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ECOSO EXCHANGE NEWSLETTER

Number 2/6, October 1989

This Issue

This Ecoso is mainly devoted to ideas on the process of creating community and on linking the movements in the work places with the movements in the localities.

Some of the articles are reprints of documents (or extracts from documents) written by Ruth and Maurie Crow for particular groups.

Ecoso 2/2 also included several articles on this theme.

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Collectives

Three Contradictions

(This article was published in the Victorian Learning Exchange Supplement on the Conserver Society, 1982. It is a summary of a talk by Ruth Crow to post graduate students of Environmental Studies at Latrobe University.)

In a collective there is a spirit of each contributing, some with one kind of skill, others with different skills, but all with a quickening appreciation of each other, learning and teaching, all developing a greater awareness and communication of common aims.

The prevailing values of our society (privatism, acquisitiveness and competition) not only limit the ability of people to form collectives, but continually penetrate the collectives that do come into existence.

Consider Three Contradictions:

Contradiction 1. Funding Projects and the Involvement of Unpaid People.

The word 'catalyst' has been used to describe people who have community skills and time to initiate community projects and to keep them going. Their role is to help raise the quality of life, not to replace the efforts of the collective, but to complement it and make it possible.

However, once community workers ('catalysts') have been appointed the collective may fall apart and mercenary relationships may replace those of mutual regard. This destroys the very reason for the initiation and existence of the collective.

To overcome this restraint it is crucial to develop new practices between paid and unpaid workers. This applies to traditional services (schools, preschools, libraries, etc.) as much as to innovative services (neighbourhood houses, learning exchanges, drop-in centres) .

Contradiction 2. Initiators and Newcomers.

When people first come together they may have rapid changes in their thinking and acting in a relatively short time. A viable collective thrives on this exhilaration of change; thus new members and ideas can enliven and transform a group.

On the other hand, new members may bring with them values and aspirations which, in the initial stages, may be directed at serving their own self interests. They may have, also, exaggerated expectations of how the collective will change their lives. In addition, there is no stage in anyone's life when they have completely set aside the dominant influences of our competitive, ambitious and aggressive society.

To overcome this constraint it is critical to develop unending opportunities for sharing attitudes and experiences, forging bonds between members, learning skills of cooperating, caring and accountability.

The ability of collectives to continually renew themselves rests on consciously fostering ideals of a Conserver Society in which the experiences of the collective become the prevailing relationships of society.

Contradiction 3. Parochialism and the Wider Community.

Exclusive loyalty to a particular collective will lead, inevitably, to the demise of that group.

In a collective people learn to fuse their personal needs with the ideals and hopes of the group; but added to this is an even more important feature....the dynamism of the group must go well beyond the collectivised-individual-need of group members and thus influence the wider community. The energy so released can be dissipated unless there exists broad-based coalitions such as Environmentalists for Full Employment, the Conservation of Urban Energy Groups, People for Nuclear Disarmament, and other such movements. The significance of these coalitions lies in the glimpse they provide of a future society based on social and ecological sanity instead of exploitation of resources and dehumanising institutions.

Thus, to overcome the constraint of the third contradiction it is crucial to work out how the prototype can be universalised and at the same time to recognise that the Conserver Society will be based on broad-based coalitions as well as these vital collectives around particular projects. Collectives can form the basis of the Conserver Society only if there develops a conscious effort to gear them in to the mainstream movement for radical social change.

Subscription to Ecoso Exchange \$10.00 for 8 newsletters. More information on Ecoso and D.A.T.E. (Documents Available Through Ecoso) from Ruth Crow, 2/5 89 O'Shanassy Street, North Melbourne 3051 (03.328.2345)

Maurie's Vision
Maurie Crow (1915 - 1988)

Maurie Crow died on April 4th 1988 and on May 8th the North Melbourne Association held "A Tribute to Maurie". This was held in the North Melbourne Town Hall and was attended by about 500 people. The Town Hall was donated by the Melbourne City Council. The Council also supplied floral decorations.

Seven people who had worked with Maurie at various times gave brief statements about Maurie's life. They were Lloyd Edmonds "The Beginning of a Long Friendship" (from 1940s), David Davies "Bridging the Generation Gap" (from 1950s), Giovanni Sgro (MLC) "Friends in my New Country" (from 1960s), Cr Winsome McCaughey "Thinking Globally and Acting Locally" (from early 1970s), Prof. Peter McIntyre "Grasping Participation Opportunities" (from the early 1970s), Ann Morrow "Shaping Melbourne's Future" from the mid 1970s) and Peter Atkins "Creatively Confronting the Energy Crisis" (from early 1980s).

Here is Ann Morrow's contribution.

Like many other people I met Ruth through our joint involvement in Community Child Care. Since the mid 1970's I've worked with Maurie and Ruth on a number of issues concerning Metropolitan Melbourne.

Maurie's and Ruth's vision of how our city can function in the future is informed by their thorough understanding of the reasons why the local community and the neighbourhood should be the primary focus for planning.

In contrast to bureaucratically orthodox approaches to metropolitan planning theirs is a "below up" rather than a "top down" perspective.

As Winsome said, Ruth and Maurie have understood so clearly that it's at the local level where people are most likely to be able to participate in decision making and become fruitfully involved in the world outside their households.

Neighbourhood nodes, for example neighbourhood houses, are to provide the focus, the neutral territory, around which people can establish productive and mutually supportive relationships with each other.

Yet Maurie's Melbourne is to be no mere collection of inward looking, navel gazing neighbourhoods. Connected to the district and the centre by energy saving public transport, the neighbourhood can serve as a point of entry to wider social and political movements such as those of women, environmentalists and campaigners for a peaceful and nuclear-free world.

The strongest advocates for community development as public policy, Ruth and Maurie also practised, and do practise, this philosophy in their personal and working relationships.

Everyone is considered to have something to give. No-one is excluded.....not on political grounds, not on age grounds, certainly not on class or gender, not on any grounds.

Ruth and Maurie's generosity of spirit has been able to keep disparate groups of individuals working productively on important issues, together, for a very, very long time. A lesson which would benefit other political and community movements.

We pay tribute today to the great contribution which Maurie and Ruth have made to our knowledge of planning principles and their connection to practice and (as Winsome said) outcomes. In particular to our understanding of the vital connections between purpose and scale, between planning, quality of life and our capacity to form productive, creative

human relationships; between physical service planning and community service planning, between the planning process and community development and between community development and our consciousness of world movements.

Maurie and Ruth have been and will continue to be an inspiration to us and all of us here thank them sincerely for what they have taught us.

(In 1988 Ann Morrow was the Director of the Social Development Division of the Premier's Department; she is now the Chief Executive to the Victorian Ministry of Education.)

Appropriate Technologies

"What Technologies are Appropriate" by Geoff Lacey explores how people see technology, its historical roots and above all the alternatives to the present system.

Modern day technology has involved the domination of nature for the supposed benefit of human beings. From now on, Geoff believes, our task must be healing nature and restoring the ecosystems.

Most importantly technology is an integral part of the experience and tradition of the community. If technology is convivial and ecological it is appropriate.

This booklet is available from Pax Chritis, P.O. Box 31, Carlton South 3053, the cost is a mere \$4.00 and this includes postage.

Japanese and Asian Takeovers

"The Third Wave : Australian and Asian capitalism" is a book jointly written by a former Professor of Economics (Ted Wheelwright) and a building worker (Abe David). It lifts the lid on the current wave of Japanese and Asian takeovers and discusses the frightening prospects for the future of our country.

Abe David has first hand knowledge of Japanese investments in Australia and brings a refreshing passion to the subject. He comes to the book through his experience in the building industry where he has worked as a rigger.

"The Third Wave" costs \$14.95 from the Left Book Club. P.O. Box 3 Flinders Lane Post Office, Melbourne, 3000. (03.654. 6947)

Community, Consumerism and Class

In 1984, in response to requests from a number of community organisations, Ruth and Maurie Crow examined the works of Martin Mowbray on "Localism" and wrote a report called "Community, Consumerism and Class".

This 50 page booklet is used in some tertiary courses in Victoria and Ruth is occasionally invited to discuss it.

Martin Mowbray's writings tend to focus almost exclusively on the state's role in serving capital. He discourages the word community, which he usually puts in inverted commas.

On the next four pages are some notes compiled by Ruth Crow for a recent talk to TAFE students who were using "Community Consumerism and Class" as a text book.

"Community, Consumerism and Class" can be purchased for \$10 (includes postage). It and the documents referred to are available from D.A.T.E. (Documents Available Through Ecoso). See page 2 of this Ecoso.

Discussion Notes
on
Community, Consumerism and Class (C.C.C.)

1. The Meaning of Words and Phrases

1.A. The word "Community" (see page 17 of C.C.C.)

"We use the word 'community' with the opposite meaning (from Mowbray) of 'social mix'; its very essence and value is not a grouping of like-minded people but a group of people irrespective of their differences. They may take common action over an issue that affects them, but this does not obliterate the different lifestyles or different standpoints of individuals any more than, for example, job action has such affect.....

"The essences of neighbourliness and job mateship is the acceptance of others at greeting level, even if you do not approve of their lifestyle, their religion, or their party politics, and even if you do not feel like developing a lasting close relationship with them."

1.B. The word "Consumerism" (see page 37 of C.C.C.).

"The prevalence of the consumerist ethos, with all needs, real and fancied, purchased on the market means that many services tend to be provided in such a way as to deny people control over their own lives. Thus part of the struggle against capitalist hegemony is the 'community creating' movement."

1.B.a. Consumerism as used in an article by Ruth Crow, "Women in Suburbia", Ecoso Exchange Newsletter 1976. This definition was based on one by Alan Roberts in "Radical Ecologist No 1, Dec. 1974.

"Consumerism flourishes in our suburbs because the privatism of suburban living assist the market to try to foist on to everyone a life-style which expects each family to own privately the goods and services which were supplied in the past, and can be supplied now, much more effectively by the community for community use. At the same time women become more vulnerable as they substitute possession of things for relationships with people and identify themselves with the sexist advertising which is an integral part of consumerism. Consumerist satisfaction are pale substitutes for the avenues of self fulfilment which tend to be excluded from suburban life."

1.C The word "Class" (see page 32 of C.C.C.)

"But once the working class is defined as those who are employed by capital to create surplus value - and their like numbers in the public service - we get a definition of working class as follows.....

- (a) Industrial workers, mainly in factories, mines and transport.
- (b) Non-manual workers in trade/shops/offices/factories/transport.
- (c) Part of the intellectually and technically trained workers in industry and services.
- (d) Rural workers.
- (e) Women doing unpaid work at home or who move in and out of workforce.
- (f) The unemployed.
- (g) Pensioners and retired workers."

1.D. The word "Hegemony" (See page 34 of C.C.C.)

"Ruling class hegemony is not something masterminded by a multi-national 'think tank' and cunningly inserted by deliberate State intervention. Rather it grows naturally out of the changing relationships of production and exchange. Support for the car way of life, as a general ethos, appears to originate from workers who, with no other option open to them, seem to initiate the demand for low density outer-suburban sprawl, and for more and better roads, as well as the demand for professional support services to overcome the isolation to which this process subjects them.

1.E. The word "Collective" (See page 9 C.C.C.)

"Experience has shown that such collective efforts have a liberating effect for people who have had poor opportunities for meeting regularly with other people, let alone working in a collective fashion."

1.E.a. "Collective" as used in an information paper by Ruth Crow published by community child care in 1976, called "Searching for Answers on child care".

"CCC uses the word 'collective' rather than the word 'interact'. The reason for doing this is to emphasis that in participatory efforts like community child care, people have found that they can do together what they are unable to do as individuals. A collective is thus much more than a group of individuals.

"A collective means a team of people, for which, since there is a common purpose, there begins to develop a spirit of each contributing as best she or he can, some with one kind of skill, others with different skills, but all with a quickening appreciation of each other, all teaching and learning from each other, all developing greater awareness and communication of common aims."

1.F. The phrase "Neighbourhood Focal Areas" (see page 17 C.C.C.)

"Areas of strong neighbourhood focal centres can provide the conditions for people from all walks of life to subconsciously accept each other on 'nodding acquaintance' basis. Only some of these acquaintances are likely to blossom, through the sharing of experiences into friendships."

1.F.a. Neighbourhood Focus in 'Citizens Action Plan for North and West Melbourne' published by the North Melbourne Association in 1973.

"A neighbourhood focus is an area in a district which is distinguished by the fact that people who live or work or are being educated in the vicinity are attracted to come to it or to pass through it frequently. The more varied the 'attractions' the wider the range of people that will be drawn to it and the time spent by the people at the focus will tend to be longer.

"An essential feature of a neighbourhood focus is that some of the spaces either indoor or outdoor, are not publicly owned. Such public space can only be 'attractive' if it has some objects or people to whom those living or working nearby can relate."

2. Historic Context of "Community Consumerism and Class"

2.A. Political Opportunities of the Early 1980s. (See Preface to C.C.C.)

"... This is a time of crisis; there will surely be considerable restructuring of the health and welfare sector in the coming months and years, and yet the consumers, unions and the left are having great trouble agreeing on any directions or tactics."

This quote from Ric Mohr is the opening paragraph in "Community Consumerism and Class".

2.B. Labour Party in Power in C^owealth and in Vic. (See page 10 of C.C.C.)

The Labour Party had been elected to government in Victoria and in the Commonwealth. A large number of the ALP election promises, at both Victorian and Federal levels, were based on the community campaigns of the 1970s (see later). At first, some quite valiant attempts were made to involve the community with implementing some of the election program.

Three Victorian examples, which very much affected the community movements, were the Human Services Programs Report, the Review of Early Childhood Services and the Social Justice Strategy. There were also several others.

In the early 1980s the Victorian Government's long-term alternative plans for the metropolis had many similarities to the model suggested by environmentalist in "Seeds for Change". A report, on the "Seeds" model, "Steps Towards a Better Melbourne - a Community View" was prepared jointly by representatives from the Community Energy Network, Train Travellers Association, Community Child Care, the Energy Committee of the Municipal Association and the Town and Country Planning Association. Briefing session on this report were held with a number of Government Ministers.

2.C. Reforms to Local Government (in Victoria). (See page 10 C.C.C.)

In addition to preparing the Human Services Programs Report the Victorian Government was attempting to introduce other changes at local government level, for example the review of boundaries and the return of democracy to the "sacked" councils.

Before Labour was elected to govern, in 1979, the Victorian Government, with considerable community participation, had examined the role, structure and administration of Local Government.

This report identified the three fold-role of Local Government:-

- * community representation and participation;
- * development of community resources;
- * ensuring effectiveness in service delivery.

2.D. Strength of Community Movement at Local Govt. Level (Vic.).

The 1970s was a period during which new types of community-based organisations flourished, for example Community Child Care, the Learning Exchanges and the Community Schools. It was also a period during which new-types of urban action groups, anti-uranium mining groups and environmental organisations were initiated.

No doubt, similar movements developed in other states and in many other parts of the world.

Three unique environmental movement in the late 1970s were :-

- * Municipal Councils declaring themselves "Nuclear Free Zones".
- * The Conservation of Urban Energy Group.
- * The Environmentalists for Full Employment. (See page 46 C.C.C.)

It is worth noting that the first Nuclear Free Municipality in the world was in Victoria. This movement depended very greatly on the strength of the links between local government and the anti-uranium and peace movements, and other community organisations such as urban action groups.

The Conservation of Urban Energy Group (CUE), which was initiated by the Victorian Conservation Council, was also the result of coalitions being formed between community-based organisations. There does not seem to have been other similar groupings in other states.

The Environmentalists for Full Employment (EFFE) was a response by the Australian Conservation Foundation to union and community concerns. EFFE was an Australian-wide organisation and was particularly helped by activists from Sydney and Newcastle, but the main contribution in sustaining EFFE was from Victoria where there seemed to be a more effective community and union base to keep the organisation viable.

These three examples are cited to emphasise the fact that in Victoria there appears to have been opportunities for forming unexpected coalitions between community organisations which do not seem to have developed in other states. This may mean that the Victorian community movement has different strength from those in other parts of Australia.

3. Comparing N.S.W. and Victoria

3.A. Using Child Care as an Example (See page 8 C.C.C.)

Five differences, which have their roots in the different history of the two states, are listed in C.C.C. The two most significant are :-

- * Of Federal child care money paid through local government, about 40% goes to Victoria as against 23 % for NSW.
- * In Victoria, 75 % of Local Government Councils are involved in child care whereas in N.S.W, there are only about 8 councils out of approximately 200 (early 1980s figures).

4. Building on Strengths (See pages 42 to 46 C.C.C.)

The aim of writing "Community Consumerism and Class" was to achieve the maximum unity of action of progressives, whether theoreticians or in the field. Three levels of unity are proposed in the final pages:-

- * unity of long term aims (goals)
- * unity of methods and directions towards those goals (strategies)
- * unity of short term aims to implement strategy.

C.C.C. states that "Where differences appear, it is better to look for acceptable positive contributions made by the contestants, and to build on the strength of each, rather than leave a critique to stand as something potentially divisive."

New Left Party
Some Comments on Statement of Intent
By Ruth Crow (Melbourne, September 1989))

The New Left Party held its National Launching Conference in July. Since then the NLP has published its "Statement of Intent". One of the proposals in this document is to have national campaigns on five "key linking issues".

These campaigns provide an opportunity for linking the movements in the workplaces with the movements in the localities.

While supporting these campaigns I am concerned about the proposed action, particularly for the child care campaign. I therefore prepared the following ideas on the Campaigns in the Statement of intent.

Ecoso subscribers can find more information on work-placed, work-related and community child care in Ecoso 2/4.

On page 13 of this Ecoso is a report from the "Commission on Industry Intervention and the Environment" which was held at the New Left Party Launching Conference. The ideas presented provide some useful starting points for the five proposed campaigns.

Local Coalitions on Nation-wide Issues

Crucial to effectively organising any NLP campaigns is the ability to work out fundamentally new ways of forming coalitions between the community /environmental movements and the trade unions, giving particular attention to coalitions at local, grass roots level.

However, the wording of the campaign proposals in the "Intent" document tends to one-sidedly reflect the past experience of the left movement around workplace issues and the economy and thus to ignore "social life and the development of people as people". ("Time to Act Statement", New Left Party initiating document.)

Little heed is given to "social change through....and representative institutions including local councils" (from "Time to Act Statement") and the very term "national campaign initiatives" tends to put the emphasis on the already existing national networks rather than facing the challenge of developing new types of coalitions at local level.

The Left is very experienced at national campaigns. This past concentration on national campaigns and has resulted in the comparative neglect of local issues. Do we want more of the same ?

In comparison to its strength in the union movement the Left has very little recent experience in fostering the creative efforts of the great variety of locally-based voluntary organisations on housing, health, child care, education, and other urban issues.

Many of these groups are already contributing to the moral and cultural transformation of society through campaigns which not only do check bureaucracy and the abuse of power but have the potential of developing new forms of democracy with organisational links to local government.

This neglect of local issues has meant that the left has not been effectively tackling the day to day problems of people (particularly women) who are not in the workforce, unemployed people, pensioners and so on who make up a considerable (and increasing) percentage of the population.

There is a political danger in narrowly interpreting the term "specific national campaigns"; rather the emphasis needs to be on acting locally on national issues.

There is danger too in trying to nationally co-ordinate such local initiatives (if that is intended). Past experience has too often shown that local groups lose their creative leadership through national efforts.

Australian historical circumstances have necessitated a great deal of progressive political effort at the national level with the result that local and state organisation have frequently lost the creative contribution from those so "promoted". History no longer demands this.

The Trade Unions and the Social Movements

The biggest task facing the New Left Party is to recognise the contradictions, which capitalism exacerbates, between the trade union movement and the other social movements. A useful way of identifying these contradictions was used in the document "Economic Strategy for Social Change" which was distributed at both the Broad Left Conference and the Getting Together Conference in 1986. (1)

Linking trade unions and community movements is not a new problem for the left. Over the past fifty years there have been numerous efforts to overcome trade union reformism through campaigns on social issues, and, in the past two decades an increasing number of examples of trade unions becoming involved in environmental issues. (2)

However, too often the linking has not been at grass roots level. The unions have usually been involved as a force coming in from outside. A two-way process is needed with the community movements taking up trade union campaigns and vice versa.

Living Standards and Quality of Life

One of the proposed campaigns is on "Living Standards". This introduces the need for a whole new type of economic analysis carrying forward the idea of socially useful production and the development of ideas on collective consumption rather than the current concentration on defensive actions on the standard of living and the social wage. (3)

Artificial barriers have been erected between the unions and community/social movements because of the rigid economic analysis of the Left in the past, its concentration on the needs of those in the employed workforce, and the centralised, bureaucratic, patriarchal structures of the union movement. This has not always been the case. (4)

The "Time To Act" statement has recognised the need for "an environmentally sustainable society" stating that "this will mean, among other things, preserving the planet's diverse ecology and species, developing an environmentally sustainable society, and building livable urban environments."

If we are to carry out this policy, now is the time to more effectively work out alternative urban plans, and in the process develop new ways of expressing demands for people to have more control over human services, this means "the development of people as people". (5)

This policy can only be put into effect if we begin to enlarge the living standards campaign to a campaign for a better quality of life.

Attacks on welfare, wages and social services mean that too often our campaigns are defensive and we do not have time to develop alternatives.

In the past the Left has on some occasions given attention to considering how trade unions can help the social and community movements, but to date very little consideration has been given as to how the community/social movements can help the trade union campaigns.

The union restructuring campaign can begin to bridge the gap between community/social movements and the trade unions. (6)

Children's Services, the Trade Union Movement and the Community Movements

One of the five "national campaigns" is for a certain number of child care places "to be argued for by the left in industrial negotiations with government and incorporated into industrial policies and claims. (The issue of pay rates for child care workers to be associated with this claim.)" (quote from "Intent" document)

Child care to enable women to fully participate in the employed workforce is only one aspect of the need for children's services.

Quantifying workplace child care needs, as proposed in the "Intent" document, is applying an economic measure whereas a creative effort is needed to find new ways of humanising the workplace and the neighbourhoods in which people live.

Whatever is happening to the idea of children's services being provided universally ... as a right whether the need is for the parents to be employed or not ?

Of course it is essential to continually find ways of involving the trade unions in campaigns for child care and other human services and to campaign for improved working conditions for child care workers, but this (the "Intent" proposal) is a very limited way of tackling these issue :-

It would strengthen the contradictions between the trade unions and the community/social movements.

Reduce the potential of developing new forms of democracy linked to local government and parliament. (proposed in the "Intent" document)

It would also make greater divisions between those in the paid workforce and those who are not.

The labour movement has never supported moves by the employers for "company town" type of control over the workforce, and, no matter what early democratic arrangements are made for "worker control", the experience (in Australia and other capitalist countries) of all such employer provided service show that the main motive is to make a profit.

Recent Federal funding for child care is resulting in employers being subsidised for this service. This should not be welcomed by the Left.

The Government itself has stated that the main reason for the proposal is that it will be a much cheaper service. (7)

Work-based, government subsidised child care will open the door for commercial chains to be the providers.

Of course, the need for child care to enable women to participate in the workforce is one part of the issue. There are many others. Campaigns for child care should not be confined to what is happening at the work place. The Left should be part of what is happening in the community movements and at local and state government levels as well as the federal funding arrangements.

The trade unions could campaigns around "work related child care", for example, campaigning for the employment of child care resource workers at the work place. Such a service could help employees find appropriate child care in the community, and help link the work place with the community through assisting with neighbourhood organisations around children's services. We need to think about other types of action.

The contributions in "The Comet" on policy on the environment, social justice, multiculturalism and Aborigines need to be heeded in thrashing out the child care campaign. These policies would be hindered by the present proposal.

Ageism flourishes when the needs of one generation are given paramount recognition and the rights/needs of others are relegated to serving these. Ageism is indissolvably linked with sexism, and racism. The "Intent" proposals on child care would strengthens ageism."

Footnotes

1. "Economic Strategy for Social Change and a Sustainable Future" was prepared by Conserver Economics Group (Melbourne 1986) which consisted of trade union activists, economists and people involved in a variety of conservation organisations.

It includes a chart on the relations between the progressive social movements :- labour, feminists, community, peace/anti-nuclear, environment, aboriginal, human rights, international development, communal cooperatives, animal rights and spiritual/religious.

This showed that there were more conflicts between the labour movement and other movements than any others and on the otherhand there were more areas of agreement between the labour movement and other movements. The task of the left is to recognise that there are potential areas of agreement but that there are also quite fundamental conflicts.

2. The trade unions have been involved in a great variety of community campaigns, for example around child endowment in the 1930s, housing in the 1940s, the pensioners in the 1950s, the living standards conventions in the late 1960s, the green bans of the early 1970s, the radical ecology conference in the mid 1970s and a number of conservation issues of the 1980s. With the exception of the green bans most of most of these have been national campaigns.

3. The term "collective consumption" more accurately describes the redistribution of wealth than does the phrase "social wage". It is a term used in campaigns on urban issues (for example by Emmanuel Castells in "City Class and Power"). It emphasises the increasingly collective and interdependent character of the process of consumption and its domination by the interests of private capital, especially the trans-nationals.

4. Fifty years ago a number of unions had neighbourhood branches with regular meetings. This enabled local community organisations to have direct communication with these unions about matters of common interest.

Today unions have no street-level facilities and their centralised bureaucracies are often inaccessible to members let alone to the public.

5. In all parts of Australia community groups are preparing alternative plans for example "Less energy with More Enjoyment" (North Melbourne), "Traffic Calming" Brisbane. These reports are tackling trend planning through presenting detailed community-action plans.

6. In a recent submission to the Olympic Games Social Impact Assessment it was proposed that building workers need to be retrained so that they can acquire skills to construct buildings which conserve energy, particularly passive solar energy. This is admittedly a very small example; but it points the way for community/social movements to consider how the workforce can become more skilled in socially useful production.

In recent years some unions have campaigned against food irradiation, but the request for this did not come from the community/social movements.

Similarly the movement against toxic chemicals has considerable potential for the community movement becoming more aware of the needs of the employees as well as the consequences of storage on the locality.

7. Ecoso Echange Newsletter (no 2/4, June 1989) has a number of articles about work-based, work-related and community controlled child care. This, and other publications mentioned are available from Ruth Crow 30-328.2345.

Industry Intervention and Environment

Report from the Commission on Industry Intervention and Environment held at the New Left Party Launching Conference, July 1989.

It was generally agreed that the Conference Paper from the Tasmanian group prepared for the Launching Conference, in the *Comet*, set out the important issues. The Conference discussions identified directions for policy development:

- current forms of mass action
- ongoing policy making procedures
- the role the NLP might play
- the need to be pro-active rather than only reactive.

Issues which took most working through were:

- the growth economy, in terms of how we approach the issues involved
- macro and micro issues, or macro versus micro
- links between local, national, and international issues
- the level at which people tap into issues
- is there a dichotomy between employment and environment protection?

It was generally agreed that the below points from the environment policy paper in the *Comet* set out the important issues. These were:

1. **WHAT IS PRODUCED?** socially useful production of goods and services serving social needs within environmental constraints.
2. **HOW IT IS PRODUCED?** what are the necessary inputs to production, how are work and production systems organised, the unwanted outputs such as waste, harmful by-products and pollutants.
3. **WHO DECIDES?** issues of social and democratic accountability, and intervention on matters otherwise left to the corporate sector such as investment policy.

These issues open the way to rational discussion about the growth economy - What is growth? What should growth be? Making growth work socially.

For both Unions and Community organizations a key issue is the democratic right to participate in decision making, directly and indirectly, on issues which affect the quality of life the living environment.

Different views arising from different experiences were presented on the question "is there a dichotomy between employment and environmental protection?" These ranged from those that think there is a major problem to those who think there is no such dichotomy, or that there need not be one.

In general to date, the main reason for job loss is technological change in conditions of corporate control. In the forest based industries in Tasmania it can be argued no dichotomy between environmental protection and employment has been shown to exist. The reality in Tasmania is that between the 1971 and the 1986 census, a 15 year period, use of the forestry resource approximately doubled - but overall employment in forest based industries is down by over 23%, and jobs are still disappearing in large numbers. There have been shifts in employment within the industries, but the overall fall is dramatic despite the near doubling of use of the resource.

Technological change in conditions of corporation control, and not environmental constraints, has caused the massive job losses.

Wesley Vale

The Wesley Vale opposition by conservationist has offered up the possibility of more jobs in smaller mills and the retention of more jobs in existing pulp and paper mills.

The alliance for shorter hours, more jobs, and quality of life can provide the means to puncture the hype of the so-called economic pundits about what is economic efficiency.

We do have to recognise that industries which compete on the world market have to be competitive; currently this is, but does not have to be, at the expense of the worker or the environment. When barring certain imports we have to also recognise our responsibilities to the workers of other nations who may be affected. The question of reinvestment of profits must address downstream processing, including creating new products and new ways of doing things.

There is a need for analysis and policy at the macro and at the micro level. The green slogan "think globally, act locally" reflects this concern. The world situation must be recognised in our national and local policies and activities, and in turn our local policies must form the foundation for our national policies and actions.

The shift must be made from reactive political mode to proactive mode - projecting positive visions of preserving the planet's diverse ecologies and species, developing an environmentally sustainable society and building enjoyable urban environments. This will be difficult for both the Left and the environment groups. Ecological problems must be stopped at their source, as must human exploitation, rather than just campaigning against symptoms. Notions of work; the ways we live; the products and services we depend upon; need to be recast, and injected into the union movement.

Short term common concerns

The flexible ways of forming coalitions so characteristic of community organizations and Green political parties - eg. Rainbow Alliance - must be respected. Linkages between the Left and the Environment movement on common concerns tend to be short term and over particular issues in the early stages, but expand as joint experience and more in depth analysis takes place.

The lessons the unions and Left have for the environment movement, and vice versa, are considerable. The limited social, economic, and political analyses of the environment movement can be reinforced by Left experience. New methods of mass work and planning by environmentalists can complement the Left call for a better quality of life, or 'standard of living'.

Other political movements around a sustainable future are also crucial. The Left has the potential (because of experience and theory) of linking the community-environment and union movements.

Four immediate areas for research were identified:

1. The Conference Paper was seen as a starting point for a framework for national policy;
2. Further analysis of the history and politics of the Australian environment movement, its progressive elements, and the lessons for unions with a view to industry interests and environment policy formulation;
3. Clarify the concepts of "growth", "industry", "efficiency", and "sustainable development".

4. Attention to joint analysis and policy formulation, and existing environmental policy in organizations such as the Greens.

Areas which are at the core of manufacturing and services industries have different problems and possibilities than is the case in outlying or peripheral areas. What works in terms of economic industry development approaches in the core, eg. Melbourne manufacturing and services industries, does not necessarily work at the economic periphery, eg. in Tasmania or much of the Victorian countryside. This opens up the importance of local analysis and initiatives around local issues and problems.

It is necessary to recognise that wider regional, national, and international developments and pressures form an important part of the context for local initiatives and issues.

The NLP was seen as a vantage point to project positive visions for sustainable living, city development, and alternative industrial development - including agricultural practices. The rights of Aboriginal people to live on and use the land in a way of their traditional choosing should not be infringed.

Common ground policy areas (between environmental and union groups) for coalition work and campaigning - broad headings:

- hazardous chemicals and waste
- air and water pollution
- recycling
- transportation, promoting public for both people and freight
- greenhouse.

In summary, we should concentrate on:

- linking policies, both internally in the NLP and externally wherever opportunities open
- working with a broad definition of "industry" that includes agriculture and white collar occupations
- making "growth" work socially - concepts of lifestyles
- addressing both macro and micro aspects of issues
- de-fusing the belief that jobs and environment necessarily conflict (eg. in energy, could build up solar industry).

For further information on NLP Industry Intervention and Environment policy contact :
Ian Patterson (002) 23.6032 or write to
NLP P.O. Box 273 North Hobart 7002

Conservation Challenge at BHP Meeting

Several hundred people attended the BHP Gold Shareholders Meeting in the mirrored ballroom of the Hyatt Hotel in Melbourne.

After the ponderous reports the shareholders were shaken from their complacency by the questions asked by a team of conservationists who are concerned that their investments are being used to destroy the natural environment and to rob the Aborigines of their land.

The main questions were about the company's methods of extraction at Coronation Hill and Alligator River in the Northern Territory.

Mr Russell Castley, one of the conservationists, stood for the board of Directors. He was defeated, but there was considerable support for him from the shareholders.

The conservation challengers were very well informed about the issues.

Rainbow Alliance Greenhouse Action

Congratulations to the Rainbow Alliance on the effort put into the Ten Days of Action on Greenhouse. The Melbourne walks, rallies, meetings have involved thousands of people.

Brisbane Environment Action Day

An Environment Action Day was organised late in August by the Tingalpa Environment in conjunction with the Brisbane City Council. Twenty nine organisations participated. Proposals for immediate action were :-

* A Suburban Environmental Network, * Community Recycling. * Propagation of Native Plants, * Reafforestation of Parks, Reserves and Rural Land, School Environmental Projects, * Development of Environmental Action.

Thanks Winsome

"Thank you Winsome for 'doing your darndest' to further the process of creating community, to promote peace, to popularise international friendship and for bringing Local Government closer to the people".

These were the words on a "round robin" signed by Ecoso subscribers at the Winter Gathering in North Melbourne.

Winsome was Lord Mayor of Melbourne for the past year. She was one of the founders of Community Child Care in the early 1970s and has been very much involved in the community organisations in the neighbourhood in which she lives (North Melbourne).

About fifty people enjoyed the convivial day which included a walk through the neighbourhood.

By BEN POTTER Age 27/9/89
Discussion of most motions at yesterday's BHP annual meeting was crammed into the last half hour of the marathon two-and-a-half hour meeting after conservation and anti-apartheid speakers had dominated the first two hours.

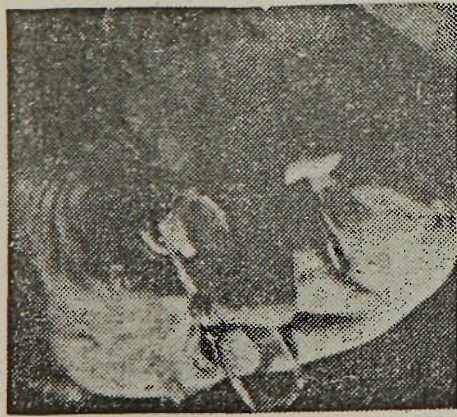
Sir Arvi Parbo, chairing his first BHP annual meeting, fielded questions — and speeches — on the Coronation Hill gold, platinum and palladium project in Kakadu National Park and BHP's dealings with the local Jawoyn people, its activities in South Africa and membership of the World Gold Council, affirmative action, dividend rates, Chilean politics and rights issues.

After two hours of discussion on these topics the meeting re-elected five directors — Sir Arvi, Mr John Gough, Mr David McPherson, Mr John Reid and Mr Bill Rogers — and approved — with little debate — a \$200,000 increase in maximum total directors' fees to \$950,000, new retirement benefit arrangements for directors and a new memorandum and articles of association.

Shareholders, whose numbers had dwindled when the time came to vote, also approved a share buyback plan and renewed, with a three-year sunset clause, the "poison pill" article preventing partial takeover bids unless authorised by shareholders.

The first speaker, Mr John Moody, asked why BHP's accounts failed to disclose its interest in a gold exploration joint venture with the South African company Anglovaal, and why it had interests in South Africa when its policy was to be guided by "prevailing majority attitudes".

Sir Arvi said BHP disclosed all its South African interests in a report tabled in Federal Parliament. He said these interests were "minute" and included a



Sir Arvi Parbo: first meeting as chairman.

dormant coalmine on which fat cattle happily grazed, a 30 per cent interest in a gold prospect, with no plans for development or production, and a small operation making prospecting equipment, with 13 employees.

"In fact if anyone wishes to make us a good offer to buy them we'd be happy to sell them," Sir Arvi said.

Another speaker, Mr Chris McNulty, charged that BHP had ignored the views of the Jawoyn people in compiling its environmental impact statement on Coronation Hill, but Sir Arvi said BHP had replied to every one of the 917 comments on the report.

He added that 10 of the 19 people originally working on the project had been Jawoyn, and there were now seven Jawoyn in a team of 15. One of the Jawoyn who had been trained as an equipment operator had resigned because of the delays to join a delay-free project, he said.

Sir Arvi also queried the "concept" of the sickness country, one of the reasons conservationists say there should be no mining at Coronation Hill. He said it applied to some 6000 square kilometres of country but was subject to debate.

Sir Arvi also said the board had not recently discussed having a rights issue.

BHP Gold is green for holders' meeting

By BARRY FITZGERALD, 17/8/89
resources writer

BHP Gold's annual meeting yesterday was dominated by conservation issues, questions from disgruntled shareholders on the lack of dividends and the group's \$156 million asset write-down in the May year.

The meeting also saw the defeat on a show of hands of Mr Russell Castley — the first conservationist to seek election to the board of a major Australian mining company.

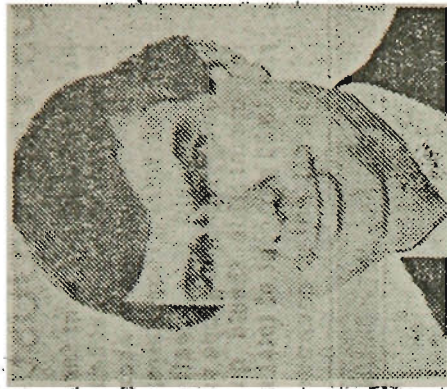
Mr Castley told the meeting that he was a conservationist who supported mining as long as it was done in an "environmentally sensitive" way.

He was not critical of BHP Gold's conservation record but did call on the company to review its involvement in the 45 per cent-owned Coronation Hill project in the Northern Territory on environmental and perhaps economic grounds.

Coronation Hill was also the subject of several other questions from the floor. The questions covered the impact on the South Alligator River region environment and Aboriginal claims over the area.

Answering a question, the chairman, Mr John Gough, said the Coronation Hill environmental impact statement (the final EIS is now with the Federal government) was an "enormously comprehensive" document.

"We think it is a full and complete study of the total situation," he said. "The EIS is now before government for a decision and the laws of the land must prevail."



Mr Russell Castley: defeated on a show of hands.

On the thorny question of dividends, Mr Gough said that a year ago "we thought the time may be approaching" when a (maiden) dividend could be declared.

"Unfortunately, in the current circumstances, that time has not yet arrived. I should reiterate the company's firm intention is to pay a dividend as soon as conditions allow," he said.

The meeting approved a restructuring of the company's capital to take account of the \$156 million asset write-down — a move prompted by the fall in gold prices and the pending corporate tax on gold mining.

Mr Gough noted that the loss was not an operating one (the \$156 million is to be applied against the share premium account and is the equivalent to a reduction in capital) and that it would ease the group's amortisation requirements.

Challenges to BHP at two meetings of shareholders. (BHP Gold in August and BHP in September... see over page). Note the challenge by Russell Castley. It takes a new type of courage to stand up in the halls of power and make such challenges. Thanks and thanks again to the challengers. (PTO).

Age 17/8/89

Challenges to BHP at two meetings of shareholders. (BHP Gold in August ... see over page... and BHP in September). Note the directors fees are set at a maximum of \$950,000 a year or over \$18000 (eighteen thousand) a week.!!!!?? (PTO)

Age 27/9/89

