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Ecoso Exchange Newsletter : what next?

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The Crow Collection Association (Incorp.)

A Living Library to Plan for the 21st Century

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Ecoso Exchange Newsletter

What Next ?

1967 to 1972 "IRREGULAR"

1972 to 1980 "ECOSO EXCHANGE" (Series 1),

1988 to 1995 "ECOSO EXCHANGE NEWSLETTER (Series 2)

1995....What Next ?

This collection of documents about the history of Ecoso may be useful in planning how best Ecoso can help to further the objectives of the Crow Collection Association.

Ecoso Exchange Guidelines

Adopted 1973

1. Ecoso has a value judgement in favour of regeneration and promotion of community participation meaning that it is humanising and enriching for people to relate to each other through one form or another of voluntary participatory activity both on the job and off the job, exercising a measure of control over such activities.

2. A consequent recognition of the necessity for change in life-style and behaviour patterns to one that sees the quality of life as an alternative to consumerism, understood as mass production and consumption of wasteful and unsatisfactory goods and services based on compulsion and manipulation.

3. Accordingly a policy of restricting the use of energy and non-renewable resources per head and hence a planned design of community including size of population, where people can relate to each other and to nature in order to reduce wasteful goods and services and at the same time guaranteeing an adequate minimum subsistence for all, using modern technology to this end.

4. The recognition that such objectives cannot be achieved either on the basis of practical, linear, one-level ecological remedies or with authoritarian and manipulative control of affairs and requires participatory effort to achieve global equilibrium.

(Subscription to Ecoso Newsletter \$10 for 6 issues. Ecoso was first published from 1967 to 1980. It was revived in 1988. The Crow Collection Association was formed in 1990. It has adopted Ecoso as its newsletter. More information about the Crow Collection and Ecoso from the address below.)



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Original Aims of Ecoso 1972

The fore-runner of Ecoso was called "Irregular Newsletter". This was first distributed in 1967, partly as the result of the Living Standards Convention in that year which brought together community organisations and unions.

Here is a statement from "Irregular" No 49, November 1972 :-

We are now planning quite a different type of publication (Ecoso Exchange)

1. In the past we have stipulated that articles are not for reproduction. In the future articles will be especially written to provide material for republication and for some of them to be directly reprinted.

2. In the future much more attention will be given to the problem of the ecological crisis and the sociological crisis.

3. We also intend to use our mailing list to include circulars from various organisations.

ECOSO EXCHANGE NEWSLETTER No 1, (Irregular 50) was dated February 1973 and included this additional point :-

The "Ecoso What ?" footnote at the end of some items is the editors' attempt to orientate the writer, the reviewer and the reader to the 4 points of the Ecoso Guidelines... the proposed newly formulated objectives of Ecoso Exchange..

Ecoso 1. carried an explanation about the change in name and objectives.

Note :- The Ecoso Guidelines, which were adopted in 1973 and are still the newsletter's objectives, are printed on the back page of every Ecoso in the Revived Series..

Ecoso Ceases 1979

After 12 years Ecoso ceased publication in 1979. Here is a photostat of the explanation for such a decision.

ITEM 3: WE SEEK AN AMALGAMATED PUBLICATION

"Ecoso Exchange" is seeking to amalgamate its publication efforts with several other existing (or projected) publications which do (or would) overlap the general area in which "Ecoso Exchange" is interested.

Such a move could improve the quality of the presentation, give greater diversity of content and attitudes, and widen the readership of all groups participating.

Readers of "Ecoso Exchange" will know that this publication is based on the four "Ecoso Guidelines" (copy of the Guidelines enclosed to remind readers). During the past few years, a number of other groups with kindred or complementary interests have come into existence and it is with such new types of organisations that "Ecoso Exchange" will be discussing some form of working together on a publication.

Potted History of Ecoso

In June 1967 a publication "Irregular" was produced to exchange information on urban planning matters amongst a small group of radicals who were a mixed bunch of professionals, municipal councillors, social planners and local political activists.

The monthly meetings of the Town Planning Research Group (T.R.G.), as the group producing the publication called themselves, grew in numbers. "Irregular" from the outset dealt with current Melbourne planning issues as well as progressive planning ideas from anywhere. Its readership gradually increased to several hundred and although most subscribers lived in Melbourne a number of subscriptions came from other capital cities.

In November 1972, a meeting of TRG adopted the four Ecoso Guidelines and changed the name of the publication from "Irregular" to "Ecoso Exchange"; (Eco' for ecological and 'So' for sociological, and 'Exchange' because the publication now aimed to be non-authoritarian and non-manipulative). The change in name marked the group's resolve that in future much more attention would be directed to the twin problems of the ecological crisis and the social crisis.

The change in name coincided with growing movements with similar objectives and strong links began to be made with a number of similar organisations. Consideration was given to pooling resources with some of the other groups, but at this stage it was decided that "Ecoso Exchange" should keep its own identity but should encourage other publications to republish material printed in it.

Thus the main effect of "Ecoso Exchange" (like "Irregular" before it) was a spin-off effect. It alerted its readers to major current controversies and raised understanding and thus helped to indicate the scope of possible activity, by helping with analysis and suggesting better alternatives. Its members and readers, in their own fields and in their own style entered the joustings in many contests on such issues as urban renewal, the transportation plan, Melbourne's Regional Plan, the Reports from Habitat, The Melbourne City Council's Strategy Plan and a whole range of social needs.

See over →

Just before "Irregular" changed its name to "Ecoso Exchange", the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (Vic. Chapter) selected this innovative publication as an example of "an outstanding contribution to the literature of Town Planning" and awarded "Irregular" one of the Robin Boyd Environmental Awards. This unexpected recognition helped to give the "Ecoso Exchange" group confidence to seek support from other radical groups for some type of gathering on ecological problems.

On the initiative of some of the "Ecoso Exchange" readers in several capital cities, sponsors for the Radical Ecology Conference (R.E.C.) were sought. "Ecoso Exchange" also helped to establish R.E.C. Committees in a number of capital cities and eventually the R.E.C. was held in Melbourne in March 1975 with about five hundred participants.

In the latter half of the 1970s a significant development has taken place in the ecological/sociological sphere. This period has been marked by the emergence of groups such as the Conservation of Urban Energy Group (C.U.E.), of the Conservation Council of Victoria, which published the book "Seeds for Change", the emergence of an energy group within the Friends of the Earth (F.O.E.) and the coalition of a number of groups that is now known as Environmentalists for Full Employment (E.F.F.E.). This group is sponsored by the Australian Conservation Foundation, Friends of the Earth and a number of unions. There has also been the establishment of the Environment Action Centre which has mainly come into existence through the enthusiasm of some young environmentalists.

During this period, some of the main contributors to "Ecoso Exchange" have been preparing papers for various seminars, or helping with publications ranging from books (such as "Seeds for Change") to news bulletins.

On most occasions these efforts have been in association with members of other groups. Some of the material has been published in "Ecoso Exchange" and some "Ecoso Exchange" material has been used as seminar papers. But, on the whole, valuable information, new research, significant writings and even events of common interest often circulate unovonly, or, worse still, lack publication altogether.

It is probably now time to consider how to establish more effective links with some of the groups that appear to be on the same 'wave length' as "Ecoso Exchange". It may be quite possible to amalgamate with a number of groups to produce a publication, and at the same time allow each group to maintain its own autonomy and membership.

If any reader has ideas on this proposition please write to "Ecoso Exchange", Box 87, Carlton South 3053.

Whatever the outcome of discussions about the future of "Ecoso Exchange" one thing is certain in the flux. There is a definite need for some type of publication such as "Ecoso Exchange". The responses from readers have shown that "Ecoso Exchange" has had a part to play; what now has to be considered, is how to update that part to meet the problems of the 1980s.

The Revived Series of Ecoso from 1988.

Ruth Crow revived Ecoso in December 1988 a few months after Maurie died in order to popularise some of his contribution to social change and to help develop a network around the emerging New Left Party. She did not revive the Town Planning Research Group which was the support group the first series of Ecoso but did have some support and encouragement from former Ecoso subscribers and the group that wrote "Make Melbourne Marvellous" (1985) and the group that wrote "Economic Strategy for Social Change" (1986).

Ruth listed 5 main points, They are reprinted below. Note the words "avowedly left" have been emphasised (please excuse the use of avidly as an adjective in the original document). This objective had been tempered through three main changes, the demise of the New Left Party, the emergence of new types of organisations such as the People's Committee for Melbourne which are "avowedly left" on some issues and the formation of the Crow Collection Association.

Here is a photostat of the 1988 statement.

Ecoso Exchange Newsletter is Now Being Revived

It is not intended to revive the meetings of Ecoso Exchange as there is now quite a number of groups filling the role that the old TGR played. It is proposed that an Ecoso Exchange Newsletter, aimed at being avowedly left on urban issues, seeks a readership throughout Australia for the following main reasons :-

- 1) To provide information... Australia-wide ...to the various groups and individuals in the ecology (sustainable society) movements.
- 2) To encourage the development of links between the trade union movement and the ecology movement.
- 3) To help unite the progressive political movements through the development of a New Party of the Left.
- 4) To find common ground on some issues between the left political parties and the newly emerging movements such as the Rainbow Alliance.
- 5) To make documents available to people in the radical ecology movement through the DATE Collection (see this Newsletter).