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# Ecoso Exchange Newsletter

## Crow Collection Association (incorp)

ECOLOGICAL SOCIOLOGICAL and POLITICAL DISCOURSE

Ecoso 2/48, June 1998

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Contents of this Ecoso :-

1. News from the Crow Collection
2. The Global Game (The Nordic Experience)
3. We Can Win Again ! (Let us Broadcast the Truth on the VFT)
4. The Future is Anything But Bleak (Rainbow Alliance Message)
5. Relationships and Community (A New Role for Government)
7. "Devastating !" Says Moonee Valley Mayor.
8. Launching "The Reds"
10. Vale to Friends and Comrades
11. "Our Achievements and Our Future" (Article from Orbost)
12. Information About Ecoso and Crow Collection.

*Supplement "So Let Us Sing" - Ballad of 1891.*

### News from the Crow Collection

Thanks to all those who helped to prepare for the seminar on **The Public and the City Plan**. Special thanks to the North Melbourne Library for use of the meeting room and for the wall board space.

Posters used by the North Melbourne Association in early 1970s were on display in the Library meeting room for a month before the seminar. The posters were arranged to show the **Seven Steps of Participatory Planning** :-

1. *The announcement that a plan is to be prepared.*
2. *A community organisation (the NMA) decides to participate*
3. *A time line for preparing a community plan is decided.*
4. *A public meeting is held to decide on value judgements*
5. *Official plan and alternatives from community are compared*
6. *Defending the chosen strategies.*
7. *Campaigns to implement the strategy.*

The seminar papers are now available. The posters are part of the Crow Collection archives and can be borrowed, Phone 9329.8685 for information.

On the same day as the seminar the **North Melbourne News** celebrated its 100th issue. The first **North Melbourne News** was published in 1978, It was one of the many local community papers inspired by the enthusiasts who established the **Learning Exchange** in Malvern in the early 1970s. So first, a thank you to John and Kerry Burke, Ann Morrow, Alan Pears and many others who pioneered this creative answer to suburban isolation. The **Learning Exchange** and most of the other papers no longer exist, but, the **North Melbourne News** celebrated by producing a 24 page paper which was delivered to local homes and workplaces.

From the very early years the collective spirit permeated the life of the **News**. In 1982 David Swifte described some of this -  
*The beauty of it is that we don't divide activities. We are'nt territorial. All task are done by everybody, artistic and menial deliveries. It is a true voluntary collective..David donated his News files to the Crow Collection.*

## The Global Game

*What is a cynic ? A man who knows  
the price of everything and value of nothing - Oscar Wilde-*

*The following is an outline of part of a chapter from a book "What is the Price of Everything - on Human Values and Global Markets". This book is an attempt by Al Burke to provide a clear and concise overview of major global trends, based on recent Swedish experiences. This extract from an outline of chapter V is republished in Ecoso courtesy of Nordic News Network (Footnote)*

International commerce is hardly a recent invention. Over a thousand years ago, the Vikings developed a trading empire that extended over most of the then known world. But it could take them a year or more to accomplish ends that can now be achieved in a matter of hours or seconds, due to the constantly accelerating expansion of communications technology and infrastructure. It is a development which, among other things, has had the effect of weakening grassroots democracy, and of strengthening those who are in a position to ride the tiger of globalisation.

The latter is a process so vast, fluid and complex, that no-one seems yet to have succeeded in divining its precise mechanisms or its full implication for existing human communities. But a few preliminary conclusions seem in order, despite the present state of general confusion. The most obvious is that multi-national corporations are the prime instruments and beneficiaries of globalisation. It has even been suggested with increasing frequency that the power of the multinational corporations has become so great as to overwhelm that of the nation-states which remain the most significant area of democratic practice and aspirations.

But the situation in that regard is by no means clear, due not least to the fact that multi-nationals have not even begun to provide the kind of essential services for which states continue to assume primary responsibility - basic education, law and order, transport infrastructure, and all the other preconditions for, among other things, the successful operation of business.

It has led to a curious pattern of public lobbying in which leading lights of the business community demand ever-greater freedom on the grounds that the nation state has ceased to be relevant, and in the next breath complain bitterly that their respective countries have failed to provide them with adequate support for their life-and-death struggle against competing nations.

Whatever the actual nature of the case may be, the business community and its political allies have not been slow to use the threatening spectre of the global economy to advance their interests at home. In Sweden, this has meant that attacks on the general welfare now focus less on its presumptive shortcomings, and more on the problems it is declared to cause Swedish business in their struggle to compete in the global marketplace. Taxes, transfer payments and workers' rights are still regarded with distaste; but the most popular tune nowadays is that such

abominations discourage entrepreneurship and perpetuate unemployment - a powerful, if not especially well- documented argument.

Contributing to the use of external threats to combat egalitarian tendencies at home is the very real pressure to which most actors in the global market are subjected. The ever-accelerating rate of change and the frantic demand to keep up with it seem to have created a semi-crazed atmosphere very like that of the Cold War arms race (which was also driven by mindless technological innovation). In the utterances of business leaders can be discerned a mounting desperation, as they struggle to meet the challenges of a steadily advancing future. It is these apprehensive souls who, as a consequence of the developments outlined above are acquiring greater and greater influence over the affairs of the world. It is not a healthy situation.

(Footnote, More information about Northern News Network from Box 1181, S-181 23 Lidingo, Sweden, E-Mail editor@nnn.se Fax/phone Sweden 46-8731 9300. Order your copy of "The Price of Everything" from the International Bookshop)

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**We Can Win Again !**

**Let Us Broadcast the Truth About the VFT.**

*A synopsis of an article by Gerry Harrant, based on the VFT Consortium's own book, VFT Focus for the Future. Gerry's article was published in the newsletter of People's Community for Melbourne, Community Planning Bulletin April 1998.*

The VFT (Very Fast Train between Sydney and Melbourne) is being indecently exhumed after we thought we had buried it in the early 1990s. The VFT is not, nor is it meant to be, an answer to Australia's interstate problems. It will not reduce road freight and car traffic as it will not carry heavy freight nor ferry cars. It is a tourist attraction, and a rich business man's toy.

**THE VFT IS NOT ECONOMICALLY VIABLE.**

With a 5 billion investment, each of the annual projected Melbourne to Sydney (or reverse) trips would carry a \$200 tag in interest alone, in addition to operating costs similar to aircraft mileage costs. The VFT Consortium's book has detailed time table figures but carefully avoids any sort of fare and income structure ! However the book points out that the State electricity utility would be expected to supply power at a fraction of cost - a fat chance with Victoria's privatised utilities. It also states that if the system does not pay, the governments would be expected to pick up the tabs.

**THE VFT WILL NOT SUPPLY JOBS.**

The trains will *not be made locally*, Any new technology generated will be imported most likely from Germany. Once in operation, the system will *employ only a handful of workers*. The conditions of employment would *set the employees apart from other railroad workers*. The VFT proposals set the scene for Australians to be navvies and waiters on third world pay.

## THE IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT

Because the minimum radius of all curves is 7km the impact on the environment would be appalling with an almost straight swathe being cut through the foothills of the alps. The permanent way would have to be inaccessible to animals, thus the line would have to be fenced creating an impenetrable barrier for local fauna. (The Consortium sloved this minor problem by providing tunnels under the line every kilometre or so !!??). Figures show that the burning of brown coal to power the VFT operation would result in carbon dioxide emissions worse per passenger kilometre than those generated by aircraft.

## RETARDING THE UPGRADING OF NATIONAL TRANSPORT

The present permanent way could be improved to carry trains at 160 KM/h as they did in the steam driven 60s. Such an upgrading would reduce the road toll, be less damaging to the environment and save public money. The VFT project would not improve transport in the Eastern States, would retard the desperately needed upgrading of exisiting transport systems in all States. More information from *People's Committee for Melbourne*. 2 Llm St Nth Melb.

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## The Future is Anything But Bleak

*Two extracts from articles by Joe Camilleri, both published in Rainbow Alliance Newsletters, one in November 1987 and the other in February 1998*

## A FUNDAMENTAL RESHAPING OF POWER

When the Rainbow Alliance was established in 1987 Joe Camilleri, its founding member, wrote in its first newsletter :-

A mood of disenchantment, verging at times on anger and cynicism, now permeates Australian politics. While the major political parties content themselves with empty slogans about the free play of market forces and the virtues of competitiveness Australia's independence is rapidly declining... the net result is there for all to see: falling living standards for the poor, greater social and economic inequalities; privatisation of key industries and services; the gradual surrender of land rights to mining and pastoral interests, continuing destruction of unique parts of Australia's natural heritage; sharp decline in overseas aid; strengthening of nuclear ties with the USA.

## HELPING TO PREPARE THE GROUND FOR MORE EFFECTIVE POLITICS.

In the Rainbow Alliance Newsletter in February 1998 Joe Camilleri reported on some of its achievements over the past ten years. He then gave a number of answers to the complicated question; *Why has the Rainbow Alliance fallen on hard times ?*

In his concluding paragraphs Joe Camilleri stated :-

Perhaps the most enduring achievement is the great number of activist it (the Rainbow Alliance) has nurtured, encouraged and skilled. For several critical years in our

history, R.A gave a great number of dedicated and talented Australians a political home they could call their own. These talents, skill, and enthusiam constitute an invaluable resource for future social and political change.

Here we should keep two lessons in mind. If it is true that we live in an increasingly globalised world, then many of our problems and solutions, must be approached from a global perspective. Yet the basic solution remains remarkably familiar. How to give people a sense of dignity, and how to create opportunities and institutions for them to participate in decisions that vitally affect their future. We need to pursue the twin goals of citizenship and democracy with a global focus and a global strategy. For us in Australia closer links with the peoples of the Asia Pacific and effective regional networks of solidarity is now a high priority..... my faith in our collective capacity to build a more habitable future remains undiminished ...I believe that new and promising opportunities for new politics will soon emerge, perhaps sooner than many of us dare to imagine.

On March 22, 1998, Rainbow Alliance members met to celebrate the end of an era... and the beginning of a new one

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## **A New Role for Government is Required Relationships and the Community**

Extracts from Paper by Lindsay Tanner MHR.

Lindsay Tanner, MHR for Melbourne presented a paper on *Relationships and Community* to the Fabian Society's Annual Conference. His conclusions, with emphasis added by Ecoso, were :-

Our society is interwoven with countless organisations and institutions which build and sustain community, and which provide individuals with a capacity to participate. Some are government bodies, some are government funded, and some are entirely independent of government. They include community health centres, neighbourhood houses, sporting clubs, play groups and residents associations. Because those on the left tend to focus on the role of the State, and those on the right on the individual, the importance of these organisations is widely undervalued.

Conservative governments around the country are gradually dismantling or diminishing many of these community organisations, and thus exacerbating problems of social dislocation and alienation. The Victorian Government is dismantling the tenants' councils in public housing estates, many of them in my electorate. Although the services they offer will theoretically be provided by contracted agencies, the focus of community involvement, participation and belonging which they deliver will be destroyed. Individual housing estates with thousands of inhabitants from a variety of ethnic backgrounds will suddenly lose the one organisation which they collectively own and through which many of their activities and difficulties

are intermediated. The loss of community will be palpable.

As well as strengthening existing organisations, the government should be helping to create new ones which reflect changes occurring in our society. For example, establishing community media access centres in regional areas would help to counter the atomising tendencies inherent in the information technological revolution, and ensure that community participation is maximised.

Government involvement in community organisations is usually driven by objectives other than building community or enhancing capacity to participate. If we are to start building a new community framework to counter alienation and dislocation we should begin with a renewed commitment to these organisations. Their intrinsic value is far greater than the sum of the total services they provide. In an era of dramatic change and profound insecurity, a new role for government is required. Sustaining the bonds of community and relationships has not been a major focus of government in western societies. The new society that is evolving will demand a different role for government, one which includes strengthening community and social relationships in the face of endless encroachment by markets and Technology.

For copies of the full paper, write to Lindsay Tanner MHR, ... Victoria St., South Carlton, 03. 9347.5000.

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## Here ! There ! Everywhere !

Victorians are on the MOVE ! All around the suburbs and in the country areas too ! In September last year the **People's Committee for Melbourne** called for expressions of interest on the best and worst examples of city planning and development. The results of this survey are now available for the cost of \$5.00 (from Mark Riley, People, Committee for Melbourne, 2 Elm Street North Melb 3051 ph 03.9326.8246 or Fax 03.9236.8030.)

This list of the papers will whet your appetite :-

**Saving the Fitzroy Pool** (Danny O'Connor and Friends of the Fitzroy Pool). **Construction of Formula 1. Grand Prix - Motor Racing Circuit, Albert Park** (David Littlewood, Save Albert Park Group); **Craigieburn Community at a Standstill or Crossroads ?** (Pierina Morano, Craigieburn Development Group); **The Esplanade Hotel, St. Kilda** (Kate Shaw); **The Baywide Residential Development** (David Batten and Pat Grainger); **City Link and the Environment Effects Statement** (Jo Connellan); **Werribee Residents Against Toxic Dump** (Harry Van Moorst); **Managing and Maintaining the Merri Creek** (Ray Radford, Merri Creek Management Committee); **City Link: Air Quality Technology and Community Consultation Processes** (Ruth Clements, Richmond Action Coalition on Freeways); **City Plan '97** (Ewan Ogilvy); **The Docklands Redevelopment** (Colin Long, People's Committee for Melbourne); **A Planning Charter** (Tara McGee, Town and Country Planning Association); **The Foreseeable Future** (Finton Robertson, Anti-Ring Road Organisation); **Medium Density Housing, the New Planning Scheme and Council Resourcing** (David Moore, Williamstown-Newport-Spotswood Residents Group.)

Mark the date : **Wed. Aug 19th for PCM, AGM**

## "Devastating !" Says Mayor

(Contributed by Ruth Crow)

The State Government has told the people of Moonee Valley that there is no way they can appeal against the decision to fill the Niddrie Quarry with toxic waste. The Moonee Valley Mayor Hedley Moffatt. says "its disastrous and devastating".

As the quarry is surrounded by houses most people who do not live in the neighbourhood may have no idea what the issues are.

Last year Jos and Helen van den Berg showed me the quarry and on the same day we also visited the site of where there once was a quarry in Newport. In Newport, as in Coburg (the Coburg Lake Gardens), the quarry is used as a beautiful lake which forms the centrepiece of a park - the main public space for the district,

The Niddrie quarry and its surrounding paddocks is as large or even larger than the Coburg and Newport parks, and it has an added advantage. The Niddrie Quarry is on quite a high hill. Thus from the north/west there is a view across the quarry (possible future lake), over the suburbs to the city skyline. It is an area which catches the cool breezes on hot summer evenings. Thus it could be a wonderful public open space for crowds of people living on the western plain.

Jos and Helen also took me for a walk along Steeles's Creek which has mainly been beautified by residents planting trees. It has a very pleasant, much used walking trail. This oasis will be destroyed. The permit for the quarry includes the destruction of the Steele's Creek Park. In its place a roadway will be built to enable 200 trucks a day to carry contaminated waste to the quarry... subjecting nearby homes to noise and possible contamination.in addition to depriving them of this open space.

For more than two years the residents of Niddrie have been campaigning against this *disastrous and devastating* plan. They are supported by their Mayor and Councillors of the City of Moonee Valleys and by their local State Members of Parliament and by the neighbourhood schools. An indication of the growing local support can be gauged by the fact that in February 1997 more than 500 people marched through Niddrie in protest, Early in May 1998 more than 1000 residents attended a meeting.

April 30th was a black day for the residents in Melbourne's Western Suburbs, On that day Planning Minister, Robert Maclellan announced in Parliament that the Niddrie Quarry proposals would go ahead and also that a toxic dump will proceed at Werribee. THE RESIDENTS OF NIDDRIE ARE APPEALING AGAINST THIS DECISION.

Victorian Local Government  
Women's Charter.

*This Charter is now available from*

*the Municipal Association of Victoria.*

GPO Box 4326PP (DX492) Melb. 3001. phone 03.9823.5555; Fax 9824.8404

There is an article about Women and Local Government

in Ecoso 2/47, December 1997

## LAUNCHING "THE REDS"

The Communist Party of Australia from Origins to Illegality  
By Stuart McIntyre,

On May 10th Leigh Hubbard and Ruth Crow launched this book on the history of the Communist Party. Ruth was chosen as she was a member of the party during part of the period covered in the book. In her launching speech Ruth named a number of comrades who were significant to her in the 1930s. Very few of them were at the gathering but some descendants were and some of the older people remembered them. Here is her speech :-

*I feel greatly honoured to be chosen to launch this book. It is being launched at a turning point in Australian history... people are talking to each other again ! They are talking POLITICS ! (see footnote)*

*Read this book, study its lessons! Future struggles may be far more complex than those faced in the 1920s and 1930s, but the basic struggles of the past will recur and a strong united left will be needed, Whether there ever is a left party again, or not, future generations will decide.*

*When I told some comrades that a history of the Party was being written the general reaction was "That is IMPOSSIBLE ! No one can really do that ! You can't put down on paper what it was like to be a Party member ! The lives of comrades were UNBELIEVABLE !"*

*So, Stuart McIntyre and the team had a formidable task. Firstly how to record what was happening in the Party branches when the main documentation is about the Central Committee and other such "leading bodies". Secondly they had to try to give facts about what was happening Australia-wide when most of the documents were about Sydney and Melbourne. And most importantly, how to critically present the historic facts about Stalinism without destroying the Left's confidence in itself.*

*You can judge how the researchers faced up to these challenges by reading the book.*

*Today I want to describe what it was like to join the Communist Party in 1936. Stuart quotes Jean Devanney's words on joining the Party "I hugged to myself that warm and wonderful feeling of belonging." That is exactly how I felt. and no wonder !*

*One of my main memories of the 1930s was of the strong women I met. I was most impressed by the women who managed to be active politically and to care for huge families. These were women the same age as my mother, and thus seemed very old to me (although they were probably only 50). For example Mrs Farrall and the Farrall family of Brighton.. there seemed to be no end to the number of Farralls and no end to the friends they had. Similarly, the Green dynasty in Brunswick where Mrs Green was the mainstay for her family of eleven. For the past sixty years May Day would not have been May Day for me if I did not meet up with a few Farralls and Greens.!*

*And of course I was inspired by women who were pursuing careers of their own. Cath Clarey in the Trade Unions and Doris McRae, one of the first woman to be a State School principal. And, there was inspiration too, from the international heroes; Marie Curie in France and La Pasionara in Spain..*

*There seemed to be hundreds of young women, some with their first babies, for example Olga Silver and Audrey Blake; and brilliant young debaters like Dulcie, Vera and Rivka. Stuart refers to the debate on Spain when Santamaria's violent*

thugs turned the hoses on supporters of Republican Spain. Rivka, (later known as Rivka Matthews) was one of the platform speakers.

It is timely to pay a tribute to Letty Nunan of Prahran and Mabel Elliot of Brunswick. I was reminded of them when Stuart again quoted Jean Devanny's words. She described *"the unconquerable optimism, indefatigable zeal, flaming enthusiasm of the paper peddlers."* This aptly applied to Letty and Mabel.

Stuart describes the eviction struggles in the 1930s but by the time I joined the Party the main housing campaign was for a Fair Rents Court. Leila Mullett and Winsome Forbes are two CPA women whose names are recorded in the documents of the 1930/40s Tenants Council (These documents are now in the Crow Collection at the VUT)

Women contributed to the politics of the day in ways which were specifically related to their own lives. Here are two examples. Firstly in the campaign against the re-arming of Japan we supported the main slogan of *"No Scrap Iron for Japan"* but also raised our own banners, parading in Bourke Street chanting *"Lisle for style ! Boycott silk Japanese stockings !"* (by the way, that was in the days before stocks. Stocking were an important fashion item. We defied fashion, a great sacrifice !)

Similarly while campaigning with the trade unions against the *"Bread and Treacle Basic Wage"* we drew attention to the plight of children, calling the *"Hospitals Monuments to Malnutrition"* pointing out that 25% of the children were under nourished through poverty. In the Mothers' Clubs we spear-headed the campaign for child endowment and for free milk for schools..

There is no time today to pay a tribute to men in the CPA, but I would like to list the names of four men who played a significant role in my life in the 1930s. Jack Legge, who came to the College where I was a student and warned us about the threat of Fascism, Ken Coldicut a zealous seller of the youth newspapers, my brother Ken Miller who was one of the main people to establish the League of Young Democrats and, of course my partner Maurie Crow.

With hindsight my four reasons for joining the Party were to free women from domestic drudgery, to campaign against fascism and war, to improve living standards and to study and popularise humanistic ideas.

I would like to praise SEARCH Foundation for making this book possible, to congratulate Stuart and the team of researchers and to thank Allen and Unwin for publishing it.

*"The Reds"* challenges us to face up to the full realisation of the evils of Stalinism and the need for a human and democratic concept of socialism. Please buy it, study it, and encourage others to do so too !

.....  
Footnote :- The Sun-Herald reported the launch on page 10 on Monday, May 11th. It added a two comments Ruth made in an interview :-

*There is a heightened awareness (today) and it can lead to further progress for the Left point of view or there could be a contrary situation as we've known with the rise of fascism.....*

*The waterfront confrontation is an example of the power of old camaraderie. But a future communist movement was likely to rise not from blue-collar workers but the urban white-collar sector because of shifts in the workforce population.*

## Vale to Friends and Comrades

During the past few months four subscribers to Ecoso have died, **George Smith, John Arrowsmith, Betty McAlister and Joan Goodwin/Finger.**

**George Smith** In the Coburg Gardens there is a special cairn to thank George for his contribution to the environment of Coburg Lake and the Merri Creek. For young people who enjoy canoeing, bush walking and cross country skiing, especially in the Snowy Moutnains area, George is known for his love of the environment, his knowledge of native plants, and the quiet way he enthused young people to follow his example. And those (now well into their fifties) who were members of the Junior Eureka League in the early 1950s will remember him at the camps on the hikes and picnics. And, of course the many hundreds of boys and girls he taught will remember how he could pass on his talents at woodwork and other crafts.

**John Arrowsmith.** At the memorial service for John Arrowsmith Val Noone described him as *an encourager of life force at the grass roots level.... I see John as part of a great river of people, Jewish, Christian, atheist, secular, humanist, ecologist or marxist who believe in people and who have hope and who work for a better future for the human race*, he said..

John was well known as a union shop steward at big workplaces such as General Motors and the Preston Tram Workshops. His research on the car industry and its ownership lead to the book *The Golden Holden* . For many years he was a very active member of the Labour History Society, continually contributed to conserving the memory of past union campaigns.

**Betty McAlister.** Betty helped many sick people through her compassionate nursing, brought up a family, campaigned for peace and for women's rights, but found time to join a singing group. *The Austral Singers* first met in the early 1950s with the aim of popularising folk songs, in particular about Australia. Her contribution, through singing, at gatherings of the Henry Lawson Society was particularly popular and the April "Lawsonian" included an obituary to her.

**Joan Goodwin/Finger** Joan was a teacher who loved English literature and helped many of her students to follow her example. As a brilliant student at the Melborune University in the early 1930s, she recognised the need to be active around the rights of women. She helped to organise the first *International Women's Day March* to be held in Melbourne. For many years Joan looked after her ageing mother and thus it was appropriate that these lines by Len Fox were read out at her funeral.

We are not talking about someone  
Who lived in another age.  
But we are thinking of a women  
Who had to face all the problems of  
growing up in a man';s world and  
caring for a family and  
looking after an ageing mother  
and loving books and birds and flowers and  
trying to understand two world wars and  
a depression and  
taking a stand for hunanity and peace  
and the future  
We are thinking of a women who had to face  
the problems of the 20th century.

## "So Let Us Sing !"

"Let us Become a Singing People !"

So let us sing comrades and friends ! Let us become a singing people. Let us sing, not only like soldiers on the march to cheer and invigorate ourselves. Let us sing at meetings, conferences, demonstrations, so that we will reach the mind and hearts of all who hear us, and stimulate a joyous energy for Socialism and world peace. (Katharine Susannah Pritchard )

The above words were sent to the Eureka Youth League for a foreword to their song book. Katharine Pritchard joined the Communist Party as a foundation member in 1920. She was an award winning novelist. (There is a number of references to her in *The Reds*.)

During the past month many socialists have lifted their voices in song. In addition to the songs on May Day there was the singing of the International at the launch of *The Reds*, but the real singing festival was at the celebration for Paul Robeson's 100 birthday on April 28th. The singing was shared by the Male Welsh Choir, the Trade Union Choir and Margaret Roadnight.

Among the songs was one by Helen Palmer *The Ballad of 1891* It was sung in honour the MUA and all those who have supported them, You can imagine how popular it was ! Here are the words:-

The price of wool was falling in eighteen ninety-one,  
The men who owned the acres saw something must be done;  
"WE will break the shearers' union and show we're master still  
And they will take the terms we give them or we'll find the  
men who will !"

From Clermont to the Barcaldine the shearers' camps were full,  
Ten thousand blades were ready to strip the greasy wool  
When through the west like thunder rang out the union's call :  
"The sheds'll be shore union or they won't be shorn at all!"

"O, Billy Lane was with them - his words were like a flame,  
The flag of blue above them, they spoke Eureka's name;  
"To-morrow," said the shearers, "they may not be so keen -  
We can mount three thousand horsemen to show them what we  
mean."

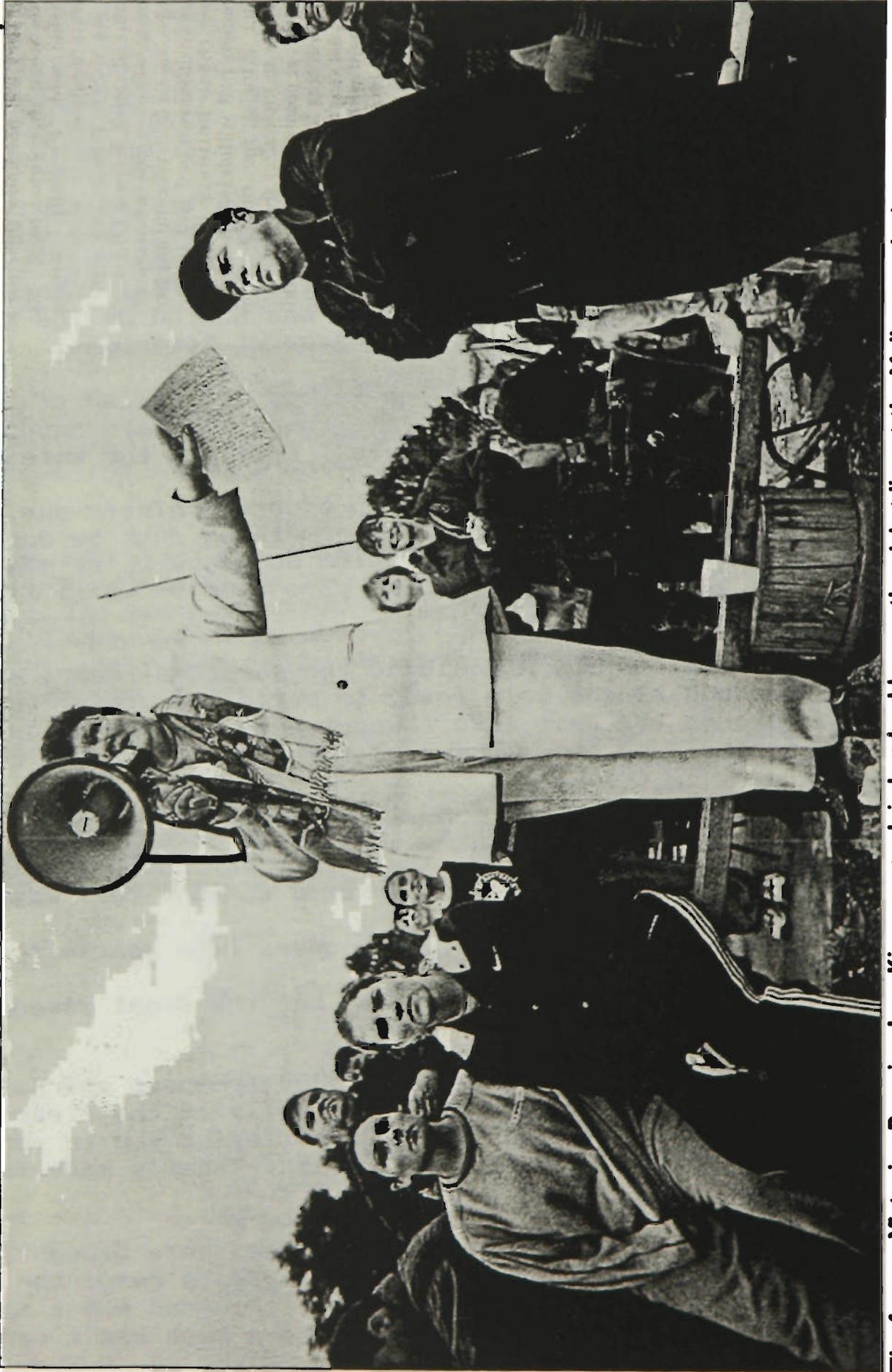
"Then we'll pack the west with troopers from Bourke to Charters  
Towers -  
You can have your fiery speeches, but the final strength is  
ours."

"Be damned to your six-shooters, your troopers and police,  
The sheep are growing heavy, the burr is in the fleece !"  
"Then if Nordenfelt and Gatling won't bring you to your knees  
We'll find a law," the squatters said, "that's made for times  
like these !"

To trial at Rockhampton the fourteen men were brought,  
The judge had got his orders, the squatters owned the court,  
But for everyone that's sentenced, a thousand won't forget.  
When they jail a man for striking, its a rich man's country yet.

# Ban Kirner from picket, judge urged

Age  
23/4/98



The former Victorian Premier, Joan Kirner, speech in hand, addresses the picket line at the Melbourne docks. Picture: SIMON O'DWYER

# Special Greetings

to

# Supporters in the Country

This letter to the editor of the Snowy River Mail is republished not only because of the information it provides but also to show that Ecoso really appreciates receiving news about issues affecting people in the country. Its refreshing to hear about campaigns we share, such as on this letter. Other letters have been on land-care, river improvement, eco-tourism, restoration of country train services, closure of schools, hospitals and banks. So thanks to supporters from far away places. Please keep up the letters.

AND

## WASN'T IT INSPIRING WHEN THE PEOPLE FROM EAST GIPPSLAND SHOWED THEIR SUPPORT FOR THE MUA BY BRINGING GIFTS OF FARM PRODUCE TO THE PICKETERS !!

Snowy River Mail, Wednesday, January 21st, 1998—7

# Orbost, our achievements and our future

(To the Editor)

Dear Sir, — With your permission, I would like to use your columns to review some achievements by community effort and possibilities in this new year and beyond for the Orbost area, but at the same time note the dangers from elsewhere.

Although I am no longer able to take an active part myself, I cannot but admire the work of others and the spirit of community prevailing. I feel that having a completely independent local newspaper is one of the factors that helps to provide the facility for cementing of the community together.

There is too much community and service group activity to mention except a few highlights which appeal to me personally. For instance, the raising of \$20,000 by the Op Shop to benefit many local organisations is a remarkable effort. Another example of what can be done by co-operative work, is the Rural Women's Arts project, the mosaic pathway and wood sculptures. I was thrilled and others should be, at the

pretend to be democratic and the policies and devices used to retain power. But first of all, by way of illustration, please indulge me to provide a touch of the allegorical. You may have heard the often quoted scientific experiment involving an unfortunate frog placed in a large cooking pot filled almost to the brim with cold water. The water was heated very gradually, so gradually that the frog does not notice and makes no attempt to hop out of the pot. That frog, unknowingly, allowed itself to be heated into a fatal state of torpor.

So it may be with us if we are not mindful of that which is happening on the state and federal levels. Surely the gradual 'heating' is evident? There are many lessons to be learnt from overseas by those who wish to retain power in spite of obvious public opposition. The example that comes to mind is that of the virtual dictator, Slobodan Milosevic, of Serbia, previously of Yugoslavia. By using his position of power in "parliament" he annulled the overall victory of the opposition in local government elections. The object being, as a first step, to destroy the influence of citizens at the grass-roots level. However, the Serb people turned out in their hundreds of thousands against his action. His government was forced to restore and accept the results of those elections. Yet, old Slobodan is still there in the driving seat. We have had a 'Slobodan' job done on us, but we have accepted it all too meekly.

After grass-roots democracy has been hobbled then, No. 2, the next step, is to restrict information on government activity on the basis of the "Privacy of Commercial Transactions". Thus, the Auditor-General's role also has to be hamstringing so that blunders and corrupt practices do not see the light of day. If the reader of this has scanned past newspapers, he or she would know that there has been plenty of blundering and corruption. Are we to be denied this information? You will have heard also the tirades and threats against sections of the media of late.

Step number three is the attack on the judiciary, verbatim at this stage, except for one questionable appointment to the High Court. Once a government has the judges in its pocket there are many possibilities, such as in Singapore. That island state has virtually a one party "parliament" due to phoney legal procedures. Whenever the opposition criticises those in power the government members targeted sue them for defamation. The result is that the hapless opposition members are rendered penniless and often have to leave the country to avoid a gaol sentence.

It could happen here, make no mistake. One day we could wake up to find ourselves in a police state. I remind you of the recent minister, insane, yet ludicrous surveillance of harmless off-beat groups and le-

gitimate organisations. Some 300 victims of that spying, fortunately, obtained leaked copies of the dossiers, so complicated and identified themselves therein. One might ask: "What is the purpose of these dossiers?" Apparently, even being opposed to duck shooting is a threat to our nation's security. Why? Are we expecting ducks to swamp us with their numbers and take over this country?

"Bread" (not for some) and "circuses" are provided during this time, distracting folks from the real issues. There is plenty of evidence of the growing numbers of victims of one of these distractions, excessive gambling. So bingo! we have dictatorship posing as democracy.

Outnumbered as we are in the countryside, with only a few altruistic types in the cities sympathetic to rural causes, demonstrations and the ballot box are almost useless. But there is an avenue of hope if we were all to grasp it. In this era of "greed is good", let us join the trend, but only in a collective selfish way. I believe that only in this fashion can Orbost and district flourish. We have enough talent and, I suspect, capital here for small to medium enterprise. Let us not be "all stressed up and nowhere to go". (Acknowledgement to Dr. Vahid Payman, psychiatrist). —GEOFF KERRY, Orbost.



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## INFORMATION ABOUT ECOSO EXCHANGE NEWSLETTER.

Eco - Ecological, Soc - sociological, Exchange - non-authoritarian

Since 1990 Ecoso Exchange Newsletter has been the newsletter for the Crow Collection Association (Incorporated). 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..

## 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, Department of Urban and Social Policy, Footscray Campus (P061), Victoria University of Technology, PO 14428, Melbourne City, MC Victoria 8001. (Phones, Sheila Byard 03-9688.4754; Ruth Crow 03-9329.8685)



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