



VICTORIA UNIVERSITY
MELBOURNE AUSTRALIA

Ecoso exchange no. 15 : incorporating Irregular no. 65

This is the Published version of the following publication

O'Mara, Jack (1977) Ecoso exchange no. 15 : incorporating Irregular no. 65.
Ecoso exchange incorporating Irregular (15). pp. 1-20.

The publisher's official version can be found at

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ECOSO EXCHANGE NO. 15

Incorporating Irregular No. 65

Autumn 1977

This issue:

- * HAMER'S CULMINATING DISGRACE : NEWPORT AND OIL-FROM-COAL.
- * 'A MANSION OR NO HOME' : A READY RECKONER FOR REFORM.



HAMERVILLE 1997

Supplementary Reading attached :

- * Pamphlet by Jack O'Mara; "Save Geelong from the Wealthy Landlords and Developers".
- * Newspaper cutting of report by Renate Howe; "Melbourne Do : Or DIE!"

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1. HAMER'S CULMINATING DISGRACE : NEWPORT AND OIL-FROM-COAL

It is time to face it. Premier Hamer, in practice, has become as bad as Prime Minister Fraser.

Victorian Cabinet's decision to persist with the Newport power station (despite all due finesse) is, objectively, as disgraceful as the Federal Cabinet's obvious determination to export uranium. Both policies cap off a longer record of policies that are just as alarming. Let us first mention the recent record of the Australian government, since this is the government that undoubtedly began by forcing the pace, not forward but backward.

The Fraser formula

As the months go by, it is becoming easier to identify Fraser as bad news for every long-overdue conservation or social remedy that has begun to operate. His reactionary actions are beginning to speak far louder than the mollifying words used to present what he is about.

Thus Fraser, in the name of "fighting inflation", has been systematically deploying every possible measure to steer resources into the hands of multi-national industries at the expense of smaller Australian industrial firms, or by cutting down or abolishing services of all descriptions.

For example, mining and pastoral exports have been boosted by devaluation, whilst some Australian manufacturing industries, which are struggling, not just with a recession, but for their very survival will be hit even harder by the competition of the consequently increasing flow of imports. Or, for example, post-war social advances are being whittled down just as fast as it is possible to do so without losing too many votes - medical care; the arts; secondary, tertiary and special education; family-supportive childcare; innovative and self-help welfare and community efforts; conservation and planning causes.

It should be remarked, that, in the main, the interests that Fraser is assisting, namely the multi-national investments he is trying to attract, are highly capital-intensive with very low labor content. Conversely, the interests that he is damaging are those with lower capital intensity but employing many more.

In the main, therefore, Fraser's actions, mean, objectively, support for energy-intensive efforts, and withdrawal of support for low-energy industries services and activities.

The attraction of foreign investment by multi-nationals in capital-intensive enterprises in Australia spells three interconnected features:

1. More unemployed, not less.
2. Drastic reduction of all services especially the very services that the community most need, and to which they can most contribute.
3. An increase in the drain on energy resources; and a decrease in paid or funded low-energy pursuits.

Hamer fits the Fraser formula

Victorians have tended far too long and too often to forgive Hamer for his government's misdeeds. Time and again, when disappointments occur, his admirers have managed to create the image that Hamer means well, but is the victim of circumstances beyond his control, that he is saddled by a Cabinet which has a conservative majority or a Party that periodically turns backwards. Time and again Hamer makes understanding promises but forgets them when the pressure of big financial interests is brought to bear.

Hamer's theory of "government by consensus" has come to mean that, in order to gain a consensus which includes the mighty, the mighty always win on any decisive issue.

- * Thus the "developers" usually win over the planners, the environmentalists or the historical preservationists.
- * The car and oil corporations always win what suits them: freeways, low densities, homogeneous zoning and other urban policies that favour the car.
- * The entrenched establishments covering health, welfare, education and pre-schools are the ones that get the certain funds to carry on; and they, plus "franchise" entrepreneurs let in to make a profit out of areas previously regarded as public "take over the field" from innovators rash enough to use funds to involve the community.
- * Brave decentralising plans for Albury-Wodonga or Geelong which could potentially be used to subsidise small industries and better urban planning are abandoned to laissez-faire growth which certainly means advantages for those big corporations with investment plans laid for the big capital cities.
- * Pioneering regional planning attempts of the Westernport region, the Geelong region and the Yarra Valley - Dandenongs area have deteriorated to various degrees of farce in the face of the most backward, most parochial or most self-interested groups, to such an extent that the whole government policy of regional planning can be regarded as virtually defeated.
- * The grand strategy of the Melbourne Strategy Plan of keeping big offices out of a small-scale mixed-use fringe area in order to support public transport, increase residential population near the City and maximise the concentration of diversity, activity and liveliness of the City has been abandoned in due deference to "development" interests - which also suits the car and oil interests.

In face of these major set-backs, the few timid and minor advances by the Environment Protection Authority, the Conservation Ministry and the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Recreation, the Early Childhood Development Centres and the Historic Building Preservation Council pale into insignificance. Hamer is in danger of being remembered by history as the Premier who introduced green number plates for cars; and who encouraged home-beautiful gardens rather than bringing back the bush into the city.

Naturally, since the Hamer promises have been systematically overturned, one by one, the bureaucratic instruments that should have been implementing those promises have instead, either remained neutral and ineffective, or been busy actively undoing the policies that Hamer was expected to "make happen".

For example:

- * The State Co-ordination Council - like its precursor, the State Planning Council - has not produced any long-term forward planning, which, at that level, should obviously start with overall State Planning objectives, and Melbourne regional strategies.
- * The Planning Appeals Tribunal has, in the main, managed to uphold the old planning scheme standards against the Melbourne Strategy Plan, instead of the other way around; and has debarred unincorporated conservation bodies and other citizens groups from appearing before it which is a rebuff even to the old-fashioned "objection" type so-called involvement of the community in planning.
- * The Ministry of Planning, the Town and Country Planning Board, the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works and the City of Melbourne Planning Department are belatedly working on a Melbourne regional strategy, behind closed doors, and without any pretense of public participation. "Grapevine" indications from this exercise are (1) sofar as they relate to the Melbourne Strategy Plan the new strategies are to throw out the "mixed-use" concept in favour of the old idea of homogeneous zoning, and to plan for high density offices outside the CBD that can only attract more traffic and increase pressure for freeways, and induce more redevelopment, leading to higher rates and rents; (2) sofar as they relate to outer suburban strategies, the outcome as between this or that outward-growth alternative would seem to lie between which of various financial/development groups can mount the most pressure on Cabinet (such as demonstrated by the Mt. Ridley fiasco, which threatens to overturn ten years of Melbourne regional planning with one immense Geelong-size "development" in an area solemnly declared by the government as non-urban for the foreseeable future !)

An Exponent of Quantitative Growth

Those who formerly supported Hamer, and those who begrudgingly had to admit that he began his Ministerial career by producing some fine-sounding aspirations, can now only laugh until they cry at the shambles his fine sentiments have come to!

It is not a question now of feeling sorry for a man whose promises lie in shambles; as if it were a case of a man who tried hard, but lost. That way, misplaced popular hopes can be re-kindled on an even less likely basis. This is so because the situation is far worse than the ruins to which his planning, environmental and social policies have been reduced.

The fact is that Hamer is actively pursuing policies of exponential quantitative growth that involve rapid depletion of fossil fuel reserves.

In late February 1977, Hamer headed a party of government and industry officials on a 3-week promotion tour of 7 American cities to induce "scores of American companies who were interested in expanding operations in Australia" to invest here. He predicted that "some of the biggest names in engineering, manufacturing and food processing would be making announcements over the next year or so". He made it clear that they were to be "joint partnerships" or "joint ventures", a euphemism for multinationals. ("The Age" 7/3/'77) In this effort, Hamer fits in entirely with Fraser's efforts to expand multi-national capital-intensive and energy-expensive take-overs.

Parallel with this is Hamer's obvious (although mistaken) belief that Victoria has so much brown coal that we have "cheap energy" with which to entice foreign investment.

In the same newspaper report, Hamer is pictured holding in one hand a bottle containing a sample of coal and in the other a bottle containing a sample of oil from coal. We are told that Hamer learned from "Washington experts" that "the world's supplies of oil and natural gas would start to run short by 1990" and he reported that the U.S. was "very interested in research being conducted in Victoria which has the world's largest deposits of brown coal."

When Premier Bolte went abroad to "sell Victoria" to big business in the 1960's it was bad enough; but to repeat this performance in the 1970's is quite unforgivable when it is now widely understood that it amounts to opening up our finite energy resources to profit-hungry multi-nationals in an energy-hungry world.

Incidentally, the Newport panel's decision to rule out the Latrobe Valley as an alternative site for the "Newport" power station on the grounds of air pollution becomes an absolutely farcical reasoning if the government is to consider an oil-from-coal plant in the same general area! Such a plant is far more polluting and uses far more water than a power station of comparable capacity !

Unlike his expressed attitudes of a few years ago, Hamer appears now to be wholly committed to a continuation of the car way of life. This would explain his wooing of American capital in the hope of finding an economic way of converting brown coal to oil, so that we can have petrol when Bass Strait oil runs dry and Middle East oil runs low.

Equally desperately, he has bullied and manocuvered to get his way so that the Newport power station goes ahead. Doubtless an unstated reason for his concern is the arrival on the Victorian scene of new multi-national ventures which will boost the need for cheap industrial power.

Taken together these two current Hamer policies of forcing through Newport and using brown coal for oil amount to a calculated bid to continue the energy pre-conditions without which an exponential increase in quantitative growth per head cannot continue. Objectively, Hamer has become an active exponent of continued consumerism and has forgotten his vision of "quality of life" with which he began his political rise to the Premiership.

Admittedly, Hamer has set up a "Solar Energy Research Committee", but, as he himself says of prospects of solar energy: "It might be able to meet between 5% and 10% of our energy needs". ("The Age" 2/5/'77) This statement, by the way, only confirms our deduction that Hamer has swung right around to a full car-and-consumerism at all costs position. We say this because, if Victorian gas, oil and coal are to be responsibly conserved, we need to start reducing total energy consumption levels by restructuring our cities to reduce the length and number of trips now necessary; and to use the sun indirectly (by methane from organic wastes) as well as directly. A combination of such measures could mean that solar energy could account for very much more than 10% of our total energy budget, because the use of organic wastes alone could save that much, without taking into account the use of the sun for domestic and industrial heating and an overall reduction in growth rates due to urban restructuring and simpler but more satisfying low-energy lifestyles.

The Fraser government, taking a cue from Hamer on coal-from-oil hopes recently set up a "National Energy Advisory Committee" in February 1977. Its chairman, Dr. Worner said that the committee are attracted to West German plans to turn Australian coal (black or brown) into oil. He is trying to get Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria interested so that a reply to West Germany can be made in June 1977. ("The Age" 19/5/'77)

In addition to touting our coal-conversion possibilities abroad, Hamer is touting them at home too. In an "Invitation to Industry" published as an advertisement in the daily press on 17/1/77, The Ministry of Fuel and Power said the government wished to encourage private industry to research oil-from-coal and other conversion projects, and coal would be "preferentially allocated on an equitable basis to those participants in the programme who are able to demonstrate their ability to construct and operate viable conversion plants". It's bad enough that oil and gas are privately and profitably exploited by ESSO-BHP: now we are to hand our coal over as well! Hamer cannot be trusted as custodian of our precious fossil fuel reserves. Neither should ESSO-BHP who are in the deal for a profit; and whose energy resources should be transferred completely to public control and ownership.

Unfortunately, what Hamer and Fraser have yet to realise is :

1. A car powered by oil-from-coal would consume nearly twice the amount of energy as a car powered from brown coal converted to electricity and such a fuel would be about 5 times as expensive as an electric car. In comparison to electric-powered public transport, though, electric cars would be far too energy-expensive and oil-from-coal cars would be fantastically expensive.
2. Any effort to continue cars-as-usual and consumerism-as-usual on the same patterns of exponential growth that they are now exhibiting would mean that Newport power station, Loy Yang power station and oil-from-coal plants would first exhaust our natural gas (making Newport obsolescent in little over a decade) and then rapidly deplete our brown coal. Those experts who irresponsibly talk about "hundreds of years" of brown coal will have to re-do their arithmetic and start talking in more realistic terms of the 4 or 5 decades which is all we can expect to exploit this resource, remembering all the time that the more inaccessible the deposits and the poorer their energy content, the more energy is required to dig them out and/or treat them.

Ironically, Hamer, who has thus set himself to become the historical instrument for an insensitive and wholly misguided attempt to continue exponential energy-growth patterns is the same Hamer who started his political rise to power with an appeal to lay the emphasis on the "quality of life" rather than material growth !

The image of the younger Hamer

We reproduce below, statements made by Hamer in 1969 and 1972 respectively. We urge readers to heed these statements and endeavour to have the concepts carried into effect...but not by Hamer, who can no longer be relied upon to carry out his own earlier ideals !

Measure the two following quotations against the current 1976/77 scene, recorded above and judge for yourself whether Hamer, today, is any longer fit to carry out the 1969/72 Hamerisms, which, cautious as they were, at least exhibited a spirit of willingness to assist the community towards lower-energy lifestyles.

Hamer in 1969 : "Is the familiar grid-iron pattern of streets, with neat villa homes fronting onto them the best answer for the citizens of a modern city? I suggest that we have some deep thinking to do about this...that designers, architects, developers and engineers alike, have a challenging time ahead."

"Above all, we need research into the needs of people, and the best ways to meet their aspirations for a happy convenient, economical yet satisfying environment in which to live. Many people fly to the countryside at every opportunity. How much effort have we made to bring the countryside into the city?"

"Many people treasure their garden plots. How many would be willing to pool their private gardens with others to form one large park on which all the houses would front?"

"How many would be attracted to row or town houses based on a similar principle? Is it really necessary to place the motor car at the front or could we not do with a smaller street for the cars at the back, in the nature of the mews behind the beautiful squares in London. Cannot the services and above all the power lines be placed at the back, or preferably underground?"

"Is it sensible that with the hordes of motor cars, the citizens should continue to face noise, fumes and danger continually outside his front door? Is it not possible to devise a layout in which children may walk to school, or women to the shops, through courts, precincts and small parks, without ever having to cross a road?"

"We may need to turn traditional ideas inside out. We may need to banish the motor car to a servant instead of a dominate position. We may, indeed we will,

have to plan in larger terms, in neighbourhoods rather than in small subdivisions, to achieve an overall scheme."

"We may need in many ways to encourage the large-scale development. There is at any rate the need for bold experiment and adventure for design and grouping and layout."

"I am convinced that Australia has something quite uninhibited to add, derived from its own style of living, its climate and its imagination."

"Whatever else we plan, whatever else we build, we need to create a sense of belonging, and to devise communities...cells, precincts, neighbourhoods, whatever name you will...WITHIN the great towns where a man does still count, and where his immediate environment embraces enough variety challenges and satisfaction to allow him to live the full life." (Quoted by "The Age" 20/1/1969 at p.14 reporting on R.J.Hamer's address as Minister for Local Government to the Building Industry Congress. For our thoughts on the subject, see "Irregular" No.23 at page 5)

Hamer in 1972 : "In the last two decades the world has seen the most dramatic period of growth in terms of the development of resources and rising living standards in the whole history of mankind. Yet 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. Indeed it is not the first time in history they have been asked, though the urgency of the asking is perhaps greater. 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 more about "Gross National Well-being"? Is it time that our proper concern with growth should be tempered with greater emphasis on the very essence of the quality and purpose of life itself...of the relationship of man to his environment and the world in which he lives?"

"...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. To emphasize quality is not to ignore quantity...the two must go hand in hand." (Quoted from Hansard 12/9/72 at p.174 reporting Premier Hamer's budget speech - See "Irregular" No.49 pp.1-3 for our 1972 thoughts on this statement and "Ecoso Exchange" No.10="Irregular" No.60 pp.10-11 for our 1975 thoughts entitled "The hard reality versus the fine phrase" on the Hamer statement and a similar statement in 1975 by Hunt, then Minister for Planning).

Note: The passages underlined above are our emphasis.

We urge readers to show these statements to such of their friends or acquaintances who retain any vestige of faith in Hamer. But warn them that if they start questioning Newport or oil-from-coal projects, asking "growth of what and at what cost...", they had better do so circumspectly or they might well find themselves imprisoned or heavily fined by Hamer's legislation for inducing opposition to vital projects!

Vital for whom? we ask. It is not statesmanship to boycott the community's hopes for a responsible and steady transition from over-dependence on fossil fuel to alternative sources of energy: coupled with a more pleasant, lower-energy lifestyle, some elements of which Hamer was beginning to foreshadow in 1969.

2. A MANSION OR NO HOME

A Ready-Reckoner for Immediate Reforms

"We believe in THE DREAM, we believe its realisation should not be every man's automatic right but we do believe it should be every man's right to realise his dream if he earns it."

(from the preface to "A Mansion or No Home")

Robert Brown and Paul Day have written the preface to the book "A Mansion or No Home" and in doing so indicated the limits of the study.
Robert Brown is president of the Urban Development Institute of Victoria and Paul Day was the project convenor for the book.

The book was made possible by financial and material sponsorship of T.W. Burke Pty. Ltd., Development Underwriting Vic. (Pty. Ltd.), Housing Commission of Victoria, Inge Bros. Pty. Ltd., Jennings Industries, Lonsworth Finance (Vic) Pty. Ltd., Lewis Land Corporation Ltd., Melbourne Estates and Finance Co. Pty. Ltd., Monnia Properties Ltd., Silvertown Ltd. and Delrange Corporation Ltd., Moore Williams and Son Pty. Ltd., Standard Roads Pty. Ltd., Stock and Holdings (Vic) Pty. Ltd., Taunton Development Pty. Ltd.

Its three authors are: John Paterson (an economist), David Yencken (a builder and planner) and Graeme Gunn (an architect).

The book was published by Hawthorn Press in 1976. Price \$15.00

It is lavishly illustrated with photographs, sketches and Ron Tanberg cartoons and it has a number of very useful charts and summaries.

In concisely presenting an overview of the planning system and a program for reform the authors have provided what could well be regarded as a ready reckoner for long overdue reform. This publication will, no doubt, become a standard textbook on how our present planning standards have outgrown their usefulness.

Two of the authors, David Yencken and Graeme Gunn pioneered cluster housing in Australia. Their efforts to free development sites of "the tyranny of lot boundaries" resulted in Winter Park at Doncaster and Elliston at Rosanna, and the Victorian Cluster Titles Act. They are thus well qualified to outline the significance of the "first steps towards a rational administrative framework for comprehensive planning" and to recommend legislative changes needed.

Comprehensive Planning and Costs Involved

However, the word "comprehensive" has limited meaning in the context of this study. The chapter on "Open Space" is mainly devoted to the provision of communal open space in a particular development site. Streets, drains, kerbs, services (electricity and gas) are mainly discussed from the angle of costs, aesthetics and neighbourhood character.

In the chapter on "Lot Sizes and Density" it is correctly stated that larger lot sizes may mean higher prices but do not necessarily mean higher standards and there are "grounds for believing that some councils have used large lot zoning as a means of ensuring that low income families will go elsewhere to live".

Although the desirability of higher densities are generally recommended as offering "small but significant economies in servicing costs", the study does not advance arguments for higher densities in areas served by public transport. The contribution from the economist in the team has resulted in emphasis being in "trade-offs" or "costs involved" being cited as the central consideration. The above example is of many. Similarly in the recommendations on drainage; soakaway techniques are advocated because "there is evidence that capital costs can be under half of the cost of traditional methods".

Along similar lines we read... "Inflexible and unsuitable street standards add to residential costs". Nowhere is there any recognition of the need for basic infrastructure reform to cope with our growing ecological crisis. The modest recommendations in the book could, in fact, contribute to reducing the amount of scarce resources used for road construction and drains and at the same time, help to restore natural waterways, but these reasons for reform are not given.

This lack of awareness of thinking about ecological effects is also in evidence in the sections dealing with the siting of buildings and the fuels used in the home. The main recommendations on siting are that there should be density bonuses for cluster development and that all siting standards be written as performance standards. On fuels, the central issue raised is the monopoly role played by the State Electricity Commission... "the S.E.C. policy obviously adds heavily to the per dwelling cost of gas reticulation by reducing utilisation of mains laid to cover non-'Gold Medallion' dwellings" - (all electric dwellings). Here again, the economic argument. There is no suggestion in either section as to how running cost for the home would be cut and the use of fossil fuel for gas and electricity could be reduced if the planning of the building took into consideration the siting and building materials best suited to reduce the need for heating and cooling and the most appropriate fuel to use.

Social Attitudes and Values

There is a recognition that there are "Social Issues". At least the words are used in the heading of the final section of the book. (Physical Standards and Social Issues) But ideas on these are relegated to a few words in the last paragraph of the book, on the need to recognise that "social attitudes and values change quite rapidly and planning standards which employ them must be kept under review". This paragraph ends by scathingly dismissing the plebs. "We have argued that the review" (the review of planning and building standards) "is a matter not only for people professionally engaged in planning, design, building regulation, but also for people who perceive the artifacts of our civilisation as the embodiment of its culture, and who can recognise the difference between a value judgement and a technical fact" !

From such an attitude it would seem that some of those responsible for this study have mainly been considering a select readership.

This attitude is also expressed in the preface where Paul Day and Robert Brown state that the book "is directed to thought provoking discussion among those who control or influence the shape of our urban future".

Much of the information in "A Mansion or No Home" favours those who think that economic techniques alone can solve our urban problems. "Thought provoking discussion" could well be confined to those who agree to this view, whereas those who think differently may be diffident about risking being accused of not "being able to distinguish a value judgement from a technical fact". Such snobbish exclusion as expressed at the beginning and the end of the book is out of keeping with most of the text, which, overall does present views on urban planning which can be popularly understood.

Despite its sponsorship and the predominance of economic consideration the study can still claim to be a "milestone" in planning within the limits it sets itself. The book is the result of more than two years writing and research and the time lag is further lengthened as the innovations, such as cluster housing, were begun in the late 1960's. Much is the speed of change in social attitudes and values that this thesis is already dated. Another book is needed to present the case for incentives for plans which effectively consider ecological and sociological issues.

Profits and Plans...Levitt and Gans

Theodore Levitt, one of America's top ranking management experts aptly described a similar study when he wrote an introduction to his own book called "Innovations in Marketing".....

"This book is not a do-gooder treatise on how to be a better citizen by serving society better. It is intended as a tough minded explanation, outline and example of how to serve yourself better by serving the customer better".

The main thesis put forward by Levitt was that innovations in the marketing of real estate could result in commercial success. Since 1958, Levittown, New Jersey is living proof of this theory.

Finally it is appropriate to quote from another American book "People and Plans" by Herbert J. Gans, who wrote in 1968: "When planners come up with better ways of achieving predispositions than builders their recommendations are usually accepted. For example, the curving streets which are now commonplace in suburbia were first advocated by planners.....They were accepted by the builder because he could create more lots out of the same acreage than with the grid plan". The question could well be asked...who would mainly benefit from such savings? This type of question is not easily answered in "A Mansion or No Home".

The juxtaposing of these two quotes from American authorities is not intended as migrating the value of "A Mansion or No Home" but to underline the fact that this book serves a limited purpose...."a clearer understanding of the pernicious effects of many current standards. Incentives rather than more restrictive standards are the effective means of achieving better, cheaper and fairer development".

The book adequately fulfills these aims.

An Explanation About the Two Documents Enclosed with ECOSO EXCHANGE 15.

I. "Save Geelong from the Wealthy Landowners and Developers.". This pamphlet by Jack O'Mara has resulted in considerable debate in the Geelong newspapers.

Mr O'Hart, who is a member of the Building Workers Industrial Union, was the president of the Geelong Trades Hall Council in 1976. (he is, this year, vice-president of G.T.H.C.). He represented the Geelong Trades Hall Council on the committee which successfully defeated the plans for a freeway through the centre of Geelong.

Jack O'Mara combines a rare insight on the relationship between employment, education and urban planning with a life time experience in trade unions. This has enabled him to clearly isolate the main issues and to give a firm call for action.

2. "Melbourne, Do or Die ?" This clipping from the Melbourne Times includes a feature article and a letter to the editor. Readers' attention is directed to both these items.

Since 1972 Ecoso Exchange has continually informed readers about the Melbourne City Council Strategy Plan. See in particular Ecoso Exchange numbers 3, 8, 10, 12 and 13.

In enclosing this page from the Melbourne Times we remind readers of Premier Homer's words when he wrote to the Melbourne City Council in 1971 asking the Council to prepare a blue-print for the central areas. The Age 20. I. '71 quoted Mr Homer as proposing....

"A colourful city, with a variety of activities working 24 hours a day.... The last thing we want is a city of concrete canyons hedged in with monolithic office buildings and populated only in office hours."

The June 1977 Newsletter of the National Trust featured an article on the "Melbourne Do or Die ?" seminar. As it's title implies it was mainly about conservation problems. It was called "Conservation of the City of Melbourne". How far the Strategy Plan implementation has failed from the Trust's point of view can be gauged from the following quote. It states :

"The Premier stressed that future development would conform to the Strategy Plan and that the burning issue was compensation. "He is doubtless aware that developments are proceeding contrary to some of the principles of the Strategy Plan and that the Government has consistently failed to clarify the law relating to compensation which has quite prevented the Council from implementing its own planning or finance and thrown others into jeopardy throughout the state."

"Equally, the Minister's claim that the Government's commitment to planning in the inner city was 'total' rang rather hollow. The lack of overall planning strategy and the plethora of over-lapping authorities have all contributed to a lack of purpose and a sense of confusion."

Dr Renate Howe's contribution to the "Do or Die ?" seminar challenge the fundamental assumptions about the process of decision making and the participative role of the community.

As Ecoso Exchange 15 goes to press the Melbourne City Council is again amending and delaying the Strategy Plan as Ecoso Exchange readers will no doubt read in the daily newspapers early in June.

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SAVE GEELONG

from the Wealthy

Landowners and

Developers !

by JACK O'MARA

PRICE 10 Cents

FOREWORD

Decentralisation of our cities in one form or other has been advocated by all political parties for more than fifty years.

Yet in that time, the population of almost all country towns has fallen and the flood of people to the capital cities has continued.

Since 1950 a wide range of incentives were offered to manufacturers to establish industries in country towns. A number of firms took advantage of what was offered and some manufacturing took place in country centres. However well intentioned the Government's motives, the policy did not achieve any substantial changes and at the Premiers' Conference in 1964, it was agreed that there should be a Commonwealth-States discussion on the matter.

In June, 1972, the Australian Institute of Urban Affairs issued a report proposing selective decentralisation and the establishment of new cities to cope with the expected population growth from 13 million to between 17 and 22 million by the year 2000.

The then Prime Minister (Mr. McMahon) acted on the report and established the National Urban and Regional Development Authority (NURDA). The policy to be carried out was to develop alternative locations for population growth outside the metropolitan areas; to restructure the growth of metropolitan areas into planned systems of inter-related but separate cities.

Based on a Victorian Government report in 1971, Geelong was selected as one of the areas for study. On 14th October, 1974, in Geelong, the Federal Minister for Urban Affairs (Mr. Uren) and two State Ministers (Mr. Hunt and Mr. Byrne) addressed a public meeting that was described as a memorable occasion. It was announced that Geelong was to be a growth centre and Commonwealth finance was to be made available for the necessary studies.

The meeting clearly showed the depth of co-operation between the two Governments, but it took the Hamer Government until the end of 1975 to pass the Geelong Authority Bill and even then, although the Bill became law, it still has not been implemented.

On 1st December, 1976, a new Bill to establish a Geelong Regional Commission was introduced into Parliament which largely followed the previous Geelong Regional Authority Bill, but changed the direction and took away most of the power that was to have been given the Geelong Regional Authority.

What happened between the October '74 meeting and the introduction of the new Bill will prove to be the biggest public scandal ever to happen in Geelong.

The question of Geelong's growth is not a party political question (although some local MPs and wealthy land-owners want it so), but something that affects every person irrespective of political beliefs.

In my view Geelong stands at the crossroads. It can develop as a planned, congenial city that will be a delight for its people to live and work in, or it can follow Melbourne with its unplanned sprawl, high population and the extreme discomforts that go with that sort of hit or miss development.

It is in this atmosphere I offer these facts, hoping it will make a contribution to the common good.

HOW WAS GEELONG SELECTED FOR DEVELOPMENT?

Geelong is ideally situated on Corio Bay and Hoddle's original plan for the city, although essentially the same pattern as for Melbourne, takes full advantage of the site. The main roads in the central area are north and south and from the top of the hill at Myers or McKillop Streets, all have striking views of Corio Bay with the You Yangs in the background.

Man's atrocious handiwork with the refinery, the wheat silos and the aluminium factory seems insignificant from that distance and the general impression is a very beautiful scene.

Hoddle planned Melbourne and Geelong at the same period but Melbourne grew rapidly while Geelong (probably because of the sand bar across Corio Bay that prevented large ships from entering) developed slowly. Geelong's population remained stationary or on occasions even declined over a period of many years, but at present has a growth rate of two per cent. per year. Australia's problem is that 84 per cent. of the population live in cities, 80 per cent. in the capital cities and in 1967 the Victorian Government accepted a recommendation from a Select Committee (Report of the Decentralisation Committee 1967) on five centres to be chosen for accelerated growth.

Geelong, from this point onwards, has always been part of the Growth Centre program. To those who say Geelong should stay as it is now, the answer is: that is not possible. **GEELONG WILL GROW.**

The only thing to be decided is how it is to grow — in an unplanned way at the whim of every wealthy land-owner or parish pump politician, or in a planned way with constant attention to achieve complete balanced development.

WHAT IS PLANNING?

Planning is for people, we are told. But is that enough? Which people — the landowners who say "because my family have owned the land for more than 100 years we should still be able to do what we wish with it"?

Planning should be directed at an all-round improvement in the quality of life for the majority of the people. It should plan for better living standards, industrial development and jobs, education, recreation, cultural life, transport, conservation, protection of the environment and everything that goes with those headings.

The economy can afford such improved services and facilities. The main obstacles are a lack of knowledge of the possibilities and how to go about campaigning for them.

The danger in Geelong is the development of a suburban sprawl that will continue the present north-south development, destroy the city centre as it is now and fill the streets to crisis point with motor cars.

The proposal to build a central freeway through Geelong's heart was defeated, but there are still proposals for arterial roads with two new concrete bridges over the Barwon and a road across Belmont Common. Any planning proposals for Geelong should not only retain all existing open space, but include the establishment of new areas.

In particular, the present areas on both sides of the Barwon should be retained at all costs, beautified and extended where possible.

WHAT PLAN HAS BEEN PROPOSED?

Even now, nothing has been finally decided. Geelong people have been given every opportunity by the existing Geelong Regional Planning Authority to participate in the discussions about the growth plans and this will continue. With the election of the Whitlam Government the initiatives of the previous McMahon Government were accepted and developed. The Commonwealth Government asked if Geelong did grow to a city of 500,000 people, where would the people go? In 1973, using Commonwealth finance, Loder and Bayley were appointed consultants and proposed a number of alternatives based on a previous geological survey of the area.

Briefly, they proposed two new cities, one at Paraparap and one at Moriac, to hold 200,000 people, each as separate, complete communities with wide open spaces in between.

Some small development on the Bellarine Peninsula and at Lovely Banks was proposed but generally it was planned to limit central Geelong's growth and to retain and develop the coastline and seaside resorts as recreation areas.

It is almost certain that the two-city proposal will not be recommended because of its impracticability, but a one-city development could be proposed. The important point is that the new legislation introduced, although it still allows planning, by limiting the powers and the scope of the Commission, the original concept is being lost.

UNEMPLOYMENT CRISIS

One of the worst features of life in Geelong today is the high number of people unemployed — approximately 9.8 per cent. of the total work force (nearly twice the national average). The main reason for this is the imbalance of industry, with manufacturing the major part of employment, and a very low proportion of tertiary employment. At the end of January, 1977, there were 1063 unemployed school leavers in Geelong and in February a further 500 were registered. Of the total 5561 registered unemployed in Geelong on January 30, 2807 (more than 50 per cent.) were juniors. Of these 1391 were males and 1476 were females.

At the same time the number of job vacancies registered were 93 for junior males, a ratio of 15 boys to each job vacancy. The position for junior females was much worse, 892 registered unemployed and a total of 16 vacancies, a ratio of 55 girls to each vacancy. There are 1500 people who travel to and from work daily by train from Geelong to Melbourne because there is no job or no job in Geelong to suit their qualifications.

In 1971 4½ per cent. of the total work force (including road transport) were travelling to Melbourne and it is expected that the number would rise to 7½ per cent. by 1981. These alarming figures show the chronic deficiency in Geelong's employment structure with the main burden falling on the young people, particularly the school leavers.

Can we rely on local councils (as has been suggested) to solve this problem? In my view it clearly shows the need for a central planning authority with wide powers that can provide cheap land and facilities and attract the right sort of industries to Geelong to change this position.

OPPOSITION TO THE GEELONG REGIONAL AUTHORITY

Immediately after the first public meeting in October, 1974, some opposition to the proposed authority was expressed. Some was genuine concern with the impact of the proposals on the environment, but almost all was because of the big landowners' desire to develop the land themselves and make huge profits. This was in sharp contrast to the other Victorian growth centre, Albury-Wodonga, where no land was compulsorily acquired, and in fact some landowners asked to have the area extended so that their land could be included. The latest action is to send a group of imposters to Canberra who say they represent "the majority of the Geelong people". They asked the Minister for the Environment, Housing and Urban Development (Mr. Newman) not to provide ANY finance for the Geelong area! Only one member of that deputation has admitted to seeing the Minister; the others remain secret.

A survey of Geelong people published by Geelong Advertiser in November, 1974, showed that 75 per cent. of the people interviewed were in favor of what was proposed. Of nine municipal councils in the region, only one is in opposition.

The document the deputation presented to Mr. Newman proclaims: "There is nothing that the proposed commission can do that cannot be done more democratically and more effectively by the existing shire and city councillors." . . . WHAT UTTER ROT! How can nine separate councils (often in competition with each other) plan and carry out the substantial changes needed in Geelong's industrial structure? Melbourne's problems arise directly from the inability of local councils to see beyond their own boundaries. The same problem exists in Geelong today.

Who are these people who are opposed to planned growth in Geelong?

There is one family whose land holdings, at present valued at approximately \$3m., if they developed it privately has been estimated to have a sale value of \$14m.!

At the present time there are other landowners operating as development companies, that are making huge profits out of the sale of their land.

LOCAL M.P.s GUILTY

The local Liberal Members of Parliament are just as guilty of ignoring the needs of the Geelong people.

On 25-3-75 in the Geelong News, Mr. Birrell, M.L.A., is quoted: "What many Liberals are saying is that the power given to directors of a growth centre to acquire land is un-Australian and not in the best interests of the Liberal Party." Who do the Liberal M.P.s think they represent — the Liberal Party or the people of Geelong?

Why is it un-Australian for the Geelong Regional Authority to have power to acquire land, but it is not un-Australian for the Geelong Waterworks and Sewerage Trust, the Country Roads Board, the Housing Commission, the Education Department, the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission to have the same power? Every local council or sewerage authority has the power — why not the Geelong Regional Authority? In every case the power is subject to the approval of the Minister. What is un-Australian about that?

STATE GOVERNMENT ALSO RESPONSIBLE

The State Liberal Government is directly responsible for the failure to implement the Geelong Regional Authority Act. The Commonwealth Government had allocated \$3m. in 1973-74 and \$20m. in 1974-75 to the Geelong area, but the Hamer Government failed to pass the legislation at that time and the Federal money was lost.

The legislation was first introduced on 8-5-75, only one day before Parliament adjourned until the spring session some months later! When the Bill finally became law in 1976, Mr. Hamer said the Act was not allowed to operate because there was no finance!

The Premier, Mr. Hamer, told the Geelong Advertiser 30-9-75 that the "growth centre concept is not scrapped or cancelled — progress is being deferred pending discussions with the Federal Government re finance."

In a letter to the Melbourne Age 30-9-75 Mr. Hamer said: "Before we set up the new authority, we first need to know that it will in fact have some funds." Yet when the money was available the Government did nothing. When the Act was finally passed, it wasn't brought into operation —because there was no money.

Recently the Geelong Trades Hall Council requested the State Government to drop the new Bill to set up the Geelong Regional Commission and to allow the Geelong Regional Authority to begin operations.

Here are some quotations from the reply dated 15th March, 1977: Mr. Hamer said, "Following the Federal Government announcement that there would be no funds in 1976-77 . . . the Victorian Government had to look at a more appropriate vehicle in terms of legislation to pursue the further growth and development in Geelong. The original concept would have required massive expenditure in the early years . . . therefore, because of the limited funding available, the Commission has had to be restricted with the emphasis on land development for industrial and commercial use." So much for Mr. Hamer's promises!

It must be an all-time record low for Parliamentary integrity!

THE CHANGES PROPOSED IN THE BILL

Although the new Geelong Regional Commission Bill closely follows the Geelong Regional Authority Act, where changes have been made they are basic and destroy the possibility of any real planning being achieved.

Clause 15 of each piece of legislation deals with the powers of both organisations.

In the new Bill, a clause has been added — 15/1(a) The Geelong Regional Commission "may" "at the request of any owner or occupier of land in the region, advise or assist the owner or occupier in respect of the use of such land or the subdivision or development of such land in a manner which is consistent with any approved statement of planning policy which relates to the region or any planning scheme for the region or part thereof."

What does this clause mean?
Why has it been included?

A strict interpretation of this clause could mean that the ONLY time the planning commission will be able to act is "at the request of any owner or occupier."

Is this what is intended?

Or is it only intended to bog down the new commission with numerous requests for "advice and assistance"?

Either alternative is a very serious retreat from the original Act.

Clause 15/1(e) of the G.R.A. Act allows the Authority to "subdivide, resubdivide and develop land vested in the Authority."

In the new Bill, after changing the word Authority to Commission, these words have been added: "for industrial, commercial and other BUSINESS purposes."

No power to develop land for residential purposes at all!

Another major change is the deletion of clauses 15/1(l) (m) (n) which allowed the Authority, with the consent of the Minister, to purchase land for gardens, parks, open spaces, to purchase areas of natural beauty for conservation and "to preserve and enhance areas, buildings and objects of historic or other importance."

POWER TO THE DEVELOPERS!

If those powers are deleted and the new Commission has no power to purchase residential land for development purposes, it means that the whole of this area of the Commission's activity is handed over completely to the tender mercy of the wealthy landowner and the developers.

I am reminded of a poem:

"See the ensign of the hosts of Greed
battening on their fellows' homing need."

From — ON A LAND SALE IN SANDRINGHAM (192?)
by R. H. Long

To complete the destruction of the whole concept of planning, two new sections have been added to the new Act.

Clause 15/4(c) and clause 15/6 which provide that before any land may be used under any approved planning scheme it must be rezoned before acquisition.

If the land has to be rezoned, it means that overnight the value of the land will rise by 200 or even 300 per cent. before it is acquired.

The only land the Commission may acquire is for industrial and business purposes only. It means that instead of attracting much needed industries to Geelong, the extremely high land prices will send them elsewhere.

Why, of all the public authorities and municipalities in Victoria, should the proposed Geelong Regional Commission be the only body with such a restriction placed upon its activities?

WHAT WE CAN DO

It's clear we must demand that the Geelong Regional Commission Bill should be thrown out completely and the Government should be forced to implement the Geelong Regional Authority Act so that Geelong can provide employment for its young people and get on with improving living conditions and the environment.

This seems to be the only way out of the present position.

Some people have stated that it will be possible to improve the Geelong Regional Commission after it becomes law. This is not so. It will be most difficult — even impossible — to restore the powers that have been taken away.

All local organisations, local councils, trade unions and employers and their organisations should join together in a mighty protest against the Geelong Regional Commission Bill. Individuals should write to local M.P.s expressing their opposition to the new proposals. We still have the chance to save Geelong from the wealthy landowners and developers.

Let's take it!

Since this pamphlet was first published opposition to the Geelong Regional Commission Bill has grown tremendously.

In an attempt to deceive Geelong people, some amendments have been introduced into State Parliament on 19 April, 1977

Clause 15/4 (c) which provides that before any land is acquired it must be rezoned, has been dropped.

The new clause 15/3(c) is written in very obscure language, but what it means is that the Minister "may recommend" compulsory acquisition of land if there is "no reasonable prospect of the purpose for which the land is required" being carried out by the landowner or the developer !

This provision makes the Bill much worse and gives the landowner the opportunity to extract the last ounce of profit for himself.

It is also proposed that limited power be given to the Commission to develop residential land by entering into agreement with the Housing Commission, the Decentralised Industries Housing Authority and the Teacher Housing Authority.

This makes the Bill even more farcical, all of those housing authorities have the power that is being denied to the Geelong Regional Commission !

The Premier, Mr. Hamer told the Parliament that the Government was anxious that the Bill be passed to ensure that the Commission could be operating by July 1st so that the Federal Government could be asked for financial aid in 1977-78.

If the same desire for speed had been shown in 1974, the Geelong Regional Authority would have been in operation with \$23M in 1973-74-75 and the probability of a further grant in 1975-76. There is very little prospect (if any) of a Federal grant in the next budget. There is still a simple and effective way of saving Geelong from the Wealthy landowners and developers — drop the Geelong Regional Commission Bill and bring the Geelong Regional Authority Act into operation immediately.

ECOSO EXCHANGE NO. 15

Incorporating Irregular No. 65

Autumn 1977

This issue:

- * HAMER'S CULMINATING DISGRACE : NEWPORT AND OIL-FROM-COAL.
- * 'A MANSION OR NO HOME' : A READY RECKONER FOR REFORM.



HAMERVILLE 1997

Supplementary Reading attached :

- * Pamphlet by Jack O'Mara; "Save Geelong from the Wealthy Landlords and Developers".
- * Newspaper cutting of report by Renate Howe; "Melbourne Do : Or DIE!"

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