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August 1997

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Thoughts on Edward Bellamy as City Planner: The Ordered Art of Geometry

John R. Mullin and Kenneth Payne

Edward Bellamy's Looking Backward was one of the most influential books in the evolution of city planning as a profession and field of scholarly inquiry. And yet, upon the hundredth year of his death, this classic is rarely used when examining the roots of the profession. The paper begins by summarizing the book itself: on one level it is a simple novel of the Gilded Age; on another, it provided a vision of the future that indirectly has helped to guide the evolution of the American community. The paper examines the factors that are fundamental in planning and how Bellamy responded to them. His views on the environment, economic development, urban design, recreation, housing, and the urban community are explained and analyzed. Finally, his importance to the profession is assessed.

There are few books in the history of American Utopian thought that have been as widely hailed and popularly received as Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*. Written in 1888 and describing utopian Boston in the year 2000, this book sold hundreds of thousands of copies, led to the creation of utopian societies and had a profound influence on political thought in the first half of the 20th century, both in the United States and in Europe. At the same time, its depiction of a society in which the individual is subordinated to the state and where an industrial army marches in lock step for the common good constantly raises questions of human rights and the fear of an all-powerful, all-knowing government. To this day, a careful reading of the book cannot leave one neutral. It clearly has contributed to how we view ourselves and how we see our future. As Lewis Mumford has written, "if one is amazed by Bellamy's utopia now, it is not because he was so wild but because he was so practical, so close to actuality" (Mumford 1931, 48; Mumford 1941, 159-169). For this reason alone, it is an important text for all planners interested in utopian thought. Yet we, as a profession and academic discipline, have largely forgotten about Bellamy. The book is infrequently among the readings in our planning classes. Neither is it regularly cited among the key books that one would (should) read when coming to grips with how our profession was formed. Yes, one can find Geddes, Burnham, and Howard. Yes, one can find Mumford, Mackaye, and Olmsted. And yes, one can draw from Nolan, Marsh, or Dyer. Unfortunately, however, one rarely finds Bellamy.

It is the premise of this paper, written in the one-hundredth year after his death, that Bellamy's *Looking Backward* is a fundamental contribution to planning history, literature, and theory. The opinions of the thousands of readers that joined the societies at the turn of the century were correct: there are ways of changing society, improving our well being, and making government more responsive. And, perhaps above all, planning as a responsible governmental activity can make a difference.

With these premises in mind, this paper re-examines Bellamy's *Looking Backward* from three planning perspectives. The first effort will be to determine the key factors that contributed to Bellamy's perceptions at the time that he wrote his text, by examining the planning concerns noted there. The second will be to identify and explain Bellamy's contributions to planning thought. Particular attention will be paid to his views on the role of collective will in determining the community's direction. The third

effort will be to examine Bellamy as a planning futurist, with Bellamy's Boston as our central focus. It is important to note that the paper does not focus on the broader economic, political, or social issues that are most often covered in analyses of Bellamy's work. We are concerned only with Bellamy's contributions to the theory and practice of planning. It is also important to note that we are examining only *Looking Backward* alone. As many readers know, Bellamy also wrote a second novel, *Equity* which is a continuation of *Looking Backward*; in it he explained his concepts further and, in many cases, modified them. We are dealing only with his original, great classic.

The Book

Looking Backward is a tepid, sentimental, and romantic novel set in the Gilded Age. The central character is a well-to-do and settled Bostonian, Julian West, who, after taking an extraordinary sleeping potion, wakes up in the Boston of the year 2000. Mr. West, who revives in the residence of a Dr. Leete, is immediately lovingly cared for by Dr. Leete and his wife, and by his daughter, with whom West ultimately falls in love. Through various trials and tribulations, Julian West is introduced to the "New Boston," which is dramatically transformed beyond anyone's nineteenth-century imagination. It is this new community, the Millennium City of God, that is the vehicle for Bellamy's explanation of how his utopia has occurred and what its characteristics are. Bellamy's utopia is Christian Socialist (Bell 1952, 270-71; Schweniger 1985, 109-11). The nation's industrial army, working in harmony, has been able to bring America's (and the world's) resources to such efficient production that poverty, crime, greed, corruption, and lack of emotional fulfillment have been obliterated. Utopian Boston is a caring, homogeneous community where equality, grace, dignity, and innocence are manifest - provided one agrees with the goals of the state.

The impact of the book was extraordinary. It not only was a national bestseller, but was quickly translated into ten languages. Bellamy was in constant demand as a public speaker. The novel even influenced the creation of new communities and the new town movement (On the Bellamy Plan 1891, 12; Batchelor 1969, 196). It also gave rise to a movement that ultimately influenced the political platforms of both the Democratic and Republican parties. Finally, the book was a moral influence on planning decisions well into the New Deal.

Edward Bellamy

Edward Bellamy's life spanned the American Industrial Revolution, the culture of the post-Civil War era, and the excesses of the Gilded Age. Born in Chicopee Falls, Massachusetts, in 1850, Bellamy witnessed first hand the rise of America's industrial power. Chicopee, at the time of his birth and early years, was the home of many textile, tool, and other manufacturing firms that were built according to the famed Waltham system (Dunwell 1978, 81; White 1836, 267). Each day, from the steps of his home, he saw men, women and children enter the mills and leave after completing their long days at hard labor. He observed their slum housing, noted their diseases, and watched their struggles and strikes as they tried to move out of industrial slavery.

Keenly interested in the military, Bellamy attempted to enter West Point in 1867 but failed the physical examination. Nonetheless, the military, as an organization where efficiency, order, organization and dedication are highly valued, remained a critical influence throughout his life. Bellamy then entered a period of intellectual wandering. A short time at Union College was followed by travel to Europe, two years of studying law, and then working as a reporter for several newspapers. His reporting activities apparently did not take all his time, for he constantly wrote books and articles. With the publishing of *Looking Backward*, Bellamy achieved national and international fame. This inspired him to write further works, to edit his own periodical, and to undertake lectures promoting his social concepts. He died at the age of forty-eight, in 1898 (Tichi 1982; Fromm 1960).

Bellamy as City Planner

Looking Backward is, in one sense, a city planning text. It deals with land use, industry, commerce, housing, open space, amenities, and the environment. It also addresses the perplexing issues of poverty, education, and economic class. The key points in the text that relate to planning are each analyzed below.

Did Bellamy Foresee the Need for Environmental Planning?

Indeed he did. In fact, one can note a strong environmental ethic through his book. His utopia was not possible without improving the living conditions of the masses. To accomplish this, the slums of the city had to be eradicated, diseases prevented, and the industrial smog eliminated. Bellamy's Julian West, when asked about his most powerful impression upon first observing the new Boston in the year 2000, responded that it was the complete absence of chimneys and their smoke. In other parts of the novel he recalls the squalor, the malodorousness of the proper sections of the city, and the pale skins of the mill workers. And how were these conditions overcome? According to Dr. Leete, the use of crude combustibles had been phased out at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Bellamy clearly was breaking with the economic ethos of the late nineteenth century. His was an era of ever-expanding technology, when the American industrial spirit knew few bounds. There were swamps to drain, hills to flatten, farm lands to develop, air space to fill and even night to be conquered with light. Nature was something to overcome. Our heroes built bridges, tunnels, and skyscrapers. And yet, there were still the smoke, the putrid air, and the pests. Bellamy saw all of this as evil, as wrong, as part of a city in decay. As Mr. West responded: "I have been in Golgotha….I have seen Humanity hanging on a cross!"

Yet, Bellamy was still a man of the nineteenth century and unlike Emerson, saw technology as a means of improving society (Bender 1995, 58). He was neither Luddite nor Jeffersonian agrarian. Olson goes so far as to suggest that Bellamy, by concentrating upon the city, the industrial system, and the world as a whole, was the heir of Saint-Simon (Olson 1982, 258). While he rejected the human conditions of the mill, he did not reject what the mill could do. He saw the potential of technology, which, once harnessed for the good of society, would be a positive part of the new millennium. There is even a

spiritual element in Bellamy's writings, his belief that God, in utopia, requires man and woman to live in/with nature rather than conquering or ignoring the natural environment. The millennial City of God is indeed one where technology and the environment are mutually sustaining.

And what of the environment of Boston in the year 2000? Bellamy's West makes several key references to it. The first occurs when Mr. West climbs to the rooftop of Dr. Leete's house in what is to be Boston's Back Bay District. When Bellamy wrote his book, (Whitehall 1968, 141-173) this area was being reclaimed and was still marked by a stench from the brackish water in the Charles River and from the area serving as a refuse dump. Clearly, in the year 2000, the Charles has changed: "I looked westward. That blue ribbon winding away to the sunset – was it not the sinuous Charles?" The important word here is "blue." Given the amount of waste that flowed into the Charles in 1887, it was hardly blue! And smog? Mr. West, from the same rooftop, can see as far as the green islands in Boston Harbor, a distance of several miles. Clearly, there is no smog, and just as clearly, the islands are in a natural state.

Bellamy and Industry

The inspiration for Bellamy's industrial army came, at least in part, from his observations of the mill works in Chicopee and his respect for military organization. Like Lowell, Lawrence, Manchester, and Holyoke, Chicopee's economic vigor was largely due to its industrial prowess (Burnham 1898, 361-79). By the mid-1840's, fourteen mills presided over what was to become the City of Chicopee (Dunwell 1978, 81). Bellamy saw much that was positive about the mills. His Dr. Leete, while rarely complimentary about the past, goes so far as to call this nineteenth-century industrial system "extraordinary." Dr. Leete also explains that the great textile mills have grown even larger in the New Boston, gaining increased efficiencies as they took on the characteristics of an army commandeered by Van Moltke. Finally, West comments that in the nineteenth century he had taken pride, after visiting South Boston's manufacturing district, in the fact that the city had over 4,000 independent manufacturing establishments.

In one sense Bellamy is describing a forerunner of Fordism or vertical integration. He likens the process to a giant mill in which raw, bulk goods are poured from a ship or train into a hopper at one end while, at the other, emerge"…packages of pounds, and ounces, yards and inches, pints and gallons, corresponding to the infinitely complex personal needs of half a million people." Is this any different than the famous descriptions of the processes at Ford's River Rouge plant in the 1920s? Ford ore was transferred from Ford mines by Ford ships and Ford rail to a Ford plant where, twenty-four hours later, emerged a Ford Model T. Indeed, could Ford spokesperson W.J. Cameron be echoing Bellamy when he wrote: "While we are producing useful products, we are also shaping human life and the conditions of social life" (Bucci 1993, 8)? As a futurist, Bellamy was also quite the savant. In the decades following the writings of his book, the textile mills did become larger and larger, and, over time, national corporations such as the American Woolen Company began to emerge (Roddy 1982).

Contemplating the pattern of development of nineteenth-century industrial communities, Bellamy was far less impressed. It must be remembered that though he came of age in a mill community, his family did not work in the mills. (His father was a Baptist minister.) Further, while his home was only a few hundred feet from the Chicopee's mills, it was a large, single-family residence of American Gothic design. Thus, while he was *in* a mill community, he was not *of* the community. With this point in mind, it is easy to see why Bellamy saw little that was positive in the mill housing. He was scathing in his criticism of nineteenth-century Boston's South Cove: "…the streets were thronged with the workers from the stores, the shops and the mills…I found myself…in the midst of a scene of squalor and degradation such as only the South Cove tenement district could present." Further, he writes: "From the black doorways and windows of the rookeries on every side came gusts of fetid air." Here once again we see Bellamy as a futurist, writing of conditions that need changing well before they entered extensive public debate.

The fact that he saw such conditions daily while living apart from them may have been why he was so incensed over poor housing. In fact, at one point in the book, within a few lines of each other he contrasts the "pestilential rookeries" of the workers with the "magnificent home of my betrothed on Commonwealth Avenue." Even in his own Chicopee, housing conditions were as deplorable as in Dickinsonian London. The unsanitary living conditions, the cheaply built structures on the banks of the Chicopee River, the seemingly constant epidemics, the impossibility of steady work, the crowded living conditions and labor strife that were so common to industrial Lowell, Lawrence, and Manchester also could be found in his hometown. Sometimes the desire to bring change occurs when one sees suffering abstractly. In that case, it is fairly easy to contribute to correcting the problem and then move on with one's life: One sees the problem, but without feeling it. It is interesting to note, as Michael Folsom has, that West's tour guide through the industrial areas of the New Boston is a medical doctor (cold, clinical, scientific) rather than a mill worker (Folsom 1985, 71). Bellamy's observation of the evil conditions, though written in a passionate tone, remains abstract. He sees the problems as a close observer who passes by but is untouched by them (Thomas 1983, 39-40). We are reminded of the pattern typical of Slateresque mill towns: the owners, managers, and elite lived on the hill overlooking the mills and with direct views to the housing of their workers; they were all-seeing, all-knowing, and all-removed from the day-to-day quest for survival. Perhaps Keyssar noted this most clearly when he wrote: "There was a darker side to the Gilded Age … one that contributed to the apprehensions of men like Bellamy. Stated briefly the 'other side' was the development or intensification of dramatic class and ethnic cleavages within Massachusetts" (Keyssar 1985, 137).

What is the character of these mills? Bellamy's Dr. Leete describes the processes of production at length. Unfortunately, however, we don't know what they look like or where they are located in the New Boston. Are they brick or granite? Are they in mill sections of the city (i.e. the South Cove, South Boston)? We do know that the size of mills, as they became larger and larger, was being widely discussed during the period when Bellamy wrote his book. The period was marked by the rise of the national trusts

and the rapid adoption of new technology. The net result was the creation of ever larger mill structures juxtaposed to each other. It was also a time when competitiveness sharpened and efficiencies became more important; in that climate, the workers and their housing represented costs that had to be minimized.

In this regard, Bellamy, as a futurist, was half correct: the mills did become larger and larger. Indeed, such was the case in Lowell, Lawrence, Manchester, and Chicopee, among other New England communities, and later it was true of steel towns (i.e. Homestead), auto towns (i.e. Flint), and even southern textile towns (i.e. Canapolis, North Carolina). What is most interesting, however, is that the mills did not expand that significantly in Boston proper; in this regard, Bellamy's perspective did not prevail. Yes, there was intensive manufacturing in central Boston, but it was small in comparison with industrial developments elsewhere.

And the type of industrial structures? In Bellamy's utopia, are they the same belching behemoths that defoliated our landscape at the turn of the century, or something new? Do we see any influence of a Peter Behrens or Tony Garnier (Buddensieg 1984; Garnier 1989)? The direct answer is that we don't see any commentary on the physical form of industry in *Looking Backward*, at all. We know the mill structures are there and that they are large. We also know they represent a continuation of the ideas that created the large mill complexes of the 1870s. As Dr. Leete comments: "You used to have pretty large textile manufacturing establishments, even in your day, although not comparable with ours." Bellamy leaves the remainder to our imagination.

Bellamy and Urbanism

What is most interesting is that Bellamy's utopia, in one sense, is clearly urban. As his critic William Morris wrote: "Mr. Bellamy…has no idea beyond existence in a great city…villages [to Bellamy]…are mere servants of the great centers of civilization" (Morris 1889, 194). His Boston of the year 2000 is dense, highly developed, and full of the magnificent boulevards, parks, fountains, and shopping districts of great cities. We do not see him arguing for the limited population of an idealized Athens or the controlled, low-density character of Howard's Letchworth. Rather, we see him as continuing the ideas of Owen, Fourier, and Cabet (Batchelor 1969, 196). Among their collective major themes was the conviction that industrial power, although leading to social alienation, was the most effective way to liberate and transform man. As Martin Meyerson noted: "Bellamy's world was rational, orderly, friendly, technologically advanced and offered national abundance…" (Meyerson 1961, 186).

It is Bellamy's sense of urban space that is most remarkable. His city of the year 2000 is not a "town in the country" or "country in the city." It is a living environment similar to that of the 1890s, but which was "regularized." Choay credits this term to Haussmann. It is "…that form of critical planning whose explicit purpose is to regularize the disordered city, to disclose its new form by mean of a pure schematic layout which will disentangle it from its dross, the sediment of past and present failures" (Choay 1969, 15). In Bellamy's view, technology and popular consent would create a new order that would bring standardization to the city. Also like Owen, Fourier, and Cabet, Bellamy

saw great merit in making the city healthier. His notion, reflecting the themes of Richardson and Olmsted, was to break up the "solids" (structures) with "voids" (parks). The intent was to eliminate the conditions that created the "fetid air", the reeking "effluvia of a slave ship's between decks" and the "mongrel curs of half-clad brutalized children." Bellamy was very much aware of the hygienic movements that were sweeping the nation and that there was a strong connection between urban health and air, light, and greenery. He would have been knowledgeable about Olmsted's plans for New York's Central Park and Boston's Emerald Necklace (Tichi 1982, 21; Fein 1972, 59-61). And he would have been familiar with the plans to fill in Boston's Back Bay and the plans for a regularized Boston prepared by Robert Morris Copeland. Yet Bellamy moves beyond the pragmatism of justifying open spaces as necessary to health. Within such spaces one finds rest, recreation, and symbols.

There is a sense of comfort in his New Boston with its fully treed streets, open squares full of greenery, and landscapes complete with fountains and statues. Bellamy comments only briefly about sports and the recreation of the masses. Professional sports have no place in his utopia; rather, loyalty to the amateur teams of one's guild is the new order of the day. In contrast to his general comments on recreation, in the book Dr. Leete mentions the Marblehead yacht races by name. This race, always the domain of the most affluent members of society (then and now), has become the "guild" yacht competition: At sea, society has become a level playing field!

Perhaps the greatest physical change in Bellamy's New Boston is that the streets are now straight. One no longer sees the rabbit warren of streets of Boston's Financial District or the pack donkey's way found in the Blackstone Block. Rather, as Bellamy's Julian West comments: "At my feet lay a great city. Miles of broad streets, shaded by trees and lined with fine buildings …stretched in every direction." Clearly, there is a rejection of the nineteenth-century Beacon Hill, North End, and Waterfront that marked Boston's unique street pattern. Where did Bellamy's ideas come from? Why such a radical change from the Boston of the nineteenth century? Perhaps it came from his visit to the major cities of Germany, perhaps it was an acceptance of Hausmann's work in Paris, or perhaps it came from his knowledge of New York City. Or perhaps it came from Bellamy's knowledge of the difficulties that the City of Boston had in regularizing property lines and creating more efficient streets following the Great Fire of 1872. In these cities and instances, among others, the effort to bring order, efficiency, and standardization were key ingredients in planning thought. Bellamy never really knew Boston. He told a friend that he learned the names of the places mentioned in *Looking Backward* by studying a map. He also acknowledged that he could never understand the labyrinth of Boston's street pattern and frequently required the use of a taxi to take him to his destination (Morgan 1944, 95).

Bellamy once again has much in common with Owen, Fourier, and Cabet. All four of these utopians saw little of value in the city as an enclosed "place." What we get from Bellamy is a sense of boundlessness in which a straight street flanked with similar buildings and well-ordered, open spaces stretches toward infinity. Does this fit with Bellamy's city of 1888? Clearly it rejects Colonial Boston, and just as clearly, it rejects

ante-bellum Boston. Bellamy saw the old peninsula city as an anachronism, as a symbol of the old culture. He was quite familiar with Boston's effort to bring a new orderliness to its physical form. His Mr. West's nineteenth-century fiancée lives on Commonwealth Avenue: "I found myself standing on the carved stone steps of the magnificent home of my betrothed in Commonwealth Avenue." This street, arguably Boston's most impressive, is the spine of Boston's Back Bay District. Built on landfill, beginning in the late 1850s, the Back Bay symbolized Boston's late-nineteenth-century prosperity. With five long streets running approximately east-west and eight cross streets in a gridiron pattern, the district was substantially different from anything else on the old peninsula. It was an instance of regularization at its finest, for centralized site design regulations were strictly enforced. Even the streets were named alphabetically. (Bostonians also note a distinction between the syllables of the odd and even streets. The odd streets have two syllables, the even streets have three).

Bellamy's efforts to regularize the city's street pattern also extended to the sidewalk. Julian West, at one point joins the Leete family on a trip to a restaurant. It is rainy and, as is the custom in the year 2000, waterproof canopies are unfurled to cover all sidewalks in the city of Boston: "…it would be considered an extraordinary imbecility to permit the weather to have any effect on the social movement of people." Dr. Leete uses the example of the canopy to illustrate the power of the collective over the individual, pointing out that, in the nineteenth century, Boston's citizens raised 300,000 umbrellas over their heads, but in the twentieth century only one is required! Clearly, the straight streets and sidewalks were an integral reflection of the collective conscience. Geometry meant truth, harmony and beauty, and just as clearly, pedestrians expected to be protected from nature. It is noteworthy, however, that like Boston of the 1880s, the imagined year 2000 is still a walking city. Despite Mr. West's wide, straight boulevards, the city is still a place where one goes on foot to its farthest points. Several references in the book point to Mr. West's morning sojourns and his easy access to the "Elephant," the central dining hall. His first trip upon re-awakening is a journey through the city's famed streets, including Washington and State Streets: "For two hours I walked or ran through…the city, visiting most quarters of the peninsula…"

Is there a sense of building a "new town" in Bellamy's utopia? Does one have to destroy the city in order to bring about the millennium or to create the New Jerusalem? On the contrary, there is nothing in Bellamy's text that suggests that the city, as a cultural form, is inherently negative. If anything, Bellamy argues that the conscientiousness of individuals will lead to a collective recognition that systems and institutions, rather than the places where they exist, would have to change. His utopia is not a Garden City, a Port Sunlight, a New Eden, or even a separatist Felangist community. It is imposed within the land form with which he is familiar. Yes, there are major changes; nonetheless, after 113 years, Mr. West is still able to reconnoiter on his own: "Finally, I stood against the door of the house from which I came out. My feet must have instinctively brought me back to the site of my old home…" Change is, indeed, superimposed upon the same landscape: One does not have to destroy the city in order to save it. As Parsinnen has noted, social critics such as Bellamy were not attempting to

exorcise urban, industrial society, but rather were endeavoring to tame it (Parsinnen 1973, 266).

A Sensory Urbanism?

It would be a mistake to assume that Bellamy was a "sensorial" urbanist. There are no instances where serendipity, whimsy, or the sense of the crowd plays a positive part in his city. If anything, such elements are rejected. Here we find the city as architectonic form: it is straight, proper, imperial, ordered, and a place where people stay at home. Clearly his city is not organic. The vulgarity of the street is something to be corrected. There is to be no dirt, no smell, and no clash of colors. There is only order, the straight line and harmonic structures. The irony here is that Bellamy's city is Boston, in actuality perhaps America's most chaotically patterned city. It is a city where the narrow street, the horse, "the rookery" and the crowd interplay to create a splashing, always changing panoply of movement. Would Bellamy do away with the Blackstone Block, the Quincy Market, and the sense of the mob at Washington and State Streets? Absolutely, yes. Would the dirty mill worker, bloodied meat cutter, and peddler intermingle and share the newsman's journey home? Certainly not. With well-scrubbed faces, they are to move quickly to their homes, where state-controlled radio will provide them entertainment until their visit to the state-controlled restaurant (or mess hall).

Given the chaos of Boston in the 1880s, one can understand Bellamy's desire for a more ordered pattern of life. Indeed, it is highly likely that he saw the lost opportunities for correcting the disorders of the city that followed the Great Fire of 1872. The fire destroyed hundreds of acres of building on the peninsula. The city immediately moved to create a greater sense of order, but was rebuffed by business leaders and property owners (Rosen 1986). Few real changes resulted. Bellamy would also have been familiar with the Copeland plans for Boston, which called for regularizing the city form.

If anything, Bellamy's rejection of the human side of the city is perplexing. It is almost as if the intermingling of the industrial laborer, executive, and student would have undermined the purpose of the industrial army. Where is romance, accidental eye contact, and the mystery of meeting different people? It simply doesn't happen. One goes to one's work place, one's restaurant, one's shop, and then to one's home. It is particularly telling that, throughout the book, Bellamy's Mr. West meets no one except the Leete Family in an informal setting. His city has characteristics more in common with those envisioned by the Bauhaus and Le Corbusier than by Jane Jacobs and the Goodmans. Bellamy's Boston is no longer dirty, smelly, colorful and whimsical. It has changed from a place characterized by the German term "Heimat" to the Roman term "Castrum."

One school of thought opines that Bellamy was not an urbanist, and that what he was really arguing for was a return to the simple, rural, and small-town life. R. Jackson Wilson believes that Bellamy's utopia was, in reality, modeled after Chicopee Falls before industrialization and the wave of immigration. He notes two key points about Bellamy's future community: 1) There is no description of anything related to industrial processes or the industrial landscape and there is little understanding of the cultural and

social world of the worker. In fact, there are no industrial workers in the entire book! Industry is simply out there, somewhere, somehow, and readers need only to know that it exists. Wilson makes this point concisely: "Just as there were many trees and no factories in *Looking Backward*, there were no visible workingmen." He then concludes that Bellamy had a general distaste for things industrial, a fear and suspicion of the industrial worker, and a desire to maintain the pastoral landscape (Wilson 1977, 45). Perhaps Thomas is correct when he writes that "Bellamy's utopia also functions to synthesize opposites – individual freedom and social duty, private property and public ownership, city and country, abundance and asceticism" (Thomas 1983, 151). If Wilson and Thomas were writing about Bellamy's utopia as a consolidation of Looking Backward and his later book, Equality, we would feel far more comfortable with their perspective. However, given that Looking Backward is set in Boston, reflects urban problems, minimizes the role of the small village, and matches the urban plans of the day, we conclude that their perspectives are a bit of a stretch. Moreover, as Reps has noted, Chicopee Falls before the great waves of migration was crudely patterned after Lowell and even had symmetrical, diagonal planning elements common to the Baroque (Reps 1965, 290-293). It also, at the time of Bellamy's birth, was a city of 8,000 people, had mill complexes 1/3 of a mile long, and was a key weapons manufacturing center. It was not, Thomas has noted, "a simple mill village" (Thomas 1983).

Bellamy and Commerce

Bellamy saw little of value in retail trade as it was practiced in the late 1800s. He saw the chaos, the mass of people going about the purchase of their daily necessities, and the practice of selling and buying as wasteful: "Stores! Stores! Stores! Miles of stores! Ten thousand stores to distribute the goods needed by this one city." He then goes on at length about the waste of time, effort, and resources that occurred through the buying and selling process, postulates that the system adds high costs ("…a fourth, a third, a half and more…"), and concludes with the statement, "What a famous process for beggaring a nation!"

He uses the examples of Boston's main shopping district, Washington Street, and central banking district, State Street, to illustrate his points. Indeed, he compares the activity of Washington Street with Bedlam and the system of exchange on State Street to the "throbbing of an abscess." To Bellamy, there is no joy in the crowd, no happiness in the market, no sense of accomplishment in "the deal" as he passes along these streets. It is simply wasted activity. Given that there were approximately 300 dry good stores, 500 shoe stores and 1,000 grocery shops in Boston in the period when he wrote his book, (Putman 1890, 22), he has a point!

What does Bellamy recommend? His Mr. West notes that in the New Boston there are no longer shops on Washington Street or banks on State Street. Instead, there are neighborhood "government supply" stores that sell virtually all items that could possibly be required. They function as sample stores where an order is taken, sent to a distribution center, and then delivered to one's home. The buildings that house those stores are architecturally significant. Bellamy describes the store in Edith Leete's neighborhood as a magnificent public building with "…a majestic life size group of

statuary." West also notices that the structure is full of light"…received not alone from the windows on all sides, but from the dome which was a hundred feet above." Below the dome is a magnificent fountain surrounded by a rest area.

Bellamy's idea of the sample store as a means of simplifying the process of buying and selling was captured, in part, by retailers in the early twentieth century; one could encounter it in any Sears-Roebuck Catalog Store. The architecture he described, complete with statuary, a dome, fountains, and rest areas, is now common in hundreds of upscale malls across the United States. And while our malls are privately owned and operated, there are frequently governmental functions within them (e.g., libraries, registries of motor vehicles, post offices).

We are struck by the absence of "spirit" in Bellamy's community. Yes, his ideas for the construction of goods and the minimization of effort in the buying-selling process are now widely accepted. But his vision also shows the worker coming from his routinized labor, going to routinized shopping and then to routinized eating. Where is escape? The Goodmans write that the shopping experience is not a rationalistic one, but the satisfaction of instinct and desire. It is social, imitative, and emulative. Drawing on the writings of Veblen, Chaplin, Mumford, and Simonson, they conclude that the modern department store with its pleasure-providing atmosphere is important: "Here all things are available according to desire, and are on display in order to support the desire" (Goodman and Goodman 1960, 127). If Bellamy were able to debate the topic, we are convinced that he would heartily disagree. As his Dr. Leete explains: "According to our ideas, buying and selling is essentially anti-social in all its tendencies."

And Washington and State Streets today? Washington Street continues to be one of Boston's major shopping districts. With the city's two major department stores located there, it is just as chaotic as it was in Bellamy's time. State Street is now comparatively quiet. There are still banks and investment houses along the street, but the practice of banking has become far more subdued and subtle. It is a street of respectability rather than one where there is pulsating, fast-paced financial dealing. One could also write that it is cold and shadowy. In the final analysis, it is dull. Bellamy would be pleased.

Bellamy and Housing

Bellamy was very familiar with the differences in the quality and availability of housing that existed in the 1880s. Although he resided in a single-family house overlooking the mills, he could not escape an awareness of the squalor in which the workers lived. It is interesting that the proximity of the Bellamy family residence to the mill housing in Chicopee was repeated in Looking Backward: The "rookeries" of the South Cove were quite close to the palatial residences of Mr. West's betrothed in Back Bay.

Bellamy wrote minimally about the housing of the poor in his utopia. We know that the slums were eradicated, that housing was guaranteed, that classism was eliminated and that people had "choice" about where they would live. It should be noted that the

home is far less utilitarian than the nineteenth-century actuality, and far more a refuge. One's meals are cooked at the Elephant (the restaurant – mess hall in Dr. Leete's District) and one's laundry is done in a community washing center. On the other hand, with piped-in music and a personal library, the home becomes a place of quiet escape.

Bellamy was far from prophetic in terms of housing. Yes, the "rookeries" are gone, but the slums are not. They may be better slums than those of the 1800s, but in an abstract sense they still reflect our failure to meet the basic need of housing. On another point, can one say that there are more communal facilities today? Bellamy's focus on central solutions to acquiring food, clothing and shelter is one of the most striking aspects of his utopia. Clearly the Laundromat and the fast food restaurant can be said to have elements of Bellamy's vision, albeit by a stretch. When he wrote the text, approximately 94 percent of a typical Bostonian's income was spent on food, clothing, and shelter. Today, the figure is approximately 62 percent (Belk and Pollay 1985, 887). On the whole, however, now as then, the home remains a place of refuge. And Boston's housing today? Ironically, there are still slums in the South Cove and palatial apartments in Back Bay. In the final analysis, little has changed.

Bellamy's Importance for Planning

What, then, is the importance of Bellamy and of his book for city planning? We can consider two aspects of the question: 1) his direct impact on others who then helped the profession to grow and prosper, and 2) his legacy for planning theory. The first answer is easier to formulate than the second.

Our review of the literature finds that Bellamy's influence on the profession was profound. We can note it in the urban parks movement, the city beautiful movement, the Garden City movement, and the national planning movement. We can see his influence in the work of Olmsted, Burnham, Howard, and the planners of the New Deal. We can see it in plans, from those for a small socialist community in California's Antelope Valley (Hayden 1976, 289) to the sweeping visions of Frank Lloyd Wright and the plans for the revitalization of Washington, DC (Ciucci et al. 1973, 58). Concerning the connection between Olmsted and Bellamy, Albert Fein has written that they were contemporaries and traveled in the same social circles (Fein 1972, 58). Though any formal record of their mutual involvement is lacking, he finds it inconceivable that there was not a sharing of ideas. Fein suggests that Sylvester Baxter, an admirer of Olmsted and disciple of Bellamy, may have been the key conduit for their interaction. Even if there is no formal record of their meeting, however, Baxter took the ideas of both men and used his influence to stimulate the creation of more than 10,000 acres of parks, 3 miles of riverbank improvements, and 27 miles of boulevards in Greater Boston: "He was as staunch a supporter of Olmsted's theories as he was of Bellamy's. For him, the theories were interchangeable" (Fein 1972, 58). Fein's point is reinforced by Cicelia Tichi in her introduction to Looking Backward: "Probably it was Olmsted's 'Emerald Necklace' of Boston's Parks, together with his Central Park, which Bellamy had seen during his year in New York, that suggested the suitable environmental design for the futuristic Boston of Looking Backward" (Tichi 1982, 21). One can identify themes common to both Bellamy and Olmsted: the need to break up the monotony of the city, to

create environments where nature and technology could co-exist, and to ensure that parks, open squares, sculptures, and fountains were plentiful, for both aesthetic and health reasons.

There was a similar connection between Bellamy's vision and the World's Colombian Exposition, one of the events that are frequently noted as having helped to stimulate the start of the city planning profession. There is a paragraph in Looking Backward where Mr. West describes the City of Boston of the year 2000:

> At my feet lay a great city. Miles of broad streets shaded by trees and lined with fine buildings, for the most part not in continuous blocks but set in larger or smaller enclosures, stretched in every direction. Every quarter contained large open squares filled with trees, along which statues glistened and fountains flashed in the late afternoon sun. Public buildings of a colossal size and architectural grandeur unparalleled in my day raised their stately piles on every side. Surely I had never seen this city nor one comparable to it before.

This paragraph, arguably, is one of the book's most frequently quoted passages. It is also used to illustrate the connection between the book and the Great White City. As the historian Sean Cashman noted: "It seemed that Bellamy's vision had become a reality in 1893 when Chicago acted as host to the World's Colombian Exposition…" (Cashman 1984, 141). Corn and Horrigan, similarly, have noted, "Bellamy's description of Boston of the year 2000 has often been seen as a prescient anticipation of the elegance and order of the Colombian Exposition…" (Corn and Horrigan 1984, 36).

While there is only suggestive or anecdotal evidence for the connection between Bellamy's work and that of Olmsted and Burnham (the chief planner of the exposition), there is a direct tie between Looking Backward and Ebenezer Howard's Garden Cities of Tomorrow. As Frederic C. Osborne wrote, Howard had been "swallowed whole" by Bellamy's collectivist vision (Osborne 1965, 229). More specifically, Howard noted how Bellamy saw technological change as being positive by promoting collectivism. This idea, which ultimately became a critical cornerstone of Howard's Garden City Ideal, can be directly attributed to the influence of Bellamy (Batchelor 1969, 196). There is a bit of irony here, for Bellamy's community is almost totally collective, largely urban, dense, and walkable, and is superimposed upon an existing urban fabric. Howard's plan is far less collective, far less dense, and would create a new community on open land (Hall 1988, 91).

Frank Lloyd Wright also drew on Bellamy's work. His famous community of the future, "Broad Acre City" (1935), called for a huge department store that shared characteristics with Bellamy's shopping center. Wright, on several occasions, gave credit

to Bellamy for contributions to his visions (Corn and Horrigan 1984, 51). Finally, we can see the influence of Bellamy in the evolution of the New Deal (Whitman 1934, 5). Programs ranging from Social Security to the Tennessee Valley Authority match the themes outlined by Bellamy. As Morgan noted: "Various New Deal projects seem to have been taken almost directly from the pages of Looking Backward" (Morgan 1944, xii). Perhaps most striking is the suggestion that Bellamy was a major influence in the development of John Maynard Keyne's economic theories (Martin 1968, 335).

In terms of planning theory, several of Bellamy's concepts have been influential over time and are still of importance to planners today. The first is the notion of fairness. In his utopia we find no differences among the citizens in terms of race, gender, origin, or economic class. This thought, developed during a period where there were distinct roles for the aforementioned groups, was quite forward-looking. The second important notion assumes that a person should be guaranteed the means to meet basic needs: food, shelter, education, and medical assistance. In an era of rugged individualism, this was a novel concept. The third notion is the importance of civic design in reinforcing the image of the "public good." All of Bellamy's fictional public structures are "magnificent," awe inspiring, and designed to show that the public's needs have precedence. Fourth, and perhaps most significant, was the importance Bellamy attributed to the collective will. From something as mundane as collective Laundromats to the powerful image of the industrial army, Bellamy's thoughts on the importance of community need as compared to individual wants have influenced planning for generations.

Afterward

Thus one can see the long influence that Bellamy's book has had: from the City Beautiful to the Garden City to attempted new towns in Pennsylvania to the TVA and the New Deal, the words and thoughts of Bellamy have echoed through the profession. His ideas on the home, the shop, the industrial complex, the park, and the vista have also influenced countless other readers in their efforts to bring a sense of order and a higher quality of life to their communities. And, though the industrial army is pervasive in the book, we see within it early stirrings of racial and gender equality. It is clear that Bellamy's little book has had a long-term effect.

But we have offered only part of the story. A few years after *Looking Backward* was published, Bellamy wrote a sequel, *Equality*. It is at once a further explanation of his ideas and, at least in terms of the city, a subtle back-peddling away from his previous and powerful urban visions. In *Looking Backward* the city is strong, stately, and imperial. It is the City Beautiful. In *Equality*, it is depopulated and its vibrant importance to the nation has been reduced. Something happened in the years between the two books that caused Bellamy to shift away from being an advocate of the great city to being an advocate for country living. There is a sense of retreat. Unlike Fichte, who stood fast before the criticism of Riehl, we believe that Bellamy wilted before the criticism of William Morris, among others, and retreated to safe ground. His two books in aggregate are a tale of two cities with two visions and two social directions. How this happened will be unveiled, we hope, in a later paper.

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