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Ecoso Exchange Newsletter

Crow Collection Association

Ecological, Sociological and Political Discourse

Ecoso 2/51, May 1999

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Listen to the Little Voices...listen to the violins ... it is the same with democracy...listen to the little voices Yehudi Menuhin in an interview on the ABC 24/10/98

VALE RUTH CROW - Ruth Crow - the force behind the Crow Collection Association and this newsletter - died on April 9th. This Ecoso was written shortly before Ruth went into hospital at the beginning of April. We have left it largely as it was prepared, about sport and how it is shifting from a public to a market force. Turn to the back of the newsletter for information about the function being organised by the CCA committee as a tribute to Ruth. Issue 2/52 (due out in July) - planned for the 20th anniversary of 'Seeds for Change' - will also contain material on Ruth's life and work.

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For information re the May 21 gathering at North Melbourne Town Hall, to celebrate Ruth Crow's life .. see the Back Cover

News From the Crow Collection

From recently received letters :-

I am pleased to receive Ecoso Newsletter which I pass on to friends who find it stimulating and useful. (from a longtime subscriber who lives in Sydney)

I particularly enjoyed the newsletter with the chart about trade unions and community. (from one of our more recent subscribers)

Thank you for your help and assistance in providing information about child care. The Crow Collection was extremely useful in helping me to write my article. (A Melb Uni student)

Thanks for your help with my work on women teachers - your material and your suggested contacts proved most valuable. (A VUT lecturer)

The Holeproof story (Ecoso 2/50) had some good lessons in it. (from a member of the Brunswick Community History Group)

2.

We particularly enjoyed the Ecoso story about Maurie and the cake (Ecoso 2/50) Your stories are beautifully written and contain ideas which help people to look at ideas in a new and progressive way. (a personal note to Ruth Crow from a long time supporter of Crow Collection)

I was pleased to see the topic of a forthcoming Ecoso will be sport, public open space and profits (from Paul Butler, more from his letter is published in article on page 5. **Sport and Big Business**).

From Beachside to Beach-head

Contributed by Max Nankervis.

If you go down in the woods today
You are in for a big surprise
If you go down in the woods today
You are in for a big surprise
For every bear from every where, and
everywhere is every bear
For todays the day the teddybears
Have their picnic.(with music and apologies.)

If the teddy bears are having their picnic in the woods today, they will probably have to first pay an entrance fee, and will be unable to wander freely because key parts of the woods will have been franchised out to a commercial organisation to offer coffee latte, or to hire out roller blades to spin around the new asphalt paths, and there will be a "The Woods Experience" (entrance \$5.00, families \$15.00) showing hourly in a new state of the art theatre/interpretation centre.

And what if the teddy bears decided instead to picnic at the beachside around Port Phillip Bay. What would they find ? Well probably the same. The opportunity for cafe latte at intervals of every few hundred metres, or even more up-market restaurants which have eased out the former community based life saving club or similar group. And, if they care to move around a bit they can hire roller blades from a franchised operator.

To be sure the teddy bears will have a far better access to the beach than their counterparts in the Mediterranean beachside towns where the "Lidos" spread their franchised tentacles out onto the (less than golden) sand to hire out deck chairs neatly disported in rows. And Franco or Paulo, making use of his franchised right to trade on the beach, will move between the bears offering suntan/sun cream lotions, and other items.

So it is all civilised And that's how we like it. Or do we ? Just how much should the Bayside (and other beaches) be commercialised and franchised. And just how "landscaped" do we want them to be ? And how do we cope with increasing crowds who have been attracted by the opportunity of cafe latte by the sea? And more importantly, who should bear the cost of this ? The local via rates, or will the users pay, distributing the cost more evenly ?

There are numerous issues which are arising round our bayside beaches. They are really just another aspect of the whole development of the postmodern, post industrial city. A city that depends on its livelihood on "spectacle", where bread (and latte) and circuses are more important than community. ~~The BEACHFRONT, like our teddybears' picnic, has become a BEACHHEAD. Discuss the issues at the Town & Country Planning Association seminar on Monday May 3, at 7.30 pm. Venue Sisselcraft Theatre, Architecture Building, University of Melbourne. All teddy bears (and others) should come if they can! (Max Nankervis & others will speak at this seminar)~~

Sport by Big Business

By Paul Butler.

As a lover of sport from the most basic levels to the most elite displays, I am increasingly distressed by the taking over of sport by big business.

A particular aspect that disturbs me is the connection between elite sport and the media. At some base level, journalism is about reporting what happens in sport. This would seem to be relatively straight forward, but in the late 20th century, much of the media has become highly dependent on sport as a way of selling advertising space. Sport, at the elite level has in turn become dependent on the income provided by media for the rights to broadcast sport.

It is hard to imagine a relationship better designed to be uncritical. How can we rely on the media to provide a sensible description and analysis of the story behind the story when they are so interdependent. Football in Victoria is dominated by the AFL as the sporting body and by Channel Seven as the media company with the broadcasting rights.

These two groups are collectively developing the new Dockland stadium Building. Docklands is far from an unproblematic exercise There is a wide range of planning, economic, and developmental issues, along with sport issues, that surround Dockland, yet how likely are they to be canvassed when so much of the media is tied into the AFL and even the development itself ?

Football, the AFL and Docklands is simply one case study and similar examples abound in other sports with the Olympics obviously being the supreme example of the media being so closely allied to and dependent on the sport that we will just not get any critical analysis.

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What Price Crown Land ?

Royal Park, that vast tree studded area surrounding the Melbourne Zoological Gardens, was reserved for public use in 1854 "to provide lungs for the City", in accordance with the policies of C.J.Latrobe who was Superintendent of the Port Philip District.

RECAPTURING THE ENGLISH VILLAGE OVAL.

Unlike the main other large inner Melbourne parks which date from about the same period, such as the Fitzroy Gardens and Botanic Gardens, flower-beds were not planted. However most of the gums and other native trees were removed to make way for cricket pitches and football grounds and deciduous trees were planted so that sports arenas in Melbourne could be similar to those of a village in England.

For many ex-service men and women the title Royal Park is

synonymous with Recruiting Depot. During the South African War, (at the turn of the century), the Great War (1914 to 1918) and the Second World War (1939 to 1945) Royal Park was the main place for recruits to report for the army. For the last three years of the Second World War Royal Park was used by the United States Army and it became known as Camp Pell. At the end of the War Camp Pell was used to house families needing emergency accommodation.

In 1956 the families were relocated to outer suburbs, the army huts were demolished. Some hurried tree planting gave the Park a facelift in readiness for the influx of international visitors who came to the Melbourne Olympic Games.

A ROYAL BUSH PARK

In 1972/73 during the preparation of the Melbourne City Council Strategy Plan the North Melbourne Association (NMA) recommended redesigning Royal Park with emphasis on more passive recreation and the use of indigenous plants...bringing nature to the city.

In 1984 the Melbourne City Council prepared a Master Plan for Royal Park. During its preparation there was widespread public participation involving metropolitan-wide sporting organisations and community groups in the neighbourhood. The general principles proposed by the NMA in 1972/73 were endorsed but these excellent proposals have only partly been implemented.

"AN UNDER-UTILIZED PARK" !

Royal Park's key asset for those who use it for passive recreation (cycling, walking, picnicing, kite-flying and so on) is that a large proportion of the area is not designated for any particular activity. However, it is this very "emptiness" which has made it vulnerable to land grabs. When the Chief Commissioner for the Melbourne City Council (Kevin Gosper) visited the Park in 1996 he said:- *There is an awful lot of vacant land around here.*

Thus in 1997 the City of Melbourne instituted a Master Plan Review for the Park which in effect legitimises redevelopment of the Park with **emphasis on improving venues for competitive sport**. For example, what has been permanently reserved public parkland is now an international hockey and netball stadium costing \$24.5 million. During the preparation of the MCC Master Plan no mention was made of the possibility of Royal Park being used for the Commonwealth Games in 2006. However, Kevin Gosper is now a member of the Commonwealth Games Bid Committee which is presided over by Jeff Kennett.

"INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS"

The Melbourne City Council has had the responsibility for the Park for most of this century, but, recently, it has been by-passed by the Victorian State Minister for Planning, Mr Rob McLellan, who has amended the planning scheme to fast track a development of "international standard stadiums". The proposed complex will occupy 5,5 hectares, excluding carparks and roads.

5.

In a letter featured in the Melbourne Age (3/1/99) Angela Munro stated :-

Those who stand to gain from the Royal Park Stadium (land, building, and infrastructure provided gratis) are the corporate lessees who will trade in naming rights, television rights (including American grid-iron) corporate seating, merchandising and catering.

This boom in publicly subsidised stadium development has little to do with amateur sport. It has everything to do with a handful of elite sports, privileged spectators in corporate boxes, and profits to be derived from televised sport. We are witnessing the misuse of public planning process, public funds and public parklands as park users and sport fans are dispossessed - pawns in the biggest game in town.

JOIN THE ROYAL PARK PICKET TO RELOCATE THE COMMONWEALTH GAMES STADIUMS - SATURDAY MAY 1, MIDDAY at the playing fields, Brens Drive, Melways 2A, 29 & 43 Hear and be heard Rod Quantock, a representative of Wurrundjeri elders & Verity Burgmann, co-author of GREEN BANS RED UNION. Info Royal Park Protection group 9347 6560 or 9347 6953

Sports, Jobs, and Taxes

Some Lessons from a Brookings Institute publication

Australia is in the midst of an unprecedented boom in the construction of sport stadiums for professional sport. These facilities are heavily subsidised through capital grants and tax concessions. Advocates of these projects frequently justify subsidies by arguing that teams and facilities have a beneficial effect on the local community.

A book of essays, recently published in America examines the validity of such claims. It is called **Sport, Jobs, Taxes - the Economic Impact of Sports Teams and Stadiums**, edited by R. G. Noll and A. Zibalist (ISBN 960973). The main theme of the book is that :-

As long as professional sports leagues maintain an ARTIFICIAL SHORTAGE OF TEAMS, so that some cities can be used by team owners as leverage against current franchise hosts in pursuit of better stadiums and leases, the stadium mess will continue.

Here are a few quotes :-

The primal cause is the monopoly status of each professional sport, which keeps the number of teams lower than the market can support. The relative scarcity of teams forces cities which could be financially viable franchise locations into competitive bidding whenever a team becomes available through expansion or termination of a lease. Monopoly leagues maximise their profits in part by creating competition between cities for teams.

Stadium financing is a complicated business. The effect of stadiums on the cash flow of teams and cities suggests that new facilities rarely ever are worthwhile. Sometimes they can be financially catastrophic. Subsidised sport facilities do not exist because they are financially valuable assets in their own right. They exist, instead, because most cities have decided that a subsidised team is better than no team at all and because scarcity in the number of teams give owners the advantage of bargaining with cities.

and a main conclusion

It is difficult to see an end to the growing subsidisation of sport facilities. Where as the superficial explanations for this phenomenon lie in the details of federal, state and local politics, the ultimate reason can be found in looking in the mirror. Professional sports in the United States are subsidised because they are very popular monopolies. While grass roots movements in local areas may achieve modest successes in slightly altering the terms of stadium subsidies, until the structural monopoly and cultural centrality are modified, large scale subsidies to wealthy team owners and athletes will be a feature of the professional sports landscape.

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Women and Sport

Extract from "The Women's Charter" published by the Union of Australian Women. Full text of the Charter can be obtained from the UAW(Victorian Section) c/o Ross House, 247 Flinders Lane, Melb.3000, or from the Crow Collection..

The women's movement is more often than not silent on issues of women and sport, yet sport is an integral part of our society with a great amount of power and prestige attached to it.

For many people sport provides a means to a fuller and healthier life. It is a focus on national pride, and at local level it can play an important role in developing community spirit, providing opportunities for socialising and forming networks,

At a personal level sport builds confidence and the ability to overcome setbacks and disappointments, to challenge and conquer oneself, to fulfil dreams and to earn respect from others (and to give others respect) when set goals have been achieved.

However, the way sport is currently organised in our society affects both men and women detrimentally.

Sport is ideally placed to re-inforce the dominant ideology of male superiority. It is obvious who runs the fastest, who jumps the highest, who throws the furthestest : and from these measurable facts lies the power for legitimating the commonly held belief about women's physical frailty.

Similarly to women in all walks of life, women in sport suffer discrimination, lack of recognition, devaluation of achievement and the trivialisation of their performance.

Since last century men's sporting organisations have been amongst the strongest local government lobbies with the result that there has been lavish funding for men's sporting facilities in our public parks and reserves. During the same period resources for women's sport have been very inadequate.

As compared to the past, sport today is much more individualistic, the participants travelling by car, arriving at the venue for their own allotted time and then leaving. This lack of social life is contributing to the decline in team spirit, that is, a sense of representing a locality or workplace,

This individualisation of sport is helping to prejudice some women against it. As the social aspect of sport is diminishing there is a fertile field for those who reject the physical and aggressive side of competitive sport regarding it as being anti-intellectual, uncultured and undesirable

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Complementary Campaigns

S.O.S. and S.O.F.

Contributed by Una Voce

A new organisation Save our Fringes (SOF) is being proposed. The initiative is coming from the president of the Mount Evelyn Environment Protection and Progress Association (Beryl Phillips). "When we hear of the establishment of Save our Suburbs (SOS) the idea occurred to me that a subsequent move could be to set up a complementary Save our Fringes Group.

One way movements such as S.O.S. and S.O.F. can complement each other is by campaigning for passive recreational facilities throughout the suburbs and the metropolitan fringes. Thus the campaign against alienation of parts of Royal Park through the building of stadiums for commercialised competitive sport, is an important issue for those living on Melbourne's fringes. Parks and urban trails, which bring nature back into the suburbs, are one way of taking pressure from over-use of fringe areas for recreational outings.

Similarly, environmental groups on the metropolitan fringe, such as Save the Dandenongs League have the hosting responsibility to ensure that what is left of our natural bush heritage is not needlessly destroyed. For example, the defeat of the proposed sky-way at Kalorama (see Ecoso 2/50) has preserved the tranquility of this picnic spot for the enjoyment of both residents and day trippers. For more information on Save Our Fringes (03)9736.1786.

The February 1999 issue of the Town and Country Planning Association's "Bulletin" (Vol 6. No 1) features the Association's answer to the Planning Minister's Statement on Urban Consolidation. (More info. 03.9869.3693)

The main theme for the next Ecoso, (Ecoso 2/52) will be *Celebrating Seeds for Change*. ...

Creatively Confronting the Energy Crisis. It is now over 20 years since *Seeds for Change* was published. Ecoso 2/52 will also be a tribute to Ruth Crow. All ideas welcome. Please send ideas to the Crow Collection, Hon. Sec., Sheila Byard, c/o Arts F 003, Victoria University, PO Box 14428 Melbourne. CMC, 8001.

Conserving Community Memory

HEEDING DON DUNSTAN INTRODUCING THE DUNSTAN ACCOLADE.

A few weeks before he died in February, Don Dunstan said :-

The only way ahead in a democracy is to have people who have the courage to get out there and tell it, not only as it is now, but also how it was....a lot of people are taking things as they are now, for granted, and have absolutely no idea that it is within living memory that we had enormous fights to change it. (Ecoso 2/50:9))

To honour Don Dunstan's memory, future Ecoso Newsletters will include an article describing some efforts that are being made to conserve community memory. reminding readers about *how it was and the enormous fights to change it*. Let us call it the DUNSTAN ACCOLADE. Ecoso's first accolade goes to Len Fox, for :-

Progress against fascism

Text by Len Fox with cartoons by Tom Challen, 1998, ISBN 0 9589239 8 1.

In this booklet Len recalls an almost-forgotten newspaper that in the grim years from 1940 to 1945 raised its circulation from 2,000 to 20,000 - and an almost forgotten cartoonist the late Tom Challen. Challen aka TAC made brilliant and powerful drawings have earned him a place in the front ranks of Australia's black and white artists.

Progress became the official newsletter of the NSW State Labor Party. In NSW in November 1940 the Labor Party members opposed to the Lang bureaucratic practices and parochial policies formed what became known as the State Labour Party.

John Hughes, Bert Chandler and Frank Graham were the main people who lead the struggle against Lang's policies. Thus this accolade is also for them, and to quote Len Fox's dedication, *the many men and women who worked on Progress, or in some other way helped it grow and become, in a critical part of our history, an important voice of the Left.*

The lasting achievement of the NSW State Labor Party was to show that the Labor Party Right could be defeated and that the Labor Party could become a strong progressive force. Through publishing *Progress Against Fascism* Len Fox has recorded part of this historic fact.

Len was the editor of *Progress*. He is now in his nineties. Jack Hughes, who was NSW Secretary of the Clerks Union from 1942 to 1952 died in October last year, aged 89. (Patricia Graham (Frank's widow) is another subscriber to Ecoso)

The booklet is available from International Bookshop, Trades Hall, Victoria Street. Carlton. While in the bookshop check on Len's other publications. ... his books of poetry (eg *Gum Leaves and Dreaming*), his reminiscences (eg *Australian on the Left*) his novels (eg *Bailey's Pine*) and his histories (eg *the Story of Eureka Stockade*), and many others

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