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Ecoso Exchange Newsletter

Crow Collection Association (Incorp.)

Ecological, Social and Political Discourse.

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NEWS FROM THE CROW COLLECTION ASSOCIATION.

Wholehearted and Lighthearted

Perhaps the secret to the success of any convivial gathering, such as the Ideas Exchange Day on August 24th, depends on unconsciously practicing the wisdom of the ancient saying that :-

You can't do anything wholeheartedly unless you do it lightheartedly and you can't do anything lightheartedly unless you do it wholeheartedly. ()*

So thanks to everyone for their *wholehearted* support and their *lighthearted* participation, not only on the Day, but for the months of preparation.

The Ideas Exchange Day was a climax in a continuous project, not an end in itself, but a node in a process which encourages people to have enough confidence, in themselves and in others, to recognise that an exchange of ideas, on what sort of society we want Australia to be, can contribute to humanising society.

It is hoped that through coming together for a few hours participants will have renewed friendships, met new people, strengthened their links with various networks (and perhaps formed new networks) and, most importantly, felt refreshed by the give and take of exchanging ideas

A report on the Ideas Exchange Day, recording the facts such as attendance, performances, displays, papers presented etc, is available from the Crow Collection Association. 03.9329.8685

The Crow Collection Committee of Management will be meeting in October. If you would like to contribute to the ideas that will be exchanged on that day, please phone 03.9329.8685.

Also, mark Friday, 17/1/'96 in your diary for the *Gloaming in the Gardens*, 5.30pm to 6.30pm at lakeside picnic tables.

* Thanks to J.J C. Smart's article in Eureka Street Vol. 6/No. 7 for quote.

"Shut Up and Shop"

From Main Street to Fortress; The Future of Malls
A Cautionary Tale with a Happy Ending.

"SHUT UP AND SHOP" It is very expressive, isn't it, of the state of our civilisation at the end of the twentieth century (or, if you think that is a bit pretentious, then perhaps its expressive of Melbourne's frustrations with a state government whose minimal concern for democratic process is evident in the Planning Minister's frequent overriding of legislation, often with intent to obliterate just a little bit more public space). Prof. Leonie Sandercock's opening remarks at RMIT lecture 3/9/'96 (8) .

Leonie Sandercock originally entitled her talk "from Main Street to Fortress : the Future of Malls as Public Spaces" but she added the subtitle "SHUT UP AND SHOP" after seeing this graffiti slogan on a wall in St Kilda and on another in Swanston street.

Ecoso is quoting the graffiti as the main heading in order to emphasise the consumerist values which are permeating society.

There is no space in this Ecoso to republish Leonie's detailed information on the history of malls in the USA from the late 1940s to today. She said that her paper was "a cautionary tale with a happy ending" therefore, this article is leaving out most of the "gloomy history of the science of malling" in order to give as much space as possible to her description of "the revival of a very successful mall in Santa Monica, Los Angeles, which embodies some of the traditional values of public space that seemed on the verge of extinction"

Using slides Leonie showed how the Santa Monica main street, which was "an economic disaster, blighted and unsafe" in 1965 was transformed during the 1980s to "become perhaps the most attractive public space in Los Angeles". Here is a summary of some of the facts on the processes used :-

1. In the 1980s "a specific plan for the area was designed with input from developers, merchants and residents".
2. The design group "asked some basic questions about what makes successful gathering places and proposed significant changes to the overall structure of the mall".
3. The final design "subtly encourages the different types of activities that take place in the mall, from shopping and strolling to sitting and meeting, to parades and community celebrations".
4. Housing was stimulated next to the promenade "by permitting commercial projects that include housing to have twice the floor to area ratio".
5. Sidewalk cafes and street performers were encouraged and the area included three cinemas..

6. A neighbouring indoor mall was eventually redesigned (this mall "had initially turned its back on the old pedestrian mall in its design orientation) to open itself out to the old main street.

And here is Leonie's word picture of the final result :-

"In a city notorious for its spatial separation by race and ethnicity as well as by income, these three blocks have become a gathering place for young and old, black and white, Latino and Asian, affluent and homeless, for family outings, romantic evenings, teenage hanging out, for movie going, indoor and outdoor dining, browsing in high brow or low brow bookstores, eating French fries or fancy Italian cuisine, and enjoying street performances, that range from puppeteers to soap bubble blowers, string quartets to Michael Jackson imitators, drummers, jugglers, blue guitarists, magicians, comedians, artists, aspiring opera singers, dancers and many more.perhaps, most interesting of all, given the general hostility to the homeless in LA, is the co-existence of homeless people and panhandlers with shoppers, performers, strollers, tourists and an official (ie City Council and local police) policy of not hassling anybody unless they become aggressive."

* This article is based on a preliminary presentation (at the RMIT) of a paper prepared by Prof. Leonie Sandercock for the 8th International Malls Conference" held in Adelaide in September. Leonie has spent most of the 1980s and 1990s as a Professor in the University of California, In the 1970s she was one of the main people to establish urban studies at what was then Footscray Institute of Technology. She is now, a professor at RMIT.

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Putting the Social into Socialism !

What's Left of the Left ?

by Eva Cox

It is hard to determine what, if anything, remains in the general bag called left ideas.

There are still a few fractions of Marxism who cling to fundamentalist credos of the sacred writ. There are the "trots" who still believe the revolution is coming, but most of us are now at least doubtful that the barricades will rise. There are others who still believe in the idealism of an egalitarian society, and mutter about class but fail to recognise that the old frameworks do not fit anymore. There are some who have given up long ago on long term change and retreat into deconstructivist modes. They find reason for disengagement as they claim to have lost their speaking positions. Too many have recanted from certainties of scientific socialism and become true believers in market and contract.

THE RIGHT IS RUNNING THE POLITICAL AGENDA

No wonder the right is running the political agenda. There are no positive alternatives from the left, just complaints about present directions. This is not the way to claim the imagination

of the masses or even the high moral ground. Negatives make a very wobbly political platform and do not attract the voters.

Overall there is little comfort for those of us who want to explain, challenge and change the present political direction. We are looking for ideas to combat presumed verities of dominant markets. We need some new ways of working out where we go from here: how do we deal with the real possibilities of increasing inequality and further retreat from civilised behaviour.

Currently, it looks as if barbarism will join with capital and the losers will be democracy and liberalism. Out of this will come fragmentation and forms of techno feudalism which will not lead the left to revolution. I have a serious concern that we may be losing the relatively thin veneer of civil society we have built up over the past hundred years.

This has been the century when we have learned various lessons from two big wars and many small ones. We saw what happens under totalitarianism, and recognised that people will go along with official savagery and barbarism if they feel anxious or threatened.

FEW SIGNS OF REVIVAL OF COLLECTIVE AND IMPASSIONED DEBATE

There are few signs of any significant revivals of collective and impassioned debates about new directions. When I started looking at left writings as part of preparing for the ABC Boyer Lectures, I found little but critiques. The best that was offered was some debates on rights, some attempt to replace class with social movements. There are debates on citizenship which straddle the political spectrum. All these debates focus on individual autonomy. Like the term social justice, they make no statement on society or social relations as such, just on competing claims of groups and individuals on an undefined state.

There was little acknowledgement of the collective, the communal or the social apart from forays into communitarism on the right. There was a focus on association, on voluntary involvements as a possible new source of energy equating these with the labour movement and hoping that coalitions of community groups and movements will propel a new party into power. But none of these seem to deal with the major problems of the limits of the original system.

I am trying to put the social back into socialist because we need a new framework, a more inclusive description of our social relationships than the means of production, distribution and exchange. Marx, like Adam Smith, defined the world through the male defined work place. The source of capital and the means of production assumed that the primary focus of man (maybe) was in the factory. A feminist perspective and the post industrial era both demand a revision of these paradigms.

PAID WORK ONLY PART OF LIFE

I suppose one of the lessons from writing the Boyer Lectures for the ABC last year was that there are no easily developed answers

to the problems we have. The development of social theories which are based on workplace relationships did not take into account the importance of daily life, the issues of public life and the relationships we have with friends, neighbours and family. Paid work is only part of our lives and how we distribute our resources must take into account the ways we live as well as the way we work.

Into this we need to put workplace, market, politics and family. These become the society, the accumulation of all the communities and networks that connect us. So can we develop ways of working which are critical of what we want to change but recognise that we need to retain the good parts. This is what I want to do, to set up discussions and debates about doing things differently, about establishing social systems based on egalitarian, participatory models which develop social trust.

So I suggest we start with civil society as the social system, the multiple communities to which we belong. We all have multiple identities and in the present world, often operate quite discretely in various networks. So we may be in paid work communities, locality groups, political groups, ethnic and or cultural groups, and our identities are the sum of our connections. So it is our social relationships which define us.

SOCIAL CAPITAL / SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS / INTERCONNECTEDNESS

This is social capital, the level of trust we develop in our social relationships. It is the quality of our connectedness which defines whether we are part of a civil society or not. So trust of strangers and institutions (social trust) encourages us to develop co-operative processes, mutual respect and collective action. When we are separated by distrust and fear, we make no social capital and individualism and competitive concerns are paramount.

Our material resources obviously are major factors in the way we conduct our social relationships: poverty, lack of paid work, problems with mobility and legal constraints will all affect our social relationships. When people are dominated by other cultures, oppressed by more powerful groups, denied access to resources and services, there is little possibility of developing social capital.

The low levels of trust tend to develop oppressive policing and control of possibly dissident groups and so democracy cannot operate, even when there are elections. When there is distrust, low social capital, then it is hard to sustain democracy, eg the pro-gun lobby and the Kennett government.

I want to go back to laws and look at why we have governments, and what we can expect them to do, together with the way we need to support their functions. I have serious problems with rights debates which assume that we can do anything we want and have no responsibility for the rights of others,

It all makes sense to me because it provides a framework into which we can fit a lot of our older theories. Why would you

create social trust, which I am defining as trusting the stranger and the institutions of the community, in a community based on gross inequality, racism, sexism, and injustice ? Putman says that it is time freely given in egalitarian organisations in which trust is developed.

BUILDING SOCIAL STRUCTURES

So trust in my lexicon, is not only about being nice to each other but about building social structures which engender trust. We need to re-examine whether the end justifies the means and recognise that building social structures require much more attention to what binds us together and what divides us.

Democracy depends on levels of social capital, particularly if we are going to set up ideals based on collective social action and an egalitarian social system. We also need therefore to deal with how we dissent and debate because none of us have all the answers and many of us will have some.

This is one of the problems of the broad left. We have a lot of jargon about democracy and debate but too often this is not translated into process. We are often distracted in to factions and fractions where more attention is paid to numbers and loyalty than issues and respect for debate and diverse views. This is rife in most left organisations and the enemy is seen as within and many leave disillusioned.

The ALP, all factions, indulge themselves in both factions and patronage, neither of which encourage the development of trust of the overall party or of left politics. I have now spent a couple of evenings at meetings of the Evatt Foundation watching one of the fruitless and useless fights between fractions of the left.

These number games often displace political and policy debates. They prevent criticism of those in power, and lead to arrogance and out of touch leadership. I am reminded of so many branch meetings and conferences where numbers meant more than policy. There are problems in organisations that value loyalty above ability and reject dissident voices without hearing their views. These ossify as they suppress not only dissent but new ideas.

These are examples of poor social capital development. How can organisations even develop new ideas when its members are involved in developing distrust rather than trust. Whatever happened to comradeship ? Does it really involve blind obedience ? I hope not.

I have thought a lot about the loss of the ALP in almost every state and at federal level. It was a mixture of style and content. The content issue is complex because moves to the so called centre ground made us too like them to the voters. They thought they would get the same policies with less aggro, and even though they were wrong, they were only wrong in degree not direction. Apart from the Industrial Relations bill and the big cuts, the current government is not substantially different in general frameworks. The Coalition can just go faster and further down paths which the ALP legitimated to make it sound tough. The

sheep in wolf's clothing has been supplemented by the wolf, who seemed at elections to be a little sheepish.

The ALP would not listen to any criticism, and surrounded themselves with those who agreed with them. Even now I see no opening up of policy areas, or real criticism of their directions. They all seem to feel that they were misunderstood and can't understand why they were distrusted. The electorate did understand the policies but did not necessarily like them. The voters did not want to be told things were good when they felt bad, so voted against the ALP rather than for Howard.

**NEW DIRECTIONS : PURSUING THE 4 D's :-
DISCUSS, DISSENT, DEBATE, DECIDE.**

So how do we develop new directions ? We need to pursue the four D's as a forward strategy: discuss, dissent, debate and decide ! We need new forums, new entry points into forms of progress which combine our goals with the means of getting there. But where will this happen ?

I have had a fantastic response to the Boyer Lectures. Thousands of copies were sold and taken off the internet. I am constantly being asked to speak to groups but these are not political groups per se. Nor are they part of the policy and advocacy infrastructure of the progressive groups. They all appear stuck in the past-present.

Some say what I am saying is too soft, too concerned with the social and not hard enough to deal with realities. As a pragmatist, I do not consider my views as unrealisable and wonder whether the present language of political debate is so masculinised that talking about social is feminising so it makes the ideas sound odd. It is a feminist approach as it counters the masculine constructs which pass as universal. So I am seeking to change the views of the social and political system to broaden views of what is important.

So some feed back please! Can we develop trust but allow dissent ? We need space to criticise what we have but constructively so we build both better processes and better pathways. I do not know the answers but the questions are becoming clearer.

(Republished from "Australian Options", No 6, September, 1996. Information on "Australian Options" from PO Box 431, Goodwood South Aust.5034. The 1996 Boyer Lecture series "A Truly Civil Society" by Eva Cox, is available at ABC shops.)

Citizenship

**Linking Principles and Participation
by Abbey Howe.**

One of the most compelling reasons cited for the Coalitions victory at the last federal elections is Labor's failure to link its long-term policy vision with the day-to-day needs of ordinary Australians. These Australians, many of whom carried the burden of economic deregulation, believed Labor's policy agenda was too

abstract and irrelevant to their lives. Labor's challenge over the next four years will be to encourage participation and consultation with the community aimed at building a more inclusive policy framework.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL TRANSITION IN AUSTRALIA

The impact of economic transition on the day-to-day lives of many Australians is best considered in the changing context of work. The increased participation of women in the workforce, the replacement of manual labour by technology and the dramatic increase in the number of people employed in service industry have all contributed to the transformation of the social and economic structures of our society.

As a result of economic transformation, many workers have lost their jobs, and many families now find that to survive both parents have to work long hours and have few choices in relation to how they organise their family life. As tax-payers, these Australians are disgruntled by the fact that the provision of public services, such as education and health care, is not of a high quality.

A further consequence of economic and social transition is that traditional forms of identification, for example with being a skilled worker in the manufacturing sector, are being undermined. For many Australians, there are no comparable forms of identity emerging and this leads to a feeling of insecurity.

It is fairly easy to generalise from the premise that Labor failed to gain the confidence of these people at the last federal elections, but also quite useful in terms of orientating the Party. During the election campaign, the ALP failed to convince the electorate that its long term policy agenda would provide for cohesion and security in a modern, complex society. In particular Labor failed to link its policy agenda with the pragmatic and immediate concerns of the electorate.

"EXCLUSIVE" PRINCIPLES ?

The fact is that many Australians did not concur that Mabo and the Multicultural Compact represented a catalyst to celebrate being modern Australians (let alone being the basis for social cohesion and security). To the contrary, many Australians felt excluded from these programs and did not consider them to be central to their needs and concerns.

Instead of representing Labor's preparedness to address some of the most contentious challenges in Australian political and social life, it is argued that initiatives such as the Multicultural Compact represented the hijacking of the political process by verbal and active minority groups.

The objective of Labor's policies, like multiculturalism has been to provide the basis of a more cohesive and stable society; an objective that is in the interests of all Australians. To this end it has been largely successful. The challenge for Labor in the future, however, is to link principles with the more

immediate concerns of Australians.

In particular, the challenge for the Labor Party in the next three years will be to make its social justice objectives more inclusive and more immediate to the concerns of Australia. The key to achieving this is to rethink the rhetoric and to reform the institutional structure of decision making to allow for more involvement of Labor with local communities. Such an approach should be considered in the context of establishing a citizenship framework within which to consider social policies programs

A NEW APPROACH TO CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship is a useful concept in this instance because it involves participation in the life of the community, it involves both rights and responsibilities and traditionally it has been the basis for social solidarity. The basis for a new citizenship framework would be our universal rights to employment, education, health, housing and access to social security. It would also be our universal responsibility to contribute to social and community life.

The objective of establishing a new citizenship framework would be to spell out to Australians, in concrete terms, the quality standards they should be able to expect from social services, policies and programs that their taxes fund. A further objective would be to create the conditions for the maximum level of participation by communities in establishing these standards.

As recently as last year, a Senate Committee considered ways of effecting a code of establishing "international best practice" in relation to democratic citizenship and social justice in Australia. To this end they considered the identification of a set of "social benchmarks" which would be expressed as a charter of rights and duties which would effectively guide social policies and programs.

In principle, the idea of a new citizenship framework within which to consider social policy is valuable. At the moment, however, it is a fairly abstract idea that is open to the same criticism, of being alienating and too distant from day to day life in Australia; as any other principle.

To overcome this criticism, and to make the idea of a citizenship charter more concrete and relevant to ordinary Australians, it is time for the Labor Party to begin considering the implementation at a grass roots level.

For example, in the area of education, children and young people in Australia have a fundamental right to a quality education in the public school system. In Victoria, despite the commitment of parents and teaching staff, our schools lack the most basic resources and facilities essential for delivering a basic education. In this context, it is not surprising that private schools are thriving and many parents are left disillusioned about what exactly their taxes are spent on.

Labor has to involve itself in consultation with teachers,

unions, parents, students and administrators to determine what constitutes a decent and comprehensive education. Labor has to repeat this process in equally important fields such as health, housing, employment, justice and environment management.

The establishment of a new citizenship framework within which to implement our social justice objectives offers Labor the opportunity to set higher standards and establish common principles with respect to universal rights. Most importantly, however, it offers Labor the opportunity to work with local communities in both cities and regional areas to link principles with action to set out practical standards and goals that are necessary to shape the kind of society that Australians wish to live in. (Reprinted from "Socialist Objective", June 1996. Information about "Socialist Objective" from Senator Kim Carr, 62 Lygon St. Carlton 3053)

The Town and Country planning Association's Charter.

Following on from its very successful planning conference in July the TCPA (Town and Country Planning Association) has finalised its charter.

The TCPA Charter is a community owned document - not the property of one organisation or viewpoint. .

Copies of the charter and of the papers presented at the July Conference are now available. The conference papers consist of speeches by Bill Russell (transport), Nicholas Low (urban fringe), Lyn Allison, Jenny Barnett, Alan Hunt and Ian Wight (planning processes), and some summaries prepared by topic conveners. These are available free to TCPA members and at the nominal cost of \$5. for others. More information about the TCPA from David Sauer, 03/9509.6677(BH) or write to PO Box 312 Market St. Melb.3000.

Community Child Care Celebrates 25 Years.

To celebrate 25 years of lobbying and advocating on behalf of the community based child care sector and to usher in the next 25 years, a dinner will be held for members and supporters. on

Wednesday, 6 November

at

Melbourne Town Hall.

If you are interested in attending this celebration, or if you have friends who have been involved in Community Child Care over the past 25 years please contact Joan on (03) 9486. 3455.

Child Care Funding Cuts.

**THE 1996 FEDERAL BUDGET ABANDONS COMMUNITY BASED LONG DAY CARE.
THE CHILDREN'S SERVICES BUDGET HAS BEEN CUT BY OVER \$100 MILLION !!**

Preserving historical memory

By Dr Phillip Deery, Department of Humanities

Totalitarian systems have a tendency to eliminate opponents. The legacies of those adversaries also have a tendency to disappear. The Berlin book burnings after Hitler seized power is one well-known example. But the same has happened in other places and at other times when authorities attempt with varying success to destroy books, pamphlets and archives of people and organisations that oppose them.

Ray Bradbury in *Fahrenheit 451* envisaged one solution, a more viable alternative is to establish repositories which preserve society's collective memories. In our archives and libraries, the 'established order' is well represented. There are almost everywhere archival repositories for government and state documents. But the often poorly organised and sometimes dangerous terrains of groups which rebel against the established order are not usually covered by these institutions, even though the study of these movements can be of crucial importance for a responsible interpretation of contemporary political and social developments.

The recent establishment of the Radical Literature Collection at the

Werrebee Campus Library in a small way fulfils this need and points towards the importance of preserving and making accessible such material for historical study. On a much larger scale, and which could provide the model for a funding initiative from an enlightened government, is the International Institute for Social History, located in a redesigned warehouse in a former dockland five kilometres from the centre of Amsterdam. I visited the Institute in May to deliver a paper at the Labour and Empire Conference and was struck by its history, its holdings and its potential for partial imitation in Australia.

The Institute began life as a private initiative in 1935. Before the outbreak of WW11, it rescued numerous threatened collections from Nazi Germany, including the records of the German Socialist and Communist Parties and the manuscript collections of Marx and Engels (to see the original handwritten pages from *The Communist Manifesto* complete with critical comments from Eleanor Marx is unexpectedly breathtaking). When the Netherlands was occupied in 1940, many of these records were seized by the Nazis for use in studying movements opposed to National Socialism. Only now are they dribbling back from repositories in the



former East Germany where they lay since the end of the war. After the war, the Institute continued its 'rescue' activities and managed to bring important collections to safety from Eastern Europe, South America and China. Its extensive repositories, dealing not only with endangered socialist movements but also utopians, feminists, Zionists, student activists and squatters, are therefore full of fuel for historians. In its aim to prevent

the loss of unique material, the Institute also provides concrete assistance to archives in the former Soviet Union which are threatened by that country's economic convulsions.

In stark contrast to many Australian libraries and archives, permanent funding for the Institute is guaranteed by the Netherlands Government via the Royal Academy of Arts and

Sciences. In this current climate, where the language of 'efficiency' and 'rationalisation' has become public policy, it was a salutary experience to visit this island in the sea of market-driven economies.

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INFORMATION ABOUT ECOSO EXCHANGE NEWSLETTER.

Since 1990 Ecoso Exchange Newsletter has been the newsletter for the Crow Collection Association. The forerunner of Ecoso was called Irregular. It was first published in 1967 when Maurie and Ruth Crow helped to initiate regular discussion groups on urban issues as a follow up to the trade union based Living Standards Convention which was held that year.

In 1973 the name was changed to Ecoso and four guidelines were adopted.:-

1. The promotion of community participation.
2. Popularising changing life styles which combat consumerism.
3. Advocating restricting use of non renewable resources
4. Achieving these objectives through participation.

ABOUT THE CROW COLLECTION ASSOCIATION

The Crow Collection consist of books and unpublished documents on political and sociological issues which were donated by Ruth Crow to the VUT in 1990. Supporters of the Collection have formed the Crow Collection Association which has the aim of enhancing the comprehensiveness of and accessibility to the Collection. These aims are implemented by the publication of Ecoso, projects around specific issues and occasional social gatherings..

Ecoso 2/41 reports on, and continues the discourse on the most recent Crow Collection project. This is the **Ideas Exchange Project** which is popularising the 1995 Senate Inquiry on Citizenship by involving people in finding answers to the question **"What Sort of Society Do You Want Australia To Be ?**

SUPPORT THE CROW COLLECTION BY SUBSCRIBING TO ECOSO

The main funds for the Crow Collection come from Ecoso subs. The subscriptions to Ecoso is \$10 for five issues. Please send subscription to Crow Collection c/o Ms Sheila Byard, Dept. of Urban and Social Policy, Footscray Campus of the Victoria University of Technology, Box 14428 MCMC Melb 8001. (More information by phoning Ruth Crow 03/9329.8685 or FAX Sheila Byard 03/9688.4324).

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