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(Incorporating "Irregular" No. 59)

This is an irregular-Ecoso Exchange. It is in fact not our usual newsletter but merely a reminder about the Radical Ecology Conference

For the past few months all efforts of Ecoso Exchange have been directed towards planning R.E.C. We know our readers will appreciate the need to concentrate efforts on R.E.C as this conference is a first step towards building a strengthened, effective, confident radical ecology movement.

As readership of Ecoso Exchange has historically been basically entrenched in urban environment we enclose some tentative notes for the R.E.C. Commission on Urban Environment. These notes will also give some idea of the scope of the R.E.C Commissions.

This Issue

1. Some Information on the Radical Ecology Conference
2. How You Can Help the Radical Ecology Conference
3. Some Notes for the Commission on Urban Environment at R.E.C.

I. Some Information on the Radical Ecology Conference

The Radical Ecology Conference will be held in the Union Building at Melbourne University over Easter 1975. (March 28th, 29th, 30th 31st)

When you receive this Ecoso Exchange the Radical Ecology Conference will be only about one fortnight from starting. A leaflet on R.E.C is enclosed (most readers would already have received leaflets as they were enclosed with Ecoso Exchange No 8)

Ecoso Exchange No 8 gave some preliminary information on R.E.C. Some more details are now available.

a) Overseas Speakers.

Two speakers from overseas are definitely coming to R.E.C ...
Malcolm Caldwell: Lecturer in Economic History in the School of Oriental and African Studies, London University. He is also a member of the editorial board of the Journal of Contemporary Asia.
Barry Weisburg: author of "Beyond Repair; the Ecology of Capitalism". He has also worked with the Oil Chemical and Atomic Workers Union International.

Invitations have also been sent to Japanese Urban Anti-pollution movement for a speaker for R.E.C and there is the possibility of a speaker from India.

These overseas speakers will participate in the plenary sessions, commissions, and work groups and will speak at a public meeting. (This will most probably be held at the University on March 29th, leaflets advertising the meeting will soon be available)

The overseas speakers will be making a national tour after R.E.C.

b) Conference Program

This is planned to be very flexible, however, some large gatherings will be held. These will be

- 1) A plenary session of all participants on Friday March 28th at 1.30 p.m.
- 2) Six Commissions or meetings of about 100 people. Subjects for the commissions are listed later in this Ecoso Exchange,

- 3) A public meeting at which the overseas speakers will be the main speakers. This will be held in the Union Building, Melbourne University and the most likely date is Saturday March 29th at 8 p.m
- 4) A Folk dance (probably on Friday evening)
- 5) A final Plenary on Monday afternoon 30st March.
- 6) Each day from 9.30 a.m. to about 10.00 a.m. there will be a general meeting of all participants.
- 7) Registration for the conference will be from 10.30 a.m. on Friday March 28th. Participants are requested to come to the Union Building well before lunch time on Friday March 28th so that there is plenty of time to meet each other and to become familiar with the resource centre and the general layout of the building.

c) Network and Resource Centre

The network is already functioning. Those who would like to be in the network but who cannot attend the conference are invited to fill in the network form and to send a donation to R.E.C. Those who are registering as participants are reminded to fill in the network to ensure that the best possible use is made of the conference time.

d) Catering

As the usual university catering facilities are not open at Easter R.E.C has had to organise its own food services. This is being done with the assistance of the Monash Pantry. Whole food lunches will be available at midday and for the evening meal there will be barbecues. The cost of meals are being kept to an absolute minimum.

e) Children

Children of all ages can be brought with their parents to the Conference. There will be a children's centre in the Union Building and facilities will be provided for babies, toddlers and for children of school age. A program of activities and entertainment has been arranged but offers of help with this are still needed.

f) Billeting

A bill

A billeting committee is arranging billets for participants from other towns. Offers of billets are still needed.

2. How You Can Help R.E.C.

- a) Don't miss out on coming to R.E.C.
- b) Don't let others miss out from coming through not informing them that it is on.
- 3) Explain to parents that there will be adequate facilities for their babies, and older children.
- 4) Join in the network even if you cannot come to R.E.C.
- 5) Send whatever donation you can afford to R.E.C.
- 6) Let us know what billets are available.
- 7) Bring resource material for other to use
- 8) Come to the opening day well before lunch (10.30 a.m. 28/3)
- 9) Come to the Conference every other Easter day at 9.30. a.m.
- 10) Stay at the Conference until bedtime.
- 11) Bring the whole family and your friends.
- 12) Fill in the registration form on the leaflet immediately and post it to R.E.C. Box 87 Carlton South. 3053

Posters and leaflets advertising R.E.C are available from the Environment Centre, 15 Drummond Street, South Carlton.

For further information phone Robin 41.2381. Ruth 328.2345

3. Some Notes on the R.E.C Commission on Urban Environment.

Explanation. A "plenary" is a very large gathering... that is it is a meeting of all participants at R.E.C.

A "commission" is a fairly large gathering attended by some participants. At plenary sessions and at commissions there will be several platform speakers but there will also be discussions from the floor of the meeting.

As will be seen from the section of Ecoso Exchange... R.E.C. information there will be two plenaries and six commissions;

In preparation for the commission on Urban Environment Maurie Crow (328.2345) and Tony Dalton (38.5010) are circulating the following draft. Please note; this is only a first draft. Ideas about the commission are welcome.

Structure. The bearing of urban activities on ecological considerations are both extremely diverse (due to different industries, different conditions and different experiences of activity in each city) and often indirect (such as style of social behaviour determining degree of demand for fashionable goods or travel; or design of urban area determining amount and type of daily commuting required.)

Taking this into account, and taking into account the short duration of the commission (say 2 hours), it is not reasonable to expect those giving a few "position papers", or even between them, to cover the whole field. But it is desirable that the announced suggested topics of the commission come near to covering the field, so that those interested in the urban area feel they are not out of order if they speak on something not mentioned in the position papers.

Another factor is the desirability of separating discussion of alternative goals from the strategy and tactics of achieving such goals (as has been done in the main themes of the conference). Those giving papers therefore should be asked to structure their papers in this way; and in the commission the chairperson appeal to speakers to outline their goals before dealing with how to implement them. Otherwise the proceedings run the risk of being dominated by a description of tactics, which, unless related to a strategy of achieving a radical goal, can be relatively superficial or even non-radical.

What NOT to Discuss. We agree with the idea put forward by Saddler and Lafitte (in their draft for commission on Energy and Resources) of listing areas which we hope need not be raised. These, we suggest, are of several types;

a) Common Ground. Because of the wide field covered by the urban environment commission and its diversity and indirectness, it is important not to use unnecessary time in convincing each other on what it is hoped may be fairly common ground amongst urban radicals. For example;

- a. Universal low density suburban "sprawl" (more transport, harder to get together.)
- b. design for urban areas to maximise access to centres by pedestrians, cycles or public transport.
- c. desirability of multi-purpose and/or shared facilities (ranging from public buildings and grounds through residential blocks to interior design for homes or work places.
- d. adaptation / renovation of sound existing building structures rather than demolition and rebuilding (not just for historical, sociological or cultural reasons but for ecological reasons to save energy.)

- e. . . . new buildings and adaption of old ones to conserve energy for heating, cooling etc (insulation, orientation to the sun etc.)
- f. . . . minimising area of roads/ footpaths by narrowing access roads (environmental areas) incorporating cycle tracks etc.
- g. . . . more tree planting of streets, creeks, parks and other open spaces.
- h.
- i.

However, just how to combine the solution to these problems with others, under the topics suggested below would be very relevant, (and network projects on how to create and fight for viable alternatives are indispensable in the whole process.),

Outside Scope of This Commission

a. Disurbanisation

For those many people active in a variety of struggles to improve the urban environment, it would not help them much to gain clarification or sense of direction if the commission were to be dominated by an argument between disurbanists (i.e. those who call for the phasing of bog cities and their replacement by universal self supporting rural communes) and those whose activities are concerned with urban problems on the assumption that at least the present built-up areas of cities will persist. If there is sufficient feeling at conference that that cities versus non cities is an issue, then this would affect most most if not all commissions, and it is suggested a sperate time-slot be made available for such a debate.

b. Non-ecological Economic Arguments.

There are other non ecological arguments about urban development which, because they are of great concern amongst radicals, tend to find wide expression but which have no automatic beneficial bearing on ecological solutions. Thus an egalitarianism between 3rd world people and Australians, or an egalitarianism between the deprived and affluent within Australia, if achieved under existing conditions could mean a heavier strain on resources and more pollution than eco-systems could stand. Such egalitarianism,, translated into the secondary redistribution of urban facilities within Australian cities (as distinct from the primary distribution through income) could also result in a worse position ecologically.

Deprivation of people living or working in deprived parts of the cities must be corrected and their standard of living elevated; and for this, more public and private capital goods may be needed to be located in such deprived parts. In this process, the problem that must be faced is how to do this in an ecologically tolerable fashion. A debate in the commission on correcting the deprivation ~~through~~ as such is insufficient; such a debate must be related to ecological objectives.

Topics Suggested

Goals. (Stating carefully whether they are short term or long term)

1. What urban designs and community organisation favour participatory activities rather than "consumerism" or "tourism"
(a) for the existing built up areas and (b) for new growth ?

2. Can cities minimise waste disposal and pollution without causing as much ecological damage as they cure, and without lowering the "quality of life" in other directions ?

3. What forms of decentralisation of urban growth (if any) are ecologically useful ?

Strategy and Tactics

Under each of the above topics which would advance goals, strategic and tactical questions such as :

- a. The potential for a combination of union action groups, resident action groups, ecological action groups.
- b. A more just distribution of urban benefits by tax and income measures or by bigger social changes, and how to adapt to ecological ends.
- c. Ecological significance of voluntary changes in styles of urban living
- d. The part that could be played by workers control over commodity production in shaping urban living.

Approach Sheet.

Since urban disciplines are the least exact of the sciences, it would not be sensible to attempt "fact sheets" as suggested for the energy and resources commission. It is suggested that something in the nature of this sheet itself... a short sort of "approach" sheet... however could be useful.

Other R.E.C. Commissions.

Pre-conference letters are at present being sent to all those who have registered to attend the Radical Ecology Conference. We enclose with this Ecoso Exchange a page from this material which list the names of those who have accepted the responsibility for planning the commissions. Some of these people are in other States, and material on their commissions is not yet to hand. However some other commissions are circulating drafts and we have made this extract from the document prepared by Gabriel Lafitte and Hugh Saddler.

Please note this is an extract from their document and they have at all times emphasised that their proposals are only tentative..

Energy and Resources Commission by Gabriel Lafitte and Hugh Saddler.

What we want to concentrate on

We have a rough list of six topics, on which we hope to get papers, The order is determined by time, as the first three relate roughly to the past and the present, while the other three relate to the future.

- I. I. A Radical framework for energy policy
2. What was the real nature of the energy crisis.?
3. The dependence of modern capitalism for its survival on increasingly energy-intensive technologies.
4. A scenario of what the resources and energy situation in Australia will be 30-40 years from now if our society continues along the lines it is currently going.
5. Methods of reducing energy and resource consumption.
6. Resource diplomacy as a tool of future governments to conserve energy and resources, effect a global redistribution of income.

"Getting Together is the Aim"

The R.E.C leaflet's first sentence states... "getting together is the aim". Thus the more people who attend the whole conference the more fully the aim of the conference is realised.
