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1. Big National Event Coming: R.E.C - Challenge to Readers

A Radical Ecology Conference is to be held in Melbourne Easter 1975. R.E.C will bring together for the first time many diverse groupings of radicals from all over Australia.

We urge all our readers to give serious consideration to personally attend this conference. It should constitute a special challenge to our readers. And here's why :-

"Ecoso Exchange" is a loose-knit association of radicals interested mainly (but not entirely) in the urban scene. Originally laced strongly with those interested in planning, architecture, social and local environmental activities, it deliberately changed its basis in February 1973 onto the so-called "4 Ecoso Guidelines". These opted for promotion of community participation based on a change in lifestyles that offered an alternative to consumerism and hence a reduction in energy per head. And these objectives were consciously linked with possibility of global ecological equilibrium.

But an acknowledgment of the primacy of ecological concerns and a recognition that urban planning should be so orientated, is one thing.

To do something significant about it, is another.

Ecoso Exchange has never offered more than an exchange of ideas between somewhat radical individuals with disparate ideas with the intention that such an exchange leads to clarification of the issues.

The Radical Ecology Conference offers something qualitatively different, and more of it. Here's how :

(a) Join an urban project group NOW

You can join and/or yourself initiate a group of radicals around the particular issue or project which concerns you, or which you would like to work on. R.E.C is offering a "learning exchange" network, which any radical in Australia can use to their advantage. Fill in the particulars on the enclosed introductory REC leaflet and put yourself in the picture. You can do this even if you cannot attend conference.

What interests you most ? An "ecological house" ? A design for urban community that minimises energy ? How to make public transport more effective ? Self-participating culture as an antidote to consumerism ? You name it.

(b) Contribute to pre-conference discussion.

Secondly, you can contribute with articles, comments, graphics, anything you think important to circulate amongst all those attending conference and read what others contribute. You can do this, too, even if you cannot attend conference.

(c) Confer : and take it from there.

Thirdly, and most importantly, we urge you to go to the conference yourself.

If before conference, you have joined a project group via the learning exchange communication network you will personally meet many of those involved in your chosen project, and have opportunities at conference itself to bring your resource materials and work with them on a particular project or issue. If you want to continue an argument started up by precirculated material, you will have the opportunity to do so verbally,

personally and in small groups around that particular controversy you think most needs clarification.

Thirdly, we suspect the average ecoso "urbanist" (if we can properly call you that, reader) has - like us - glaring deficiencies either in ecological knowledge, or on how to effectively apply such knowledge to the urban scene, or on how such application can be popularised. For such, a conference should prove invaluable simply to hear those radicals whose main concern always has been an ecological one.

Historically, "ecoso exchangers" started, in the main, with human concern, and found in 1972 they had to adopt also an ecological objective. It will be salutary for us all - through REC - to reverse the process: start more scientifically and more consistently with the ecological solutions and grapple with the exercise of relating this to the human scene.

A dozen of those consistently supporting Ecoso exchange (formerly "Irregular") meetings over its 7 years of existence took part in the original initiating call for the conference, some months ago. Their main concern was to see that there came into being a get-together of radicals of all brands with a genuine concern for ecological matters. That will happen. The opportunity to learn as well as teach--to creatively contribute -- has been made. Over to you reader!

We append a short check-list for orientation. It is not exhaustive, not original, not even significant unless applicable in a mass way.

(d) Check-list for orientation of urbanists to REC.

The checklist that follows has as its objectives the twin ideas of modifying lifestyles to enable reduction of fossil-fuel energy, and replacing with increasingly satisfying and intensive human inter-relationships not heavily dependent on fossil-fuel.

1. Design/redesign urban land-use/transport patterns that :-

- a. avoid dispersal of urban functions which generate avoidable car and truck trips.
- b. give most opportunity to use the energy-cheapest transport (foot cycle, public transport).
- c. make easy the functioning of do-your-own-thing groups :
 - (i) to reduce reliance on "consumerism" (defined in ecoso guidelines)
 - (ii) to reduce reliance on aimless travel as recreation:
- d. uses busy human-scale mixed-use local centres to solve a, b & c.

2. Application of above objectives in different forms to three sets of conditions :-

- a. new urban growth (i.e. choice of land-use/transport forms metropolitan peripheral growth; radial corridors and/or satellites; widely separated decentralised cities; linear corridor decentralisation.)
- b. restructuring present urban areas (e.g. revitalising or creating people-intensive centres, linking them with superior public transport, ceasing freeway programs)
- c. holiday resorts (e.g. reduce the suburbanisation of holiday resorts, strengthen access by public transport, create compact holiday accommodation, better serviced for personal relaxation and culture.)

3. Design/redesign the local residential built environment :

- a. reduce energy from fossil fuel power sources required for heating, cooling, cooking, washing, watering and waste disposal.
- b. grouping households to enjoy multi-purpose use of basic domestic machinery and facilities for outdoor/indoor childplay, entertainment and recreation
- c. Minimising the process of building new buildings in inner areas: sites where sound old buildings have to be pulled down to do it, by:
 - (i) selecting underutilised sites instead.
 - (ii) rehabilitating old buildings and changing use by restructuring interiors, rather than demolition.
 - (iii) rear additions that do not affect present buildings.
- d. local and district mixed-use focal centres created or strengthened to serve area. (see 1 d. above)

4. Design/redesign workplaces, and/or work process and/or products :

- a. to produce commodities to last longer with adequate re-use and/or spare parts/repair services
 - b. to reduce waste of power or waste of material by modification to techniques, materials or processes.
 - c. to limit production of energy-expensive materials/products to the purposes for which they are unique.
 - d. to site or re-site labor-intensive pollution free workplaces in or near mixed-use local or district centres (see 1 d & 3 d. above)
- Item 4, the last one mentioned - obviously one of quite major importance - is one to which Ecoso exchange (or other groups for that matter) have paid too little attention. Its solution must include searching worker control or rather worker-consumer control.

All items, in our view, require, in addition, solutions that are capable of mass application. Individual inventiveness by workers, as well as individual demonstrations by consumers of better ecological ways of doing things are to be welcomed because they pioneer practical efforts which illustrate just what might be successfully universalised.

To put that in other words: the solutions must be capable of becoming not only political ones but thoroughly radical political ones that are determined to re-shape industrial-economic-social reality to ecological ends. You may not share this view, but we urge you to turn your best creative efforts to help make the Radical Ecology Conference achieve its aims. Only 500 are to attend. Book early.

TWO POSERS FOR THE MID- '70's :

Can the small "l" liberals go radical ?

How radical are the A.L.P "lefties" ?

For this article we shall define "radical" as meaning those who have an understanding that measures are desperately needed to turn policies of all government authorities, instrumentalities and all industries away from quantitative growth-at-all costs solutions, and towards ecologically tolerable qualitative solutions.

Looked at this way, we will then deal with two typical groups within governments which show more promise than most. They are:

- * The Hamer group within the Victorian Cabinet.
- * The Cass-Uren-Connor group within the Australian Cabinet

Both these groups started out with great ecological promise. Victoria has been recognised as the national centre for so-called "trendy" liberals: the name given to the small "l" Hamer-Hunt class of politicians by the older-fashioned conservatives. It is of national importance, therefore, to assess whether "the trendies" are capable of "making it happen", as Hamer promised the electorate in 1973, when they head a State government.

Similarly, the earlier new-broom policy approach of some of the new Federal Ministers showed great ecological promise.

Now it must be recognised that the Hamer group may not have a majority within the Victorian cabinet on ecological issues of any importance: or even if they do, the weight of conservative pressures outside Cabinet may be just too heavy. "The Age" leading news item stated that it is "generally accepted" that Hamer "can count on full support from only 6 or 7 members of the 17-man Cabinet on most issues" 16/11/'74.

Just so, on ecological matters, not every Minister in the Federal Cabinet would be as aware as, say, Cass, Connor or Uren. Moreover these men share two added burdens with their fellow Ministers not borne by their State counterparts (a) the narrow-minded jostling for petty party political advantage by some State ministers (including some of Hamer's ministers) in refusing to co-operate with Federal policies, backed by Federal money with "tags" (what money hasn't?); plus an obstructionist Senate (b) more recently, the looming recession and the strong revival of popular feeling for "keeping industry going" or "attracting new industries", with blame fixed on the Australian government (and not the States), and with a re-emergence of an emphasis on quantitative economic growth.

This contribution makes no pretension to examine this most important problem with any great depth, but rather, to pose the problem and invite other readers to give more comprehensive views or examine aspects in depth.

How to Pass Judgement.

We suggest that regard has to be had to 3 elements in any assessment of the ecological record of any government. They are :

- A. Formulation of correct ecological goals.
- B. Setting up Machinery capable of reaching these goals.
- C. Using the machinery and actually achieving results.

Stage C is impossible without stage B, which in turn is unthinkable without stage A. Put like that, of course, it sounds not only elementary, but even simplistic.

But elementary approaches are precisely what is needed at this stage.. Its no earthly use saying, for example "the Victorian Environment Protection Act is the strongest legislation of its kind in the world", if the machinery set up under the act is simply not being used in any significant way to conserve fossil fuel resources in the process of preserving the environment. Its no earthly use reciting Labor policy on ecology issues, or even citing a few positive administrative reforms, if the weight of legislation and administration runs in the old traditional economic policy ruts that were progressive in the 1940's, but do not fit the 1970's

That's why we ask whether the A.L.P "lefties" are capable of becoming "radicals", which they will need to do to orientate their policies along different lines to those of the corporations; for in no other way can they remain "left". And that 's why we ask whther the small "l" liberals can go left, which they will need to do to fight their way clear of entanglement with and submission to the corporations.

Samples

Below we give samples of A, B and C, warning that they are drawn somewhat at random, and may, here or there, give an unfair impression. We invite correction if we are wrong or superficial or have drawn from misreported news items. The whole subject, however, is so vital, that a few mistakes are infinitely to be preferred to silence.

A. ---Goals - Hamer

"Irregular No 49" of November 1972 quoted extensively from Mr Hamer's Budget speech of 12/9/1972; and asked "How can such fine sentiments be put into practice ?" Readers interested can refer to "Irregular's" earlier fuller quotation or to Hansard of 12/9/'74 at p. 174 for the context. Part of the speech reads :-

"---more and more the world over, people are calling into question the validity of this material growth as an end in itself. Growth of what, and at what cost, are the questions people -and in particular young people-are asking. What is the profit, they say, in steadily expanding and improving man's supply of material things, if the things of the spirit are dimmed, and the very environment in which we live is threatened. These are proper questions for all of us -----" "---Economists gave us the concept of "Gross National Product" and interest has centred on the rate at which that grows. Is it time to think about "Gross National Well-being" ?---"

"---The very real consideration for the future is how far the community is prepared to go, given a lead from the Government, and how much material advance it is prepared to forego, to preserve and conserve the world we live in. The quality of living, and the endeavour to preserve the very ability of man to live, must become the increasing concern of all peoples and all governments---"

These remain fine sentiments.

B. Machinery - Hamer

6 examples of new machinery adopted or foreshadowed :-

1. Environment Protection Act and an environment protection authority said to be one of the strongest of its kind in the world, and an appeals board
2. Advisory Committees to advise on "conservation" or "preservation" e.g Yarra Valley or preservation of buildings.
3. State Planning The Bland report on the Public Service (No 2.) was ordered by the government, and, as we go to press, its findings are available: it proposes a strengthened streamlined centralisation of planning controls for conservation with a new department set up for

the purpose, and a Commission to advise on long-range "strategic" planning, and conservation standards.

4. Regional Plan ordered from the Melbourne regional planning authority to take proper account of conservation, "urban decentralisation" with provision of satellite towns and transport.
5. Strategy Plan requested from the Melbourne City Council to prepare a proper plan for Melbourne's central business district and surrounding inner areas for a lively, diversified city.

An example of old machinery rejected

6. Freeway Network Plan the total mileage proposed by the Metropolitan Transportation Committee's plan was cut by half, no freeways to be built through inner areas, a review of the whole freeway network to give more support for public transport

Quite impressive, really, set out like that. The Hamer machinery seems to shape up to the sentiments expressed in the budget speech quoted.

But what has happened since, as measured against the fine perspectives Hamer began with, namely, the Government "giving a lead" to the community "to preserve and conserve the world we live in" ?

C. Results - Hamer

Newport Power Station. Last "Ecoso Exchange" dealt with this. There is a Union leaflet enclosed. And a few comments in the next item. We will not discuss further the merits here.

But---the government cannot absolve itself from responsibility by sheltering behind an instrumentality of its own creation (the State Electricity Commission) or a pollution appeals board of its own creation on a policy so vital to humanity as energy. Estimated total Victorian consumption of electricity for the year 1999 (at 13,174 Gwh) is 61 times the consumption in 1948 (at 1511 Gwh) while population over this 50-year spell is not expected to be more than 3 times ! (Gabriel Lafitte's paper "Power of Power" quoting S.E.C sources.).

If Hamer's brilliant goals (A) and machinery (B) allow such results as (C) i.e a 20-fold per head increase in electricity over 50 years, then (a) and (B) become simply window-dressing.

The Yarra Valley, the Dandenongs, the Inner Areas. The government is to set up a separate regional planning authority to protect the environment of those parts of the Yarra Valley that lie beyond the outer suburbs, plus the Dandenong Ranges.

The "Age" environment writer Tim Colebatch describes this machinery as having "tough planning powers", including powers to buy up and re-subdivide existing subdivisions, and controls to preserve trees. But powerful teeth cannot do much biting without money. Also that part of the Yarra valley already within the present urban areas escapes the teeth altogether (being left to the tender mercies of the MMBW).

Local environmentalists of the Dandenongs Liberation Front are already attacking the delay pointing out that "development" in the meantime is accelerating. They demand an interim development order to halt house-building on new subdivisions, and halt road building until a hills strategic tourist plan is produced.

Fair enough ! The government has to be prepared to step in with its own direct administrative controls, and not shelter behind machinery left in the hands of the narrow parochial propertied interests of local Councillors, which, it seems, may predominate in the new Dandenongs-Yarra Valley regional planning authority as they do in the other regional authorities that are operating.

The inner areas need emergency protection just as urgently as the outer areas, ;but here too the Hamer government has sheltered behind the local vested interests as expressed in the MMBW. It has made no attempt to unscramble the rigid zones of the planning scheme to enable mixed uses to continue, nor protect the building stock, beyond a mild very restricted measure to provide machinery to protect the more precious buildings and historic environs. (See also under "Strategy Plan" below).

Conservation Planning. The Bland Report No 2, if adopted, really gives little more prospect of genuine co-ordination of strategic conservation planning than does the existing State Planning Council. Theoretically, this SPC assembly of heads of government departments, and instrumentalities under the chairmanship of the Chairman of the Town and Country Planning Board not only co-ordinates forward "strategic" planning, but vets

the "Statements of planning policy" of a statewide character. The ineptness of the State Planning Council and the vacuity of the policy statements have become a by-word for those whose hopes had, earlier, been raised by these techniques..

In the absence of any vigorous positive co-ordinated plans of an "ordinary" kind, it is hard to see how the extraordinarily more difficult ecological element is to be integrated into something that will work. The very exceptions which, as conservation machinery, had some limited conservation "teeth" by virtue of a measure of independence for a short time (the Environment Protection Authority and the Land Conservation Council) seem to be threatened by the Bland report and destined, in the name of "co-ordination" to be swallowed into the new conservation department.

Regional plan for Melbourne. was foreshadowed as a radial corridor pattern with or without a few dormitory satellites by Hamer in 1967, and seven years later in 1974 the Hamer government has "opted" for the same basic 1967 pattern, rejecting any energy-saving radical alternatives. The government cannot shelter behind the farce of public "objections" and public hearings coupled with pseudo-sociological and pseudo-scientific apologia produced by the MMBW regional planning authority in a matter so vital to energy-saving and social life (See Ecoso Exchange No 6).

Strategy Plan for City Area. was requested by Hamer in 1971, and a plan (Interplan) based on a strategy of diversity compactness and accessibility was adopted in principle in 1974. The essence of this was strong public transport, restraints on car commuter travel, and on high-rise office development spilling down St Kilda Rd ~~which~~ and other boulevards near the city. However, the regional planning authority (the MMBW) has recently adopted policies in direct contrast to the strategy plan. Its policy for St Kilda Rd. encourages a car-based and freeway-served central business district extension which will nullify the strategy plan. The Hamer government has taken no steps to legislate to protect the very principles of a vital city which Hamer, in the first place, said was needed.

Freeway Stopped--- For how long? The sceptics say that Hamer was playing a "shrewdy" when he ordered a slashing of the freeway network by half, just before the last election. The whole of it couldn't be built immediately anyway. And the safest way politically of having it built was to build half a freeway network, which, by throwing so many extra cars into a given area would automatically release pressures that would eventually build up to a demand to construct the other half.

The sceptics seem to be right. The adoption of a radial metropolitan growth pattern (See above), and the meek subservience to the MMBW's initiatives for a car-based city centre (See above) are the acts of a government resigned to a freeway solution.

To cap it all, Hamer is now repeating the freeway lobby's drivel about freeways being "safer". He conveniently forgets that every car on a freeway must pass along arterial roads to get on or off it, and the more cars permitted by the capacity of the whole system, the more cars there will be on the arterial roads, and the less people on the even safer public transport.

The new Hamer line comes in support of a new proposed "outer" ring freeway. Such a scheme would have a centrifugal effect, scattering urban growth to the circumference, consolidating the energy-expensive radial corridor pattern and of urban design capable of being strongly served by public transport.

If the Hamer group aspire to remain small "l" liberal, they will have to become more radical by taking on the ecological challenge from the direction it is coming---the oil interests, the automobile interests, the steel industry, the big land developers and the insurance companies and others behind them with the big investment money.

A & B Goals and Machinery - the Feds (samples only)

Turn now to the Australian government scene.
The national estate

In Sept. 1969 Whitlam wrote that the foreshadowed "Department of Urban Affairs" (the department was set up and is now called Dept of Urban and Regional Development DURD) "--must act as an initiator, an innovator and a co-ordinator of efforts to conserve Australia's national estate. It is now clear from an abundance of overseas experience that

urban man is diminished by any final severance of his links with nature and the countryside, and we should be appalled by the prospects that such a severance may ultimately come about in our own domain of great open spaces, scenic grandeur and abundant wildlife. ----The Department will carry out as a matter of urgency a survey of the Australian countryside designed to identify areas suitable for the expansion of existing cities or the establishment of new regional centres, areas to which mineral deposits, water resources or soil fertility impart a special economic significance and areas which should be preserved for their natural beauty, historic associations or scientific interest." ("Whitlam on Urban Growth" Vic. Fabian Society Pamphlet 19 at p.21)

True to pre-election promises, not only was DURD and a Ministry for the Environment and Conservation established, but these two Ministries, acting conjointly, commissioned a Committee of Enquiry into the National Estate which in October 1974 published "The Report of the National Estate". "Findings and Recommendations" of this report (pp 335-349) are wide-ranging in the field of the obvious, direct, immediate and especially visual destruction of natural environment such as pineplanting, clear-felling or sandmining. Strangely, dangers from secondary industry (which give rise to the pressures for pineplanting, clearfelling and sandmining, as well as generating their own impact on the environment) constitute great gaps of silence in the report. To mention current topics: mercury from paper mills, the advisability of new petrochemical industry, the aluminium industry's drain on fossil fuel.)

However in the Sept. 1974 budget the conservation program at the chosen level had begun to swing :

- * A 3-year \$20m. program to help the States buy land for nature conservation
- * An \$8m program to preserve the national estate.
- * A national air-monitoring program \$250,000.
- * Nature conservation studies \$381,000
- * A public environment awareness program \$100,000.
- * Assistance to States for water quality assessment \$322,265.

Urban Rehabilitation

At another level, DURD has decided:-

- * to preserve accommodation in the inner suburbs for low-income households
- * to achieve a suitably broad socio-economic mixture in the areas affected
- * to preserve the historic landscape qualities of the older inner suburbs.
- * to foster community participation in the planning development and management of neighbourhoods. (1974/75 Budget Paper No 8 p.31)

Atomic energy

At still another level "Slowburn" the Friends of the Earth Sept. 74 broadsheet distributed by the ACF quotes two Federal Ministers :

"Radioactive waste is not just another form of pollution---it is the single most persistent, insidious and destructive waste ever created---" (Dr Moss Cass, Minister for the Environment 1974).

"In no circumstances would I act to establish an atomic reactor plant in Australia when the state of atomic technology has no answer to the radioactive wastes from spent reactor fuel" (R.F.X. Connor, Minister for Minerals & Energy 4/6/'74)

C. The Results -Feds

Random Samples only:-

"I will be recommending to Cabinet that the Australian Energy Commission should establish its own milling plant in the Northern Territory---We will proceed on a government-to-government basis on the sale of uranium" (Mr Connor Melb. "Herald" 26/9/'74)

Query: Can the Australian government justify exporting to other countries the uranium that will result in "radioactive wastes from spent reactor fuel to which the state of atomic technology has no answer" ?

"Australia's foreign investment talks with the U.S resulted in agreement on joint studies on 'very important projects' in energy and minerals, the Deputy Prime Minister Dr. Cairns said today.

"---he disclosed that he had asked Australian and U.S companies, along with their governments, to look at the possibility of joint studies such as oil, natural gas, petrochemicals, coal and uranium in Australia. 'They responded immediately to that', he said (Melb "Age" 16/11/'74). We'll bet they did ;.

The Environmental Impact Study machinery devised by Cass's Ministry has had no impact on the Redcliffe petrochemical project. To run an impact study after the capital is expended or to base it on a harmlessly low standard of protection is as sensible as shutting the stable door after the horse has bolted.

All this smacks ominously not only of the revival of a growth-for-growth's sake approach, but an approach that would tie Australia's growth even more firmly to that of the multi-nationals than it is now.

If the Cairns-Cass-Connor class of labor leader aspire to remain on the "left" they will need to acquire a radically different small "l" liberal angle on ecological matters and depart sharply from the outworn concepts of labor building a "strong" nation in the narrow economic sense on the basis of rapid depletion of minerals, much of which should be left under the ground in Australia (or in Iran for that matter) for Australia's future generations as well as an energy source for the future of the third world.

3. Introduction to our Enclosures

1. Tasmanian Woodchip Broadsheet

Enclosed is a broadsheet entitled "---on the other side of the hill Whats happening to our forests" This was prepared by the Hobart group supporting the Radical Ecology Conference (see our first article above). After distribution of this, they held a successful seminar on the woodchip industry at Triabunna (half way up the east coast) on Dec 1st. 50 or so activists attended from all over Tasmania. Enough said. Read the broadsheet. It advertises itself.

2. R.E.C Leaflet

Please fill in the leaflet and return it as soon as possible---don't forget to fill in the "network" form---and money is urgently needed !

3. Newport - A Ghastly Mistake

Copy of this leaflet published by 15 unions, is enclosed. When you have read it post it up somewhere it will be read---or see it is handed around to inform as many people as possible.

The Victorian State Electricity Commission is mounting an advertising campaign costing "thousands of dollars". Starting on 23rd November, full page ads. appeared in Melbourne dailies. Here we pinpoint only one aspect.

The SEC ad. referring to union leaders who have refused to build Newport until there was an enquiry into other sites and ways of generating electricity (now backed by the Trades Hall Council itself and the ALP opposition in Parliament) says : "they have their fingers on the power switch of your State - and the consequences could be catastrophic".

If we are to speak in metaphors such as this, then the Victorian government at all times has had its "fingers on the power switch", and have pulled the switch every time the Latrobe Valley electricity workers have had a serious wage dispute with the SEC. Power stoppages are always presented as the fault of the workers, and never the fault of government policy !

It is hard to avoid the conclusion that the government instead of shouldering the responsibility of a reasonable industrial policy, has deliberately chosen natural gas as a fuel for the Newport station to by-pass the Latrobe Valley workers altogether. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that the government knows very well that this method is- from an energy resource point of view -the most expensive way of generating power, but would rather waste fossil fuel resources than go to the bother of solving the industrial problems of SEC workers.

Our electricity should come from our cheap and ample brown coal, not from the more limited "prime" fuel of natural gas for which the biggest energy return is gained by burning it direct.

Ironically, two days before the SEC ad. appeared a world "energy economist" arrived in Melbourne to address the Royal Society. Mr Nathaniel B. Guyol advocated that one way to protect the future of energy is "to force electricity authorities to go back to coal. The same too for industries that have switched over to oil burners. Gas producers too should go back to coal ("Herald" 21/11/'74)! The last time I did my figures on Australian energy I found that Morwell was getting one million British thermal units for 10 cents on its low grade brown coal. That's the best bargain in the world, so why abandon it ?".

Yes, why, SEC ? Why, Mr Hamer ?