

# Prince Charles has a plan for Pittsburgh

by Kathleen Klenetsky

In the fall of 1985, Great Britain's Prince Charles came to the United States to encourage efforts by Lloyd Cutler's Committee on the Constitutional System and related groups to overthrow the U.S. Constitution in favor of British parliamentarianism. Speaking to a seminar sponsored by the Library of Congress, Charles, a "New Age" devotee whose dabblings in gnosticism and other pagan cults has provoked widespread controversy within Britain, railed against the separation of powers and other hallmarks of the United States' republican government, and bemoaned the loss of Britain's former colonies.

Two years later, in early March, the man-who-would-be-queen returned to the United States to escalate his war against the American System. At a conference in Homestead, Pennsylvania, sponsored by the American Institute of Architects (AIA) and the Royal Institute of British Architects, in cooperation with Pittsburgh Mayor Richard Caliguiri and other local officials, the Prince delivered a broadside attack on the United States' economic underpinnings, urging a "final solution" to what remains of U.S. basic industry.

Grandly titled "Remaking Cities," the four-day conference was largely devoted to discussing how to revitalize the Monongahela Valley, which has been plunged into a deep depression by the collapse of the U.S. steel industry. Over 30,000 of the area's steelworkers have been thrown out of their relatively high-skilled, high-wage jobs since 1979.

But if any of these unemployed workers expected the conference to produce positive proposals for getting the steel industry back on track, they were in for a big disappointment. As it turned out, the event produced a blueprint for the permanent deindustrialization of the Pittsburgh area, and, for that matter, of every industrial center in the nation. Cities should be "remade," the conference said, in the image of small feudal entities based on real-estate speculation, gentrification, the service economy, and other useless activities.

Prince Charles, the meeting's honorary chairman, summed up its dominant theme in his keynote speech, in which he enthusiastically embraced a report presented at the conference, the main thrust of which is that the Mon Valley's steel industry is dead, period, and any attempt to revive it would be a futile, sentimental gesture.

## Turning steel mills into flea markets

The product of an 18-man "Regional Urban Development Assistance Team" (RUTAD) made up of American and British architects and city planners, the 125-page report explicitly calls for dismantling the last vestiges of this once-productive area's basic industries.

The study bluntly states that the major steel complexes in the Mon Valley should be razed to the ground, because: 1) they interfere with speculators' plans for the post-industrial "regeneration" of the area; and 2) their continued presence fosters "illusions" that the steel industry may yet revive. The report goes so far as to propose that one mill be turned into a museum, so that the area residents will start to see them as history, rather than something that will return!

If this weren't humiliating enough to the area's population, RUTAD's recommendations concerning the use of the sites now occupied by the mills certainly are. Among the grotesque proposals proffered is one to transform the Homestead works into a "garden festival." This, an AIA official associated with the report explained, will bring "thousands of tourists" to the Mon Valley. (Asked how much the former steelworkers who will be involved in servicing these tourists will earn, the official airily replied, "That's not a question we're interested in.")

Even worse is RUTAD's recommendation that the McKeesport steel complex be replaced by a recreational complex "that could involve the world's largest flea market" and a used-car mall. Suggestions for other steel-mill sites include a sportsplex and pottery barn.

Those who want the United States to recapture its former economic and strategic preeminence would naturally find the report anathema. But the Prince thought it the greatest thing since sliced bread. In his keynote, Charles praised the RUTAD document to the skies, enthusing over its "new and exciting vision for the economic, environmental and social regeneration of the valley," and calling on "all the communities along the valley [to] become involved at a grass-roots level in determining their own future, in much the same way as some of the more successful urban regeneration programs in England, which operate under the banner of "community architecture." "

Charles's reference to "community architecture" was particularly telling. One of the Prince's pet projects back home, the movement draws its inspiration from the rabidly anti-progress John Ruskin and the "small is beautiful" nonsense spouted by today's ecology fanatics. It played a key role in implementing the "rationalization" of the British steel industry. The movement's leader, Rod Hackney, a member of the Prince's inner circle, opened the Mon Valley conference with a speech claiming that in Britain, like the U.S., "the reason cities were built"—i.e., as industrial hubs—"is now gone." Charles' and Hackney's involvement in the conference, and their blessing of the RUTAD report, has given a major boost to similar destructive efforts in the United States.