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# LET'S BAKE A BETTER CAKE!

We should not confine our efforts to slicing the old cake more equitably but should produce a new cake with better qualities.

This issue of Ecoso Exchange is mainly devoted to presenting several visions of the future.

1. Where do the children play?

*Ideas about children in suburbia.*

2. Where are We? What is Wrong?

*Questions asked at the National Planning Education Conference.*

3. Capitalism, Socialism and the Environment.

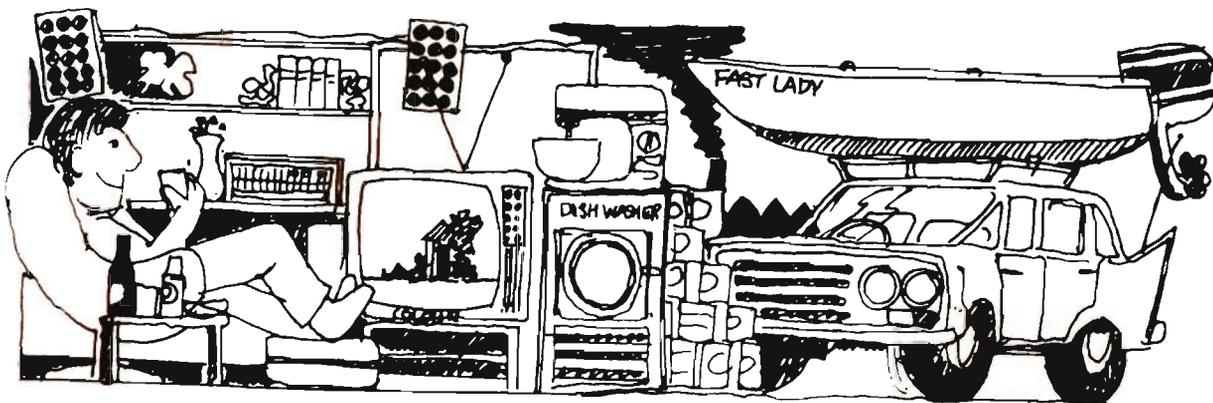
*Comments on Hugh Stretton's latest book.*

4. Mobile Privatism and Convivial Community.

*Continuing the discussion begun in Ecoso No. 12.*

5. Social change and Alternative Life Styles.

*Information about a conference to be held in Canberra in December.*



*"There is a more efficient way of living which does more for the dignity of humans using less energy and preserving the world as a pleasant and habitable place", from Ecoso Guidelines.*

Other publications are welcome to use material if source is acknowledged.

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(Incorporating "Irregular" No.63)

(Other publications welcome to use material if source acknowledged)

THIS ISSUE :

1. Where do the Children Play ?
2. Where are We ? What is Wrong ?
3. "Capitalism Socialism and the Environment"
4. Mobile Privatism and Convivial Community
5. Social Change and Alternative Life Styles

1. WHERE DO THE CHILDREN PLAY? contributed by  
Michael Wilkins

The emptiness of life in the suburbs, documented in the last Ecoso Exchange, extends to children as well as women. The one-to-one linking of women and children is slow to change. (They might get saved first, but everything else last) In The Life and Death of Great American Cities, Jane Jacobs considers that the barrenness of residential planning is a consequence of the predominance of men in the relevant professions. (pp.83/84; see also Ecoso Exchange No.12)

Just as a comfortable white Australian existence leaves much of people's (especially women's) potentialities unfulfilled, children are capable of sharing more of adult life than is generally allowed for, and of being "an integral part of the community". (1)  
As an example, "investigation into the play needs of an area... can be carried out with the assistance of children - asking as well as answering the questions". (1)

Scandinavian countries, always in the vanguard of planning and architectural innovation, are equally so with regard to the design and provision of playgrounds. As long ago as 1939, Copenhagen building regulations ensured that "housing blocks intended for more than eight families shall be provided with children's play space". (1) In Britain, the Street Playgrounds Act of 1938 provides for the closing of ordinary streets to traffic during daylight hours.

Traditional levelled playgrounds with fixed equipment are only one possible kind of playground. And "once a child has swung on the swing, slid down the slide..., what next?" (2) The necessity for adult supervision and energy with traditional equipment such as swings, may-poles, merry-go-rounds, climbing bars and seesaws is noted by the CAN Report. (3) Assuming with Bengsston (1973) (4) that children like "to run, to climb, to crawl, to build, to feel contrasting textures, and see colours", there is a need for more creative possibilities. "...Playground design is slowly undergoing a transformation: play sculpture, retention of trees, utilization of existing variations in levels or creation of new ones, use of light attractive materials and an attempt to translate what children actually do into terms of practical pieces of equipment". (1)

A Canadian leaflet on "creative playgrounds" (2) envisages the following components:

1. Landscaping which recreates nature's patterns, or preserves natural features, will evoke creative, imaginative and discovery activities for all ages.... (The idea of 'forests in the city' is valuable here, e.g. the planned "wilderness park" for Royal Park, discussed in CAN Report, p.81, and recent newspapers.)
2. Adult facilities: Landscaping has the added value of making a play space attractive and convenient to adults - thus prolonging the child's stay....
3. Sand is nature's most manipulative, creative substance, but without water near it is useless; it will not respond..
4. Water can be provided in hundreds of ways.... Streams have more creative play value than wading pools....

- 5. Loose materials are essential for a creative playground and the more there are the more variety; the more creative combinations result....
- 6. Play houses, tree houses, sitting places, barbeques, caves or nooks made with stones, hedges, land moulding all contribute to social development....
- 7. Physical development equipment must be properly scaled to physical growth....
- 8. Gardening is an excellent activity for learning and emotional satisfaction.

The provision of animals, and proper consideration of group activity areas and site design finish the recommendations.

An adventure playground, like the above descriptions, is "perhaps the most revolutionary experiment we know for absorbing the interest and releasing the energies of young people from two to eighteen years of age. Their deep urge to experiment with earth, fire, water and timber, to work with real tools without fear of criticism or censure, and their love of freedom to take calculated risks are recognized in these playgrounds and are met under tolerant and sympathetic guidance." (5)

The accessibility of playgrounds is an important factor (inseparable from good housing policies, as the difficulties involved in the supervision of children from high-rise flats in ground-level playgrounds attest.) One solution is the "Radburn idea" (6), in which cars and humans on foot and cycles are separated for peaceful walking or cycling as well as safety. It would seem easier to keep children entertained in public transport than in the confined space of the car, and equity demands public transport access to as many playgrounds and recreation areas as possible.

As picnic grounds, often with a few swings and walking tracks, are provided along major highways for motorists and their children, there seems equal justification for providing play areas or facilities at long-distance railway terminals, at least; and why not on long-distance trains? Trains are uniquely suited for the addition or use of carriage space for innovative purposes such as childcare and play. That they already contain the potential for play is shown by the value of old trams, buses or train carriages or engines as playground equipment.

Finally, while noting an increased community interest in playgrounds and childcare, and their liberation, along with related issues, solely from the privatized family domain into the public sphere, obviously provision of the funding needed to make many projects a reality is dependent upon this awareness also reaching the planners and "decision-makers" at all levels.

FOOTNOTES

- 1. Anthea Holme and Peter Massie, Children's Play: A Study of Needs and Opportunities. London: Michael Joseph, 1970 (Pp. 117, 117, 47 & 54 resp)
- 2. Children's Environments Advisory Service, Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Creative Playgrounds. Ottawa, not dated.
- 3. C.A.N. (Citizens Action Plan for North Melbourne) p. 73
- 4. Arvid Bengsston, Environmental Planning for Children's Play. London; Crosby Lockwood, 1973. (The same publishers also published his Adventure Playgrounds, 1972.)
- 5. (Lady) Allen of Hurtwood, New Playgrounds. London (?): The Housing Centre Trust, 1964, p.5.
- 6. Paul Ritter, Towns for Children. An article in Australian Preschool Quarterly, Feb. 1968

2. WHERE ARE WE ? WHAT IS WRONG ?

At the end of August the Town Planning Students Club held a "National Planning Education Conference" at Melbourne University. The topics for discussion were couched in such challenging statements as "Where are We, and What's Wrong?" and "Where We Should Go and How."

Hugh Stretton (History Dept. of Adelaide University), Tony Powell (National Capital Development Commission) and Les Perrott (private planning consultant) were the keynote speakers, and at forums and workshops a variety of speakers gave short papers including reports by

Colin Benjamin, Terry Hillsberg, Bruce Hartnett, Patricia Apps, Winsome McCaughey and Ruth Crow. Thus, although those who are professionally engaged in town planning were prominent at the conference, there were opportunities for those who are not planners, (and who are not studying to become planners) to put forward their ideas on planning education.

The reports from the group discussions showed that many students are concerned about how to relate to real life situations, and are trying to find an answer to what seems to be the irreconcilable contradiction between social justice and producing the goods and services which are traditionally expected of town planners.

Terry Hillsberg helped to point to the answer to this by saying that there is another side to be considered... "the goods and services produced by the planner have to be collectively consumed... it is necessary to learn how to transfer some of the planning skills to the ordinary people."

Winsome McCaughey graphically described the effect on women of the scattering of services in our sprawled suburbs and made a plea for urban areas to be planned so that social facilities are clustered in a hub. She emphasised that much of the loneliness and alienation suffered by women was increased through the suburbs being planned around accessibility being judged on accessibility by car.

Bruce Hartnett warned that technological questions have been allowed to dominate the planning field and this tended to make planning very conservative, yet the way to the future is through social change. The central issue is whether planning can make contact with social change movements, he said.

This planning education conference clearly showed that there are three aspects to the challenges posed... (see above, the theme of the conference was about "Where are We?, What is Wrong? and Where do We go from Here? ") These are:

- 1) We are at the end of the period where piecemeal planning patched up problems, as if each defect could be remedied separately.

A number of the main speakers concentrated on this aspect of planning but their pre-occupation with grand plans and mystifying techniques was not shared by the general body of students. It is rather surprising that in the days of anti-freeway, anti-Commission flats and green bans that there still exists such strongly entrenched paternalism amongst some of the most prominent, professional planners. The contributions to the conference by Tony Powell and Les Perrott, for example, clearly showed that the type of planning they describe was not politically neutral. Their concentration on the importance of technical matters did not obscure the fact that they saw planning as serving the established powers rather than the people.

Tony Powell predicted that state planning authorities which now had an advisory role to Government would soon emerge as development corporations with management responsibilities similar to the National Capital Development Commission. Such accretion of power for planning bodies could be good if it were wielded in the interests of the people, but could be bad if wielded in the trend fashion typical of present authorities.

- 2) We are at the beginning of planning where a vision of the future becomes a key element so that the city is seen as a single organism with all the human and ecological inter-relationships.

This fact did not emerge crystal clear, for two main reasons.

Firstly, two of the key-note speakers appeared to set the tone of the conference around giving students some hints on how to fit themselves for careers in the government offices or in offices of the big planning firms. Their emphasis was on the man-power problems of the big employers. This attitude was re-enforced by other platform speakers and also in the discussion groups, where, understandably there was a pre-occupation with

how to get a packet of comprehensive, "cogent" or certain skills. It was comparatively easy for everyone to be articulate on this practical problem.

Secondly, on the other hand, those who warned against this lop-sidedness were talking, of necessity, about matters which were innovative and tentative, in areas not yet guaranteeing a safe career. Few of the listeners would have had any day to day knowledge about community action as outlined by Winsome McCaughey or about the Trade Union action as referred to by Bruce Hartnett. It was thus much harder for students to be articulate on the dynamics of projecting community needs into the future and the bearing this should have on the educative process.

- 3) We have to work out ways to bridge the gap between the past practice of technical piecemeal planning and the past utopian planners with their unrealisable dreams.

Ruth Crow thought that the key to this task lies partly in the very nature of the national conference where planning education was left, not only to the academics, nor only to the academics plus a few professional planners; but that a number of people who are active in the community had been included as resource people for the conference.

This is one small indication of how planning is emerging from its cocoon, and a recognition that planning should aim to assist alienated relationships between people rather than being merely the acquisition of skills concerning the physical environment. an

She, and Winsome McCaughey emphasised the importance of collectives and described the emergence of all sorts of groups which are helping people to take apart the immensity of their surroundings and enabling them to find small units to which they can relate.

In a very brief contribution, Colin Benjamin urged that the values debate should be of central concern to students and warned against those like Tony Powell, who over-emphasised the physical side of planning.

One final comment on the conference - in all, 17 speakers addressed the conference from the platform. Of these, there were three women, Patricia Apps, Winsome McCaughey and Ruth Crow (Ruth and Winsome chose to share their time and, in fact, were only one time slot). This is stated not as a criticism of those organising the conference, so much as a further example of how past planning practices have not been based on the participation of many of those who consume the end product of planning (See also Ecoso Exchange No 11 and No 12 about the lack of opportunity for women to participate in urban planning)

During the three days of the National Conference on Planning Education a photographic exhibition from West Germany was on display. This exhibition included some quotes from world renowned planners and the main message was that planning should be to meet the need of people. The exhibition had the challenging title of "Profitopolis" and in its own way strengthened those who emphasised the fact that the result of planning should not be for profit but should be for the collective consumers - the men, women and children who live in our cities.

Those interested in more details of this National Town Planning Conference are urged to subscribe to Polis by sending \$3.00 to the magazine c/o the Melbourne University Town Planning Department.

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For new readers:

"Ecoso Exchange" is based on four Ecoso guidelines which aim to reverse the trends towards recklessly squandering the world's limited resources and proposing a way forward for a more efficient way of living which does more for the dignity of humans, using less energy and preserving the world as a pleasant and habitable place. Copies of the guidelines are available from "Ecoso Exchange" Box 87 Carlton South 3053 or by phone: 328,2345.

### 3. CAPITALISM, SOCIALISM AND THE ENVIRONMENT

In the last issue of Ecoso Exchange (No 12) it was stated that it was hoped that it would be possible to present a full examination of Stretton views. Since then Stretton has published "Capitalism, Socialism and the Environment".

In this new book, he again shows his gift for being able to "interest and surprise and hold people, second by second, step by step, from image to image, from room to room, through doorways and around curves" to quote from his 1970 book "Ideas for Australian Cities". In this quote he is describing "deploys and devices" used by architects, but the same description aptly applies to his written word. He is an artist who captures the romantic intricacies of daily life and he has the knack of involving the reader in intimate discussions; referring to experiences which many may have shared, probing deep-seated prejudices and making whimsical predictions.

There is no doubt from his books, and from his speeches (for example his recent keynote address at the National Conference on Planning Education referred to earlier in this Ecoso Exchange), Hugh Stretton places people and their human needs as the central purpose of cities. But his idea of the future is not very inspiring. For example, in the final part of the book "Conclusions" he writes about "what I know face to face, chiefly in the life of my own street" (page 309) and he states: "Life styles like these (in the Adelaide suburban street where he lives) should be seen as the end of the whole left enterprise, which should have no other purpose than to improve the conditions which make such patterns possible". (page 311)

Well! How reassuring! If that is what the future holds there is no need to struggle; depending on your point of view it is either not worth fighting for or else it is already here!

Stretton sets himself the task of examining the three troubles that democracies face... these are misusing or exhausting our natural resources; spiralling inflation and inequalities in wealth and income. In focussing on these central problems he challenges environmental reformers to see the need for political philosophies. He does this by describing three possible futures and tries to unbare the contradiction of each.

His book is disappointing in a number of ways. Firstly, he has a limited vision of what the "left" is capable of. He defines the "left" as "wanting to reduce inequalities" (page 2) and although from time to time he refers to Marx, he, at no time, shows an understanding of the Marxist concept that in changing production relationships, human relationships are also changed. Stretton's future is thus based on human relationships which are compatible with capitalism and he is hard-pressed to describe ways of motivating people. For example, in describing the way production would be organised to carry out a program to overcome the three evils, he writes, "...the reformers were practical people. They could not expect to revolutionise human nature and expectations of the millions of the employees who did the organisational business of modern industry" (page 305) and thus he describes what he terms "conventional motivation".

He does not envisage the "left" taking over production, as he is mainly concerned with overcoming inequalities and he thus envisages a new society where "many of the motives and working arrangements of the salariedbureaucracy of (say) a private company or power utility are much the same as they always were." He believes that "the Left sometimes under-estimates the good that some multi-nationals can do in well governed countries; just as the Right underestimates the harm that others can do in ill governed countries; the enterprises themselves can operate adaptably to national conditions and from most of them the government get the performance they deserve" (page 175) or as he cryptically states on page 294 (at the end of his Program), "Ownership means what it always did. Production and services are still carried on by a large number of independent firms and agencies". Stretton is at his most brilliant best when he describes the work force with which he is most familiar.

In chapter 6, he tries to "identify the inventive and persuasive intellectual services the Left may need" (page 137). Similarly, in chapter 11, there are vivid descriptions of the work relationships (and the changes that could take place in these) of the academics, institutional economists, town planners, professional and salaried managers and political leaders. There is however, little evidence that work relationships of the clerks, teachers, engineers, plumbers, social workers and others could change. This omission can partly be explained by the fact that Stretton envisages a future of small scale and domestic production; extrapolating the work and home relationships he knows from his own life's experience. This is perhaps the root cause of the overlay of paternalism.

His uncritical faith in "domestic production" (chapter 8) is also paternalistic as he seems to be completely unaware of the nature of sexist oppression and thus, his one-sided eulogy of suburban life is in contrast to his many-sided observations about most other aspects of city life. His limited view of the left (remember left means wanting to reduce inequalities) is compounded by the arbitrary categories into which he divides people. In addition to the "Left" there is the "Poor" and the "Rich" and he in no way relates such groups to the means of production.

As pointed out in Irregular No 33 (which has been incorporated by Ecoso Exchange) in a book review of "Ideas for Australian Cities" in June 1970, Stretton's dichotomy into "Rich" and "Poor" is reminiscent of "The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists" of last century. This tends to allow him to gloss over the needs of the whole work force and its many segments which are throwing up increasingly diversified life styles. Nevertheless they all have one thing in common and that is that they must sell their labour power; whether that be for wages, salaries or professional fees is beside the point.

Despite all this criticism, Stretton's latest book will help readers get to grips with some of the contradictions surrounding the environmental movement. Like his previous popular book, "Ideas for Australian Cities" it is a book to enjoy; but a couple of words of warning. Firstly, don't be mesmerised into an arm-chair philosopher, nodding in agreement with his vivid and entertaining word pictures, and secondly, don't expect to read it from cover to cover in a few days. It is a book to be used as resource material on the many different problems that Stretton tackles.

#### 4. MOBILE PRIVATISM AND CONVIVIAL COMMUNITY

What follows is a talk given by Maurice Crow at the "Environment and Society" session of the Sociological Association of Australia and New Zealand 1976 Conference, held at LaTrobe University, last August.

The last issue of Ecoso Exchange (No 12) was distributed as illustrative material. In effect, this is a continuation of the discussion on "Mobile Privatism ... or Convivial Community" and "Women in Suburbia", commenced last issue.

#### Value Judgment: Let's Bake a Better Cake !

Let me start right in with a value judgment in place of the customary self-deprecating joke to prove that the lecturer is only human. However, I am conscious that one person's sacred value judgment may be, for another person, an uproarious joke: so I will not be offended if you laugh.

My value judgment is this: that 80% or so of Melbourne's people who are working people (whether industrial, whitecollar or professional workers) are severely alienated, both from the products of their labor and from each other; that this inhuman condition, endemic to a capitalist industrial system, has been accentuated in recent decades by the development of what I have called "mobile privatism" whereby, ironically, one half of them are suffering from an excess of mobility and an excess of consumerist hardware, while the other half are suffering from a deficiency of mobility or consumer goods or both; that therefore both halves of the working population and their dependents are deprived, and not merely those who appear to be "have-nots", and all this is bad.

And lastly, the way out of this impasse is not simply more mobility and more consumer goods for the deprived sections, but a new society, differently organised, in which a condition of self-management of production and convivial community arrangements for leisure-time pursuits replace the system that has given rise to our present malaise.

With perspectives such as these, you will gather, I believe that the future must be a planned one. Humans cannot leave their fate to the automatic mechanisms of an all-pervading market place whose money-fetish messages now penetrate via T.V. to our very living rooms, educating everyone, even the school children of tenderest age, with demands that equate life with "fun" and fun with the acquisition of the latest fashion.

There follows from this several corollaries regarding methods of examining society and re-shaping it.

Firstly, if one is earnest about a humanised and ecologically-tolerable urban future, the guidelines for that future can never emerge from a questionnaire. Extrapolation from the experiences of people who have been alienated all their lives may register strong negative readings of discontent but never sharp positive concepts for an alternative life-style in an alternative society.

Those who have been endowed with insights into the nature of society (and this includes sociologists - but not only them) should not, in my opinion function as barometers that indicate where the boiler might burst and be patched up with a few controls. On the contrary, I believe their responsibility is to help to project options for the alternative futures for society ... and not just options in general, but workable options that can be seen to be workable and relate to everyday living.

Secondly, there are some sociologists and others, who commendably concentrate their emphasis on the disadvantaged, the deprived, the low achievers, the migrants, working women, the single parent family and so on. Let me call these, collectively "the poor", meaning not poor in spirit, but poor in cash, or by circumstance: lack of communication or of opportunity, lack of age or of qualification - those who are poorly-equipped to attain the lifestyle of those with no such handicaps.

Well, sociologists and others are not wrong to bring succour to the poor, so defined - of course! But what would be wrong is any notion that the real solution lies in raising the poor to the level of the others: because "the others" are not rich anyway. The catchword should not be "the poor against the working people", as if the lot of the working people was already paradise!

It is not a question of re-slicing the same cake more equitably. Indeed in this direction lies elitist solutions that come to regard a charitable hand-out of consumer goods and services to the poor as a substitute for assisted do-it-ourselves efforts, in which we can all be involved in a mutual struggle to emancipate ourselves by our own efforts from the pervading alienation thrust upon us all. In this process we are talking about a new cake with a new quality!

### Projection of Workable Urban Alternative

My next proposition then is that it is inescapable for those who embrace such value judgments that they bend their hand to the task of projecting a planned alternative workable urban system, and so I will try to keep Melbourne in the centre of the focus from here on.

This urban alternative, then, must include a planned change in the organisation of secondary and tertiary industry, in transport and land-use design and in social policies to achieve both human and ecological ends. I have been speaking thus far about human ends rather than ecological ends, yet the projected future society has to take account of both ... or rather human ends must always be seen as embracing ecological ends, for human society itself, having been clever enough to break right out of the circle we call ecological balance, and dominate nature for a time, must now be even more clever and break back into that circle to re-establish the balance - with human society once more as a non-disruptive part of that balance.

To tackle ecological problems without tackling big-city problems is an impossibility. Pollution, not to mention resource conservation of non-renewable resources, bears a direct relationship to the expenditure of fossil fuel energy, itself a non-renewable resource. Although it is true that the relationship between energy-use and ecological effect is not a one-for-one relationship for all the different processes or

activities for which energy can be deployed, we can be sure that any measure that contributes to the net reduction of energy use cannot fail to lie in the right direction. In Melbourne there is an enormous expenditure of fossil fuel energy in the industries centred here and in the transport needed to convey both goods and people to their daily destinations. The total is something like  $\frac{1}{4}$  of that for Victoria as a whole.

What we have to do therefore - and do urgently - is to halt the trend of an exponentially increasing use of energy per head, and then reverse that trend. Fortunately, the solution to this problem based on multi-disciplinary planning efforts for industry and transport and household uses, coincides with social solutions based on community experience to expand low-energy convivial community pursuits...or anyway they can be made to so coincide. The creation of a more human society, and the restoration of ecological sanity, are, to my way of thinking, simply different sides to the same coin.

Re-establishment of "extended" Community, but One in which the Nuclear Family and/or the Individual Within it, are Afforded a Reasonable Amount of Privacy

I want to illustrate this proposition with reference to the position of women, children and the elderly in Melbourne's suburbia, but with the focus on women.

Time does not permit an expansion of certain assumptions on which my conclusions will rest, but I will list four of these assumptions to expose them to your scrutiny:

1. Women are, indeed, second-class citizens ... and here, bear in mind, I am referring not only, and especially not mainly to tertiary-trained women graduates in career jobs (although I guess they have their hassles too) but to the tens of thousands of typists, shop-assistants, process workers, nurses, as well as housewives who do not also go out to work ... all of them suffer to one degree or another from a very real oppression springing from their subservient position in very many ways.
2. Women are doubly oppressed, by their position in the home as well as in the wider world of affairs.
3. The liberation of women from this oppression should not be seen as a transposition of the sexes : men too are deprived of a full life, precisely because they are deprived of a full companionship with women arising from their position of ascendancy - so that ascendancy of either sex over the other is undesirable.
4. The men in this audience do not agree with such a state of affairs, and would wish to correct the situation if they could see how.

To correct such conditions, my first proposition is that the universal provision of nuclear-family homes, self-contained for all purposes and insulated from its neighbours, artificially isolates women, children and the elderly, and some sort of shared activities based on shared facilities at the neighbourhood block level are required to reverse this trend.

Australia has never been a feudal country: we have never had a peasantry with big families - what we now call "extended families" as distinct from nuclear families i.e. with grandparents or maybe aunts or uncles or cousins all in the one household, and with a variety of such households grouped together in a little village. More pertinent, since we have not had these extended families, we have not had domestic industry - home industry - strongly developed. The home industries of breadmaking, winemaking, preservation of fruit, fish, meats and other foods, vegetable growing and poultry keeping, weaving, clothesmaking and pottery making etc. and the numerous arts and crafts that go along with all this.

In these type of activities, the home was like a small multi-purpose factory, the housewife was a mistress of many crafts and had the dignity of a purposeful, if often harassed, life. I don't want to idealise the situation: probably much of the work was sheer hard, never-ending grind; probably the element of creativity was not very highly developed, the skills being very much passed on from one generation to the next unchanged. But - as I say - at least there was dignity of a purposeful life, and a small commune of people to which you belonged, and in which you were respected for what you did.

One feature of this I want to emphasise: it was not just the mother

involved in this, it was the children and the generation of grandparents, too. And that is a very salutary way at looking at the problem of women in cities. The position of little boys and old men is tied-in with the position (or rather lack of position) of women, just as much as are little girls and old women. And if I don't always mention this tie-in, please try to mentally include it, where the context admits.

Now this type of feudal or post-feudal but pre-capitalist yeomanry farming existence denied personal freedom, and it denied personal privacy - except in the fields. With the development of capitalism in Australia, this century, the husband went into the factories and some of the women too (but mainly women before or after the childrearing ages). What we now call the "nuclear family" became typical. That is, the Mr. Justice Higgins basic wage family of man, wife and two children. Man and wife, and their immediate issue, became independent of the extended family shackles, gained more privacy - and there are positive features of privacy. But, as Margaret Meade points out: for the first time in history the rearing of children - previously a matter for the extended family and even wider community - for the first time in any country, any period, in any earlier form of society - became thrust upon the nuclear family.

Because of both availability and custom, the responsibility was especially thrust upon the mother. But the nuclear family mother and housewife, as industry developed, was assisted by more and more so-called labor-saving domestic devices and the displacement of formerly home pursuits which were taken over by industry. Food and drink were prepared, cooked, smoked or cured and tinned, canned or bottled in factories; clothing and furniture were mass produced, washing machines and cleaning machines appeared, so the possibility of education of the young in these domestic skills by either the mother or grandparents evaporated. And - universal compulsory so-called free education - the school system run by the State - took over.

So here is one cause of the modern-day problem of women. The responsibility of upbringing is supposed to rest upon her - the pedestal of the nuclear family. But industry has stripped her of the body of domestic wisdom she once had to practice and which she used to hand on to her children. Her authority, or rather "respect" would be a better word ... the respect that goes along with work, the respect engendered in passing on the know-how of work, or, even better, the respect generated by a collective-type working - a working together on a project (even a domestic project) ... this work respect between mother and child has evaporated.

At the same time, from the children's point of view, they never see the father and mother at work either - segregated in factory, office or laboratory.

No wonder adolescent children cease to be able to relate to their parents - and still less to their grandparents and vice versa !

Here then, is one problem. How is it to be overcome? One aspect of the cure must surely be the re-establishment of an "extended" community, but one within which the nuclear family and/or the individual within the nuclear family, are afforded a reasonable amount of privacy, if and when they need it. But at the same time, the advantages of a mixture of generations around some purposeful activity in a commune-type group similar to the extended family, but without blood-relations, is needed.

Now, when I say that, let me immediately qualify it. I am not suggesting that the way forward is to push women - or even women, children and old people all together - back into the kitchen, the kitchen garden or the home workshop - even if it is a bigger kitchen, a bigger garden and a bigger workshop than that provided by the brick-veneer. We live after all in a big city, we do, or rather could have enormous richness of relationship with other people, precisely because of this - and an endeavour to deny this, to artificially revive a sort of universal subsistence farming or artisan work would, in fact, be irrelevant for most people, children included.

But the optional possibility of community, along with privacy, would both help to ease domestic isolation and simultaneously lay the objective basis in the form of shared childrearing and maybe other shared domestic tasks in such a way as to assist women, children and the elderly (but above all women) to get out into the wider world.

For such a transformation to succeed would require a rethinking of our concepts of housing. Communal-type living requires ...

arrangements of living spaces that are appropriate to the challenge. The efforts of pioneers using existing building structures are likely to remain permanently at the experimental stage unless there is hard political effort to change the building regulations, the planning ordinances, the rules of home financing, even the laws on titles which hamper the conversion of old buildings into living spaces suitable for communes and which do not permit the building of new structures suitably designed for communal living.

I am not suggesting that spaces can create human relationships - of course they cannot. But human relationships can certainly be thwarted by physical barriers so designed as to make a desired relationship arduous to establish or maintain. The Cluster Titles Act provides a legal framework that is a useful step in a helpful direction. But much more is necessary. If urban communes are to flourish, it must be made readily possible to adapt buildings to group living - to enlarge, disband or reform such groups; also for a family or individual to move readily, without financial hassles and fuss, from one communal situation to another.

One of the biggest stumbling blocks to people deciding to live in any other shelter than a 3-bedroom brick-veneer is that under this capitalist system, the naked cash nexus that pervades literally all human relationships imposed through the system of home ownership, has resulted in a house being regarded as an investment, as well as a shelter. So, the re-sale value must be considered. And the same constraint which has a most sobering and conservatising effect, prevents developers building anything they fear might not sell and re-sell.

Let me summarise this aspect. Communal arrangements of some description, with a sharing of some of the childrearing and some of the domestic chores, in order to give equal opportunity for all to participate outside the home in education, work or recreation, and with the possibility of re-introducing some communal handwork or culture or other low-energy projects for the whole collective is required. It is required as part - but only part - of the solution for ending the deadly isolation of the housewife and the children and the elderly, both from each other and from the wider world. To succeed it will require a reconstructing of all our concepts of housing design, including the concept that a home is a market commodity - an investment - that has to be standardised in order to be marketable.

Let it be assumed then that by some more communal arrangement we have liberated the housewife, domestically speaking that is, for a day. What is she going to do with her day? Where does she go? What does she do when she gets there? To use an "in" word: to what does she have "access"?

Two barriers to access by women, children, adolescents and the elderly to the wider world need to be overcome:

- (a) the segregation, stratification and institutionalisation of society.
- (b) practical accessibility due to city land-use transport design

Take the workplaces of private enterprise first. The necessity for trade secrets which spring from the desperate competition of the capitalist system, which also impels enterprises into a feverish efficiency - means that a person is either employed with a definite niche within the division of labor - a definite "cog in the works", as it were - or you are not there at all: you are locked outside. So, the factory, the office, the laboratory is not "open sesame" to the housewife...nor, for that matter, for the unemployed, the youth or retired elderly people.

The whole purpose of such enterprises is to produce as many commodities or services as it can to sell on the market, use the surplus to re-invest and grow as fast as it can to unload still greater quantities of commodities and services on the market. It has no time to educate or train people how to take part in this process - this timewasting and inefficient function has been passed over to the education system for the community to pay. It has no time or room or patience for employees to design new products or even better ways of making old products - mass production requires standardisation both of product and productive methods.

So, short of becoming a fulltime but second-rate cog in these male-dominated places, the housewife has no place here.

Turn now to the community institutions: can the schools, hospitals, asylums, community centres, universities and kindergartens be humanised and provide a humble place for the housewife? Traditionally: no. Traditionally like the private enterprises they have excluded from participation the consumers of their services, whether of education, health or care of various sorts.

Firstly, the consumers have had no say in the running of the place, and secondly, like the private enterprises, they have tended to grow in size into huge bureaucracies male-dominated, at that, which further places them beyond the control of any viable small community unit.

There are currently many signs of revolt against these traditional trends: community controlled schools, community based child care, domiciliary health and welfare services and small health clinics to supplement or supplant aspects of the giant hospitals and so on. And there are demands for smaller human-scale units - more manageable, more accessible to the ordinary person - including the housewife.

Then there are being set up all manner of innovative voluntary services outside the traditional ones: learning exchanges, fun factories, the open book, resource centres, craft shops, neighbourhood houses, women's centres, community newspapers, medical consumer unions and so on.

Women have played a prominent part in these forward moves - but their experimental fragile nature does not always make participation by a stranger an easy matter. The recent retraction of funding also leaves some of them in a tenuous position or a state of collapse.

Yet these types of new personal services of the tertiary industry are often run by women: they are more tailored to the needs of women as consumers, and more adaptable to the needs of women who want a participatory niche, who want to be involved somehow at some level. The new workforce is more related to the housewife "at the front gate" level as the new saying goes; more attainable.

Of course the Establishment will try to starve these fragile organisations of people's initiative - or to head them off into a few safe pockets, absorbed and crippled with rules and regulations of a top-heavy administration of the traditional type.

But here the battle has begun. Shut out, except as fulltime employees, from factory, office and laboratory, shut out from most of the traditional hospital, school, childcare and other community centres, women - a few of the pioneering stamp - are asserting themselves both within some of the traditional structures and by building new structures. How can hundreds of thousands of women be assisted to follow suit? Before leaving the subject of "front gate" services, however, please observe that they are all relatively low-energy activities.

I want to finish on the question of transport and land-use design which are matters quite inseparable from the problem of creating vital urban centres throughout the suburbs, for which, in my view there is a crying need.

The evolution of the design of the capitalist city has accentuated all the obstacles for women I have been mentioning.

A hundred years ago, when Melbourne was a walking city, houses of rich and poor alike had to be close to workplaces, and shops and pubs close to both. Land uses were mixed and except for a few with horses, mobility was evenly distributed, and the housewife and children and old people at least had the corner shop or corner pub, the local dance or football club, for a bit of life around the place.

Melbourne next became a tracked city, but in this period too, transport was fairly evenly distributed. There were a few stray motorists from amongst the class who used to own horses, but everyone else - for a modest fare - could get now easily to the local shopping centres strung along the tram lines or around the railway station. The scout hall, the library, the tennis court, the picture theatre as well as shops and pubs were accessible, as also were the beach and countryside in the weekends. But because people could now work far from where they lived, Melbourne began to get differentiation between suburbs - some industrial working-class and "poor", some definitely only the wealthy could afford, and some in between.

Socio-economic stratification of the population had begun. In addition to accentuating this, Melbourne, having become a "rubber city" over the past 20 years, has heaped age-stratification. By and large, young couples have been induced to set up house in new housing estates; so that some suburbs are young, some middle-aged and some elderly.

But worse, for the first time in the history of cities, the car has brought with it a decidedly uneven distribution of mobility. Half the population - mainly the male mature-age adults - have the magnificent new

form of automobile mobility. The rest, those too old or too young and very many housewives have practically none, or relatively extremely inadequate public transport which has suffered a rapid run-down in the last few decades. Worse still, decision as to location of workplaces, shops, schools and all other people-intensive activities are made by the middle-aged male planners, city councillors, company directors etc... all of whom are car drivers and who have come to believe that it is axiomatic that car-access is the greatest convenience that life can offer.

As a consequence the last twenty years has been an anti-urban period. Whereas a good urban pedestrian convenience concentrates a rich range of different attractions all together, the rubber city is undoing this as fast as it can.

This dispersal coming on top of the segregation and institutional isolation already mentioned has stranded the housewife and the teenagers and the elderly in the suburbs. Even if they can find a chauffeur, even if the housewife herself is chauffeur, they cannot set out to go "there"; because as some wag has put it, when they get there, there is no there there! To play on the words a little further: to the housewife liberated from her domestic chores and children, who has no place to go where she can get actively involved, the answer is not "there, there - never mind".. the answer is to create such places.

What is needed, I suggest, is to concentrate into one local centre every possible people-intensive activity in that local catchment area - shops, offices, light-industry, hotels, entertainment, secondary and tertiary educational institutions - to provide a lively place with a range of attractions for all types and age groups. Right in the heart of such commercial activity should be established all manner of indoor spaces available for a range of non-commercial community activities - the "front gate" services I have mentioned, for example - but not only those: any other low-energy pursuits in which citizens can interest themselves - craft, indoor sporting, cultural or whatever.

Thus there would be at least one local place where students, housewives, industrial and office workers and pensioners could meet and mix, there would be one "neighbourhood focus". All efforts of the social planners, the land-use planners and transport planners - and local urban groups and conservation groups - should be concentrated on this objective.

For those who chose to live right in or very close to such a centre, and were prepared to live in high-density accommodation this would be available too, to further this urban place. The solution proposed, in effect, is to deliberately set out to urbanise the suburbs, gradually freeing them from the disurbanising effect wrought by the over-use of the car for all purposes.

The car would be banned from such centres, and, except for separated delivery services, so would the truck. This would enable a tight compactness, enabling easy pedestrian access to every part of each centre, thus permitting the highest possible degree of practical variety and hence attractiveness.

Public transport would be deliberately deployed to accentuate the availability of all urban centres both from residential areas, and between one centre and another. All local public transport would be a shuttle type, funnelling everyone to the local centre whether that was their ultimate destination or only on their way to some other centre. All local and district centres (which would be somewhat bigger than local centres and serve several of them) would be around rail stations; all district centres and Melbourne central city area would be connected by express services.

Please note that lifestyles so based would minimise the number and length of trips necessary, direct most of them to public transport that couldn't be done by walking or cycling and are desirable ecologically, since they conserve resources both in transport energy, and in energy required for a heavy pre-occupation with consumerism rather than personal involvement in low-energy type convivial pursuits. The extravagance of freeways, of course, has to stop.

Built on an expanding base of clustered housing with some degree of chosen collective self-support and activity (as already described when discussing life at the residential block level) such centres providing some opportunities at a more specialised level and surely the only way we can hope to overcome the privatism that has beset us, alienating us

from each other, and simultaneously endangering our planet's ecosystems?

On the details of such mighty social transformations, that circumstances now require of us, there are likely to be endless differences; but on the main direction we humans must go to remain alive and to retain our humanity, let's agree to get going. But the way to "get going" is not the familiar grand ~~scales~~ macro planning that gives us zoning schemes, freeway networks and universal low density together with a maximum of tourism and consumerism and a paucity of urban life. Instead we urgently need a Melbourne regional strategy plan that starts from behind the "front gate", and is concerned with how life can be enriched with human relationships and low energy satisfactions because it is from these humble micro-planning imperatives that the macro-planning should proceed.

## 5. SOCIAL CHANGE AND ALTERNATIVE LIFE STYLE

"I am convinced that there is an urgent need to clarify the alternative which must be found, to the aggressive, acquisitive society in which we live and which now poses a grave threat to the survival of the human race", wrote Jim Cairns in a letter last June.

The letter was an invitation to attend a meeting to plan a SCAL Conference and since then meetings have been held on the first Saturday in every month at 2p.m. at the N.O.W. Centre, corner Harding Street and Sydney Road, Coburg. At least a hundred people have come together on each occasion and through dividing into groups of about fifteen, as well as having large assemblies, there have been lots of opportunities for vigorous exchange of ideas as well as for more formal decision making.

The Conference is to be held in Canberra from December 10 to December 14. Already a number of organisations are supporting the Conference. For example, in the latest "Chain Reaction", it is proposed that Friends of the Earth organise a summer bike ride around the east coast, protesting at the wood-chipping in the forest near Eden and then climbing the mountains to Cooma and on to Canberra for the Alternate Life Style Conference.

Some of the practical details of the Conference are now being worked out ... for example, an application form will soon be available and an explanatory letter setting out the aims of SCAL.

The Conference will probably now be based around a Commonwealth Hostel in Canberra, which is near the lake. To keep in touch with what is being planned, send at least \$1.00 to Evelyn Cullen, 44 Park Road, Montrose 3765. Other contacts are Robert Fensham, "Inverness", Arthur's Creek Road, Nutfield ... Sue Canning, 18 Selbourne Road, Waltham (819 3783) and Joan McNea, 21 Smith Street, Collingwood.

From attending several of the Melbourne gatherings it seems that most of the supporters are striving towards being socialists, but with emphasis on personal liberty and not so much emphasis on political struggle.

Although the idea of the Conference has started in Melbourne, it is to be a national get-together and already there is news of interest in Newcastle and in Adelaide. There have also been meetings in some of Victorian country centres such as Ballarat.

It is to be hoped that some of the experiences in exchanging ideas through small groups and networks, such as were developed around the Radical Ecology Conference and the Craft Conference are used as the basis for helping to forward the alternative life-style gathering.

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For further information about "Ecoso Exchange" write to Box 87 Carlton South 3053 or phone 328,2345. Subscription is \$4 for about 4 issues, or \$1 per issue. Includes postage. No set dates for publication, but will appear 3 or 4 times annually

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