

THE MAIN event for me last week was a realisation that things will never be the same again. This economic nadir is not one of the ups and downs, it is the end of a quarter century of the reconstruction of our built environment. (Conservatives would say 'destruction'). Isn't it lucky that we've lost the desire to redevelop and build big at the same time as we've lost the resources?

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BUT this is little comfort to redundant architects. Public sector housing output, school and university, hospital and civic building will not recover. The fall in population as well as the decline in living standards ensure this. Precious few architects will be employed in the slightly expanded industrial building and private housing fields. Forget the property companies too — another £200m outfit called in the receivers last week. Even the armies of pampered public sector 'research' architects should feel uneasy. We can expect to employ only about two thirds of the architects we have. And was it two years

ago that the RTPI President was declaring the country 3 300 planners short? Forget it, and come retrain with me and be ... a rehab manager. Rod Hackney lives, Sant Elia is dead.

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THE GLC could justify itself — and it needs to do so — if it could contrive to get London Transport buses run with some slight regard for the convenience of users. The latter tend to be underprivileged and inarticulate compared with those who rely on other means to travel to work. No one would *choose* to rely on the buses, but some of us, especially in South London, have no option. The people who actually schedule the services as opposed to those who plan them, constantly think up new tricks. One Kafka-esque routine is to complain to LT — the public relations department would make a splendid candidate for cost savings. They have run out of "staff and/or bus shortage" excuses, now its spare parts. Bunching is blamed on traffic — how it is contrived only half a mile from Wandsworth garage is a mystery. The bus service



## Week by Week

should come high in Peter Shore's priorities if he is serious about revitalising the inner cities.

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AS the last few architectural monuments limp off the drawing board into three dimensions, one can but feel some sympathy with

their designers. Had the National Theatre or Hillingdon town hall been completed ten or five years earlier respectively, they would have been heralded as masterpieces. We are all even more at a loss what to think about such edifices now that architectural criticism, as a branch of art criticism, has been banished from the newspapers and journals.

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NICK Wates and his publishers held a jolly party in a Tolmers Square house to celebrate his book about saving the square from Joe Levy's bulldozers. The decorative state of the house would have been regarded as exaggerated if rigged up for a re-shoot of David Copperfield — yet it was all scrubbed clean by our apparently gentle atavists. The salvation of this undistinguished bit of urban fabric might hearten would-be preservers of Grade I buildings elsewhere.

### David Pearce

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22.10.76