODERN MOVEMENTS"

The Modern Movements:

The birth of modern architecture - like the Renaissance - hinged on the recognition of a deep historical discontinuity. One of the great obstacles to modernism in the nineteenth century had been the rigid insistence on continuity with the past. About 1900, however, the architectural avant-garde severed this bond. It was suddenly realised that the way to the future was not through the past. The past was over - an almost unbridgeable void had opened between it an the present.

The contemporary forces acting on the architect were not only intellectual; the real world, in which architecture operates, had changed. The industrial machine age had matured. Architecture was under the imperative to "adapt" to the machine age and was inspired to do so in the near-worship of the machine.

This adaption would have been impossible had not architecture's new material means also undergone a process of maturation. The emergence of new building materials in the nineteenth Century such as cast iron, wrought iron, steel and perfected engineering techniques, along with reinforced concrete enabled the architect to realise this "new architecture".

Modernist doctrine of the early twentieth Century had great propagandistic success in promoting the development and spread of the movement proclaiming that technological, mechanomorphic architecture was mankind's social and moral salvation and could make men better through a purer, more "rational" and "functional" architectural environment. Yet it is crucial to realize that there are many modern architectures, not merely one. Modern architecture is many sided and ever-changing because modern life is many sided and ever-changing. Only the explicit revival of the European past is forbidden.

Skyscrapers had been developed (mainly in New York) in the 1850s and 60s. But material and cultural circumstances induced Chicago, around 1885, to exploit the multistorey idiom. It was here that the curtain-wall was developed. Free from carrying any real load, the curtain-wall could take almost any shape, allowed maximum openness and fenestration. It is easy to understand why it was to become one of the protean conceptions of the modern building art.

Early 20th Century architects experimented freely in a search for a viable new architectural style. This period saw Art Nouveau, Expressionism and high modernism. (Pevsner, 1968).

Frank Lloyd Wright was the most futuristic of all the Modernists, especially in his early work. Mies Van Der Rohe, later a major figure, in 1919-21 produced a series of projects for glass-walled skyscrapers that are expressionist and more (Johnson, 1978). But it may be assumed that Walter Gropuis's Fagus factory was the beginning of the modern movement in 1911. (Gropius, 1956)

High modernism as represented by the Bauhaus was a visionary ideal shared for a brief time by leading artists and reflecting a transient convergence of ideological, socioeconomic, and artistic tendencies. High modern style was not unique to the Bauhaus. As it's often used (and abused) name, "international style", accurately indicates, it was an international European phenomenon involving many individuals. (Gropius, 1956).

For all its professing of impersonality and functionalism, high modernism was a style infused with humanistic values and idealism. Even the largest works refrain from monumentalism, although high moderism was never simply a "style" in the ordinary sense but a utopian movement created by diverse forceful personalities.

High modernism by the early 30s had been demystified, reduced to a formalist doctrine. Late modernism that followed was divergent, pluralistic and problematic. It peaked in the postwar decades and appears to have died in the 1970s. Late modernism was led by the leaders of high, and in one case early, modernism (Wright). Mies Van Der Rohe's most influential contribution during this period was to the skyscraper, it's development was dead since the turn of the Century but sprang to life again. He was a firm believer in the dogma of architectural "truth" and his mastery of planning involves more than mere space. His Seagram building ideally represents his skyscraper style - the most influential modernist formula of the postwar period, with worldwide imitations and derivatives. (Trachtenberg, 1986)

The buildings of the great Modern Masters (eg Mies Van Der Rohe, Wright, Le Corbusier and Gropius) dominated the architectural scene through the 1950s and 60s. However it was in this period that modernism truly became an international style that it had prematurely proclaimed in 1932.

It became a prominent architectural mode nearly everywhere throughout the world. The skyscraper, in

this period, had developed relatively little, compared with the pioneer works in the 1880s and 90s, it was restricted to the treatment of the curtain wall. Two aspects of Mies's skyscraper style were seized upon and exaggerated: the sculptural weight of the fluting and the "visible" display of structure. Also, not to be overlooked as an influence was the brutalism coming from Le Corbusier's late style. As an antidote to the slick impersonal international style of plate-glass sheets and shiny steel and aluminium members, the Brutalists offered an aggressive style of rough, chunky concrete forms. (Sharp, 1978).

Although pioneered in the 1960s, the 70s exploited the use of opaque, mirror-glass panels which will be discussed in chapter five.

One of the first buildings in Ireland to show the influence of the "modern movement" was Desmond Fitzgerald's airport terminal building at Collinstown, of 1943. Some ten years later came the Central Bus station by the firm Michael Scott and Partners, in an important situation close to Gandon's Custom House. The work of this firm (now Scott, Tallon, Walker) has gained international recognition. Among their best known

buildings are the rebuilt Abbey Theatre, Carroll's tobacco factory, Dundalk, the radio and television buildings at Donnybrook, and the new headquarters for the Bank of Ireland.

The pinnacle of modern architecture in Ireland was during the 1960s and 70s. It was during this period the Stephenson Gibney partnership rose to become the largest in the country, employing as many as 140 people. Stephenson, during this period, adopted both the international style and Brutalist idioms.

CHAPTER TWO

A PROFILE OF SAM STEPHENSON

Sam Stephenson was born into a literary background in Dublin in 1933. His father was Dublin's chief librarian and founder member of the Old Dublin Society.

His ambition to become an architect came from an early age and was encouraged by a friend of the family who acted as nanny to him. He became one of the first students to graduate from Bolton Street College of Technology, but because he had won the travelling scholarship he did not sit the Diploma exams.

In the bleak economic climate of the 1950s in Ireland, when both architectural work and building materials were hard to come by, emigrating as soon as one graduated from architectular college was as natural as waking up in the morning. But Sam Stephenson decided to stay and, with Arthur Gibney, over the next decade built up the largest practice in the land.

This was in 1960, and by 1962 they won the international competition for the Electricity Supply Board head office in Lower Fitzwilliam Street, Dublin. This commission was the milestone in the development of the practice, but their success also brought them their first taste of controversy.

Yet this controversy was a very effective advertisement for a virtually unknown practice and induced further contracts.

Sam Stephenson's association with controversy became quite renowned and is best illustrated in the Central Bank and Dublin Civic offices projects discussed in chapters three and four.

Sam Stephenson is very fond of the Wellington monument in the Phoenix Park and also admires the work of Albert Speer, but he was greatly influenced by American architecture in the 1960s, especially by an Irish born architect, Kevin Roche. Stephenson commuted quite regularly to the United States and imported many of the architectural ideas into Ireland.

The exploitation of materials such as glass, concrete and steel was based in America in their vast mega-structures, which obviously impressed Stephenson. He introduced the use of granite as a principle material in modern constructions in Ireland. His ideology is based on the international style, pioneered by Oud. (interview, Arthur Gibney, 2 March 1990).

Yet he also agrees with Kevin Roche who has little time for expressing current architectural theories "used by those who talk and write more than they draw and build", (Stephenson, 1983, page 8). Many of Sam Stephenson's theories can be directly traced back to Kevin Roche, for example Roche never uses more than one material where possible, a standard of Roche's adopted by Stephenson.

Their treatments of projects also show similarities between the two architects. The Oakland Museum (see fig. 1) shows great influence on the intended podium from which the Dublin Civic offices should have risen; The "Slot" windows in the original facade for the Worcester country National Bank (see fig. 2) may be seen in the final design for the civic offices.

Roche used reflective glass curtain walling extensively, some examples being the United Nations plaza one and two scheme (fig. 3); the Irwin Union Bank and Trust company building (fig. 4); and the final design for the Worcester Country National Bank (fig. 5).

Reflective glass was very much a material of the 1980s, even though Roche used it in the 60s. He may not necessarily have been the source of Stephenson's

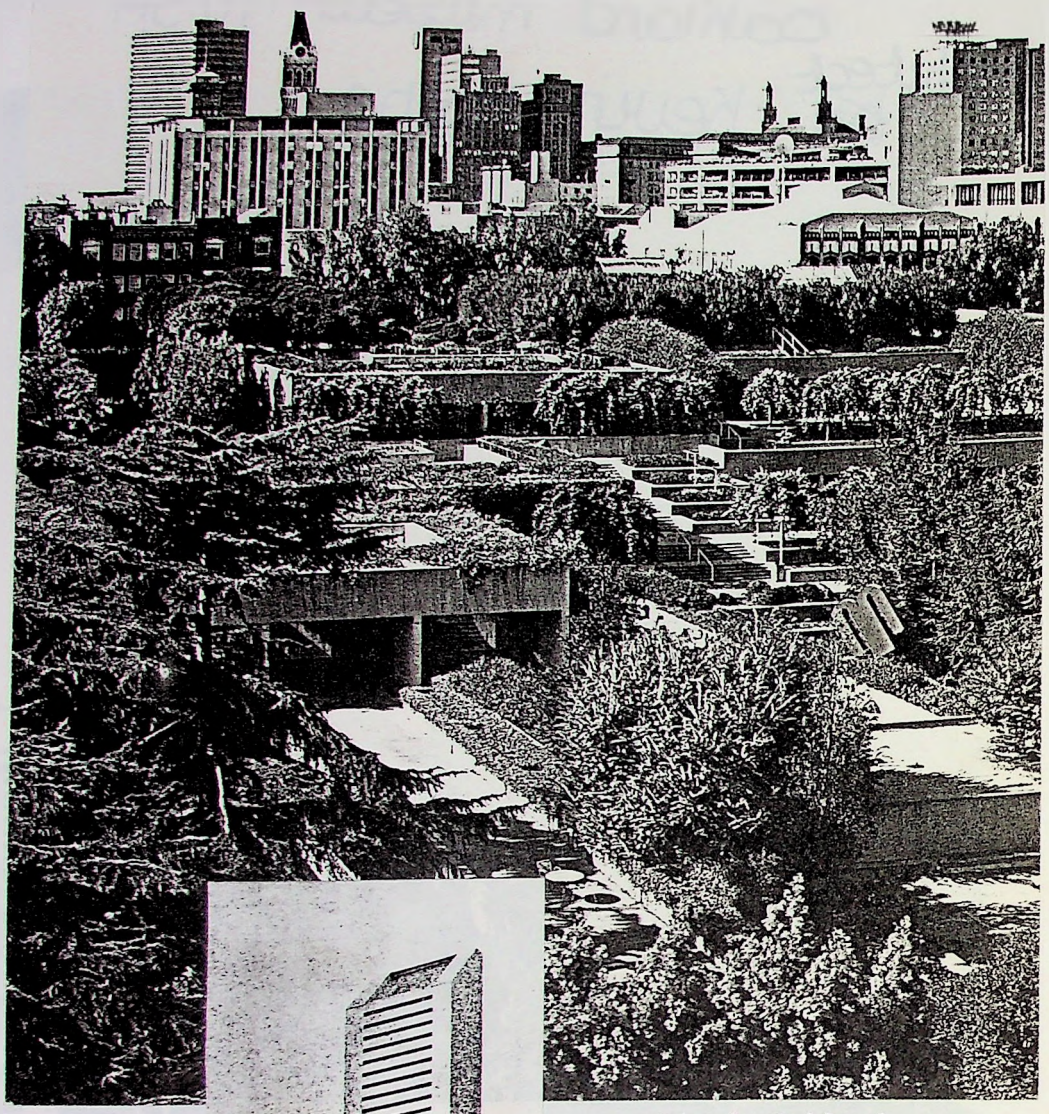


Fig 1: Oakland Museum U.S.A.

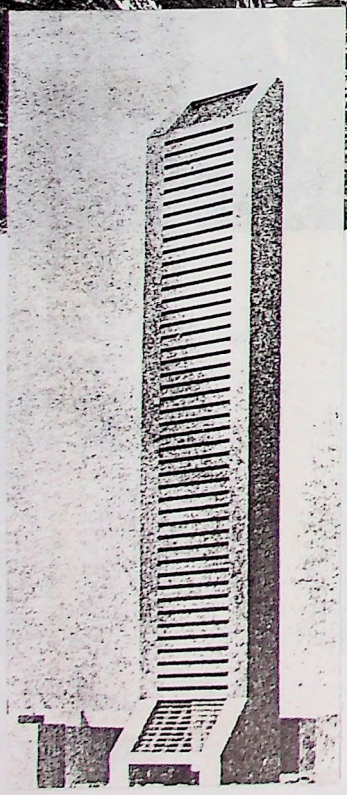


Fig 2: Concept Rendering For Worcester Country National Bank

Fig 3 United Nations Plaza One and Two

New York 1969 - 83

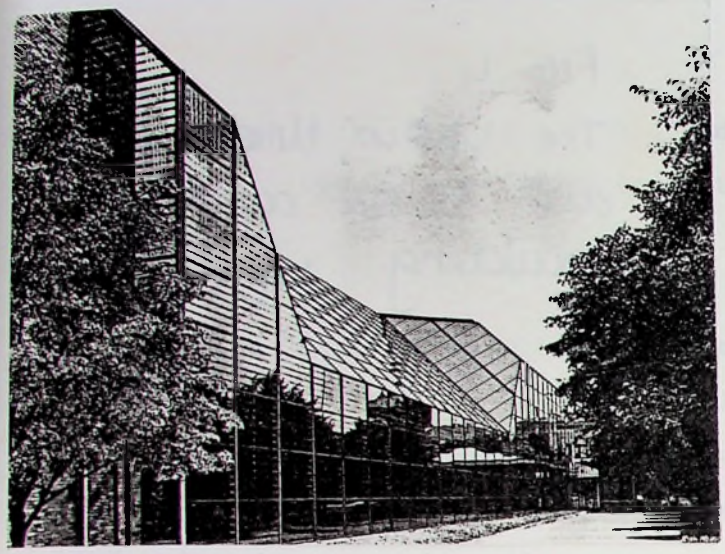


Fig 4
The Irwin
Unin Bank and
Trust Company
Building
(1966 - 72)

Fig 5
Worcester Country
National Bank

Educational Building Society building and the Bord Na Mona building, both of which were completed in the seventies.

What is evident is the resemblance between Roche's Irwin Union Bank and Trust company building (fig. 6) and Stephenson's Bord Na Mona offices, both of which have an open pergola creating an avenue along the side of a reflective glass curtain wall.

Stephenson's affinity towards glass and steel concourse areas may be seen in many of Roche's interiors (fig. 7 & 8).

Both architects show great sensitivity in their treatment of interiors. In public areas they both use vast amounts of glass draped in foliage, or, if natural light is unavailable, use controlled artificial light, bright metallic finishes, with marble or granite and, again, plenty of plants.

Even the method by which Roche developed a concept was adopted by Stephenson. Roche used models. 60% of his premises in America was allocated to a model making workshop; some of his models were full size (Unknown, 1983, pg. 27).

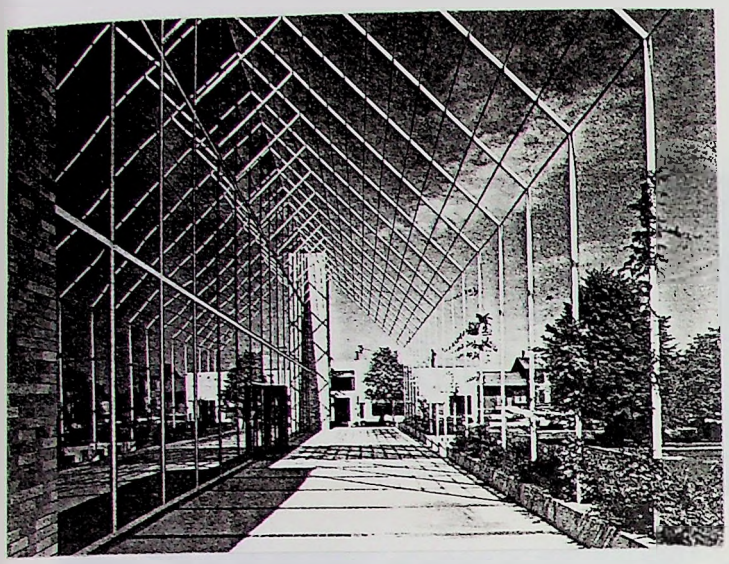
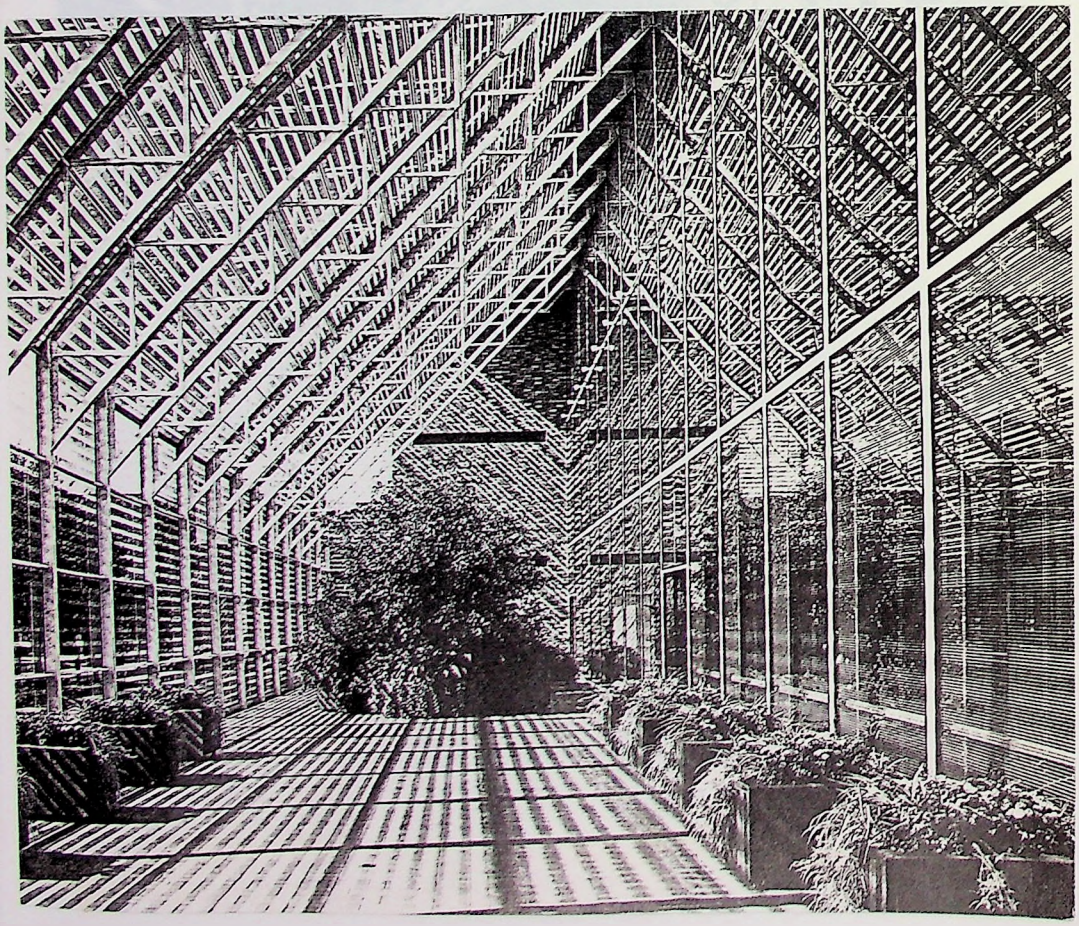


Fig 6
Irwin Union Bank
and Trust company
building
"Pergola"

Fig 7
Irwin Union Bank
and Trust Company
Building
"interior"



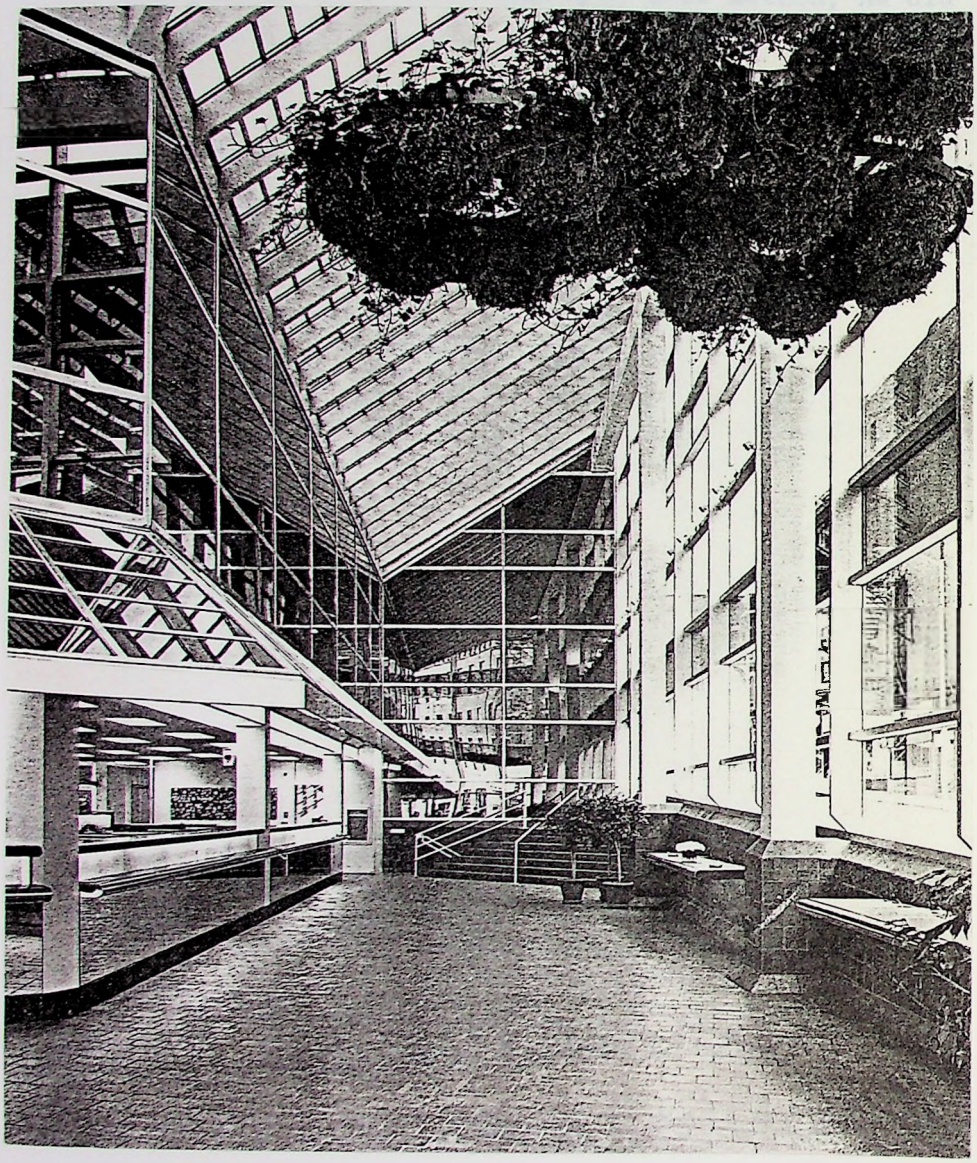


Fig 8 Worcester Country National Bank - interior

Yet, even though Stephenson employed this method, he did keep his models on a smaller scale.

What Stephenson admired most about Roche was the ability to conceptualise and to develop a project on a giant scale, while still meeting the functional and economical requirements (Stephenson, 1983, page 7).

Yet was Dublin prepared to accept projects of such a scale?

CHAPTER THREE

THE CENTRAL BANK

THE CENTRAL BANK

The Central Bank head office must be one of the most observed and commented upon modern buildings in Ireland, much of it related to its height and the political football that this was made into. It remains one of Sam Stephenson's favourites "it is" he says

> "the first major civic building to be built on a prominent site since the 18th century. It has helped Dame Street to come alive"
>
> The Irish Times, 14 Sept. 1982

This may not be unanimous among the public today, as it certainly was not during the building's construction.

> "Doubting citizens of Dublin will see this as a significant building".

Sam has also been noted in commenting.

> "It will probably be noted for preservation in 50 years time"
>
> (To bed with Palladio, Rising with Lutyens, R.T.E. 1988)

The head office project would more accurately be described as three buildings on the one site, bounded in the south by Dame Street, the west by Fownes Street, the north by Cope Street and to the east by the Old Jury's

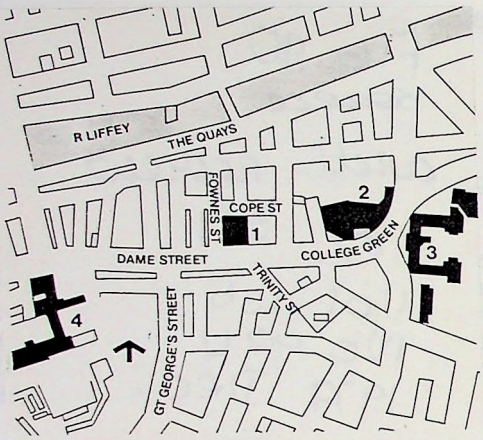
Hotel premises and the reconstructed Blooms Hotel which fronts onto Anglesea Street (Fig. 10).

Dame Street consists of Georgian and Victorian buildings along side hiberno romanesque and gothic revival buildings. They all are of low height with shops at ground level, commercial offices above these and living quaters above these again. Yet it must be noted that from the beginning Dublin Corporation readily agreed to treat the Central Bank office block as a major civic building.

The site intended (and used) for the building contained the listed commercial buildings dating from 1796;

> "this fine classical grouping was the venue for meetings of the Ouzee Calley Society, later subsumed into the Dublin Chamber of Commerce, and it is best remembered for its paved courtyard, which provided a charming short-cut for pedestrians on their way to Merchants Arch and the Halfpenny Bridge" (McDonald, 1985, pg 166).

When it was learned that this unique environment was under threat from the Central Bank (in September 1966) conservationists reacted with the usual combination of horror and dismay. Their main concern was to at least



location plan
key 1, Central Bank; 2, old Parliament House; 3, Trinity College, 4, Castle

Fig 10 Central Bank Location

retain the front facade of the building, this was agreed to in the final plans. A great show was made of the banks commitment to "restore" the commercial buildings and the blocks of cut stone were individually numbered before being taken down.

The intention being to rebuild the frontage; but

> "the cut stone so carefully numbered and stored way had been junked and a "replica" clad in newly-quarried granite, was designed to replace the original facade" (McDonald, Frank, 1985, pg 168-169)

This was a breach of the planning permission but went almost unnoticed because of the major controversy over the height of the building. In November 1967, the bank submitted plans for a fifteen storey skyscraper on the site and while this was turned down by the corporation, the planners granted permission a year later for a "Seagram - style" thirteen storey block on the basis that the facade of the commercial building would be retained (see Fig.11). the block would have been 176 feet high, (more than 50 feet higher than the final building). An Taisce appealed to the Minister for Local Government, Kevin Boland. In November 1969, Boland threw out the banks scheme as it would be "excessively obtrusive on the skyline" as well as being "out of scale and sympathy with the character of existing buildings in the area" (architectural archive).

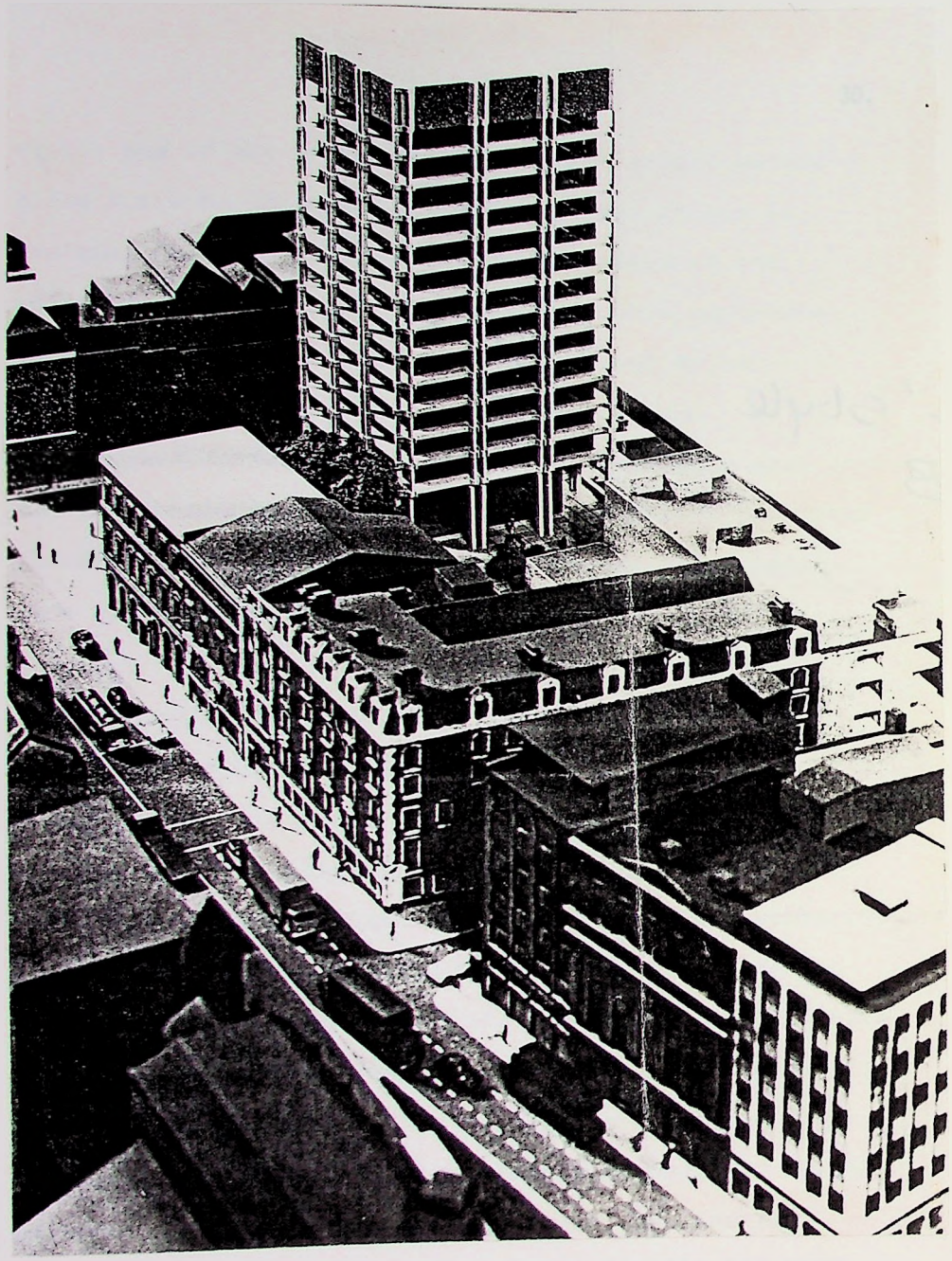


Fig 11 Original "Seagram" style concept for Central Bank

By the end of May 1970, Stephenson had submitted new plans for a building whose structure was unique in Ireland. This building basically consisted of two reinforced central cores supporting double cantilever trusses from which the floors were "hung" below.

The permission for this "upside down" building was granted by mid-August. The key feature to the permitted plans was that the roof was flat, structural details, were yet to be worked out.

Afterwards it was decided to rotate the commercial buildings through 90°, so that they would now face Fownes Street (this was done to increase the size of the plaza area). The plans permitted in August were redundant, so another set of revised plans was submitted to the Corporation. The application was lodged on 1st March 1972 and in an incredibly hasty move, the planners decided to grant permission just sixteen days later. If the plans were subjected to detailed scrutiny, much of the later embarrassment might have been avoided. In the eighteen months which had passed since the earlier scheme was approved, some structural details had been worked out, and as a result, the parapet height of the building was increased by eight feet to 120 feet. This

change was indicated in the March 1972 application, but the planners regarded the additional height as "marginal" and in any case, the roof was still "flat".

In reality, however, the revised plans which were the subject of successful application were already redundant. On December 1971, a full three months before the permission was granted, the corporation received plans incorporating further revisions. Stephenson also met with James Molloy, the manager of the planning department and discussed the changes with him. These radical revisions meant that the parapet height would exceed 120 feet and the roof would be pitched.

The Corporation were, therefore, already in possession of evidence which should have caused them at least to query the plans submitted for approval on 1st March 1972. Not only did they not do that but, as noted above, they actually gave their approval in double-quick time.

Meanwhile, construction work got underway and by April 1973 the twin services cores had been constructed by then the planning permission had already been breached, the two cores were already nine feet too high and the roof superstructure was going to add a further 20 feet

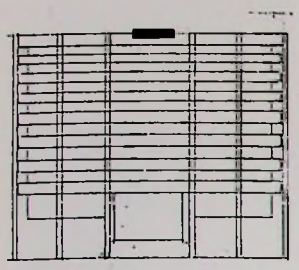
on to the building because of the need to carry greater loads than initially envisaged (mild steel was used instead of high stress steel and the introduction of the air-conditioning system increased the load).

Drawings of the building showing the pitched roof had also been published in the Irish Times on 22nd of February with Sam Stephensons consent. Incredibly, senior officials in the planning office claimed they had not seen these drawings, even though they had more than a passing interest in the project. After all, the planning department was housed at the time in a building next door to the Central Bank site. The chief planning officer, Charles Aliaga Kelly, was the first to notice there was something amiss with the Central Bank, this was at the end of August 1973. These suspicions were confirmed in early September, yet instead of issuing a "cease and desist" notice immediately, the Corporation merely "requested" the Bank to halt work. According to Stephenson "a lot of people in the Corporation were playing games". (To Bed With Palladio, Rising With Lutyens, R.T.E., 1988). Stephenson lodged a new application, but work did not halt on the site. By 23rd November the permission was refused but the roof superstructure was already in place. The decision, which

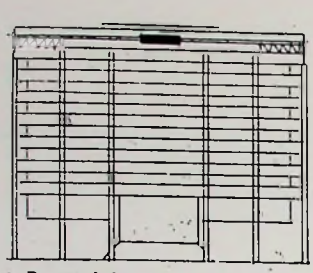
was endorsed by the city councillors, said the additional height was a "serious obstruction" on the existing skyline of the city and would affect views and vistas over a wide area. In addition, they said, the change in the roof profile would be "visually discordant and generally out of character with the city centre enviroment" (To Bed With Palladio, Rising With Lutyens, R.T.E., 1988). Yet the corporation had permitted a thirteen storey building for the site a few years earlier.

The revelation that the Central Bank was almost thirty feet higher than it was permitted to be caused great controversy. The Bank claimed that it only know of the extra height a few weeks previously, a public inquiry was held and Stephenson submitted five alternative designs ranging in height and cost :-

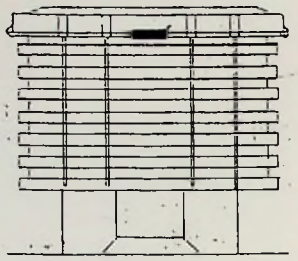
	COST	TIME	HEIGHT
1	£1,440,000	194 wks	119'9"
2	£1,094,000	108 wks	125'9"
3	£ 674,000	118 wks	134'4"
4	£ 630,000	156 wks	133'1"
5	£ 220,000	94 wks	134'4"



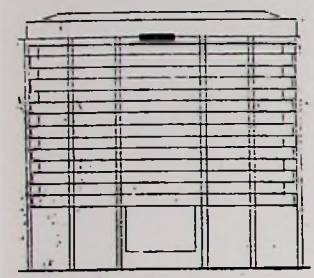
Proposal 1



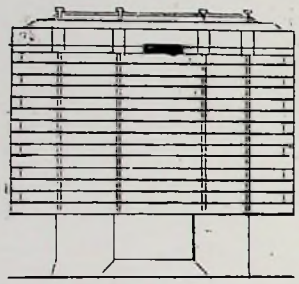
Proposal 2



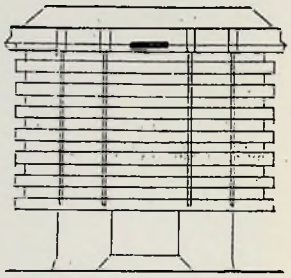
Proposal 3



Proposal 4



Proposal 5



Existing design

The bank did lose it's appeal and it had to go through another planning application and another appeal before permission was finally granted for a "compromise" solution on 30th January 1975. The height was reduced marginally by omitting the proposed copper roof and taking down its steel supports. Instead the heavy trusses from which the building is hung were clad in copper and left exposed, making for the oddest roof profile in Dublin. (Fig 12). Completed in 1978, several years behind schedule, the Central Bank ended up costing £10 million - more than five times the original estimate. The bank sued Sam Stephenson for his

Fig 12 Central Bank "The Oddest Roof Profile in Dublin

unauthorised departure from the approved plans, but the action was settled when Stephenson agreed to pay a £200,000 fine without admitting liability.

THE BUILDING

As mentioned earlier, there are three separate elements

1) The main building :- seven floors of offices suspended from the roof structure between mezzanine reception area and roof level plant room (Fig 13).

2) A partially submerged four level building on the east side with catering and dining areas (Fig 14).

3) The commercial building - housing the bond office in the southeast corner (Fig 15).

(There is also and underground car park)

Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that there are four principle elements, since in some respects the most important element of all is the extensive plaza, fronting on Dame Street (Fig 16). Suitable hard landscaped with sets in circular motif and five trees eventually forming a mini-avenue up to the entrance steps (and a somewhat ever-monolithic fountain in the

Fig 13

The Central Bank

Main Building

Fig 14

The Central Bank

Canteen Building

Fig 15 The Commercial Buildings

Fig 16 The Plaza Area

south west corner). The plaza is used to visually open up the site from Dame Street and allow the set back office building to rise higher than would have been acceptable at the site frontage. Hardly a novel device after all Mies van de Rohe did it decades ago in his Seagram building. In this case the open space has been "engineered" somewhat by taking down the listed commercial buildings which originally fronted onto Dame Street and rebuilt it facing Fownes Street (see page 31).

Dublin's restrictive height policy, however, results in the bank building taking only minimal advantage of the Plaza and tower theme, the result being an overall "squat" form which rather apologetically peaks its head over its surroundings when seen from a distance. Yet a rash of commercial towers in central Dublin would be disastrous (Fig 17).

The overhanging spandrels and ground floor core walls are clad in Wicklow granite which is also used for landscape walling and as paving steps in the plaza.

Granite was used for all cladding as Sam Stephenson believes that "most of the great buildings only used one material where possible" (To Bed With Palladio, Rising

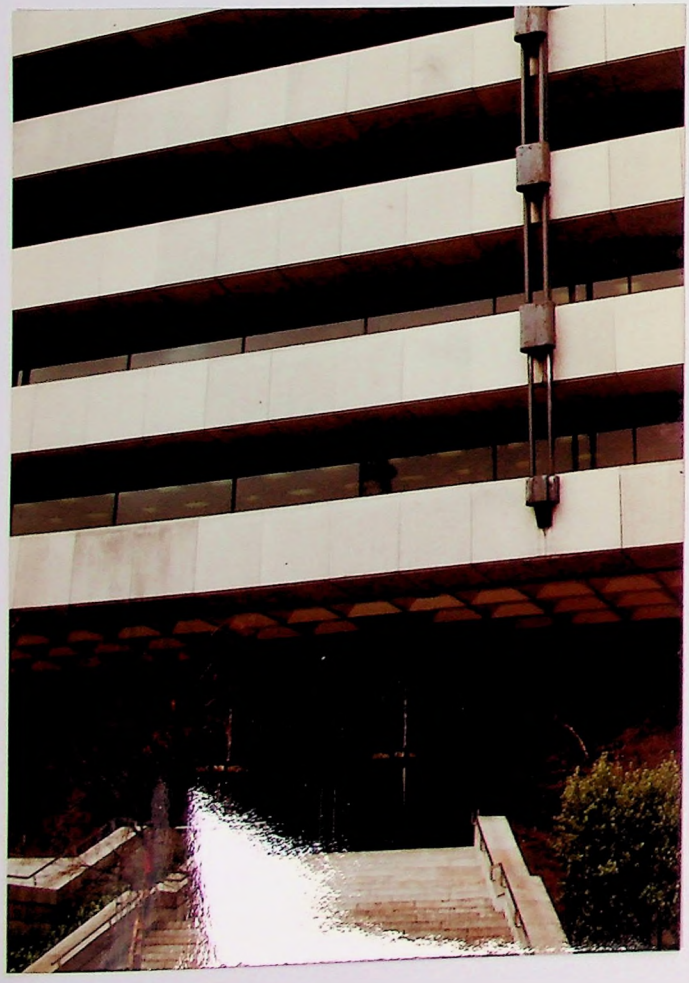


Fig 17
"A Rash of Commercial Towers in Central Dublin Would Be Disasterous"
View of Central Bank from Civic Offices (above)

Fig 18 (left)
"External Staircase Rising To Entrance"

with Luytens, R.T.E. 1988). A traditional pedestrian route between Dame Street and the Halfpenny bridge has been maintained across the plaza and is in frequent use. The use of suspended structure obviously gives potential freedom at ground level but whereas the effect of the first floor slab soaring out from the support cores is quite dramatic from some angles, security requirements appear to have limited exploitation of the possibilities. The two splayed marble staircases which rise up from the plaza are suitably impressive (Fig 18). The entrance level is glazed at front and rear with what must be the largest single pares of glass ever used (Fig 19) in Ireland, and proof that glass can bend dramatically is provided by the curved glass over and around the two entrance doors (Fig 20). Three high speed lifts with stainless steel finish and dark mirrored cabins are grouped on one side of the reception and a similar executive lift on the other (Fig 21).

A feature of the upper floor offices is the perimeter circulation corridor which affords uninterrupted panoramic views over Dublin. The seven office floors (the seventh with the executive suites) have an openness and spaciousness that is not readily apparent from outside. A deeply coffered ceiling slopes down at the

Fig 19 Central Bank - Foyer

Fig 20 Central Bank Entrance Doors

Fig 21 Central Bank - three high speed lifts

perimeter to full height glazing, but the floor and ceiling line extend a further one and a half metres beyond the glazing (eliminating vertigo). The canteens were put into a bunker-like building (in complete contrast with the panoramic main building). The edges are divided into bays, the light of day streams down through distant baylights. The effect was romantic and sophisticated. Staff canteens are rarely either of these. (To bed with Palladio, rising with Lutyens R.T.E., 1988).

CONCLUSION

The Central Bank is probably Sam Stephenson's greatest achievement in central Dublin to date. There have been many buildings constructed recently in Dublin but few could merit the description of architecture. It has a commanding profile with a dramatic structural system, dearly expressed, not hiding behind tinted glass curtain walling. It is a big building, a landmark that changed Dame Street dramatically. The resistance from certain quarters was, of course, utterly predictable from the very beginning and consequently the building could have been designed in a self effacing manner causing as little disturbance as possible in order to provoke the

least opposition.

That the designers did not adopt this course of action is there for all to see, and no matter what one may think of the final development, it is to their credit that they did not equate good architecture with instant popular acceptance. Neither did those who changed Dublin in centuries gone by.

But the building is often described as "misplaced" within the context of it's surroundings. This is quite apparent when passing down Dame Street. The street is suddenly "blasted" open by a sudden injection of modern architecture. Although it is a very good building in isolation, what comes into question is whether or not Sam Stephenson's "modern" approach was suited to this project.

It is unfortunate that the most observed and commented upon part of this impressive building is the roof structure. It is somewhat ironic that the political "solution" to the overheated controversy was to insist that the roof trusses be clad in copper. If any architect put in a planning application for a design which proposed to "express the integrity of the roof

structure" in the manner which has resulted it would almost certainly be turned down. It must be said that the copper canopy originally proposed for the building would have been far more suitable. Maybe within time the Central Bank may get it's majestic topping.

Stephenson's idea that planning permission is merely a licence to develop an architectural concept (as he said at the inquiry) is totally unacceptable if there is to be any control over the outcome of the "creative" design process. He also put forward the argument that he had the right to seek revised planning permission (Hanley's People, R.T.E. 1986); he failed to mention that until permission was granted building should, logically, cease.

Yet, although what may have seemed like an arrogant architect trying to "put one over" the planning authorities, the extraordinary double standards of Dublin Corporation are often missed.

In the case of the Central Bank, the whole controversy might have been avoided altogether if the bank had been more devious from the outset. Under Section 84 of the planning act, state authorities are exempted from the

need to seek planning permission before embarking on the construction of a building, no matter how large. All they are required to do is to "consult" with the relevant local authority and, if there are any objections, the minister for the environment (formerly local government) has the final say. But because there is no need to file a planning application and therefore, no right of appeal by third parties, the public is entirely excluded from the process. The whole business is conducted behind closed doors and, as such, it is a major subversion of the right of public participation enshrined in the planning act. Effectively, the State is elevated above the law, and the exemption it enjoys is not limited to developments with "security" implications. (McDonald, 1985).

CHAPTER FOUR

THE DUBLIN CIVIC OFFICES

Fig 22

THE CIVIC OFFICES

The Civic Offices have been the cause of great dismay for Sam Stephenson since he first won their contract in 1969.

He described it as "probably the most important thing I'll ever build in my life" and because they remain unfinished "are being judged in isolation from the original concept" (To Bed with Palladio, Rising with Lutyens, 1988, R.T.E.).

Only one phase of the original concept has been completed and an ambition of Stephenson is to finish the project. This may not be eagerly welcomed by either the public or the Corporation, who endured, during the first phase, one of the most intense environmental controversies in Dublin's history, at great financial cost.

The site on which the four office blocks were to be built, Wood Quay, was the most important Viking site ever unearthed in Europe, containing as it did, the very story of Dublin's birth.

The project became the most potent symbol of the

Corporation's determination to have it's way with the city, regardless of cost or consequences. The bureaucrats wanted new Civic Offices and they were prepared to stop at nothing to achieve their objective.

It is hard to credit that these two great "block-houses" are the result of over 30 years of planning. For it was in January 1956 that the city council first approved plans for the Civic Offices on the four acre site in front of Christchurch Cathedral. The scheme, designed by Jones and Kelly, was straightforward Stalinist in style and it's great bulk would have blotted out any view of Christchurch from the Liffey quays. Under pressure the Corporation shelved the Jones and Kelly scheme, even the R.I.A.I. (Royal Institute of Architects of Ireland) expressed strong reservations about the project, arguing that the site was of such importance that it warranted a major architectural competition. Special legislation was enacted to enable the site to be acquired under a compulsory purchase order and, by 1967, the Corporation had its "plot" for the Civic Offices. Demolition work got underway immediately and among the casualties was "an eccentric piece of Victorian", O'Meara's Irish house pub. Then, instead of adopting the RIAI's proposal for an architectural competition, the Corporation

proceeded to arrange a contest for developers.

Thus, from the very outset, the Corporation was primarily concerned with how the whole project was to be financed. Architecture was very much a secondary issue and, significantly, there was no reference to the site having any archeological importance. The Corporation intended to judge the competition itself. Only after sustained pressure from the RIAI was a twelve-man board of assessors appointed to adjudicate on the proposals put forward by the short listed developers and their architects.

The four page brief for the contest merely requested the provision of 300,000 square feet of office space in "an efficient layout and a form reflecting the importance of the buildings in the life of the city". Noting that it was the Corporation's policy to "open up the vista of Christchurch from the quays", the brief said "the disposition and height of the buildings must take this into account". But there were to be no "unduly windswept" open spaces or large-scale surface car parking. It was also specified that the designers should "have regard to" the character of existing buildings on

the riverfront and "the effect on the skyline of the proposed buildings, particularly when viewed from the quays"- otherwise the brief concentrated on so-called "road improvements" (McDonald, 1985, pg 191).

Six of the entrants submitted by developers were picked by the Corporation and put on exhibition at City Hall. The most concise assessment of the schemes on view was made by Desmond Leslie. Referring to the requirement in the brief that the entrants must "have regard to" Christchurch, he wrote, "The best that can be said for any of them is that the cathedral is still there". (McDonald, 1985, pg 191). Desmond Fitzgerald, professor of architecture at UCD, on behalf of the Gallagher Group submitted four designs. They were all variations on the theme of a massive eighteen storey slab block, plonked on the eastern side of the site. More daring was the design submitted by Michael Scott and Partners on behalf of Cramptons. A scaled down version of the United Nations in New York, it had a twenty-two storey skyscraper, with two storey council chamber along side, rising from a podium that would have covered the entire site. This dramatic proposal was placed in second and could have even won, only the assessors thought it may dominate Christchurch and could be out of character with central

Dublin's skyline.

Thus, after careful consideration of the jury, throughout 1969, Sam Stephenson's ingenious plan of four office blocks, ranging in height from five to ten storeys, "offering glimpses of Christchurch" won first prize.

The project development required an architect who was sensitive to the heritage and classical buildings of the area. Sadly, Sam Stephenson did not demonstrate any sensitivity in the treatment of these buildings.

In 1970 the scheme was submitted for planning permission. The plans did their usual rounds of the various Corporation departments; but for technical reasons, at least two departments recommended that the entire scheme should be rejected. Matt Macken, the city manager at the time, had the final say. Rather than cause the embarrassment of the Corporation refusing permission for its own office blocks, he granted permission for the scheme on Christmas Eve 1970.

More than thirty individuals and organisations lodged complaints to the then minister, Bobby Molloy and a

full scale oral hearing was held in May 1971. Incredibly Molloy finally confirmed Macken's decision in July 1972. Yet he requested that the National Monuments Advisory Council could inspect, record and recover matter of archaeological interest from the Wood Quay site.

Because the Corporation had, since September 1972, involved itself in the financial burden of a £5m loan, Macken confidently declared in March 1973 that there was no reason why building should not start immediately. But, even by May, excavations being conducted by the National Museum had only investigated 5% of the site. The Corporation issued a notice to quit and the Museum authorities, disgracefully, did.

For three months bulldozers ripped through the site destroying much of the remains, including a recent discovery of the old city wall.

Even Jimmy Tully noticed something was amiss at the Wood Quay site. Tully was the minister for local government at the time and, it must be noted, in terms of planning, he was probably the worst minister for local government in the history of the State.

On 13th November 1973, he stopped work on the site "pending consultation and further investigation" (Irish Independent, 14th November 1973).

Matt Macken was told by Tully to prepare a report setting out all available options, including the feasibility of building the Civic Offices on a large Corporation site at Waterford Street.

However, in the report, which was prepared in double quick time, the Waterford Street option was brushed aside in two short paragraphs in contrast with six times as much space arguing in support of continuing with the development of the Wood Quay site. (McDonald, 1985).

Not surprisingly, when presented with this one sided report, the City Council voted unanimously in favour of the motion calling the minister to allow the offices to be built on the site.

The Corporation staff also applied pressure on the minister through their unions, for fear that they may never see their new offices.

But what really persuaded Tully was Macken's argument

that any further delay would cost money.

Thus on the 13th February 1974, Tully announced that the scheme would go ahead with the offices on the eastern (Fishamble Street) side of the site.

Macken, although he had "conned" the City Council and the minister had not convinced the conservationists, and they continued their objections until the end.

Stephenson had been continuously involved, throughout all the interventions, in the Corporation's efforts to save the Wood Quay project. He also took these times as an opportunity to redesign the whole scheme. However, the more work he put into it, the less sympathetic it became (not that it was entirely sympathetic in the first place (Fig 23, 24 and 25).

By the time he was finished redesigning them in May 1976 he had to "sell" the entire package to the Corporation again. This he did successfully but because of high interest rates during the mid-seventies the cost had become somewhat intimidating and the Corporation split the project into two phases; the first costing £6.7 million. The contract for the first phase was signed in October

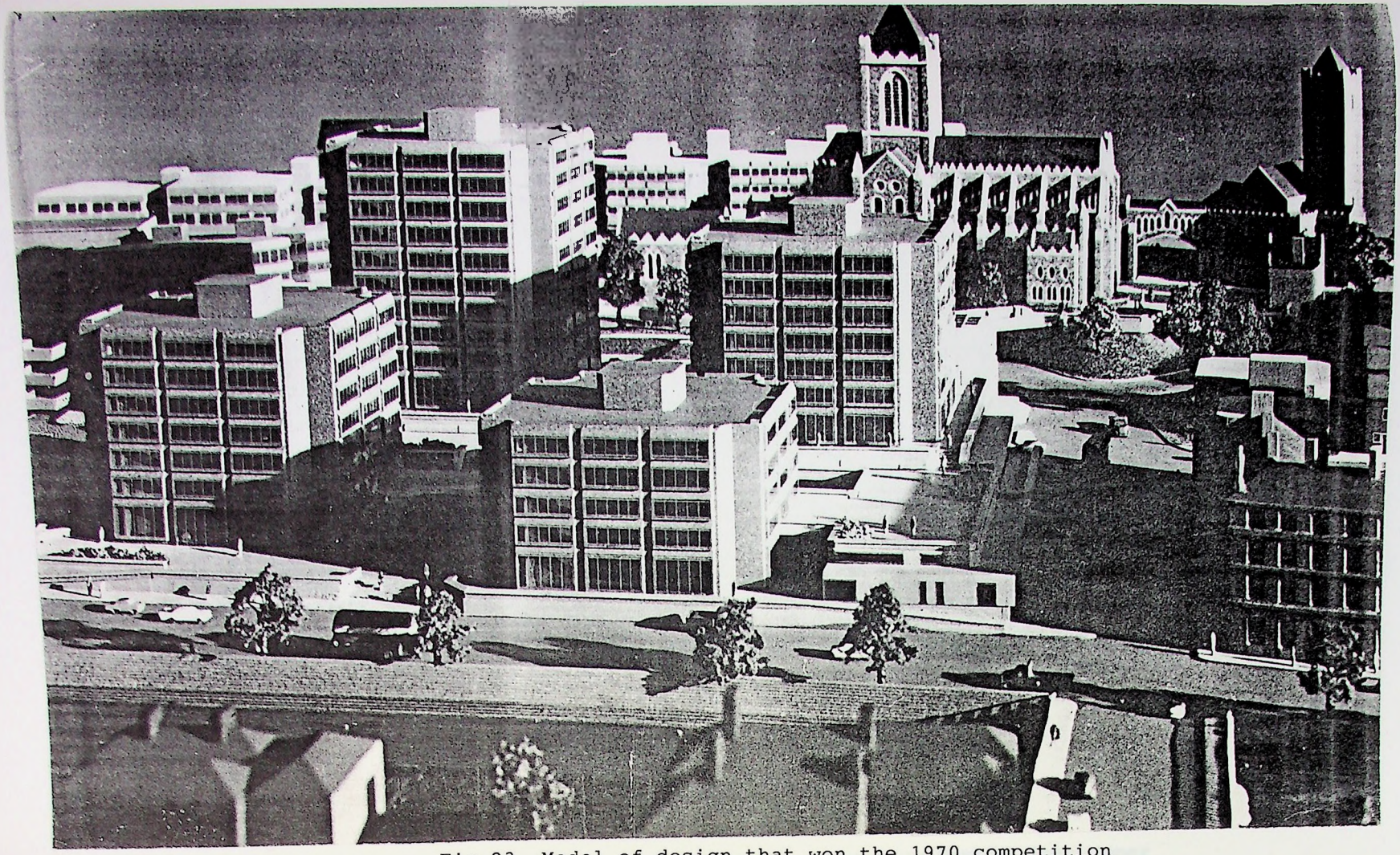


Fig 23 Model of design that won the 1970 competition

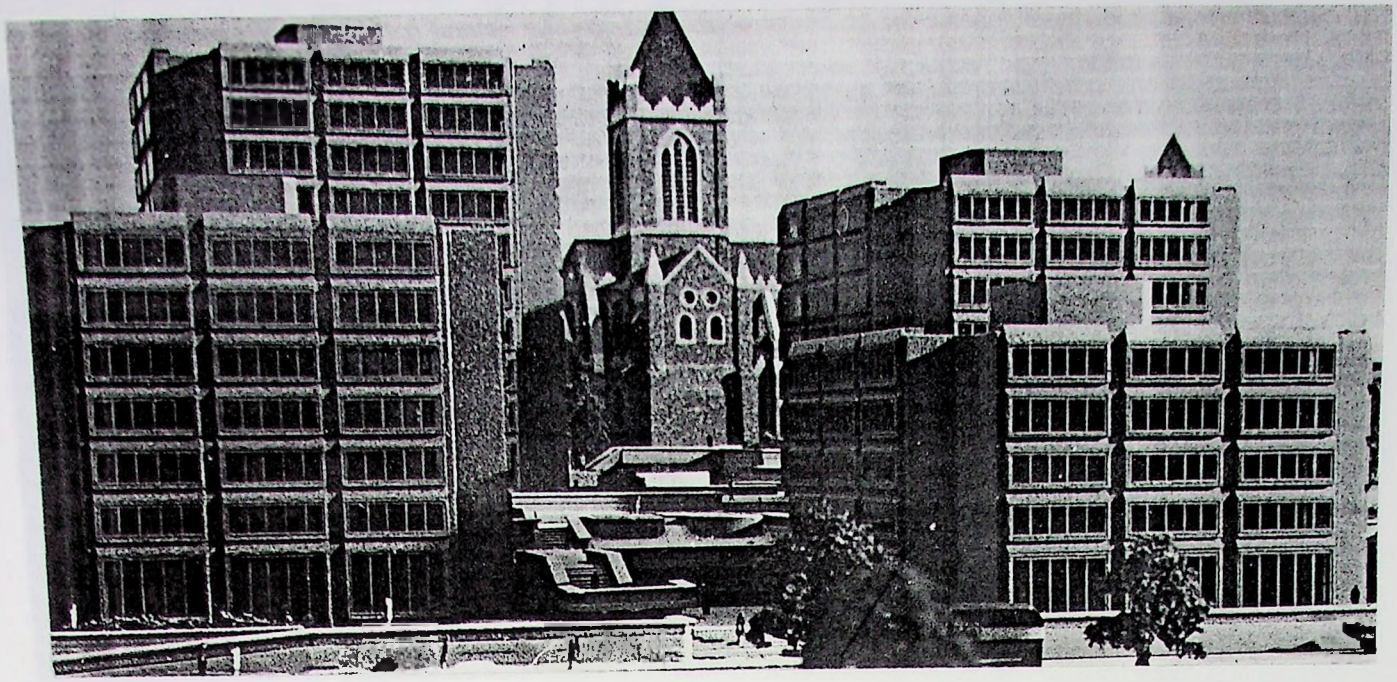


Fig 24 Original Design Model - view from Ormond Quay Upper

Fig 25 Original Design Model - view from Ormond Quay Lower

1977, and the Corporation hoped to be in their new offices by 1980, but this would have meant that Matt Macken would have to dishonour his pledge to the City Council in 1974 that the site would be completely investigated by archeologists.

Six weeks after the contractors moved into the site, word leaked out that they had been ordered to bulldoze through the "medieval junk" in the words of the Corporation (McDonald, 1985, pg 298).

This description aggrivated Rev. Father Martin, a professor of medieval history in UCD. He was the chairman of the Friends of Medieval Dublin, a group formed in 1976 by many conservationists, including Sam Stephenson (who had departed from the organisation beforehand).

The priest dragged the Corporation through high court injunctions and eventually in June 1978 convinced Justice Liam Hamilton to declare the site a National Monument. At this stage Wood Quay had caught the public's imagination and F.X. Martin found himself leading a mass movement against the destruction of this prominent site. He led some 20,000 people through the

streets of Dublin in September 1978, demonstrating the incredible threat the people felt against their heritage. (To bed with Palladio, rising with Lutyens, R.T.E., 1988).

In June 1979 a group of distinguished citizens occupied the site, ironically Michael Scott was among them. Michael Scott had received the second prize for the contest held in 1968 and one might question what his opinion might have been if "he" had won the competition - would it have been the same as what it was on this day? I think not!

They occupied the site for three short weeks, but finally the Corporation won. Even the remains of the old city wall, which the Corporation had pledged to retain, were dismantled, the stones numbered for some imaginary date in the future for re-erection. Today they may be seen as a pile of rubble under the main building.

This victory proved not to satisfy the Corporation fully and they proceeded to sue F.X. Martin for £89,000 in "damages",

Sam Stephenson at this stage had, predictably, earned quite a reputation for himself and had become something

of a "pariah" in the property world.

Property developers shunned the prospect of controversy, wanting things done with the minimum amount of fuss. So Sam had to look elsewhere for clients turning to the more congenital climate of Britain. Even today, Sam is battling for an additional £674,500 in fees he alleges the Corporation still owes him. Yet in the Irish Independent, January 16th, 1990 they claim they only owe him £30,000 at most.

The Corporation did not move into their offices until 1986, and the total cost of the first phase was over £21 million, ten times the estimate quoted in 1967, when the scheme was first conceived.

THE BUILDING

After winning the international competition for the Civic Offices complex in Dublin, Sam Stephenson described it as "the greatest architectural opportunity in Dublin since Gandon took his design of the Custom House off the drawing board" (The Architect (London), Vol 3, No.4, 1973, April pp. 66 - 68).

His scheme involved building four office blocks of various heights on the four acre site, bounded on the east by Fishamble Street, the west by Winetavern Street, the south by Christchurch Cathedral and the north by the Liffey's Wood Quay.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, gaps between the buildings offered glimpses of Christchurch from the quays.

Terraced parks and concourse areas were to join the buildings with large public spaces and walks. Sunlight was to flood into the central area which was to be the main entrance to the complex.

A background of two lower buildings were to take the

scale of the taller buildings down to the river side (Fig 26).

During the periods when the various controversies (discussed earlier) caused intervention, Sam took the opportunity to redesign the whole scheme. This proved to be disastrous.

Even though his winning entry was far from perfect, it's pre-cast elevations, flat roofs and projecting windows were more in character with the area than what resulted from his overhaul (see Fig 24 and 26). The blocks became almost solid, with chamfered roofs, granite cladding and - worst of all - deep recessed "slit" windows. In other words the entire appearance of the Civic Offices is totally different to the scheme envisaged in 1968.

Sadly the Corporation as a planning authority is exempt from development control. The new scheme also included a sunken council chamber and an underground Viking museum.

What exists at the moment is two of the intended office blocks connection by a concourse area constructed from glass and metal tubing. Three or four floors of the

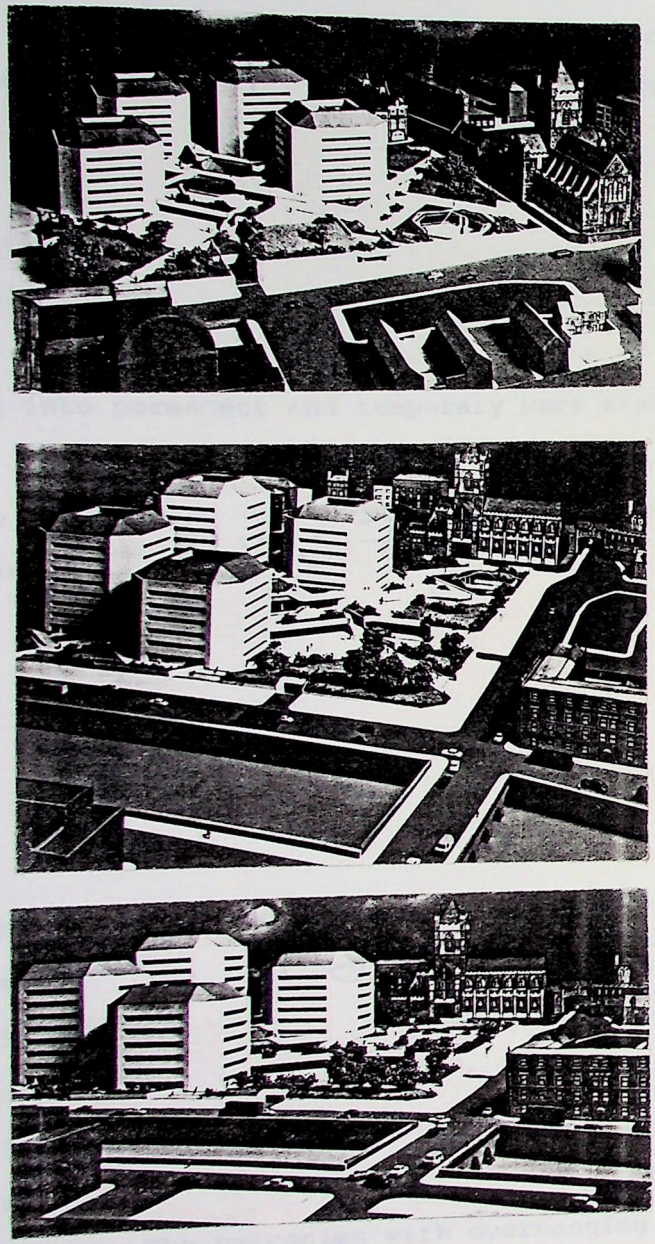


Fig 26 Model of Final Design

Consisting of the intended four blocks

blocks, should be below ground level if the scheme was completed. The taller of the two blocks has nine storeys and the smaller has seven (Fig 27 and 28).

Both these blocks have a central core housing two stairwells, lift-shafts, a fire safety shaft and toilets. Office space surrounds these central cores, divided into permanent and temporary work stations.

The two blocks have been likened to many things, including

> "huge filing cabinets, oversized nuclear shelters or even the concrete bunkers built by the Germans around the coast of Continental Europe, during World War II".
> (McDonald, 1985, pg 289)

The similes could continue forever and yet none would be complementary. Yet when you examine some of the details, which Sam Stephenson is noted to exceed in, such as the concourse connecting the two blocks (Fig 29 and 30), your confidence in him, as an architect, is almost reinstated. The area is bright, airy and quite sensitive in treatment. The balconies with overhanging plants induce a touch of humanity into an almost ice-cold

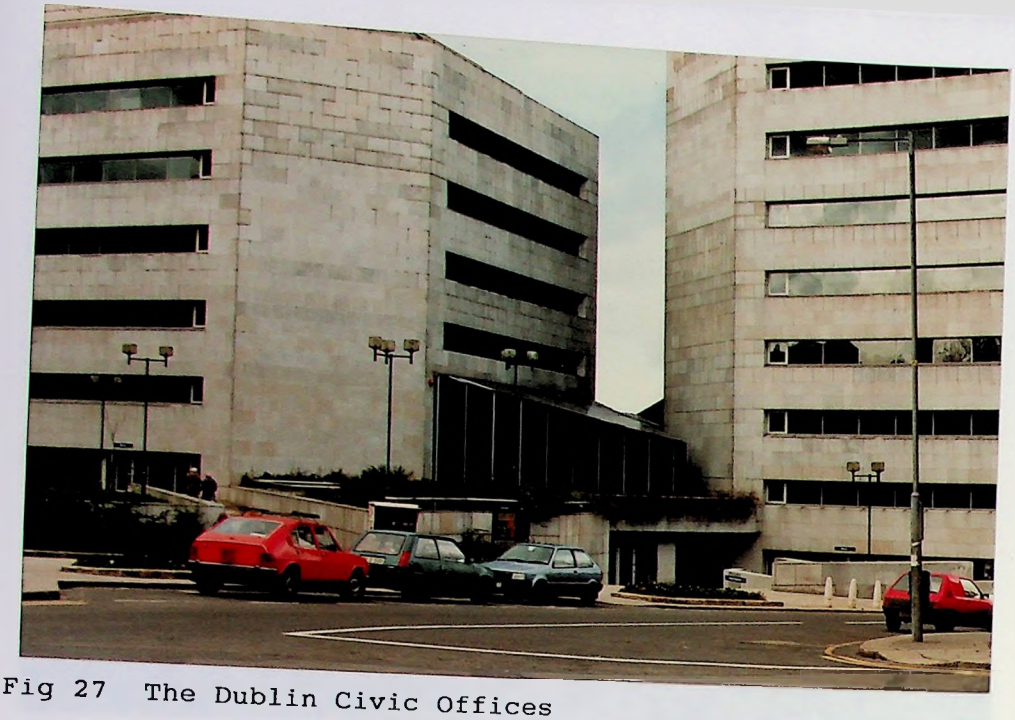


Fig 27 The Dublin Civic Offices

View from Lord Edward Street

Fig 28 The Dublin Civic Offices

View from Wood Quay

Fig 29 Dublin Civic Offices, Concourse Area

"A Viking Sculpter Brazenly Reminding Us Of

What Was Lost"

Fig 30

Stairs Leading

Up To The

Concource Area

building. The only problem is that, with it being an Irish Corporation building the windows are rarely cleaned.

Stephenson claimed that these buildings were expressions of what local government is. The buildings "made a statement" of what activities were being conducted within them.

Certainly, these buildings do not convey an image of a democracy that the hub of our local government should be "stark, cold and monstrous", they convey a totalitarian image. But is this not more accurate judging the Corporations own antics in the planning of these offices (Fig 31).

But somehow, although the imagery may be accurate, the intention was not there to create this image of our government. So in reality, the architect, Sam Stephenson failed.

Dublin is a medieval city with mainly 18th century architecture, these new buildings intrude into where it is oldest. Christchurch is a focal point and should not be competed against (Fig 32). It may be described as a physical assault on the public and the area. The buildings which line the river quays are essential

Fig 31 "Stark, Cold and Monsterious"

Dublin Civic Offices

Fig 32 Christchurch "An Uninterrupted View"

Dublin; while they are allowed to disintegrate to be replaced by unsympathetic new buildings, the most memorable aspect of the city will be lost.

These blocks are over simple, bold and domineering. Yet when Stephenson returns to details he is very good. The concourse area connecting the two blocks uses glass and metal tubing very effectively but as far as the blocks themselves are concerned he seemed to just lose interest.

If the project had been completed the sunken council chamber, under ground Viking museum, terraced parks and concourse areas may have enhanced the scheme but they would not have saved the project.

The project should not be completed in the form intended; as Frank McDonald suggested in "To Bed with Palladio, Rise with Lutyens", R.T.E., 1988, an international architectural competition should be held with the intention to hopefully reinstate the street scape.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE GLASS BUILDINGS

Fig 33 (above)

Fig 34 (below)

THE GLASS BUILDINGS

In the past two decades one of the most discussed architectural devices has been reflective glass curtain walling. The building skin usually becomes a frameless grid of identical, opaque, mirror-glass panels that mask the structure and all the internal features of the building as effectively as a blank stone wall. It is true that mirror glass, first developed in 1960, assists air conditioning by reflecting heat and is economical and efficient to design and construct by hiding windows and everything else behind it. But such a cool, mirror-glass building of the '70s and '80s is as forbidding, antisocial, and hostile as a person wearing mirrored sunglasses.

When adopted for low-rise buildings in European city centres, there has been a mixed reaction. Whether the glass reflects surrounding facades from previous epochs' backyards or the reflective glazing across the street, its longterm effectiveness as a street scape comes under question.

In Ireland, the main exponent of the glass curtain wall is Sam Stephenson.

The Educational Building Society Offices

In 1970 Sam Stephenson was commissioned by the E.B.S. to redesign their existing building on the corner of Westmoreland Street and Fleet Street. They required a new office layout, maximising use of available space, and a neon sign of some significance on the outside of the building. Stephenson obtained approval for a basic "reconstruction" of the original building, the educational chambers, yet brazenly proceeded with quite a different design (a policy not unknown for Stephenson) (McDonald, 1985).

Judgements on the building were inevitable widely divergent, but the real test was yet to come. The EBS wanted to extend their premises and later acquired three adjoining buildings - the immediately adjacent Paradiso restaurant with it's splendid art nouveau facade; the main office of the Irish Times and Graham's Pharmacy. The second phase of the scheme retained the Paradiso facade and intended to continue the reflective glass curtain walling on the other side. The Victorian Society and An Taisce supported the proposal, but the Dublin Civic Group objected on historical, aesthetic and planning grounds. Dublin Corporation approved the scheme

but (presumably to forestall being criticised by the public for allowing "another glass building") the planning conditions stipulated that the elevation should incorporate "some solid elements", which inevitably broke the integration of the first and second phases.

THE BUILDING

The educational chambers had an irrational steel structure, some timber floors, some concrete, and brick wall structure at the back. The site was highly congested with no main rear access. Stephensons solution was to remove the building's exterior back to the steel structure, which was then completely obscured by a reflective glass curtain wall of single glazing in aluminium framing. Travertine marble was used for the main entrance door-surround and continued inside for public area floors and banking hall counters (Fig 35). Neon signs were houses behind a curtain wall, making it invisible by day but doubly effective at night.

When continuing the development in phase two, the obvious solution to integrate the new development with

Fig 35 Educational Building Society - Phase One

phase one was to continue the original concept of glass curtain walling on the other side of the Paradiso facade. But because of Dublin Corporation's insistence of incorporating "some solid elements", highly polished granite was introduced (Fig 36). The same grid was retained on both sides, thus, the Lafayette facade became the centrepiece of an almost symmetrical design (with nine bays of glass and granite on one side and ten bays of glass on the other).

The original phase one doorway was removed and replaced with glazing. The new entrance lies behind the Lafayette facade rising dramatically to a glass roof (Fig 37) with galleries at all floor levels (Fig 38). The semicircular profile of the original glass roof has been retained and is echoed by the semicircular profile of the exposed glass and steel lift (Fig 39). The full-height entrance hall helps overcome the change in floor levels of approximately four feet between phase one and phase two (Fig 40).

The second phase was completed in 1981 and the entire scheme provides a total of 3,650 m^2 office space at a cost of £2.9 million.

Fig 36
Educational
Building Society
"Integration of
Solid Elements"
(above)

Fig 37
Educational
Building Society
Glass Roof Above
Foyer
(left)

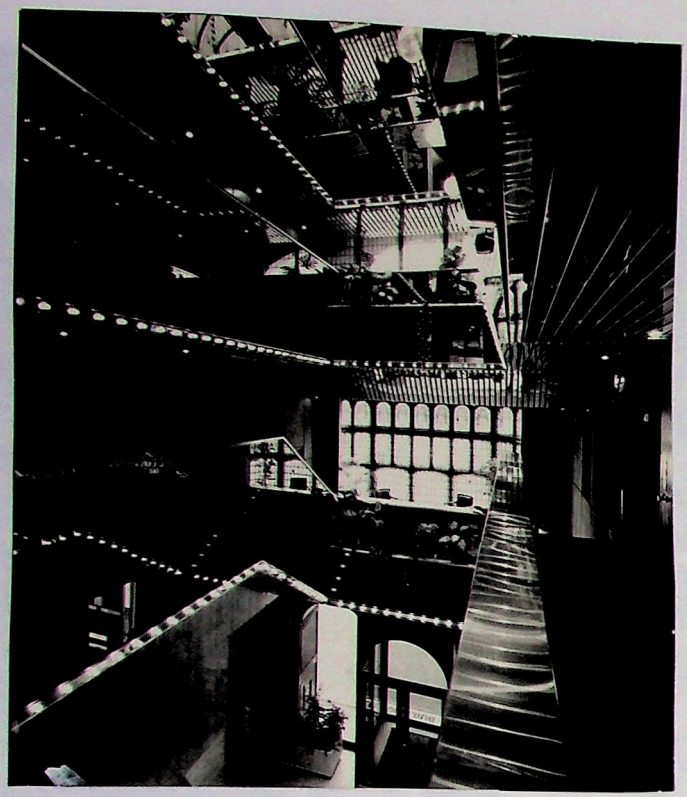


Fig 38
Educational
Building Society
"Galleries at all
floor levels"

Fig 39
Educational
Building Society
"exposed glass
and stell lift"

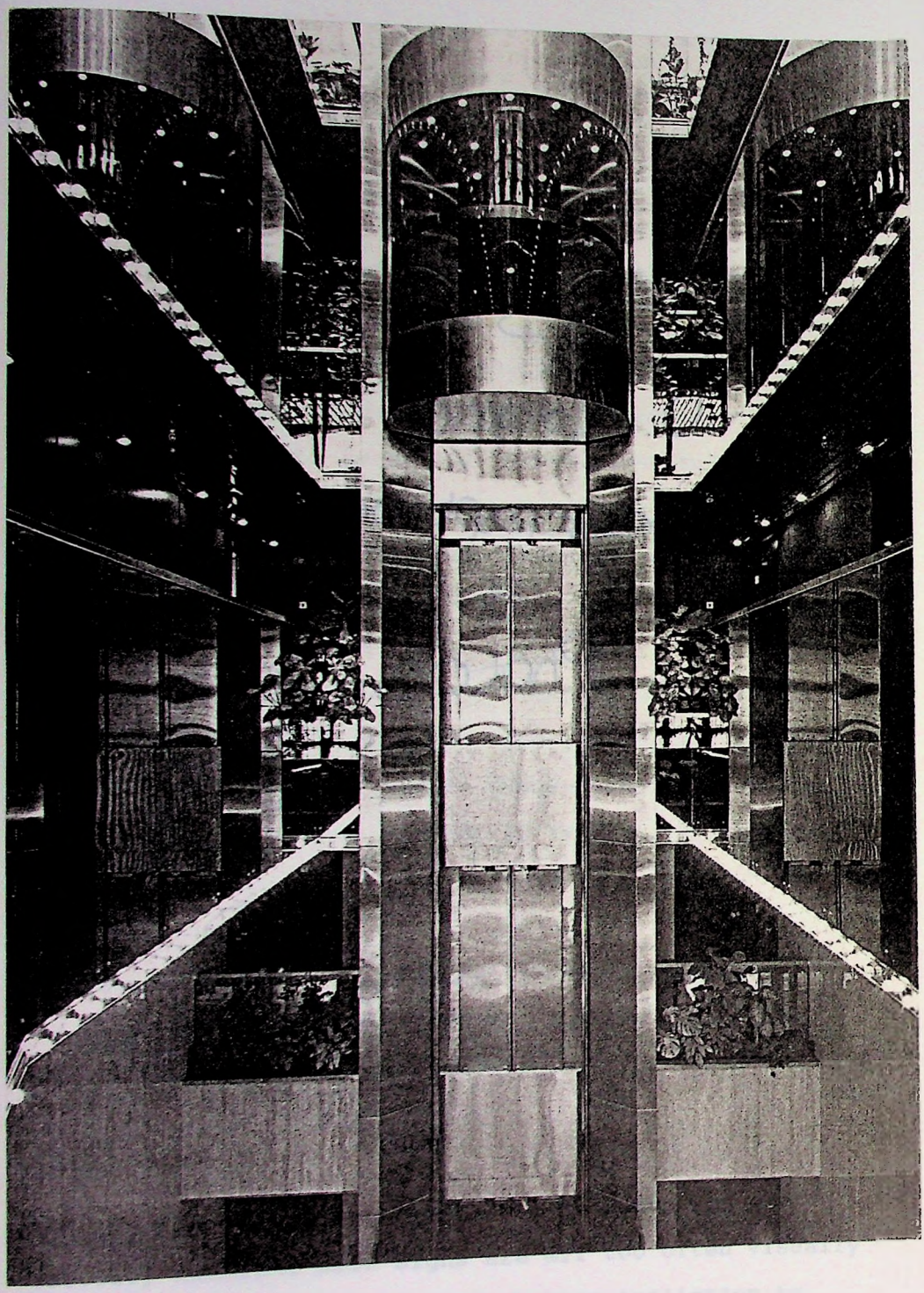


Fig 40 Educational Building Society

"Full Height Entrance Hall"

CONCLUSION

The first phase of the Educational Building Society offices should not have been built in the existing style as permission was only granted for the reconstruction of the original buildings. Yet the insistence of the planning office to introduce "solid elements" into the facade of the second phase (as if it was a public apology for letting the first phase go ahead) broke the integrity of the design.

The building, as a whole, was destroyed by this insane ruling by the planning office and because of this, the building is somewhat hard to judge without using the imagination to visualise what it "should have looked like".

The building may have been quite successful because it is on a reasonably small scale. With the old Paradiso facade retained, the new building is given interest and could have been quite elegant.

The clients requirement for the neon signs was quite cleverly handled. Neon signs are all too often visually obtrusive elements and to reduce this infliction to

the dark hours was a design achievement.

In the usual "Sam Stephenson" style, the entrance lobby has to be the most exciting in the city. Whether its kinetic commercialism or art, the EBS interior is pure Hollywood, dramatic yet quite and tasteful.

Yet, this building is an intrusion on Westmoreland Street, even though much of the street character has already been destroyed through the invasion of neon signs, its buildings are mainly Georgian, with the neo-classical parliament buildings (Bank of Ireland) and the Italian Pallazzo of Trinity's north wing (College Street).

The Bord na Mona headquarters in Baggot Street could be described as one of Sam Stephenson's success stories. They won the first An Taisce "context" - buildings in their environment award, in 1984, and while this competition was not strictly an architectural one good design was naturally a consideration in the assessment of the judges and the manner in which a development related to it's surroundings was regarded as an integral design element (Plan, (Dublin), Vol. 15, No. 10, 1984 Oct. pp. 14 - 15).

Also, in 1985, while Sam Stephenson's currency centre at Sandyford took the Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland Gold Medal, the jury commended the Bord na Mona offices. (Plan (Dublin), Vol 16, No.12, 1985, Dec pp. 7, 15).

Although these huge reflective pavilions look so original in Dublin, they would go unremarked in Dallas, or any other city that has lent a little of itself to modern architecture.

Bord na Mona first intended to build their offices on the edge of Fitzwilliam Square but this would have meant

that five, perfectly sound, Georgian buildings would have been demolished. Jimmy Tully, minister for the environment, who was at this stage quite renowned for his rash decision making, granted permission. This scheme may have gone ahead but a students occupation and growing public opposition led them to move around the corner to utilise a vacant site previously occupied by a Christian Science Church.

The fact that the original building on the site had been demolished, and the fact that it had large public building, meant that the Corporation could not insist on a pseudo-Georgian front. The result is that Sam Stephenson has been able to proceed further with his development of an architecture of tightly controlled contrasting planes of curtain walling and solid cladding.

THE BUILDING

The development comprises of 40,000 sq feet of office space in a five storey T-shaped block over a basement car park with space for 66 cars. A central core contains, two main staircases, two lift shafts, tea rooms, lavatories and ventilation ducts.

Externally the building is clad in grey Wicklow granite fixed in an ashlar pattern and a curtain wall of grey tinted glass and anodised aluminium (Fig 41 and 42). A feature of the development is the external landscaping (Fig 43) and the entrance hall which rises through five floors to a glass roof (Fig 44 and 45). The lift lobbies in the central core have access galleries which overlook the entrance hall at every floor level giving unobstructed views across lower Baggot Street (Fig 46). Another interesting feature of the development is the aluminium pergola which frames the entry to the site from Lower Baggot Street to the entrance hall doors (Fig 47). It was also the first newly developed office block in the city centre to use turf as the fuel for the heating system. Nine months after Bord na Mona moved into their new offices in 1978, a fire broke out gutting the third floor and causing quite a bit of damage.

CONCLUSION

As with the EBS building, the reflective qualities of the Bord na Mona building produce many interesting views from the surrounding streets. It is an elegant and delicate structure. The severity associated with

Fig 41 + 42

Bord na Mona

"Granite Fixed in Ashlar pattern, curtin wall of grey tinted glass and anodised aluminum"

Fig 43 Bord na Mona Building "external landscaping"

Fig 44

Bord na Mona

Entrance hall

rising to glass

roof

Fig 45

Bord na Mona

"Entrance Hall"

Fig 46
Bord na Mona
"Lift Lobbies in Central Core have access galleries which overlook the entrance hall"

Fig 47
Bord na Mona
"Aluminium Pergola"

reflective glass is broken externally by the pergola that leans against the facade like a conservatory. The entrance lobby is quite dramatic with plants draping from the overlooking office balconies which results in the interior being softened and visually intermingled with the exterior. Yet such a design has little need to shelter behind the anonymity of reflective glass, which at best gives a glimpse of Georgian terraces and at worst a glimpse of overcast skies and the dreary backsides of adjoining buildings.

Yet, the plague of weak and watered down Georgian style buildings have, arguably, damaged the city's character as much as insensitive modern architecture would have done. This building was between these two levels. It neither mawkishly imitates nor conflicts with the city's Georgian past. The building's scale (it is only five storeys high) and it's cladding stops it overpowering it's Georgian neighbour (Fig 48).

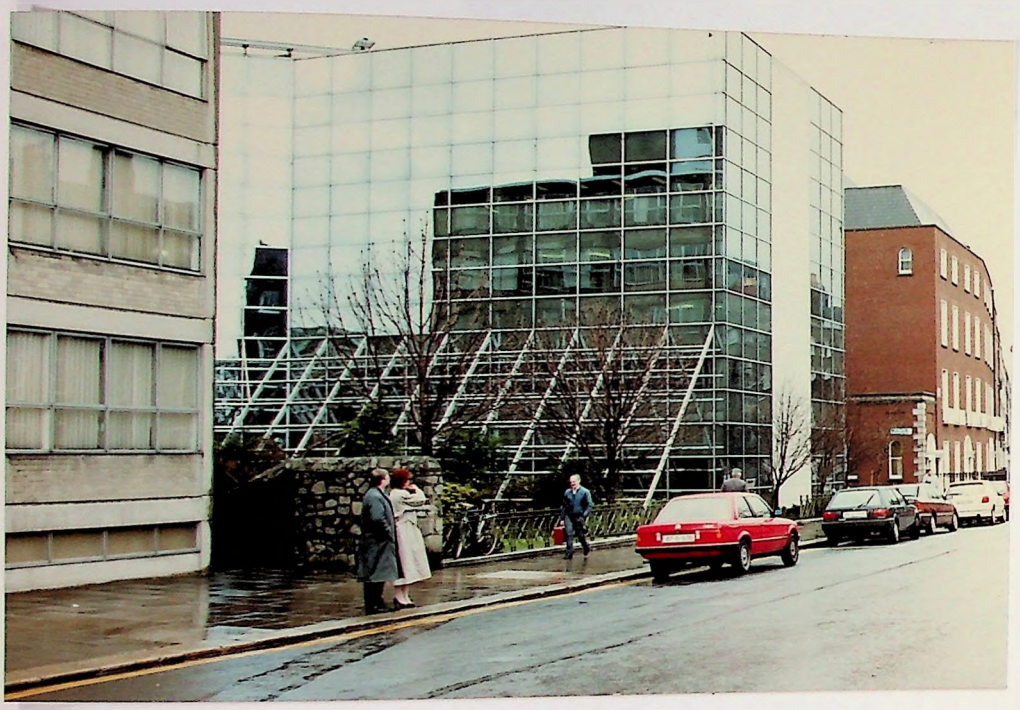


Fig 48 Bord na Mona

Building "weak watered down psudo - Georgian

Facades in the background"

CONCLUSION

Dublin is not a city that easily lends herself to the international style or Brutalist idioms of Sam Stephenson. It's perfectly aligned 18th Century streets are disrupted because they are blasted open for spacious areas, and / or are infused with alien forms.

Nor did Sam Stephenson or the planning authorities maintain the responsibilities set out in the introduction of this thesis.

Although in isolation the Central Bank building successfully represents this era and could be considered an architectural achievement, it is yet misplaced within its environment of Dame Street and the central Dublin skyline is disrupted somewhat due to the buildings idiosyncratic roof line. Neither did the architect have any respect of planning permission, yet this may be due to the apparent double standards of the planning authorities who used this incident as a "lesson to all" at the public's expense.

The Dublin Civic offices represent the most appalling example of irresponsibility regarding architecture and

planning. Ironically the client was Dublin Corporation itself (i.e. the Planning Authorities).

The buildings should never have been built on a site of such archaeological importance. Neither did the architect regard the surrounding environment, invading with aggressive blocks into where the city is oldest. These over-bold blocks were met with public outrage not only because of the damage inflicted on the city's heritage, but also because aesthetically they are a public affront. Yet the planning authorities not only footed the public with the astronomical bill of almost £21 million but denied them any right of intervention and certainly did not represent their overall opinion. The buildings go against any scheme envisaged for the quays and are not even fully functional as they are incomplete.

The use of reflective glass curtain walling as an architectural device, as discussed in Chapter 5 , is dubious. In the case of both the Education Building Society and Bord na Mona buildings one wonders if the design was adopted to the reflective glass wall or if the reflective glass wall was adapted to the buildings design. If the former were the case the architect would not be solving an architectural problem but hiding it.

The Educational Building Society scheme again showed Sam Stephenson's complete disrespect for planning permission laws. A replica of the original facade (as permitted) may or may not have been more suitable than the reflective shell that was built. But the insistence of the planning office for the integration of some "solid elements" into the facade of the second phase, which led to the introduction of granite, destroyed the building. One might even suggest that the individuals behind this decision had absolutely no architectural knowledge. The Bord na Moan building is quite a sensitive approach to reflective glass curtain walling and is the more successful of the two buildings.

Modern architecture could have been accommodated in Dublin without disrupting her street-scapes. Allocating an area similar to Le Defence in Paris may have given Sam Stephenson the large arena he required. But due to the planning authorities not developing an overall scheme for the city, mayhem has set in, destroying the city's character and causing public outcry. Architects who have an affinity to the "modern" architectural idiom are deprived of creativity and the Planning Office is inundated with complaints and controversies. One of the most apparent problems lies within the planning act. This often enables individuals (e.g. the minister for

the environment) to have the final say in planning approvals. These individuals may not have an architectural (or related) background and their decisions may be subjective or for personal gain.

To eliminate this dictatorship enshrined in the planning act each and every planning proposal should pass through a council consisting of representatives from the public, the government, the planning department and an independent architectural body.

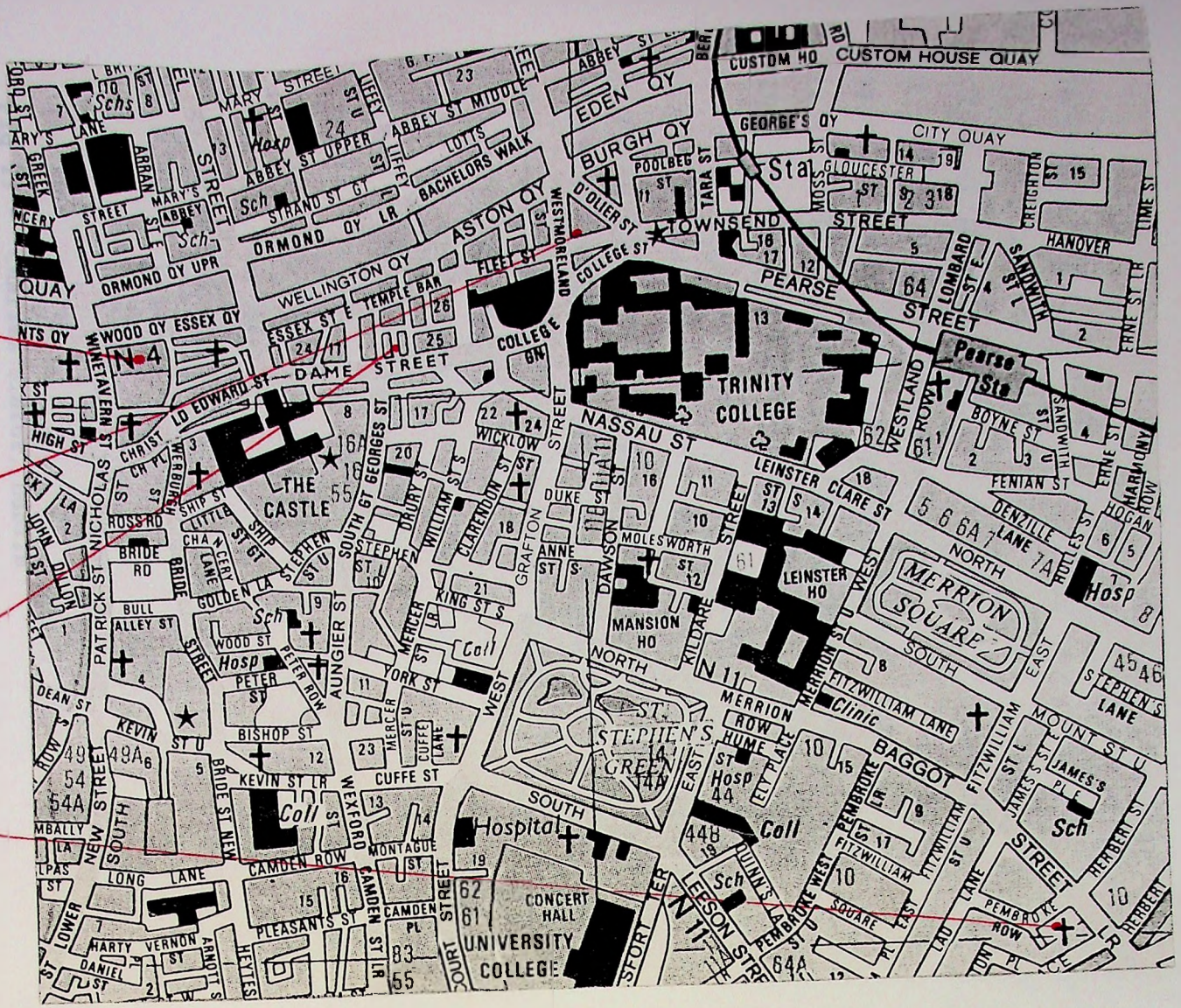
Increased communication between the architect and planning authorities is needed, so that both parties work together in harmony as opposed to continuously hindering each others contribution to architecture.

Dublin Civic Offices

Educational Building Society

The Central Bank

Bord na Mona



REFERENCES

Sources of Illustrations

Fig 1 - Dal Co, Francesco, Kevin Roche, 1985

Fig 2 - Dal Co, Francesco, Kevin Roche, 1985

Fig 3 - Dal Co, Francesco, Kevin Roche, 1985

Fig 4 - Dal Co, Francesco, Kevin Roche, 1985

Fig 5 - Dal Co, Francesco, Kevin Roche, 1985

Fig 6 - Dal Co, Francesco, Kevin Roche, 1985

Fig 7 - Dal Co, Francesco, Kevin Roche, 1985

Fig 8 - Dal Co, Francesco, Kevin Roche, 1985

Fig 9 - Charles Slater, Dublin

Fig 10 - "Bank Statement", Arctl Review

Fig 11 - Architectural archives

Fig 12 - Architectural archives

Fig 13 - Personal

Fig 14 - Personal

Fig 15 - Personal

Fig 16 - Personal

Fig 17 - Personal

Fig 18 - Personal

Fig 19 - Charles Slator, Dublin

Fig 20 - Personal

Fig 21 - Charles Slator, Dublin

Fig 22 - Personal

Fig 23 - Architectural archives

Fig 24 - Architectural archives

Fig 25 - Architectural archives

Fig 26 - Architectural archives

Fig 27 - Personal

Fig 28 - Personal

Fig 29 - Personal

Fig 30 - Personal

Fig 31 - Personal

Fig 32 - Personal

Fig 33 - Personal

Fig 34 - Personal

Fig 35 - "Reflecting City Life"; Building

Fig 36 - Personal

Fig 37 - Personal

Fig 38 - Charles Slator, Dublin

Fig 39 - Personal

Fig 40 - Personal

Fig 41 - Personal

Fig 42 - Personal

Fig 43 - Personal

Fig 44 - Personal

Fig 45 - Personal

Fig 46 - Personal

Fig 47 - Personal

Fig 48 - Personal

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. DAL CO, Francesco; Kevin Roche Rizzoli International Publications inc. 1995

2. GROPIUS, Walter; The New Architecture and the Bauhaus; Faber and Faber Ltd; 1956

3. JOHNSON, Philip C; Mies van der Rohe Secker and Warburg Ltd. 1978

4. MCDONALD, Frank; The Destruction of Dublin, Gill and MacMillan, 1985

5. O'DWYER, Fredrick; Lost Dublin Gill and MacMillan, 1981

6. PEVSNER, Nickolaus; The Sources of Modern Architecture and Design; Thames and Hudson; 1968.

7. PEVSNER, Nikolaus; Studies in Art, Architecture and Design, Volume Two. Victorian and After. Thames and Hudson 1968

8. SHAFFREY, Patrick; The Irish Town; The O'Brien Press; 1975

9. SHARP, Dennis; The Rationalists, Theory and Design in the Modern Movement; Architectional Press: 1978

10. TEGETHOFF, Wolf; Mies Van der Rohe - The Villas and Country Houses. The Museum of Modern Art 1985

11. TRACHTENBERG, Marvin; HYMAN, Isabelle; Architecture from Prehistory to Post Modernism; Academy Editions; 1986.

12. UNKNOWN; Kevin Roche Architect; Architectural Association of Ireland; 1983

13. BOWN, Chris; "15 Year Sage of Dublin Town Hall; Building Design, No. 736, 1985 April 26th pp 4.

14. MADDOCK, John; "Architect: Corporation Action Fails"; Irish Independent; January 16, 1990, pg 11

15. VINEY, Michael; Irish Times; 8th August 1974

16. UNKNOWN; "The Architect with a Design for Controversy" The Irish Times, 14 September 1982

17. UNKNOWN;"A Planning Crisis in Dublin", Country Life; Vol 155, No.3994, 17 Jan 1974, pp 88 - 89

18. UNKNOWN; "Plus"; Building; Vol. 226, No. 6829(17), 26 April 1974, pp 67

19. UNKNOWN; "Plus"; Building; Vol. 226, No. 6822 (10), 8 March 1974 pp 64 - 67

20. UNKNOWN; "Central Bank Dame Street"; Plan (Dublin); Vol. 11, No.1, January 1980 pp. 6 - 16

21. UNKNOWN; "Bank Statement", Archtl Review, Vol.166, No.994, 1979, Dec. pp 347 - 355

22. UNKNOWN "Educational Building Society, Dublin" Plan (Dublin), Vol.13, No. 7, 1982 Jul, pp 12 - 17

23. UNKNOWN "Vitreous Variations"; Architects Journal, Vol. 176, No. 35, 1982 September 1, pp 24 - 25

24. UNKNOWN; "Bord na Mona, Baggot Street, Dublin" Nov '78 Plan (Dublin); Vol. 9, No. 11, 1978 Nov pp 6 - 11

25. UNKNOWN; "Reflecting City Life", Building, Vol 238, No. 7125(6), 1980 Feb 8, pp 89 - 46

26. UNKNOWN; "Reflecting on Dublin", Architects Journal, Vol 169, No. 4, 1979 Jan 24, pp 156 - 157

27. UNKNOWN; New Civil Engineer, 20th June 1974

28. UNKNOWN Construction and Property News, 13th February 1974 pg 1

29. UNKNOWN; Irish Independent, 14 November 1973

30. UNKNOWN; The Architect (London), Vol. 3, No.4, 1973 April pp 66 - 68

31. UNKNOWN; Plan (Dublin), Vol. 15, No.10. 1984 Oct, pp 14 - 15

32. UNKNOWN; Plan (Dublin), Vol.16, No. 12, 1985, Dec, pp 7, 15

INTERVIEWS

GIBNEY, Arthur; Interview over phone, 2nd March 1990
(Sam Stephensons partner from 1960 to 1975)

STEPHENSON, Sam; Interview over phone, 8th March 1990

VIDEOS

"To Bed with Pallodio, Rising with Lutyens" R.T.E., 1988

"Hanley's People" R.T.E., 1986