

Manchester  
Society of  
Architects



A Branch of the  
Royal Institute of British Architects

The Right Honourable Margaret Thatcher MP  
10 Downing Street  
LONDON SW1

SBD/DD  
30 November 1983

Dear Prime Minister,

I enclose for your information a copy of an article which appeared in the Manchester Evening News on Saturday 26 November 1983, together with a copy of my letter about it to that newspaper.

The circumstances upon which I comment are an example of the convincing point of view presented to you by Mr Owen Luder and the "Group of Eight" for the Construction Industry at your well publicised meeting of October 1982.

I have sent a copy of this letter and its enclosures to the Secretary of State for the Department of the Environment and Transport, Mr Owen Luder - the Past President of the Royal Institute of British Architects and to Mr Michael Manser the current President.

Yours sincerely,  
Sydney Downs.

Immediate Past President  
Manchester Society of Architects

Please reply to:  
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# Manchester Society of Architects



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The Editor  
The Manchester Evening News  
Deansgate  
Manchester

SBD/DD  
30 November 1983

Sir

Your article "Builders Drop a £9m Brick" in the Manchester Evening News of Saturday, November 26 1983 illustrates clearly that the Construction Industry cannot be turned on and off like a tap in accordance with successive government policies and in reaction to immediate problems. That is a lesson that many have been trying to teach for a long time - not least the Construction Industry "Group of Eight" at national and local levels. It was the reason for a well published meeting between that Group and the Prime Minister in October 1982, when the President of the Royal Institute of British Architects was able to argue, with the full support of his Construction Industry colleagues, that, given more years of neglect, the building labour forces will simply not be there when they are needed.

Of course, there is a shortage of bricklayers! I imagine that the building employers may have been trying very hard indeed to find them. However, trained and experienced bricklayers cannot be produced out of thin air exactly when short notice demands. There is a similar shortage of other skilled tradesmen. Is it surprising that recruits do not come forward to an industry where, when they have finished their present building job, they face a strong possibility of the dole queue, whatever their ability and enterprise?

Manipulation of Construction is a tempting but short sighted palliative in times of national recession. It is too easy to run building down. The many consequences of that have to be faced now and in future. They could be situations of the kind you describe and very steeply rising prices in years ahead. How can we help government to look further ahead than the end of its nose?

Yours faithfully

Sydney B Downs  
Immediate Past President  
Manchester Society of Architects

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# Builders drop a £9m brick

By DAVID BAINTON

**HUNDREDS of homes being built on council estates in Salford are months behind schedule because of a shortage of bricklayers.**

Councillors on the city's housing committee were told that some builders were up to three months behind. Altogether nearly 400 homes in contracts worth £9m were hit.

It seems incredible with 3½m unemployed and the building industry crying out for work, that there has been difficulty in getting bricklayers any time this year," said Coun William Moores. "I wonder if the employers have been trying very hard?"

Chief architect Mr Derek Warburton commented: "In my opinion, the major reason for the delays is lack of adequate labour force. The contractor at Weaste in particular, has experienced difficulties in obtaining bricklayers this summer. This also applied on all five sites.

"Contributory factors were abnormal variations in brick sizes, Timber window frames and pre-cast concrete sills did not conform to specification and had to be replaced."

The estates are at Lower Broughton, Weaste and at Brunswick in Pendleton.

"Nevertheless, he has given me an assurance that he will be finished by the contract date of March 1984 — if not before."

Even though Salford's housing allocation for fresh buildings has been slashed by almost half over the past three years, they could end up with the embarrassing situation of being underspent by some millions of pounds. Unspent money cannot be carried over to the following year.

Housing chairman Coun David Lancaster said: "The Weaste contractor is well aware that he is about three months behind on our estimate.

PM. Aug 82  
Camp of Eight

